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PRESS RELEASE

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LOGAN COUNTY REAPPLIES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER VARIANCE

Logan County has resubmitted an application for variance from Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home, after the county's first application was denied by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) last week.

The application resubmitted on Friday, May 15, is similar to the original, once again addressing the recovery of the local businesses' economic health while maintaining the public health safeguards for the county. The application is requesting that some restrictions be relaxed in Logan County, including a provision that restaurants, movie theaters, public gyms and places of worship be able to reopen immediately to 30% capacity if they can meet the social distancing requirements set forth in the Public Health Order.

The first go-around, reviewers noted several concerns about vulnerabilities in Logan County as reason for their denial including 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." However, in Logan County, the majority of positive COVID-19 cases are associated with offenders in the Department of Corrections Sterling Facility.

Those concerns are addressed in the new variance application, noting that the number of daily community-spread COVID-19 cases has remained flat since the first positive case was reported to Logan County on March 22, with a current total of 32 non-DOC positive cases as of May 13. Logan County is requesting that CDPHE consider that the high rate of COVID-19 positive cases are contained in the Sterling Correctional Facility which is overseen by the Colorado Department of Corrections and for which Logan County has no jurisdiction.

In addition, Sterling Correctional Facility officials have confirmed that the vast majority of their cases are asymptomatic with a low probability of critical care required. The DOC has made assurances that they are taking all precautions necessary to keep their employees safe and COVID free, utilizing the use of PPE for all staff and inmates and the quarantine of positive inmates.

To address another concern expressed by CDPHE regarding any foreseen burdens placed on the local health care system, Sterling Regional MedCenter has a surge plan to increase bed capacity to 59 if needed, in less than 24 hours. The MedCenter has not had an admission of a potential or confirmed COVID-19 patient for the last 12 days, and there are currently no COVID-19 hospitalizations.

Along with the request for relaxed requirement, Logan County also maintains the public health requirements for all residents of Logan County:

- Maintain physical distancing (6 feet)

- Adults 65 and older and high risk populations should limit public interactions and stay at home as much as possible
- Use cloth face coverings for interactions where physical distancing is not possible or when entering public places
- People with symptoms should stay home and should not go to work
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

The new request was again 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 Tyrrell.

Logan County is awaiting to hear a final decision from CDPHE.

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