

Dear Friends of 15th Suffolk,

We want to continue to thank you for all you're doing to encourage one another and to stay healthy during the coronavirus outbreak. Addressing the hardships caused by COVID-19 is currently the top priority of the legislature.

As of, March 31st, over 50 bills have been filed in the Massachusetts Legislature relating to COVID-19. More are in draft or discussion, pending federal legislation and analysis. See below for local and state COVID-19 resources, a brief policy update, and links to some of the bills Rep Nika has filed or cosponsored. We will update you on non-COVID-19 legislation, such as this session's Housing, Public Health, and Civil Rights bills, in future newsletters.

If you have questions or concerns about policy or constituent needs and resources, don't hesitate to reach out at the contact information below.

NOTE: In our previous newsletter we highlighted the Brookline VITA Program but as an addendum we were asked to emphasize that you should not send your social security number by email for any reason.

Local Resources and Announcements

- **[BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION FACT SHEET: When To Be Tested for COVID-19](#)**: Helpful BPHC document on what someone should expect if they feel symptomatic and when they should get tested
- **[COVID-19 RESOURCE GUIDE FOR BOSTON'S IMMIGRANTS](#)**: Information about services for Boston residents affected by COVID-19, regardless of immigration status.
- **[Brookline COVID-19 Resources](#)**: Including information about Brookline Center Safety Net Program, the Brookline Food Pantry, and more.

State-level Resources and Announcements

- **[Baker-Polito Administration Extends Non-Essential Business Closures and Executive Branch Employee Guidance, 3/31](#)**
 - Click [here](#) for the essential services extension order.
 - Click [here](#) for the full list of categories of “COVID-19 Essential Services.” ([PDF](#))
 - Click [here](#) for COVID-19 Essential Services FAQs created by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development.
- **Hotel/Motel Guidance:** As part of the updated essential business list, DPH issued new guidance today around hotels, motels, inns, beds and breakfasts and other short-term residential rentals. Based on this new guidance, hotels, motels, and short-term rentals may only be used for efforts related to fighting COVID-19, like front line health workers or individuals, or for Massachusetts residents who have been otherwise displaced from their residences. Click [here](#) for the Hotel/Motel Guidance.
- The Baker-Polito Administration announced the **[launch of a new text-based notification system](#)** to deliver important information about the Commonwealth’s COVID-19 response to Massachusetts residents. The new messaging tool called “**AlertsMA**” will allow residents to subscribe to real-time notifications by texting the keyword COVIDMA to 888-777. After signing up, state and public health officials can send short messages and links to information directly to a resident’s cell phone or other mobile device.
- **Buoy Health Care Tool:** Buoy Health’s online 24/7 tool is free for Massachusetts residents and uses current COVID-19 guidance from the CDC and Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Visit [Buoy.com/mass](#) to learn more and use the tool.
- **[Massachusetts RMV Announces Transition to Suspension Hearings by Phone and Appointment-Only Reservation System for Required In-Person Transactions, Effective This Afternoon](#)**
- **[MBTA Discourages All Non-Essential Travel](#)**

Brief Policy Updates

- Yesterday, on Tuesday, 3/31, Senate Ways and Means approved S2621, An Act providing temporary protections for renters and homeowners during the COVID-19 emergency, which would be effective for the 90 days following the bill’s passage or until the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency. The bill

prohibits "non-essential evictions" and landlords from imposing a late fee for non-payment of rent, if tenants can prove late or non-payment was due to financial impacts from COVID-19. The bill also protects homeowners by prohibiting foreclosures of residential properties, and has language to assist people applying for a reverse mortgage. Currently, the House is deliberating a bill with similar goals. Rep Connolly and others are working with Greater Boston Legal Services to fill in some gaps of actions not covered by S2621 that effectively still allow for displacement, such as notices to quit, termination of certain leases, and Sheriffs and movers carrying out levies of execution (which allow landlords to put furniture on street).

- Thanks to the leadership of Reps Lindsay Sabadosa and Paul Mark, Secretary Sudders, and others, peer-support recovery centers are now essential businesses and may continue to offer support to those recovery.
- Progressive Mass issued [a letter with over 2 dozen organizations signing on](#) calling on the Legislature to put a package of safety net measures on the floor of the House and Senate for a vote no later than April 10th. They also urge the use of the Rainy Day Fund to swiftly enable some combination of much-needed interventions.
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) has been expanded by the federal government to cover many types of self-employed workers. The Administration is working to adapt the UI infrastructure in Massachusetts to enable newly eligible workers to apply for and receive benefits. It may take weeks. We will keep you posted.

SELECTED COVID-19 Legislation

Additional bills Rep Nika intends to cosponsor are currently in draft, including in the areas of nonprofit relief, housing debt assistance, and small business relief. Many of these, and the bills below, may be impacted by recent or pending federal legislation.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

- **[HD4935](#)**: An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID19 Emergency - Rep Connolly
- **[HD4956](#)**: An Act providing for a rent increase freeze in response to COVID-19 - Rep Sabadosa

- [**SD2889**](#): An Act establishing a COVID-19 homeowner protection act - Senator Moore

EMPLOYMENT

- [**HD4978**](#): An Act providing for cash assistance to certain persons over 65 years of age who stopped working as a result of COVID-19 or stay-at-home advisory (The CARE Act) - *Rep Elugardo and Rep Balse*
- [**SD2870**](#): An Act providing certain state employees sick leave for COVID-19 related absences - *Senator Feeney*
- [**HD4934**](#): An Act providing certain state employees sick leave for COVID-19 related absences - *Rep O'Day*
- [**HD4949**](#): An Act providing worker compensation protection to emergency response and medical personnel related to COVID-19 infection - *Rep Hendricks*
- [**HD4958**](#): An Act relative to COVID-19 emergency unemployment insurance expansion - *Rep Mark*

BUSINESS

- [**HD4971**](#): An Act to expand options for local restaurants during the COVID-19 emergency - *Rep Gordon*
- [**HD4985**](#): An Act relative to a Micro-Business stimulus package COVID-19 pandemic - *Rep González*
- [**HD4950**](#): An Act providing emergency access to equity and justice for all in response to COVID-19 - *Rep Miranda*
- [**SD2884**](#): An Act to expand take-out/delivery options for local restaurants in response to COVID-19 - *Senator DiZoglio*

EDUCATION

- [**HD4961**](#): An Act suspending student loan debt due to the COVID-19 emergency - *Rep Domb*

NONPROFIT

- [**HD4986**](#): An Act relative to Small Churches economic stimulus package in Gateway cities during the COVID-19 pandemic - *Rep González*

CASH ASSISTANCE

- [**HD4926**](#): An Act establishing the COVID-19 Quarantine Assistance Fund - *Rep Pignatelli*

- [HD4945](#): An Act providing for emergency cash assistance in response to COVID-19 Rules - *Rep Gouveia*

HEALTHCARE/PUBLIC HEALTH

- [HD4955](#): An Act providing for a MassHealth expansion in response to COVID-19 - *Rep Sabadosa*
- [HD4980](#): An Act providing out-of-state medical licensing reciprocity during the COVID-19 emergency - *Rep Kearney*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- [HD4963](#): An Act regarding decarceration and COVID-19 - *Rep Sabadosa*

ADMINISTRATIVE RELIEF

- [HD4990](#): An Act providing state tax filing relief due to COVID-19 - *Rep Gentile*
- [SD2882](#): An Act relative to remote notarization during COVID-19 state of emergency - *Senator Tarr*

OTHER

- [HD4984](#): An Act relative to internet access during the COVID-19 pandemic - *Rep González*
- [HD4965](#): An Act establishing a COVID-19 Local Food Access Emergency Fund - *Rep Domb*



For constituents, advocates, or anyone else looking to get in touch, you can reach the office at **617-722-2582**, or isabel.torres@mahouse.gov!

You can follow us on social media on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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