

# **New Bedford to receive \$2.4 million in COVID Recovery Grants**

The following was posted by Massachusetts Representative (New Bedford) Antonio F. D. Cabral:

“The City of New Bedford is slated to receive \$1,624,151 in funding through the CDB20-COVID Recovery Grant Fund and \$805,424 in funding through the ESG20-COVID Recovery Grant, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

These Community Development Block Grants and Emergency Shelter Grants will allow the City of New Bedford to better address homelessness and support transitional housing, and to obtain housing assistance for low-income individuals.

I am grateful for HUD’s quick action in disseminating these grant funds to high-need cities throughout the country, and for our Massachusetts congressional delegation’s persistence. New Bedford needs this emergency investment funding.”

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## **Boston Mayor Walsh: Everyone Wear a Mask When Leaving Home**

People across Massachusetts started wearing masks in public in noticeable numbers Saturday, adjusting to the latest aspect of the new COVID-19 normal a day after new federal guidance

recommended “simple cloth face coverings” in public settings.

The Centers for Disease Control said cloth face coverings could ‘slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.” The government said coverings could be made from household items at home, and was a voluntary measure.

At a press conference with first responders Sunday in Foxborough, Gov. Charlie Baker at one point waved his own hands to emphasize that hands “are in many respects one of the primary carriers of this thing” and people need to be vigilant about hand-washing, using sanitizer, and wiping down doorknobs and surfaces.

“One of the things they have said about masks is it keeps your hands away from your mouth, which is also a good thing,” Baker said.

The governor explained his understanding about the guidance, saying the “primary purpose” of it is to have people wear masks when in places where social distancing is difficult to ensure they don’t infect someone else.

“We’re going to do everything we can to make sure we continue to engage in the social distancing,” Baker said, flanked by a backdrop of mostly law enforcement officials who were not wearing masks.

In its new guidance, the CDC said, “We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (‘asymptomatic’) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (‘pre-symptomatic’) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity – for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing – even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.”

Baker called the Centers for Disease Control guidance

“perfectly appropriate.”

A few hours later at Boston City Hall, Mayor Martin Walsh held a coronavirus update, standing at a podium with a backdrop of people wearing masks, and talking about his plans to wear one made by a city councilor.

Walsh said 15 people have died in Boston from COVID-19 and confirmed cases rose 27 percent over 48 hours.

“That’s what a surge looks like and we are still at the beginning of the surge,” the mayor said.

Walsh’s messaging on masks differed from Baker’s.

“I’m asking everyone and anyone to wear a mask covering their face when you leave your house,” Walsh said. “That means shopping, going for a walk. That means working on a construction site or at work. Any essential workers, we’re asking you to do the same. Anything outside your home.”

Scarfs, bandanas or any type of cloth may be used for a mask, Walsh said, and people should make sure they are able to breath comfortably while wearing masks. The city is providing masks to its employees who must work outside their homes, he said, and helping others to acquire masks.

“We can all help slow the spread by covering our faces,” he said. “It’s important to understand that covering does not protect you from infection. Physical distancing is still one hundred percent necessary. You need to keep at least six feet away from other people even when you are wearing a face covering, but face coverings will help slow the spread of the virus. That’s because up to about 25 percent of the people who are infected are not showing symptoms right now. Many are still out and about because they don’t feel sick.”

The mayor said he would be wearing a face covering made by City Councilor Annissa Essaibi George, who is part of the

Boston Area Mask Initiative. His press office released a photo of the mayor wearing a mask.

The initiative indicated on its website Monday that more than 110 organizations have requested masks, with more than 15,000 masks sought and more than 5,400 masks sewn and distributed so far.

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## **New Bedford at 65 positive cases for COVID-19 on Monday, up from 54 on Saturday**

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported Monday morning that New Bedford has a total of 65 positive cases of COVID-19, up from the **54 cases they reported on Saturday** and up from 49 on Friday. The City did not report data on Sunday.

The City of New Bedford Board of Health Friday afternoon issued a cease and desist order to the Walgreens store located at 1103 Kempton Street. Earlier this week and month, Walgreens confirmed that three of their employees tested positive for COVID-19. Full details **here**.

You can see our interview with Mayor Mitchell on Friday:

On April 5, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 764 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 12,500. 764 is a significant drop from **yesterday when 1,334 new cases were reported**. 15 new deaths were reported bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 231.

As of 4 pm Sunday, 71,937 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 3,137 in the past 24 hours. The testing is down from 5,838 on Saturday. Full details and breakout by county **here**.

According to Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan, **Fall River now has 62 confirmed cases of COVID-19** as of Sunday.

Bristol County is now up to 659 confirmed cases as of 4 pm on Sunday, up from 517 on Saturday.

Last week, Governor Baker detailed the latest model projections that estimate the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts could range from 47,000 to 172,000 (or 0.7% to 2.5% of the total population of Massachusetts). The models show hospitalizations would potentially peak between April 10-20. Full details **here**.

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## **Boston Mayor: Nearly half of our positive COVID-19 tests are people under 40**

As of April 5, there are 1,877 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Boston residents, representing an increase of 259 cases from the previous day. Public health modeling indicates that Boston is only 11 days away from peak demand for hospital resources, an estimate that emphasizes the critical need to flatten the curve immediately.



“I cannot stress enough that the actions we take now through

the next several weeks will help curb the spread of this virus, and save lives,” said Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. “There is nothing that I won’t do as Mayor of the City of Boston to protect our residents, and at this very critical time, we must do everything we can as Bostonians to protect one another. This is bigger than any one person – this is about the greater good of our people. Stay safe, stay inside, and let’s get through this together.”

To date, nearly 45 percent of positive tests in Boston are in people under the age of 40 and more cases of severe illness are now being seen in young people. Further, nearly 80 percent of positive tests are in people under the age of 60. The CDC estimates that nationally 25 percent of people infected with COVID-19 are asymptomatic, and may not know they are a carrier of the virus, or that they could be infecting others. As of April 5, 15 residents of Boston have died from COVID-19.

Social and physical distancing remain the primary strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The new measures that Mayor Walsh is putting into place strengthen the guidance previously issued around social and physical distancing, which include staying home as much as possible and maintaining a distance of 6 feet or more from others. These new measures will be effective on Monday, April 6 through Monday, May 4, 2020, and include:

Encouraging everyone to wear a face-covering over their mouth and nose when in public:

- In addition to social distancing when going out in public for an essential trip, wearing face covers will help to reduce the risk of a person spreading the virus, especially if they do not know they are sick. Face coverings should be worn anytime someone is outside the home, including on walks or other passive recreational activities.

Face coverings should not be placed on children under 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious,

incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.

- Face coverings can include a cloth, scarf, bandana, etc. that cover a person's mouth and nose. Homemade face coverings should be made of intact, close-weave cloth and allow comfortable breathing. Visit CDC guidelines on face coverings for more information and guidance.
- Face coverings should be frequently washed using a washing machine with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. They can also be hand washed with soap and warm water and left to dry.
- It is advised that residents use a face covering, as opposed to a medical grade facemasks, in order to preserve protective equipment for health workers and those serving on the front lines in response to COVID-19.

The Boston Public Health Commission is issuing a Public Health Advisory for everyone in Boston except essential workers to stay at home from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily:

- This advisory will address unnecessary trips to businesses, restaurants, and other locations, and is intended to encourage people to stay inside their homes at night.
- Residents are encouraged to utilize delivery services as much as possible after 9 p.m.
- As a reminder, residents are encouraged to remain in their homes as much as possible throughout the day and only leave for essential needs, including trips to the grocery store, pharmacy, emergency meal sites and other essential services. Residents are discouraged from visiting essential businesses only to browse and should be mindful of only visiting essential businesses to pick-up essential items.

Closing City parks with recreational sports areas:

- Recreational sports areas in City parks, such as courts and fields, will be closed to limit exposure and contact between people. As a reminder, all playgrounds in Boston have been

closed since March 20, 2020 and will remain closed. Areas for passive recreation, like walking and jogging, will remain open.

- Additional signage will be posted on all recreational sports areas and outside of parks that will be closed. For a full list of park features that are closed, please visit the Parks updates webpage.
- If needed, Boston Police are empowered to disperse gatherings and they can order people to vacate closed sections of parks.

Recommendations for people who are at higher risk:

- For people over 65 and those with underlying health conditions, the City of Boston encourages taking extra precautions. Trips outside the house should only be made when absolutely necessary, for either food or medications. Those experiencing difficulty with access to food, please call 311 or visit our food resources page for assistance.
  - In addition, taking walks or spending time outside is discouraged for the next few weeks, and exercising inside the home instead is encouraged as an alternative.
  - The underlying health conditions that can put someone more at risk are very common and include asthma, diabetes, heart conditions, kidney or liver disease or conditions that can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment and smoking.
  - In Boston, over 11 percent of adults have asthma, and the rate is higher in black (15 percent) and Latino (12 percent) residents, as well as in Dorchester and Roxbury (15 percent each). One in four Boston public high school students have asthma, according to the Boston Public Health Commission.
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# 764 new positive cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, down from 1,334 on Saturday

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As of 4 pm today, 71,937 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 3,137 in the past 24 hours. The testing is down from 5,838 on Saturday.



New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported Saturday afternoon that **New Bedford has a total of 54 positive cases of COVID-19**, up from the **49 cases they reported on Friday** and up from 42 on Thursday.

The City of New Bedford Board of Health Friday afternoon issued a cease and desist order to the Walgreens store located at 1103 Kempton Street. Earlier this week and month, Walgreens confirmed that three of their employees tested positive for COVID-19. Full details **here**. You can see our interview with Mayor Mitchell on Friday:

At 4:30 pm today, Fall River reported 62 cases of COVID-19. Full details **here**.

Earlier this week, Governor Baker detailed the latest model projections that estimate the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts could range from 47,000 to 172,000 (or 0.7% to 2.5% of the total population of Massachusetts).

The models show hospitalizations would potentially peak between April 10-20. Full details [here](#).

As of April 5, the total amount of cases in The United States is 325,185 with 9,267 total deaths.

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## Morton Hospital in Taunton Converting to COVID-19 Center

By Michael P. Norton  
State House News Service

The Massachusetts health care landscape is shifting again in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Steward Health Care on Saturday began transforming Morton Hospital in Taunton into a dedicated care center for patients who test positive for the virus. The company on March 17 made a similar move at its Carney Hospital in Dorchester.

Steward, a for-profit health care company unlike the many non-profit hospitals in the state, also suspended inpatient intensive care admissions at Nashoba Valley Medical Center in Ayer, saying the change will increase its overall ICU availability by redeploying staff and equipment to communities with increasing needs.

Another significant change: Steward is consolidating inpatient intensive care admissions at Holy Family Hospital by drawing resources from its Haverhill campus to the Methuen campus ICU unit over the next few days.

Steward says the size of the Holy Campus campus makes is

possible to create an isolated unit in Methuen to care for COVID-19 patients.

Gov. Charlie Baker declared a coronavirus state of emergency on March 10, when the state had 92 confirmed cases. On Saturday, state public health officials reported 11,736 cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, 216 deaths attributed to the virus, positive cases at 96 long-term care facilities, and hospitalizations of 1,068 COVID-19 patients. The state is operating under a stay-at-home advisory ahead of a surge in cases that's expected to arrive as soon as Friday.

Dr. Joseph Weinstein, chief medical officer for Steward Health Care, said traditional models of care are ineffective at addressing the surge in virus cases, citing "lessons from Italy and China."

"Significantly lower infection and mortality rates were achieved in places like Germany and South Korea, where hospitals clustered COVID-19 patients in isolated locations, thus lessening the chance of infection for other patients and staff," he said.

The changes associated with the "proven isolation strategy," according to Steward, include better care and recovery chances for COVID-19 patients, reduced mortality rates, and better capacity for other Steward hospitals to care for patients undergoing treatments for health conditions unrelated to the virus.

Steward Health Care operates 35 hospitals in nine states and serves more than six million patients annually.

Nurses from Steward hospitals in Arizona and Utah began arriving in Massachusetts this week to assist with care, and more than 100 nurses from other Steward hospitals in Massachusetts have volunteered to be temporarily reassigned to hospitals with greater needs.

Steward also reported Sunday that it launched a program “months ago” to acquire and stockpile specialty ventilators and personal protective equipment to treat COVID-19 patients as part of preparations for the arrival of the virus. Once the coming surge declines, the company plans to move unused equipment to its other hospitals as those facilities deal with an influx of patients.

The claims about preparedness conflict with assertions from the Massachusetts Nurses Association, which represents more than 2,750 nurses and health care workers in eight Steward-owned hospitals in Massachusetts. On Friday, the nurses union alleged that Steward is inconsistently providing protective equipment like N95 masks and gowns and that nurses “are forced to reuse soiled masks for days.”

“If the stockpile exists, there is a disconnect because the supplies are not generally accessible to staff when needed,” the union said.

In a statement released by the nurses association on Friday, Carney Hospital nurse Peg Conlon said, “Yesterday there were not enough N95 masks available in the ICU, in the special COVID-19 units or anywhere in the hospital. What we do see is a dangerous rationing of PPE at Carney, which is a guarantee for more spread, and of a loss of staff as more of us become sick.”

Inadequate access to personal protective equipment has been a worldwide problem, putting health care workers at risk and aiding in the spread of the virus.

Baker on Sunday plans to visit a drive-through COVID-19 testing site in Foxborough at 12:30 p.m. Boston Mayor Martin Walsh plans a 3 p.m. virus update. At 4 p.m., U.S. Sen. Edward Markey holds a livestream discussion with Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO.

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# To Wear or Not to Wear a Mask

By Michael Rocha, MD

New Bedford, Massachusetts – In a well-meaning effort to fight COVID-19, there is a lot of information and even more opinion circulating about the use and effectiveness of various masks. The controversies can be confusing. Guidelines have wavered and different countries have adopted a spectrum of approaches.

As a part of their national strategies, some countries have encouraged widespread use of masks, both in healthcare and for the public. Notably, there was widespread mask usage by the US public during the 1918 flu pandemic. On April 3, 2020, the CDC made the recommendation to wear “cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.” (CDC.gov)

There are two types of masks commonly used by healthcare professionals: N-95 masks and surgical masks. The indication for when each is used often depends on whether the virus may be in aerosolized form or droplet form. An aerosolized virus is suspended in the air like a gas or fog and may be present for three hours in some settings. This is often much more transmissible and is the greater threat to healthcare professionals. A droplet virus particle is a relatively heavy particle that falls to the ground or any surface by gravity, usually within 6 feet.

N-95 masks are among a class of masks that are named based upon how many particles are filtered. A N-95 mask can filter 95% of particles in the air and must be professionally fit-

tested to ensure a complete, proper seal. They are widely used for diseases such as tuberculosis. Currently, they are being used in situations when there is extremely close contact such as when a breathing tube is placed.

N-95 masks were made to be used once and discarded. In the current pandemic, healthcare workers are often given a single N-95 mask to last a day or more and may be reused. It's unclear if the masks retain their effectiveness after a few hours. Production of N-95 masks is being increased but is limited by lack of materials. There are not nearly enough N-95 masks currently available to keep every healthcare professional adequately protected. EVERY available N-95 mask should be in the hands of healthcare professionals.

Surgical masks are made of moisture-resistant inner- and outer layers with an inner filter. They are used in hospital situations where the risk of aerosolized virus particles is low. Surgical masks are not airtight but when worn correctly, provide protection. They are currently being used by hospital personnel in situations where aerosolized virus is not a concern. Supply is not unlimited and this is playing a role in the conflicting recommendations by various health and governing bodies. Like N95 masks, surgical masks should be saved for use by healthcare workers.

There is another type of mask that you likely see frequently: cloth masks. These masks are not hospital-grade but are being used by healthcare professionals when N-95 and surgical masks are not available. Some healthcare professionals are using cloth masks over N-95 masks to extend their potential life-span. These are the masks that are now recommended for the general public to use.

There are limitations to use of cloth masks but they may have a critical role in slowing the spread of COVID-19. A cloth mask itself will not prevent the person wearing it from contracting COVID-19. Its ability to filter air particles is

at best 50% and unlike N-95 masks, it does not have a tight seal around the mouth and nose. If it is not taken off properly, there is a risk of contaminating oneself and any surface it touches.

One purpose of a cloth mask is to prevent the person wearing it from spreading COVID-19. The cloth mask prevents secretions from spreading by essentially collecting them on the fabric. They may also help remind people to avoid touching their face. If every person wore one when in public, it could help prevent asymptomatic people from spreading the virus.

In countries that encourage universal mask usage by the public, there appears to be a slower spread of the virus which is critical to preventing our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed. Wearing a mask reduces the transmission of the virus from one person to another. It's crucial though that people wearing a mask avoid a potential false sense of security. The role of a cloth mask is in conjunction with, not in place of, social distancing and good hand hygiene.

If you do wear a mask, please learn to use it properly to ensure safety and effectiveness. Before putting it on, wash your hands and make sure the mask is clean. Determine the orientation of the mask (which side is inside/outside and which edge is close to the nose). Marking this with a pen is a good idea if you plan on removing and reusing it through the day before washing it. If the mask gets moist or wet, it may not be as effective and it may breed germs.

If any obvious contaminants or droplets land on the mask, remove and do not reuse until it is washed. Avoid readjusting the mask after exposure, but if you must, use washed hands to do so and wash your hands after you adjust the mask. Do not readjust your mask with unwashed hands. Have a high index of suspicion that the straps or loops of the mask may be contaminated.

If you store an unwashed mask in a paper bag or container you can contaminate the inside of the mask if you orient it in alternating positions. Assume the outside of the mask is contaminated and treat surfaces that it may touch as contaminated. Wash the mask often and after every use, as regular laundry soap deactivates the virus. It's best to have at least two masks so that if one becomes moist or soiled, another is available while the first is washed. Know the limitations of the material of the DIY mask.

If you decide to use a mask, please save ALL N-95 and surgical masks for our healthcare professionals and first responders. They have the greatest exposure and it appears that healthcare professionals who contract COVID-19 may have a more severe case. We MUST protect our protectors.

The CDC has now recommended cloth masks for all when going out in public for essential needs. This will now be an important part of our efforts along with social distancing and hand washing to do our job and beat this virus.

#Masks4All #SaveN95SurgicalMasks4Healthcare

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### **Authors:**

- Michael, Rocha, MD, Cardiology, Hawthorn Medical Associates, LLC
- Bonnie Boerl, MD, Internal Medicine, Communication & Advocacy Consultant
- Mi Haisman, MD, Orthopedic Surgery, Hawthorn Medical Associates, LLC

### **Contributors:**

- Tanya Feke, MD, Family Medicine, Diagnosis Life, LLC

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- Mask Facts(2020) Website Maskfacts.org Facts about masks and best-practices for mask creation, design, and use.

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### **Media Articles from March-April 2020:**

- COVID-19: WHY WE SHOULD ALL WEAR MASKS – THERE IS NEW SCIENTIFIC RATIONALE Dr. Sui Huang in Medium.com on March 26, 2020

- Keeping the Coronavirus from Infecting Health-Care Workers What Singapore's and Hong Kong's success is teaching us about the pandemic. Atul Gawande, MD in New Yorker on March 21, 2020

- Not wearing masks to protect against coronavirus is a 'big mistake,' top Chinese scientist says. Jon Cohen in Science Magazine on March 27, 2020

- To fight the spread of coronavirus, it's time to wear masks in all hospitals. Harlan Krumholz, MD in Washington Post on March 31, 2020

- Wear a Mask. No, Don't Wear a Mask. Wait: Yes, Wear a Mask. Danielle Kosecki In Elemental by Medicium on March 31, 2020

- Why Telling People They Don't Need Masks Backfired. by Zeynep Tufekci in New York Times Opinion on March 17, 2020

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# **1,334 new positive cases of**

# COVID-19 in Massachusetts, 216 total deaths

On April 4, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,334 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 11,736. 24 new deaths were reported bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 216.

As of 4 pm today, 68,800 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 5,838 in the past 24 hours.



New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported Saturday afternoon that **New Bedford has a total of 54 positive cases of COVID-19**, up from the **49 cases they reported on Friday** and up from 42 on Thursday.

The City of New Bedford Board of Health Friday afternoon issued a cease and desist order to the Walgreens store located at 1103 Kempton Street. Earlier this week and month, Walgreens confirmed that three of their employees tested positive for COVID-19. Full details **here**. You can see our interview with Mayor Mitchell on Friday:

At 4:30 pm today, Fall River reported an additional 6 cases bringing the total in the city to 57. Full details **here**.

Earlier this week, Governor Baker detailed the latest model projections that estimate the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts could range from 47,000 to 172,000 (or 0.7% to 2.5% of the total population of Massachusetts). The models show hospitalizations would potentially peak between April 10-20. Full details **here**.

According to the CDC, as of April 4, the total amount of cases

in The United States is 301,902 with 8,175 total deaths.

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## **New Bedford at 54 positive cases for COVID-19 as of Saturday afternoon**

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You can see our interview with Mayor Mitchell on Friday:

On April 3, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,436 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 10,402. 38 new deaths were reported bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 192. Full details and breakout by county **here**.

According to Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan, **Fall River now has 51 confirmed cases of COVID-19** as of Friday. **The Fall River Fire Department has reported two positive COVID-19 cases with their fire fighters.**

Bristol County is now up to 517 confirmed cases as of 4 pm on Thursday, up from 424 on Thursday.

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# **Largest teachers union in Massachusetts wants MCAS canceled**

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

The state's largest teachers union wants the Senate go a step further than the House did on Thursday and mandate the cancellation of the MCAS standardized this year.

"Any remote learning that is happening should focus on creative efforts to help students stay connected to their educators and each other, as well as to deepen their understanding of material they have already learned – not prepping for a test," Massachusetts Teachers Association President Merrie Najimy said in a Friday statement.

The House on Thursday evening passed a bill that would allow Education Commission Jeff Riley to suspend testing requirements for 10th and 12th graders, but ensure that if a senior is required to pass the MCAS to graduate that they be given a time other than this spring to take the exam. The bill also mandates that testing requirements for third graders and

eighth graders be modified or waived.

Riley has not said what he intends to do, but said he would make a decision quickly after being given the authority. The MTA said it has "no information as to what a modified test would look like, what its purpose would be or who would have to take it." According to the union, New Hampshire and Maine have already waived their testing requirements.