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ORDER OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROVIDING FOR CONTINUITY OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES CARE

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charles D. Baker issued a declaration that a public health emergency exists in the Commonwealth due to due to the outbreak of the 2019 novel Coronavirus ("COVID-19"). On March 11, 2020, in view of the grave threat that the spread of COVID-19 presents to the public health, the Public Health Council authorized and directed me to act pursuant to G. L. c. 17, § 2A and to take all appropriate actions, incur such liabilities, and establish such rules, requirements, and procedures necessary to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in order to protect the health and welfare of the people of the Commonwealth.

As of March 16, 2020, 197 cases of COVID-19 were reported by the Department of Public Health, with 10 of the 14 counties in the Commonwealth impacted, and all indications are that the number of cases continues to grow. The escalating COVID-19 public health emergency has begun to and will continue to produce an extraordinary demand on the Commonwealth's healthcare system. Addressing this exceptional demand will require a degree of flexibility and responsiveness in the staffing of emergency medical services (EMS).

Accordingly, in view of the need to ensure continuity of EMS care and ensure sufficient EMS personnel to staff ambulances to respond to the COVID-19 virus, pursuant to the authority granted by G. L. c. 17, § 2A and with the approval of the Governor and the Public Health Council, and in order to assure the maintenance of public health during the continuing public health emergency, I issue the following Order:

1. When a Class I, II or V ambulance transports a patient receiving care at the Basic Life Support (BLS) level, ambulance staffing will satisfy minimum required staffing standards provided the ambulance is staffed with at least one EMT who is at a minimum certified at the EMT-Basic level, as set forth in 105 CMR 170.810, and one first responder, as defined in 105 CMR 171.000 (excluding lifeguards), or other individual deemed qualified by the affiliate hospital medical director who shall drive the ambulance.

2. When a Class I, II or V ambulance transports a patient receiving care at the Advanced level of ALS, ambulance staffing will satisfy minimum required staffing standards provided the ambulance is staffed with at least one EMT who is at a minimum certified at the EMT-Advanced

or higher level, and one first responder, as defined in 105 CMR 171.000 (excluding lifeguards), who shall drive the ambulance.

3. When a Class I, II or V ambulance transports a patient receiving care at the Paramedic level of ALS, ambulance staffing will satisfy minimum required staffing standards provided the ambulance is staffed with at least one EMT who is at a minimum certified at the Paramedic level, and one first responder, as defined in 105 CMR 171.000 (excluding lifeguards), who shall drive the ambulance.

All applicable statutes, regulations and guidance not inconsistent with this Order remain in effect.

This Order shall be effective immediately and shall remain in effect until the State of Emergency is terminated by the Governor, or until rescinded by me, whichever shall happen first.

IT IS SO ORDERED

Monica Bharel, MD, MPH
Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

March 17, 2020