

STATE of TEXAS
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES



SARAH DAVIS
DISTRICT 134
HARRIS COUNTY

April 9, 2020

Dear Community Leader,

Thank you all for your continued service and leadership through this difficult time. As of today, 170 of Texas' 254 counties are reporting cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Harris County and Houston have reported 2,341 total cases. Statewide, there have been 10,230 cases reported, 199 fatalities, and approximately 1,101 patients recovered according to the most recent projections and statistics from the Department of State Health Services. Of the 199 reported fatalities, 31 occurred in Harris County and Houston. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their loved ones.

Despite the growing number of cases, projections indicate that ongoing social distancing practices are beginning to impact the epidemiological curve. As such, state, local, and federal officials continue to urge compliance with stay at home orders and social distancing practices. The short-term social isolation may be difficult as faith communities celebrate Passover and Easter, but we will emerge stronger together over the long-term.

State Agencies:

Governor Greg Abbott issued the following regulatory waivers:

- Expanding the healthcare workforce by allowing physician assistants (PA), medical physicists, perfusionists, and respiratory care who have completed all requirements other than the licensure exam to practice under supervision on a temporary emergency license prior to taking the licensure exam;
- Allowing End State Renal Disease (ESRD) facilities to offer off-site outpatient services at ESRD facilities, freestanding emergency rooms, and ambulatory surgical centers that are no longer licensed and closed within the past 36 months, as well as mobile medical units and physicians offices; and
- Enabling speech-language pathologists, audiologists, behavior analysts, hearing instrument fitters and dispensers, and dyslexia therapists and practitioners to provide services via telehealth.

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Governor Abbott also announced 90 days of free childcare through Care.com for frontline workers responding to COVID-19. Frontline workers seeking and caregivers wishing to enroll and offer childcare may visit: <https://texasfrontline.care.com/>.

The **Texas Supreme Court** extended its emergency order staying eviction proceedings until April 30. It also issued an order effective until April 30 delaying the date of service for garnishments writs for consumer debt to May 8, unless further extended.

Additionally, Governor Abbott ordered all **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** state parks and **Texas Historical Commission** historical sites to close beginning at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, April 7. These sites will remain closed under the Governor orders them to reopen.

The **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)** continues to experience record high call volumes and web traffic as individuals file for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. Since March 14, TWC has processed 800,000 claims for UI benefits. Previously, TWC increased the number of computer servers from 5 to 10, and it will increase the number of servers from 10 to 20 over the weekend. On Monday, TWC launched its first third-party call center and opened a second call center today. A third additional call center is slated to open next week. Separately, TWC has increased call center hours of operation from 7 AM to 7 PM daily.

TWC has also begun to implement federal unemployment benefits passed by the CARES Act. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, which provides benefits to individuals who were traditionally ineligible for UI benefits, including self-employed individuals and independent contractors was launched this week. Further, the Emergency Increase in Unemployment Benefits, which provides additional \$600 on top of other UI benefits, will launch this weekend. TWC has published flowcharts for newly eligible individuals and individuals who have already applied for UI benefits before the launch of new federal benefits.

In the meantime, TWC encourages individuals to submit applications for UI benefits at staggered timelines based on their area code:

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Recommended Call and Access Times Area Code of Applicant	Suggested Call Time
Area Codes Beginning with 9	Mon-Wed-Fri 8AM - Noon
Area Codes Beginning with 3, 4, 5,6	Mon-Wed-Fri 1PM - 5PM
Area codes Beginning with 7, 8	Tues -Thurs-Sat 8AM - Noon
Area codes Beginning with 2	Tues-Thurs-Sat 1PM - 5 PM

Additional information, including flowcharts, is available at
<https://www.twc.texas.gov/news/covid-19-resources-job-seekers>.

As of April 8, 2020, the **Texas Military Department (TMD)** has deployed 957 TMD members, 879 Texas Army National Guard, 12 Texas Air National Guard, and 66 Texas State Guard. These members are embedded with state, local, and federal partners to provide medical assistance, communications support, infrastructure support, and transportation upon regional request. TMD has activated three Joint Task Force (JTF) Brigade Headquarters in Houston, Dallas, and Austin. TMD has also deployed 9 General Support Units reporting to the JTFs in Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Lubbock, San Antonio, Tyler, and Weslaco to provide individual assistance to cities and surrounding counties.

Local Response:

The **City of Houston** has suspended all municipal court activities, including all trials, jury duty, arraignments, hearings, and parking adjudication. For more information, go to:
<http://www.houstontx.gov/courts/>

Other Local Resources:

- Houston Health Department COVID-19 Hotline (Open 9AM to 7PM, Monday through Friday, and 9AM to 3PM Saturday and Sunday): 832-393-4220
- Houston Emergency Operations Center: <https://houstonemergency.org/covid19/>
- HCPHD Screening and Informational Hotline (Open 9AM to 7PM): 832-927-7575
- Stay At Home Order Violations
 - Violation Hotline: 832-839-6941
 - Violation Online Complaint: <https://www.readyharris.org/Stay-Home#stay-home--report-violations>

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- HCPHD Self Assessment: <https://covcheck.hctx.net>
- Houston METRO: <https://www.ridemetro.org/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Reporting COVID-19 Related Fraud and Scams

Unfortunately, reports of bad actors attempting to scam unsuspecting individuals are on the rise.

Certain fraudulent schemes should be reported to federal authorities. These include:

- Online scams, phishing emails, and malicious websites;
- Fraudulent phone calls relating to tax benefits or claiming to provide COVID-19 cures; and
- Calls or emails soliciting charitable donations for non-existent charities.

You may report these types of fraudulent activities to the National Center for Disaster Fraud by phone at 866-720-5721 or email disaster@leo.gov. Online scams should be reported to the FBI Internet Crimes Complaint Center at <https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>.

If you suspect price gouging or other consumer-related scams, you may file a consumer complaint with the Texas Attorney General by phone at 800-621-0508 or online at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection/file-consumer-complaint>.

My office continues to monitor the situation and is in touch daily with state and local agencies. Should you have any questions or require additional information or assistance, please call my office at 512-463-0389 or 713-664-7095. You may also email me at sarah.davis@house.texas.gov.

Many Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Davis".

Representative Sarah Davis
House District 134