



Office of  
**Representative Hannah E. Kane**  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## **Rep. Kane supports \$55M supplemental budget to fund COVID-19 testing and school masks**

**BOSTON** – State Representative Hannah Kane (R- Shrewsbury) recently supported a \$55 million supplemental budget that provides funding for expanded COVID-19 testing and the distribution of masks for public school districts, while also setting a date for the 2022 state primary election.

House Bill 4340, *An Act relative to immediate COVID recovery needs*, was engrossed on a vote of 159-0 in the House of Representatives on January 19. The Senate is expected to take up the bill the week of January 23.

Representative Kane said the spending proposal earmarks \$25 million to help establish and expand COVID-19 testing sites across Massachusetts and to purchase tests. Funding will be made available for on-site testing locations such as community health centers, urgent care centers and non-profit organizations, which will be required to provide walk-up appointments.

An additional \$25 million will be used to acquire N95 and KN95 masks for distribution to students, staff and faculty at elementary and secondary public schools no later than February 28. The remaining \$5 million is being set aside to help increase vaccination rates for children between the ages of 5 and 11 living in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus.

Representative Kane noted that House Bill 4340 requires the Baker-Polito Administration to seek federal reimbursement at the highest allowable rate for all eligible expenditures contained in the bill.

The supplemental budget also establishes the 2022 state primary date for Tuesday, September 6. This authorization is needed to ensure that Massachusetts is in compliance with the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, which requires absentee ballots to be mailed to qualifying military and overseas voters who apply for a ballot at least 45 days before the November 8 state election.

House Bill 4340 also temporarily extends certain pandemic emergency provisions that had expired in December. According to Representative Kane, municipalities will be allowed to continue holding remote public meetings until July 15, 2022 to help mitigate the transmission of the coronavirus, and remote notarization using electronic video conferencing will continue to be authorized through the same date.

House Bill 4340 contains an additional provision allowing certain retired state, county and municipal employees to continue working during the pandemic as a consultant or an independent contractor without impacting their pension. This provision does not apply to individuals who were retired under a general or special disability law.

Before the final vote on the bill, additional language was adopted via a consolidated amendment that would:

- allow funding to be used for the COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Initiative to increase booster shot rates in disproportionately impacted communities;
- allow for Town Meetings to meet remotely until July 15, 2022 and to be conducted with a reduced quorum requirement equal to not less than 10 percent of the normal quorum requirement;
- provide health care professionals and health care facilities with immunity from liability in the course of providing health care services during the COVID-19 emergency – retroactive to November 22, 2021 and effective until February 28, 2022 – provided they acted in good faith and in accordance with emergency rules and applicable laws;
- extend the period for which a public corporation may conduct an annual or special meeting of the shareholders from December 15, 2021, to July 15, 2022; and
- extends period for which directors of charitable corporations may hold remote meetings and other modifications from December 15, 2021 to July 15, 2022.

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