Gov. Holcomb Takes More Actions to Protect Hoosiers During Public Emergency

Thursday, March 19, 2020 12:00am to 12:00am

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INDIANAPOLIS — Governor Eric J. Holcomb took additional unprecedented actions today to protect and support Hoosiers during the COVID-19 outbreak by signing executive orders that extend the closure of schools, provide economic relief and protections for individuals and businesses, and expand unemployment insurance benefits for those impacted by job loss.

“Every day we learn more about how to tackle this monster. We are being thoughtful about how to approach every action we are taking in this national public health emergency and putting Hoosiers’ health and safety first,” said Gov. Holcomb.

Daily COVID-19 testing capacity in Indiana has expanded with the addition of a new partnership between the Indiana State Department of Health and Eli Lilly and Company, and at least one other entity has initiated testing this week. In the past 24 hours, about 200 tests have been completed.

“As we increase the number of tests analyzed each day, no one should be caught off guard that the number of positive cases will increase,” said Dr. Kris Box, state health commissioner. “This will help us know where community spread is occurring in Indiana and help us mobilize resources in affected areas.”

Here is a summary of covered actions. The Executive Orders, which contain additional actions, will be found at this link: www.in.gov/gov/2384.htm (https://www.in.gov/gov/2384.htm)

State of Emergency Extension

The Governor will extend the current state of emergency an additional 30 days when it expires on April 5.K-12 schools

All K-12 public schools will remain closed until May 1. Non-public schools are also ordered closed. This date may be revised to extend through the end of the 2019-2020 school year if circumstances warrant. All-state mandated assessments will be canceled for the current academic year. The governor has contacted U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to share the state’s plan and also has asked the Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jennifer McCormick to pursue any federal waivers needed to cancel the requirements for accountability, chronic absenteeism and state-mandated assessments.Economy

The state of Indiana will align with the federal government to delay state income tax payments from April 15 to July 15. The U.S. Treasury extended the deadline to pay federal income tax by 90 days. Penalties will be waived for 60 days for property tax paid after May 11. The state will work with counties that may experience cash flow stress because of the delay. The state will not immediately move forward with using $300 million in reserves to pay for several capital projects approved in the just-concluded legislative session and instead maintain flexibility to utilize the funds as needed for relief efforts and to maintain current services. The state will consider using bonding authority to move forward with the just-approved capital projects.

Providers of essential utility services such as gas and electric, broadband, telecom, water and wastewater services are prohibited from discontinuing service to any customer during the public health emergency. The state's application to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was approved on Wednesday. This program provides targeted, low-interest loans of up to $2 million to help small businesses and nonprofits overcome the temporary loss of revenue as a result of coronavirus. See more at SBA.gov/Disaster. Unemployment Insurance Benefits

The state will interpret Indiana's unemployment laws to the broadest extent possible to cover Hoosiers who are out of work because of COVID-19. Benefits will be paid to individuals who file their initial unemployment claims late. The Department of Workforce Development will allow individuals to continue to accrue unemployment eligibility if they take work leave because of COVID-19. DWD will seek federal authorization to provide unemployment benefits for those who are not otherwise eligible for unemployment, such individuals who have recently started a job. For employers, DWD will not assess certain experience rate penalties because of employees who receive unemployment benefits because of COVID-19. Housing

No residential eviction proceedings or foreclosure actions may be initiated during the public health emergency. This does not relieve the individual of obligations to pay rent or mortgage payments. All public housing authorities are requested to extend deadlines for housing assistance recipients and required documentation to show eligibility for housing programs. The Indiana Department of Financial Institutions and Indiana Community Housing Development Authority are required to work with financial institutions to identify tools to help promote housing stability.Social Services

Participants in the Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP) and the Children's Health Insurance Program are not required to make premium payments. Job search requirements are waived for those applying for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits. The Family and Social Services Administration will seek a federal waiver to extend renewals for existing Medicaid and HIP recipients. Telehealth services for mental health, substance use disorder and prescribing for Medicaid covered services will be expanded.Insurance

The commissioner of the state Department of Insurance will request that insurers institute a 60-day moratorium on policy cancellations for non-payment of premiums. This does not suspend a policyholder's obligation to make payments. The commissioner will ask health

insurers to cover COVID-19 testing without requiring prior authorization. The commissioner will request that health insurers not increase prices or coverage costs that involve medical care for COVID-19.Bureau of Motor Vehicles

To limit the number of in-branch transactions, late fees will be waived for several driver's licenses and identification card renewals, vehicle registrations, titles, and certain other transactions. Other operational changes in branches are being instituted to provide for the safety of employees and customers in branches, such as spacing between terminals and limiting the number of customers in the lobby.Veterans

Requirements have been relaxed for veterans to qualify for awards from the Military Family Relief Fund. Awards in excess of $2,500 may be approved by the IDVA director during the public health emergency.Health and Professional Licensing

Mental health professionals are permitted to practice via telemedicine. Advance Practice Registered Nurses are allowed to provide services in multiple locations. The state health commissioner may waive requirements of the nursing home certificate of need statute to respond to COVID-19 issues for long-term care facilities.More information may be found at the ISDH website at coronavirus.in.gov and the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

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EVENT DETAILS

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