

POST-GAZETTE

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BOSTON'S COVID-19

State of Emergency Declaration to End April 1st

Mayor Michelle Wu and Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, Commissioner of Public Health and Executive Director of the Boston Public Health Commission, recently announced Boston's COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Declaration will end on April 1, 2022. The announcement follows a vote by the Boston Board of Health during their Wednesday meeting following the recommendation of Dr. Ojikutu. The Emergency Declaration has been in place since March 15, 2020.

"Today's announcement is a testament to how Boston came together in a historically challenging time to lift up public health and community," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "As we transition to this next phase of living with COVID, we will focus on providing the testing, resources, and planning to keep our communities safe and prepared."

"While the City of Boston is no longer in a state of emergency, we must continue to protect our most vulnerable residents and prepare for the future," said Dr. Bisola Ojikutu. "Now is the time for us to use all of the lessons learned from the pandemic, strengthen community partnerships, develop stronger public health infrastructure, and ensure an equitable recovery for all."

Dr. Ojikutu's recommendation to rescind the order is based on the City's consistently improving core COVID-19 metrics, including community positivity, daily adult COVID-19 hospitalizations, and occupied ICU beds. As of March 7th, the community positivity rate

is 2.2%, down from a peak of 32% in early January. Daily adult hospitalizations have also steadily declined and are now down to 94 after peaking at 769 in mid-January. The percentage of occupied ICU beds has been consistently below the Commission's 95% threshold of concern over the last few weeks.

During their meeting, Boston Public Health Commission officials provided a recommended framework for Boston Public Schools to use in determining when to lift the school masking requirement. Dr. Sarimer Sánchez, from BPHC's Infectious Diseases Bureau, advised reviewing the school masking policy when the number of positive COVID-19 tests per day in Boston falls below 10 cases per day per 100,000 residents, while considering other COVID-19 metrics. BPHC is also encouraging development of "mask friendly" policies for students and staff, and increasing access to vaccines in school communities. The current COVID-19 daily case incidence is approximately 13 cases per 100,000 residents in Boston. The final decision on revising the school mask policy will be made by Boston Public Schools.

The consistently improving metrics also mean the City of Boston and the Boston Public Health Commission can shift their focus to longer-term planning and preparedness efforts, developing a roadmap to handle future surges and pandemics, while continuing to support ongoing efforts to increase access to vaccinations and testing.

The Boston Public Health Commission declared a state of emergency at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a decision made in consultation with infectious disease and public health emergency preparedness experts at the Commission as well as the City and other emergency preparedness, public health, and healthcare experts. The Declaration was instrumental in Boston establishing an incident command structure and deploying staff and resources to perform crisis response and healthcare coordination functions throughout the pandemic.

"Based on the data, it is clear to the Board that the emergency declaration is no longer necessary," said Manny Lopes, Chair of the Boston Board of Health. "I am proud to have worked with Mayor Wu and Dr. Ojikutu, who led with science and made the hard but necessary decisions that kept our city safe and on the path to a much brighter future. The Board looks forward to our continued partnership with the City as we monitor the pandemic and help guide the city toward recovery."

Despite lower case numbers, BPHC cautions residents that COVID-19 is still transmissible, and can result in severe illness and hospitalization, especially for the city's most vulnerable residents. The Commission recommends residents protect themselves and those around them by getting vaccinated, boosted, and wearing masks indoors if they are at high risk for severe illness or if they will

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News Briefs

by Sal Giaratani

Republican Jay McMahon Running for Attorney General

Jay McMahon, a Cape Cod Republican has announced that he is running for Attorney General this fall. McMahon ran for this seat four years ago against Maura Healey and was unsuccessful. In 2020 when I met him, he was running for State Senate against incumbent Senator Susan Moran. He lost 56 to 44 percent.

In his campaign this year, he has a strong anti-drug platform, opposes COVID vax mandates for first responders and has been criticizing "wokeness" of state political leaders, including Healey.

Two Candidates to Date For Suffolk District Attorney

The race for Suffolk County District Attorney so far has drawn two candidates, Boston City Councilor (District 5) Ricardo Arroyo from Hyde Park and acting D.A. Kevin Hayden of Dorchester who was appointed by Gov. Baker to fill out now U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins' remaining term in this office.

Arroyo has promised to continue all the reforms started by Rolins and said he would build "a justice system that protects the safety and dignity of all people." Hayden the interim D.A. who grew up in Roslindale announced in front of the Boys and Girls Club in Dorchester pledged a commitment to public safety, criminal legal system reform, and accountability to all the communities that make up Suffolk County.

Toilet Paper Rolls Thinning Out

Toilet paper rolls now have fewer sheets per roll than they had last year, but the price has not gone down. As major corporations raise their prices on everything from detergent to diapers, consumer watchdogs have tracked that the size of products are simultaneously shrinking.

Even Mr. Whipple might say there's less to squeeze in a package of Charmin and that the bear family would also need to stock up on plenty more TP packages, and be pinching pennies and counting their toilet sheets per bathroom trip.

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