ORDER OF THE STATE HEALTH OFFICER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PUBLIC GATHERINGS DUE TO RISK OF INFECTION BY COVID-19

(APPLICABLE TO BLOUNT, SAINT CLAIR, SHELBY, TUSCALOOSA AND WALKER COUNTIES)

WHEREAS, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has been detected in Alabama; and

WHEREAS, the appearance of COVID-19 in the State poses the potential of widespread exposure to an infectious agent that poses significant risk of substantial harm to a large number of people; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, on recommendation of the State Health Officer, Kay Ivey, Governor of the State of Alabama, declared a state public health emergency exists in the State of Alabama; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, the Jefferson County Health Officer, in response to a rapidly growing number of cases of COVID-19 being detected in Jefferson County, issued an order suspending certain public gatherings in that county; and

WHEREAS, there are certain to be many more undetected cases of COVID-19 in Jefferson County, and its surrounding counties; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Health has designated COVID-19 to be a disease of epidemic potential, a threat to the health and welfare of the public, or otherwise of public health importance; and

WHEREAS, *Code of Ala. 1975*, § 22-3-5(2), authorizes a County Health Officer to "institute immediate measures to prevent the spread" of diseases so designated by the State Board of Health; and

WHEREAS, *Code of Ala. 1975*, § 22-2-2(7), authorizes the State Health Officer, on behalf of the State Board of Health, to exercise the duties of county health officer in counties having no County Health Officer.

NOW THEREFORE, THESE PREMISES CONSIDERED, it is ordered that the following be implemented in Blount, Saint Clair, Shelby, Tuscaloosa, and Walker Counties:

1. Effective today, March 17, 2020, at 5:00 P.M., all gatherings of 25 persons or more, or gatherings of any size that cannot maintain a consistent six-foot distance between persons, are prohibited until further notice. This Order shall apply to all gatherings, events or activities that bring 25 or more persons in a single room or single space at the same time.

2. Effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020, all Senior Citizen Center gatherings shall be closed.

a. Senior Citizen Centers and their partners are urged to assure that their clients continue to receive needed meals via curbside pick-up or delivery.

3. Effective at the close of school or business Wednesday, March 18, 2020, all the following shall be closed until April 6, 2020:

a. Private Schools (all grades through 12th grade)

b. Preschools and childcare centers with 12 or more children. This shall not apply to childcare centers operated within hospitals.

Prior to April 6, 2020, a determination shall be made about whether to extend the above closures.

4. Effective immediately, all Nursing Home/Long Term Care Facilities shall prohibit visitation of all visitors and non-essential health care personnel, except for certain compassionate care situations such as end-of-life.

5. Effective today, March 17, 2020, at 5:00 P.M., any restaurant, bar, brewery or Priority Category 3 food service establishment shall not permit on-premises consumption of food or drink for one week. This order shall be reevaluated prior to the end of one week for possible modification.

a. Such establishments may continue to offer food for take-out or delivery provided the social distancing protocols including maintaining a consistent six-foot distance between persons are followed.

b. Such establishments are strongly encouraged to offer online ordering and curbside pick-up of food.

c. Hospital food service areas are excluded from this order provided they have their own social distancing plan.

6. If the organizer or sponsor of an otherwise suspended event desires, they may submit a request for an exemption from this order, at the discretion of the State Health Officer. While the State Health Officer is under no obligation to grant such an exemption, it shall be fairly considered based on the following criteria:

a. Effective measures have been taken to identify those attending the event that may potentially be affected with COVID-19, including but not limited to personal testing for the disease or submission of current medical clearances to the organizer.

b. Effective measures have been taken to prevent the spread of infection even by those that are infected while not symptomatic, including the provision of anti-infection measures such as proper facemasks, personal sanitation measures, and other measures that may be considered proper.

Requests for an exemption must be submitted AT LEAST two weeks in advance of any scheduled event.

This Order shall remain in full force and effect for the duration of the existence of the current emergency conditions.

Done on this 17 day of March, 2020.

Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Officer