

March 15, 2020

Dear Mayor Fuller,

I am writing to ask you to take immediate actions TODAY to protect the health of our families, community. At this point, every single day of delayed action reduces our ability to save the lives of those we care about, the health care workers on the front line, and those we will never meet.

People are still congregating in playgrounds, restaurants, bars, and at neighborhood gatherings, the perfect way to propagate the virus and continue our trajectory towards what happened in Italy, where it went from 3 cases to >12,000 and >1,400 deaths in <4 weeks. As of yesterday, there were many families congregating at Cabot Playground.

The numbers are stark: At the current pace of transmission, according to the Harvard Global Health Institute, more than 225,000 people in Massachusetts may need a bed, and 1 in 5 of those (45,000) may need an ICU bed. The state has 3,600 beds and 400 ICU beds at any time. Successful strict policies that limit person to person transmission NOW is the ONLY current tool we have to change the trajectory we are on.

Please take the same kinds of actions urgently recommended by public health experts and being implemented by mayors and governors nationwide and by governments around the world, to close all ALL nonessential public spaces in Newton and to advise strongly against all nonessential engagement with other people. The government must take the lead in mobilizing a coordinated response from all sectors of society rather than allowing individuals and institutions to work on these problems in a siloed, voluntary manner.

Newton should immediately take these concrete actions to save as many lives as possible:

1. Close all playgrounds, gymnasiums, activity centers, theaters, concert halls, places of worship, and other cultural venues.
2. Restrict restaurants to takeout and delivery only; close all bars and coffee shops; and urge residents to prepare their own food whenever possible.
3. Close all businesses except essential ones required for daily living, such as grocery stores, banks, and health care centers
4. Request all employers to institute work from home for all but essential workers.
5. Keep schools closed for at least four weeks and reassess at that point whether longer closure is required. Work with educators to implement creative strategies to educate remotely.
6. Establish funds and creative solutions to mitigate the adverse impacts of school closures for vulnerable families, such as guaranteeing some level of income or making concrete suggestions for child care.
7. Explain to the public in clear terms, what it means to enforce strict social distancing (see

attached)

8. Increase funds for emergency preparedness and widening coronavirus testing capacity.

9. Assemble a city-wide emergency task force engaging businesses, community leaders, and residents with medical and public health expertise.

10. Work collectively with other municipalities in the commonwealth to advocate for Governor Baker to implement all of the above measures state-wide.

Public messaging by civic leaders is the only way to ensure engagement with these measures by all institutions, businesses, and individuals as part of a societal effort against this epidemic. We must prepare people for the possibility of medium- to long-term implementation of social distancing strategies.

One week ago in Spain, it was business as usual. Three weeks ago there were no active documented cases of coronavirus at all in Spain and fewer than 400 by March 6. Between March 14 and 15, the number of cases surged by more than one-third to 7,753 and deaths doubled to 288. This rapid spread has overwhelmed the health system in Madrid, the worst-affected area. Despite plans to increase dramatically intensive care and other medical care beds, there is little if any capacity for treating additional cases.

We are counting on you to take immediate steps, TODAY, to protect the lives of residents in Newton and beyond. The actions you choose to implement today will literally mean the difference between life and death for thousands of People.

On March 15 after this letter was drafted, Governor Baker announced a few of the actions above. We urge you to implement all of the above measures to save as many lives as possible.