



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF

State Representative  
**MICHAEL WEBBER**

*Serving the Greater Rochester Area*

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**October 2,  
2020**

Dear Neighbors,

**COVID-19  
Update**

Welcome to my October edition of my E-Newsletter. Due to the upcoming general election, this will be my last E-Newsletter until after the election is over due to a mandatory blackout period.

**State Budget  
Update**

**PPE Bill Package**

**Business  
Liability  
Protections Bill  
Package**

The following e-mail will provide up to date information regarding several issues surrounding the state's COVID-19 response, the state budget, and important legislative updates. 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 to combat COVID-19.

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LINKS**

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Website](#)  
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For more information, please visit my website at [www.repmichaelwebber.com](http://www.repmichaelwebber.com), or contact my office by phone at [\(517\) 373-1773](tel:5173731773) or by email at [michaelwebber@house.mi.gov](mailto:michaelwebber@house.mi.gov). If you have any questions, concerns or opinions on what is happening, please contact me.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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[Schools](#)

Michael Webber  
State Representative, 45<sup>th</sup> District

### **COVID-19 Update**

The governor has extended her State of Emergency through October 27, which was set to expire on October 1. The State of Emergency has been in place since March 10, 2020. Please continue to follow guidelines from the Oakland County Health Department and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Resources for up-to-date information.

Movie theaters and performance venues are set to reopen as part of the governor's newest executive order. Executive Order (EO) 185 allows indoor theaters, cinemas, performance venues, arcades, bingo halls, bowling centers, indoor climbing facilities, and trampoline parks to reopen by Friday, October 9<sup>th</sup>.

In addition, EO 185 requires students in grades kindergarten and up to wear a mask in regions 1 through 5 and 7. The EO makes changes to the non-residential indoor gathering limit and increases it from 10 to 20 people or 20% of seating capacity with a maximum of 500 people. This order will allow greater capacity for funerals going forward.

The Michigan Nursing Homes COVID-19 Preparedness Task Force presented its final recommendations to the governor in protecting Michigan's most vulnerable populations. The recommendations include:

- Continuing to use the regional hub program with strengthened guidance and protocols as Care and Recovery Centers.
- Identifying and coordinating with hospitals with excess surge capacity.
- Improving coordination of personal protective equipment distribution and allocation.
- Securing funding for continued testing of nursing home residents.
- Exploring options for creating dedicated facilities/alternative care settings.

- Improving support of physical and mental health for staff.
- Increasing opportunities for safe visitation so that our seniors can interact more with family members.

Information about COVID-19 continues to change. The latest information can be found at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/Coronavirus).

### **State Budget Update**

The House, Senate, and the governor reached an agreement on a bipartisan budget that protects schools, local public services and taxpayers despite the challenges of COVID-19.

Despite the impact COVID-19 and economic shutdowns have had on the state economy, the plan for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 once again balances the budget. The budget returns about \$35 million to the state's budget stabilization "rainy day" fund.

This year has been filled with many challenges for our state and local communities, but it has also given us a chance to reflect on the priorities that matter most to us. Balancing the state budget has always been easier said than done, but doing so in the midst of a pandemic was especially difficult. Despite facing financial stress due to COVID-19, we were able to build a balanced budget that protects and maintains investments in shared priorities such as education, public health and safety, and the essential local services Oakland County families rely on every day.

The per-student foundation allowance for K-12 schools remains unchanged, but schools will receive an additional one-time payment equal to roughly \$65 per student increase, along with other changes to increase the commitment to Michigan's school aid fund. The school aid fund will surpass \$15.5 billion.

The budget plan fully protects revenue sharing payments made to cities, townships and counties – helping fund the essential local services residents across Michigan rely on like public safety, road repairs, and our quality of life.

Other highlights for the budget year beginning Oct. 1 include:

- **Public Safety:** The plan also includes more than \$4 million in training courses that focus on de-escalation techniques for police officers, dispatchers and other law enforcement personnel. More than \$47 million has been allocated for forensic science, with a portion of funds going toward reducing the backlog in processing sexual assault kits that assist in the prosecution of sexual assault cases.
- **Road funding:** The Legislature continues to follow through on the plan approved in 2015 to add significantly more money to road repairs. The overall Transportation budget exceeds \$5 billion for this fiscal year, despite the financial pressures from COVID-19. The 2015 plan remains intact to help ensure better roads moving forward, and that must be taken into account before asking for even more money during these challenging times.

The budget plan – contained in House Bill 5396 and Senate Bill 927 – advanced on a bi-partisan basis to the governor for her signature.

### **PPE Bill Package Introduction**

Supporting small businesses throughout the Greater Rochester Area and the whole state during COVID-19 is a priority of mine, which is why I am one of the Sponsors of a bi-partisan bill package that would provide important relief to employers dealing with the increased cost of operating in the

COVID-19 economy.

The bill package would exempt personal protection equipment (PPE) and workplace disinfectant products from the Michigan Sales and Use taxes. The purchase of PPE is an unforeseen cost and should not be taxed in lieu of the pandemic.

Employers obtaining this tax exemption would be required to have and maintain their safety plans in dealing with COVID-19. This bill package received a hearing in the House Tax Policy Committee and are House Bills 6033-6035.

### **Business Liability Protections Bill Package**

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed new challenges on businesses, schools, universities, and non-profits and I supported the bi-partisan legislation that will help employers deal with frivolous COVID-19 lawsuits.

Employers still must take reasonable precautions to protect employees and customers from COVID-19. The bill package does the following:

- Limits liability with respect to certain claims related to COVID-19
- Provides protection from liability to certain persons on reopening of a business or school
- Prohibits an employer from taking adverse employment action against an employee who is absent from work due to COVID-19

This bill package now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

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