

Massachusetts man charged with felony after stating he has COVID-19 and will cough on police officers

"Reminder – you can be charged with a Felony if you tell a police officer that you have and/or are going to give an officer COVID-19.

On Saturday morning just after midnight, Springfield Police Officers responded to the 1000 block of Sumner Ave. for a disturbance inside a home.

Approximately 10 people were inside the kitchen and when officers arrived most began to leave in a cooperative manner.

That's when a man, later identified as Darius Figueroa, approached an officer shouting at him. Mr. Figueroa stated something to the effect of "I have corona, I'll cough on all of you, you all want corona." The officer then advised Mr. Figueroa that he made a felony threat and Mr. Figueroa responded by saying "I don't care, F*** you all."

When the officer told Mr. Figueroa to put his hands behind his back, he ran away and tried to hide in a bedroom and resisted arrest until he was taken into custody.

22-year-old Darius Figueroa was charged with a Felony threat and resisting arrest."-Springfield Police Department.



Springfield Police Department photo.

**Massachusetts reports 88 new
COVID-19 deaths on Monday,**

26,867 total cases

On April 13, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,392 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 26,867. This is a decrease from Sunday's 2,615 reported cases. 88 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 844.

As of 4 pm today, 122,049 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 5,319 in the past 24 hours compared to the previous day's total of 7,954.



New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 151 positive cases of COVID-19 Monday morning, up from the **136 cases they reported on Saturday** and up from 119 on Friday. New Bedford doesn't report totals on Sundays. Mayor Mitchell reported **New Bedford's third COVID-19 related death on Friday**.

Mayor Jon Mitchell and the New Bedford Board of Health have acted to protect workers and customers at essential businesses, announcing new requirements to ensure the use of masks by employees while interacting with the public. Full details **here**.

According to Mayor Coogan's Office, there are 146 confirmed cases in Fall River. Coogan confirmed that so far Fall River has not seen a death due to the virus. Full details **here**.

Thousands of state health care workers will be getting a raise after the union representing licensed nurses and caregivers working in Massachusetts state hospitals and group homes struck a deal Sunday night with the state to increase pay by as much as \$10 an hour for the duration of the COVID-19 health emergency. Full details **here**.

As of April 13, the total amount of cases in The United States is 572,587 with 23,078 total deaths.

Workers dealing with customers in New Bedford required to wear face coverings

New Bedford, Massachusetts – Mayor Jon Mitchell and the New Bedford Board of Health have acted to protect workers and customers at essential businesses, announcing new requirements to ensure the use of masks by employees while interacting with the public.

Under the City's order, all essential businesses operating under the state's current restrictions, such as food vendors and restaurants, must require employees who receive payment or serve customers to wear a surgical mask, or a cloth face covering that covers the nose and face, while performing their duties.

Employees who interact with the public in this way include cashiers, baggers, counter attendants, wait staff, drive-through servers, and deliverers. The mask or face covering must be worn when performing these duties interacting with the public unless the employees are separated from customers through a partition.

Employers and businesses will be required to supply masks or face coverings to their employees. As the order goes into effect, the City will work together with local businesses to

ensure they are able to comply with this order. The order goes into effect on April 14, and will be enforced beginning the weekend of April 18, 2020. Businesses violating the order after cooperation with the City will be subject to a \$100 fine per day per noncompliant employee.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that face coverings be worn in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as essential businesses including grocery stores and pharmacies. The City's order requires employees interacting with the public to observe this guidance; the Health Department also urges residents to heed the CDC's guidance on face coverings, available at the CDC website (www.cdc.gov), a link to which is available on the City's website.

Mayor Mitchell declared a state of emergency in New Bedford on March 13 due to the COVID-19 outbreak and has acted to enforce social distancing measures and protect residents. The City has since announced measures to safeguard public health, including the closure of personal care businesses, restricting public access to city buildings, modifications to city parks and facilities, and strong requirements to ensure the protection of residents of senior living facilities and nursing homes.

Acushnet Fire Chief shares photo to illustrate today's harsh, reality "COVID-19 is

real, it is here in our community.”

“Within the past few days, we transported to the hospital one of the 16 residents of Acushnet known to be infected with the Covid-19 virus. We followed all necessary protocols and all treatment and transport standards were met if not exceeded.

Two crew members made entry and I remained more than seven feet away, in full PPE, in the event a third Paramedic was needed. We followed the book to the letter. But the book didn't prepare us for the fear we saw in the patient's eyes.

“I spoke with the patient's spouse. I said that part of my job is to work towards getting our community to understand that the virus is here and that the crisis is real, not just something talked about at a televised briefing. They agreed. “People are not taking this seriously,” they said. “I don't understand it.”

I took this photo making sure that no identifying items were included. I showed it to the spouse and asked if I had their permission to display it because it is real. They agreed. “It will help people understand that the virus is here in town,” I told them. They nodded. “It is, it is,” they said.

“We are not the focus of this post, YOU are Acushnet! This is one of our neighbors. Honor them by following the social distance requirements, constantly washing your hands, limiting possible exposure and being smart during this unprecedented time.”

Kevin A. Gallagher, Fire Chief.”

New Bedford reports 151 total positive COVID-19 cases Monday, up 15 since Saturday

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 151 positive cases of COVID-19 Monday morning, up from the **136 cases they reported on Saturday** and up from 119 on Friday. New Bedford doesn't report totals on Sundays.

Mayor Mitchell reported **New Bedford's third COVID-19 related death on Friday.**

The City of Fall River reported an additional 25 confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Sunday. According to Mayor Coogan, there are 141 confirmed cases in Fall River. Full details **here.**

Mayor Jon Mitchell, Southcoast Health President and CEO Keith Hovan, and representatives of Essex Group Management Corporation today announced two Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Care Centers in New Bedford for those recovering from COVID-19. Full details with photos and video **here.**

On April 12, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 2,615 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 25,475. This is an increase from Saturday's 1,886 reported cases. 70 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 756. Full details **here.**

MCAS testing requirements for the school year are suspended, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will modify or waive graduation requirements for students set to complete high school this summer, and due dates for district improvement plans will be pushed back under a bill Gov. Charlie Baker signed into law Friday. Full details **here.**

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Senator Elizabeth Warren, Rep. Ro Khanna unveil essential workers Bill of Rights

Today, United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Representative Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) unveiled a proposal for an Essential Workers Bill of Rights to protect frontline workers during the coronavirus pandemic. The lawmakers also called for the next coronavirus relief package to pass Congress to include the policies in the Essential Workers Bill of Rights.

Essential workers are on the frontlines of this pandemic, and many are working in high-risk conditions without appropriate equipment, safety standards, or job protections. They include doctors, nurses, home care workers and other healthcare workers, grocery store and drug store employees, domestic workers, food service workers, federal, state, and municipal employees, janitorial staff, farm workers, delivery drivers, warehouse workers, transportation workers, and child care workers. Reports indicate that these workers may be contracting COVID-19 at a higher rate than the general public.

“Essential workers are the backbone of our nation’s response

to coronavirus,” said Senator Warren. “We have a responsibility to make sure essential workers have the protections they need, the rights they are entitled to, and the compensation they deserve. The next relief package must put all workers front and center – but it must also specifically include the policies in our Essential Workers Bill of Rights.”

“Nearly 60 million Americans are still working to keep our internet running, to deliver our groceries, to make sure we have electricity, and to care for the sick. In an age of automation, we are reminded of the dignity and importance of work that is not remote,” said Representative Khanna. “This crisis needs to open our eyes to the value of workers who are often invisible, and we need to give them the pay and benefits they deserve.”

An Essential Workers Bill of Rights must include:

1. Health and safety protections. Every employee, including employees of contractors and subcontractors, should be able to do their job safely, which means having necessary amounts of personal protective equipment provided by employers at no cost to the employee. Employers should be required to take proactive actions when someone at the job site may have contracted coronavirus, including informing employees if they may have been exposed and evacuating the job site until it can be properly cleaned. And the Occupational Safety and Health Administration should be required to immediately issue a robust Emergency Temporary Standard to keep employees safe.

2. Robust premium compensation. Every worker should be paid a livable wage, and essential employees are no exception. During this pandemic, essential workers should also be paid robust premium pay to recognize the critical contribution they are making to our health and our economy. Premium pay should provide meaningful compensation for essential work, be higher for the lowest-wage workers, and not count towards workers’

eligibility for any means-tested programs. It must be retroactive to the start date of the pandemic, and not used to lower the regular rate of pay for any employee.

3. Protections for collective bargaining agreements.

Collective bargaining agreements must be protected from being changed or dissolved by employers during this crisis, including during bankruptcy proceedings. Workers' rights to vote for representation in a National Labor Relations Board election in a fair and safe manner must also be protected during the pandemic.

4. Truly universal paid sick leave and family and medical leave.

Congress must pass Senator Patty Murray's PAID Leave Act, which provides 14 days of paid sick leave and 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, so essential workers can care for themselves, family members, or dependents, without being required to submit unnecessary paperwork. And we must ensure that President Trump is not allowed to arbitrarily exclude workers to roll back these protections.

5. Protections for whistleblowers. Workers who witness unsafe conditions on the job or know about workplace coronavirus exposure must be able to openly identify their concerns and have them addressed, without fear of retaliation.

6. An end to worker misclassification. The pandemic has highlighted the longstanding problem of employers misclassifying workers as independent contractors in order to avoid providing the full suite of benefits and protections available to employees. At a time when too many essential workers are being denied basic employment protections, Congress should crack down on worker misclassification.

7. Health care security. All essential workers should get the care they need during this crisis, including those who are uninsured or under-insured, regardless of their immigration status. We must use public programs to provide no-cost health

care coverage for all, as quickly as possible. Congress should also listen to workers who have called for a full federal subsidy for fifteen months of COBRA for employees who lose eligibility for health care coverage.

8. Support for child care. At a time when child care providers across the country are closing their doors and struggling to survive the pandemic, Congress must commit robust funding to help these providers and ensure essential workers have access to reliable, safe, healthy, and high-quality child care.

9. Treat workers as experts. Any time a public health crisis hits, the government should work with employers and workers to craft a response and set safety and compensation standards. Essential workers, and their unions and organizations, must be at the table in developing responses to coronavirus – from determining specific workplace safety protocols to helping develop plans for distributing PPE to holding seats on the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

10. Hold corporations accountable for meeting their responsibilities. Congress should ensure that any taxpayer dollars handed to corporations go to help workers, not wealthy CEOs, rich shareholders, or the President's cronies. That means taxpayers and workers should have a stake in how funds are used and companies should be required to use funding for payroll retention, put workers on boards of directors, and remain neutral in union organizing drives. CEOs should be required to personally certify they are in compliance with worker protections, so they can face civil and criminal penalties if they break their word. And any federal funding should be designed to ensure that employers cannot skirt the rules by firing or furloughing workers or reducing their hours or benefits in order to access a tax credit or avoid a worker protection requirement.

Hazard pay coming to many Massachusetts health care workers

By Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Thousands of state health care workers will be getting a raise after the union representing licensed nurses and caregivers working in Massachusetts state hospitals and group homes struck a deal Sunday night with the state to increase pay by as much as \$10 an hour for the duration of the COVID-19 health emergency.

The hazard pay for health care workers will kick in immediately, according to the union, and will last at least through May 30, and possibly longer.

About 6,500 front-line health workers whose jobs put them at an increased risk of contracting the coronavirus stand to benefit.

"We're pleased to deliver this hard-earned pay increase for our members," American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 93 Executive Director Mark Bernard said. "The agreement we signed with the state calls these increases 'pay incentives,' but we view them primarily as well-deserved recognition for the courage and dedication AFSCME human services professionals are exhibiting on the job every single day and night."

The agreement calls for workers holding a license related to their occupation, such as a licensed practical nurse, to

receive a \$10 increase in their hourly wage, while all other workers will receive a \$5 per hour pay bump, union officials told the News Service.

The raises will remain in effect until the Executive Office of Health and Human Services determines that the threat from the COVID-19 pandemic has "abated," according to the union, but that shall not be before May 30.

The state also agreed to pay a one-time \$500 bonus to eligible workers who have not missed a shift or a regular work day since Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency related to COV ID-19 on March 10.

The hazard pay benefits are expected to flow to those working in state general health and mental health hospitals, developmental disability group homes and facilities, and to those working with youth in the custody of the Department of Youth Services, among others.

"Our members know that they are needed now, perhaps more than ever," Bernard said. "And, they have really stepped up during the crisis. They have been wherever they are needed, whenever they are needed. We are grateful to the Baker Administration for acknowledging their contributions."

Massachusetts is not the first state to agree to hazard pay for public employees on the front-lines of fighting the pandemic, or whose jobs put them at a greater risk of becoming infected with the disease.

Earlier this month, AFSCME Council 93 struck a deal with Maine Gov. Janet Mills for some its health care and corrections workers to receive raises between \$3 to \$5 an hour, depending on their responsibilities.

The AFSCME Council 93 represents about 45,000 public employees in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Bernard said the agreement reached Sunday night with the Baker administration was a “good start,” but said it wouldn’t stop him from continuing to push for the temporary pay increases to be extended to more workers, and to have them paid retroactively to the start of the state of emergency in early March.

Massachusetts reports 70 new COVID-19 deaths on Sunday, 25,475 total cases

On April 12, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 2,615 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 25,475. This is an increase from Saturday’s 1,886 reported cases. 70 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 756.

As of 4 pm today, 116,730 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 7,954 in the past 24 hours compared to the previous day’s total of 6,404.



New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell’s office reported 136 positive cases of COVID-19 Saturday morning, up from the **119 cases they reported on Friday** and up from 102 on Thursday. Mayor Mitchell reported **New Bedford’s third COVID-19 related death on Friday**. New Bedford does not report additional cases on Sunday.

The City of Fall River has seen an additional 25 confirmed cases of COVID-19. An increase from yesterday’s total.

According to Mayor Coogan, there are 141 confirmed cases in Fall River. Full details [here](#).

Gov. Charlie Baker hopes lawmakers can resolve differences and send him a viable bill pausing all eviction and foreclosure proceedings statewide by next week, he said Saturday while touting aid that will flow to undocumented immigrants who are ineligible for unemployment benefits. Full details [here](#).

As of April 12, the total amount of cases in The United States is 542,023 with 21,489 total deaths.

Massachusetts State Police want to clear up misunderstanding about wearing face masks

“Michael and Matthew of Oxford went outside to say hello to Trooper Joel Daoust. Under normal circumstances, Trooper Daoust will sometimes stop and talk to the boys while they are outside playing, and he is patrolling.

Today, while going by, Matthew was worried they’d get arrested if they didn’t have masks on. Obviously they won’t be, but it’s a great idea to keep everyone safe.

Stay safe and healthy!

#PracticeSocialDistancing”

Kennedy: Allow people to vote by mail in 2020

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Noting that the Legislature has expressed interest in addressing ballot access for candidates, U.S. Rep. Joseph Kennedy III urged state lawmakers not to forget voters in the process and approve a vote-by-mail program for 2020. Kennedy is running in the Democratic primary against incumbent U.S. Sen. Edward Markey. He wrote a letter Saturday that was sent to all state representatives and senators.

“Every single registered voter in our Commonwealth should be mailed a ballot, guaranteeing that no one has to risk exposure to a deadly virus to exercise their right to vote,” Kennedy wrote. Colorado, Utah, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii already use vote-by-mail, and Kennedy said that New York, New Hampshire, and Maryland have taken steps to make voting easier during the pandemic.

The Senate on Monday plans to vote on a bill that would cut by half the number of signatures candidates for federal, county and Governor’s Council seats would have to collect to qualify for the ballot. Kennedy said that with the end of the pandemic uncertain and the possibility of a fall resurgence projected by some experts, passing a vote-by-mail law immediately will also assure that voters can participate in the process.

“In the age of coronavirus, no one should be forced to choose between their health and their right to vote,” he wrote.

President Donald Trump has raised concerns about fraud when

discussing the possibility of a national vote-by-mail program.

Do you favor voting by mail? Comment below!