

SENATOR BECCA RAUSCH

NORFOLK • BRISTOL • MIDDLESEX

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Local elections for the Town of Wellesley have been postponed.

A new election date has not yet been selected.

For more information and updates, please visit <https://wellesleyma.gov/244/Voting-Elections>.

CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19 UPDATE #3

Monday, March 16, 2020

Friends,

As this pandemic period continues to evolve, my team and I continue to do everything we can to deliver resources and accurate information about COVID-19. Please try to stay calm and take all the precautions you can, including avoiding in-person contact with people who do not live in your own households. Additional precautions were listed in [my first update](#). Remember that while my office is working remotely, we are here to help you! Please call (617) 722-1555 or email me at Becca.Rausch@masenate.gov if you have questions, comments, or concerns.

This update provides some highlights of steps I've taken and actions implemented by state government to slow the spread of COVID-19 and support Bay Staters during the pandemic.

Things my team and I have done:

1. We converted all meetings and [office hours](#) to phone calls or video conferencing.
2. All of us have been [working remotely](#) since March 12 ([find out how we did it](#)).
3. As the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, I am focused on determining what our municipalities need from the Legislature in order to keep operating. Today, my team and I are evaluating the [Governor's proposed legislation](#) to help sustain our local governments and essential functions under these emergency conditions.
4. We are connecting with local support systems and resource providers to support service delivery to those who need it.
5. Last week, over a dozen colleagues and I [pushed hard for Governor Baker to close the schools](#) (which he did - schools are now closed through Monday, April 6) and also close the child care centers (which he has not yet done).

Things the state government has done:

1. Starting tomorrow, Tuesday, March 17, through Monday, April 6, all gatherings of 25 individuals or more are prohibited, and restaurants can provide take out and delivery only (no in-person dining).
2. On Thursday, March 12, the Senate and House expeditiously passed, and the Governor signed into law, [\\$15 million in supplemental funding to support monitoring, treatment, containment, prevention, and other efforts to combat COVID-19](#) by the state Department of Public Health (DPH), regional and local boards of health, and other public entities.
3. [Governmental boards can meet without a physical quorum](#) of members present and without affording public access to the physical meeting locations.
4. The Legislature is practicing social distancing. The State House is now officially closed to the public throughout the COVID-19 state of emergency. Senate sessions for this week will be informal sessions to reduce the number of people in the chamber while still maintaining Senate operations and functionality. The entire Legislature will join a conference call with leaders in the executive branch tomorrow, Tuesday, March 17; we had an opportunity to submit questions in advance, and I submitted several pertaining to COVID-19 testing, income insecurity during a pandemic, support for local businesses, food insecurity, regional transportation safety, and much more.
5. Senate President Karen Spilka appointed Senator Jo Comerford, Chair of the Joint Committee of Public Health, to lead a Senate working group on COVID-19. The entire Senate membership has been actively contributing to the working group's mission of addressing this pandemic as comprehensively involved, and centering our most vulnerable residents as we do this critically important work.
6. On Friday, March 13, DPH announced that the [Commonwealth's 2-1-1 hotline](#) will now provide real-time information on COVID-19, including resources, and referrals in multiple languages.
7. On Wednesday, March 11, the Massachusetts Health Connector announced a [special 45-day enrollment period](#) running until April 25 to ensure everyone who wants access to covered coronavirus services has it.
8. All Massachusetts health insurers are [now required](#) to cover the cost of testing and treatment related to COVID-19 for all members.
9. The Department of Public Utilities issued an order to suspend all gas and electric shut-offs during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

Things you should do as individuals:

1. Remember that this is **not** an extra long school vacation, and this is **not** a series of snow days. The purpose of all these closures is to limit our contact with other people and prevent the spread of the virus. Therefore: do not have in-person play dates. Do not go to playgrounds. Do not go to libraries. Do not host parties, even if you invite fewer than 25 people. This is going to get worse before it gets better. The only way we get this under any semblance of control is by engaging in comprehensive social distancing.
2. **STAY HOME** to the greatest extent possible.
3. Engage in distance-socializing via phone calls and video chatting.

4. Create a schedule for your days while working from home. Check out some more [tips for successful remote work](#).
5. Take a walk. Every day. The sunshine is good for you in basically all regards. If you meet people during your walk, be sure to keep at least 6 feet of distance between you.
6. Order take-out or delivery. Buy gift cards from your favorite local restaurants and cafes to redeem in the future. Our local businesses are hurting and you might enjoy not cooking a meal (or cleaning up afterward!).
7. Enjoy an [opera](#).

Special tips for parents and caregivers of younger children:

1. Make a daily schedule and stick to it.
2. Find free or low-cost remote learning experiences for your children. Many local dance and yoga studios are offering streamed classes for free. (Be sure to frequent those places when the pandemic period is over.) Consider hiring a local art educator to teach your children remotely; many of these great people are contractors, meaning they don't get paid if they don't work, and all the classes are shut down, so this is a win-win for everyone -- kids learn, parents get a break, and educators make some money.
3. Have virtual play dates.
4. Get friends, family, neighbors to engage with you and your children via phone or video chatting.
5. Try to [de-stress the family](#).
6. Take a [virtual field trip](#) or ["visit" a museum](#).
7. Consult [free online educational resources](#). Scholastic is offering free ["learn at home" daily projects](#) for preschoolers and K-12 students.
8. [Skype a scientist!](#)

Yours in service,



Senator Becca Rausch