

Mayor O'Connell: 21 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Taunton

Today, Mayor Shaunna O'Connell announced that, as of Thursday, March 26, there are 21 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Taunton.

"Taunton residents should not panic but should take very seriously all the directives and advisories that have been put in place to protect the public and stop the spread of COVID-19. Our priority is to keep the public informed and safe. Our Emergency Task Force Team meets via teleconference daily to continue our coordinated response to this public health emergency," said O'Connell.

Taunton Health Department officials were notified by DPH of the positive test results. The individuals are being contacted and informed of self-isolating requirements. State and Federal privacy laws prohibit any further information being disseminated.

"The Board of Health is working closely with the Mayor and key officials in the City on the COVID-19 response, but we need the public to do their part to help keep everyone safe. Please listen and adhere to the advisories regarding staying at home, unless you are going out for necessities. It is extremely important that if you are confirmed to have COVID-19 you adhere to the isolation requirements, and if you are a close contact of a confirmed case, you must adhere to the quarantine requirements. Everyone can do their part in terms of reducing the spread of COVID-19 within the City of Taunton," said Heather Gallant, BOH Director.

Updated information continues to be made available on the City of Taunton website, social media, local cable, and to local media. Due to the rapidly changing nature of circumstances, residents are encouraged to check frequently for updates.

“There is a lot of helpful information on our City website, so people should check it regularly. We also continue to give daily Video Updates and E-Alert updates,” O’Connell stated. “We need the public to strictly adhere to all directives and advisories.”

Directives in place in the city are as follows:

- The Governor has ordered schools to remain closed and re-open on May 4.
- Playgrounds and basketball courts are closed to the public. People should not engage in pick-up sports games that require close contact.
- Certain gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited. There are limitations and exceptions regarding the prohibition on gatherings of more than 10 people. The complete regulation regarding prohibited gatherings is available here: <https://www.mass.gov/.../march-23-assemblage-guidance/download>.
- City buildings, TMLP, and the library are closed to the public until April 7. Residents are encouraged to make payments online and conduct other business online as permitted. The secure drop-box outside of City Hall may be used to drop off bill payments and other documents. Do not drop off cash. If you require assistance from a city department, call 508.821.1000.
- All non-essential physical workplaces and facilities (“brick and mortar premises”) are ordered to remain closed to workers, customers and the public from 12:00 noon on March 24, 2020, at least through 12:00 noon on April 7, 2020. Essential services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, hospitals, healthcare facilities, gas stations, public transit, restaurants that offer takeout and delivery, police departments, and other essential operations will remain open while the advisory is in effect.
- Individuals are strongly advised to stay home and only go out for necessities.

“Refried Fabrics” donates mask covers to New Bedford Police and Fire Departments, EMS

“The New Bedford Fire & Police Departments along with New Bedford EMS would like to extend a sincere thank you to Mark & Lisa Litos of Refried Fabrics on Belleville Avenue for their generous donation of 500 N95 mask covers.

These mask covers will prolong the life of our N95 masks while we await the delivery of additional masks. Their donation will allow every Fire, Police, & EMS first responder to be issued a mask cover.”

10 more COVID-19 deaths reported in Massachusetts, total at 25 with 23,500 individuals tested

State health officials today announced 10 additional deaths from COVID-19, the largest number of deaths in Massachusetts reported in a single day, as the number of tests grew by 3,827 people since yesterday.

These 10 people are:

- Male, 50s, Essex County, preexisting conditions, hospitalized
- Male, 80s, Essex County, preexisting conditions, hospitalized
- Male, 80s, Middlesex County, unknown preexisting conditions, hospitalized
- Male, 70s, Middlesex County, preexisting condition, hospitalization status under investigation
- Male, 80s, Hampden County, unknown preexisting conditions, hospitalization status under investigation
- Male, 90s, Suffolk County, preexisting conditions, hospitalized
- Male, 80s, Worcester County, preexisting conditions, hospitalized
- Female, 70s, Norfolk County, preexisting conditions, hospitalization status under investigation
- Male, 80s, Franklin County, unknown preexisting conditions, hospitalization status under investigation
- Female, 80s, Middlesex County, preexisting conditions, hospitalized

These deaths bring to 25 the total number of deaths from the novel coronavirus in Massachusetts.



As of 4 p.m. today, Massachusetts has 579 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 for a total of 2,417 cases. A total of 23,621 Massachusetts residents have been tested for COVID-19 by the State Public Health Laboratory, commercial and clinical labs, a jump of more than 3,827 since yesterday. The DPH daily online dashboard reflects testing results for 20 clinical and commercial labs performing testing in Massachusetts in addition to results from the State Public Health Laboratory.

Expanded testing capacity in Massachusetts continues to be a focus of the work of the COVID-19 Response Command Center, and

the effort to increase testing capacity across the state will continue.

The 25 people who have died ranged in age from 50s to 90s. They include residents from Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Worcester, Hampden, Berkshire, Essex, Barnstable, and Franklin counties.

COVID-19 activity is increasing in Massachusetts. At this time, if people are only mildly symptomatic, they should speak to their healthcare provider about whether they need to be assessed in person. If not, they should stay at home while they are sick. Asymptomatic family members should practice social distancing and immediately self-isolate if they develop symptoms.

In the United States, there have been more than 68,440 cases of COVID-19 and more than 994 deaths, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Massachusetts and nationwide, the public is being asked to avoid crowds, stay 6 feet away from others, not shake hands or hug, and call/Facetime and online chat with friends and loved ones rather than meet face to face.

To keep updated regarding COVID-19 in Massachusetts, residents can text "COVIDMA" to 888-777 to receive COVID-19 text message alerts straight to their phone. More information about COVID-19 can be found at www.mass.gov/covid19. For general questions, a 24/7 hotline is available by calling 2-1-1.

The Pasta House and Cask &

Pig Announce Temporary Closure Until April 7th.

Earlier today The Pasta House, located in Fairhaven and Cask & Pig, in Dartmouth posted the following message on their social media:

I want to start by thanking the community for all the support over the past 9 days as we transformed our restaurant into a take-out only operation. We had to lay-off half our staff and the other half worked very hard with the huge demand in take-out orders. We stayed open during this pandemic for one reason, to serve our community! And too also give away some toilet paper, ?. But after much thought and deliberation we've decided it's time to get our staff home and safe so we can continue to stay healthy during this crucial time.

The first discovered case of Covid-19 in Bristol county was this past weekend so we need to all be very careful in preventing the spread of this virus. Our county was one of the last in the state to be affected but now it's our job to stop the spread! I hope everyone is taking this as serious as we are and please stay safe!

Our plan is to re-open on April 7th for full service. If Governor Baker extends the restaurant closure mandate we still plan on opening for take-out only.

Thank you,
Cask & Pig Management

Thank you,
Pasta House Management

We can't wait for them to reopen as well! Stay safe and thank you for serving the community during this difficult time.

Jobless Claims Skyrocket nearly twentyfold in Massachusetts

By Chris Lisinski and Michael P. Norton
State House News Service

Unemployment claims skyrocketed in Massachusetts last week as the federal Department of Labor reported never-before-seen levels of need nationwide during the coronavirus crisis.

The federal agency's report listed 7,449 non-seasonally adjusted advance claims in Massachusetts during the week ending March 14 and 147,995 during the week ending March 21, a nearly twentyfold increase.

A similar trend carried nationwide: seasonally adjusted initial claims jumped 3 million week over week to about 3.28 million total, smashing previous records with swaths of the country out of work due to the pandemic.

"This marks the highest level of seasonally adjusted initial claims in the history of the seasonally adjusted series," the Department of Labor wrote in its report. "The previous high was 695,000 in October of 1982."

The claims surge reflect the sudden impact of the virus in the United States and the widespread efforts to shutter businesses in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent more infections and deaths. In previous downturns and recessions, initial claims have increased more gradually, rather than all at once.

Baker administration labor officials on Thursday morning did not respond to a request for comment on the new numbers and how the state's system has been functioning in the face of the claims crush.

Gov. Charlie Baker signed a bill last week expediting access to state unemployment benefits for employees who lose access to work because of COVID-19. Those who submit successful applications will no longer face a one-week waiting period and should be able to receive aid within seven to 10 days.

Between 500 and 800 state employees are deployed to facilitate the unemployment claim process, Baker said Wednesday, and he praised the system as "working far better given the amount of volume it's dealing with than I think anybody would have expected."

"As I've said before, if we didn't have the platform that we have now, the system would have crashed a long time ago," Baker said.

In a report last week, Goldman Sachs estimated the national unemployment rate could rise from 3.5 percent to 9 percent due to the outbreak, with the impact particularly sharp on low-wage jobs vulnerable to economic downturn.

Some industries – hotels, airlines, and restaurants, for example – have been vocal about how the coronavirus and the shutdowns it caused have affected their businesses.

The Massachusetts Lodging Association estimated last week that 17,847 direct hotel-related jobs and another 66,799 jobs that support hotels have been cut in the Bay State already, with occupancy rates at many hotels hovering in the single digits.

Elizabeth Warren: “This is Not the Bill I Wanted”

Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

The largest stimulus package in modern American history cleared the Senate late Wednesday night by a unanimous margin, and the proposal to spend roughly \$2 trillion in response to the coronavirus pandemic is now in the hands of the U.S House.

Shortly after 11 p.m., the **Senate voted 96-0** on its version of a bill (HR 748) that would establish direct payments to many Americans, expand and fund unemployment benefits, fund corporate and small business relief, boost health care spending, and offer state and municipal governments budgetary support. Senate Democrats had objected to earlier versions of the legislation and demanded greater oversight mechanisms and family-focused aid before party leaders reached a deal with the White House. Estimates on the exact impacts are unavailable.

Gov. Charlie Baker said Wednesday he is still working through the bill, and estimates and breakdowns were not available from the offices of Sens. Elizabeth Warren nor Ed Markey.

In tweets, Warren said a \$450 billion corporate relief fund has some oversight and restriction but not enough. “This is not the bill I wanted, but its immediate impacts are vital,” Warren tweeted. “They are also insufficient. We will need to do more – and soon.”

But the price of action during a health crisis shouldn't be a \$450 billion Trump Administration fund that could be used to boost favored corporations. I fought for more oversight & restrictions on this fund. We got some limits, but they are short of what's needed.

New Bedford mom of 4 comes up with inspiring activity for her kids during COVID-19 “stay-at-home” advisory

“I have four kids: Yoseliel who is 9 years old and has ADHD, a lot of anxiety and was actually seeing an in-school therapist. Keliezer is 6-years old;, Ashlyani is 3-years old, and my babygirl Zeilyani who is 10 months old.

With all this going on, CORONAVIRUS, school been close, STAYING HOME, I decided to do something fun to brighten their day. Especially my 9-year old who does understand a lot, who has asked me in tears “Am I going to see my friends again?”

I read this for them before we started making our rainbow ♥?

‘Rainbows appear after mighty storms, when things look their very worst, just when the skies are their darkest grey, look for the rainbow first. The rainbow is a sign of God’s promise, that he will guide us through any storm.’” -Ashley Gomez.

Mayor Mitchell reports third coronavirus case in New Bedford

While live on New Bedford Guide's Facebook page, Mayor Jon Mitchell reported the third case of COVID-19 or coronavirus in New Bedford.

Massachusetts has seen 679 new positive cases of coronavirus in the last 24 hours bringing the total to 1,838. 67 of those are in Bristol County. Massachusetts has now tested 19,794 people, a significant increase in the past few days.

15 people have now died from coronavirus in Massachusetts:
<https://www.newbedfordguide.com/four-more-covid-19-deaths-reported-in-massachusetts-15-total-19794-individuals-tested/2020/03/25>

Four more COVID-19 deaths reported in Massachusetts, 15 total – 19,794 individuals tested

Massachusetts health officials today announced four additional deaths from COVID-19. These include:

- A male, 80s, from Norfolk County with pre-existing conditions

- A male, 80s, from Barnstable County with pre-existing conditions
- A male, 70s, from Worcester County with unknown pre-existing conditions
- A woman, 70s, from Worcester County with pre-existing conditions

All four had been hospitalized. These deaths bring to 15 the total number of deaths from the novel coronavirus in Massachusetts.

As of 4 p.m. today, Massachusetts has 679 new cases of COVID-19 for a total of 1,838 cases. A total of 19,794 Massachusetts residents have been tested for COVID-19 by the State Public Health Laboratory and commercial and clinical labs. The DPH daily online dashboard reflects testing results for all of the clinical and commercial labs performing testing in Massachusetts in addition to results from the State Public Health Laboratory.

In addition to the State Public Health Laboratory, Quest Diagnostics, and LabCorp, the online dashboard includes 10 more labs and their testing data. Expanded testing capacity in Massachusetts continues to be a focus of the work of the COVID-19 Response Command Center, and the effort to increase testing capacity across the state will continue.

The 15 people who died ranged in age from 50s to 90s. They include residents from Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Worcester, Hampden, Berkshire, Essex, and Barnstable counties.

COVID-19 activity is increasing in Massachusetts. At this time, if people are only mildly symptomatic, they should speak to their healthcare provider about whether they need to be assessed in person. If not, they should stay at home while they are sick. Asymptomatic family members should practice social distancing and immediately self-isolate if they develop symptoms.

In the United States, there have been more than 54,453 cases of COVID-19 and more than 737 deaths, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Massachusetts and nationwide, the public is being asked to avoid crowds, stay 6 feet away from others, not shake hands or hug, and call/Facetime and online chat with friends and loved ones rather than meet face to face.

To keep updated regarding COVID-19 in Massachusetts, residents can text "COVIDMA" to 888-777 to receive COVID-19 text message alerts straight to their phone. More information about COVID-19 can be found at www.mass.gov/covid19. For general questions, a 24/7 hotline is available by calling 2-1-1.

Governor Baker extending the closure of all Massachusetts public and private schools until May 4

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new actions to support the ongoing COVID-19 response, including extending the closure of all public and private schools and non-emergency child care programs and steps to protect homeowners and low-income tenants from eviction and foreclosure. The Department of Public Health (DPH) also issued an order relative to pharmacies and grocery stores.

Schools and Non-Emergency Child Care Programs: Governor Charlie Baker issued an emergency order extending the closure of all public and private schools, and all non-emergency childcare programs, until May 4 in an effort to prevent the

further spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

This order expands on previous orders issued on March 15 and March 18 suspending normal educational operations at schools and non-emergency child care programs until April 6, and the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) established a process to approve Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs to serve vulnerable children and families of first responders and essential workers.

This closure extends one week beyond scheduled spring vacation week on most school district calendars.

The order does not apply to residential special education schools.

This extension will allow school administrators and educators added planning time to ensure students can complete course requirements, as well as provide teachers with time to expand remote learning opportunities.

Remote Learning and Education: During this time, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is requesting that educators continue to develop and assemble high-quality educational materials to provide students with effective remote learning resources through the month of April. The Department is also creating a model for districts to use and modify in collaboration with local stakeholders to fit their school district's needs, and will continue to work with schools to identify best practices for implementing effective remote learning.

Remote learning encompasses a wide variety of learning methods, including both analog and online. While technology is an excellent tool, districts should also consider ways students can continue to learn offline.

This could include exploring nature, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social

distancing) and engaging in hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' experiences.

Additionally, through a new partnership between DESE and WGBH, educational resources will be posted on the department's website, and middle and high school students can access WGBH and WGBY educational programming on WGBH and WGBY on the WORLD channel from noon to 5 p.m.

Housing Stability for Vulnerable Populations: The Baker-Polito Administration announced steps to keep vulnerable families in their homes, preserve the health and safety of low-income renters and homeowners, and prevent homelessness due to reduced or lost income. These steps include the following:

DHCD is moving to temporarily suspend terminations of federal and state rental vouchers under their purview.

MassHousing is transferring \$5 million to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for a COVID-19 Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) fund to assist families facing rent insecurity.

The Division of Banks (DOB) has issued new guidance to Massachusetts financial institutions and lenders urging them to provide relief for borrowers and will advocate for a 60-day stay on behalf of all homeowners facing imminent foreclosure on their homes.

DHCD is issuing guidance recommending that all owners of state aided low-income housing, including Local Housing Authorities and private owners, suspend both pending non-essential evictions and the filing of any new non-essential evictions.

Affordable housing operators are urged to suspend non-essential evictions for loss of income or employment circumstances resulting in a tenant's inability to make rent.

This guidance urges operators to establish reasonable payment

plans, notify Section 8 or public housing residents about interim income recertification to adjust rent payments, and to consider offering relief funding for residents ineligible for income reassessment.

Pharmacies and Grocery Stores: Today, DPH issued a new order to support pharmacies and grocery stores and their employees during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This order will require grocery stores and pharmacies to:

Provide at least one hour per day of shopping for adults over 60-years-old.

Offer sanitation options, such as hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes, as available, to clean shopping carts and points of frequent contact.

Appropriate social distancing policies, including a marked "Social Distancing Line," beginning six feet away from all checkout counters.

Close any self-serve food stations.

Instruct store employees who are ill to stay home, and for stores to accommodate employees who fall in the high-risk category with alternative assignments to limit exposure.