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Governor Kate Brown Announces Updates to the County Watch List

October 16, 2020

Portland, OR—Governor Kate Brown today announced that Lane County has been added to the County Watch List, bringing the total number of counties on the Watch List to five.

“The Oregon Health Authority continually monitors case counts across the state," said Governor Brown. "Recognizing the case increases in Lane County over the last two weeks, OHA has already been working with Lane County Public Health to address the community spread they are experiencing.

"There is no question that the spread of COVID-19 in Lane County is connected—to a degree—to student social activities. Social gatherings, like off-campus parties, are incredibly dangerous and spread this disease. Let me be clear, though: it will take the entire county working together to bring these COVID-19 numbers under control. Once COVID-19 is spreading in the community, small family get-togethers can also lead to dozens of infections.”

Counties are placed on the Watch List when COVID-19 is spreading quickly and public health officials cannot trace that spread to specific sources—creating a potentially dangerous dynamic. Specific markers of this rapid community spread include when there is a sporadic case rate of 50 or more per 100,000 people in the last two weeks and the county has had more than five sporadic cases in the last two weeks (sporadic cases are those that cannot be traced to a source; they indicate community spread). Counties remain on the Watch List for a minimum of three weeks and until their sporadic case rates drop below these thresholds.

The County Watch List allows the state to prioritize resources and assistance to counties that are seeing the broadest spread of COVID-19. When a county is placed on the Watch List, the Oregon Health Authority increases monitoring and communication, and deploys additional technical assistance and resources, such as epidemiological support, case investigation, and contact tracing help.

Governor Brown added, "The Watch List signifies caution. When we are able to address community spread early on, the more likely we are to be successful in curbing that spread. While OHA offers support and resources to help county officials prevent further case spikes, it remains up to all community members to do their part. I urge all Oregonians to continue wearing face coverings, watch your physical distance, wash your hands often, and stay home if you feel sick. Now is also a good time to schedule your flu shot."

The complete County Watch List (https://govstatus.egov.com/reopening-oregon#countyStatuses) now includes the following five counties: Benton, Clatsop, Lane, Malheur, and Umatilla.

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