



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

For Immediate Release

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**House approves legislation to help keep local
government running during COVID-19 pandemic**
Bill also extends tax filing deadline, allows beer & wine take-out at restaurants

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) is continuing to work closely with her legislative colleagues and the Baker-Polito Administration to ensure that municipal governments can continue to operate and provide essential services to residents during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

On March 27, the House of Representatives approved a redrafted version of legislation originally filed by Governor Charlie Baker that gives communities more flexibility in completing town meeting business and finalizing a budget during a declared State of Emergency. The bill also allows bars and restaurants holding liquor licenses to sell beer and wine for take-out under certain conditions, and extends the state income tax filing deadline from April 15 to July 15.

“H4598 goes a long way in acknowledging that Commonwealth cities and towns need more flexibility in governance to navigate this unprecedented public health and economic crisis. I was happy to work with public officials in the towns I represent to voice their opinions on the bill to House leadership, and I thank Governor Baker for filing this important legislation,” remarked Representative Kane.

House Bill 4598, *An Act to address challenges faced by municipalities and state authorities resulting from COVID-19*, authorizes town moderators – in consultation with the select board and local public health or safety officials – to postpone town meeting for up to 30 days due to a declared public health or safety emergency. A recess or continuance can be repeated as long as the State of Emergency is in effect, and for up to 5 days after the order is lifted. However, the town must notify the Attorney General within 10 days of the initial recess or continuance and provide details on the reasons for postponement.

Representative Kane noted that House Bill 4598 also gives local select boards the option to extend town meeting business beyond the June 30 cut-off date mandated by state law, and allows towns that are unable to finalize a new municipal budget by June 30 to continue operating using monthly interim budgets. These interim budgets can be funded using existing free cash or unexpended funds in a revolving account, enterprise fund or special revenue account, with the approval of the director of local accounts at the Department of Revenue.

To assist restaurants and bars that have lost business due to the current statewide ban on dining in, House Bill 4598 provides for the sale of wine and beer in conjunction with food take-out and delivery orders. Customers will be limited to 1.5 liters of wine and 192 ounces of beer per transaction, and all orders must be placed on or before midnight.

House Bill 4598 also:

- authorizes cities, towns and districts that incur a deficit this year to amortize the debt over the next three fiscal years, using guidelines issued by the Commissioner of Revenue;
- extends the deadline for municipalities to exercise a right of first refusal option to purchase property until 90 days after the State of Emergency is lifted;
- removes the annual cap on hours and earnings for retired employees collecting a pension so they can work during the State of Emergency, provided they did not retire under a general or special disability law;
- permits cities and towns to extend the deadlines for property tax payments and applications for tax exemptions to a date no later than June 1;
- authorizes cities and towns to waive interest payments and other penalties for late payments of excises and taxes, including water and sewer payments, if payment is made before June 30;
- allows permit-granting authorities to hold meetings and public hearings remotely during the State of Emergency, using the guidelines established in the Governor's March 12 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law; and
- ensures that no permit, variance, special permit, license, amendment, extension, or other approval issued by a permit-granting authority will lapse or be deemed granted, approved or denied until 45 days after the State of Emergency is lifted, or by a date otherwise prescribed by law, whichever is later.

House Bill 4598 now moves to the Senate for further action.

Representative Kane 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.

Additional resources and information about the coronavirus is available on the state's website at <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

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