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PRESS RELEASE

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Logan County Public Health Order Variance Application is Not Approved

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has denied Logan County's application for variance from Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home. Reviewers noted several concerns about vulnerabilities in Logan County and want to monitor the situation before further consideration of a variance.

The commissioners originally submitted the variance on April 29 to request that restrictions be relaxed for Logan County, including a provision that restaurants, movie theaters and public gyms be able to reopen at this time to 30% capacity if they can meet the social distancing requirements of at least six feet between individuals throughout. With their variance request, the commissioners were addressing the recovery of the local businesses' economic health while maintaining the public health safeguards for the county.

The request submitted was modeled after an approved variance for Mesa County, and was signed off by Logan County Commissioners Joe McBride, Byron Pelton and Jane Bauder, Sterling City Manager Don Saling, Northeast Colorado Health Department Public Health Director Trish McClain, and Sterling Regional MedCenter CEO Wade Tyrell.

The CDPHE letter addressing the variance application noted that "Logan County has the highest rate of COVID-19 in Colorado, with a three day daily incidence continuing to be high and trending up." In Logan County, the majority of positive COVID-19 cases are associated with the Department of Corrections Sterling Facility. As with many large employers in Logan County, not all staff are residents of Logan County.

Whether the positive cases are inmates or staff, the Sterling Regional MedCenter will be the primary hospital that is required to have capacity to respond to any potential increase in severe illness due to COVID-19. If Logan County chooses to resubmit an application for a variance, one criteria will be to provide additional clarification around hospitalization bed capacity and what burden increasing cases in Logan County might create for the local health system.

"The primary concern continues to be around positive COVID-19 cases in the community as a result of exposure to the virus," stated Trish McClain, Public Health Director. "We want to ensure that our healthcare partners have the sustained capacity to deal with COVID-19 cases as well as

non-COVID health issues that continue to occur. There are several things residents of Logan County can continue to do to make a difference including staying home unless conducting necessary business and wearing masks when going to public places. And remember, by wearing a face covering or mask, you are protecting the people you meet; if they are wearing a mask as well, they are protecting you. In addition, whenever anyone feels sick, stay home to ensure you don't expose others in the community to any illnesses."

Current conditions in Logan County were deemed to not be conducive to relaxing any of the Safer at Home restrictions. CDPHE offered to provide Logan County with technical assistance if needed and Logan County will be eligible to resubmit an application with continued monitoring of disease prevalence and a new letter of support from Sterling Regional MedCenter.

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