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5th District of Massachusetts

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Hello Friend,

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to cause disruption to our daily lives and impact our communities, I wanted to share some important resources and helpful information with you to ensure that you and your family stay healthy and financially secure during this crisis.

Use these shortcuts to quickly find resources that are relevant to you:

- [1. Assistance for Small Businesses and Non-Profits](#)
- [2. Emergency Sick Leave](#)
- [3. Unemployment Insurance](#)
- [4. Useful Information for Parents and Kids](#)
- [5. Advice for Renters and Homeowners](#)
- [6. Social Security Information](#)
- [7. Important Health Care Updates for Veterans](#)
- [8. Getting Home from Abroad Safely](#)
- [9. Stay Updated, Stay Healthy](#)

Relief for Affected Workers, Small Businesses and Non-Profits

I know this pandemic is causing incredible financial hardship for businesses and is threatening many peoples' job security. Here are some vital resources that are available to keep you financially secure.

Assistance for Small Businesses and Non-Profits:

- The SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program provides small businesses and non-profits with working capital loans of up to \$2 million to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing. **Click [here](#) to apply for assistance .**
- Massachusetts is postponing the collection of regular sales tax, meals tax, and room occupancy taxes that would have been due in March, April, and May until June 20. All penalties and interest will be waived. Businesses that paid less than \$150,000 in regular sales plus meals taxes in the year ending February 29, 2020 will be eligible for relief for sales and meals taxes, and businesses that paid less than \$150,000 in room occupancy taxes in the year ending February 29, 2020 will be eligible for relief with respect to room occupancy taxes.

Emergency Sick Leave:

- If you are sick, please stay home. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act expanded paid emergency sick leave to more workers, and we are working to make sure all employees can receive paid sick leave. For more information, **please read this [fact sheet](#) .**
- Emergency paid sick leave also covers those who need to stay home to care for a sick child or family member.
- Contract workers, or gig economy workers, can now receive a tax credit in case they need to take emergency sick leave.

Unemployment Insurance :

- The Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) are filing emergency regulations that will allow people impacted by COVID-19 to collect unemployment if their workplace is shut down and expects to reopen in four or fewer weeks.
- New federal guidance has allowed for more flexibility at the state level for unemployment insurance. Massachusetts has suspended its one week waiting period, and other requirements have been temporarily relaxed to assist workers like bartenders and servers, who may not have been laid off but are currently out of work.
- If you already have an unemployment claim, all requirements regarding attending seminars at the MassHire career centers have been suspended, and missing deadlines due to the effects of COVID-19 will be excused under the MA Department of Unemployment Assistance's (DUA) good cause provision.
- **To learn more and file unemployment claims online, click [here](#) .**

Useful Information for Parents and Kids

From March 17 through April 6, all Massachusetts public and private schools will be closed. All Massachusetts daycare and child care centers, with the exception of residential and placement schools, will also be closed starting on Monday, March 23 through April 6.

- Massachusetts is establishing a process to approve child care programs that will serve vulnerable children and the children of families who are essential to the health, safety, and welfare of our communities. **More information can be found [here](#).**
- Massachusetts has received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide free school meals to students after their school has been closed due to COVID-19. **To learn more, please click [here](#).**
- The State is also working with multiple organizations to set up grab and go meal sites at various public locations like playgrounds or bus stops. To be notified of these locations, **please [follow me on Twitter](#)** where I regularly share updates on new food assistance locations in the 5th district.
- To stop the spread of COVID-19, many Massachusetts colleges and universities are switching to remote learning, ending study abroad programs, and closing on campus housing. If you or someone who know has been impacted by these changes, **please [contact me for assistance](#).**
- I have also [sent a letter](#) to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, demanding that affected students be given immediate access to loan debt relief and guaranteed reimbursement for classes, study abroad programs, and housing.

Advice for Renters and Homeowners

- **For renters:** If you are unable to pay your rent due to loss in income, please contact your landlord as soon as possible to make arrangements. Boston and Cambridge Housing Authorities have suspended evictions for their residents, and the Massachusetts Housing Court has halted evictions until April 21st.
- **For homeowners:** If you are unable to pay your mortgage due to loss in income, please contact your mortgage provider as soon as possible. A number of banks have posted their policies online. For those with government-backed mortgages, the Federal Housing Administration, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac have suspended foreclosures. For those with private lenders, there are mechanisms in place for borrowers experiencing an economic hardship that may enable you to reduce or suspend payments. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has a [list of suggestions and resources](#) that can be found on their website.
- The CFPB also has a [dedicated page on COVID-19](#) to help you stay financially secure during this pandemic.

Social Security Information

It is important for everyone to know that **all Social Security benefits will continue to be paid to those who receive them** . Scammers and other bad actors may try to misinform you into thinking that the pandemic will stop you from receiving Social Security payments, but that is not true.

- To slow the spread of COVID-19, all local Social Security offices will be closed to the public and will no longer be able to accept walk-in visitors.
- In case you or a loved one is need of assistance during the pandemic, you can access most services on the [Social Security Administration \(SSA\) website](#) or call toll-free at 1-800-772-1213.
- To access the SSA's designated COVID-19 webpage, which includes a list of frequently asked questions regarding the pandemic and its impact on Social Security benefits and services, please click [here](#) .

Important Health Care Updates for Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and its medical facilities are working hard to protect and care for veterans during this pandemic.

- Veterans and their families should **consult VA's website** for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 and treatment at VA facilities.
- Guidance from local VA medical facilities about their current operating status is available on each facility's website, **which can be found through VA's [facility locator tool](#)** .

Getting Home from Abroad Safely

I've heard from many constituents about a friend or loved one who is stuck abroad and trying to get home. While it is important not to panic, I encourage those who are impacted to follow these steps.

- Any American who is currently abroad and trying to return home should **enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrolment (SMART) Program**. SMART is a free service that provides travelers with important information from the U.S. Embassy about safety conditions in the country that they are visiting, allows the U.S. Embassy get in contact with them in an emergency, and helps family and friends get in touch with the enrollee while they are abroad.
- **Please also [contact my office](#)** so my staff can coordinate with the State Department to get you the assistance you need.

Stay Updated, Stay Healthy

For the most up-to-date and reliable information about COVID-19 at the state, national, and global level, please check these webpages regularly:

- [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

Here are some additional resources help you protect yourself and your family from COVID-19:

- [How it spreads](#)
- [Symptoms](#)
- [Older People and People With Chronic Diseases at Higher Risk](#)
- [Testing](#)

Did you find this information to be helpful?

Yes

No

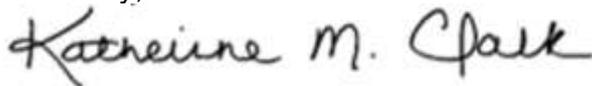
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[Click to open in a separate window](#)

**It is my job to listen to Massachusetts families. Please click to take my survey to share your views and join my email list.*

Again, please be sure to regularly check my [dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#) on my website for new health and public safety information as well as for additional resources as they arise. I promise to keep you updated as this situation evolves and will continue to do everything I can in Congress to protect American families from this virus.

Sincerely,



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