

# Polito, Keating, Kennedy tour UMass Dartmouth field hospital

With the Commonwealth's latest field hospital set to open this week at UMass Dartmouth, Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, Representatives Bill Keating and Joseph Kennedy III, and other officials visited the campus's Tripp Athletic Center on Tuesday for a tour.

The facility, a partnership among the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, UMass Dartmouth, and Southcoast Health, is licensed through Southcoast for 98 acute care beds. The field hospital was readied within a span of two weeks and will be ready to accept patients as early as Wednesday should the additional capacity be needed amid a surge in patient volume, officials said.

"Our administration is committed to providing patients and frontline health care workers with the resources and care necessary to continue battling COVID-19," Polito said. "This facility will support ongoing efforts to establish field hospitals throughout the Commonwealth and we are grateful for to UMass Dartmouth and Southcoast Health for their collaboration and hard work to protect residents and communities."



UMass Dartmouth chancellor Robert E. Johnson and Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito tour the field hospital constructed in the Tripp Athletic Center.

The fifth field hospital established in Massachusetts since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic will be staffed and supplied by Southcoast physicians and providers, nurses, and clinical and operational personnel. UMass Dartmouth will provide food services for patients and employees, as well as external security. MEMA installed generators, portable restroom and shower facilities, washers and dryers, and air conditioning units.

"I am proud of UMass Dartmouth's participation in this regional, collaborative effort to protect the citizens of the South Coast region," said Chancellor Robert E. Johnson. "I applaud the Baker-Polito Administration's nation-leading response to the spread of COVID-19 and the commitment shown by Keith Hovan and Southcoast Health as they prepare for any possible scenario. We will get through these unprecedented times together and be stronger for it."

Hovan, President and CEO of Southcoast Health, agreed.

“Lieutenant Governor Polito’s steadfast commitment and enduring efforts to protect residents across the Commonwealth were instrumental in this achievement, as were Governor Baker’s, Secretary Mary Lou Sudders’ and MEMA’s,” Hovan said during the tour. “And Southcoast could not ask for a better partner than Chancellor Johnson and the entire UMass Dartmouth community. While we hope this facility will not be desperately needed, it represents the aggressiveness of our preparation and the scope of our response. We’re grateful to all who made it possible, especially our frontline healthcare workers.”

In addition to Polito, Keating and Kennedy, other elected officials in attendance for Tuesday’s tour included State Representatives Antonio Cabral, Christopher Hendricks, Christopher Markey and Paul Schmid and Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan.

“UMass Dartmouth has been transforming lives for years,” Keating said. “Now, they’re working to save lives by partnering with Southcoast Health, where all our heroic health care workers on the front lines are dedicated to keeping us safe.”

Said Kennedy:

“Expanding our health care capacity is absolutely critical in our efforts to save lives as COVID-19 continues to creep throughout communities. By opening this field hospital today, UMass Dartmouth and Southcoast Health will ensure our neighbors will always have somewhere to turn when they are in need of treatment and care.”

Dr. Will Blair will serve as the field hospital’s medical director. Kelly Shanley, RN, Director, will act as operations leader. And Bill Tavares, Emergency Department RN, will serve as nurse leader.