



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

July 8, 2021

Sen. Martin M. Looney
Senate President Pro Tempore

Rep. Matthew Ritter
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Sen. Bob Duff
Senate Majority Leader

Sen. Kevin Kelly
Senate Minority Leader

Rep. Jason Rojas
House Majority Leader

Rep. Vincent J. Candelora
House Minority Leader

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

RE: Renewal of Emergency Declarations Pursuant to Special Act No. 21-5

Dear Senator Looney, Representative Ritter, Senator Kelly, and Representative Candelora,

I write today to inform you, pursuant to Special Act No. 21-5, that I intend to renew through September 30, 2021 the declarations of public health and civil preparedness emergencies originally declared on March 10, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance with the requirement in Special Act No. 21-5 for approval by the General Assembly of such renewal, I will be issuing today a call to the General Assembly to meet in special session on July 14, 2021. While our state is in a much better position with regard to the prevalence of COVID-19 and our ability to respond to it than we were at the outset of the pandemic, there remain several reasons why it is prudent and responsible to renew the emergency declarations.

When I first issued the emergency declarations, it had become clear that Connecticut was facing an onslaught from a highly infectious disease about which little was known, for which there were no known effective treatments or vaccines, and which immediately imposed significant impacts on the economic, social, and emotional well-being of so many of our citizens.

Since then, the people of the United States and Connecticut have sacrificed greatly and endured great loss. More than 8,000 people have been taken by this disease – fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, beloved grandparents, aunts, uncles, cherished friends and colleagues. We must not forget the human and emotional price we have paid.

But in the face of such great loss, we have also made enormous progress together.

Pursuant to the emergency declarations, I issued executive orders to help us engage the full resources of the state government and the private sector in the fight against this disease. Such orders made it possible to procure and distribute personal protective equipment, boosted financial and staffing resources to provide critically needed healthcare services, provided fiscal relief to people and businesses devastated by the economic impact of the pandemic, created flexibility in laws and regulations to conduct government and private business safely, and instituted protective measures to keep the public, including children in schools and their teachers, safe.

The people of Connecticut responded heroically. Healthcare professionals, schoolteachers, grocery workers, restaurant employees and building cleaners and maintainers, among many others, kept our society going even during the darkest months at great personal risk to themselves. Business and academic leaders contributed their expertise and their resources to the fight against the coronavirus. Connecticut's residents sacrificed in ways large and small, adjusting and adapting to great disruption and often foregoing the interactions so essential to daily life.

And the legislature, under your leadership, has taken significant action in cooperation with my administration to provide the resources and flexibility needed to fight this disease, passing legislation to provide access to healthcare, telemedicine and social services, expediting fiscal relief to businesses, workers, and residents, and codifying or extending provisions that made it safer to conduct social, economic and government activities ranging from voting to outdoor dining to public meetings.

We are engaged in one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the nation, one that must continue and must also evolve in order to remain successful. More than 67 percent of our population has received at least one dose of vaccine, and more than 61 percent are fully vaccinated. Fully 79.6 percent of adults in Connecticut have received at least one dose. As a result, our infection rate is low, with an average of only 40 new cases per day and a test positivity rate that has hovered consistently below 1 percent for weeks. Most significantly, hospitalizations and deaths attributed to COVID-19 have plummeted and remain low.

Our success at reducing infections, increasing healthcare access, and providing both fiscal relief and operational flexibility have made it possible to reduce from a high of more than 300 active executive orders at the height of the pandemic to only about 11 that I propose to extend – a reduction of 96 percent.

These orders are still needed to protect the public and continue critical measures to provide healthcare access and economic relief and respond to evolving changes. They are also narrowly targeted to achieve specific goals that would otherwise be unachievable because of statutory or regulatory barriers that were not contemplated in the context of a highly transmissible and long-lasting disease outbreak when the statutes were passed.

For example, more than 30 percent of our population has not received even one vaccination dose, part of nearly 1.5 million Connecticut residents who are not yet fully vaccinated. This presents a serious public health risk, especially in light of new information showing that a full course of vaccination is necessary to protect against the newest variant. The increasing prevalence of a new COVID-19 strain, called the “Delta” variant and estimated to be about 60 percent more contagious than previous strains, puts those who are ineligible to receive the vaccine or who have conditions that make the vaccine less effective at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 from others who have not yet been vaccinated. Nearly 100 percent of those who have died or been hospitalized from COVID-19 were not vaccinated, adding to the urgency of continuing to make progress on increasing vaccination rates.

Our vaccination campaign must continue to reach those who have not yet been vaccinated. In support of that effort, the Department of Public Health (DPH) has identified several sites on state-owned commuter parking lots that are ideal for vaccination clinics because they are easier for residents to access. Using such lots, however, requires the continued modification, accomplished by a currently effective executive order, of a statute that prohibits use of these lots for anything but commuter parking.

Making vaccines convenient and easy to access and making them available in many different areas and locations is a core component of our strategy for reaching unvaccinated people. With commuters returning to work and increased traffic, these high-traffic lots have the potential to attract commuters. The sites will go live by July 30, 2021. To maximize effectiveness, DPH needs to have enough time for first and second doses at the sites. If the sites are successful, DPH needs the flexibility to extend the program through September. Every vaccination counts toward our combined health and safety.

In addition, DPH continues to adjust to the changing circumstances around vaccine distribution and federal resources. Even now, DPH and other state agencies are negotiating vaccine redistribution contracts with hospital systems. These new arrangements will make possible a more targeted vaccine distribution network than currently exists in the state. Although any contract negotiations take time, procuring these types of goods and services through traditional statutory processes, even using certain emergency procurement authorities that already exist, does not provide the flexibility and efficiencies that are needed at this time. Two executive orders that have

waived these statutory processes specifically and only for critical COVID-19 response measures must be continued in order to make this possible.

The order that authorizes state agencies to provide temporary, non-congregate housing is being used in large part at this time as a wraparound service for those individuals who because of their existing housing or working environments, are at increased risk of exposure to, infection with, or transmission of COVID-19. In a 30-day period in May and June of 2021, 939 homeless households and approximately 200 domestic violence survivors used hotel rooms for non-congregant housing. This is a rolling system with rooms constantly in use. The declarations of emergency and attendant orders like this one ensure that the state addresses the health and safety of our residents. And, because of these necessary declarations of emergency, the state continues to receive FEMA funding to cover the costs of non-congregant housing as well as other items.

While I have lifted requirements that masks be worn in most settings and locations, there remain several settings where transmission risks must be reduced because of the higher numbers of people in enclosed spaces, the vulnerability of certain people to infection even if vaccinated, and the difficulty of determining who is vaccinated. For this reason, the order requiring masks in certain settings and providing for the Commissioner of Public Health to issue modifications to the mask requirements, remains necessary.

Similarly, because children under 12 are not yet eligible for vaccination, the increased risk to the unvaccinated from new variants, and the uncertainties about the course of the disease when classes resume in just a few weeks, the order authorizing the Commissioners of Education and Early Childhood to issue operational and safety rules for school and childcare settings also remains necessary.

Another transition measure will ensure that both tenants facing eviction and landlords will have more time to access the resources they need. While I have ended the state's eviction moratorium, I recently issued an executive order to provide tenants some additional time to repay all back rent or for tenants and landlords to access federal relief funds through the UniteCT program. Extending this order for a short time will mean more landlords are likely to receive unpaid rent and more tenants will stay in their homes. Doing so is critically important not only as an economic relief measure, but also because those at the lowest end of the economic spectrum are the least likely to have already been vaccinated, increasing the risk of infection that is already exacerbated by the rising prevalence of the Delta variant.

Renewing the emergency declarations is necessary to extend these orders and to respond to any unanticipated changes to the risks presented by the pandemic. In addition, several federal funding sources are contingent on the continuance of certain orders issued pursuant to the emergency declarations or on the continuance of the emergency declarations themselves.

FEMA will continue to cover 100 percent of the non-congregate housing costs if the declarations are continued beyond July 20, 2021. To date, the Department of Housing has received \$7.7 million in FEMA reimbursements. There is currently an additional \$8.4 million in the pipeline for non-congregate housing and an additional \$2.26 million projected for July 20 to September 30, 2021. In addition, the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) has granted waivers to the states, including Connecticut, allowing for the issuance of emergency allotments (supplements) based on

a public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act related to an outbreak of COVID-19 when a state also issued an emergency or disaster declaration. Connecticut has applied for and received this waiver since April 2020. The total amount of additional benefits received through June 25, 2021 is \$339,339,554; the additional amount received in June 2021 alone is \$32,588,367; and the average issuance or additional amount to a family in need is \$155.45.

For these reasons, it is necessary to renew the emergency declarations, and I recommend strongly that the General Assembly approve such renewal for this limited time. I will continue to exercise the authorities attendant to these declarations in a judicious fashion and in a spirit of consultation and cooperation. I appreciate your cooperation and collective effort in responding to this generational challenge to our state.

Sincerely,



Ned Lamont
Governor

cc: Members of the General Assembly