

Baker: COVID-19 numbers in Massachusetts may be hitting plateau

At the start of an eighth week living under a state of emergency, Gov. Charlie Baker said Monday the data might be starting to show that the coronavirus's spread has "plateaued" as he committed an additional \$130 million to support efforts to fight COVID-19 in nursing homes, where the toll of the pandemic has been particularly harsh.

Baker, however, again said he would have more to say later this week about his thinking on how and when to begin reopening parts of the economy, and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh said in no uncertain terms that May 4 is too early for businesses to invite workers and customers back through their doors.

"I can tell you right now that Boston will not reopen on May 4," Walsh said.

The press briefings from Baker and Walsh came a week before the governor's executive order to close all non-essential businesses during the public health emergency is scheduled to expire on May 4.

Baker described Massachusetts as "still in the surge and very much in the fight." He contrasted the situation in the Northeast with conditions in some other states, particularly across the South, where governors have started to relax stay-at-home advisories.

"The trend data remains reasonably high," Baker said. "But obviously whatever decision we make needs to come with a little thought and a plan behind it, so we'll probably put

that out later this week.”

Some business groups, including the Mass High Tech Council, have published recommendations for how to reopen that rely on significantly increased testing efforts, which Baker said he supports and is working to implement. Other groups, however, say businesses must be given the chance to show they can protect workers.

“The Federal and State governments have done an admirable job communicating to the public the measures necessary for safe interactions moving forward. Small businesses must be given the opportunity to demonstrate they are willing and capable of re-opening in a responsible and safe manner. That is the only way our state will begin to climb out of the economic disaster it currently finds itself in,” said Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance spokesman Paul Craney.

The governor did say he believed Massachusetts had been successful in “flattening the curve,” and noted that the number of new hospitalizations on Sunday increased by only 32 from the day before.

“It seems to have plateaued, depending upon which part of Massachusetts you’re in, and then the hope and the expectation is it will start to fall, but it will probably fall slowly the same way it ramped up slowly,” Baker said.

Baker said long-term care facilities, including the state’s 386 nursing homes, have “unfortunately evolved into a national hotspot,” with 10,031 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than half of the state’s deaths from the disease occurring among residents and staff of the facilities.

The administration said that by the end of the week it would make \$130 million in additional funding available for nursing homes to pay for staff, cleaning and personal protective equipment.

"The numbers are tough to comprehend, but they illustrate the lethal grip COVID-19 can have on seniors, and especially those with underlying health conditions, here in the commonwealth and obviously our deepest condolences go out to the families, loved ones and staff who have been impacted by this horrible virus," Baker said.

The governor also said the state was assembling a team of 120 nurses and certified nursing assistants to deploy in teams of 10 to facilities in emergency situations, and would be auditing long-term care facilities for compliance with a new set of care criteria, including mandatory testing of staff and residents, a 28-point infection control check-list and adherence to protective equipment requirements.

The money – which comes on top of the \$130 million made available April 15 – will be sent to facilities that can show they're living up to those safety standards.

"These funds will be allocated to nursing homes that are meeting a benchmark for certain criteria to ensure these privately operated facilities are working as safely as possible," Baker said at an afternoon press conference from the State House.

Baker said that fighting the "invisible enemy" can be especially challenging in settings like nursing homes where the coronavirus can spread undetected among residents and staff showing no symptoms.

"That makes controlling the disease much harder, and it also demands a new level of infection control and staffing requirements for our nursing homes so that they can create the safest environment possible," Baker said. "This, of course, is not easy to do, but it's expected, required and necessary."

Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said the state would also make \$44 million in additional funding available for residential congregate care service providers

“to address unplanned, and thus unbudgeted” expenses such as overtime, infection control, cleaning services and personal protective equipment.

The money is in addition to \$94 million made available for residential service providers in late March, and Massachusetts hopes to be reimbursed for 75 percent of the staffing costs by the federal government.

Sudders said state agencies work with 238 different residential service providers to help care for 20,500 individuals, including children and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the state plans to increase its monthly reimbursement to those providers in May and June by an additional 15 percent.

Tim Foley, the executive vice president of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers who was personally thanked by Baker for his help during the press conference, said the increases in funding will lead to “enhanced pay” for caregivers and increased oversight to ensure a safe working environment.

“These actions support nursing home workers who are on the frontlines, brushing aside fear every day, in their fight to stop the spread of the virus and provide care for seniors and people with disabilities,” Foley said in a statement.

SEIU Local 509 President Peter MacKinnon said the rate increases for residential service providers indicate recognition that those care providers are underpaid, despite putting themselves in harm’s way.

“Today’s rate increases are an important reminder of the vital services front line workers provide to serve our community members most in need. There is power in a union, and this announcement shows the strength of all workers in raising their voices, making their needs known, and fighting for what’s right,” MacKinnon said.

Governor Baker announces \$130 million for Massachusetts nursing facilities

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced a second round of funding up to \$130 million for nursing facilities to support COVID-19 response efforts over the next two months, as well as increased funding of \$44 million for residential congregate care service providers. This funding will support staffing costs, infection control and personal protective equipment (PPE). In addition to increased financial support, the administration has implemented required testing for staff and residents of nursing facilities.

Additional Support Services: The Commonwealth will offer support for temporary staffing assistance for all nursing homes in need. This includes clinical response teams of 120 nurses and CNAs deployed in teams of 10 during emergency situations, crisis management support and deployment of the Massachusetts National Guard. These efforts will be supported by a centralized infection control performance improvement center established by the Massachusetts Senior Care Association.

Increased Financial Support for Nursing Facilities: The administration is releasing a second round of funding for two months for nursing homes that meet specific requirements and accountability measures. The funding is dependent on required COVID-19 testing of all staff and residents, regular infection control audits, appropriate allocation of funding and the public release of facility performance and funding use.

Further details about this second round of funding available for nursing facilities include:

Required Testing: Facilities must test all staff and residents, and report results to the state. Facilities are also encouraged to identify and pursue testing avenues with area hospitals, EMS or other providers. The state's mobile testing program is available for those facilities unable to set up testing.

In-person Clinical Audits: All nursing facilities will be regularly audited in-person for infection control and accountability, and each will receive a baseline audit during the first two weeks of May. These clinical audits will be conducted using a 28-point Infection Control Checklist, based on DPH, CDC and industry guidance. This checklist includes infection control, PPE supply and usage, staffing, clinical care, and communication requirements.

Facilities will be scored into three ratings: in adherence (green), in adherence but warrants inspection (yellow) and not in adherence (red).

Funding Accountability: Funding release is dependent on accountability measures, including audit ratings and appropriate funding allocation. Facilities must use this funding for staffing, infection control, PPE and other supports that directly benefit staff, including hotels for staff retention and infection control.

Staffing Supports: The Commonwealth will provide temporary staffing assistance to all nursing homes during the COVID-19 public health crisis, including clinical rapid response teams to provide urgent, short-term staffing for facilities in need, crisis management experts, and the deployment of the Massachusetts National Guard to aid with logistical, environmental and other supports. The state will also contract with staffing agencies to support facilities that are

otherwise unable to access staffing agencies.

Infection Control Performance Improvement Center: The Massachusetts Senior Care Association and Hebrew Senior Life, in coordination with other industry providers, will lead an infection control performance improvement center to ensure accountability and provide assistance to facilities that are struggling with infection control capability. The performance improvement center will provide infection control protocols and trainings and PPE supply chain and management support, as well as identify, triage and provide infection control specialist support and intervention.

Public Reporting: All performance measures and funding use will be publicly reported using a mandatory reporting template, and the Commonwealth will provide consolidated information in the testing completion status by facility, COVID-19 case counts and mortality of staff and residents, and audit results. These reports will be due shortly after June 30, and the Commonwealth will then compile and deliver a public report.

Increased Support for Residential Congregate Care Service Providers: The administration is providing a second phase of increased funding – \$44 million – across purchase of service residential congregate care service providers during the COVID-19 outbreak. This funding builds on the \$95 million in increased funding announced on March 30, bringing the total funding for these providers to \$139 million, and will support increased staffing costs, infection control and PPE.

To mitigate many residential congregate care service providers' expenses related to the COVID-19 surge, Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) agencies will increase the monthly reimbursement for May and June services for an additional 15%, in addition to the previously announced 10% increase. Further support to address provider needs during the surge include mobile COVID-19 testing expansion and

coordination with MEMA to provide PPE to providers.

EOHHS agencies work with 238 residential service providers throughout the Commonwealth to ensure the health and well-being of over 20,500 individuals reflecting diverse populations, including children, youth and families, and individuals with physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disabilities and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

New Bedford reports 62 new COVID-19 cases since Saturday

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 62 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford Monday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 503, **up from 441 on Saturday**. New Bedford health officials do not report COVID-19 numbers on Sundays. No new COVID-19 related death were reported, keeping the total at 13.

On April 26, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,590 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 54,938. This is a decrease from Saturday's 2,379 reported cases. Full details **here**.

Fall River reported 14 more confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on Sunday. According to Mayor Coogan's Office, Fall River has seen 377 total positive cases. As of Friday, 149 cases have cleared isolation. Full details **here**.

Sarah Rebello, who co-hosts a conservative radio show in Fall River, organized a rally at Government Center to express what she feels is an unconstitutional lockdown.

Boston to start antibody study this week

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Boston plans to begin testing for antibodies to the coronavirus among asymptomatic residents in select neighborhoods in the city to get a better understanding of the prevalence of the virus.

Boston City Hall announced a partnership on Sunday with Massachusetts General Hospital to test 1,000 volunteers this week for both COVID-19 and antibodies to the virus as part of a study to evaluate the true level of exposure in the city. Outreach to residents for testing began Sunday in East Boston, Roslindale, and within the 02121 and 02125 zip codes in Dorchester.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 25 percent or more of the infected population could show no symptoms of COVID-19, but remain a risk to transmit the disease to others. As of Wednesday, the state reported that Boston had 6,744 documented cases of COVID-19, a rate of 970.4 per 100,000 people.

"It is our hope that by conducting this testing, we as a collective City will get a better understanding of the true prevalence of COVID-19 in our community," Mayor Marty Walsh said in a statement. "The more we can expand our testing, the more we can learn how to use our medical resources more efficiently, and how we need to focus our current efforts to contain the virus."

Testing for COVID-19 is done with a nasal swab, while antibody testing is done with blood drawn from a finger prick to determine whether the body is responding to infection or has previously fought off the virus. Testing for residents contacted to be a part of the study will be free and on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Gun store activists protest at Bourne Bridge Rotary on Saturday

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Gun rights activists staged a demonstration on Cape Cod on Saturday afternoon to protest Gov. Charlie Baker's refusal to include gun shops on the state's list of essential businesses that are allowed to stay open during the coronavirus pandemic.

Dozens of activists, many wearing masks, gathered on the grass at the Bourne Bridge Rotary holding signs demanding that gun shops, as well as the broader economy, be allowed to reopen. Some protesters also held "Don't Tread On Me" posters and large signs for Jay McMahan, the Republican running in a special election for a state Senate seat that covers Plymouth and parts of the upper Cape.

"Our liberal GOP Governor not only closed our gun stores statewide, he prohibited online firearms courses, and made firearm businesses ineligible for state small business loans. Even the Democratic Governor of Maine followed President Trump's guidelines and made Maine gun stores essential," said

Adam Lange, the sponsor of the protest and the founder of United Cape Patriots. The gun group Massachusetts Gun Rights also participated.

Some gun stores and activists have sued Baker in federal court over his decision to close gun shops during the pandemic. The governor's business closure executive order runs through May 4, but could be extended.

COVID-19 cases drop for 3rd straight day in Massachusetts

Massachusetts Coronavirus Update

On April 26, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,590 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 54,938. This is a decrease from Saturday's 2,379 reported cases.



169 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday, down from 174, bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 2,899.



As of 4 pm today, 236,100 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 9,255 new tests since yesterday.

Gov. Charlie Baker would not say Friday afternoon whether he plans to extend the economic shutdown currently due to expire May 4, but he detailed what he will be looking at when it comes time to make that decision. Full details [here](#).

New Bedford Coronavirus Update

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 31 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford Saturday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 441, **up from 410 on Friday**. One new COVID-19 related death was reported today bringing the total to 13. No specific details (age, sex of the patient, etc) are available. New Bedford officials do not report new data on Sundays.

The New Bedford Police Department welcomed home Sgt. Ortega who is recovering from COVID-19. Full details **here**.

Fall River Coronavirus Update

Fall River reported 14 more confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on Sunday. According to Mayor Coogan's Office, Fall River has seen 377 total positive cases. As of Friday, 149 cases have cleared isolation. Full details **here**.

Sarah Rebello, who co-hosts a conservative radio show in Fall River, organized a rally at Government Center to express what she feels is an unconstitutional lockdown.

Warren: IG must investigate fraud, waste and abuse in small business loan program

United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Chairwoman of the House Committee on Small Business, Representative Nydia Velázquez (D-NY-07) wrote to the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Treasury Department

Inspector Generals (IG) requesting a broad investigation into the implementation of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

“The PPP was intended to help the small businesses that form the backbone of our economy, and has now been provided over \$650 billion by Congress to do so. To make sure that these funds are spent consistent with congressional intent and appropriately to address the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we request that you open a broad investigation into the program’s implementation,” wrote the lawmakers.

Senator Warren and Representative Velázquez called for a review of the SBA and Treasury Department rulemaking and guidance process and whether it was effective in ensuring lenders and small businesses could access the program quickly and equitably – and if there were appropriate protections against program waste, fraud, and abuse. They asked for an assessment of whether banks favored larger, wealthier customers and existing customers to the detriment of the small mom-and-pop businesses. They also asked for a determination of whether larger businesses and public companies were able to obtain loans, the cost of these loans to taxpayers, if these businesses needed the funds due to COVID-19 pandemic, and whether companies with close ties to Administration officials or other political connections were able to receive PPP funds.

Congress created the PPP to prevent bottlenecks and allow banks and credit unions in every community to quickly and easily administer this small business assistance. But even before the program officially began, there were reports of numerous problems with the SBA rules and implementation of the law, and it became apparent that agency leadership did not take adequate steps to prevent a number of foreseeable errors.

Once the banks began processing loans, small businesses immediately began to raise concerns that they were playing favorites, processing the largest loans first out of a desire to reap higher fees, and shoring up their business lines by

prioritizing existing larger customers over small mom-and-pop businesses. For example, JP Morgan “provided loans to virtually all of its commercial banking customers that sought financing through the small business relief program, while the lender’s smallest customers were almost entirely shut out.”

In addition to favoring large, well-off customers, the program was undermined by large restaurant chains, hotels, and other huge publicly traded companies that received PPP loans that were intended to benefit small businesses. For example, Continental Materials, a “company owned by a prominent Chicago family (the family of U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Ronald Gidwitz) with close ties to the Trump administration was able to get a \$5.5 million loan under the program.” Although the Treasury Department released guidance designed to address some of these concerns yesterday, it is not clear if this guidance will be sufficient to prevent abuse of the program.

The lawmakers wrote that the reports raise significant questions about whether SBA and Treasury officials that wrote the rules took appropriate steps to prevent abuse. With Congress already allocating an additional \$310 billion to the PPP, they asked that the SBA and Treasury Department Inspector Generals open a broad investigation to ensure the program supports the millions of small businesses that have been devastated by the economic collapse caused by COVID-19.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, Senator Warren has worked to ensure Massachusetts can get the help it needs – including the Commonwealth’s small businesses. She called for clear guidance from SBA and Treasury to ensure all small businesses have equal and expedient access to funding. Senator Warren also called on Congress to do more to help small businesses survive this crisis. She proposed eliminating the cap on total relief on small business loans. On March 26th, Senator Warren joined Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh on a conference call with Boston small business owners to share details of the relief for small businesses in the latest

legislative package. She held a similar call with small businesses across the Commonwealth the same day. Senators Warren and Markey shared information and resources for small businesses impacted by coronavirus.

2020.04.23 Letter to SBA and Treasury IG

Baker: Data trends will dictate timing of economic reopening

It's all going to depend on the data.

Gov. Charlie Baker would not say Friday afternoon whether he plans to extend the economic shutdown currently due to expire May 4, but he detailed what he will be looking at when it comes time to make that decision.

"We are still in this surge and we need to recognize that this insidious and often invisible virus is still making people here in Massachusetts very sick," the governor said. He later added, "Our view going forward here is going to be that until we start to see some of that kind of information – the peaking of the surge and the move in the other direction – for some sustained period of time, we're not going to be interested in reopening anything."

Baker previously has pointed to White House guidance that recommended states could begin to resume greater levels of economic activity after documenting 14 days of declining case counts and on Friday said his administration plans to follow guidance from the federal government, other countries and

public health experts before planning an economic reopening. He said Friday that the duration of positive trends necessary to reopen “varies depending upon who you talk to.”

With 50,969 total cases and 4,946 cases newly reported Friday, Baker said Massachusetts is “sitting in what I would call the peak” but that his team has not seen anything in the daily data on testing, new cases, new hospitalizations and deaths “that would suggest that we’re over the peak and heading down the other side.”

Current conditions would not appear to support a resumption of widespread activity on May 4, which is 10 days away. Asked why he doesn’t just extend his order closing non-essential businesses beyond May 4 now, Baker said his team is still following the day-to-day data in search of trends.

“I get the fact that people want a hard and fast answer on this one, and I keep saying that the hard and fast answer is going to be in the trend data,” Baker said. He added, “We’ll have more to say about it a little closer. I get the fact that people would like an answer, but any answer I give you today wouldn’t be worth very much because it’s going to be driven by what happens over the course of the next two weeks, which I can’t – I don’t have a crystal ball, I can’t predict.”

Earlier this week, the governor said he plans to “pull together the best and brightest minds from our business and public health and academic communities to work together to put together a thoughtful framework that can work in Massachusetts” and on Friday said his administration has already started to talk with public health experts and business leaders about reopening.

He also acknowledged again Friday that the steps the state has taken to staunch the spread of the coronavirus “have had significant economic dislocation for hundreds of thousands of people here in Massachusetts.”

About 653,000 Massachusetts residents have filed unemployment claims in the past five weeks, and more than 200,000 others applied for a new unemployment program open to self-employed and gig workers who did not previously qualify. Baker said the state's system for processing claims from newly-eligible workers was launched 10 days ahead of schedule and has already processed more than 100,000 of the new claims.

"On the one hand, it's mindboggling and concerning that so many people are filing for unemployment," he said. "But on the other hand, I'm glad our system has been able to keep up and actually process claims so that these folks can get the support that they need."

He added, "Sadly, the economic toll that's with us is going to be with us for a while, there's no question about that."

During Friday's press conference, Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said the administration is filing for two new waivers from the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services in hopes of giving the MassHealth program more flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

"Our requests include expanding Medicare telehealth coverage to include services provided by phone, as well as video, to increase access to health care for seniors and individuals with disabilities who may not have readily available access to video technology," Sudders said. "Additionally, we're allowing MassHealth flexibility to qualify for coverage for individuals who may be eligible but have not submitted all their forms to the state, providing flexibility with respect to federal provider payments limits to enable MassHealth provide critical stabilization funds for health care providers ... in addition, being able to enroll individuals into MassHealth for 90 day period, while we ensure we have all the documents available for them."

Friday's press conference also marked the return to the podium for Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, who has recovered from her own bout with COVID-19. She said Friday, "People can and do recover, and we need to remember that."

Baker said he was glad to have Bharel back at work and back at the public updates on the state's fight against COVID-19 and pointed out that the virus he likes to call "insidious" even got to Bharel, a "really committed social distancer."

"Even under that scenario, the virus found a way to get to her," he said. "And I think, in many ways, that's a story that plays out thousands and thousands and thousands of times all over the country and all over the world, and that's part of the reason why the tracing program is ultimately going to be hugely important."

At the end of his prepared remarks on what he said was "another difficult week in managing our way through the surge," Baker spoke about encouraging and inspiring stories he hears from people all over the state. He talked about high school seniors taking jobs at grocery stores since their last year of high school was cut short, and businesses upending their operations to contribute to the fight against COVID-19.

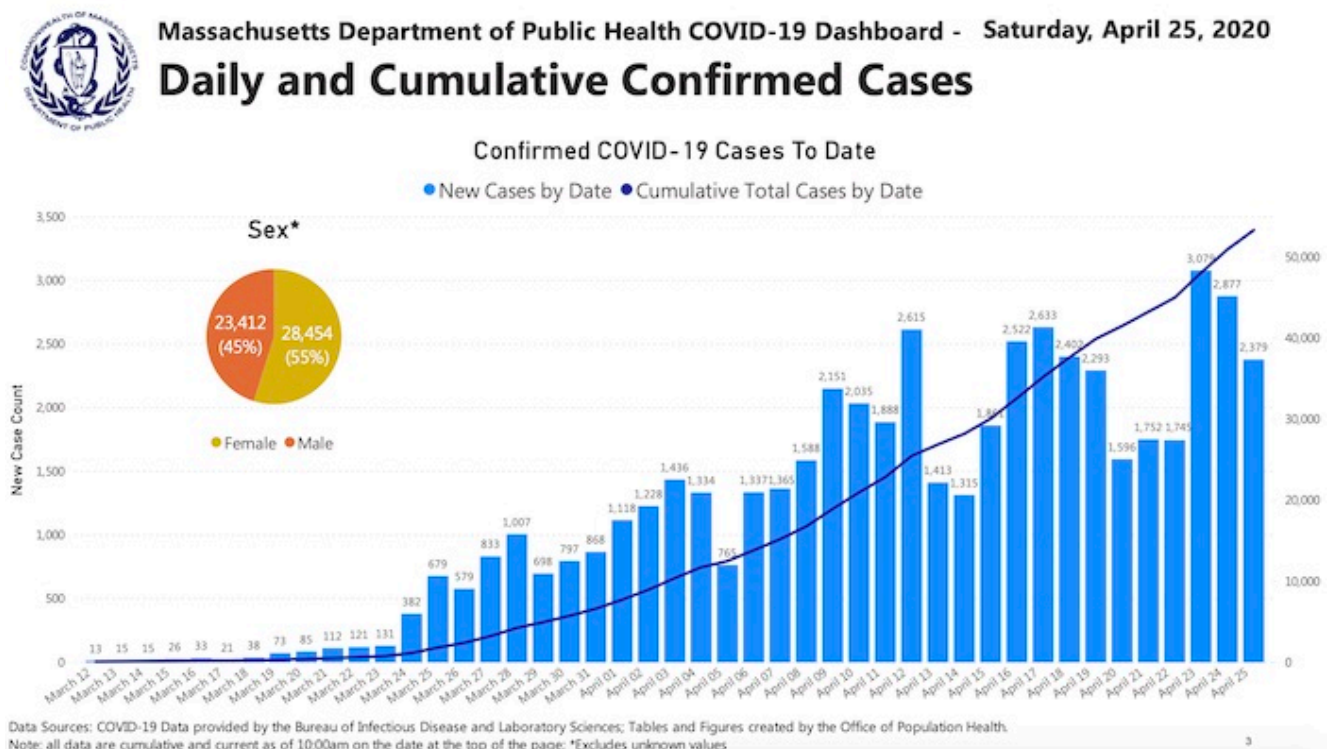
"We also see little glimmers of hope all around us," he said. "And I hope that all of us will use that as part of the fuel that we all need to not only get through the surge, but get to the other side and start to think about what the next act here in Massachusetts will look like."

COVID-19 related deaths in Massachusetts drop for 5th straight day

Massachusetts Coronavirus Update



On April 25, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 2,379 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 50,969. This is a decrease from Friday's 4,946 reported cases.



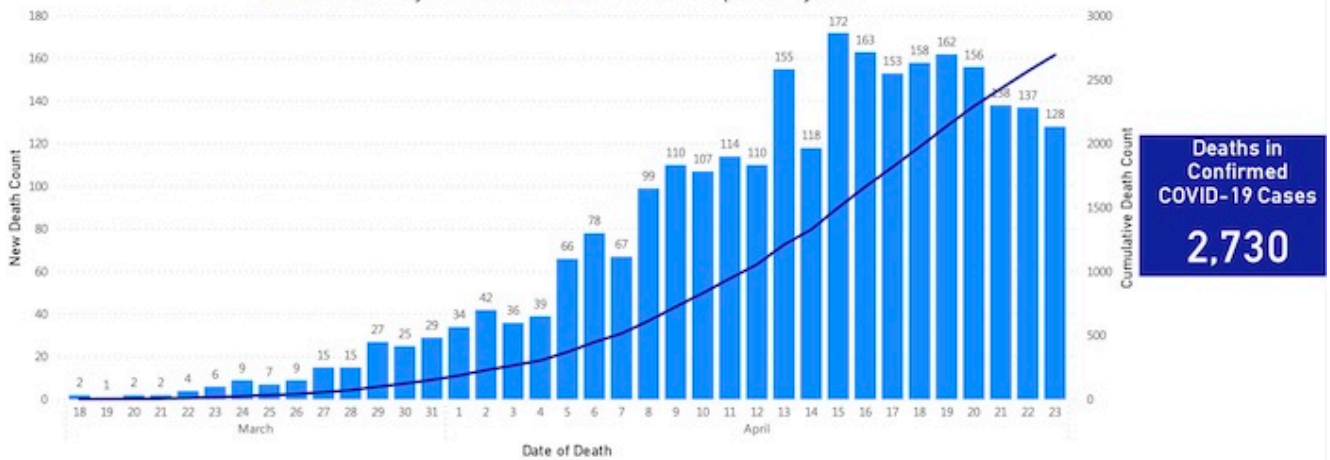
174 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday, down from 196, bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 2,730.



Daily and Cumulative Deaths

Deaths* in Confirmed COVID-19 Cases by Date of Death

● New Deaths by Date of Death ● Total Deaths Reported by Date



Data Sources: COVID-19 Data provided by the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences and the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics; Tables and Figures created by the Office of Population Health
Note: all data are cumulative and current as of 10:00am on the date at the top of the page; *Counts on the trend chart do not match total number of deaths reported, as there is a several day lag in reporting by date of death.

As of 4 pm today, 226,845 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 11,632 new tests since yesterday. This is the third straight day Massachusetts Health officials reported ten thousand or more tests.

New Bedford Coronavirus Update

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 31 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford Saturday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 441, **up from 410 on Friday**. One new COVID-19 related death was reported today bringing the total to 13. No specific details (age, sex of the patient, etc) are available.

The New Bedford Police Department welcomed home Sgt. Ortega who is recovering from COVID-19. Full details [here](#).

Fall River Coronavirus Update

Fall River reported 23 more confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on Friday. According to Mayor Coogan's office, Fall River has seen 337 total positive cases. 149 cases have cleared isolation. Full details [here](#).

While case numbers released by the Massachusetts Department of Health suggest the Bay State isn't out of the woods in the COVID-19 pandemic, a local group is getting ready to show their displeasure over how the virus has been handled.

Sarah Rebello, who co-hosts a conservative radio show in Fall River, has organized a rally to take place at Government Center to express what she feels is an unconstitutional lockdown. Full details [here](#).

New Bedford reports 31 new COVID-19 cases, one new death since Friday

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 31 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford Saturday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 441, **up from 410 on Friday**. One new COVID-19 related death was reported today bringing the total to 13. No specific details (age, sex of the patient, etc) are available.

The New Bedford Police Department welcomed home Sgt. Ortega who is recovering from COVID-19. Full details [here](#).

Fall River reported 23 more confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on Friday. According to Mayor Coogan's office, Fall River has seen 337 total positive cases. 149 cases have cleared isolation. Full details [here](#).

While case numbers released by the Massachusetts Department of Health suggest the Bay State isn't out of the woods in the COVID-19 pandemic, a local group is getting ready to show

their displeasure over how the virus has been handled.

Sarah Rebello, who co-hosts a conservative radio show in Fall River, has organized a rally to take place at Government Center to express what she feels is an unconstitutional lockdown. Full details **here**.

On April 24, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 4,946 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 50,969. This is an increase from Thursday's 3,079 reported cases. 196 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday, up from 178, bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 2,556. Full details **here**.