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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: March 13, 2020

TO: ALL MEDIA

FROM: JOEL STRASZ, PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

RE: Bay County Individual Tests Positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Bay County, Michigan – Testing through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has identified Bay County’s first presumptive positive case for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Specimens will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmatory testing.

The presumptive positive person is a physician at Covenant HealthCare in Saginaw. Once it was confirmed that he tested positive the Bay County Health Department along with Covenant HealthCare and other area county health departments have been working together to inform patients, staff and others that have had contact with the physician and provide them information to ensure that they take immediate actions to minimize the exposure of others.

Now considered a pandemic outbreak, the virus COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia. Studies of the virus suggest that more than 80% of people diagnosed with COVID-19 encounter mild symptoms and recover quickly. However, the people who are most likely to have severe disease and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>60 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes. This is especially important as Bay County has the highest percentage of persons over the age of 60 (26%) in the state of Michigan.

COVID-19 symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, people should wash their hands, stay home when sick, avoid close contact with sick people, and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer in the past twenty four hours signed an executive order prohibiting public gatherings of more than 250 people and closed all K-12 school buildings until April 5th. The Bay County Health Department strongly encourages that public meetings in the community over 100 people be cancelled or rescheduled for a later date. Furthermore to protect seniors and individuals with above mentioned chronic conditions, the Health Department also strongly encourages these individuals to avoid public gatherings for the time being.

“Bay County is mobilizing every resource it has to protect our most vulnerable citizens in the wake of this devastating virus” stated County Executive Jim Barcia. “I have directed the Health Department to utilize all of its available resources to work diligently with local health care providers, townships and

cities, and community organizations to protect our citizens. We all need to do our part to fight the virus including frequent handwashing, maintaining social distances of six feet, avoiding large crowds and most importantly staying home when you are sick.”

As of 6:00 pm, the State of Michigan has 16 presumptive cases of COVID-19. Bay County continues to work with local providers to identify persons exhibiting symptoms, testing them and providing care, if necessary.