



Kenneth I. Gordon
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Gordon)

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Rep. Gordon Provides March 31 COVID-19 Update - Extended Stay-at-Home Advisory, Essential Services Order

As the number of Massachusetts residents testing positive for the COVID-19 virus continues to grow, Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford) provided further updates to his district. There were 868 new residents testing positive for the virus in Massachusetts on March 31, the date of this writing, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 6,620. So far, 89 people in the Commonwealth have died from the disease, 33 new fatalities reported today. The vast majority of those who succumbed were elderly or had preexisting health conditions. So far 46,935 patients have been tested.

Among the fatalities were six residents of the Holyoke Soldiers Home. In all, 13 cases were reported on Sunday. The COVID-19 Command Center, led by Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, vowed first to be sure every patient is receiving proper care at the facility, and then get to the bottom of how so many unreported cases existed at the facility. Rep. Gordon sent his sincere sympathy to their family, and to all veterans. He will lend his support to all efforts to determine how these veterans were exposed to the virus without notice.

Further updates related to the Coronavirus and its effect include new information concerning an extension to the current order shuttering in-person services at non-essential businesses, and to unemployment insurance.

Governor Charlie Baker issued an extension of the stay-at-home advisory and emergency order requiring that all businesses and organizations that do not provide "COVID-19 Essential Services" close their physical workplaces to the public until May 4.

Residents are again advised to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel and other unnecessary person to person contact during this time. Residents who are considered at high risk when exposed to COVID-19 should limit social interactions with other people as much as possible. Further, gatherings of more than 10 are prohibited until May 4. The Department of Public Health provides the following stay-at-home reminders to residents:

- Only leave your home to address essential needs. You may leave your home for exercise, including taking walks, but avoid unnecessary contact with other individuals.

- You can still run essential errands such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy but practice social distancing. If you are at high-risk, you should inquire about your local pharmacy/grocery store's alternative hours for high risk individuals.
- When going to the pharmacy you should fill your prescriptions for 90 days if possible; for some medications this is not allowed. If you are at high risk, you should try to use a mail-order service.
- Non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, and elective procedures must be rescheduled.
- If possible, health care visits should be done through tele-medicine.
- Parents should not arrange for visits with other children during this time.
- All individuals must eliminate close contact activities such as in pick-up sports.

Rep. Gordon also provided an update regarding unemployment insurance for those not traditionally covered under Massachusetts law, such as self-employed individuals and those paid through 1099s. The federal government recently passed the CARES Act, which will authorize the states to extend unemployment compensation to individuals who have not traditionally been covered. However, the state Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), which administers unemployment benefits, is awaiting guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor regarding the program's requirements. As soon as federal guidance is received, DUA will move quickly to accept applications from these groups. In the meantime, Rep. Gordon urges constituents to remain patient and check here for updates: mass.gov/unemployment/covid-19.

Other updates that have not previously been posted regarding the COVID-19 emergency include:

- Rep. Gordon scheduled another virtual office hours session for Thursday, April 2nd from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Any Burlington, Bedford, or precinct 3 resident is invited to join the call. His office will share call-in information on Wednesday explaining how to join. If you are unable to join the call but would like to contact the Representative, you can reach him at Kenneth.Gordon@mahouse.gov or 617-722-2575.
- The Governor announced new efforts to support the health care system and increase access to testing. At the request of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Strategic National Stockpile approved a 250-bed field medical station in the City of Worcester. The station will be used to monitor patients who are not in acute distress, which will open hospital beds for more serious cases. Governor Baker also announced a pilot project that will allow symptomatic residents of nursing and rest homes to be tested quickly on-site.
- The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary education, Jeffrey C. Riley, sent a letter to families that included recommendations for remote learning along with updates on MCAS testing, required days of school, special education, school meals, and other important topics. Read the Commissioner's letter on the [Department of Education website](#).
- Those who are healthy, feeling well, and eligible to give blood or platelets are encouraged to donate as soon as possible. The current crisis led the Red Cross to cancel a number of blood drives across the Commonwealth and now there is a shortage of life-saving blood products. Appointments can be made through the Red Cross Blood Donor

App, by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org), or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

- Rep. Gordon reminds residents to take care of their mental health during this challenging time. Those who are feeling overwhelmed can seek emotional support by dialing 2-1-1 and choosing the “CALL2TALK” option, reaching out to the 24/7 Samaritans helpline at 877-870-4673, or by calling the 24/7 toll-free, multilingual, and confidential Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990.