

Governor Baker's new executive order and UI regulations :

Yesterday, the **Governor filed several [executive orders](#)** regarding **closing restaurants and bars** for on-premise consumption, statewide **K-12 school closures** until April 7th, **hospital and assisted living visitor restrictions**, among others.

Regarding **Unemployment Insurance**, the Governor filed ([S 2598](#)) which would waive the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits to be paid to workers impacted by COVID-19.

More on **Unemployment Insurance guidance** to businesses and workers can be [found here](#).

Governor Baker also filed the municipal flexibility bill that would allow town moderators, in consultation with local board of selectmen, to **postpone Town Meetings for up to 30 days** because of a public health emergency, and a select board could push the meeting beyond June 30, which is currently the deadline in state law. He also filed legislation to make **September 14th a holiday for the Boston Marathon**.

State House News has made its **coronavirus coverage** free - [check out here](#) throughout the day for updates.

MASSHIRE BERKSHIRE CAREER CENTER CLOSED on March 16 & 17th: Effective March 16th, the Governor has directed that all non-emergency state employees not report to their workplaces, including career center employees. There is an emergency conference call at 11:30AM on March 16th to develop a strategy for job seekers collecting unemployment insurance, participating in training programs, and for employers impacted by mandated closures.

TRAINING PROGRAMS SUSPENDED: Due to school closings associated with mitigating impacts of COVID-19, the EOHED training programs (Advanced Manufacturing Training at McCann, Taconic and Berkshire Community College) have been suspended until April 7th, 2020. This information has been communicated to program participants, instructors, and schools. All parties will be kept informed of the status of the training program going forward and will adhere to state-wide guidance in this matter.

March 10, 2020 -

Governor Baker declares state of emergency for Commonwealth of Massachusetts based on mitigating the spreading of COVID-19 virus.

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

The Berkshire Workforce Board is required to follow the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development regulations as they are communicated. These recommendations currently include:

- Effective today, all conferences, seminars and other discretionary gatherings, scheduled and hosted by BWB involving external parties, are to be held virtually or cancelled for at least the next 30-days. BWB currently has access to “Go to Meetings” and I will be exploring other communication tools such as WebEx for conducting virtual meetings as we progress.
- In an attempt to mitigate the spread of the virus, effective today and for the next 2 weeks, all external meetings are cancelled. Alternatively, employees are encouraged to participate remotely.
- At this time we have cancelled the March 12th Board meeting, March 11th BWIN meeting, March 11th and 25th Career Meet Ups. My recommendation is to continue to plan for meetings after April 11th with the notion that they may be canceled/changed.
- Employees should not attend external work-related conferences, seminars or events.
- Regular internal business shall continue and BWB offices will remain open from 8AM-4PM and I encourage you to make phone calls and send limited emails (be cognizant to not overload people – be polite, concise, and include multiple actions). Use this as a time to get caught up with projects
- As previously communicated, employees feeling sick with fever or flu symptoms should not come into work. Email or text me if you are feeling ill.

Our primary focus is to continue to provide a safe working environment for our staff, consultants and Board Members and a safe learning environment for our students participating in our numerous trainings and career readiness programs. We recognize that the decisions being made at the state level are intended to support these efforts.

Berkshire Workforce Board External Meetings cancelled - effective immediately, all meeting of the Berkshire Workforce Board have been cancelled or encouraged to occur remotely. Email and phone communication is encouraged.

Business Resources provided by Associated Industries of MA (AIM) - Several companies have reached out to the BWB about guidelines during this challenging time, and the Associated Industries of MA (AIM) forwarded this “Employers Guide to Covid-19” which can be shared with companies. <https://aimnet.org/blog/the-employers-guide-to-covid-19/>

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE - The changing circumstances around COVID-19 are challenging to us all. All staff are reminded of our Mass4You Employee Assistance Program and are encouraged to access this EAP support as needed at 866-342-6892. The caring professionals staffing this line are available 24/7 to support you in dealing with any stress associated with medical challenges, caregiving and coping.

Thank you for your continued vigilance as we work together through the challenges of COVID-19. BWB will continue to keep you updated on further developments and encourage you to consult both the [Department of Public Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#) websites for the most up to date information.