



Dear Governor Charlie Baker,

The world is in crisis and now more than ever we appreciate your resolute leadership. 74 of Greater Boston Interfaith Organization Friends and allies representing civic sector institutions – communities of faith, unions, social service providers, healthcare centers and schools – are deeply committed to assisting in the fight against COVID-19. Though we are no strangers to crisis, this one is truly unprecedented. In this time of crisis, we are called by our faith to honor the sanctity of human life and to exercise our Prophetic voice with the most vulnerable among us. We are writing to you for two purposes. The first is to extend an offer of help during this unprecedented crisis.

***We are willing to step up in a range of ways, including mobilizing our people for any job that keeps us safe and pursuing any other possible ways to help. We will do anything in our power to slow the spread of this epidemic, treat the sick and aid in the recovery.***

- We spread the word early on to all of our congregations and communities to follow your directives on physical distancing. We have suspended all programs (except for essential services) and we will continue to keep our doors closed.
- Countless churches, mosques and synagogues have cancelled in-person worship. Many of the now empty buildings and outdoor spaces are serving other purposes in the fight against COVID19 including providing feeding programs, and testing sites, and for Red Cross emergency blood drives. We are open to exploring the possibility of expanding the options to include the use of facilities for hospital beds, quarantine facilities and whatever else is needed. The system will be overwhelmed. We want to help.
- We can mobilize people to acquire the skills necessary for any critical jobs that can be learned quickly and that don't compromise our safety. Tens of thousands of Greater Bostonians trust us. People are essential in this battle.
- Those of us who provide essential services will continue to put our lives on the line. Pastors, rabbis, imams, bus drivers, nurses, doctors, homeless outreach workers and pantry volunteers will keep working.
- We want to work with you and we will consider any proposal.

*The second purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to three issues that have long been the focus of GBIO's work, all of which are critical to our surviving this health and economic crisis. We welcome the opportunity to work with you on these issues and are eager to hear your ideas about other areas on which we might collaborate in addition to any proposals you may have for us.*

### **Affordable Accessible Healthcare**

We want to support urgent healthcare needs through our organized voice. We are open to working with you and thinking creatively to address the needs during this crisis.

Additionally we have redoubled our commitment to advocate for passage of comprehensive healthcare reform in this year's budget. The reform would include but not be limited to, 1) Lowering the cost of prescription drugs 2) Increasing Access to affordable mental health and substance use disorder, 3) Eliminating surprise out-of-network billing. These priorities have never been more urgent than now, during this unprecedented health crisis affecting so many in the Commonwealth.

### **Mortgage Deferral and Rent Assistance**

GBIO is working with MAHA on a proposed idea (see attached) to defer mortgage payments in light of the current economic crisis resulting from COVID, likely to escalate to a full blown depression.

We strongly support the recently passed house bill H.4615 which would put in place a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures needed to keep people in their homes during a time when staying home is necessary for the public's health.

The attached proposal defers mortgage and loan payments for Commonwealth residents, religious institutions/non-profits, and small businesses. In addition to mortgage deferral it is critical that renters are provided rent assistance. Now, we need to keep people in their homes, congregations and small businesses in their buildings long-term.

### **Criminal Justice System**

Currently the Commonwealth of Massachusetts houses approximately 16,000 people in State Prisons and County Houses of Correction. These facilities are aging, overcrowded and largely ill equipped with supplies and equipment to prevent and contain the spread of coronavirus in their populations and among corrections staff. As the first positive cases of infection are reported among prisoners and staff, it has become increasingly urgent to take decisive action.

Therefore we are calling for the release of incarcerated people in the following categories:

- Pretrial Detention and Bail: People whose cases have not yet been heard and who are being held on bail under \$10,000 who are not detained because they pose a danger to public safety.

- Compassionate Release: People who are considered, according to CDC guidelines, vulnerable to COVID-19 who are not detained because they pose a danger to public safety.
- Technical Violations: People being held for technical violations of parole or probation, or who have not paid outstanding fees and fines.
- Parole: People nearing the end of their sentence or eligible for parole and/or medical parole. Expedite the release of people granted parole.

We further call for adequate and appropriate supplies, equipment and procedures at every detention facility. Not taking these measures jeopardizes not only prisoners and corrections staff, but also families and communities surrounding our facilities, with ripple effects beyond. Finally, we urge you to suspend phone call charges and allow greater call time to allow isolated prisoners access to their loved ones. Connections for all of us are critical in this period. Time is of the essence.

*We want our people, our institutions and our Commonwealth to make it through this crisis. We have faith that we will. We are ready to do our part.*

## **Boston**

### **Bethel AME Church, Jamaica Plain**

Rev. Dr. Ray A. Hammond, Co-Pastor  
 Rev. Dr. Gloria E. White-Hammond, Co-Pastor  
 Rev. Robert "Bob" Gray, Associate Pastor  
 Rev. Carrington George Moore, Youth Minister  
 Rev. Jamison Collier

### **Boston University School of Theology**

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean of the School of Theology  
 Bryan Stone, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

### **Brighton Allston Congregational Church, UCC**

Rev. Mark Seifried, Interim Senior Minister

### **Church of The Covenant**

Rev. Rob Mark, Senior Pastor  
 Rev. Adam Isbitsky, Associate Pastor

### **Cornerstone Church of Boston**

Bill Johnson, Lead Pastor.

### **Eliot Congregational Church of Roxbury**

Rev. Dr. Evan C. Hines, Senior Pastor

### **Emmanuel Gospel Center, Dorchester**

Jeffrey Bass, Executive Director

### **First Church in Boston Unitarian Universalist**

Rev. Stephen Kendrick, Senior Minister

### **Fourth Presbyterian Church**

Rev. Burns Stanfield, Senior Pastor  
 Rev. Katie Cole, Associate Pastor  
 Debbie Duval, Pastoral Resident

### **Grant AME Church**

Rev. Pedro A. Castro, Jr.  
 Rev. Stephanie Castro, Associate Minister  
 Rev. Thelma L. Woods

### **Hyde Park Presbyterian Church**

Rev. Elizabeth Weiman

**Hyde Park Seventh-day Adventist Church**  
Pastor James Yansen, Jr.

**Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center**  
Wael Al Khairo, Executive Director

**Masjid Al- Qur'an**  
Imam Talib Mahdee

**Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance (MAHA)**  
Thomas Callahan, Executive Director

**Mosque for The Praising of Allah**  
Imam Abdullah Faaruuq

**Nehar Shalom Community Synagogue**  
Rabbi Victor Reinstein

**New Roots AME Church**  
Rev. Mariama White-Hammond

**Old South Church In Boston**  
Rev. Dr. Nancy S. Taylor, Senior Minister  
Amo Ngoepe, Pastoral Resident

**Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana  
"Elim" de Boston**  
Rev. Veronica Soto-Feliciano, Pastor

**Roxbury Presbyterian Church**  
Rev. Liz Walker

## **Brookline**

**Congregation Mishkan Tefila**  
Rabbi Marcia Plumb

**First Parish in Brookline**  
Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood, Senior Minister

**SPENSTEM**  
Imam Taymullah Abdur-Rahman

**Sh. Yasir Fahmy**

**Stratford Street Church**  
Rev. Enid Watson

**St. John Missionary Baptist Church**  
Rev. Art J. Gordon, Senior Pastor

**St. Katherine Drexel Parish**  
Fr. Oscar Pratt

**Temple Hillel B'nai Torah**  
Rabbi Barbara Penzner, West Roxbury

**Temple Israel**  
Rabbi Elaine Zecher, Senior Rabbi  
Rabbi Suzie Jacobson, Associate Rabbi  
Rabbi Dan Slipakoff, Assistant Rabbi  
Rabbi Jen Gubitz, Associate Rabbi

**Union United Methodist Church, Boston**  
Rev. Dr. Jay Williams, Lead Pastor  
Assistant Pastor Nikki Young  
Lay Leader Ruby Blake  
Ministers Ashley Johnson, Adama  
Brown-Hathaway, Ph.D., & Kyle Walden

**Voice of the Gospel Tabernacle**  
Rev. Dieufort J Fleurissant

**Yusuf Mosque**  
Imam Ismail Fenni

**Highrock Evangelical Covenant Church of  
Brookline**  
Rev. Yumiko Nakagawa

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**  
Rev. Jeffrey W. Mello, Rector

### **Temple Beth Zion**

Rabbi Claudia Kreiman, Senior Rabbi

### **Temple Ohabei Shalom**

Rabbi Audrey Marcus, Rabbi

Rabbi Daniel Schaefer, Assistant Rabbi

## **Burlington**

### **Presbyterian Church in Burlington**

Rev. Catriona Portillo

## **Cambridge**

### **Cambridge Community Fellowship Church**

Larry Kim, Senior Pastor

### **First Church in Cambridge, Congregational UCC**

Rev. Daniel Smith, Senior Minister

### **First Parish in Cambridge Unitarian Universalist**

Rev. Adam Lawrence Dyer, Lead Minister

## **Greater Boston**

### **JCRC of Greater Boston**

Jeremy Burton, Executive Director

Nahma Nadich, Deputy Director

## **Lawrence**

### **Merrimack Valley Project, Lawrence, MA**

Rev. Peter Lovett, President

### **Temple Sinai**

Rabbi Andrew Vogel

Student Rabbi Talia Stein

### **The United Parish in Brookline**

Rev. Kent French, Senior Pastor

Rev. Amy Norton, Associate Pastor

### **Old Cambridge Baptist Church**

Rev. Cody J. Sanders, PhD.

### **Reservoir Church**

Rev. Steve Watson, Senior Pastor

Rev. Lydia Shiu, Associate Pastor

### **St. James's Episcopal Church**

Rev. Matthew Stewart

### **St. Paul AME Church**

Rev. Ellis I. Washington, Pastor/Teacher

Rev. Sam Washington, Local Elder

### **University Lutheran Church**

Kathleen O. Reed, Pastor

### **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)**

Kathleen Patrón, Lead Organizer/Executive  
Director

## **Lexington**

### **Temple Emunah**

Rabbi David Lerner, Senior Rabbi

### **Hancock United Church of Christ**

Rev. Dr. Paul Shupe, Senior Minister

Rev. Barbara Callaghan, Minister

### **Temple Isaiah**

Rabbi Howard Jaffe, Senior Rabbi

Rabbi Rachel Maimin, Associate Rabbi

Lisa Doob, Cantor

## **Massachusetts**

### **Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action**

Cindy Rowe, Executive Director

### **Massachusetts Board of Rabbis**

Rabbi Neal Gold, President, MA Board of Rabbi

## **Natick**

### **The Rev. Eric C. Markman**

Hartford Presbyterian Church

## **New England**

### **Haitian Evangelical Pastors Association of New England**

Rev. Jean Marie Clerveau, President

### **Presbyteries of Boston and Northern New England**

Rev. Cindy Kohlmann, Resource Presbyter,  
Co-Moderator, 223rd General Assembly of  
the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)

### **New England Bangladeshi American Foundation Inc. NEBAF**

Fehmida Malik, Chairperson

## **Newton**

### **Congregation Dorshei Tzedek**

Rabbi Toba Spitzer, Senior Rabbi

Rabbi Shahar Colt, Rabbi for Congregational  
Learning

### **Newton Presbyterian Church**

Rev. Dr. R. Ward Holder, Temporary Pastor

### **Lutheran Church of the Newtons**

Rev. Kari Jo Verhulst, Pastor

### **Temple Shalom of Newton**

Rabbi Laura Abrasley, Co-Senior Rabbi

Rabbi Allison Berry, Co-Senior Rabbi

### **Union Church in Waban**

Rev. Stacy Swain, Senior Pastor

## **Quincy**

### **First Presbyterian Church**

Rev. Drew Hanson, Pastor

### **The River Church South**

Rev. Kristina Kaiser, Pastor

## **Sharon**

### **Sharon Interfaith Action**

Rabbi David Jaffe

## **Wellesley**

### **GBIO at Temple Beth Elohim**

Rabbi Rachel Saphire, Associate Rabbi

### **St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church**

Rev. Helen M. Moore; Interim Rector

### **United First Parish Church**

The Reverend Sheldon W. Bennett, Minister  
Emeritus

### **St. John Episcopal Church**

The Rev. Fr. Phillip E. Kutta; Bridge Priest

### **Temple Israel of Sharon**

Rabbi Rachel Silverman

## **Winchester**

### **Temple Shir Tikvah**

Rabbi Cari Brickln-Small  
Beth Levin, Cantor