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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Beshear, Dr. Stack: Kentucky Headed for Exponential Growth in Cases; Record Deaths Reported Today

New restrictions expected Wednesday to help slow the rapid spread of COVID-19

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 17, 2020) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear again warned Kentuckians that they must take action to stop COVID-19, as cases are increasing rapidly in the commonwealth. Families, schools, businesses and community leaders should all come together and do their part.

“When we talk about our health care workers, we call them our front line of defense,” said Gov. Beshear. “But really, they’re our only line. We don’t have back up. So if we are going to truly care about them and ensure there are enough doctors and nurses to help people who are sick, we have to lower community spread.”

The White House Federal COVID-19 Report for Kentucky explained that “there is now aggressive, unrelenting, expanding broad community spread across the country, reaching most counties, without evidence of improvement, but rather further deterioration. Current mitigation efforts are inadequate and must be increased to sustain the health system for both COVID and non-COVID emergencies. We share the strong concern of Kentucky leaders that the current

situation is worsening and that all Kentuckians need to do their part to stop the spread. The Governor's active measures are commended."

Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, shared new models that demonstrate how COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths will likely progress in the state if Kentuckians don't take action to flatten the curve.

He showed the success of Kentucky's *Healthy at Home* program and mask mandate in suppressing the virus and helping the state avoid an exponential increase in cases during the spring and summer. Unfortunately, he said without new action, Kentucky will likely see that exponential growth in cases in the fall and winter.

Dr. Stack explained that COVID-19 is expected to be the nation's third leading cause of death in 2020, only behind heart disease and cancer.

"This is not political. We are trying to keep people safe from a once-in-a-century pandemic," said Dr. Stack. "If your neighbor's house is burning down, are you going to stand idly by, or are you going to try to rescue them from the fire? I am confident that if we come together we can interrupt this third climb, but it's got to be Team Kentucky pulling together."

He also highlighted a [video](#) from Pikeville Medical Center CEO Donovan Blackburn.

"Our COVID-19 ICU patients range from 32 years old to 90 years old," said Blackburn. "With 83 COVID-19 patients and climbing, we – like other hospitals in the state and region – are nearing our capacity. We are also at risk of shutting down other vital services. So that we do not overburden our hospitals and health care workers, I urge all Kentuckians to please take this seriously and mask up."

Gov. Beshear said he will announce additional steps to combat the virus Wednesday at 4 p.m. EST.

"When you look at the severity of this, action has to be taken," the Governor said.

Case Information

As of 4 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17, Gov. Beshear reported the following COVID-19 numbers:

- New cases today: 2,931
- New deaths today: 33
- Positivity rate: 9.10%
- Total deaths: 1,697
- Currently hospitalized: 1,521
- Currently in ICU: 354
- Currently on ventilator: 178

Top counties with the most positive cases today are: Jefferson, Fayette, Madison, Daviess, Boone, Hardin and Kenton.

The red zone counties for this week can be found [here](#).

Those reported lost to the virus today include an 85-year-old man from Barren County; a 69-year-old man from Breathitt County; a 60-year-old man from Calloway County; a 36-year-old woman from Christian County; four women, ages 83, 90, 91 and 91, from Daviess County; an 89-year-old man from Floyd County; a 51-year-old man from Grayson County; a 78-year-old woman from Green County; an 85-year-old man from Hancock County; a 93-year-old woman from Henderson County; three women, ages 75, 78 and 93, and five men, ages 49, 79, 87, 88 and 94, from Jefferson County; two men, ages 68 and 72, from Jessamine County; a 94-year-old woman and an 89-year-old man from Madison County; two women, ages 92 and 94, from McLean County; an 86-year-old woman from Monroe County; a 68-year-old woman and a 74-year-old man from Ohio County; a 65-year-old man from Oldham County; a 99-year-old woman from Rockcastle County; and a 58-year-old woman from Trigg County.

Contact Tracing

The Governor implored Kentuckians to cooperate with contact tracers as COVID-19 hospitalizations in the state hit a record high. Families can learn more about the process in this [video](#) from Judy Mattingly, director of the Franklin County Health Department.

“As the number of cases rise, the number of people who have been exposed increases exponentially. Our local health departments are overwhelmed. It is our

duty as Kentuckians to help and protect our neighbors,” said Gov. Beshear. “This includes notifying contacts if they have been exposed to COVID-19.

“If you are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, you must take the right steps to protect yourself and others. Please stay home and quarantine for 14 days since your last exposure. If you develop symptoms like fever, cough, shortness of breath or fatigue, get tested. Find the nearest testing location at [kycovid19.ky.gov]kycovid19.ky.gov.”

A close contact is someone who was within six feet of someone with COVID-19 for a total to 15 minutes or more either two days before symptoms began or before a positive COVID-19 test if asymptomatic. Kentuckians who are quarantining should stay away from others in their households; if possible, they should use a separate bedroom and bathroom.

Surge Testing Update

Gov. Beshear recently [announced](#) the commonwealth’s partnership with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to conduct COVID-19 surge testing.

Additional testing provided through HHS began Monday, Nov. 16 in Lexington at the Keeneland Race Course. Appointments are required and can be made at <https://www.doineedacovid19test.com>. Drive-through testing will be conducted Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Kentuckians are asked to use Keeneland Gate 1 access, at Versailles Road and Man O’ War to access the Keene Barn parking lot test site (4201 Versailles Road).

The Keeneland site will administer the highly reliable PCR test and provide 400 appointments per day with test results in 48-72 hours. Additionally, individuals who receive a COVID-19 test will receive five cloth face coverings.

All Kentuckians are welcome at these sites and are urged to take advantage of the additional COVID testing available to them. All testing sites in the commonwealth are listed at [kycovid19.ky.gov]kycovid19.ky.gov.

Economic Development

The Governor also shared some good news by congratulating two companies on their expansions in the commonwealth.

[Stanley Engineered Fastening](#), a Stanley Black & Decker company, plans to create 49 high-paying jobs for Kentuckians with a \$6 million expansion at its

Christian County facility. [Georgia-Pacific Consumer Products Group](#) opened their \$100 million expansion in Bowling Green, a project that is creating 70-plus full-time jobs.

More Information

To view the [full daily report](#), [incidence rate map](#), testing locations, long term-care and other congregate facilities update, school reports, the White House Coronavirus Task Force reports for Kentucky and other key guidance visit, kycovid19.ky.gov.

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