

Greetings,

Beginning Monday, April 19, all Massachusetts residents ages 16 and older become eligible for a COVID vaccine.

Since the vaccine first became available, Sam Hopper from our team has maintained a **comprehensive vaccine guide** so that constituents had every bit of information that we did about who was eligible and when, where, and how to access your vaccine. [The guide is linked here.](#)

Will you help make sure everyone has access to a COVID vaccine?

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Sam has just completed a major update, in time for your use or for you to share it with family and friends who haven't yet been vaccinated. In addition to including direct links for all regional public-facing vaccine sites, it includes where people can go to get help with transportation, phone access, and more. (All you have to do is forward this email.)

I received my first vaccine yesterday and know what it's like to wake early to see if there is availability at a CVS, put my name on waiting lists, preregister, and sift through pages of web forms. Our guide helps make all of this just a bit easier and less confusing. **Again, it's on our website for all to use, [here](#).**

About COVID-19 variants

On Tuesday, April 13, the two Joint Committees I chair for the Senate, COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness and Management and Public Health, held a combined hearing on COVID variants. As you may know, Massachusetts is among top states for variants in the nation.

The hearing covered issues of epidemiology, hospital preparedness, and sequencing. What we heard pointed towards continued vigilance around masking, distancing, and contact tracing; an expansion of testing, as well as increased and targeted efforts to expand vaccinations. It is also clear that we must remain closely engaged in tracking the variants' presence in and impact on the Commonwealth as the prevalence of variants is increasing and — while experts are working tirelessly to understand the impact of variants — there is still a great deal we don't know.

You can view the hearing in its entirety, here: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/3666>.

From March 4, 2020, when I co-chaired the Joint Committee on Public Health oversight hearing on the Commonwealth's preparedness for dealing with the impending coronavirus crisis, it was clear to me that the fight against COVID-19 was a race against the clock: a *race* to stop community spread, a *race* to develop the vaccine, a *race* to vaccinate our people. I have the same urgency now as I had more than 400 days ago as we rise to meet the new challenges posed by COVID variants.

On behalf of constituents, my team and I are sifting through a great deal of information on variant testing, vaccine efficacy, the possible need for vaccine boosters, and more — we are grateful to frontline medical providers for their tireless service.

A front page story last Sunday in *The New York Times* discussed the variants raging in Europe and Brazil and the ways in which lawmakers were caught unaware.

I'm sure we all agree: Let's all do our part to ensure this does not happen in Massachusetts. Please continue to adhere to public health guidance.

The team wishes everyone who is observing a peaceful and joyous Ramadan.

Jo, Cameron, Elena, Sam, Brian, and Jared

P.S. If you're a business owner, we want you to know that we're engaging in the unemployment insurance solvency assessment rate jump. We understand that a legislative solution is required and the Senate has expressed a desire to achieve a legislative solution as soon as possible. The House, Senate, and Governor are working to come to an agreement on the correct legislative solution. I've reached out to the Senate Chair of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, who is helping to drive a solution to this issue, and conveyed significant urgency on behalf of the small businesses in the district that are facing very steep hikes. The Department of Unemployment Assistance notified employers last night that first quarter payments, which were due on April 30, will instead be due on June 1, which will give the legislature time to address the issue.

P.P.S. If you are fully vaccinated, please be sure to review the Department of Public Health's guidance for folks who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, which can be found [here](#).

P.P.P.S. The People's Town Hall is coming up on Monday, April 26 - [registration is required](#). Registrants should have immediately received a confirmation email from Zoom with instructions on how to join. If you didn't receive a confirmation email from Zoom, please try registering again [here](#), or contact Sam in my office: samantha.hopper@masenate.gov for assistance.

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