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Governor Wolf Signs Fourth Renewal of COVID-19 Disaster Declaration to Aid in Response and Recovery

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Press Release, Public Health, Public Safety

Today, Governor Tom Wolf signed a fourth renewal of his 90-day Proclamation of Disaster Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic. The first proclamation was signed on March 6, following the announcement of the first two presumptive positive cases of the virus in Pennsylvania.

“COVID-19 vaccinations have begun, but we are still in the early stages of vaccine administration,” said Governor Wolf. “We will continue to prioritize a safe, efficient and equitable distribution process, and expect vaccinations to increase as the federal government makes more vaccine available to states. This renewal will allow the commonwealth to maintain its response and support efforts as we continue testing, contact tracing and vaccination efforts to keep Pennsylvanians safe.”

The emergency disaster declaration provides for increased support to state agencies involved in the continued response to the virus and recovery for the state during reopening. This includes expediting supply procurement and lifting certain regulations to allow for efficient and effective mitigation.

The disaster declaration has allowed for waivers and extensions to continue to provide for Pennsylvanians and businesses under the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, including the ability to waive the one-week waiting period to receive unemployment compensation, work search requirements, and the registration with PA CareerLink for applicants, and to provide relief from charges for employers; and allowing the commonwealth to suspend numerous training requirements and certification and licensure renewals for health care professionals, child care workers, direct care workers, direct support professionals, among other professional groups who provide life-sustaining services to our children, seniors, and vulnerable residents. It allows the commonwealth to increase the number of vaccine providers and improve vaccine distribution.

Through the disaster declaration, PEMA has been able to mission assign the National Guard to provide various types of support for long term care facilities, including providing direct patient care support, ancillary support, and testing, and at community-based testing sites. It also provides PEMA with the ability to leverage continued federal support such as non-congregate sheltering.

The renewed disaster declaration will continue to support all of these efforts, as well as allow the commonwealth to rapidly scale response efforts and employ new intervention tactics.

The Department of Health’s Department Operations Center at PEMA continues to be active, as is the Commonwealth Response Coordination Center there.

A Proclamation of Disaster Emergency is effective for a 90-day period unless sooner rescinded or extended by official action of the Governor.