



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

*For Immediate Release*

Contact: Anna Darrow, 617-722-2810, [Anna.Darrow@mahouse.gov](mailto:Anna.Darrow@mahouse.gov)

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## **Rep. Kane rejects House re-opening plan, saying it lacks key details and accountability**

**BOSTON** – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently opposed a plan to re-open the House of Representatives, saying it lacks key details and grants sweeping powers to an 8-member working group that is not required to hold public hearings or solicit feedback. The plan also contains a vaccine mandate for legislators and staff, which Representative Kane supports.

House Bill 4121, *An Order to safeguard the health of House members and employees during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic*, was approved on a vote of 131-28 on September 23. The Order requires all House members and employees to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19, or to seek a reasonable accommodation due to a qualifying disability, qualifying medical condition, or a sincerely held religious belief. Those who fail to do so will be required to work remotely and not allowed in the State House, and would possibly face additional penalties until they are in compliance.

Representative Kane said she is concerned the House Working Group created under the Order will have the power to unilaterally “establish policies and procedures for the implementation, administration and enforcement” of the Order, without being subject to any accountability or further approval by House members.

The Order also requires “all members, officers and employees physically working at the State House” to comply with “any additional mitigation measures” that may be imposed by the House Working Group beyond the vaccination requirement, including expanded mask use throughout the building. Representative Kane said the Order essentially gives the working group broad authority to issue a wide range of mandates without any limitations.

Representative Kane also cited the lack of safeguards contained in the Order to ensure that information about a member’s or employee’s vaccination status will remain confidential. The Order is silent on how this information will be protected and what penalties would be imposed for improperly disclosing someone’s personal information.

A previous working group report released on September 20 called for a four-phase re-opening plan, which would allow for a limited number of House members and employees from “core offices” to be physically present in the building during the initial phase and would eventually re-open the building to

the public in the fourth and final phase. That report was also short on details regarding a timeline for implementing each phase and the specific metrics and benchmarks that would be used to advance from one phase to the next.

Representative Kane said the latest Order passed by the House does not include any details on when and how the State House will finally re-open to the public, adding that she would have preferred to see the working group empowered to make specific recommendations which could then be vetted and amended by the full membership to provide for a safe and responsible re-opening plan.

Due to the health and safety concerns associated with COVID-19, the House has been operating under temporary emergency rules since last year, which have allowed members to participate in formal sessions and cast roll call votes remotely. Earlier this summer, the House voted to extend the emergency rules until October 1.

Representative Kane said the last extension included a provision limiting the use of the emergency rules after October 1 to no more than 30 days at a time and requiring a majority vote to reauthorize the emergency rules in additional 30-day increments. The Order adopted by the House on September 23 eliminates the 30-day provision and keeps the temporary emergency rules in place indefinitely.

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