



Office of
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

For Immediate Release

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Rep. Kane: Legislature taking proactive steps to protect public, assist workers during coronavirus outbreak

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) says she is working with her colleagues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic by taking steps to protect the public and provide support for workers who lose their jobs as a result of the outbreak.

Representative Kane noted the House of Representatives and the Senate have already approved a bill waiving the one-week waiting period for laid off workers applying for unemployment benefits. The changes are retroactive to March 10 – the day Governor Charlie Baker declared a State of Emergency in response to the outbreak – and will remain in place for 90 days after the Governor’s order is lifted.

The Legislature previously enacted a supplemental budget providing \$15 million in assistance to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, as well as local and regional boards of health. This money is being used to support ongoing monitoring, treatment, containment, public awareness and prevention efforts against the virus.

Representative Kane has also co-sponsored three bills in response to COVID-19. The first, *An Act relative to emergency hazard health duty* (S2602/HD4927) would allow all first responders who contract, have symptoms of, or otherwise become affected by COVID-19 to have their medical condition or incapacity to work presumed to be work-related and considered to be on duty time, allowing for continued compensation. No first responder will have to use sick time, vacation time, or personal time to cover COVID-19 related incapacitation, and they will receive regular pay throughout the entirety of the incapacitation. The second bill she co-sponsors, *An act providing certain state employees sick leave for COVID-19 related absences* (SD2870/HD4934), provides that any employee of the Commonwealth who is absent from work due to COVID-19 infection, quarantine, or isolation as directed by a physician or authorized public health authority and does not have sufficient earned sick leave time for the absence will be granted sufficient sick leave time to ensure any such absence is paid. Finally, she co-sponsors *An Act relative to restaurant relief* (HD4967), which would allow restaurants to sell their current inventory of beer, wine, and spirits that are canned or bottled and unopened to members of the general public who are not under 21 years of age.

Representative Kane also said the House and Senate are now working on a proposal filed by Governor Baker to assist municipalities with essential government functions during the State of Emergency. House Bill 4572 would allow for a 30-day postponement of Town Meeting due to the public health emergency created by the virus, while giving local Select Boards the power to extend Town Meeting beyond the June 30 cut-off date mandated by state law if necessary.

House Bill 4572 would also allow for the temporary reduction of quorum requirements for Town Meeting to comply with “social distancing” measures designed to prevent the spread of the virus. The bill would also authorize towns that are unable to finalize a budget by June 30 to continue spending at current fiscal year levels on a month-to-month basis for essential operations, using revolving funds and existing cash balances, until a new budget is finalized.

Representative Kane said she will continue to provide regular updates for constituents on her social media pages, including on her website www.rephannahkane.com, Facebook page www.facebook.com/StateRepresentativeHannahKane, and her Twitter account, handle @HannahEKaneMA. Constituents can also contact Representative Kane directly by calling 617-722-2810 or e-mailing Hannah.Kane@mahouse.gov.

Representative Kane expects the House and Senate will be taking additional actions in the weeks ahead to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. In the meantime, she encourages constituents to utilize the state’s website at <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19> to stay informed about the latest developments during the State of Emergency.

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