



March 19, 2020

The Honorable Janet T. Mills
Governor of Maine
1 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Governor Mills,

In light of the circumstances facing our state and the nation regarding the threat of an outbreak of COVID-19, we know that your office and state lawmakers are working to do all that you can to help the people of Maine through this crisis.

I would like to thank you, specifically, for enabling extra assistance to Maine's small businesses in the form of economic disaster loans from the Federal Small Business Administration (SBA), as well as expanding Unemployment Insurance to workers harmed by the impact of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak. These steps are undoubtedly necessary due to the unprecedented nature of this crisis.

As you consider additional steps that can be taken in the coming days, I wanted to make a handful of recommendations that we believe will make a significant difference for the people of Maine. It is our hope that you will make these ideas central to your administration's efforts to help the state regain its economic footing:

- The state has allowed municipalities to function on existing budgets given Town Meeting delays; do the same for everyday families by matching the IRS extended tax filing deadline.
- To stimulate economic activity, consider a sales tax holiday and suspending the online sales tax as people shift to shopping online for necessities. Give a tax break for all businesses continuing to pay employees through the shutdown. Suspend business licensing rules that could hinder small startups and entrepreneurs. Reduce the statewide minimum wage for all industries to help small businesses.
- Yesterday you issued an order allowing take-out and delivery of food and beverages while prohibiting dine-in services. We seek clarification on the definition of "beverages," and request you allow the take-out and delivery of beer and wine, similar to what Governor Sununu has ordered in New Hampshire.

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- Some workers might need a health insurance policy for a month or two until they are able to get back to work. Loosen rules on short-term insurance in Maine, including waiving benefit mandates and medical loss ratios, and allowing for online or over-the-phone sales.
- Governors around the country have acted to expedite the licensing of medical professionals, and to accept medical licenses from any state. This would bring people to Maine from across the country to help care for the sick and elderly.
- We also recommend loosening other restrictions on healthcare services, including waiving requirements for out-of-state telemedicine providers and lifting ACA reporting rules so that doctors have more time to spend with patients. You may also request a Section 1135 Medicaid waiver to eliminate some of these burdensome rules within MaineCare.
- Given the fact that many parents are now homeschooling their children while working from home or looking for work because of the public shutdown, disburse some of the state per-pupil education spending to families to make up for those surprise costs. You can also waive teacher credentialing regulations so that small groups can get together in neighborhoods and call it school. Relax calendar and instructional hours for K-12 education to allow for extended online learning and waive state testing requirements for the 2019-20 school year.

We understand that not all of our recommendations may be implemented by the Executive Branch alone; some may need municipal or legislative approval, but we are urging you to use your voice to support these policy ideas. We strongly believe these suggestions would mitigate the ensuing damage to Maine's economy in the wake of action to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

Maine Policy Institute stands ready to help our partners in government to maintain the health, safety, and livelihoods of Mainers in this uncertain time. Please take these recommendations to heart, and feel free to contact me at 207-321-2550, or mgagnon@mainepolicy.org. My team and I appreciate your consideration and look forward to being of assistance. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Matthew Gagnon
Chief Executive Officer