

Massachusetts COVID-19 Response Update – March 23, 2020

- On Monday morning Governor Baker issued a stay in place order effective Tuesday, March 24th at noon and going until April 7th unless it is extended.
- The order instructs all non -essential businesses to close their physical operations to workers and customers by Tuesday at noon.
- The order also cuts the size of allowed public gatherings from 25 to 10 people.
- While the order stops short of issuing a formal shelter-in-place order, DPH formally recommended that residents stay home whenever possible and avoid unnecessary travel and other unnecessary activities for the next two weeks.
- Essential businesses that will be exempt from the order include grocery stores and the businesses that support them, including delivery and packaging operations, gas stations, pharmacies, medical facilities and pharmaceutical manufacturers.
- Restaurants offering take-out food can also continue to operate.
- Package stores are included in the exemption for food and beverage businesses, and medical marijuana dispensaries will remain open, but recreational pot shops must close.
- The MBTA will continue to operate
- We will continue to monitor the impacts from the order in coming days.
- The order and guidance document are both attached.
- Marijuana businesses are asking Governor Baker to reconsider his ruling that only patients registered in the state’s medical marijuana program will be able to legally buy marijuana for two weeks beginning today at noon. Medical marijuana has been deemed an essential service, but unlike California and Illinois, legal marijuana sales for people not registered as patients must cease as of noon today in Massachusetts.
- Transportation infrastructure work will continue for the foreseeable future. Construction and maintenance projects on highways and rails are critical to supporting workers who still need to commute. Some highway work may be paused on a case by case basis.
- State Education officials are exploring all options on this year’s MCAS testing requirements, including delaying or suspending testing all together.
- State Insurance Commissioner Gary Anderson published a notice on Monday urging all insurers, including those who provide health care coverage to provide employers and individuals “as much flexibility as is reasonably possible” on the payment of premiums during the public health crisis.

- The House and Senate met in informal session Monday where they passed legislation Monday that allows municipalities to postpone municipal elections and permit voting by mail for any municipal or state election before June 30.
- That action came alongside formal postponements of four special elections for open legislative seats, all of which were scheduled for March 31, until May 19 for two Senate districts and until June 2 for two House districts.
- The House and Senate are scheduled to meet again in informal session on Thursday at 11am.
- Sessions will be live streamed.
- As of Monday night, the state had 9 COVID-19 related deaths, 79 people are hospitalized and 777 have been tested.
- Boston Mayor Marty Walsh is tapping a consulting firm headed by Stanley McChrystal, a retired four-star Army general who at one time commanded US and international forces in Afghanistan, to review the city's emergency plans amid the coronavirus pandemic. The city also announced its second reported death from COVID.