



## Massachusetts COVID-19 Updates – May 21, 2020

- As of Monday night, DPH reported a total of 88,970 cases of COVID-19. The state has now confirmed a total of 6,066 deaths from the virus.
- Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito visited Symmons Industries, a plumbing parts manufacturer in Braintree, on Wednesday to see firsthand how a local business is implementing new workplace safety standards required by the state in order to resume some normal operations.
- The state's unemployment rate will be updated Friday morning, and Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Rosalin Acosta said that she will be looking at job losses from specific sectors to get a sense for how many jobs might not return post-pandemic.
- The state's unemployment rate for March was [2.9 percent](#) and some groups have estimated it will climb above 20 percent as a result of the pandemic and government-mandated business closures.
- More than 1 million Massachusetts workers have sought unemployment benefits since March 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The House met in formal session Wednesday to consider a more than \$1 billion information technology bond (H 4708).
- The House adopted a consolidated amendment to deal with the 189 amendments that had been filed.
- The mega-amendment runs seven pages and includes about \$101 million in additional capital spending authorizations.
- The consolidated amendment is can be [found here](#).
- The House will meet Thursday in informal session.
- The Senate will also meet on Thursday in informal session.
- Legislation outlining vote-by-mail procedures for the September and November elections in Massachusetts "absolutely cannot wait another month," electoral reform advocates said Wednesday as they renewed their push for action on Beacon Hill.
- At least half a dozen bills that would alter the fall's elections are awaiting legislative action, including one (HD 5075) endorsed by the advocacy coalition that hosted Wednesday's press conference.

- That legislation, which was co-authored by Election Laws Committee Co-chair Rep. John Lawn and has 88 cosponsors, would send every eligible Massachusetts voter a ballot for the general election without any application requirement. For the primary, voters would need to submit a request for a ballot.
- The bill also authorizes clerks to begin scanning in ballots before election day as a way to cope with the increased volume of mail-in votes, expands in-person early voting to two weeks before the primary and three weeks before the general, and trims the voter-registration deadline from 20 days before each election to 10.
- Attorney General Maura Healey has asked a bankruptcy court to give people more time to file claims against OxyContin manufacturer Purdue Pharma and has set up a hotline to connect residents with volunteers who can help put together a claim.
- Healey and attorneys general from 24 states [filed a brief](#) Tuesday evening in Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York asking that the deadline for claims to be filed against the Connecticut company that manufactures OxyContin and has been targeted by state and local governments for its role in the opioid epidemic be extended to Sept. 30 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The current deadline is June 30.
- University of Massachusetts President Marty Meehan will seek a tuition freeze for the tens of thousands of in-state undergraduate students in the system.
- Meehan will ask the UMass Board of Trustees to keep tuition at its current level for the 2020-2021 academic year when the board votes on student fees in June.
- If approved, Meehan's proposal would affect nearly 50,000 students in Massachusetts and would be the first time in six years without a tuition increase for UMass undergraduates.
- Massachusetts and Rhode Island officials announced plans Wednesday to take a look at one of the topics at the center of some of the tension about shared ocean usage, the fisheries.
- The two states and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced grants worth \$1.1 million to four institutions to conduct research on recreational and commercial fisheries, seabed habitat, and offshore wind policies in Europe.

- According to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the studies will "advance the assessment of the interactions between offshore wind development and fisheries in the northeast" and "will help establish baseline datasets on fisheries and seabed habitat."
- The initiative will also support and inform a regional fisheries science and monitoring program being developed under the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA).
- Marijuana retailers will be able to take orders online and over the phone when they begin to reopen Monday, and will fulfill those orders in their parking lots or just outside the main entrance, the CCC announced Wednesday.
- Since the pandemic hit and the governor ordered non-medical marijuana operations closed in late March, the CCC has overseen the conversion to curbside pickup at 32 medical marijuana treatment centers around the state.
- On Wednesday, the agency released the [administrative order](#) that will govern the new way of doing business for marijuana retailers. [The order can be viewed here.](#)
- Under the order, which takes effect Monday, any marijuana retailer reopening must inform the CCC ahead of time and submit to the CCC their curbside operating procedures within 48 hours of reopening, including a layout identifying the designated curbside sales area and traffic plans.
- Businesses must also inform local public safety and health authorities. The order is attached.
- On Wednesday, Carmen's Union President James Evers wrote to Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack and legislative leaders warning that MBTA employees and their passengers will face significant health risks if the face-covering requirement is not enforced.
- The letter is can be [viewed here.](#)