**Commissioner John W. Hellerstedt, M.D.**

**DECLARATION OF A PUBLIC HEALTH DISASTER IN THE STATE OF TEXAS**

**March 19, 2020**

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

I, John W. Hellerstedt, M.D., Commissioner of the Department of State Health Services, do hereby certify that the introduction and spread of the communicable disease known as COVID-19 in the State of Texas has created an immediate threat, poses a high risk of death to a large number of people and creates a substantial risk of public exposure because of the disease's method of transmission and evidence that there is community spread in Texas.

THEREFORE, in accordance with the authority vested in me by Section 81.082(d) of the Texas Health and Safety Code, I do hereby declare a state of public health disaster for the entire State of Texas.

Pursuant to Section 81.002 of the code, each person shall act responsibly to prevent and control communicable disease. The following actions, taken immediately, will reduce and delay the spread of COVID-19:

- People, businesses and communities should immediately undertake hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation practices that are accessible, affordable and known to be effective against COVID-19.
    - Wash hands often for 20 seconds and encourage others to do the same.
    - If no soap and water are available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
    - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue away.
    - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
    - Disinfect surfaces, buttons, handles, knobs, and other places touched often.
    - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- People who are known to have, or are under investigation or monitoring, for COVID-19, should adhere to the direction provided to them by duly authorized persons, including public health officials. Failure to abide by such direction may result in involuntary quarantine or isolation for the purposes of preventing further community spread of COVID-19.

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MAR 19 2020

- People who are ill, especially those with symptoms consistent with influenza or COVID-19, should isolate themselves at home until they recover. Such persons should only present for medical evaluation and treatment if their symptoms are such that they cannot continue to be cared for in their home. And, when seeking medical care should call their doctor or health care facility before arriving to allow them to prepare.
- Limit trips into the public to essential outings. Traveling to work, the grocery store, the pharmacy or to seek medical care would be considered essential trips.
- Limit as much as possible close contact with other people. Stay six feet away.
- Do not gather in social groups of more than ten (10) individuals.
- Employers should allow work at home alternatives to the greatest extent possible.
- Restaurants should not allow dine-in options, either inside or outside. Take-out and curbside options with minimal contact are permitted and highly encouraged.

The Texas Department of State Health Services will continue to provide the most current and practical advice on how to control the spread of COVID-19 and encourages all Texans to seek additional information from a trusted source such as https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/ or from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/.

Adherence to these rules and the sound public health principles that support them will provide optimal protection for the people of Texas. These measures are necessary to advance the health and safety of all Texans.
Copies of this proclamation will be filed with applicable authorities.

Given under my hand this the

19 day of March, 2020.

JOHN W. HELLERSTEDT, M.D.
Commissioner of Public Health

ATTESTED BY:

Ruth Hughs
Secretary of State

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