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ANGELA D. ALSOBROOKS**

PRESS RELEASE

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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE ALSOBROOKS ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL ACTIONS
TO KEEP RESIDENTS SAFE AS COVID-19 NUMBERS SLIGHTLY INCREASE**

***County Executive Takes Actions Against Recent Large House Parties; Urges Governor
Hogan to Make the 2020 General Election Vote by Mail***

LARGO, MD – Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks announced today that she is taking several additional actions to keep residents safe as new cases of COVID-19 have slightly increased in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland. The County will begin to use authority granted in the Governor's Executive Order to impose fines and other penalties on those who hold large house parties, and the County Executive will send a letter to Governor Hogan urging him to conduct the 2020 General Election as a vote by mail election.

“While we are not yet at the point of having to roll back our reopening, we are concerned about some of the recent trends we have seen in our County and across the State of Maryland,” said Alsobrooks. “If we want to avoid a setback in our recovery, we must all continue doing our part to stop the spread of this virus, to include wearing face coverings and practicing physical distancing.”

In response to recent large house parties, the County is using authority granted by the Governor's Executive Order to local health officers to close unsafe facilities. The County has the authority to mandate that only people who live at these properties are able to be at the property. Anyone who violates this order, and this includes the owners of the property, any promoters who host the party and anyone who attends the party, will be subject to being charged with a misdemeanor that carries a maximum penalty of up to one year in jail, a 5-thousand dollar fine, or both. The County is ready and willing to take action against anyone that is willfully violating safety ordinances by hosting these parties.

In addition, the County Executive is sending a letter today to Governor Hogan urging him to conduct the 2020 General Election as a vote by mail election. Rather than mailing absentee ballot

applications to all voters, the County Executive is urging the Governor to mail ballots to all registered voters instead, similar to the 2020 Presidential Primary Election. The County Executive is also asking the Governor to extend the early voting timeline from October 22 through November 3, 2020. Finally, the County Executive is asking the Governor to allow the County to expand to 15 early voting locations and to use only those locations on Election Day, and to install secure drop boxes at the 15 polling locations.

Due to a number of factors, opening all polling sites as a normal election would be impossible for Prince George's County. Many of the venues that normally serve as polling places such as senior centers, churches and private halls have withdrawn because they do not want to serve as polling places during a pandemic. The County would need 3,500 volunteers to open all polling locations, and based on a recent survey the County conducted, only 34% of trained poll workers indicated a willingness to work. Furthermore, volunteers are typically seniors, and it would be irresponsible to ask them to work these polling locations during a pandemic. The County Executive's letter to the Governor presents a reasonable alternative to the State's current plan.

The County is also launching a \$2 million assistance program for childcare providers who were hit hard by the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the County had 25,000 childcare slots, and now there are approximately 14,000. Through the County's COVID-19 Business Recovery Initiative, childcare facilities have received \$735,000 in assistance so far to maintain their businesses. The County is finalizing details of this new assistance program and will provide an update with eligibility requirements and the application process in the near future.

The County's COVID-19 Ambassador Compliance Team also continues to perform unannounced visits to businesses to ensure that owners, employees and patrons are in compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols outlined by the County. To date, Ambassadors have visited more than 200 businesses across the County. The County has closed one business so far, a martial arts facility in the County that serves children. This facility was not practicing safe physical distancing, occupancy requirements and wearing of facial coverings. Residents can report a business violating COVID-19 safety protocols to the Ambassador Compliance Team by calling 311 or emailing covidcompliance@co.pg.md.us.

Finally, the County's Prince George's Forward Task Force continues its work to plan for the County's recovery. The Forward Task Force will host two public meetings in the coming weeks to outline their initial set of recommendations for the County Executive, the first on August 5 and the second on August 19. Residents are able to send their thoughts and concerns on the County's recovery and future to the Task Force at pathforward@co.pg.md.us. The Task Force also has a new website that will provide details on public meetings and all future updates, www.PrinceGeorgesForward.com.

All of these announcements come as the County has seen a slight increase in several key metrics over the past two weeks. The County has seen a 56% increase in cases over the last couple of weeks, from a low of 581 cases the week of June 28 to 909 cases for the week of July 12. Hospitalizations have also increased from an average of 45 inpatients per day with COVID-19 for the week of July 5 to 62 per day last week. Finally, the County's positivity rate has also increased slightly from 5.3% for the week of July 12 to 5.8% percent last week. The County is

closely monitoring COVID-19 data daily to determine if additional actions will be needed at the local level.

For the latest COVID-19 updates and resources in Prince George's County, please visit mypgc.us.

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