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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Health Care Resources, Small Business Relief, Other Efforts To Support COVID-19 Response

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

3/20/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

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Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Executive Office of Education

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new actions to support the ongoing COVID-19 response, including new financial support for health care providers, expanded relief for small businesses, and a new federal waiver request to give the state expanded flexibility to respond to the public health emergency. The Administration also joined life sciences leaders to highlight a new partnership aimed at providing additional supplies for hospitals.

The Administration also announced new tax penalty relief for businesses, further action to limit the need for customers to visit the Registry of Motor Vehicles in person, and other initiatives to support the Commonwealth's residents and communities throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

Financial Support For Health Care Providers: The Administration's COVID-19 Response Command Center continues to identify and prioritize efforts to ensure the Commonwealth's health care system has the resources it needs to support the response to COVID-19. Today, the Administration announced a $200 million infusion in cash at MassHealth for critical, acute care and safety-net health care providers, as well as for certain health care

providers required to help ensure that our members receiving care in the community or nursing facilities do not need to go to the hospital. These will be accelerated payments and cash advances for immediate, stopgap relief to ensure the front-line health care system is able to provide necessary resources to patients.

Emergency Supply Hub: Life sciences industry leaders joined the Administration today to highlight the new **Massachusetts Life Sciences Emergency Supply Hub** (https://www.massbio.org/news/blog/calling-on-all-life-sciences-and-healthcare-organizations-to-donate-supplies-to-fight-covid-19-151858). MassBio, in partnership with MassMEDIC, the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, and the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals, launched the Supply Hub to help coordinate efforts aimed at bringing additional supplies and resources to the Commonwealth's health care institutions as they test and treat patients with COVID-19. The initiative calls on life sciences and health care organizations in the state to donate supplies needed to combat COVID-19. MassBio will share information with the Department of Public Health to triage and connect supplies with those healthcare providers that need them.

New Drive-Through Testing Site: On Thursday, the Commonwealth's first large-scale drive-thru COVID-19 testing site launched at CVS in Shrewsbury. The new site is the result of an ongoing partnership between the Baker-Polito Administration, the federal government, local health authorities and CVS. The site is designated for emergency personnel and first responders, expanding testing access to front line workers. Currently, this site is one of over 40 sites launching throughout the country over the next week, with test kits supplied by the federal government.

MassHealth Waiver & Other Requests: Massachusetts is filing a waiver request today with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that will give the state and its Medicaid program, MassHealth, more flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 public health crisis. If allowed, the waiver would enable the Commonwealth to fast-track MassHealth enrollment, streamline administrative requirements for providers, and deliver critically needed health care services easier during the COVID-19 emergency. Through the waiver request and other federal requests, the Commonwealth is seeking flexibility to address key areas of need:

- Allow for non-traditional sites of care to expand surge capacity, such as use of testing tents and overflow hospital sites
- Allow new providers, including out of state providers, a streamlined pathway to practice in the state including caring for MassHealth members
- Allow physician assistants to practice independently
- Provide flexibility to hospitals and skilled nursing facilities to meet increasing demand
- Expand MassHealth Hospital-Determined Presumptive Eligibility to all individuals – which MassHealth already expanded through a public health order last week – including children, older adults, and individuals who have received MassHealth benefits within the past 12 months
- Allow medications to be delivered to members, and waive a signature requirement for these prescriptions
- Waive face-to-face requirements for certain services, including Home and Community Based Services, and behavioral health evaluations for Schedule II-IV prescriptions

In addition, the Administration announced that MassHealth and the Health Connector will protect coverage for all individuals who have Medicaid coverage as of March 18, 2020 and for all individuals approved for coverage during the national emergency.

Expanded Small Business Resources: Earlier this week, the Administration announced a **$10 Million Small Business Recovery Loan Fund** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-10-million-small-business-recovery-loan-fund) to provide financial relief to small businesses and non-profits impacted by COVID-19. Today, the Administration announced that MassDevelopment's Board of Directors will meet next week to vote on a partnership that will make an **additional $10 million available for the Small Business Recovery Loan Fund.**

The state-level emergency loan fund is aimed at providing crucial resources for small businesses that will supplement important federal relief. Governor Baker on Tuesday **formally requested** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-changes-to-expedite-health-care-licensing-increase) disaster relief from the federal Small Business Administration, and with this week's **announcement that that request had been granted** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-changes-to-expedite-health-care-licensing-increase), Massachusetts businesses impacted by COVID-19 may now apply for low-interest loans.

Tax Relief for Businesses: The Baker-Polito Administration is announcing tax penalty relief to support businesses affected by COVID-19. The Department of Revenue today announced that it will waive any late-file or late-pay penalties for returns and payment due for meals and room occupancy taxes between March 20 and May 31, 2020.

Limiting Need For In-Person RMV Visits: The Administration today is taking further action to limit the need for customers to visit the Registry of Motor Vehicles in person. Today, Governor Baker **issued an order** (/doc/march-20-2020-rmv-order) allowing the Registrar to extend vehicle registrations and modify the conditions of registrations, plates and titles. It also enables the waiver of certain inspection requirements.

Workforce Guidance For Schools: Earlier this week, Governor Baker **ordered all elementary and secondary schools to close** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-emergency-actions-to-address-covid-19) for educational purposes until April 6. Recognizing that local school districts employ a significant number of hourly employees, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education today is issuing guidance to local school districts recommending they continue paying hourly employees, while suggesting they continue to engage in professional development.

Smoke Alarm Inspections: Governor Baker today **issued an order** (/doc/march-20-2020-smoke-alarm-inspections-order) making a change to the inspection statutes that require a smoke and carbon dioxide alarm inspection prior to a residential real estate transaction. The Order would permit the inspection to be deferred if the buyer contractually assumes responsibility for installing the detectors and the subsequent inspection happens within 90 days of the conclusion of the COVID-19 emergency.

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, and members of their administration are committed to making Massachusetts the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

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DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

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The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

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The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development promotes vibrant communities, growing businesses, and a strong middle class.

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Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

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EOPSS is responsible for the policy development and budgetary oversight of its secretariat agencies, independent programs, and several boards which aid in crime prevention, homeland security preparedness, and ensuring the safety of residents and visitors in the Commonwealth.

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Massachusetts Department of Transportation

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Our mission is to deliver excellent customer service to people traveling in the Commonwealth by providing transportation infrastructure which is safe, reliable, robust and resilient. We work to provide a transportation system which can strengthen the state's economy and improve the quality of life for all.

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Executive Office of Education (/orgs/executive-office-of-education)

From pre-school to post-secondary education, the Executive Office of Education works to connect all Massachusetts residents with an education that creates opportunities.

While Massachusetts' students rank first in the nation on many educational measures, the Executive Office of Education strives to strengthen the foundations of education reform, empower schools and educators, and develop pathways to college and careers so all students in the Commonwealth can succeed, regardless of their zip code.

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3/18/2020 | *Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency*

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