



CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

2020 Legislative Session

March 13, 2020

Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

This week, the impact of COVID-19 was felt across the state. Governor Lamont has declared a Public Health Emergency in the State on Tuesday, March 10th, and the Public Health Emergency Committee met Wednesday, March 11, 2020 to determine review the governor's declaration. The Committee was in agreement of following the plan put forth by the governor and will serve in an advisory role during the emergency. Additionally, Governor Lamont extended the four-day closure (3/12-3/15) of the Legislative Office Building and Capitol until Monday, March 30th. State and private-sector workers are encouraged to work from home and the governor and Legislative Leadership are working to respond to the Public Health Emergency including hourly wage worker relief, school closures, an Executive Order banning gatherings of people totaling more than 250.

Note: The closure of the Capitol and Legislative Office Building through March 30th will undoubtedly impact the legislative session. We will be sure to keep you apprised as further details emerge.

This past week has revealed new developments of particular interest to you:

Education Department Wants Local Schools to be Prepared for Possible Closures

The Department of Education released an updated document on Monday on the preparations for COVID-19, which includes a section on preparing for possible school closures. School closures in the state have not been mandated by federal or state officials, and without an emergency declaration from the Lamont Administration or the federal government, school shutdowns are left in the hands of school districts and local health officials. As of March 8th, the state had tested 47 residents for COVID-19, with one person testing positive for the virus and has been hospitalized in Danbury. According to the CDC, there have been 164 positive cases and 11 deaths in 19 states. Investigators are still in the process of finding out the source of the virus for 110 of the 164, while 36 were travel-related, and 18 were infected person to person in the U.S. Forty-Eight states including Connecticut are using the CDC's testing protocol to identify and deal with the virus. The updated document states that in the event of school closures

within the state, the Board of Education is allowed to authorize a shorter school year than the mandated 180 days. However, school closures are a last resort, and the CSDE has recommended that school districts plan to have some high quality, distance learning opportunities that could be used in the event of school shutdowns.

[Education Department wants local schools to be prepared for possible closures](#)

Cigna First Insurer to Say It will Pick Up the Tab for Coronavirus Testing

Private labs have begun testing patients for coronavirus, and pressure is being put on insurers by lawmakers to pick up the tab amid concerns about who will bear the cost of care in an outbreak. Cigna which is based in Bloomfield was the first insurer in the United States to say it would cover coronavirus testing, at no charge to patients. The CDC is currently offering testing to patients with a doctor's order at no cost. However, on Monday, two private companies, LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics, will start processing coronavirus tests on Connecticut residents. Academic medical centers and hospitals all across the United States are rushing to develop their own tests. Cigna has stated that it will be covering coronavirus testing as a preventative benefit for fully insured plans, waiving co-pays, coinsurance and deductibles, and this applies to customers enrolled in employer sponsored plans, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, and individual/family plans purchased through the ACA. Some states, such as New York and Washington have already ordered health plans to waive co-pays and deductibles for coronavirus testing. Senate and House members have already asked the Governor to do the same.

[Cigna first insurer to say it will pick up the tab for coronavirus testing](#)

Why Public Subsidies are Critical to New Downtown Hartford Housing Construction

Support for public subsidies to fund new housing construction in Hartford are necessary if the city would like to see more apartments being developed around the central business districts according to a new study done by the East Hartford real estate advisory firm Goman+York Property Advisors LLC. Taxpayer dollars are necessary in the effort to support new apartments in the area, because high construction costs and operating expenses make it difficult and almost impossible for developers to achieve a 12% or 18% return on investment, which is the minimum most would accept to do the project. The study, which was commissioned by the Capital Region Development Authority, provides two hypothetical examples of a typical housing project to demonstrate why a subsidy is needed. The first example has the development costs as \$250 per square foot, with monthly market rents of \$2.35 per square foot, which equates to an apartment with 650 square foot having a monthly rent of about \$1,527, and annual operating costs of \$9,87 per square foot. The net rent comes out to be \$18.33 per square foot,

and the projects ROI, without subsidies is 7.3% which is far below what would entice a developer. However, using the same example, but providing \$100 per square foot public subsidy which equates to 40% of the overall development costs bumps up the ROI to 12.22%. The State Department of Economic and Community Development loans/grants, various state and federal tax credits, brownfield loans, and city tax abatements are a number of tools developers use to reach their minimum required ROI, according to the study.

[Why public subsidies are critical to new downtown Hartford housing construction](#)

Tracked Bills:

Please see attached document.