

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 27, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to urge you to approve the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's request for a major disaster declaration due to the ongoing novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. While Massachusetts state agencies and municipalities have taken significant action to address the COVID-19 crisis, a robust and effective response in the Commonwealth requires additional assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).¹

On January 31, 2020, Massachusetts announced the Commonwealth's first case of COVID-19,² and the Commonwealth declared a state of emergency on March 10, 2020.³ On Monday, March 23, 2020, Governor Baker issued an emergency stay-at-home order, closing all nonessential businesses and banning gatherings of more than 10 people,⁴ and yesterday, the Governor announced that all Massachusetts schools will remain closed until at early as May 4, 2020.⁵ As of Thursday, March 26, there are 2,417 confirmed cases and have been 25 deaths related to COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.⁶

As the unprecedented economic impact of COVID-19 impacts the entire country, many Massachusetts residents are being forced out of work.⁷ In addition to the health effects of the pandemic, Massachusetts has also seen a significant increase in unemployment, with a nearly 20-fold increase in unemployment claims last week, putting the state in the top quarter of states with the largest percentage increase in claims.⁸

¹ Letter from Massachusetts Governor Charles D. Baker to President Donald J. Trump, March 26, 2020.

² CNBC, "Eighth US case of new coronavirus confirmed in Massachusetts," Tucker Higgins, February 1, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/02/01/eighth-us-case-of-new-coronavirus-confirmed-in-massachusetts.html>.

³ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "COVID-19 State of Emergency," Accessed March 26, 2020.

⁴ Letter from Massachusetts Governor Charles D. Baker to President Donald J. Trump, March 26, 2020.

⁵ Boston Globe, "Baker orders schools closed until early May," Martin Finucane, Stephanie Ebbert, and James Vaznis, March 25, 2020, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/03/25/metro/baker-orders-schools-closed-until-early-may/>.

⁶ WBUR, "Map and Charts: Reported Coronavirus Cases And Deaths In Massachusetts," March 26, 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/commonhealth/2020/03/09/coronavirus-cases-massachusetts-map>.

⁷ WBUR, "3.3 Million File For Unemployment Claims, Shattering Records," Jim Zarroili and Avie Schneider, March 26, 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/npr/821580191/unemployment-claims-expected-to-shatter-records>.

⁸ WBUR, "Unemployment Claims In Mass. Skyrocket, With A Nearly 1900% Increase In Initial Applications," Simón Rios and Ally Jarmanning, March 26, 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/bostonmix/2020/03/26/massachusetts-unemployment-numbers>.

In accordance with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance (Stafford) Act, Massachusetts has requested disaster unemployment assistance, crisis counseling assistance, and other critical federal assistance for the Commonwealth.⁹ These programs are vital for Massachusetts to adequately respond to the economic and health care impacts of pandemic, particularly as the Commonwealth currently needs additional resources and potentially health care infrastructure to meet the state's needs.¹⁰

Agencies, municipalities, and organizations throughout Massachusetts has taken efforts to slow the COVID-19 outbreak through strong social distancing measures, as recommended by public health experts.¹¹ Federal assistance through FEMA and a major disaster declaration, however, is critically needed to help the Commonwealth's cities and towns, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations statewide address the pandemic as aggressively and effectively as possible.

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we respectfully urge your timely approval of this request. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and your prompt consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Stephen Lynch
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

⁹ Letter from Massachusetts Governor Charles D. Baker to President Donald J. Trump, March 26, 2020.

¹⁰ Letter from Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward J. Markey to President Donald J. Trump, March 25, 2020, [https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020.03.25%20Letter%20to%20Trump%20re%20equipment%20failure%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020.03.25%20Letter%20to%20Trump%20re%20equipment%20failure%20(1).pdf).

¹¹ New York Times, "The Virus Can Be Stopped, but Only With Harsh Steps, Experts Say," Donald McNeil, March 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/22/health/coronavirus-restrictions-us.html>.

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