



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**January 7, 2021**

## **Baker-Polito Administration Announces Extension of Capacity and Gathering Limits, New Guidance for Hospital ICU Staffing, Elective Surgeries**

*Capacity Limits for Most Industries, Gathering Limits Extended Until at Least January*

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**BOSTON** — Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the extension of further restrictions and new hospital guidance to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

Industry restrictions for capacity limits and reduced gathering limits went into effect on Saturday, December 26<sup>th</sup>, and will now be extended for at least two more weeks to January 24<sup>th</sup>.

Read a summary of the restrictions [here](#).

Read the emergency order [here](#).

### **INDUSTRY RESTRICTIONS & GATHERING LIMITS**

**Capacity Limits:** Under the current restrictions that are being extended today, most industries in Massachusetts remain subject to a 25% capacity limit:

- Restaurants (based on permitted seating capacity)
- Close Contact Personal Services
- Theaters and Performance Venues
- Casinos
- Office Spaces
- Places of Worship
- Retail Businesses
- Driving and Flight Schools
- Golf Facilities (for indoor spaces)
- Libraries
- Lodging (for common areas)
- Arcades and Indoor Recreation Businesses
- Fitness Centers and Health Clubs
- Museums, Cultural Facilities and Guided Tours

- Workers and staff will not count towards the occupancy count for restaurants, places of worship, close contact personal services, and retail businesses.

All other rules and restrictions in each sector-specific guidance will continue to remain in effect.

**Gatherings Limit:** The current gathering limits in place since December 26 are also being extended. Indoor gatherings will remain limited to 10 people. Outdoor gatherings will remain limited to 25 people outside. The gatherings limit applies to private homes, event venues and public spaces.

### **NEW HOSPITAL GUIDANCE:**

**Hospital Tier Escalation:** The Department of Public Health's [hospital guidance](#), issued in early November, establishes a regional tiering system for hospitals to support continued collaboration among hospitals and sustain capacity. Since early December, all regions across the Commonwealth have been in Tier 3 status, which established a framework for greater coordination to balance patient load and ensure capacity.

Today, in response to the continued rise in hospitalizations, all regions across the state will be escalated to Tier 4 status. In Tier 4, the hospitals in each region will meet at least daily, and will continue to collaborate across regions where necessary, to address growing capacity constraints and continue to load balance as needed.

**ICU Nurse Staffing Ratios:** To support the health care system's continued response to the surge in cases and hospitalizations, the Commonwealth is allowing the deployment of acute nursing staffing under certain circumstances. Starting today, hospitals with severe capacity constraints may request a temporary exemption from the mandated nurse-to-patient ratios in the ICU. This option will only be available to hospitals with capacity of less than 20% who first attest to DPH that they have suspended all nonessential elective invasive procedures, including those conducted in an outpatient setting under the hospital's license. Additionally, hospitals must take every reasonable step to expand capacity prior to requesting a temporary exemption. If a hospital's bed capacity increases, or if the hospital re-starts nonessential elective invasive procedures, the hospital must resume compliance with the ICU staffing requirements.