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Subject: Press Release: Local Action to Enhance Executive Orders to Reduce Transmission of COVID-19
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For Immediate Release
Nov. 25, 2020

Local Action to Enhance Executive Orders to Reduce Transmission of COVID-19

After seeing some stability only a couple of weeks ago, Buncombe County has identified 5,375 total cases of COVID-19. We are consistently adding 60 new cases a day on average. We now have experienced 125 COVID-19 related deaths – each one of these a neighbor of ours, a person who lived here with us. Our key metrics have moved into unfavorable areas. Our new cases per 100,000 population per week has increased almost 20% from 111 just a week ago to 142 this week. Our percent positivity, while still below 5%, has significantly increased over time. Back in September, we were seeing percent positivity around 3%, we now have 4.8% of our tests coming back positive. These metrics indicate increased viral transmission here in our community.

Executive Order 180 provides more clear language and reinforces the statewide mask mandate. If you are indoors with people outside your household, you must wear a mask regardless of distance. If you are outdoors and cannot maintain 6 feet of distance, you need to wear a mask. This means every day, every time and even at our holiday get-togethers.

The new Executive Order and NC DHHS recommendations empower local jurisdictions to enact local action based on the local risk. County and city leadership, public health officials, and others have considered our unsettling trends and are today making recommendations to fit our needs locally.

We are aligned with Executive Order 180 and in addition, are exercising local authority to implement civil penalties for businesses in an effort to enhance enforcement efforts. Included in the Local Declaration:

- Amendment to Sub-Section 3.8.b.1. of Executive Order 169, to make it clear that any event or space using this guidance MUST be a seated event. There are different capacity limits for different settings. Please review the Executive Order to determine capacity limits for your facility.
- Implementing civil penalty for businesses, organization, and other establishments that are not compliant with Executive Order capacity limits as defined for facility type. All businesses, offices, industries, and indoor areas of

every kind and nature in the jurisdictions subject to the Declaration shall post the maximum emergency occupancy at every entrance along with clear and conspicuous signage indicating that face coverings are required for entry. Signage from public health can be found at www.buncombeready.org.

To aid in these new Enforcement Measures we will be reforming the Multi-Agency Task Force which was very successful in ensuring restaurants were in compliance with Executive Orders earlier this year. Once Again, this task force will consist of Public Health Officials, Sheriff's Deputies, Asheville Police Department and City and County Fire Departments and Fire Marshalls. This Task Force will be primarily complaint driven but will also proactively monitor local businesses for compliance.

Key factors this task force will be assessing are:

- Signage requirements
- Mask compliance
- Capacity limitations
- Greeters at stores with over 15,000 sq. ft.
- Compliance with 6ft physical distancing

The first violation of these requirements will result in a civil, possibly criminal citation. If a business is found to be in violation a second time they will be closed down on the spot for a period of 24 hours. Additional violations will result in extended periods of closure. Reports of Violations can be sent to ready@buncombecounty.org or called in to the Ready team at (828)-419-0095.

In order to reduce our risk and flatten this curve, we must remember the simple and effective precautions of wearing a mask, keeping six feet apart and washing our hands often. We must limit our interactions. Each encounter with someone outside our household, is an opportunity for spread.

This means when we gather as families or as friends. When we interact at work. And when we visit businesses and other establishments in our community. We have to remember that committing to these simple measures protects us, our families, our friends, our churches, our schools, our economy, and our community.

Please rethink your holiday this year and limit your holiday gatherings to only those in your household. Share fellowship with your extended family and friends in other ways. If you partake in a holiday gathering, keep it small. Limit the number of people invited. Keep it outdoors if possible. Even with your family and friends, keep 6 feet apart and wear masks.

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