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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: APRIL 6, 2020
TO: ALL MEDIA OUTLETS
FROM: JOEL R. STRASZ, HEALTH OFFICER
RE: **INFECTION RISK FROM VISITING PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN: Grocery stores, restaurants, and other selected venues of public accommodation remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic because the Governor's Executive Order explicitly permits and encourages these businesses to continue operating to serve the needs of the public. As these businesses remain open to serve the public, their employees face increased risk of coronavirus exposure.

Businesses in Bay County should monitor the health of their employees and follow all guidance relevant to safe operations provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), and the Bay County Health Department (BCHD). Employees who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be directed to stay home and self-isolate until it is safe for them to return to work, which will be at least 7 days after symptom onset and 3 days after symptom resolution (without taking any fever reducing medications).

"We are thankful for our front line employees, not only in the medical field but also in the grocery stores, pharmacies, takeout restaurants, gas stations, and essential retail shops that allow us to continue to have access to food, medication, and life's other necessities. These employees interact with people each time they work and therefore put themselves at risk, as we know that coronavirus is very communicable. That is why each and every one of us needs to take the upmost precaution when visiting these establishments, not only to ensure our own safety but also the safety of these front line employees as well," said Bay County Executive Jim Barcia.

BCHD continuously provides guidance to the general public and businesses regarding strategies for staying safe and curbing the spread of the coronavirus. Unfortunately, it is possible for someone who is infected to transmit the virus to others despite being completely free of symptoms or before developing any symptoms. All Bay County residents should recognize there is a risk of exposure to the coronavirus whenever they visit any business during this period of sustained community transmission of COVID-19.

We are actively engaged in case notification and contact tracing as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are currently tracking the health of 240+ persons in the community who have been tested, 30 persons who have tested positive for COVID-19, and over 250 contacts of those cases who are in quarantine. Resource limitations make it impractical and impossible for BCHD to provide specific notice to all customers of every business every time an employee of a business might develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.

Therefore, the public is encouraged to stay home, stay safe, minimize trips away from home, and exercise appropriate caution whenever visiting any businesses during the on-going pandemic. The public should assume that anyone they encounter might be infected and help prevent spread of the coronavirus from person-to-person by:

- 1) Maintaining safe physical distancing: at least 6 feet of separation from others.
- 2) Wearing a mask or other face covering: to avoid the possibility that you might spread the virus to others.
- 3) Following recommended practices for hand hygiene and cough etiquette.

Stay safe and be well.