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For Immediate Release

Sen. Joyce Waddell [joyce.waddell@ncleg.net]

Sent: Friday, April 10, 2020 12:29 PM

To: [Steve Johnston](#)




From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 10, 2020

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Executive Order 131 - Sets Policies for Retail Stores, Enforces Mandatory Rules at Nursing Homes and Expedites Issuing Unemployment Benefits

Charlotte, NC- On Thursday, April 9, 2020, Governor Cooper issued a new executive order that does three things:

- Provide new limits on retail establishments for how many people can be in the store at one time
- Formalize guidance for nursing homes to prevent and respond to outbreaks
- Help employers file for faster unemployment benefits on behalf of their employees

With Easter this weekend and Passover underway, it's important to remember that it is still not safe to gather with extended family and friends. As hard as it is to miss longstanding traditions, we need to continue social distancing to protect ourselves and our loved ones. NC DHHS is sharing more detailed information about the state's COVID-19 cases and hospital capacity. View the NC DHHS dashboard for more information.

Read a [FAQ](#) about Executive Order 131

North Carolina has received three shipments from the Strategic National Stockpile. The supplies received in those shipments represent 33.3% of what the state requested. That's not enough, and the state is working every option it can to get more supplies.

If you are sick or think you may have COVID-19, start by calling your doctor, public health department or community health center to talk to a medical professional by phone. They can help you make a plan for what to do next. North Carolinians can call 2-1-1 if they need help or resources in response to COVID-19.

FAQ
Read a [FAQ](#) about North Carolina's Stay At Home order.
Should I wear a mask in public?

The best way to stay healthy is to stay at home. If you need to go out for essentials, covering your face is one tool to help stop the spread of this virus. A medical grade mask is not necessary and those should be reserved for health care providers.

Do not let a face covering provide a false sense of security – they are not replacements for social distancing and hand washing.

What is being done to keep prisons safe?

We know this virus presents additional challenges for congregant living facilities, including nursing homes, long-term care facilities and prisons. The safety of the staff and populations at these institutions is of critical importance and DPS is taking extra steps including additional screenings for staff entering prisons, quarantine time for new offenders, restricting visitors and frequent cleanings to help reduce spread. The Governor and DPS are closely reviewing all available options, always keeping public safety top of mind.

What is the state doing to fix the overwhelmed unemployment insurance system?

The Division of Employment Security has distributed more than \$40 million so far in COVID-19 benefits. The Division will continue to rapidly expand capacity to get more checks out quickly.

Since March 16, almost 500,000 North Carolinians have filed for unemployment insurance. The Division of Employment Security is taking extraordinary steps to get checks to people who need them. In this unprecedented crisis, DES has already received more than 100 times the volume of applications for unemployment insurance seen in a usual week, jamming phone lines and straining website capacity. To meet this need, DES is rapidly expanding immediate capacity:

- Adding more than 350 people to help individuals and employers with their claims
- Contracting with an additional call center
- Adding computer servers and bringing on 5 DIT employees to ensure capacity for a large number of people to file online without crashing the system
- Doubling printing and mail capacity to ensure that documents can be printed and delivered quickly and on time
- Purchasing more than 500 new computers and laptops to ensure that both employees in the office and at home can work to process claims.

"I continue to be concerned about the large number of African Americans with positive results for the coronavirus and even more than ever we must follow guidelines and take care of ourselves and remember to take social distances seriously. Over the past few months I have spent a lot of time meeting citizens in the district at small and large events, but now I am doing a lot of reaching out to constituents on line. That's because I know it's really important that we all stay at home as much as we can and follow recommendations to keep our communities safe. We are listening to your concerns and can be reached at our office through email or telephone calls. " said Senator Joyce Waddell.

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