

**COVID-19/Coronavirus Advocacy & Policy Updates  
as of March 25, 2020 at 2:45pm**

**[Newest information highlighted in yellow]**

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**State Updates**

**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>).
- March 20<sup>th</sup>: Authorizes a more expansive use of telehealth services via audio-only calls/conversations, video, and telecommunications in lieu of in-person health care visits; health care providers enrolled in the MD Medical Assistance Program or a program of the Behavioral Health Administration may be reimbursed for audio-only calls or conversations for medical assistance or behavioral health services if the provider does not violate the parameters of this order (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Medicaid-Telehealth-3.20.20.pdf>)
- March 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Prohibits price gouging - prohibits retailers from increasing the sale or rental price of good or services to a price that increases the retailer's value of profit by more than 10%; see link for a full list of items and services: <https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Price-Gouging-3.23.20.pdf>
  - The Secretary of Health is authorized to: implement a process to allow laboratories to develop and perform testing for COVID-19 consistent with FDA policies for coronavirus diagnostic tests, and issue directives to control and regulate the development and performance of COVID-19 testing (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Lab-Authorization-3.23.20.pdf>)
  - Amends the March 19<sup>th</sup> order prohibiting gatherings and events of more than 10 people to close non-essential businesses to the public as of 5pm of March 23, 2020 (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Gatherings-THIRD-AMENDED-3.23.20.pdf>)

- For Interpretive Guidance on which businesses are considered to be non-essential, read: COVID19-04, COIVD19-05, and COVID19-06 found here: <https://governor.maryland.gov/covid-19-pandemic-orders-and-guidance/>
- March 25<sup>th</sup>: Amends March 13<sup>th</sup> order to ensure that child care providers are limited to serving people supporting health care, emergency medical, law enforcement, and other essential services as delineated in the order (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Child-Care-Access.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/>

For updates on COVID-19 Executive Orders, Proclamations, and Guidance:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/covid-19-pandemic-orders-and-guidance/>

### **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>.

- The Department Legislative Services Building is closed as of March 19<sup>th</sup>, except for specific purposes.
- General Assembly created Joint COVID-19 Legislative Response Workgroup

### **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/>
- The Maryland Superintendent of Public Schools, Dr. Karen Salmon, and Governor Hogan announced that Public Schools will remain closed through April 24<sup>th</sup>
- Any essential personnel who are working and need child care may register for services by calling 1-877-261-0060.

## Howard County Updates

### 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/>. The County Council is working remotely.

### Other Updates

- Non-emergency County offices are closed.
- Hearings before Zoning Board, Board of Appeals, Hearing Examiner, and Alcohol Beverages Hearing Board are postponed in March and April.
- Howard County Executive Calvin Ball is hosting a virtual town hall on Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm about questions and concerns about the coronavirus, the County's response, the census, and upcoming elections. Residents can call in at 855-756-7520 ext. 57556# or tune in to the livestream at <https://www.facebook.com/HoCoGovExec/>. Pre-registration is encouraged; to sign up, visit: <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Countywide-Updates/Virtual-Town-Hall>

For County updates, visit: <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Countywide-Updates>

## **Federal Updates**

### **Taxes**

- 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>
- The deadline to file federal taxes has been extended to July 15, 2020 as of March 23, 2020. See: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-day-now-july-15-treasury-irs-extend-filing-deadline-and-federal-tax-payments-regardless-of-amount-owed>

### **Families First Coronavirus Response Act**

- Summary text: <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Families%20First%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf>
- Full text of legislation (H.R. 6201/Public Law 116-127): <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr6201/BILLS-116hr6201enr.pdf>
- Some key information in 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
- Fact Sheet: <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Families%20First%20Coronavirus%20Response%20Act%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

### **Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020**

- Summary text: <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Coronavirus%20Supp%20Summary%203.4.20.pdf>
- Full text of legislation: (H.R. 6074/Public Law 116-123): <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr6074/BILLS-116hr6074enr.pdf>
- Key information:
  - Funding for FDA, CDC, and Small Business Disaster Loans
  - Allocates funds to health care entities for disease prevention, treatment, etc., particularly out of the Department of Health and Human Services

- Directs funds to global health responses, State operations, humanitarian assistance, and to the USAID for oversight of coronavirus actions
- Provides an emergency telehealth waiver
- Fact Sheet:
  - <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Coronavirus%20Supplemental%20Fact%20Sheet%20%285%29.pdf>

## **\$2 Trillion Stimulus Bill**

*(Please note: Information presented here is from the Associate Press and Forbes. When the full legislative text is located, it will be shared.)*

This new stimulus bill is still in its final stages of working through legislative processes. The House of Representatives is currently not in session, so there is uncertainty around what process will be used for the House to vote on the bill. News sources report the following provisions in the bill:

- A more generous unemployment benefit including “gig” workers, freelancers, independent contractors, and some people who are still working but whose hours have been cut
- An increase of \$600 per week in addition normal State benefits for up to four months; adds 13 weeks of benefits for regular unemployment insurance through the end of 2020; insurance would be retroactive to January 27<sup>th</sup>
- Additional \$242 billion in emergency appropriations to fight COVID-19 and for safety net programs, including, food stamps (\$15.6 billion), child nutrition, hospitals, the CDC, and transportation and public health agencies
- A still-to-be-negotiated amount of money in loans to large businesses like airlines that have to be repaid; allows employers to defer payroll tax payments for 2020 until 2021 or 2022
- States’ Governors have requested at least \$150 billion in aid to State and Local governments to help ease the strain on their budgets; the final amount is to be determined; projections seem to agree that states will receive these funds since state budgets tend to rely on income and sales taxes for revenue and those will decline amidst business closures
- Sick leave may be readily available more quickly than unemployment insurance under previous emergency legislation
  - Employees may get 80 hours of sick leave at full pay, capped at \$511 per day, if they are unable to work or telework due to medical quarantine or treatment for COVID-19, suspecting they have COVID-19, or are ordered to quarantine by the government
  - Employees who care for someone else who has or is suspected of having COVID-19 or for a child whose school or day care is closed may receive two weeks of sick pay at 2/3 of their pay, capped at \$200 per day
  - Family leave: employees can get up to 12 weeks of family leave (first two weeks are unpaid) if they must stay at home with children whose schools or day care centers are closed due to the pandemic at a rate of 2/3 of their pay, capped at \$200 per day

Sources: <https://apnews.com/be6a343cc5a8ee6672a135a96849a4d4>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarahhansen/2020/03/25/states-local-governments-would-get-150-billion-from-2-trillion-stimulus-bill-schumer-says/#3d1c9d2311b8>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/advisor/2020/03/25/what-you-need-to-know-about-expanded-unemployment-benefits-for-covid-19/#5fdd0ba236e4>