



Dear Members of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis,

It is with great concern for human life that we share with you the following statement.

**Statement from the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis Regarding the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Phase 1 Reopening Plan for Houses of Worship**

Jewish tradition teaches that the value of *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life, comes before all else. The state's new safety standards raise many questions for clergy, lay leaders, and synagogues. We know our synagogue members are saddened that we cannot gather together for communal worship. We understand the disappointment when life cycle events cannot happen as planned. At the same time, the health and safety of synagogue members, clergy, and staff must be the preeminent Jewish value as we chart a new way forward.

In these days of yearning to be together, we recognize that in other states gathering to worship has hastened the spread of Covid-19 and could jeopardize the progress of these long weeks of being at home. Throughout history, the Jewish community has placed the needs of the *kahal* and the greater community above all else. Protecting those most vulnerable and ensuring there is no further spread of disease is of the utmost importance and a cornerstone of our Jewish values.

Therefore, the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis maintains that synagogues and Jewish institutions should *only* physically reopen their spaces when they can be assured of the well-being of their members, especially the most vulnerable amongst us. When the time does come to physically reopen, we are committed to implementing all health and safety best practices as guided by medical experts.

At this challenging moment, we also call upon our government officials to prioritize human life above all else. We do not want our family, friends and neighbors to become statistics. Just as we will rely on expert medical opinions as we proceed with extreme caution, we encourage the leaders of our Commonwealth to do the same.

Finally, we remain committed to all those in our community impacted by the shut-down and Covid-19. We will continue to care for and support those in need and to support our communal organizations.

We pray for the health and safety of our community and our friends and neighbors as we take the next steps forward in responding to this unprecedented communal crisis.

With appreciation for all that you're doing during these trying times,

The Massachusetts Board of Rabbis Executive Committee:

Rabbi Neal Gold, President

Rabbi Alison Adler

Rabbi Allison Berry

Rabbi Ron Fish

Rabbi Navah Levine

Rabbi Sara Paasche-Orlow

Rabbi Victor Reinstein

Rabbi Toba Spitzer