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Policies Currently Enacted in Response to Coronavirus to Ease Burden on Working-Class Communities

In the short weeks since Covid-19 has been spreading in the United States, millions have faced staggering levels of crisis around some of our most basic human needs. In addition to the public health threat, large portions of our economy have shut down, causing widespread loss of work, income, housing, food and more.

Now is the time for swift, policy action in the public and private sectors to uphold the public good and human life. All 50 states and the District of Columbia are in a State of Emergency and many have been able to pass important policies to expand our safety-net, such as:

- Extension of unemployment insurance and waivers on waiting periods to apply
- Expanded Temporary Disability
- Residential eviction moratoriums and some commercial eviction moratoriums
- Extra beds for homeless populations
- Expanded paid leave - PFML
- Emergency childcare
- Greater access to healthcare coverage/directives to private insurers
- Bans on utility shutoffs

We applaud these initial efforts at protecting working class families and their communities. In Massachusetts, our local and state governments are also responding with policies to support residents in this unprecedented crisis. Unions are engaged in direct organizing and impact bargaining with employers to protect members and uphold worker and community standards as much as possible. And even some corporations are attempting to do their part in this public health crisis.

The Greater Boston Labor Council offers the following summary of policies that have been won by workers and communities, some that have been passed by various levels of government and others issued by the private sector. **These policies go above and beyond some of the initial basic protections listed above. The GBLC holds these up not as perfect or complete, but as creative, high road, working-class focused responses to a rapidly changing crisis.**

For suggestions, corrections or edits, please contact Rachael Running: rrunning@gbgc.us.

High Road Covid-19 Relief Policies by City/State:

- **Greater Boston Area**
 - **Prisoner release:** Suffolk District Attorney Rachael Rollins to release inmates vulnerable to COVID-19 and who pose no 'meaningful risk' to public safety: <https://bit.ly/39dMoJj>
 - **Food for Homeless:** The City of Cambridge is launching a program that will pay local restaurants to make and deliver boxed or bagged lunches to nearby homeless shelters. <https://wbur.fm/2QKBOMt>
- **Los Angeles Area:**
 - **Release of prisoners and de-emphasis on arrests:** The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is releasing inmates from its jails and cutting down on how many people it books into custody to protect those housed in close quarters from the growing coronavirus pandemic. Countywide arrests have dropped from a daily average of 300 to 60, while the jail population was reduced by more than 600 inmates. <https://lat.ms/2xXEyq0>
 - **Residential eviction moratorium and rental assistance fund:** L.A.'s plan will temporarily ban evictions and late fees, require landlords and residential mortgage-holders to work out payment plans with affected residents, reduce city business taxes and create a citywide rental assistance fund. <https://lat.ms/2QDJx5S>
 - **Economic relief package of \$11 million for small businesses** impacted by coronavirus. <https://bit.ly/3adT3Eh>
 - **Temporary Shelter Beds for homeless population:** \$20 million in budget reserve funds will be used to add 1,600 emergency shelter beds in thirteen City recreation centers and scale up to dozens more locations with more than 6,000 beds provided by the American Red Cross. <https://bit.ly/2wylrT3>
 - **Emergency homeless housing in hotels:** Counties have procured four hotels to shelter homeless people in Ventura, Oxnard and Thousand Oaks Counties. <https://bit.ly/33LSvU3>
- **Washington D.C.**
 - **Emergency Relief Bill:** This bill expands eligibility for unemployment insurance to workers who have been laid off or lost hours; allows hotels to defer payment of property taxes; allows other businesses to delay payment of sales taxes; creates a grant program the Mayor can use to help those who otherwise wouldn't be eligible for unemployment insurance; prohibits price-gouging and stockpiling during the state of emergency; stops evictions and utility cut-offs; forbids landlords from charging late fees on rent payments; extends public benefits programs. <https://bit.ly/396dL7R>
- **San Francisco Area**
 - **Free Emergency Childcare:** San Francisco's Parks and Recs facilities will be providing free childcare for frontline workers. <https://bit.ly/2Wvh8m9>
 - **Prisoner release in Alameda, Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties:** 247 inmates were approved for early release after their sentences were modified and

another 67 inmates were released by the court on their own recognizance. Sheriff's office will continue to release inmates when it's feasible.

<https://cbsloc.al/3bjpvp1>

- **San Diego**

- The San Diego Convention Center and the city's large event facility, Golden Hall, will become shelter space for hundreds of homeless San Diegans amid the coronavirus outbreak. <https://bit.ly/2Uz2kAh>

- **New Jersey**

- New Jersey will release as many as 1,000 people from its jails in what is believed to be the nation's broadest effort to address the risks of the highly contagious coronavirus spreading among the incarcerated. <https://nyti.ms/2UggQHw>

- **Chicago**

- The City worked with the hotel owners and Unite Here Local 1 to end an 18-month labor strike so that they can provide hotel rooms in city-rented downtown facilities for individuals with a COVID-19 diagnosis or who are awaiting test results. All hotel workers who work during any quarantine operations will be properly trained and will not directly interact with guests. The City also negotiated with the YMCA for increased access to 400 additional shelter beds. <https://bit.ly/39ka0vM>

Policy Responses - International:

- **Italy:** As of March 10, 2020, mortgage payments will be suspended across Italy as part of measures to soften the economic blow of coronavirus on households, a minister has said. (<https://bbc.in/3aK6Rq7>)
- **Australia:** A stimulus package of around 0.5 percent of GDP was announced, including \$25,000 tax-free (spread over six months) to many businesses, and a one-off \$750 payment to social security recipients and veterans (spread over six months) to many businesses, and a one-off \$750 payment to social security recipients and veterans. <http://bit.ly/2W8Uekw>
- **United Kingdom:** The UK will cover 80% of wages lost due to the virus. <https://bit.ly/39lvyr1>
- **Denmark:** The Danish government told private companies hit by the effects of the pandemic that it would pay 75 percent of their employees' salaries to avoid mass layoffs. <https://bit.ly/39gByCa> For staff paid by the hour, the maximum coverage is 90 percent. <https://bit.ly/2QIIUrF> Denmark's government agreed to cover the cost of employees' salaries at private companies as long as those companies do not fire people. The plan will last for three months, after which point they hope things come back to normal.
- **Korea and China:** Both countries have increased unemployment insurance benefits and expanded social safety nets. <https://bit.ly/2wA2csg>

Policy Responses - Private Employers/Entities:

- **Stop and Shop: UFCW has negotiated an increase in pay and extended sick leave.** Workers will receive a ten percent increase in pay during the coronavirus outbreak and

two additional weeks of paid leave if they become sick. UFCW International and UFCW Locals have been negotiating with employers across the country to recognize how hard grocery workers are working to provide necessary food and supplies to their communities during the coronavirus pandemic. <https://bit.ly/2WBw2Y1>

- **Verizon: The Communications Workers of America (CWA) has negotiated paid leave for workers** who can't work for the following reasons: if diagnosed with COVID-19, if directed by a doctor to stay home, if required to care for kids when school and daycare are closed, or to care for a sick family member. <https://bit.ly/3acdT7i>
- **Transdev (part of parent-company Veolia): The Boston Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers 8751's, worked with Mayor Walsh and negotiated full pay** from contractor Transdev. Their solidarity commitment to Boston's communities includes providing transport labor as needed to shuttle food and laptops for school children, transport frontline health workers in case public transportation is shut down, and other emergency transportation needs. <https://bit.ly/39pleiJ>
- **Darden Restaurants: Emergency plan to pay hourly employees** amid coronavirus pandemic: Darden Board plans to withdraw on its \$750 million credit. "We are pleased to have an emergency pay program to supplement our permanent paid sick leave policy for all of our hourly team members." <https://bit.ly/2Uv00dQ>
- **Best Buy:** Employees will not be forced to work if they aren't comfortable doing so; wages will be paid to employees who are sick or need to take care of their children home from school; wages will be paid to employees for their regularly scheduled hours during reduced hours. <https://bit.ly/2xY0JfH>
- **Tailored Brands/Mens Wearhouse:** All employees will be paid for scheduled hours throughout this time period. <https://bit.ly/2WEybt4>
- **Apple:** All hourly workers will continue to receive pay in alignment with business as usual operations; expanded leave policies to accommodate personal or family health circumstances created by COVID-19 — including recovering from an illness, caring for a sick loved one, mandatory quarantining, or childcare challenges due to school closures. <https://apple.co/33FN8Wf>
- **Real Estate Board of New York** issued a 3 month moratorium on evictions. https://nypost.com/2020/03/13/rebny-top-nyc-landlords-agree-to-stop-evictions-as-respo-nse-to-coronavirus/?mod=article_inline
- **Microsoft:** Pledged to continue to pay hourly service workers – such as kitchen staff, janitors and shuttle drivers – even if their hours are reduced. (<http://bit.ly/2Q639zi>)
- **Starbucks:** Will pay workers for the next 30 days, whether they come to work or stay home. <https://bit.ly/2Uxq5bY>
- **Target:** Will offer \$2/hour pay increase during crisis. (<https://bit.ly/2Uxq5bY>)
- **Companies paying their employees during store closures, at least initially:** Abercrombie and Fitch, Apple, Bath and Bodyworks, Carhartt, Crocs, GAP Inc., Levi, Lululemon, Lush, Macy's, Sephora <https://bit.ly/2QKWLxM>