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## March 10, 2020

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### I. State and Local Briefing Call on COVID-19

On **Wednesday, March 11, at 1:00 PM ET**, White House Senior Administration Officials are hosting a briefing call on the coronavirus public health emergency. If you would like to join, [register now](#). Please feel free to share this invitation with your colleagues, as well as your community's public health officials.

You must RSVP to join the call. Upon successful registration, you will receive dial-in details to the email address you use to register. If you successfully register and do not receive dial-in instructions, please check your spam/junk folder. Multiple people cannot dial-in using the same registration information.

For additional information and resources for local leaders, visit [NLC's Coronavirus Response Resources page](#).

### II. Sweeney Announces School Employee Health Benefit Deal with NJEA

On Monday, Senate President Sweeney was joined by the President of New Jersey Education Association, Marie Blistan, [announcing](#) an agreement on healthcare benefits reforms. The seven year plan is estimated to produce annual savings of \$670 million for local school districts and \$403 million for school district employees. It has been reported, that Senate President Sweeney is hopeful to have the reform on the Governor's desk by the end of the month, a special enrollment period in July and the new plan take effect on September 1. For more on the agreement please see our most [recent blog post](#). At this time the bill text of the agreement is unavailable. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates.

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### **III. Governor Declares Public Health Emergency, State of Emergency**

Last night, Governor Murphy issued [Executive Order 103](#), declaring both a State of Emergency and Public Health Emergency across New Jersey, effective immediately. By declaring a State of Emergency, the State is provided with more flexibility to waive or suspend rules as needed to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak and ease certain restrictions on the State's ability to procure needed goods or equipment. The declaration of a State of Emergency also triggers the State's price-gouging law, which prohibits businesses from raising their prices more than 10%. An emergency declaration is also a required step to receive financial assistance from the federal government, which has just appropriated \$8.3 billion to be used in efforts to control the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Governor noted, "...the situation may become too large in scope to be handled in its entirety by the normal county and municipal operating services in some parts of this state, and this situation may spread to other parts of the state...."

After discussing the potential effects of the virus on state operation, the Order notes, "...the continuous delivery of services at the county and municipal level performed by those governments and their employees is also essential...."

The declaration of a Public Health Emergency empowers the State Director of Emergency Management (that is, the Superintendent of the State Police), in conjunction with the Commissioner of the Department of Health (DOH) "...to take any such emergency measures as the State Director may determine necessary, including the implementation of the State Emergency Operations Plan and directing the activation of county and municipal emergency operations plans, in order to fully and adequately protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the State of New Jersey from any actual or potential threat or danger that may exist from the possible exposure to COVID-19. The State Director of Emergency Management, in conjunction with the Commissioner of DOH, is authorized to coordinate the relief effort from this emergency with all governmental agencies, volunteer organizations, and the private sector."

The Director is also authorized to, "...coordinate all activities of all state, regional and local political bodies and agencies in order to ensure the most effective and expeditious implementation of this order, and, to this end, may call upon all such agencies and political subdivisions for any assistance necessary." This puts the State Department of Health in charge of supervising and coordinating all efforts by local boards of health in managing the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Order also prohibits municipalities from sending, "public works, fire, police, emergency medical, or other personnel or equipment into any non-contiguous impacted municipality within this state, nor to any impacted municipality outside this state, unless and until such aid has been directed by the county emergency management coordinator... in consultation with the State Director of Emergency Management in conjunction with the Commissioner of DOH."

Further, "It shall be the duty of every person or entity in this state or doing business in this State and of the members of the governing body and every official, employee, or agent of every political subdivision in this state and of each member of all other governmental bodies, agencies, and authorities in this state of any nature whatsoever, to cooperate fully with the State Director of Emergency Management and the Commissioner of DOH in all matters concerning this state of emergency."

Under the Order, State agencies are authorized, "...to take appropriate steps to address the public health hazard of COVID-19, including increasing access and eliminating barriers to medical care, protecting the health and well-being of students, and protecting the health and well-being of state, county, and municipal employees while ensuring the continuous delivery of state, county, and municipal services."

For more on the latest concerns and references for information and assistance please see [NJLM Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#).

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