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Joel R. Strasz  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media

From: Joel Strasz, Public Health Officer – Bay County Health Department

Date: March 26, 2021

Re: **COVID-19 Variant B.1.1.7 Identified in Bay County**

**BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN** – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) notified the Bay County Health Department (BCHD) that the MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories identified the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7 in an Bay County resident. The confirmed case is middle aged and had no known travel history.

The SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 variant is thought to have emerged in the United Kingdom and has since been detected in many countries and states. This variant is concerning because it is associated with increased transmissibility. Compared to the wild-type virus, the B.1.1.7 variant is approximately 50 percent more transmissible, leading to faster spread of the virus and potentially increasing numbers of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Therefore, additional levels of public health intervention are required once the variant has been identified. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention variant data, 8,337 B.1.1.7 cases are reported nationwide, with 986 of those from Michigan as of March 26, 2021.

With the high transmission rate of the B.1.1.7 variant and with Spring Break and the Easter holiday upon us, vaccination is more important than ever. Bay County residents should get vaccinated as soon as it is offered to them. At this time, the COVID-19 vaccines appear to be effective against the variant. Actions to protect yourself and others from the B.1.1.7 variant include:

- Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 as soon as it is available to you.
- Wearing a mask around others.
- Staying six feet apart from others.
- Washing hands often.
- Ventilating indoor spaces.

The Bay County Health Department will continue to prioritize registrants 50 years of age and older, but will accept as many of the current age categories as allowed by the State of Michigan. [All Bay County residents, aged 16 and older are encouraged to register](#) and will be sent appointment invitations for other BCHD sponsored clinics in the future.

Please do your part and help minimize the spread of COVID-19. For the latest and most accurate information regarding the COVID-19 please go to the Bay County Health Department website at <https://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/COVID19/>.