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(Gordon)

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Rep. Gordon Provides April 28 COVID-19 Update -- Stay-at-Home Advisory, Non-Essential Business Closure Extended, House Resumes Formal Sessions

Governor Charlie Baker issued an executive order today that extends the essential services emergency order from May 4 to May 18, while the House of Representatives is making plans to commence formal session voting.

With regard to the governor's order, all businesses and organizations that do not provide "COVID-19 Essential Services" must remain closed to workers, customers and the public during this time. The Administration also announced that the Department of Public Health's Stay-at-Home Advisory remains in effect and gatherings of 10 or more people remain prohibited until May 18.

Residents are strongly urged to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel and other unnecessary person-to-person contact during this time period. Residents can still make trips to get necessities and make purchases from essential businesses like restaurants but should wear face coverings when they are in public. Those who are considered at high risk when exposed to COVID-19 should limit social interactions with others as much as possible.

"We are all dealing with an unprecedented challenge, which is why we must continue to heed the advice of public health experts," said Rep. Gordon. "These next few weeks will test our resolve as a community, but remember that you are not alone. We will all get through this together".

In order to address the COVID-19 emergency and other pressing matters, the House of Representatives will finalize preparations for remote voting and resume formal voting sessions this week. While Rep. Gordon has been working hard to address ongoing issues in Burlington, Bedford, and Wilmington throughout the crisis, the House has not held formal sessions in order

to comply with necessary physical distancing measures. The new rules prepared by the House of Representatives will enable legislators to vote either at the State House or remotely, in keeping with public health guidelines. With these new protocols in place, the House plans to take up a bond bill filed by Governor Baker that will address a gap in revenue until the July 15 tax-filing deadline. The deadline was extended to ease the burden on Massachusetts residents during the COVID-19 emergency.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives presented a plan to its members that will be taken up today (April 29) in informal session. That plan will allow the House to conduct formal session voting and debates with the use of streaming video and connections via telephone to vote and debate. Although several emergency pieces of legislation were passed unanimously in the past few weeks to deal with the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, this new process will allow for formal process for the first time since the Governor declared a state of emergency.

“This new process is safe and secure,” said Gordon. “It will allow for the public to follow the debates and votes, and for the members to stay safe by participating remotely. Overall, it is a creative win for democracy.”

With these new protocols in place, the House plans to take up a bond bill filed by Governor Baker on Thursday. The bill will continue to fund the government in absence of revenue that would have been collected prior to the July 15 tax-filing deadline. The deadline was extended beyond April 15 to ease the burden on Massachusetts residents during the COVID-19 emergency.

Governor Baker also announced the formation of the Reopening Advisory Board, which will be Co-Chaired by Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy. The Board brings public health officials together with leaders from the business community and municipal government from across the Commonwealth. This group is charged with advising the administration on strategies to reopen the economy in phases based on health and safety metrics. It will meet with key stakeholders and solicit input from a variety of constituencies over the next three weeks to develop a report by May 18 that will include DPH approved workplace safety standards, industry frameworks and customer protocols and guidelines, including enforcement mechanisms and coordination with municipal leaders. Although the report is due on May 18, the administration has made clear that public health data and guidance from health care experts will dictate the timeline of the re-opening process.

In order to address concerns from residents, Rep. Gordon will host another virtual office hours session on Thursday, April 30 at 11:00 a.m. Constituents from Bedford, Burlington, and Wilmington’s Precinct 3 are asked to email Kenneth.Gordon@mahouse.gov for call-in information. Residents can also find updates from Rep. Gordon on Facebook at facebook.com/StateRepKenGordon or on his COVID-19 page at repkengordon.org/covid-19.

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