

Statement from Bristol DA Quinn Regarding ACLU/CPCS Petition for Mass Release of Inmates

The following is a statement from Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III

“A petition filed by the ACLU and CPCS has requested the mass release of thousands of defendants, many of whom are dangerous individuals and career criminals. For reasons of public safety and common sense, I strongly oppose this petition.

Seven of the 11 district attorneys, the Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance, the trial court, local police departments and others have all filed an opposition to the petition.

□

I am very mindful of the serious public health crisis that is afflicting our country.

I am concerned for everyone’s welfare, especially our heroic medical workers, grocery employees, first responders and anyone putting themselves in danger for the public good.

I am very concerned about the well-being of the thousands of victims whose rights would be violated by the mass release of thousands of individuals from our jails and prisons. This would jeopardize both their physical and mental well-being, especially in cases of domestic violence.

We need to make rational decisions so that there are not grave, unintended consequences from rash and ill-conceived decisions.

Correctional facilities have implemented stringent protocols to protect inmates and staff from the Coronavirus. As of this writing, no one has tested positive in the Bristol County jails. These facilities have dealt with significant health-related issues in the past and have the expertise and experience to protect the inmates.

We are now receiving a number of motions for the release of very dangerous defendants who have no business being out on the street. While I am concerned for everyone's welfare, this appears to be an attempt to manipulate this serious public health crisis to obtain their release from jail.

Ensuring public safety is my primary duty. It is a duty that underlies all government action. I will continue to review cases on an individual basis, but I am strongly opposed to the wholesale release of defendants who are properly in custody. Releasing many defendants to the street is against the public interest and should not be done in a society based on the rule of law. □”

Massachusetts State Police remind public that COVID-19 social distancing applies to outdoor areas

REMINDER: PLEASE PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING OUTDOORS AS WELL

On several days last week, our Troopers observed high volume of visitors to state parks and reservations. With warmer temperatures on the way, the Baker-Polito Administration,

including the State Police, reminds visitors that precautions recommended to reduce the chance of COVID-19 virus transmission should be practiced in all settings, including outdoor areas.

Specifically, we urge visitors to state parks and other outdoor properties to maintain social distancing of at least six feet, avoid gatherings of people, and to practice healthy personal hygiene, to aid in the prevention of spreading the COVID-19 virus. Furthermore, if visitors of state parks observe areas with high concentrations of people, the public is asked to leave the location and either visit a different park in the area or return at a later date or time.

Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) also advises people to participate in non-contact recreational activities, for example hiking, bike riding, and jogging. Furthermore, if an individual is ill, over 70, and/or part of a vulnerable population, please stay home to avoid the risk of contracting the disease.

The state parks system has over 450,000 acres of property, and every region of the state has hidden gem state park locations to explore that may be less busy than more popular park locations. The DCR website provides visitors the ability to search state parks by both region and recreational activity.

“The Massachusetts state parks system offers excellent opportunities for us all to get outside, which is important for everybody’s mental and physical health,” said DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery. “However, visitors should adhere to staying at home as much as possible to reduce the risk of becoming in contact with the virus and potentially spreading it to others.”

Visitors are reminded that the agency has removed trash receptacles throughout the state parks system to aid in the prevention of spreading COVID-19. DCR asks that all visitors

of state parks adhere to a “carry in, carry out” trash policy during this public health emergency, and urges visitors do their part to help protect our shared natural resources by leaving no trace and taking any trash with them.

DCR has created a Massachusetts State Parks COVID-19 webpage – <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-state-parks-covid-19-update> – that centralizes virus updates that impact the state parks system. The webpage provides visitors of state parks with information including the closure of certain agency facilities, like visitor centers, playgrounds and restroom facilities and other pertinent information.

Acushnet informs public of first positive COVID-19 case

The Town of Acushnet was informed of its first positive case of COVID-19. Due to privacy requirements, the demographics of this case will remain confidential. The close contacts of the positive case have been notified and are following CDC guidelines for self-quarantine.

With increased testing capabilities and community spread of COVID-19, having a positive case in Town was inevitable. This is a crucial time in infection control. Maintaining social distancing, limiting exposure to others, avoiding crowded places and vigilant handwashing are vital steps in slowing the spread of this disease.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other Federal agencies and our local Board of Health to share the most up to date information available.

The DPH website is updated constantly with the latest guidance, including printable fact sheets in multiple languages at www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus.

Information about coronavirus, the virus that causes COVID-19, can be found at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health website, by calling 2-1-1 or visiting <https://mass211.org/> where citizens are able to live chat with a person. For specific questions, call the DPH Epidemiology Line at 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 617-983-6800.

New Bedford's Coastal Foodshed receives \$40,000 to sponsor COVID-19 meal delivery project and help people get back to work

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation today announced it will contribute \$40,000 to Coastal Foodshed to sponsor and coordinate the New Bedford COVID-19 Meal Delivery Project. Starting Monday and running for four weeks initially, Tia Maria's European Cafe and Destination Soups will prepare 100 daily meals for older adults and others in need in New Bedford, Mass. As part of this project, meals will be delivered to homes by New Bedford-based Yes! We Van commuter transportation services. As a result of Coastal Foodshed's sponsorship of the meals program, at least eight local people will now be back to work helping others.

"Through Coastal Foodshed's ability to work with Tia Maria's,

Destination Soup, and Yes! We Van, this four-way partnership will deliver nutritious and timely meals to our most vulnerable neighbors during these challenging times,” said Michael Carson, president and CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and chair of the Foundation’s board of directors. “It is designed to support social distancing, take care of those most at-risk for complications from COVID-19, and help put people whose jobs have been impacted by COVID-19 closures back to work. The Harvard Pilgrim Foundation is looking to further expand this project to other areas in the region and we remain committed to providing the necessary resources to support community-focused initiatives.”

As part of this project, Immigrants Assistance Center will identify New Bedford residents most in need. To apply for meal delivery, call (508) 996-8113.

“As a current Healthy Food Fund partner with Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, we are very committed to coordinating this local initiative and getting freshly cooked and healthy meals to those in our community who need it most,” said Kim Ferreira, MS, RD, LDN, Co-Executive Director & Co-Founder of Coastal Foodshed, which operates a Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation supported Mobile Market.

The Foundation will continue to work closely with nonprofit organizations, community leaders and government stakeholders to support their efforts in addressing the COVID-19 crisis.

“This tremendous opportunity from Coastal Foodshed and Harvard Pilgrim Foundation comes at just the perfect time,” said Jessica Coelho, owner of Tia Maria’s European Café. “We are all in uncharted territory and now our team has a new-found purpose as we can prepare meals for homebound seniors and others in the community who need food. Because of this effort, we are able to provide work for three of our employees. We are excited to be a part of this and are very thankful that we can contribute.”

Additionally, Yes! We Van transportation services can offer three of its employees additional payable hours which it otherwise would have reduced due to impacts of COVID-19.

Harvard Pilgrim Foundation recently announced support for two other local organizations as part of its \$3 million COVID-19 relief efforts: United Way of Greater Fall River and United Way of Greater New Bedford each received a \$10,000 grant for their COVID-19 Relief Fund.

Governor Baker: COVID-19 surge in Massachusetts could begin early to mid-April

Chris Lisinski
State House News Service

The surge in coronavirus cases long expected by public health officials could start to hit Massachusetts between April 7 and April 17, Gov. Charlie Baker said Monday, stressing the importance of taking steps to prepare additional health care capacity.

With the state's testing apparatus up to thousands of patients per day, confirmed COVID-19 cases have recently been increasing at a rapid pace. Massachusetts had 4,955 cases Sunday afternoon and 48 deaths attributable to the disease.

That trend will likely continue, Baker forecast during his daily press briefing Monday, and according to at least some models could hit its apex in the next eight to 18 days.

"This isn't an exact science, but generally speaking, most of

the calculations that are out there with respect to Massachusetts, both some of the ones we've done and some of the ones other people have done, suggest that the surge here is probably going to start somewhere between (April) 7th and the 17th," Baker said.

State officials continue to prepare to manage and mitigate the peak. Baker identified four key areas of focus: protective gear, hospital bed capacity, ventilators and staffing.

On Monday, Baker announced that the federal government – which he criticized last week as handcuffing states' efforts to acquire protective equipment – will send more than 1,000 ventilators to Massachusetts, which will make a "big difference" to the most critical patients. He said he expected the ventilators to arrive by week's end.

The state also received another shipment of personal protective equipment from the national strategic stockpile over the weekend, and local manufacturers have begun working with the administration to supplement supplies. Baker said New Balance will begin manufacturing face mask prototypes in its Lawrence factory and then ramp up production across New England.

In another new state effort, about 1,800 people have registered to volunteer their medical expertise in hospitals amid the outbreak since the administration launched a portal last week, Baker announced Monday. They will be brought on board on an accelerated basis under a Department of Public Health order.

The governor outlined plans in motion to designate nursing homes specifically – and only – for care of patients with COVID-19. Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in Worcester will start the process with 150 beds ready to begin transfer by Thursday, Baker said, before ramping up to a maximum capacity of about 300.

Altogether, the administration is targeting establishment of at least 1,000 beds for coronavirus-afflicted older adults, hoping both to lessen the strain on hospitals ahead of the forthcoming surge and to avoid requiring that skilled nursing facilities receive patients from hospitals.

“We need to continue to create significant capacity so our most vulnerable population, should they get infected with COVID-19 and need acute care in a well-equipped and safe setting, will get it,” Baker said. “We know this isn’t an easy task, but without these designated sites, hospitals would have to discharge COVID-19 patients to any skilled facility with an open capacity, which could put the rest of the healthy residents and staff at those facilities at risk.”

In a statement after Baker’s announcement, Massachusetts Senior Care Association President Tara Gregorio said the push to open coronavirus-specific facilities is a “difficult, but right” decision.

“Massachusetts is acting boldly and responsibly, while other states are mandating that all nursing facilities admit COVID-19 positive patients,” Gregorio said in a statement. “We believe based on clinical guidance that this approach unnecessarily introduces a highly contagious and deadly virus into nursing homes.”

While he offered a projection about the surge, Baker declined to estimate specific numbers of cases or deaths due to the spread of COVID-19 after Dr. Anthony Fauci, a member of the White House’s coronavirus task force, on Sunday said some models roughly predict 100,000 or more fatalities nationwide.

“A huge part of what we’re trying to do, both through preparation around the surge and a lot of the other work we’re doing is to make sure that everybody who can be saved is saved,” Baker said. “I prefer to think about it that way than I do with respect to some really cold and impersonal number. I

know a couple of people who have lost people as a result of the COVID-19 virus, and it's a way more personal item in my mind than any number you can put on it."

The administration has not offered any estimate about the statewide hospital capacity amid the outbreak. In January, the Center for Health Information and Analysis in a report identified 14,596 acute care hospital beds across the state.

Through Sunday afternoon, the Department of Public Health confirmed 399 of the state's 4,955 COVID-19 cases required hospitalization. In the same figures, 1,405 patients did not need to be admitted, and the hospitalization status remained unknown for another 3,151.

Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said Monday she ordered the Massachusetts Health Connector, the state's health insurance marketplace, to delay many coverage terminations that would normally result from administrative issues such as lack of documentation.

The governor also issued an order Monday granting HHS flexibility to offer health providers financial relief, including rate adjustments and supplemental payments, to cope with skyrocketing demand or high volumes of vulnerable individuals during the outbreak.

Baker stressed the importance of social distancing as he has in almost every public appearance since the outbreak began, particularly after Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel announced on Friday that she tested positive for COVID-19. Baker said Bharel is working from home and described her condition as "good."

The governor also forecast announcements to come, saying his administration would likely offer an update Tuesday on an order that non-essential businesses must close and would provide more information later this week on efforts to trace contacts of those who contracted the virus.

Gov. Baker announces actions to expand health care workforce, support for providers during COVID-19

Governor Baker announced new actions that will support efforts to expand the Commonwealth's health care workforce by expediting licensing for certain health care workers and onboarding for health care volunteers who have signed up through the Administration's new online volunteer portal. The Administration also outlined a Department of Public Health order that will support continuing steps being taken to expand care capacity for older adults infected with COVID-19, in addition to other actions designed to support providers and businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Expedited Onboarding Of Health Care Volunteers: Last week, the Administration launched an initiative to recruit volunteer medical professionals to support hospitals as the Commonwealth continues to expand medical capacity. Since launching the initiative, more than 1,800 volunteers have already signed up, reflective of the Commonwealth's world-class health care workforce. To support expedited onboarding of these volunteers, the Department of Public Health has issued an order authorizing the Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management to perform a CORI check on any volunteer who registered through the volunteer portal without a notarized CORI acknowledgment form. The Order requires any entity performing a CORI check pursuant to the Order to implement sufficient compensating controls to reasonably verify an individual's identity, including inspection of a photographic

form of government-issued identification via teleconference.

On-Demand Licensing For Health Professionals: To further support the Commonwealth's health care workforce, the Department of Public Health has issued an order designed to provide on-demand licensing and re-licensing for certain health care professionals. The Order expedites licensing for professionals with licenses in good standing in other states, and professionals who have allowed their Massachusetts licenses to expire within the past 10 years while in good standing. This order applies to a wide range of health professionals: registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant, pharmacist, pharmacy technician, nursing home administrator, physician assistant, respiratory therapist, perfusionist, genetic counselor, community health worker and emergency medical technician.

Expanding Care Capacity: As part of its efforts to expand existing health care capacity, the Administration's COVID-19 Response Command Center is working with long-term care facilities to establish dedicated skilled nursing facilities to care for individuals infected with COVID-19. The initiative offers an alternative location where individuals who are stable but still need medical care can be transferred to recover, relieving pressure on hospitals and opening up hospital beds for the treatment of patients with the greatest medical need. The transfer of existing residents out of participating facilities will be handled with the utmost care. The Administration has received federal approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for this initiative.

The Department of Public Health has issued an order waiving certain MassHealth regulations regarding the transfers and discharge of long-term care facility residents, for the limited purpose of safely transferring and discharging all residents living in a long-term care facility that is intended

to be used as a designated COVID-19 facility. The Command Center has worked with the Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in Worcester to start this effort, which will help bring 300 skilled nursing facility beds online in central Massachusetts. The Command Center will continue to work with long-term care facilities to add care capacity for older adults.

Financial Relief For Care Providers: Governor Baker today issued an order providing the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) administrative flexibility to extend financial relief to providers of critical health care and social services that serve EOHHS clients, including members of MassHealth. The financial relief may be in the form of temporary rate adjustments, supplemental payments, and new rate and payment methodologies that reflect the modified ways services are being delivered. These measures will be subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance. This will allow EOHHS to extend critical financial support to:

Providers that are facing extraordinary demand due to the COVID-19 emergency, while, at the same time, have lost significant revenue because they have had to cancel other procedures and appointments;

Providers that are necessary to keep vulnerable individuals safe in their homes or residences and out of more acute settings like hospitals; and

Human service providers that have been forced to respond to the unanticipated circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic by altering the way they deliver services and the hours and scope of these services.

Shareholder Meeting Requirements: Under Massachusetts law, public companies can permit shareholders and their proxies to participate in annual or special shareholder meetings by

remote communication, but they are also required to hold a meeting in a physical space that shareholders can attend in person. Given the challenges of meeting such requirements while non-essential workers are required to stay home and gatherings are limited to 10 people, Governor Baker today issued an order adjusting this meeting requirement. The Governor's order permits public companies to hold annual or special shareholder meetings completely by means of remote communication, until 60 days after the end of the state of emergency. Additionally, if a public company has already sent written notice to its shareholders of an annual or special meeting to be held in a physical location, this order allows that company to notify its shareholders that the meeting now will be held solely through remote communication without mailing another notice, provided they issue a press release, send email notice where possible, and take other reasonable steps to notify their shareholders of the change.

New Bedford to begin annual street sweeping program on April 1

New Bedford, Massachusetts – The Department of Public Infrastructure will conduct a major street sweeping program in the city, including a parking ban on designated sides of the street beginning Thursday nights, as listed below. The program will run from April 1 through November 1.

The street sweeping will operate on a bi-weekly schedule, at the following locations:

Street sweeping will occur from 11:50 p.m. on Thursdays to

6:00 a.m. on Fridays

FIRST and THIRD Thursday of the month:

- Dartmouth Street (from Matthew Street to Allen Street)
- Kempton Street (from Rockdale Avenue to Sixth Street)
- Mill Street (from County Street to Rockdale Avenue)
- Rivet Street (from Route 18 to Hemlock Street)

SECOND and FOURTH Thursday of the month:

- County Street (from Rivet Street to Cove Street)
- Ashley Boulevard (from Nash Road to Coggeshall Street)
- Acushnet Avenue (from Nash Road to Coggeshall Street)
- North Front Street (from Nash Road to Coggeshall Street)

Failure to follow the posted street sweeping signs will result in vehicles being towed. During this timeframe, parking will be prohibited within the posted areas to allow sweepers full access to the curb line. These focused areas of sweeping are in addition to the regular, weekly scheduled street sweeping on the city's main thoroughfares. Anyone with questions may contact James Costa of the Department of Public Infrastructure at 508-979-1550 ext. 67344.

New Bedford reports 27 total cases of COVID-19, up 14 cases since Sunday

According to the New Bedford Mayor's office, New Bedford has a total of 27 positive cases of COVID-19 as of noon on Monday, March 30. This is an increase of 14 **since Sunday morning** when 13 were reported. The sharp increase is mostly due to a spike

in testing.

Fall River has reported **three new cases since Saturday, bringing the city's total to 12.** The City of Fall River has not updated its numbers for Monday yet.

Bristol County increased from 179 on Saturday to 208 on Sunday – an increase of 29 new COVID-19 cases.

As of 4 pm On Sunday, Public Health officials have tested a total of 39,066 people in Massachusetts resulting in 4,955 positive results of COVID-19 – an increase of 698 new cases since Saturday. Officials also reported four more deaths since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 48. None of the four deaths were in Bristol County. Full details [here](#).

New Bedford reports 16 total cases of COVID-19 Monday morning

UPDATE: New Bedford has seen its positive COVID-19 cases nearly double from Sunday morning to noon today – going from 13 to 27. This is mostly due to increased testing.

According to the New Bedford Mayor's office, New Bedford has a total of 16 positive cases of COVID-19 as of Monday, March 30. This is an increase of three **since Sunday** and four since Saturday. Fall River has reported **three new cases since Saturday, bringing the city's total to 12.** The City of Fall River has not updated its numbers for Monday yet.

Bristol County increased from 179 on Saturday to 208 on Sunday

– an increase of 29 new COVID-19 cases.

As of 4 pm On Sunday, Public Health officials have tested a total of 39,066 people in Massachusetts resulting in 4,955 positive results of COVID-19 – an increase of 698 new cases since Saturday. Officials also reported four more deaths since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 48. None of the four deaths were in Bristol County. Full details [here](#).

OPINION: “New Bedford, your loved one will possibly die scared and alone instead of surrounded by their loved ones if you don’t take precautions.”

“I want to say something to make people understand how serious they need to be taking this pandemic. Most people with good health will never really understand the true meaning of how bad this is for other members of our society who are not as lucky to have good health. To those people, I say how lucky you are!

Let me explain to you what the potential of this virus is if we do not take every precaution there is to keep from allowing it to spread.

If you live with a loved parent grandparent or other family

member or friend that has health issues such as COPD, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis. You need to socially distance yourself (6 feet) from all other people. That means hanging out at someone's house. Riding around with others in vehicles and using caution with public transportation. And if you choose to not take these precautions, this is what happens!

You have just socially spread Covid 19 into your home. Your mother, father or grandparent are now going to get very sick. If, and this is a big if, they recover you and they are very lucky! Think about the ones that are not that lucky. You will need to say goodbye to them at the nearest medical facility because you will not be allowed in with them. With luck, the facility will have the proper medical equipment to help them.

They will be hooked up to a ventilator and be alone for long periods of time, only to have an overworked health professional check on them occasionally while they have dozens of other patients to check on. Your loved one will possibly die scared and alone instead of surrounded by their loved ones.

Think about this when you say it won't hurt anyone if I go hang out for a short while." -□Kelly Timms Hinckley□.