

Massachusetts pot stores receive green light to reopen next week

Colin A. Young

State House News Service

Recreational marijuana stores will be allowed to reopen for curbside pick-up next Monday, just more than two months after they were ordered to close as part of the essential work order Gov. Charlie Baker put in place to control the spread of COVID-19.

Though medical marijuana treatment centers have been allowed to fulfill patient orders throughout the pandemic, adult-use cannabis operations – not just retailers, but also the growers and product manufacturers – were shut down effective March 24. Baker said they will be allowed to reopen Monday, May 25, for curbside pickup of orders.

“The whole point behind curbside is it doesn’t require people to go inside and stand around,” he said. “And there’s plenty of evidence at this point that inside spaces with a long period of time in which people are there, especially if they don’t have the ability to socially distance, is probably the biggest and most significant opportunity for spread.”

Cannabis advocates have been calling on Baker for weeks to allow non-medical marijuana sales to resume, and the chairman of the Cannabis Control Commission has said he thinks the industry could operate safely and effectively. A group representing many of the state’s cannabis retailers said Monday that it is glad Baker is allowing pot stores to be among the first businesses to reopen.

“We appreciate this gesture of confidence by the

Administration and believe it is reflective of our industry's commitment to workplace and consumer safety, as well as our history of compliance and significant regulatory oversight," David Torrisi, president of the Commonwealth Dispensary Association, said. "In addition to beginning to restore access to safe, tested adult-use cannabis, this determination provides a first step in providing meaningful economic relief to the more than 2,000 Massachusetts cannabis employees who will be able to return to work—workers who otherwise do not qualify for federal relief."

While adult-use shops have been closed, the CCC has seen a surge in registrations for the medical marijuana program. Though the product is largely identical, the medical program offers several benefits not available in the recreational market: medical marijuana is not taxed, patients can get marijuana delivered to their homes, and patients can buy edibles with higher THC levels than are allowed in the non-medical market.

Eight House Democrats ask Governor Baker to extend stay-at-home advisory

Katie Lannan
State House News Service

A group of eight House Democrats asked Gov. Charlie Baker on Friday to extend his administration's stay-at-home advisory and closure of most businesses beyond its current May 18 lapse date. Baker's economic reopening advisory board is set to issue its report Monday, and Baker has said he envisions

beginning a gradual process of allowing some businesses to resume operations around that date.

In a letter to Baker, the lawmakers – Reps. Mike Connolly, Lindsay Sabadosa, Christine Barber, Michelle DuBois, Nika Elugardo, Jack Lewis, Maria Robinson and Tami Gouveia – outline a series of concerns, including the continued rise in COVID-19 case counts.

“We recognize general improvement in the overall COVID-19 trends and are grateful for the sacrifices that Commonwealth residents have been making,” the letter says. “And while we are cognizant of the hardships people continue to endure, we think it would be premature to allow the Stay-At-Home Advisory to expire on Monday, May 18th. Furthermore, the current plan – to start reopening the economy less than one day after the Reopening Advisory Board releases its guidance – is confusing to many of our constituents and businesses. This confusion will result in poor public health choices and is deeply concerning to us as legislators.”

Governor Baker announces four-phase approach to reopening Massachusetts

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a four-phase approach to reopening the Massachusetts economy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and published Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards that will apply across all sectors and industries once reopening begins.

The goal of the phased reopening, based on public health

guidance, is to methodically allow certain businesses, services, and activities to resume, while protecting public health and limiting a resurgence of new COVID-19 cases.

Phase 1 will be “Start:” limited industries resume operations with severe restrictions

Phase 2 will be “Cautious:” additional industries resume operations with restrictions and capacity limits

Phase 3 will be “Vigilant:” additional industries resume operations with guidance

Phase 4 will be the “New Normal:” development of vaccine and/or therapy enables resumption of new normal

Businesses and activities that provided “COVID-19 Essential Services,” per Governor Baker’s March 23rd order, will continue to operate. Certain businesses and activities with a lower risk of COVID-19 transmission will open in earlier phases. Decisions and timing will be influenced by public health metrics for when the first phase of reopening begins, as well as when it is safe to move into concurrent phases.

CLICK HERE for more information about the four-phased reopening approach.

CLICK HERE for today’s presentation from the Reopening Advisory Board.

Additionally, the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the COVID-19 Command Center, in consultation with the Reopening Advisory Board and based on feedback from industry, labor, and community coalitions, has developed Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission as employees and customers begin to return to workplaces during the first phase of reopening. These Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards are applicable to all sectors and industries that will be open in phase one, and create new workplace

requirements for social distancing, hygiene, staffing and operations, and cleaning. These standards are being released to give workplaces time to plan and prepare for reopening.

For social distancing:

- All persons, including employees, customers, and vendors should remain at least six feet apart to the greatest extent possible, both inside and outside workplaces
- Establish protocols to ensure that employees can practice adequate social distancing
- Provide signage for safe social distancing
- Require face coverings or masks for all employees

For hygiene:

- Provide hand washing capabilities throughout the workplace
- Ensure frequent hand washing by employees and adequate supplies to do so
- Provide regular sanitization of high touch areas, such as workstations, equipment, screens, doorknobs, restrooms throughout work site

For staffing and operations:

- Provide training for employees regarding the social distancing and hygiene protocols
- Employees who are displaying COVID19-like symptoms do not report to work
- Establish a plan for employees getting ill from COVID-19 at work, and a return-to-work plan

For cleaning and disinfecting:

- Establish and maintain cleaning protocols specific to the business
- When an active employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, cleaning and disinfecting must be performed
- Disinfection of all common surfaces must take place at

intervals appropriate to said workplace

CLICK HERE for more information about the Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards.

In addition to these Mandatory Standards which apply to all workplaces, the Reopening Advisory Board is developing Sector Specific Safety Protocols and Best Practices that will detail how particular industries should operate upon reopening.

The Reopening Advisory Board is scheduled to provide its full report to Governor Baker on Monday, May 18th.

FDA Authorizes First Diagnostic Test Using At-Home Collection of Saliva Specimens

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized the first diagnostic test with the option of using home-collected saliva samples for COVID-19 testing. Specifically, the FDA issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) to Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory for their COVID-19 laboratory developed test (LDT), which had been previously added to the high complexity molecular-based LDT “umbrella” EUA, to permit testing of samples self-collected by patients at home using the Spectrum Solutions LLC SDNA-1000 Saliva Collection Device. This announcement builds on last month’s EUA for the first diagnostic test with a home-collection option, which uses a sample collected from the patient’s nose with a nasal swab and saline.

“Authorizing additional diagnostic tests with the option of at-home sample collection will continue to increase patient access to testing for COVID-19. This provides an additional option for the easy, safe and convenient collection of samples required for testing without traveling to a doctor’s office, hospital or testing site,” said FDA Commissioner Stephen M. Hahn, M.D. “We will continue to work around the clock to support the development of accurate and reliable tests, as we have done throughout this pandemic. The FDA has authorized more than 80 COVID-19 tests and adding more options for at-home sample collection is an important advancement in diagnostic testing during this public health emergency.”

Today’s EUA for Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory’s molecular test permits testing of a saliva sample collected from the patient using a designated self-collection kit. Once patients collect their saliva sample, they return it to the Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory in a sealed package for testing.

The Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory test is currently the only authorized COVID-19 diagnostic test that uses saliva samples to test for SARS-CoV-2, the strain of coronavirus that causes COVID-19. The test remains prescription only.

Today’s authorization is limited to testing performed at the Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory using their molecular LDT COVID-19 authorized test for saliva specimens collected using the Spectrum Solutions LLC SDNA-1000 Saliva Collection Device. It is important to note that this is not a general authorization for at-home collection of patient samples using other collection methods, saliva collection devices, or tests, or for tests fully conducted at home.

Governor Baker lifts ban on golfing in Massachusetts

Colin A. Young

State House News Service

Gov. Charlie Baker is ready to let people tee off in Massachusetts again.

The administration updated a COVID-19 essential services webpage Thursday morning and said that while golf courses are not considered essential businesses, “private operators of golf courses may permit individuals access to the property so long as there are no gatherings of any kind...”

The new rules require that “appropriate social distancing of six feet between individuals is strictly followed” and groups will be limited to four golfers, as is traditional.

The updated guidance also allows municipal golf courses to open, but all courses must comply with a strict set of restrictions – including a ban on caddies and golf carts and the mandate that courses have hand sanitizer readily available.

Golfers have become vocal about their desire to get back on the links, and their frustration that the governor consistently encouraged people to get outside and get exercise, but did not seem to give real credence to the idea that golf could be a safe, distant activity.

“We’re not a warm weather state. It’s been winter for the most part. I get the fact that there are golfers who like to golf in the winter. But if you were to say to me do I think that golfing in the winter would be considered an essential thing to be doing at a point in time when we were closing down thousands and thousands and thousands of other non-essential

businesses in Massachusetts? My answer to that would be no," Baker said last week.

The governor was responding to a question from online golf columnist Tom Gorman, who recently dubbed the governor "Golf's Grim Reaper."

Of the states that closed golf courses at the start of the pandemic, Massachusetts was the last to allow the sport to resume.

"Things have gotten testy at times in Massachusetts as eager golfers have clamored their state government for golf courses to reopen," Golf Advisor, which tracks the status of courses around the country, wrote Thursday morning.

Under the new guidance, golf courses can identify staff to serve as security personnel and enforce social distancing, but no other employees may work the "recreational component" of the golf operation. Groundskeeping has been allowed throughout the pandemic. Golfers will have to pay either online or via a remote payment method.

Players must wait in their car until 15 minutes before their tee time, and courses are required to keep practice greens and driving ranges closed. Tee times must be at least 15 minutes apart, according to the guidance.

Everyone must use their own clubs. Flag sticks must remain in the hole at all times, there will be no rakes to tidy bunkers, and courses must remove or cover ball washers. Once the round is over, players must immediately return to their cars.

There will be no 19th hole – clubhouses, pro shops, restaurants and other facilities must remain closed, under the new rules.

New Bedford Regional Airport receives \$472,500 grant for perimeter fencing

Today, Congressman Bill Keating announced an additional \$1,956,550 in funding from the US Department of Transportation for four airports in the Ninth Congressional District. The following airports received grants:

- \$927,000 for Barnstable Municipal Airport to acquire snow removal equipment and an additional \$250,000 to acquire an aircraft rescue vehicle;
- \$472,500 for New Bedford Regional Airport to install perimeter fencing;
- \$145,500 for Marshfield Municipal Airport to acquire additional land for approaches and an additional \$110,250 for perimeter fencing; and
- \$51,300 for Plymouth Municipal Airport to extend their taxiway.

“These funds, coupled with the recent grants from the CARES Act, will further strengthen our local airports that are vital to the economic success of our region,” said Congressman Keating.

Downtown New Bedford's Green Bean opens back up

Green Bean, a popular downtown New Bedford coffee and vegan spot on 740 Purchase Street, announced that they are back open today from 7 am – 2 pm. Customers will have to order online or by phone. **Green Bean temporarily closed their business on March 23** when the coronavirus pandemic starting to take hold in Massachusetts.

One of New Bedford's most popular restaurants, **No Problemo**, re-opened two weeks ago.

New Bedford's Blue Harvest Fisheries re-opens after "enhanced cleaning and disinfection"

Last Thursday, Blue Harvest Fisheries at 40 Herman Melville Blvd in New Bedford was forced to close its doors by the New Bedford Board of Health after three of its employees tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. The business is now back open.

The "cease and desist" order for the facility hinged upon the "enhanced cleaning and disinfection" of the entire business and a subsequent 3-day waiting period.

The business was quick to respond when they discovered the

employees had tested positive for the virus and did not wait for the “cease and desist” order from the City’s Board of Health. Instead, they immediately hired an independent, professional, third-party cleaner to perform a thorough disinfecting and cleaning of the entire facility.

In addition, they have enacted a new safety protocol for their staff in the form of incorporating rigorous sanitation, cleaning, and disinfecting procedures, as well as, social distancing practices.

In early April, Walgreens on Kempton Street in New Bedford given cease and desist order. Details [here](#).

Bristol County Savings Promotes South Dartmouth resident to indirect loan officer

Bristol County Savings Bank (BCSB), headquartered in Taunton, Massachusetts, announces the promotion of Melissa F. Beauregard to the position of Indirect Loan Officer. In this capacity, Beauregard coordinates the underwriting and credit quality of indirect car loan applications from the Bank’s Main Office at 29 Broadway in Taunton.

Prior to her promotion, Beauregard held the position of Indirect Loan Underwriter for the Bank. Previously she served in a number of capacities with J.J. BEST BANC & CO in New Bedford, Massachusetts, including Senior Loan Officer and Loan Processor.

Beauregard is an animal rescue advocate, participating in numerous local events to raise awareness and funds for the cause. She is also a notary public for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and earned her associate degree, with honors, from the New England Institute of Technology, Warwick, Rhode Island. Beauregard resides in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

MA Lawmakers urge Trump to fully fund COVID-19 response for Massachusetts Tribal Nations

United States Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Edward J. Markey (D-MA), along with Representatives William Keating (D-MA-09), Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA-08), Katherine Clark (D-MA-05), Lori Trahan (D-MA-03), Joseph P. Kennedy III (D-MA-04), James P. McGovern (D-MA-02), Richard E. Neal (D-MA-01), Seth Moulton (D-MA-06), and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-07) sent a letter to President Trump requesting that he direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to waive the traditional cost-share requirements for all COVID-19-related assistance for the Commonwealth's two federally recognized tribal nations, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe.

The lawmakers' letter comes after President Trump declared COVID-19-related emergencies for both tribal nations and follows a similar request for the Commonwealth made by the Massachusetts lawmakers last week.

"The response to the pandemic is unlike anything the

Commonwealth or our nation has experienced in modern times, and the need for additional resources to combat this crisis grows with each passing day,” the lawmakers wrote. “These needs are also felt acutely by the two federally recognized tribal nations in Massachusetts, which are being stretched extremely thin in order to provide crucial services to their citizens.”

In early April, leaders from both tribal nations wrote to President Trump to request waivers from any cost share and to request that FEMA increase its federal cost share from 75% to 100%, citing the financial hardship caused by the pandemic. Unlike states, the two tribal nations do not have a tax base to help cover the cost of services to their citizens and as a result, they have not been able to implement fully all the emergency measures they would have been able to take if they did not bear a significant share of the cost. In addition, the federal government’s trust and treaty obligations require that tribal nations not be left to suffer severe hardship from an emergency.

“The federal government ought to provide COVID-19-related assistance while allowing for the tribal nations to endure as little hardship as possible,” the lawmakers continued. “Granting the requests of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and waiving the traditional cost share requirements for all COVID-19-related assistance to them, will better empower them to address this pandemic.”

2020.04.22 Letter to President re. FEMA cost share for Massachusetts tribes

Senator Warren has been very active in working to ensure Indian Country has the resources it needs and is owed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. She introduced the Tribal Medical Supplies Stockpile Access Act (S. 3514), legislation that would guarantee that the Indian Health Service, tribal

health authorities, and urban Indian organizations have access to the Strategic National Stockpile, a federal repository of drugs and medical supplies that can be tapped if a public health emergency could exhaust local supplies. Senator Warren cosponsored Senator Udall's CDC Tribal Public Health Security and Preparedness Act (S. 3486), which would enable tribal nations and tribal organizations to apply directly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for Public Health Emergency Preparedness program funds. She joined Senator Udall's letter to Vice President Mike Pence, head of the White House Task Force on Coronavirus, urging him to engage meaningfully with tribal leaders and Native communities. Senator Warren also joined colleagues in urging President Trump to ensure that COVID-19 relief is implemented in a way that upholds the federal trust and treaty responsibilities, respects tribal sovereignty, and provides for meaningful government-to-government consultation with tribal nations.