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Governor Mills Takes Further Steps to Respond to COVID-19, Protect Health and Safety of Maine People

March 18, 2020

Governor prohibits dine-in service at bars and restaurants; bans gatherings more than 10 people & signs emergency legislation to respond to COVID-19

Under authority granted to her in a civil state of emergency, Governor Janet Mills today [issued an Executive Order](#) mandating that all restaurants and bars statewide close to dine-in customers effective today, March 18, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. for a period of 14 days until midnight, March 31, 2020. Take-out, delivery, and drive-through options can continue. In her order, the Governor also prohibited all gatherings of more than 10 people until further notice, mandating the latest U.S. CDC's guidance on gatherings. In addition, Governor Mills strongly urged non-essential public-facing businesses, such as gyms, hair salons, theatres, casinos, shopping malls, to close their doors for the next two weeks to minimize public gatherings. These new actions come as Governor Mills seeks to significantly strengthen social distancing measures in Maine. Social distancing is considered one of the most effective methods to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

"I do not take these steps lightly. Maine's small businesses and their workers are the backbone of our economy, and I understand that these actions will not only impact them, they will also disrupt the lives of Maine people," said Governor Janet Mills. "However, COVID-19 continues to spread across Maine and more aggressive action is required to mitigate that spread and to protect the health and welfare of Maine people. My Administration is committed to working with businesses whose operations are affected by COVID-19. I continue to strongly urge all Maine people to take seriously the threat of this virus and to practice social distancing. We all have a responsibility to do our part."

"We are continuing our work to find ways that we can support both Maine businesses and Maine workers during this challenging time," said Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Heather Johnson. "DECD, in partnership with other departments in Governor Mills' Administration, is committed to finding solutions and to partnering with other entities that can offer support to ensure that there are resources available for businesses impacted by the changes in the market as a result of the Coronavirus."

Governor Mills' Executive Order:

- **Prohibits gatherings of more than 10 people statewide.** Gatherings subject to this Order are those that are

primarily social, personal, and discretionary events not work-related events. Such gatherings include, without limitation, community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based events; social clubs; sporting events with spectators; concerts, conventions, fundraisers, parades, fairs, and festivals; and any similar event or activity in a venue such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theater, gymnasium, fitness center or private club.

- **Closes dine-in facilities at all restaurants and bars statewide.** All restaurants and bars shall close their dine-in facilities. Such businesses that offer carry-out, delivery, and drive-through food and beverage service may continue to do so but eating and drinking inside restaurants and bars is temporarily prohibited. Such businesses offering carry-out, delivery, and drive-through food and beverage should employ social distancing best practices and minimize gathering of customers. The Governor urges Maine people to continue to support our establishments by purchasing take-out meals or by buying gift cards or other measures of support.

The Order will be reviewed prior to its expiration date for a determination of the need for revision and renewal.

In addition, Governor Mills strongly urged non-essential public-facing businesses, such as gyms, hair salons, theatres, casinos, shopping malls, to close their doors for the next two weeks to minimize public gatherings.

This does not include businesses that provide essential services including, but not limited to: food processing, agriculture, industrial manufacturing, construction, trash collection, grocery and household goods (including convenience stores), home repair and hardware and auto repair, pharmacy and other medical facilities, biomedical and health care, child care, post offices and shipping outlets, insurance, banks, gas stations, laundromats, veterinary clinics and animal feed and supply stores, shipping stores, public transportation, and hotel and commercial lodging.

Although these businesses may remain open, Governor Mills strongly urged Maine people to implement social distancing measures and to be thoughtful about the need to visit these businesses.

Other businesses, including but not limited to legal services, business and management consulting, professional services and insurance services, are encouraged to have employees work remotely. If that is not possible, Governor Mills urges employees to implement social distancing measures.

Governor Mills also signed into law today an emergency bill granting her access to at least \$11 million in State funding to respond to COVID-19 and an omnibus emergency bill expanding authorities of State and local officials to allow them greater flexibility to respond to the virus. The bipartisan supplemental budget also provides \$1 million to the Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support public health nurses and cover costs of lab tests and other response efforts not otherwise federally funded.

Governor Janet Mills [has also taken strong steps to protect Maine workers and small businesses](#) impacted by COVID-19. Upon Governor Mills' request, [the Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#) declared that Maine businesses are now eligible to apply for economic support loans to help them overcome any temporary loss of revenue due to COVID-19. Additionally, the emergency omnibus package she signed today temporarily revises eligibility for unemployment insurance to extend it to individuals whose employment has been impacted by COVID-19. It also temporarily waives the one week waiting period for benefits so that workers may obtain benefits faster and ensures that claims for UI will not affect an employer's experience rating. It also establishes a consumer loan guarantee program through FAME, in partnership with financial institutions, to provide low- or no- interest loans for eligible people in Maine.

These new steps from the Governor build on the work done by the Mills Administration to prepare for and respond to COVID-19, including:

- [Convening a Coronavirus Response Team](#), led by Maine CDC Director Dr. Nirav Shah and comprised of key individuals in the Mills Administration, to coordinate State government's response across departments and local agencies and health authorities;
- [Signing a proclamation of civil emergency](#) to bring the State of Maine to highest alert and allowing her to deploy all available state resources to protect the health and safety of Maine people and to take every action she reasonably deems necessary to help respond to and protect against the spread of COVID-19 in Maine. The proclamation also

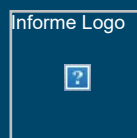
eased Maine's access to critical federal aid to boost response efforts.

- Signing into law a \$73 million supplemental budget proposal that protects the health and well-being of Maine people as the State responds to COVID-19;
- Signing into law a package of emergency measures granting her access to at least \$11 million in State funding to respond to COVID-19, expanding authorities of State and local officials to allow them greater flexibility to respond to the virus, and provide support to Maine workers impacted by the virus.
- [Issuing a Declaration of Abnormal Market Disruption](#), drafted in close consultation with Attorney General Aaron M. Frey, to prohibit price gouging of certain necessities;
- [Declaring a health insurance emergency](#) to require health insurance carriers providing health care coverage in Maine's commercial market to cover costs related to coronavirus testing and increase access to care.
- [Directing the Maine Department of Health and Human Services](#) to issue emergency rules to ensure MaineCare does not charge copays for office visits and prescription drugs that may be needed for COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment, and to allow for a prescription refill of up to 90 days so people have to make fewer visits to pharmacies.
- [Recommending ending classroom instruction](#) in all public schools as soon as reasonably practical
- [Applying for and receiving a waiver](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow schools the ability to provide meals offsite to students, if the school or community currently has, or qualifies for, a USDA Summer Food Service Program.
- [Recommending hospital systems and health care providers](#) across Maine postpone non-urgent medical procedures, elective surgeries, and appointments until further notice.
- [Recommending all long-term care providers](#) prohibit all visitors and non-essential health care personnel; except for certain compassionate care situations such as an end of life situation, until further notice.
- Distributing personal protective equipment to first responders and health care professionals across Maine as it becomes available.
- [Temporarily suspending](#) non-essential, out-of-state travel for all State employees and reviewing leave policies and telecommuting options.
- [Launching a 211 option for Mainers to get answers](#) to questions about COVID-19 at any time. This service is available by dialing 211 (or 1-866-811-5695), texting your ZIP code to 898-211, or emailing info@211maine.org.

For more information on Maine's response to COVID-19 and updated testing results, visit the Maine CDC [website](#). Additionally, Maine CDC and 211 Maine have launched a new option for Mainers to get answers to questions about COVID-19 at any time. This service is available by dialing 211 (or 1-866-811-5695), texting your ZIP code to 898-211, or emailing info@211maine.org.

The best thing that Maine people can do to protect their health is to practice social distancing and take the same preventive measures that avoid catching a cold: Wash your hands often for 20 seconds. Cover coughs and sneezes. Stay home if you are sick. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, shortness of breath, and lower respiratory distress. Call ahead to a health care professional if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness. Health care providers will make the initial determination on whether COVID-19 testing is advisable. As appropriate, health providers will take samples and submit them to Maine CDC.

Credit

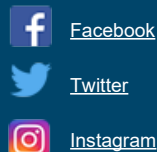


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