

Dear Matthew Kaply, Board Manager,

In accordance with the “Board Member Remote Participation Policy” adopted by the Board on October 4, 2021 and after consultation with you, I am directing that the April 10, 2023 meeting of the Plumbers’ Examining Board be conducted virtually through exclusively remote participation pursuant to Section 2 (a.) (ii) of that policy. In support of this directive, I have determined that, based on the following circumstances, there exists an emergency or urgent issue which, pursuant to the policy, requires the Plumbers’ Examining Board to meet by entirely remote methods on April 10, 2023:

1. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services first proclaimed on January 31, 2020, and most recently renewed on February 28, 2022, the nationwide public health emergency (PHE) due to the continued consequences of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.
(<https://aspr.hhs.gov/legal/PHE/Pages/default.aspx>)
2. The Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services declared on July 1, 2021 a health emergency due to the continued consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which shall remain in effect through the duration of the PHE declared by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
(<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Public%20Health%20Emergency%20Declaration%206-30-21.pdf>)
3. The acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services wrote a letter to all Governors on January 22, 2021 stating, “To assure you of our commitment to the ongoing response, we have determined that the PHE will likely remain in place for the entirety of 2021, and when a decision is made to terminate the declaration or let it expire, HHS will provide states with 60 days' notice prior to its termination.”
(<https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Public-Health-Emergency-Message-to-Governors.pdf>)
4. Efforts to combat the pandemic continue in Maine where, as of March 28, 2023, 320,678 residents have been infected (228,383 confirmed and 92,295 probable), 7,276 residents have been hospitalized with the virus, and 2,972 people have died from the virus since January 2020. (<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/data.shtml>)
5. As of March 28, 2023, the number of new COVID-19 infections in the State of Maine as confirmed by testing brings the seven-day average of new cases in the State to 111, the number of new cases (confirmed and probable) statewide is 665; the number of current hospitalizations is 138 (with 16 in critical care; the total number of deaths is 2,972.
(<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/data.shtml>)

6. Viruses like SARS-CoV-2 continuously evolve. The Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 (including B.1.1.529, BA.1, BA.1.1, BA.2, BA.3, BA.4 and BA.5 lineages) is currently classified as a Variant of Concern. As of March 28, 2023, the Omicron variant represents 100 percent of all sequenced samples collected in Maine.
7. As of March 28, 2023, 11 of Maine's counties are in the “low”, 5 counties are in the “medium,” and 0 counties are in the “high” transmission category as defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
(https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Maine&data-type=CommunityLevels)
8. An in-person meeting of the Board is foreseeably likely to result in an increased risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus, which has an incubation period of 2-14 days before the onset of symptoms, for members of the Board, its staff, licensees, and members of the public.
9. Conducting an in-person Board meeting on April 10, 2023 is not practicable due to the widespread persistence of COVID-19 infections and the continued threat of exposure of the COVID-19 virus to Board members and to members of the public. Therefore, after consultation with you, I have determined that there is an emergency such that the Plumbers’ Examining Board meeting shall be held entirely remotely as the best way to protect the safety and wellbeing of the members of the Board, its staff, licensees, and members of the public.

There will be no physical location where members of the public may attend this meeting. The Board will continue to provide members of the public a meaningful opportunity to attend the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams as it has successfully done since April of 2020. Please post this determination to the Board website and update the agenda to include the online meeting link information as soon as possible.

Percy Brown Jr
Percy Brown Jr (Apr 4, 2023 07:54 EDT)

Percy L. Brown Jr., Board Chair

Dated: March 31, 2023