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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The New Jersey Department of Corrections Starts Pathway to "Reopening" with Phase 2 Testing**

**TRENTON, NJ—July 27, 2020 –** The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) has launched Phase 2 of its universal COVID-19 testing initiative for inmates and staff who previously tested negative. Approximately 10,600 FDA-approved Rutgers saliva tests are administered by Rutgers University Correctional Healthcare and the NJDOC Special Operations Group once weekly for an indefinite period of time for staff and a 28-day cycle for inmates, at which point testing will be re-evaluated.

"We've made great strides managing the virus with the implementation of the state's largest testing initiative, in concert with the Department's virus mitigation strategies, that include, for example, masking, temperature checks and modifications to group activities," said Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq. "Testing is a game-changer, with Phase 2 informing how and when we resume certain activities, such as visitation, classroom instruction, worship services and psychoeducational groups in a way that's safe for all involved."

The Department has approximately 29,000 test results to date that includes about 5,700 retests of inmates with results informing the placement of positive cases within its system. At the height of the pandemic, there were more than 800 cases of COVID-19 across NJDOC facilities; today, there are less than 30.

Announcements on the resumption of select activities, such as visitation, will be made available on the agency's website (www.njdoc.gov).

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