



# Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

June 25 PM - Jran Email

Dear Jran Community:

Today, we will go over the Governor's new orders in light of the rapid increase in COVID19 cases, surge capacity at area hospitals, the importance of social distancing and wearing masks, an opportunity for our area congregations to host a free mask drive, and voting during the pandemic.

## **COVID19**

Today, Governor Greg Abbott issued two new notices for the State of Texas. The first announcement [temporarily pauses any further phased reopening of businesses](#). All businesses that could open under the Governor's prior orders may remain open at their current occupancy rates and [using the minimum health standards](#) set forth by the State. The Governor indicated that he has no desire to roll back his Open Texas efforts and will only do so as a last resort.

As a result of the spike in new COVID19 cases requiring hospitalization, the Governor's second announcement came in the form of a [new executive order expanding hospital bed capacity](#). Under today's order, hospitals in Bexar, Dallas, Travis, and Harris counties must postpone "all surgeries and procedures that are not immediately, medically necessary to correct a serious medical condition or to preserve a life...". There is some ambiguity around the order about whether an elective surgery can proceed so long as it does not "deplete any hospital capacity needed to cope with the COVID-19 disaster."

To follow up on Tuesday's Jran email, Harris County Public Health informed me that many religious organization's buildings are considered "commercial entities," however there is still some clarity that is needed on a case-by-case basis. All religious entities are being asked to require masks for all in-person activities or meetings.

Johns Hopkins University is reminding us that we are [still in the first wave of COVID19 infections](#), despite the sharp increase in new cases. County Judge Lina Hidalgo announced that while the NRG pop-up hospital is ready to be deployed if needed, it's better that we not get there—continue staying home, wearing a mask when out, and keeping social distancing.

The Governor is ordering the National Guard to hand out free masks to every person who is tested for COVID19 at any of the [State run testing sites](#).

The Texas Medical Center is reporting that as of today, all TMC institutions in the nine county Greater Houston Region are using 100% of their base ICU capacity. Of the [five warning metrics](#), TMC has put a red warning label on three of them: COVID19 case growth trend, ICU bed occupancy, and daily new COVID19 cases. The two green labels are PPE and testing. TMC is predicting that we are [12 days away from exceeding the sustainable surge capacity](#) of our hospital system before moving into [emergency surge](#).

Mayor Turner reported that the City of Houston has an additional 924 new cases of COVID19 today, bringing the number of [active cases to 13,306](#). The age groups testing positive the most are between 20-40 years old.

The Greater Houston Partnership, our area's business advocacy organization, is [asking employers to roll back their opening strategies](#) and to send all workers home who can work from outside the office. Several area retailers and restaurants are voluntarily closing their doors due to the inability to keep employees and customers safe.

The City's public testing sites are reporting that they have reached their 500 test capacity by noon every day. The President has ordered federal funds to be reallocated away from local testing sites to Federally qualified sites and Walgreens locations. The City is working on redirecting funds to maintain their two largest sites, so you may see a charge for testing at other sites.

### [#MaskUpHou](#)

City and County officials are relying on masks as one of our biggest weapons against spreading COVID19. While social distancing and staying home are the most effective, opening businesses has made it very challenging in practice.

***If you are interested in your congregation hosting a free mask give away for members of the community, [please let me know](#). The Federation is working with the City to provide the masks free of charge.***



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## Voting During COVID19

Voting for the Primary Runoff elections begins on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The Governor extended early voting due to the COVID19 health crisis. Don't forget to bring your mask!

Extended early voting hours are:

- Early Voting
  - June 29 – July 2: 7 am – 7 pm
  - July 5: 10 am – 7 pm
  - July 6: 7 am – 7 pm
  - July 10: 7 am – 10 pm
- Election Day
  - July 14: 7 am – 7 pm

People over age 65 can apply for a mail-in ballot. The last day to apply is July 2<sup>nd</sup>. To find your polling location or apply for a mail-in ballot, visit [harrisvotes.com](https://www.harrisvotes.com).

## In Other News...(Earbuds in, volume up!)

We've seen baseball stadiums full of plush animals and now we have a [theater full of plants!](#) The Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona opened to a packed house of lush greenery. The UceLi Quartet played their concert, Giacomo Puccini's "Crisantemi," to 2,292 potted plants. Human listeners can enjoy it via [livestream](#), complete with the opening plea to the plants to silence their phones and not take pictures.

Take care and continue to #MaskUpHou,

Jackie

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