

Massachusetts COVID-19 Update

March 16, 2020 || By [Steven A. Baddour](#), [Daniel J. Connelly](#), [Caitlin R. Beresin](#), [Kaitlyn C. Sprague](#), [Taylor C. Shepherd](#)

The Baker Administration continues to monitor the COVID-19 public health crisis, expanding almost daily on restrictions for schools, restaurants and several other places of business across the Commonwealth. As these updates are constantly evolving, this post is meant to provide the most up to date announcements. Actions taken by the Administration include the following:

1. Coronavirus Command Center and Telemedicine

Gov. Baker announced last week that Secretary Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services ("EOHHS"), will lead this effort to ease restrictions on accelerating testing and coordinate planning and response efforts across the state. Stepping aside from her day-to-day duties leading EOHHS, Sec. Sudders has pegged her Assistant Secretary and Director of Medicaid, Dan Tsai to take over daily operations of the office in her absence. The goals of the Command Center include expanding the capacity and distribution of testing, allocation of equipment, guidance on surge hospital crisis capacity, contingency planning, and identifying supply chain vulnerabilities. EOHHS has also established requirements for commercial insurers to cover medically necessary telemedicine and telehealth services, over the phone and via videoconference, to be paid at the same rate as in-person care highlighting the benefits of keeping patients inside their homes to stop the spread of the virus.

2. Closures and Other Restrictions

Schools: As of Tuesday, March 17th, public and private K-12 schools will close and continue educating their students via online courses and studies. Schools will remain closed until April 7th.

Restaurants/Bars: As of Tuesday, March 17th, on-site dining will be prohibited in Massachusetts. Restaurants may offer take-out for customers, however, on-site consumption of food and beverages will be prohibited until April 5th. Official guidance from the Baker Administration can be found [here](#).

Nursing Homes: The Commonwealth's nursing homes are banning visitors from their premises' due to the vulnerabilities of the elderly to COVID-19.

Groups of 25+: Gov. Baker has tightened his original restriction on the congregating of groups of people larger than 250 to banning groups larger than 25 plus. This restriction excludes grocery stores, retail businesses and work environments. Official guidance from EOHHS can be found [here](#).

3. Unemployment Aid

Due to the rising concern relative to residents of the Commonwealth being forced out of work due to building closures and event cancellations, the Baker Administration has filed emergency regulations to waive the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits and expand eligibility for those affected to receive faster financial relief. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development also plans to file emergency regulations allowing workers impacted by COVID-19 to collect unemployment if their workplaces shut down, but plan to reopen within four weeks.

At ML Strategies, it is our belief that once all restrictions have been lifted, the Legislature will be in a race to the finish of the legislative session. Your team at ML Strategies remains committed to assisting you in your legislative and regulatory goals in the weeks, months and years ahead.

For additional information directly from the Baker Administration relative to COVID-19, please refer to the March 15 press release announcing emergency actions [here](#).

Authors



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