



Kenneth I. Gordon
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Rep. Gordon Provides April 9 COVID-19 Update -- Unemployment Update, Conversation with Congressman Moulton

The state's Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) made three important announcements on Thursday regarding unemployment compensation programs established under the federal government's CARES act, according to updates from Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford).

First, DUA is implementing the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program (FPUC), which will provide an additional \$600 to the weekly benefits of regular unemployment compensation claimants. The extra \$600 will be applied to all eligible weeks of benefits retroactively to March 19, 2020 and continuing until July 20, 2020. Eligible claimants who are already receiving benefits do not need to do anything for the \$600 to be added to their weekly benefit amount, and their disbursements will begin immediately. New claimants will receive the additional \$600 as soon as their claims are processed and determined eligible.

Second, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program will provide up to 39 weeks of unemployment compensation for those who are self-employed, independent contractors, gig economy workers, and others who are not eligible for traditional unemployment compensation. DUA is building a platform to implement this program and it is expected to begin accepting claims on or about April 30, 2020. Eligible claimants under PUA will receive this benefit retroactively from February 2, 2020 or the first week a claimant was unable to work as a result of COVID-19, whichever date is later. The week ending on December 26, 2020 is the last week the benefit is payable. These claimants will also receive an additional \$600. Residents who fall into this category should visit mass.gov/unemployment-insurance-ui-online for updates on the system's rollout.

Finally, the the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program will soon be made available for individuals who have exhausted their previous unemployment benefits. The PEUC program provides up to 13 weeks of additional unemployment insurance benefits. The Department is awaiting additional federal guidance on how to implement and administer this program, so the extended weeks of PEUC benefits are not yet available.

Representative Gordon met with Congressman Seth Moulton on his cable program Rappin' with the Rep. earlier in the day to discuss COVID-19 response efforts at the state and federal levels. Their discussion can be viewed on BCAT and Bedford TV shortly. It can be found on the bcattv.org web site as well as repkengordon.org/rappinwiththerep/.

Representative Gordon hosted another successful virtual office hour session today and he invites Burlington, Bedford, and Wilmington precinct 3 residents to join him again next Thursday, April 16 at 11:00 a.m. If the Governor's daily update conflicts with that time, the video conference will begin when his speech ends. For Zoom call-in information, please email Kenneth.Gordon@mahouse.gov.

The total number of positive cases climbed to 18,941 today with 2,151 new cases reported. An additional 70 people perished from the virus, which brought the toll to 503. In total, 94,958 tests have been conducted in Massachusetts.

Other updates not yet provided include:

- The Department of Public Health issued an emergency order on Tuesday that limits grocery store occupancy to 40% the maximum permitted limit. If lines form outside of the store as a result, staff are required to ensure that customers maintain an appropriate distance;
- On Tuesday the Baker Administration announced \$800 million in stabilization funding through MassHealth to support health care providers impacted by COVID-19. This infusion will send over \$400 million to hospitals, over \$80 million to nursing facilities, and more than \$300 million to other health care providers like home health agencies and behavioral health providers;
- The CDC issued a recommendation on April 3 urging residents to wear cloth face coverings in public, while continuing to practice social distancing and good hygiene. This will help prevent spread by those who are asymptomatic;
- Governor Baker signed an executive order on Thursday requiring insurers to cover all medically required costs of COVID-19 treatment in out-of-network hospitals or other medical facilities with no charge to the patient, including co-pays, deductibles or co-insurance payments. In addition, he issued two more orders that expand the health care workforce and capacity by making graduates of international medical schools eligible for licensure in the Commonwealth under certain conditions and expediting licensure of nursing students and graduates;

- Families with loved ones in long-term care facilities can call the new Nursing Home Family Resource Line if they have questions or concerns during the COVID-19 outbreak. The line is staffed 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days per week. Contact the line at (617) 660-5399;
- In an effort to further protect high-risk populations, the Baker Administration launched a collaboration with the Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts National Guard, and the BROAD institute to facilitate safe, rapid on-site testing for residents of long-term care facilities like nursing homes and rest homes. More than 1,300 tests at 80 different facilities have been completed so far through this program and
- The Baker-Polito Administration announced the expansion of SafeLink, the Commonwealth's statewide, 24/7, toll-free and confidential domestic violence hotline to now include resources and support for survivors of sexual assault. If you are experiencing violence within your home or concerned about a loved one who may be experiencing violence, please call the SafeLink hotline for support and resources. If you are in immediate danger, please call 9-1-1.

Representative Gordon reminds residents that we will overcome this crisis if we come together to support each other. "We know that this situation is placing immense strain on everyone in our community and we ask for your continued cooperation to protect our most vulnerable from the virus," he wrote in a statement. "Officials expect the surge of COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts will come sometime in the next week. We must remain vigilant during this time and continue to follow the guidance of public health experts and government officials by staying at home, going out only when absolutely necessary, and practicing proper sanitation. We thank you for all the sacrifices you are making."

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