

## COVID-19/Coronavirus Advocacy & Policy Updates as of March 20, 2020 at 2:15pm

### **Emergency Funding**

Governor Hogan signed into law an emergency bill, SB 1079 (crossfile: HB 1661), that allows him transfer up to \$50 million from the Revenue Stabilization Account to fund costs pertaining to COVID-19. The Governor must give the Legislative Policy Committee at least 7 days to review the request before transferring funds. The Department of Budget and Management must submit a report to the Legislative Policy Committee and the Maryland General Assembly of how the funds were used within 60 days of the funds being released. For more information, please see the text of the law: [http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/chapters\\_noln/Ch\\_12\\_sb1079T.pdf](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/chapters_noln/Ch_12_sb1079T.pdf).

### **Healthcare and Unemployment Insurance**

Senators Bill Ferguson and Clarence Lam introduced an emergency bill, SB 1080 (crossfile HB 1663), that the Governor signed into law on March 19, 2020 during the catastrophic health emergency for COVID-19. Some key aspects the legislation stipulates are the following:

- Prohibits cost-sharing by carriers (HMO, insurer, nonprofit health service plan) for COVID-19 testing
- MD Department of Health (“the Department”) will cover testing and associated costs if they are not otherwise paid for by a carrier or another 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- Requires carriers and the MD Medical Assistance Program to cover the costs of COVID-19 immunization without cost-sharing if:
  - the Department has determined that the immunization will prevent COVID-19
  - the Department has determined that patient is in a category of individuals they have determined should not have to share the cost of immunization
- Authorizes out-of-state licensed health care professionals to provide telehealth to patients in Maryland and the Department to reimburse telehealth services provided to the patient
- Provides stipulations for alternative workweeks for certain employees.
- Allows the Secretary of Labor to determine if an individual is eligible for benefits if:
  - the employer temporarily ceases operations due to COVID-19, thus preventing employees from coming to work.
  - an individual is quarantine due to COVID-19 with the expectation of returning to work after the quarantine ends
  - an individual leaves employment due to a risk of exposure or infection of COVID-19 or to care for a family member to COVID-19.
- During this emergency and beyond:
  - A retailer is prohibited from increasing the sale or rental price of a good or service that increases the retailer’s profit by more than 10%, including the price of food, fuel, water, ice, medicine, medical supplies and equipment, cleaning products, building supplies and equipment, energy sources, and storage space.
  - An employer is prohibited from terminating an employee solely on the basis that the employee is required to be isolated or quarantined.

This legislation remains effective through April 30, 2021. For full information on this legislation, read the text here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/bills/sb/sb1080T.pdf>.

## Governor's Executive Orders

- March 14<sup>th</sup>: Suspends certain child care regulations in order to increase access to child care for providers of health care, emergency medical services, law enforcement, and other services. (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Day-Care-Order.pdf>)
- March 16<sup>th</sup>:
  - Closed racetracks, casinos, and betting facilities (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Casino-Racetrack-OTB-Closure-Order-1.pdf>)
  - Amended large gatherings prohibitions to be limited to 50 people (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Executive-Order-Amending-Large-Gatherings.pdf>)
    - Requires large gatherings and events to be cancelled or postponed until the state of emergency is over
    - Closed restaurants and bars, with the exception of take-out/carry-out options
    - Closed movie theaters and fitness centers
    - Closed bingo halls to the general public
    - Requires State and local government facilities with an expected occupancy of more than 50 people to post the appropriate notices of social distancing and provide opportunities for hand-washing
  - Temporarily expands permission for health care facilities to appoint health care practitioners with out-of-state licensure to practice health care in Maryland (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Executive-Order-Health-Care-Matters.pdf>)
  - Residential service companies (i.e., companies that provide gas, electric, sewage, disposal, telephone, telegraph, water, cable television, internet service, or a combination of those) may neither terminate nor charge fees for untimely or late payments during this state of emergency (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Executive-Order-Prohibit-Termination-of-Residential.pdf>)
  - Moratorium on all evictions throughout the duration of this public health emergency (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Executive-Order-Temp-Evictions-Prohibiting.pdf>)
- March 19<sup>th</sup>
  - Allows Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel with out-of-state licensures to operate in Maryland and expands the work they are eligible to do under the supervision of a healthcare practitioner (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Emergency-Medical-Services.pdf>)
  - Amends a March 16<sup>th</sup> Executive Order to (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Amending-Gatherings.pdf>):
    - restrict gatherings of more than 10 people
    - close senior citizen activity centers

- maintain that restaurants and bars may remain open for carry-out or delivery services only
- restrict access to fitness centers solely for licensed child care facilities within fitness centers
- reaffirm that all movie theaters are closed
- specify that malls are closed as of 5pm on March 19<sup>th</sup>, with the exception of retailers that are accessible from outside of the enclosed spaces of malls [retailers that are only accessible from enclosed areas of the malls are closed]
- confirm that recreational facilities (e.g., bowling alleys, bingo halls, skate parks) are closed as of 5pm on March 19<sup>th</sup>
- Note: there is a misdemeanor penalty for violating this order
- Waives aspects of weight limits under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations for the transport of emergency or medical equipment pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic response by up to 15% (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Vehicle-Weight-Limits-3.18.20-2.pdf>).

For updates from the Governor's office on the coronavirus:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/coronavirus/> or <https://www.facebook.com/GovLarryHogan/>

For all executive orders from the Governor's office:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/category/executive-orders/>

Tracking health updates on the coronavirus (including case tracking):

<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>

### **Howard County Council**

Request for everyone to refrain from attending public hearings. Testimony may be submitted electronically to [councilmail@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:councilmail@howardcountymd.gov) or U.S. Postal Mail. Meetings and hearings will be streamed online at <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Online-Tools/Watch-Us> and Channel 99 (Comcast) and Channel 44 (Verizon). Visit the County Council's website for updates: <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/>.

### **Maryland General Assembly**

The General Assembly adjourned on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Legislative priorities shifted to the budget, coronavirus responses, and other like matters. Other important legislation has been passing during this time. Visit the General Assembly's website for the most current information: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebiste>.

### **Additional Updates/Resources**

- Governor Hogan issued a proclamation to officially postpone the primary election from April 28<sup>th</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- The election to fill the vacancy in District 7 will still be on April 28<sup>th</sup> and will be vote-by-mail only.

- The MD Transportation Authority has moved to all cash-less tolling at toll points to minimize interaction between people.
- All Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP) stations/centers are transitioning to drive-thru testing throughout the State.
- The D.C. Metro, MARC, and Commuter Bus are reducing services to focus on emergency and health care personnel who need to get to their jobs and mobility customers who need assistance for medical appointments, dialysis, pharmacies, and grocery stores only.
- BWI now has restrictions for access solely to employees and individuals with tickets for flights. Everyone is encouraged to postpone non-essential travel.
- Coronavirus resources for businesses from the Departments of Labor and Commerce: <https://businessexpress.maryland.gov/coronavirus>
- Meals during coronavirus:
  - HCPSS: <https://news.hcpss.org/news-posts/2020/03/hcpss-to-provide-free-meals-during-school-closures-meal-service-march-17-27-2020/>
  - Resource to locate nearest food distribution site to you in Maryland (outside of HCPSS sponsored sites): [https://mars.msde.maryland.gov/mars\\_sitesearch/](https://mars.msde.maryland.gov/mars_sitesearch/)
- Recommendations: Encourage people to use Employee Assistance Programs (as available) and tele-health opportunities to help manage stress, anxiety, and other challenges during this time. Many counselors are offering services remotely.
- Governor Hogan has enacted a Hospital Surge Plan to increase the number of hospital beds by 6,000 in a multi-phase plan.
- Delivery and carry-out sales of alcohol are temporarily permitted by bars, restaurants, wineries, and distilleries, subject to liquor laws.
- The Department of General Services has instituted temperature checks and health screenings at the State House.
- Maryland has received official designation from the U.S. Small Business Association's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan program to provide low-interest loans for small businesses and nonprofits impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information and to apply, go to: <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance>
- Governor Hogan relaunched Maryland Unites to help us connect to share and access resources: <https://governor.maryland.gov/marylandunites/>

### Federal Updates

- For anyone who owes payments to the IRS for taxes up to \$1 million, you may delay payment until July 15, 2020 without interest or penalty. See: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/payment-deadline-extended-to-july-15-2020>
- Taxes are still required to be filed by April 15, 2020, as of March 20, 2020.
- Federal legislation to extend relief for the coronavirus was signed into law on March 18, 2020. (summary text: <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Families%20First%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf>) Some information on this law:
  - Increased funding for WIC, TEFAP, and nutritional assistance for seniors and to U.S. territories

- Coverage for COVID-19 testing through the Department of Defense
- Suspends work and training requirements for SNAP beneficiaries during this crisis
- Employees of employers with fewer than 500 employees and government employers who have been on the job for at least 30 days may take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave under the FMLA to adhere to instructions for quarantine, care for an at-risk family member who has been instructed to be quarantined, or to care for a child if the child's school or place of care has been closed.
- Increases funding for unemployment insurance.