

STATE of TEXAS
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES



SARAH DAVIS
DISTRICT 134
HARRIS COUNTY

May 15, 2020

Dear Community Leader,

I hope this message finds you well during this unprecedented time. Thank you all for your continued leadership and dedication our local communities. As of noon today, 222 of Texas' 254 counties are reporting cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Harris County and Houston have reported 8,817 total cases. Based on the most recent statistics and projections, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) reports 18,472 active cases, 1,272 fatalities, and approximately 25,454 recovered patients. Of the 1,004 reported fatalities, 193 occurred in Harris County and Houston. We continue to keep those suffering from COVID-19 and their loved ones in our thoughts and prayers.

As the state continues phased reopening of the Texas economy, it is imperative that we continue to physically distance in public, wear non-medical grade masks, and practice good respiratory and public health hygiene. This will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and help decrease the number of new case counts in the state.

State Agencies:

On Monday, May 11, **Governor Abbott** directed the **Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**, **Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)**, and **Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)** to begin testing all nursing home residents for COVID-19.

In addition, Governor Abbott has directed the **Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)** to waive late fees for certain occupational licenses, including for barbers, cosmetologists, electricians, speech-language pathologists, and dyslexia therapists.

On Wednesday, May 13, Governor Abbott also extended the COVID-19 disaster declaration covering all Texas counties.

Capitol:
P.O. Box 2910
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Committees:
Appropriations • Insurance
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TDEM has also announced the extension of federally supported, state-managed testing sites in Texas through June 30, 2020. There are 7 sites statewide, including 2 in the City of Houston and 2 in the Harris County area.

HHSC announced the approval of federal funds to support pandemic food benefits, domestic violence services.

On May 12, HHSC announced that it will receive over \$1 billion in food benefits from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT). These funds will support families with children who have temporarily lost access to free or discounted meals due to school closures resulting from COVID-19. P-EBT provides each child with a one-time benefit of \$285, which may be used to pay for groceries, similar to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Over 3 million children in Texas are certified to receive free or reduced lunches this school year, and their families will see P-EBT benefits automatically loaded by May 22. Additional information is available on HHSC's [P-EBT website](#).

In addition, HHSC announced the receipt of over \$3 million in federal funds appropriated to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families as part of the Coronavirus Assistance, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. These funds will enable 78 facilities across the state to provide domestic and family violence survivors with immediate shelter, supportive services, and access and referrals to community services. Additional information is available at HHSC's [Family Violence Program](#) website.

Further, HHSC announced a pilot program to allow individuals receiving SNAP benefits to purchase groceries online for curbside pick-up or delivery through participating retailers. Additional information is available on [HHSC's website](#).

Governor Abbott also announced federal funding allocations for local jurisdictions in Texas. My office sent follow-up information on these allocations to the Cities of Bellaire, Southside Place, and West University Place.

Local Response:

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The City of Houston and Harris County continue to offer the following resources related to COVID-19:

- Houston Health Department COVID-19 Hotline (Open 9AM to 7PM, Monday through Friday, and 9AM to 3PM Saturday and Sunday): 832-393-4220
- Houston Emergency Operations Center: <https://houstonemergency.org/covid19/>
- HCPHD Screening and Informational Hotline (Open 9AM to 7PM): 832-927-7575
- Houston METRO: <https://www.ridemetro.org/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

My office continues to monitor the situation and is in touch daily with state and local agencies. Should you have any questions or require additional information or assistance, please call my office at 512-463-0389 or 713-664-7095. You may also email me at sarah.davis@house.texas.gov.

Many Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Davis".

Representative Sarah Davis
House District 134