

Illinois e-News Release

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Gov. Pritzker Announces Series of New Measures to Help Illinoisans Affected by COVID-19

Governor Announces Sales Tax Deferral for Bars and Restaurants, SBA Loan Eligibility, New Grocery Hours for Seniors, Expanded Health Care Services

Chicago — As Illinoisans face increasing challenges as a result of the coronavirus, Governor JB Pritzker announced a series of new measures to relieve pressure on small businesses, increase safe opportunities for vulnerable populations to purchase essentials and expand health care services for patients and providers.

“Our social distancing efforts are the most important thing we can do to protect our seniors and support our health care workers,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “The fight against COVID-19 is a scientific one: it requires the best that medicine, innovation and statistics have to offer. But as we do all that we can to find a cure, find treatments, and support our medical infrastructure, we can’t forget the exceptional human costs of these mitigating measures. We must do all that we can to address them.”

SALES TAX DEFERRAL FOR BARS AND RESTAURANTS

To help alleviate some of the unprecedented challenges facing bars and restaurants due to COVID-19, Gov. Pritzker has directed the Department of Revenue to defer sales tax payments for more than 24,000 small- and medium-sized bars and restaurants — accounting for nearly 80% of all such entities statewide.

Under the directive, eating and drinking establishments that incurred less than \$75,000 in sales tax liabilities last year will not be charged penalties or interest on payments due in March, April or May made late. The Department of Revenue estimates this will give relief to nearly 80% of bars and restaurants in Illinois.

Penalties and interest will be automatically waived; however, qualified taxpayers must still file their sales tax return even if they are unable to make a payment. Any taxpayers taking advantage of this relief will be required to pay their sales tax liabilities due in March, April and May in four installments starting on May 20 and extending through August 20. For more information, please view IDOR’s informational bulletin available at tax.illinois.gov.

SBA APPROVES SMALL BUSINESS LOANS IN ILLINOIS

Two days after submitting documentation demonstrating the impact of COVID-19 on more than 3,000 businesses across the state, Gov. Pritzker announced today that the U.S. Small Business Administration has approved the state’s eligibility for disaster assistance loans for small businesses facing financial hardship in all 102 counties due to COVID-19. Eligible businesses can apply for up to \$2 million in low-interest loans at: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov>

NEW GROCERY STORE HOURS FOR OLDER RESIDENTS

After convening the largest grocers and food manufacturers in the state with the help of Illinois Retail Merchants Association, Gov. Pritzker announced today that a growing coalition of grocery stores statewide will set aside one or more hours of operation for older residents to shop, before stores open to the general public.

Among the grocers with new hours for elderly shoppers are Whole Foods and Shop & Save in the Chicagoland area and Hy-Vee and Valli Produce throughout Illinois.

EXPANDING HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Gov. Pritzker announced today that his administration is implementing several measures to remove regulatory barriers for health providers and increase opportunity for patients as Illinoisans are urged to stay home as much as possible during this time.

Through emergency rules and an executive order, the Pritzker administration has significantly relaxed rules around telemedicine for both Medicaid and private insurers, allowing more providers to get reimbursed for these services that allow patients more flexibility and safety. For plans regulated by the Department of Insurance, the executive order calls for providers to be reimbursed at the same rate at which they are reimbursed for in-person visits and prohibits private health insurers from imposing any cost-sharing for in-network providers. For Medicaid, the emergency rules also require providers to be reimbursed at the same rate at which they are reimbursed for in-person visits.

The Department of Healthcare and Family Services has filed an 1135 waiver with the federal government to remove administrative barriers for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The Pritzker administration is seeking to increase access to telehealth and the number of health care providers that can screen patients, allow 90-day prescription supplies without prior authorization and early refills, as well as several other items that will increase flexibility and provide additional resources.

The Department of Human Services has also filed a federal waiver to ease eligibility requirements for food assistance programs like SNAP and WIC, which cover 1.8 million Illinoisans and 174,000 pregnant women and parents of young children respectively.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES WILL REMAIN

As rumors continue to swirl, Gov. Pritzker assures Illinoisans that essential services will always remain open, including but not limited to grocery stores, pharmacies and gas stations. As new information becomes available, the Pritzker administration will continue to communicate with the public and media in a timely and transparent manner.

ILLINOISANS: STAY HOME

Social distancing is the paramount strategy for minimizing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. The Governor continues to make tough calls to keep Illinoisans safe, including mandating that events of 50 people or more be canceled, suspending dine-in operations of bars and restaurants and temporarily closing public and private K-12 schools. Public health officials continue to urge Illinoisans to stay home as much as possible.

Those experiencing symptoms should call a health care provider who will help arrange medical treatment without putting others at risk of exposure.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has a statewide COVID-19 hotline and website to answer any questions from the public or to report a suspected case: call 1-800-889-3931 or visit [IDPH.illinois.gov](https://idph.illinois.gov).

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