

INITIAL AND RECERTIFICATION INTERVIEW WAIVER EXTENSION REQUEST

1. State/Territory: Massachusetts/NERO
2. Date(s): Through July 31, 2020
3. MA State of Emergency Declaration remains in effect.
<https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-591-declaration-of-a-state-of-emergency-to-respond-to-covid-19>

The following conditions currently exist in MA due to COVID-19:

- Residents of the State are confirmed to have contracted COVID-19
- Some or all areas of the State are containment or quarantine zones
- Businesses have closed or remain at significantly reduced their hours
- The State's residents have experienced economic impacts due to job suspensions and losses
- State's residents must continue practicing social distancing

4. Operational Challenges

Since the Governor's State of Emergency Declaration on March 10, 2020, economic disruption related to the COVID-19 health crisis continues. The Governor was forced to close schools through the end of the academic year and has extended his late March stay-at-home advisory through at least the second phase of the state's reopening plan. As of June 1, 2020, Massachusetts remains fourth in the nation for number of reported coronavirus cases, and deaths attributed to the virus have escalated from the previous week, up 7%.

While the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)'s daily active rate of pending SNAP cases has stabilized back to pre-COVID levels, the overall SNAP caseload size has increased 13% since March 1, 2020. In addition, Massachusetts has concerns regarding a second surge of SNAP applications once the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) ends at the end of July 2020. A total of more than 24,000 households were closed or denied in April and May for excess of income associated with FPUC and we anticipate an additional 5,000 closing in June. This would mean we can anticipate over 30,000 households reapplying in August with FPUC expires.

The precipitous rise in the number of SNAP households in Massachusetts (453,612 to 523,077 over the past three months) requires careful attention. It is anticipated that the trend will reverse as sectors of the economy reopen. However, the health of the Massachusetts economy is directly tied to the health of its residents. Our state is currently in phase two of a gradual, four-phased reopening of businesses after confronting relatively severe challenges brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

In consideration of these factors, the Department believes the Initial and Recertification Interview waiver will:

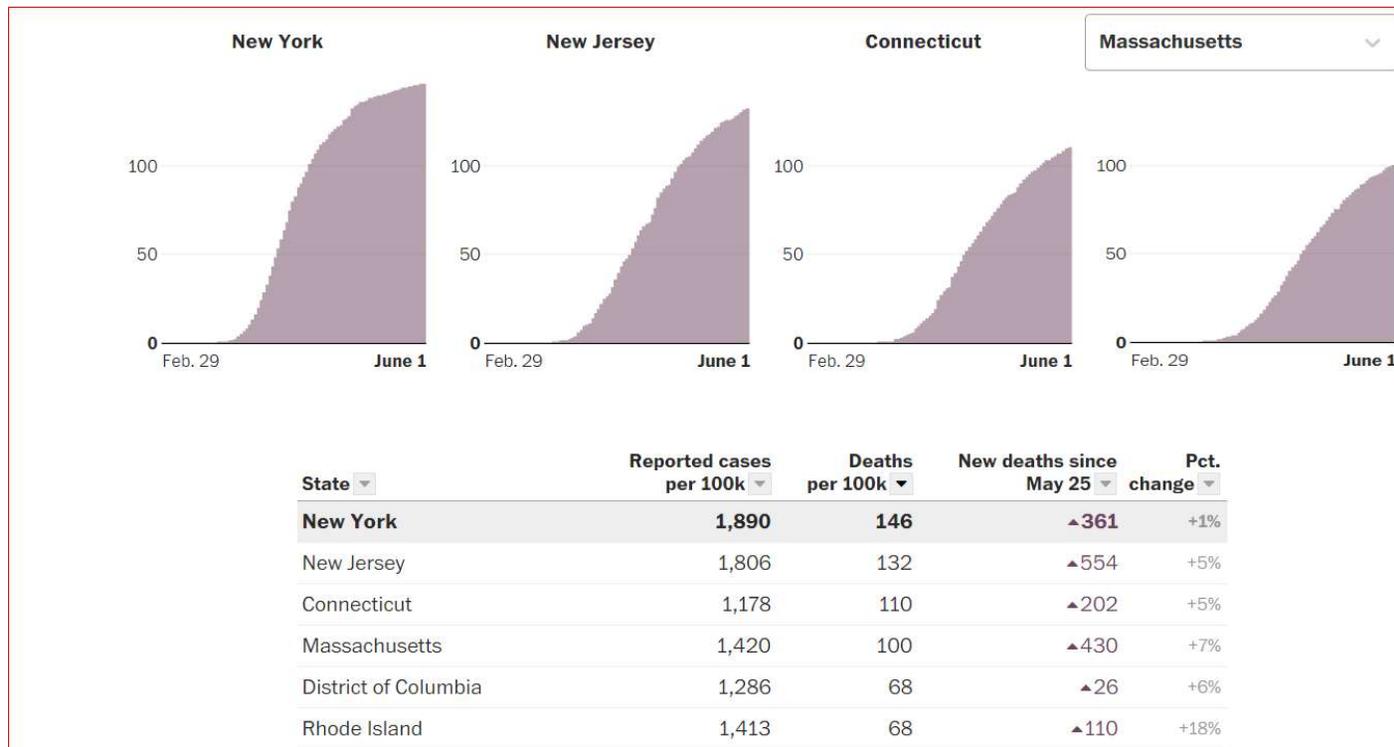
- continue the state's ability to provide streamlined access and enhanced SNAP application assistance;

- equip the state with the ability to perform streamlined recertification duties in anticipation of the heightened volume, outlined in graph below, ensuring ongoing SNAP eligibility; and
- assist in proactive outreach efforts and collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment to those who lose their FPUC

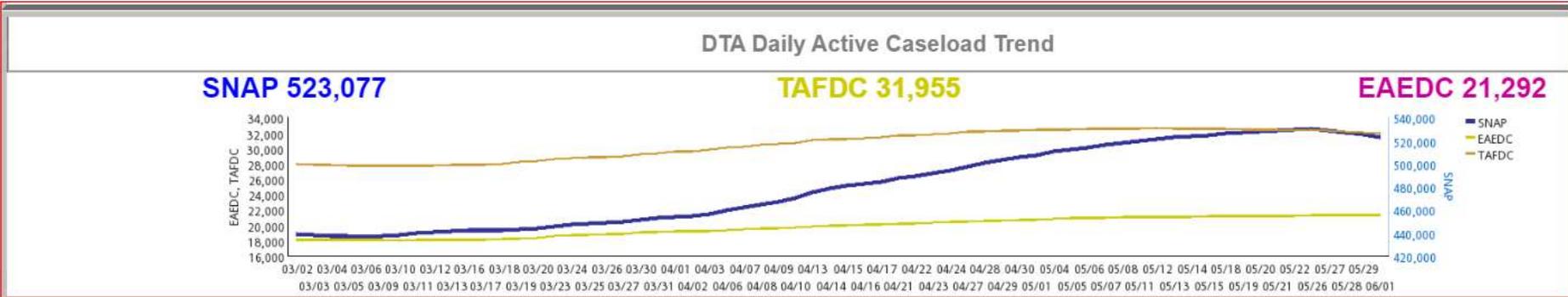
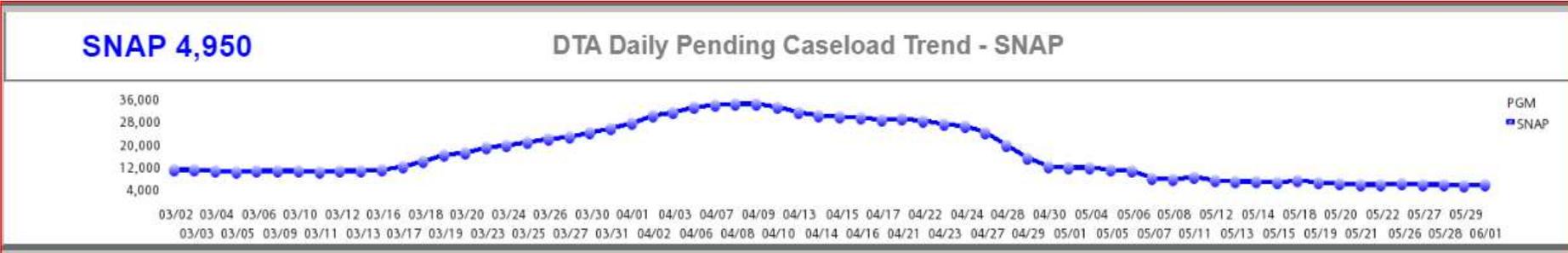
For these reasons, Massachusetts is requesting this adjustment until August 31, 2020.

Data/Graphs

State-by-State Comparison data, Washington Post, June 1, 2020



DTA Internal Data



SNAP Recertifications and Interim Reports, Yearly Comparison

