



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

December 20, 2022

The Honorable Mark Kohler
Secretary of the State
State Capitol, Hartford, CT 06106

Frederick J. Jortner
Clerk of the State House of Representatives
State Capitol, Hartford, CT 06106

Michael Jefferson
Clerk of the State Senate
State Capitol, Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Declaration of a Continued Public Health Emergency and Directive to Agencies to Apply for Available Federal Funds

Dear Secretary Kohler and Clerks of the General Assembly:

Given the continued harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on low-income families and communities, and to ensure that our state agencies can apply for available federal funding, pursuant to Section 19a-131a of the Connecticut General Statutes, I declare that after December 28, 2022, a public health emergency continues to exist throughout all counties of the State of Connecticut. This declaration shall remain in effect through June 28, 2023, or until the federal public health emergency (FPHE) ends, whichever is earlier.

Connecticut is not an outlier in its continuation of a public health emergency or in its continued receipt of enhanced Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits or reimbursement for non-congregate housing. A majority of states continue to have declared emergencies in various forms and continue to receive federal funds. Some states have passed legislation or have existing statutes granting certain agencies the ability to declare a public health emergency without the need for a Governor declared public health emergency. Connecticut's statutes require the Governor to declare a public health emergency and do not permit a department head or state agency to declare an emergency or to issue orders absent a Governor declared emergency.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the state's response to it has changed as conditions have changed. We no longer find ourselves in the same circumstances that we did in March of 2020. We now

have access to vaccines, COVID-19 tests, and personal protective equipment. There is no longer a need for me to issue executive orders to implement the state's pandemic response and I will not issue any executive orders under this declaration. I am exercising my authority under Section 19a-131a of the Connecticut General Statutes to permit our state agencies to continue to access crucial federal funds under the Stafford Act and SNAP.

While we now have more tools available to protect ourselves, we cannot ignore the negative public health and economic effects that still exist because of COVID-19. On October 13, 2022, the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary renewed the FPHE through January 11, 2023. The HHS Secretary can extend the FPHE as many times as he deems necessary in 90-day increments and to date he has extended the existing FPHE twelve times. The Acting HHS Secretary has also stated that HHS will provide states with 60 days' notice prior to the termination of the FPHE. Since the HHS Secretary did not provide notice of his intent to terminate the FPHE, we expect that the emergency will continue through April 11, 2023.

The FPHE permits our agencies to apply for enhanced benefits to address increased food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies conducted by the Connecticut Foodshare Institute for Hunger and Research Solutions found that food insecurity increased during the pandemic. The Department of Social Services has also experienced an increased demand for SNAP to address the increased food insecurity caused by the pandemic.

SNAP provides nutritional assistance to approximately 224,285 Connecticut households each month and the increased SNAP benefits have been an important component of the state's response to the economic effects of the pandemic. Pursuant to Section 2302 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is authorized to make additional SNAP allotments to states for emergency SNAP benefits for eligible households contingent upon both a continuing FPHE and an emergency or disaster declaration by a state. Connecticut has received and distributed an additional \$929.1 million of emergency SNAP benefits under this program. The enhanced SNAP benefit results in recipient households receiving an additional \$156.44 per month on average. The continued receipt of these funds is vital to offset the effects of food insecurity in Connecticut during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A state declared public health emergency also permits the state to access funds under the Stafford Act which has been crucial to the state's ability to reduce density in congregate housing and provide alternate housing for people experiencing homelessness and to survivors of domestic violence. To protect public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic it is necessary and beneficial to continue to provide non-congregate housing. The Department of Housing has found during the pandemic that non-congregate shelters have had far fewer outbreaks of COVID-19 than traditional shelters. Continuing non-congregate sheltering under this public health emergency allows the State to protect the health and welfare of our most vulnerable residents. Over the course of the pandemic the State has placed 6,970 individuals experiencing homelessness and many domestic violence survivors in non-congregate housing. To date the State has received \$15.89 million in federal reimbursement and is expecting to receive an additional \$20.7 million to support this important public health and safety program.

For the foregoing reasons, I am extending the public health emergency.

I am filing this declaration with you under my hand and seal on this 20th day of December 2022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ned Lamont". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ned" and the last name "Lamont" clearly distinguishable.

Ned Lamont,
Governor