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COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Beshear: ‘We are Breaking Our Record for COVID-19 Hospitalizations Every Day’

Governor announces record positivity rate; health care leaders say vaccinations are ‘No. 1 priority’

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 26, 2021) – On Thursday during his weekly Team Kentucky update, Gov. Andy Beshear said hospitalizations have increased every day without exception for the past 42 days, from 239 people July 14 to a record 2,074 people Aug. 25. Before the delta variant, Kentucky’s record number of COVID-19 hospitalizations was 1,817 on Dec. 17, 2020.

The Governor highlighted other statistics from July 14: On that day, there were 60 Kentuckians in the ICU for COVID-19; as of yesterday, there were 549. On July 14, there were 25 Kentuckians with COVID-19 on a ventilator; as of yesterday, there were 338. On July 14, the state’s COVID-19 test positivity rate was 3.81%, and it was down to a low of 1.79% June 24; yesterday, it was 13.16%, a record high in the time since the state has had adequate testing supplies.

“My point with all of these numbers is that we are in uncharted territory. We have been fighting this virus for almost 18 months, but we have never been here before,” said **Gov. Beshear**. “As horrible as last year’s surge was, we were never in the position where doctors worried they’d need to choose between treating a

patient who can't breathe because of COVID or treating a patient who is bleeding out from a car accident. But that is the strain that our hospitals are under now."

Kentucky health care heroes said vaccinations are the "No. 1 priority right now."

"Last year was extremely difficult taking care of patients with COVID. I thought after last year that we had seen the worst of it, especially with the introduction of vaccines. Once we all got vaccinated, I thought that a lot of this would go away. Unfortunately, it's come back, and it's come back pretty ugly," said **Mohan Rao, MD, general surgeon at Baptist Health Madisonville**. "I'm not going to tell you that getting vaccinated is going to keep you from getting sick 100% of the time. What I am going to say to you is that as somebody who believes in individual liberties, which I do, I'm vaccinated. And I did that for the protection of myself, for the protection of my family and for the protection of my patients."

"The crisis is real. Our patient volumes are higher than they ever have been in any summertime period in the history of our hospital and our health system. We're working the problem. Our health care heroes are flexing, they're adapting and they're improvising, working with each other to increase capacity, increase throughput and at the same time, maintain the top quality of care we are known for," said **Dr. Dennis Beck, interim chief administrative officer at Deaconess Henderson Hospital**. "The most important thing is to encourage vaccination. If you know somebody, if you know people at your church or your schools who still haven't been vaccinated or are hesitant, help them get informed."

"It is exhausting to see more and more patients come in who are struggling," said **Courtney Fales, registered nurse at St. Elizabeth Healthcare**. "We have to work twice as hard. It takes more staff, it takes more bodies to keep these patients stable. It just makes me really want people to get vaccinated because the ones that I see struggling right now are the ones who have not gotten the vaccine."

"Hospitals are being filled all over the country and I would say most of our patients right now are unvaccinated folks," said **Sean Kathman, registered nurse at St. Elizabeth Healthcare**. "Patients who we have had, who have been vaccinated, they have been admitted for maybe a day just for observation and have been discharged in a day or two – not nearly as sick as the folks who are unvaccinated. Vaccinations are our No. 1 priority right now."

“The decision on broader masking, on masking throughout the commonwealth, is now one that’s going to be left to the legislature. But yesterday, having the third highest number of cases we’ve ever had and having 65 people die, that would’ve been the trigger for me,” added **Gov. Beshear**. “If it was in my authority to put in a masking order for indoors across the state, every other time we’ve been this high, we’ve done that, and it’s worked. It has decreased the number of cases. I can’t do that now, and I get that, and I’ll provide all of the information I can to the General Assembly. Hopefully they will make the best decision they can. But I am begging you out there, put on that mask. We desperately need for you to do it again.”

New COVID-19 Community Testing Sites

The Governor announced four new testing locations across Kentucky:

Gravity Diagnostics

7 a.m. to 12 p.m. EDT

Beginning Friday, Aug. 27

Drive-through testing available daily, no appointments required

- **Danville**, 224 Southtown Drive, Danville, KY 40422

Wild Health and UK Healthcare

8 a.m. to 3 p.m. EDT

Beginning Friday, Aug. 27

PCR testing only; next day results via email; walk-up appointments accepted

- **Corbin**, Baptist Health Corbin, [WildHealthTesting.com/Corbin](https://www.wildhealthtesting.com/Corbin)
- **Morehead**, St. Claire Healthcare, [WildHealthTesting.com/StClaire](https://www.wildhealthtesting.com/StClaire)
- **Pikeville**, Pikeville Medical Center, [WildHealthTesting.com/Pikeville](https://www.wildhealthtesting.com/Pikeville)

The Governor said that North Carolina State University [modeling results](#) showed that without masks or regular testing, up to 90% of susceptible students may become infected by the end of the semester. The study demonstrated that, when used in combination, masks and testing can prevent 80% of new infections, an especially important finding for schools with children younger than 12 who cannot be vaccinated yet.

COVID-19 Update

Aug. 25, 2021, COVID-19 Case Information (Most Recent Data Available)

Cases: 4,849

Deaths: 65

Hospitalizations: 2,074

ICU Census: 549

On Ventilators: 338

Positivity Rate: 13.16%

From March 1 to Aug. 18, 2021, 85.3% of COVID-19 cases, 90.3% of COVID-19 hospitalizations and 87.4% of COVID-19 deaths were among partially vaccinated or unvaccinated Kentuckians.

As of today, 2,488,328 Kentuckians have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine; 6,674 have been vaccinated over the past 24 hours.

Gov. Beshear Honors Military Medical Professionals

Led by medical professional Guardsmen, the Kentucky National Guard has distributed approximately 10,000 vaccinations among both the general public and Department of Defense personnel in the commonwealth. As part of Health Care Heroes Appreciation Week, the Governor recognized some of Kentucky's Guardsmen who also serve in the medical community, including:

- Air Guardsmen
 - Maj. Angela Himler, a registered nurse practitioner who works full time for the Air National Guard;
 - First Lt. Natasha Perry, a registered nurse at Norton Healthcare; and
 - Senior Master Sgt. Paul Vought, an Air Force medic and a cardiopulmonary technician at UK Healthcare.
- Army Guardsmen
 - Col. Chris Howell, a physician assistant at the Lexington Veterans' Affairs Hospital;
 - Capt. T.J. Shaddix, a physician assistant at Eastern State Hospital; and
 - Sgt. Alicia Shultz, an Army medic and ICU technician at St. Joseph Health Care.

"I stand before you as a man who grew up in the same knobs and hollers of LaRue and Nelson counties as Abraham Lincoln," said **Army Col. Chris Howell of the Kentucky National Guard**. "Alongside my fellow Kentuckians, I've been able to play a small part in a dynamic team that has brought the fight to this

pandemic, and we will continue to do so until it's won. Please help in this fight and do your part. Please get the shot.”

“With as much as we’ve asked of both our medical professionals and our military over the last 18 months, I can only imagine how hard these folks must have worked,” said **Gov. Beshear**. “Since March 2020, we’ve called on the National Guard to do a variety of jobs across the commonwealth to help combat the COVID-19 virus. In particular, our military medical professionals have helped with drive-through testing services, mass vaccination centers, mobile vaccination teams and long-term care facility and local health department support, as well as setting up and completely staffing our Alternate Care Facility at the Louisville Fair and Expo Center last summer. It’s incredible to look back at their impact.”

On Monday, Gov. Beshear said President Joe Biden extended reimbursement to states for mobilizing National Guard personnel in support of COVID-19 response efforts beyond the original deadline of Sept. 30, through the end of the calendar year. To learn more, see [Monday’s release](#).

FEMA Support for Understaffed Hospitals

On Monday, Gov. Beshear said he had submitted a resource request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for additional health care professionals to help where Kentucky needs them most.

Today he announced that 30 FEMA personnel and 15 advanced life-support ambulance vehicles will be dispatched to Kentucky for 30 days, arriving Friday, Aug. 27.

COVID-19 Mitigation Efforts Help Kentucky’s Economy Continue to Soar

Today, Gov. Beshear highlighted six economic development announcements as Kentuckians work to protect the commonwealth’s economic momentum during the fight against the COVID-19 delta variant:

- **Thoroughbred Aviation Maintenance Cuts Ribbon on New Headquarters at Blue Grass Airport:** Yet another homegrown Kentucky company is expanding in the commonwealth, as Gov. Beshear congratulated Thoroughbred Aviation Maintenance on the opening of its new consolidated headquarters operation at Lexington’s Blue Grass Airport, a project creating up to 47 full-time jobs over the next three years with an \$800,000 investment. To learn more, see the [full release](#).

- **James E. Pepper Distilling Co. Breaks Ground on New Woodford County Warehouse:** Gov. Beshear joined community and company leaders to break ground on a new James E. Pepper Distilling Co. warehouse in Midway, as the Lexington-based brand expands following the revival of its historic distillery after a 50-year hiatus. To learn more, see the [full release](#).
- **Chapin International Growing Fast in Kentucky:** Last September, Chapin International announced its first Kentucky facility in Mount Vernon, and less than a year later, the company is moving forward with two new projects in the state, totaling nearly \$16.7 million in new investment. Chapin, which makes compressed air sprayers, is adding 100 additional jobs in Rockcastle County, doubling the planned job creation at that facility. Chapin also is locating a second Kentucky facility in Danville, a nearly 500,000-square-foot facility that will employ another 100 Kentuckians. To learn more, see the [full release](#).
- **Bigelow Tea Co. to Create 31 Jobs with Jefferson County Relocation, Expansion:** Gov. Beshear highlighted continued economic growth in Jefferson County, as Bigelow Tea Co. announced plans to relocate and expand in Jeffersontown with a \$53 million investment that will create 31 quality jobs for Kentucky residents. To learn more, see the [full release](#).
- **LDG Multifamily to Relocate, Expand Headquarters in Louisville:** Gov. Beshear announced affordable-housing developer LDG Multifamily will expand its Louisville operations with an up to \$10.75 million investment to purchase and renovate a new headquarters, creating 50 high-wage jobs for Kentucky residents. To learn more, see the [full release](#).
- **Beginning next year, Toyota will assemble hydrogen fuel cell modules in Georgetown:** Gov. Beshear said Toyota's announcement is great news for Kentucky and a sure sign of more electric vehicle (EV)-related manufacturing to come. These hydrogen fuel cell modules will be available to heavy-duty commercial truck-makers, allowing the big-rig industry an emissions-free option. Kentucky remains the number one state per-capita in production of passenger vehicles and is becoming a force in EV-related manufacturing.

Gov. Beshear: Eastern Kentucky Open for Business as Mountain Parkway Expands Again

On Tuesday, Gov. Beshear, joined by his Senior Advisor Rocky Adkins, transportation officials, state legislators and local leaders, said work on the

Mountain Parkway Expansion has reached a major milestone with half of the construction segments now complete.

Gov. Beshear celebrated the expansion's impact on Eastern Kentucky as he officially opened eight more miles of the parkway between mile marker 57, near Helechawa, and mile marker 65. To learn more, see the [full release](#). "When complete, the 46-mile Mountain Parkway Expansion will be the final, finishing link creating a 400-mile-long, four-lane, high-speed corridor from Paducah to Pikeville," said **Gov. Beshear**. "When I ran for Governor, I made a commitment to focus on transportation infrastructure and specifically the Mountain Parkway Expansion. Improved safety and mobility is vitally important for tourism, economic development and overall quality of life for the people who are proud to call Eastern Kentucky home."

Team Kentucky All-Stars

During Health Care Heroes Appreciation Week, Gov. Beshear visited staff at the Franklin County Health Department, Deaconess Hospital in Henderson, the Powell County Health Department and Mary & Elizabeth Hospital in Louisville to thank them for their work as life-saving Team Kentucky All-Stars. Tomorrow and Saturday, he will visit more health care heroes in Fayette, Woodford, Anderson and Jefferson counties.

"On Monday, I signed a proclamation declaring this Health Care Heroes Appreciation Week in order to put the spotlight where it belongs as the delta variant of COVID-19 is filling up hospital beds across the nation and right here in the commonwealth," said **Gov. Beshear**. "I again urge everyone in government, everyone in media and everyone in your daily lives: This week and every week, let's refocus and redouble our support for the people who have been keeping us healthy and safe for so long now."

Gov. Beshear recognized the Transitional Care Center in Owensboro, where 100% of current residents and staff are vaccinated.

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