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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Beshear Provides Update on COVID-19

Visit the Governor's [Facebook](#) page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 17, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Wednesday updated Kentuckians on steps the state is taking to address the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

“COVID-19 has been tough. It has changed so much about our daily lives. It has upended our economy, it has required us to sacrifice. It has taken the lives of so many of our loved ones, and it has tested our mental and emotional health. It has also taught us critical lessons: that we are compassionate people, that our ability to survive and thrive depends on each other, and that we Kentuckians are some tough people,” the Governor said. “It’s also taught us a critical and deadly lesson on the importance of health care. When we fail to provide our people coverage, we allow our population to suffer from diabetes, lung cancer and congestive heart failure. This pandemic shows us that the lack of good health care options makes us more vulnerable and less resilient.”

The Governor also offered new information on efforts to get personal protective equipment (PPE) to poll workers ahead of next week’s primary elections and new testing sites as part of the state’s

partnership with Kroger. The Governor also made announcements about the Cabinet for Health and Family Services health care exchange and leadership at the Department for Community Based Services.

Case information

As of 4 p.m. June 17, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 12,995 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 170 of which were newly confirmed Wednesday.

“We don’t want 170 new cases, but when you look at Arizona, a state that is one-and-a-half times our population, I believe, they had over 2,000 new cases yesterday. There’s only about a 20,000 difference overall in how many tests have been out there,” Gov. Beshear said. “So Kentuckians are doing a good job. But we’ve got to remember, what we see around us says it can come back very, very quickly.”

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear reported six new deaths Wednesday, raising the total to 518 Kentuckians lost to the virus.

The deaths reported Wednesday include a 71-year-old man from Clay County; a 90-year-old woman from Fayette County; and four women, ages 45, 87, 93 and 95, from Jefferson County.

“Let’s make sure we continue to turn on those green lights and ring the bells every morning at 10 a.m.,” the Governor said. “It’s something that’s brought us together as a people, but more important it’s something that’s been there for people at that tough time. It’s something small we can all do to lift someone up. It’s well worth it.”

At least 3,444 Kentuckians have recovered from the virus.

For additional information, including up-to-date lists of positive cases and deaths, as well as breakdowns of coronavirus infections by county, race and ethnicity, [click here](#).

The Governor also shared a story of a remarkable recovery, as [reported by WLKY](#).

“Let’s share a good news story. The story of Marilyn Newton. After a 58 day stay at Baptist Hospital in Louisville, she can now say she officially beat COVID-19,” said Gov. Beshear. “She’s

being transitioned to Kindred Healthcare for rehabilitation. Her daughter, Amber, said they were told she wasn't going to make it. Amber and their family have a renewed sense of faith from their experience."

PPE for Election Workers

Gov. Beshear directed his administration to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep voters and poll workers safe during Kentucky's primaries next Tuesday.

"I encourage every Kentuckian to vote, which is their duty as an American, but we must take every precaution available to protect voters and poll workers exercising that fundamental right," the Governor said. "We continue to take action to allow people to safely exercise their right to vote on Tuesday, including ensuring our poll workers have this protective gear."

The Governor's office is providing 5,000 masks, 4,000 gallons of hand sanitizer, 5,800 face shields and 20,000 gloves for the June 23 election. The PPE will be distributed to all 120 counties.

Gov. Beshear, the Board of Elections and Secretary of State Michael Adams previously reached an agreement to allow Kentuckians to vote via absentee ballot ahead of the election to protect voters from COVID-19, but there will be in-person voting on Tuesday. To read the news release from earlier today, [click here](#).

Health Care Exchange

Gov. Beshear announced Wednesday his intention to move the commonwealth back to the successful Kynect state health care exchange.

"We have been paying more over the last four years to get less. So today, I'm announcing that I've submitted a [declaration of intent letter](#) to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to transition to a state-based exchange beginning Jan. 1, 2022," the Governor said.

In 2013, Kentucky implemented a state-based exchange, known as Kynect. About 500,000 newly eligible people were enrolled in Medicaid coverage and Qualified Health Plans, making Kynect one of the most successful exchanges in the nation.

However, Gov. Matt Bevin dismantled Kynect in 2017, forcing people to use the federal exchange. Gov. Beshear pointed out that Kentuckians are paying a roughly 3% user fee for that exchange, totaling \$9.8 million in 2018, based on the most recent information from CMS.

The Governor said launching the state exchange will incur a one-time cost of \$5 million for the system, with operating costs pegged at between \$1 million and \$2 million annually. He said that means the state system will save \$2.8 million to \$3.8 million the first year, and \$7.8 million to \$8.8 million annually thereafter.

“In the last four years, we moved backward in health care. The rate of uninsured and uninsured children grew,” Gov. Beshear said.

Gov. Beshear said a state-based exchange will provide benefits beyond avoiding the federal user fees. He said the new system would offer Kentuckians a reduction in premium costs; integrate with Medicaid, offering a single door to access coverage; allow greater flexibility and autonomy than the federal system; and keep control local, putting officials in position to determine the needs of Kentuckians.

“We have an opportunity to be better, to get healthier, to save money and ultimately to provide that basic human right that is health care,” the Governor said. “It also allows us greater flexibility and autonomy than the federal exchange, where we can extend the annual open enrollment period and offer special open enrollment periods. It finally offers us local control. I believe we can do this much better than the federal government. We proved that many years ago, and as we go forward, this is just going to be one part of a larger set of announcements on health care that we anticipate we will be making in August.”

Unemployment Insurance

Gov. Beshear provided an update on the state’s ongoing efforts to administer and process the unprecedented number of unemployment insurance claims brought on by the pandemic.

“No one in state government will be happy until all Kentuckians have received the benefits for which they qualify,” the Governor said. “As COVID-19 restrictions are easing, offering in-person

services for those experiencing issues with their unemployment insurance benefits is now possible.”

During the past two days, in-person unemployment insurance services located near the Capitol building has reached capacity. To continue helping Kentuckians with their insurance claims, in-person services will be provided Thursday, June 18, and Friday, June 19, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Cabinet for Health and Family Services headquarters, 275 E. Main St. in Frankfort.

In order to provide service to those Kentuckians who have waited the longest on their claim, there will be a separate line on Thursday for those who filed a claim in March. On Friday, there will be a line for those who filed in March and April.

Additional times and locations for in-person services are being worked out. For more information from the Labor Cabinet at the Kentucky Career Center portal, [click here](#).

New Leadership

Gov. Beshear and Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, on Wednesday announced Marta Miranda-Straub as the new commissioner for the Cabinet’s Department for Community Based Services (DCBS).

Gov. Beshear lauded Miranda-Straub’s career and knowledge.

“Marta has served families and children through trauma, substance abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault intervention, and gender equity and anti-racism activism. Her professional goal for 40 years has been to make people’s lives better,” the Governor said. “She understands the importance of human service professionals and what a difference their support can make for the welfare of Kentucky children, adults and families. She is a valuable addition to Team Kentucky.”

Testing expansion

Gov. Beshear said Wednesday that the state’s partnership with Kroger is bringing testing for coronavirus to several new locations.

Kroger will provide testing next week in Louisville, Lexington, Shelby County and Warren.

“Let’s make sure we fill every spot. Let’s not have any no-shows,” said Gov. Beshear. “Let’s make sure that we get as much testing as possible. We have the capacity, now we’ve got to have the will.”

Information on how to register at more than 180 sites throughout the commonwealth can be found [here](#).

Updated Guidance on Pools, Larger Gatherings

Gov. Beshear’s administration has offered updated guidance covering [public pools](#) and gatherings of [up to 50 people](#).

Condolences for Congressman Barr

Gov. Beshear on Wednesday offered heartfelt condolences to U.S. Rep. Andy Barr and his family following the unexpected passing Tuesday of the congressman’s wife, Carol.

“My heart goes out to Congressman Andy Barr, someone I’ve known basically my whole life, for the loss of his wife last night,” the Governor said. “They have young kids, and a family a lot like ours. I’m thinking about them. You know, we’re people, and we should be people before we’re Democrats or Republicans. His loss, the family’s loss, just like the loss of all the families from COVID-19, is devastating.”

Census Update

Gov. Beshear reminded Kentuckians of the critical importance of filling out their U.S. Census forms. Those who have not can fill out the Census at my2020census.gov or by phone at [844-330-2020](tel:844-330-2020) (English) or [844-468-2020](tel:844-468-2020) (Spanish).

More Information

Read about other key updates, actions and information from Gov. Beshear and his administration at governor.ky.gov, kycovid19.ky.gov and the Governor’s official social media accounts [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Kentuckians can also access translated COVID-19 information and daily summaries of the Governor's news conference at tinyurl.com/kygovespanol (Spanish) and tinyurl.com/kygovtranslations (more than 20 additional languages).

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For official news and updates from the Beshear/Coleman administration, visit governor.ky.gov/news.