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(Gordon)

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Rep. Gordon Provides Update on Efforts To Protect Burlington, Bedford, and Wilmington Residents From Effects of COVID-19 Virus

State Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford) wrapped up the business week with a flurry of activity, joining his colleagues in their efforts to protect Commonwealth residents as best they can from the ongoing COVID-19 challenges. The virus continues to spread. As of Friday, the number of cases in Massachusetts rose to 418, 85 more than the previous day's tally. Hospitalizations also climbed, from 43 to 58. A total of 3,132 Massachusetts residents have been tested for the virus.

Rep. Gordon, along with Senator Mike Barrett (D-Lexington) and Senator Cindy Friedman (D-Arlington) who jointly represent Bedford and Burlington, respectively, and Wilmington's delegation which also includes Rep. David Robertson (D-Tewksbury) and Senator Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester), urged their constituents to observe social distancing this weekend and through the crisis. Each urge their constituents to remember that the government's ability to protect our residents from the spread of this virus is dependent on our residents' willingness to stay at least six feet from each other and avoid crowds. Each urge them to: avoid unnecessary trips; cover a cough or sneeze; avoid touching each other, such as with handshakes and hugs; and, maybe most importantly, to wash their hands well and often. While Governor Charlie Baker reminded residents Friday afternoon that a "shelter in place" order has not been called, we recognized that if we do not see enough progress in containing the virus, such an order will be considered.

While the rest of the Bedford, Burlington and Wilmington delegation worked with their committees and districts on the matters that affect their priorities most, Rep. Gordon spent the day Friday working from home but engaged in conference calls and on-line communication with House members and advocates. His morning began with discussions with House leadership concerning the special and municipal elections bill that is expected to be brought up for a vote as early as Monday. The bill would allow municipalities, such as Burlington, with an upcoming election on April 4, to postpone its town election due to the current state of emergency.

Rep. Gordon is working with the House Speaker Robert DeLeo's office in hopes of negotiating a provision that will allow for mail-in voting during the emergency situation. While this will not be the final bill on the subject, Rep. Gordon hopes this will be a good time to introduce this convenience when it is most needed.

As House-Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Economic Development, Rep. Gordon then participated in a committee meeting that focused on measures to help the businesses and residents of the Commonwealth. The discussion was far-ranging and bipartisan. Many of the ideas will likely find their way to new legislation in the coming weeks.

The afternoon included a hearing on the Governor's bill concerning a municipality's authority to postpone Town Meeting and flexibility with regard to other issues. It would waive penalties for late payments for certain residents on an as-needed basis and address other emergency provisions in tough times.

Other updates to state policy includes the Governor's announcement that we are not yet in a "shelter in place" situation. However, bars and restaurants remain closed for in-service dining. Gyms and many personal service businesses like salons have closed. Schools, preschools and daycares are closed until April 6. Employers are encouraged to arrange for employees to work from home. There is little reason to venture out and distancing is the way we will hasten an end to this trying situation.

In other updates that have not been previously posted:

- Nursing homes and assisted living centers are required to restrict visitation of all visitors. Hospitals are required to screen all visitors before entering;
- The Department of Revenue will waive late-file and late-pay penalties for returns and payments due from March 20 through May 31 for meals and room occupancy taxes. That follows a postponement announced earlier this week for collection of sales, meals and room taxes for small businesses;
- A new order will also allow the Registry of Motor Vehicles to extend car vehicle registrations, to modify the conditions of registrations, plates and titles, and, with the Department of Environmental Protection, to postpone inspection requirements for 60 days.
- Licensing of certain health care professionals will be expedited to provide more access to care during this emergency;
- Occupational or professional licenses of individuals that are in good standing and that would otherwise be up for renewal during the COVID-19 emergency may be extended for 90 days after the end of the public health emergency;
- The Department of Environmental Protection and Attorney General Maura Healey are temporarily suspending enforcement of beverage container redemption due to the volume of traffic at retailers and to combat spread of COVID-19;
- Only the following eight RMV centers will be open until further notice: Boston/Haymarket, Brockton, Fall River, Lawrence, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Springfield, and Worcester;

- The Department of State issued a [level 4 Travel Advisory](#) today. In short terms, it means that United States Citizens should avoid international travel; and
- An emergency fund the state launched earlier in the week to support small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic will receive another \$10 million, because the initial funding was claimed so quickly.

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