



September 4, 2020

Dear Neighbors,

Welcome to my September edition of my E-Newsletter. Due to the primary election, this is our first E-Newsletter in a few months following a mandatory blackout period.

COVID-19 Update

Return to Learn Plan

State Budget Update

Election Law/AV Ballot Process

The following e-mail will provide up to date information regarding several issues surrounding the state's COVID-19 response, K-12 education plan, and the upcoming budget process. I continue to work with local, state, and federal officials to make sure that medical and financial resources are properly getting to the Greater Rochester area.

Office Hours- Notice

For more information, please visit my website at www.repmichaelwebber.com, or contact my office by phone at [\(517\) 373-1773](tel:5173731773) or by email at michaelwebber@house.mi.gov. If you have any questions, concerns or opinions on what is happening, please contact me. Please be patient when expecting a response from our office due to the high demand in handling calls and assisting residents of the Greater Rochester area during this challenging time.

District Office Hours- Notice

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 my monthly in

Thank you.

person office
hours have
been
postponed.

Sincerely,

Michael Webber
State Representative, 45th District

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COVID-19 Update

The Governor's Nursing Homes COVID-19 Preparedness Task Force released a twenty-three-page report on Monday with proposed changes to the state's policies surrounding nursing homes and COVID-19. This comes in wake of the news that 33% of Michigan's COVID-19 deaths have been linked to nursing home residents or employees.

The task force recommended the state explore the possibility of creating facilities dedicated to caring for nursing home residents who have contracted COVID-19—instead of the state's current policy which focuses on treating COVID-19 nursing home patients in isolated wings of otherwise non-COVID facilities. This proposal was included in Senate Bill 956, sponsored by Senator Pete Lucido, which passed both chambers of the legislature with bipartisan support in July. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed this bill.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Justice announced it was requesting data from numerous governors on nursing home deaths and related data on COVID-19. Michigan began publishing data on cases and deaths from Michigan's 400 nursing homes in June, and much of this data is now available publicly. However, unlike most other states, Michigan does not release data on COVID-19 cases and deaths in facilities such as in adult foster care homes, homes for the aged, and unlicensed assisted-living homes. The Department of Justice will use this data to determine whether to open investigations under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act.

Finally, FEMA has announced Michigan will receive \$935 million in pandemic relief assistance as part of the president's executive order from last month. The relief money, which will provide an additional \$300 a week to Michigan's jobless, will be paid retroactively to August 1. UIA spokesman Jason

Moon said on August 31st that the program will take at least three weeks to implement. The agency expects that some 910,000 Michiganders will qualify for these payments. I voted with my colleagues on the House floor to approve the supplemental bill that appropriated additional federal dollars towards unemployment assistance.

Return to Learn Plan

The House, Senate, and the governor reached an agreement on a bipartisan plan to provide clarity to school districts and give flexibility to families for the K-12 school year.

The Return to Learn plan provides flexibility for parents and teachers. This pandemic has affected different regions of the state in different ways, and we need to support our local schools in returning as safely and responsibly as possible.

The Return to Learn plan does the following:

- Requires local school districts and health departments to work together to develop health and safety standards that are best for students in their unique area.
- Provides flexibility to learn anywhere so students won't stop learning simply because they can't be in the classroom.
- Allows school districts to start whenever is best for them without obtaining a waiver to bypass Michigan's Labor Day start requirement.
- Redefines the word "attendance" to mean "engaged in instruction" rather than "physically present," allowing schools to be innovative and give students the opportunity to learn outside the classroom.

- A student assessment is required within nine weeks of the school year, with a second one required by the end of the year, for districts to receive funding. These benchmark assessments will provide detailed information to parents and teachers about where a student needs additional help and to ensure that kids do not fall behind in the wake of the public health crisis.
- School boards will have to publicly reevaluate their instruction plans every month and give parents a voice in decision making.

The plan passed both chambers of the Legislature and was signed by the governor in August.

State Budget Process Update

Federal COVID-19 relief the state already has coming helped address an unprecedented and challenging budget shortfall in the current 2019-2020 fiscal year budget that ends on September 30th. It is one part of our strategy to ensure funding for schools and local governments will not be cut this fiscal year.

An agreement was reached with the governor that would also rely on using a portion of the state's rainy-day fund, hiring freezes and layoffs, and other cost savings within state government to balance the existing fiscal year budget.

This month work continues for the next fiscal year, which begins on October 1st. The August Revenue Estimating Conference gave a better than expected projection for the 2020-2021 budget year. Revenue in state sales, use, and withholding taxes, along with federal UIA, stimulus, and paycheck protection (PPP) helped significantly close a multibillion-dollar deficit. Still we know that more work is

needed to help our economy rebound and help struggling workers return to work safely. Michigan's economy has not fully recovered as hundreds of thousands of people are still out of work.

The governor and her budget team insisted that we delay budget talks until additional federal money was appropriated for Michigan. The consensus revenue conference showed that existing federal money contributed greatly to any sort of economic recovery Michigan has had to date. We can't wait any longer to put a budget in place for Michigan's next fiscal year. The legislature is ready to act and I will work to make sure we budget for our priorities.

Election Law & AV Ballot Process

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed new challenges on local clerks to safely run this year's general election. Residents will still be able to vote in person come November 3rd or can request an absentee ballot. Any registered voter is eligible to obtain an absentee ballot for the upcoming election. AV ballots can be mailed back or returned via Drop Box at City Hall.

State election law requires clerks to check the signature on the absentee ballot application with the one in the voter file before the absentee ballot is sent. The signature requirement also applies when a voter returns the absentee ballot. Absentee ballots must be returned to the clerk by 8:00pm on Election Day. There has been discussion regarding legislation that would allow AV ballots postmarked by Election Day to still be counted if they arrive within 48 hours of Election Day.

In addition, Senate Bills 756 and 757, introduced by Senator Ruth Johnson, would allow some city or township clerks to perform certain preprocessing work to handle the expected increase of absentee ballots. Clerks would not be able to remove absentee ballots from their secrecy envelopes as part of the preprocessing work. These bills aim to make our upcoming election run smoothly as possible during these challenging times.

These bills are before the Senate for further consideration.

For more information on state election law or to request an absentee ballot application please visit www.michigan.gov/sos or visit your local clerk's office.

Office Hours-Notice

As you know, being open and accessible to you is one of my top priorities. Due to COVID-19 shutdowns and restrictions, we have not been able to host our traditional monthly in person office hours.

As many have adapted during this challenging time, our office has worked hard to stay connected to the community we serve. Our e-mail inbox and call log have increased during this time and we have worked hard to stay current with both. I also hosted a tele-townhall on Auto No-Fault Insurance Reform in June to engage with residents and answer their questions. I hope to do another tele-townhall or get back to in person office hours this fall.

Please continue to call (517-373-1773) and email (MichaelWebber@house.mi.gov) our office to discuss your concerns or to seek help with any issue you may be experiencing with our state government. We want to hear from you.

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