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**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY IMPLEMENTS NEW COVID-19 SAFETY
MEASURES FOR BUSINESSES IN RESPONSE TO CONTINUED
INCREASE OF COVID-19 CASES**

LARGO, MD – Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks announced today that the County will implement new COVID-19 safety measures for certain businesses in response to continued increases in key COVID-19 metrics. This decision was made under the advice of County health officials after analyzing COVID-19 data and trends over the past few weeks.

“Unfortunately, our COVID-19 metrics continue to trend in the wrong direction, which requires us to take additional actions to keep Prince Georgians safe,” said Alsobrooks. “While we know there is a light at the end of the tunnel with the anticipated approval of COVID-19 vaccines, this pandemic is not over yet. We must not grow weary, and we must all continue to do our part to keep each other safe.”

Starting Wednesday, December 16 at 5:00 PM, indoor dining at restaurants must close. Indoor dining is also prohibited at banquets, receptions and meeting rooms in hotels, conference centers and similar establishments. Outdoor dining will be allowed at 50% capacity, and restaurants can still offer curbside and takeout services. In addition, the casino will be limited to 25% capacity. Finally, all retail must reduce capacity to 25%. All businesses must still continue to follow additional safety guidelines, such as enforcing physical distancing and the wearing of face coverings. These new measures will remain in effect through January 16, and the County will continue to monitor COVID-19 data and metrics in the coming days and weeks to determine if these measures should be extended.

These new guidelines were developed based on data from contact tracing and in response to continued increases in key COVID-19 metrics. The County's positivity rate is now above 10%, sitting at 10.1% for last week. The County's infection rate is sitting at 1.10 as of December 1, which places the County at the border of the “high risk” category.

In addition, last week the County saw the highest number of new cases in one week throughout the entire pandemic, with 2,908 new COVID-19 cases for the week of November 29. The County's average daily case rate for last week was 45.7 new cases per day per 100,000 residents, which places the County in the "critical risk" category. Finally, hospital capacity has decreased since the Thanksgiving holiday, with only 48.7% of beds available.

The County Executive also announced that the County has developed a vaccination plan and will begin a public information campaign to educate the public and address any concerns from residents. The goal of this campaign will be to ensure every Prince Georgian fully understands how the vaccine will protect residents from COVID-19.

The "Proud to be Protected" campaign will involve tele-town halls, virtual forums, infographics, a new webpage devoted to the COVID-19 vaccine, and other communications tools to keep the public informed and answer any questions they may have. Residents should expect to see messages about vaccinations and information about a tele-town hall in the coming days and weeks through the same communications channels the County has utilized to keep the public informed of all COVID-19 updates.

Finally, the County Executive announced that a regional partnership of hospitals in Prince George's County and surrounding jurisdictions have been awarded two multimillion-dollar grants from the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC). The regional partnership in Prince George's County was the only partnership in the State of Maryland to receive dual funding from the HSCRC.

The first regional partnership grant includes nearly \$23 million to increase behavioral health (mental health and substance use disorder) services in Prince George's County, the second largest amount awarded in the State by the HSCRC and the largest behavioral health award to any single County. The grant will allow the County to expand its mobile crisis teams, reducing response times when they are needed for behavioral health crises.

Other activities that will be funded through the behavioral health grant include technological enhancements to the Crisis Call Center, the implementation of wraparound care coordination services for high-risk individuals, the creation of a crisis receiving and stabilization center where individuals can receive timely care coordinated by behavioral health professionals, and transportation services through the mobile crisis teams and taxi/rideshare services to help residents access behavioral health resources.

The second regional partnership grant includes more than \$7 million to enhance diabetes care and prevention in Prince George's and St. Mary's counties. The grant was awarded in part due to the successful implementation of the *PreventionLink* program through the Prince George's County Health Department, which integrates clinical practice with evidence-based public health programs to prevent or delay development of type 2 diabetes in people at risk. This program is also bringing together stakeholders in chronic disease care with a shared goal of reducing the burden of diabetes, hypertension, and stroke in underserved areas.

The grant itself provides funding for the expansion and support of additional DPPs (diabetes prevention programs) and DSMT (diabetic self-management training) programs, many of which are community-based. The grant also provides funding for outreach to clinical providers to support electronic referrals to prevention programs and train them in new screening guidelines to better measure pre-diabetes, as well as outreach to patients through a social marketing campaign for screening and education on chronic disease. Finally, funding is provided to increase wraparound services for patients, including help with transportation to healthcare appointments, financial support for the purchase of prescriptions, and assistance to apply for health benefits.

Both grants will be overseen by Totally Linking Care in Maryland (TLC-MD), a coalition of hospitals in counties across Southern Maryland. TLC-MD focuses on projects that allow member hospitals to amplify their impact by working together to improve the health of the communities they serve and positively improve the healthcare delivery system in their regions. TLC-MD's original work established the importance of partnering with community-based organizations, transitional care RNs, and community health worker programs to reduce hospital readmissions, total cost of care, and most importantly, improve patient outcomes.

Hospital members participating in these grants include Adventist HealthCare Fort Washington Medical Center, Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center (diabetes only), MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital (diabetes only), and University of Maryland Capital Region Health.

For the latest COVID-19 updates from Prince George's County, visit health.mypgc.us/coronavirus.

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