

# Boston's homeless see first case of coronavirus, city adds 550 more beds



BOSTON MA. MARCH 29: A facility with 70 beds at a former hospital at 1515 Commonwealth Ave. in Brighton will be converted to care for the homeless during the Covid-19 crisis on March 29, 2020 in Boston, MA. (Staff Photo By Nancy Lane/MediaNews Group/Boston Herald)

---

By **ERIN TIERNAN** | [etiernan@bostonherald.com](mailto:etiernan@bostonherald.com) | Boston Herald

PUBLISHED: March 29, 2020 at 9:51 p.m. | UPDATED: March 30, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

---

## **Boston Herald**

We made this story available to all readers in the interest of public safety. Please consider supporting our coverage of the coronavirus by subscribing to The Boston Herald.

[Support local journalism](#)

Coronavirus has hit Boston's homeless population, Mayor Martin Walsh announced on Sunday, unveiling a plan to bring hundreds more beds online in an effort to promote social distancing and contain the virus.

"We are fully committed to protecting all of our residents," Walsh said. "Every single life is worth saving, and every single life is worth protecting."

The first member of the city's homeless population tested positive for coronavirus last last week, Walsh said.

The city has added 550 beds to help with housing homeless individuals and to quarantine those who may have come in contact with coronavirus — including 250 by reactivating a the Newton Pavilion, a shuttered Boston Medical Center building, 70 beds at a repurposing a former long-term acute care hospital at 1515 Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton that could come online as soon as this week, and 38 beds in temporary tent clinics next to the 112 Southampton Shelter.

Barry Bock, CEO at Boston Health Care For the Homeless Program, who is partnering with the city to run the temporary facilities, praised Walsh's leadership "in this time of crisis."

"We are grateful for the joint partnership to combat the pandemic," he said.

Another 172 beds at a Suffolk University dorm for homeless individuals will help reduce crowding in the city's existing shelters.

"These sites will enable us to get some of our most vulnerable guests, especially our elders, out of a crowded situation in our congregate shelters," said Lyndia Downie, president & executive director of the Pine Street Inn.

Screenings have been happening across the city's network of homeless shelters for about a week, but the city has been strengthening its healthcare services for weeks in anticipation of a coronavirus outbreak.

Walsh last week awarded \$2.5 million to Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, Pine Street Inn and Boston Medical Center from the newly-minted Boston Resiliency Fund to strengthen the health care system for the City's homeless population.

---

**Sign up for the Coronavirus Watch Newsletter**  
**Subscribe to the Herald's Coronavirus Watch**  
**newsletter for the latest on the virus in**  
**Massachusetts and beyond!**

Enter your email

**SIGN UP**