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## **Summary of DC COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020** (Enacted March 16, 2020)

Set forth below is a summary of provisions in the new law that are important to relative caregivers and the DC children they raise.

### **Title I. Labor and Workforce Protections**

- Extends unemployment compensation to those unemployed or partially unemployed due to the coronavirus, *e.g.*, if you self-quarantine or lose shifts at work. (Amends DC Unemployment Compensation Act, DC Code § 51-101 *et seq.*)
- If you test positive for the virus and cannot work, you will be eligible for medical leave. (Amends DC Family and Medical Leave Act, DC Code § 32-501 *et seq.*)

### **Title II. Business Relief**

- Extends the March 31, 2020 real property tax for hotels to June 30, 2020 and allows other businesses to defer February and March sales taxes to July 20, 2020.
- Sets up a small business grant program to help businesses and nonprofits recover from reductions in revenue resulting from the public health emergency. This will also independent contractors that do not qualify for unemployment insurance.
- Allows restaurants to sell beer and wine for carry out or delivery in closed containers.

### **Title III. Public Health, Safety and Consumer Protection**

- Gives the Commissioner of the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking additional authority regarding emergency rulemakings, orders and bulletins (including waiver of time restrictions for filling and refilling prescription drugs).
- Benefits—Authorizes the Mayor to take actions that she determines appropriate to support the continuation of, and access to, any public benefit program. The Mayor has announced that TANF, SNAP, and Healthcare Alliance benefits are automatically extended. No action is needed to remain eligible. The Mayor has not yet addressed other public benefit plans such as District housing vouchers, the Grandparent and Close Relative Caregiver subsidies, Adoption, Guardianship and Foster care subsidies. (Amends DC Public Emergency Act, DC Code § 7-2304.01.)

- Price Gouging—No one can charge extra for merchandise or services during a public health emergency.
- Stockpiling—Allows the Mayor and other government officials to limit how much of certain things you can buy to protect first responders and supply chains.
- Utilities—Electric, gas and water are prohibited from being disconnected during the public health emergency declared by the Mayor, or for 15 calendar days thereafter. (Amends Retail Electric Competition and Consumer Protection Act, DC Code § 34-1501 *et seq.*; Retail Natural Gas Supplier Licensing and Consumer Protection Act, DC Code § 34-1671.01 *et seq.*; District of Columbia Public Works Act, DC Code § 34-2407.01.)
- Evictions—Tenants cannot be evicted during a public health emergency declared by the Mayor. (Amends Rental Housing Act, DC Code § 42-3505.01(k)).
- Prescriptions—Pharmacists can refill prescriptions early during a public health emergency declared by the Mayor. Pharmacists do not have authority to refill prescriptions that do not have a refill order. (Amends DC Health Occupations Revision Act, § 3-1202.08).
- Licenses and registrations—Mayor may extend validity of and waive deadlines, fees, fines and penalties for licenses and registrations during and 45 days after a public health emergency declared by the Mayor (e.g. driver’s and other professional licenses).
- Homeless Services—During a public health emergency declared by the Mayor, a family may be placed in an “interim eligibility placement” which is “a short-term shelter placement for a family, for the purpose of conducting an in-depth assessment to facilitate an eligibility determination for shelter and appropriate supportive services” for 60 days instead of 3 days and the mayor has 10 business days following the end of the public health emergency to “issue the eligibility determination.” The Mayor may also waive other requirements and provisions e.g. in person meetings and communication. (Amends Homeless Services Reform Act, DC Code § 4-751.01 *et seq.*)
- Tenants’ Rights—Tenant and tenant association deadlines under TOPA and RHA are extended until 30 days after the end of a public health emergency declared by the Mayor. (Amends the Rental Housing Conversion and Sale Act, DC Code § 42-3401.01 *et seq.*—a statute that gives tenants rights when a landlord seeks to convert rental housing to condominiums, Rental Housing Act, DC Code § 42-3501.01 *et seq.*—a statute that protects low and moderate income tenants) Also, landlords may not charge rent late fees during a public health emergency declared by the Mayor. (Amends Rental Housing Act, DC Code § 42-3531(c)(6)).

- Good time credits—Gives the Department of Corrections discretion to award additional good time credits to effectuate the immediate release of persons sentenced for misdemeanors during a public health emergency. (Amends DC Good Time Credits Act, DC Code § 24-221.01c(c)).

#### **Title IV. Education**

- DCPS can waive certain promotion requirements for any student who fails to meet them during a school year when the Mayor has declared a public health emergency. (Amends Student Promotion Act, DC Code § 38-781.05(c)).

#### **Title V. Public Body Meetings**

- ANCs are not required to meet during public health emergencies declared by the Mayor; however, they may meet remotely.
- Other Boards and Commissions also do not have to meet during public health emergencies unless ordered by the Mayor to do so.
- FOIA is suspended during a public health emergency declared by the Mayor.
- Public body open meetings requirements can be met during a public health emergency declared by the Mayor if the public can view or hear the meeting through technology either during or soon after it takes place.

(Amends Open Meetings Act, DC Code § 2-571 *et seq.*)

#### **Title VI. Council Authority**

- The Mayor will submit her FY 2021 budget proposal to the Council by May 6, 2020. This is extended from March 19, 2020.
- The Council is authorized to conduct meetings and vote virtually.