



April 15, 2020

It's been a month since the governor declared a statewide emergency due to COVID-19. As our state and country adjusts, Missourians continue to do their part, maintaining physical distance and increasing vigilance to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Despite hardships and great economic loss, I'm constantly impressed by everyone's resilience, especially the hardworking heroism of our brave health care professionals, first responders and others working to take care of our most vulnerable.

Like all of you, I'm ready to return to normal. Many of you are frustrated. I understand that. Many are out of work, with no clear answer on when you can return or be re-hired. Some of you are going in to work each day to serve others and doing your best to stay healthy. In this strange new "normal," Missourians are sacrificing each day in tangible ways, whether by celebrating a holiday away from family, attempting to teach kids at home or postponing typical high school graduation celebrations. One thing we know for sure amid all the uncertainty is that Missourians are flattening the curve. I believe the number of infections, hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 have been directly impacted (and lowered) by our sacrifices.

I've heard from some of you worried that the peak is still weeks away, hopeful that your fellow Missourians continue to stay safe and concerned we must do more, including expanded testing. I've heard from others concerned about the long-term economic impact of a continued shutdown. I believe our state leaders are committed to fighting the spread of the virus and providing economic support to those struggling. As we work to stay safe and

healthy, I thank you again for your continued vigilance and offer the following updates and resources.

NEARING THE PEAK

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, public health officials have allocated hospital resources based on projections provided by researchers at the University of Washington's Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). Revised models provided by the Seattle-based institute now call for Missouri to see its greatest demand for hospital beds, ventilators and other medical resources **on April 28**.

The IHME model assumes Missourians will continue to practice social distancing through May, but the projection does offer hope that our country will soon return to normal. Missouri's projected peak coincides closely with stay-at-home orders issued by the governor and local communities, most of which expire **on April 24**. Officials are evaluating whether those orders may need to be extended. I'll be sure to keep you informed as those decisions are made.

SCHOOL'S OUT UNTIL SUMMER

Last week, the governor and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) ordered all public and charter schools in Missouri to remain closed through the remainder of the academic year. Most schools continue to offer alternative educational opportunities to keep children engaged. Nutrition programs, such as grab-and-go meals, will continue. The governor's order does **not** yet impact summer school classes, as they are considered part of the following academic school year. We expect to receive additional DESE guidance regarding summer in the coming days. For more information, visit www.dese.mo.gov.

FUNDING THE STATE'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

The \$6.2 billion supplemental budget passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor last week includes more than \$5.6 billion in federal money to address the coronavirus crisis. Here are some of the highlights:

- * \$1 billion for personal protective equipment to first responders and health care workers
- * \$1 billion to local governments
- * \$1.8 billion for K-12 schools and \$500 million devoted to colleges and universities

- * Hazard pay for prison workers and state hospital staff
- * Housing assistance for health care workers separated from their families
- * Money to hospitals, nursing homes and area agencies that support seniors to cover COVID-19 expenses

Most of the programs authorized by the Legislature are funded by the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress in March. This is the same federal legislation that funds direct payments to individuals, increased unemployment insurance and loans to small businesses.

HELP FOR WORKERS

The Missouri Department of Labor (DOL) started issuing Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation payments under the CARES Act. Everyone who is eligible for unemployment compensation will receive this \$600 federal supplement. Payments should appear within the next few days. Payments will be made retroactively for claims filed on or after March 29. The last payable week for the \$600 supplement will be the week ending July 25, 2020.

My office continues to hear from self-employed workers who have been denied benefits. I'm working to get answers to these questions. The state Department of Labor plans to provide an update later this week about the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, which provides benefits to individuals who are not eligible for regular unemployment, including those who are self-employed. Please contact my office directly with any questions.

You can apply for benefits, check the status of your account and find answers to frequently asked questions at www.labor.mo.gov/coronavirus.

RETURNING TO WORK

The Senate is expected to return to Jefferson City on April 27.

Legislation I sponsored to reform home property tax assessments in Missouri passed the Senate and awaits a vote in the House of Representatives. As one of the only tax-related measures to pass either chamber this year, **I plan to amend this bill to provide an opportunity to bring tax relief to Missourians affected by the COVID-19 crisis. I'm working with my House colleagues on an amendment that would exempt the \$1,200 direct payment many Missourians will receive as part of the federal CARES Act from state income taxes.**

I expect the prescription drug monitoring program I sponsored and that was approved by the Senate in March will be sent to the governor for his signature. I also anticipate final action on several measures I put forward to combat violent crime in Missouri.

The COVID-19 situation changes rapidly. Watch my [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for the latest developments. As always, if my office can assist you in any way, please contact us directly by emailing me through my senate [website](#) or calling us at [\(573\) 751-2183](tel:5737512183).