

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

April 10, 2020

Around the Square

COVID-19 Projections Improving

Governor Mike DeWine announced Thursday that COVID-19 projections are steadily improving based on updated models, predicting a new peak of significantly fewer daily cases. He attributes Ohioans' better than anticipated adherence to strict social distancing as the primary instrument in reducing these numbers and announced that the state will begin to consider plans to loosen restrictions. However, the administration is wary of a secondary and prolonged spike in cases should social distancing at all be reduced at this time. This week, the state announced hospital overflow sites in convention centers around the state in anticipation of a burden on healthcare facilities and is currently working on strategies to slow the virus in the prison population.

5,512 cases have been confirmed in the state as of Thursday, including 213 fatalities. For all COVID-19 updates, follow Gov. DeWine's briefing daily at 2 pm [here](#). Additional resources and statistics can be found at coronavirus.ohio.gov.

Political News and Notes

State Revenue Tax Down

Overall tax receipts in March fell \$159 million short of projections from the Office of Budget and Management. This 10.5% drop represents the beginning of an economic downturn resulting from numerous businesses closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic precautionary measures. Still, the estimates from the entire fiscal year remain 0.5% above original projections, and are 2.2% over the total receipts through the same period last fiscal year. Specifically, personal income tax fell below estimates by 5.1% for the month of March, and now faces a 0.7% dip for the fiscal year to date. Prior to the pandemic, Ohio had been ahead of estimates in nearly every tax category, indicating a successful time for the state's economy.

Sustained Surge in Unemployment Claims

Ohio contributed 226,000 to the nation's 6.6 million new claims for unemployment last week. That total is second only to the prior week's 272,100, which set a record high for a one week period in the state. The nation followed a similar trend, with the 6.6 million illustrating a slight downturn from the 6.9 million one week prior. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services has extended their call center to seven day operations and reallocated up to 1,000 workers from their home departments to staff unemployment calls. The agency has already paid out \$124 million to 200,000 workers in the last three weeks, and any processing delays due to the surge will not impact the amount of compensation.

Potential employees can utilize a new [website](#) to browse high-demand jobs during the pandemic. U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown has recently proposed the "Heroes Fund," which will provide a pay premium up to \$25,000 for frontline workers including bus drivers, grocery store clerks, and hospital janitors among a list of positions. Ohio urges individuals to file for unemployment using the ODJFS [website](#). Those without computer access can call 1-877-644-6562. The call center hours have been extended to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, and 9 a.m to 1 p.m. on Sundays.

This Week's Bills

HB 598 - EMT Services: To temporarily authorize emergency medical technicians to perform certain medical services in hospitals and to declare an emergency.

HB 599 - EMS / Funeral Workers: To require, during the period of the emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D issued on March 9, 2020, and for six months thereafter, prompt notification of an emergency medical services worker or funeral services worker who has treated, handled, or transported a patient who tested positive for COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.

HB 600 - Ambulance Drivers: To authorize a person who has had a valid commercial driver's license to drive an ambulance during the state of emergency due to COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.

HB 601 - Adult Changing Stations: To enact Matthew's Law, requiring public buildings to have at least one rest room facility with an adult changing station and authorizing an income tax credit for installation.

HB 602 - Tax Foreclosure Notices: To modify the manner in which property tax foreclosure notices may be published.

HB 603 - Student Loan Interest: To require the Chancellor of Higher Education to waive interest rates and suspend payments on state student loan programs for up to sixty days, to require the Chancellor to conduct a study to assist institutions of higher education and students during the COVID-19 outbreak, and to declare an emergency.

SB 301 - Price Gouging: To make changes to the Ohio Consumer Sales Practices Act and to declare an emergency.

SCR 12 - Pandemic Discrimination: To denounce all forms of stigmatization, racism, and discrimination occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.