

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TDH COMMISSIONER DR. LISA PIERCEY UPDATE ON COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Tennessee Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP today provided an update on actions underway to ensure Tennessee is prepared for an outbreak of COVID-19. Tennessee does not have any cases of COVID-19 at this time, and the risk to the general population in Tennessee and the United States remains low. Piercey's remarks are available online at <https://youtu.be/XQjelgg72cl>. Her statements are included below.

TDH is providing information on COVID-19 online at www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html. Additional information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

Statement from Tennessee Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP, February 28, 2020:

Fellow Tennesseans,

I'm Dr. Lisa Piercey, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Health. With a growing concern in our nation over coronavirus, I wanted to share with you some information and update you on our preparedness efforts.

As in any emerging threat, our knowledge grows with time. At this point, we know that coronavirus is a respiratory illness with symptoms and spread much like influenza or "flu." Its primary symptoms are fever, coughing and shortness of breath, and usually come on anywhere between two to 14 days after exposure. In most people, the illness produces mild to moderate symptoms that do not require hospitalization. However, just like with influenza, the elderly, people with chronic lung conditions and those with compromised immune systems are at higher risk.

There are also some things that we don't know for sure right now, such as if the virus can be spread by people without symptoms, or how long the virus can remain on nonliving surfaces like door knobs and bathroom faucets.

The most important thing to know is that Tennessee is prepared. Our state has one of the best emergency preparedness systems in the nation, and we have been in daily contact with our local, state and federal partners to coordinate our response efforts, including specialized plans for our hospitals, schools, employers, prisons and military.

It is common to feel helpless and vulnerable during these types of situations, but there are some things you can do. First and foremost, wash your hands frequently, especially after



coughing or sneezing, and avoid touching your face, nose and mouth. You should also avoid close contact with people who are sick, and if you are feeling ill, stay at home to protect others.

While there are currently no cases in Tennessee, we continue to monitor the situation closely. The Tennessee Department of Health will issue a statewide advisory promptly, if we determine that the virus has reached our state.

Fear, panic and misinformation can be just as dangerous as an outbreak itself. If you want additional information, I encourage you to seek a reputable source of news, such as the CDC or the World Health Organization. Tennessee-specific information can be found on our website at TN.gov/health.

Thank you for helping us to protect, promote and improve the health of Tennesseans.

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The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. Learn more about TDH services and programs at www.tn.gov/health.

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This news release can be accessed online at www.tn.gov/health/news.html.

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