

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Charlie Baker, Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Governor
Massachusetts State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

On behalf of the 11,000 members of the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants (MSCPA), I would like to thank you for your steady leadership through this unprecedented public health crisis. We will undoubtedly be dealing with this crisis for months to come and with ramifications that touch each sector of our society. We are committed to assisting you in the recovery process in any way possible.

Many states have been evaluating and issuing a shelter-in-place order. Although we understand there is currently no plan to issue a shelter-in-place order in Massachusetts, I would like to formally request that accounting services be designated as an essential service should Massachusetts make such a declaration.

Accounting services are essential to a smoothly operating and fully functioning economy, and even more important during times of crisis. While the COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted every industry, I believe that the accounting profession needs to operate as normally as possible and continue to help individuals and businesses complete their necessary tax returns, advise on critically important business and financial decisions and ensure that important and confidential taxpayer information remains protected from entities seeking to inflict further harm on people during their most vulnerable times. Furthermore, precedence has been set, as California has included accounting services as essential services and with reports that New York, Minnesota and Ohio are all considering similar designation.

As restaurants, museums, large venues, nail salons, hair salons and countless other small and mid-sized businesses shut down, business owners will look to their CPAs and accountants to help them navigate these incredibly trying times as they struggle to stay in business. Our members are among the most trusted financial advisers to their clients and should have the ability to assist by using any tools at their disposal – including office space and materials that ensure efficiency and security.

Many of these small and mid-sized business owners will apply for small business relief loans through the programs you initiated and through those under the federal government, and they will need the expertise and professional experience to help maximize such assistance. Our members provide a sense of relief beyond their professional skills, but also connect with their clients in a personal way that exudes trust and competence. Additionally, banks and other lenders require current financial statements while reviewing loan applications, services that require CPAs to access client information and documents such requests that will only increase during this crisis.

While roughly 1.8 million Massachusetts taxpayers have already filed their returns, about half remain to file. We do not yet know if Massachusetts will also extend the April 15 filing deadline to July 15, 2020, but either way, accountants will need to complete that work efficiently and diligently without a mandate to work remotely.

While COVID-19 developments change rapidly by day, we need assurance that the most critical industries will remain open for business – including accounting services. There are many uncertain days ahead, and we will need our trusted CPAs, accountants and financial advisors at the ready to help us weather through this storm.

I urge you to deem accounting services and the accounting profession as essential should you declare a shelter-in-place order to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 virus on the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy A. Pitter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Pitter
President & CEO

Cc: The Honorable Karyn Polito, Lieutenant Governor
The Honorable Rosalin Acosta, Secretary of the Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development
The Honorable Michael J. Heffernan, Secretary of the Executive Office of Administration & Finance
The Honorable Mike Kennealy, Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development
The Honorable Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health & Human Services
The Honorable Thomas Turco, Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety & Security