

Message from the Chief Judge

March 26, 2020

“All courts of the United States shall be deemed always open for the purpose of filing proper papers, issuing and returning process, and making motions and orders.” 28 U.S.C. § 452.

The Bankruptcy Court for the District of Massachusetts is open, conducting hearings, and continuing the business of the Court. You have seen a number of orders and announcements issued by our Court addressing the challenges presented by the current unprecedented public health crisis. I am sure that there will be more as there are further developments.

Our Court’s priority is to operate in a manner to best ensure the health and welfare of our employees, parties appearing before the Court, members of the bar, and the general public. We have taken steps to minimize the exposure of our staff and the public. As you know, our Clerk’s offices in Boston and Springfield have been closed to the public, but continue to be fully staffed by Court personnel through remote access to telephone and computer systems or by on site personnel. Effective on Friday, March 27, 2020, we will also be terminating public access to the Clerk’s office at the Donohue courthouse in Worcester. Almost all of our pleadings are filed electronically, and the Court has permitted email filing of pleadings by unrepresented parties. Additionally, depository boxes for use by unrepresented parties to deposit pleadings are located in the Springfield and Worcester courthouses and at the Moakley courthouse in Boston. Of course, you may call the Clerk’s office main line or any extension at the Court to reach Court staff any time during business hours. Additionally, the emergency number listed on the Court’s website ([www.mab.uscourts.gov](http://www.mab.uscourts.gov)) is staffed 24 hours each day.

Our Judges are conducting telephonic hearings on a regular schedule and will conduct emergency evidentiary hearings in person, if necessary. The Judges and Clerk of Court are meeting by video regularly and are attempting to address rules and scheduling issues that put parties at risk through contact. I understand that each session is making efforts to quickly address motions for extensions or particularized COVID-19-related requests.

The Court is very much aware of the demands on members of the bar in times of crisis. I have no doubt that counsel will serve their clients with distinction during this crisis and its aftermath. We will do everything possible to ensure that the Court is functioning efficiently to fulfill its constitutional and statutory duties.

Please view the Court’s website for more details and check regularly for future developments. You may also call the Clerk’s office should you have any questions or suggestions.

Stay well.

Christopher J. Panos  
Chief Judge  
United States Bankruptcy Court