March 20, 2020

Dear Legislator:

Researchers across the globe are urgently pursuing a vaccine for COVID-19, now a global pandemic with over 235,000 confirmed infections and roughly 10,000 deaths including at least 221 cases and three deaths in Texas. In a major sign of progress, enrollees received the first doses of vaccine in an early-stage clinical trial in Seattle this week. Even in a best-case scenario, a COVID-19 vaccine remains several months away from approval for use in the general population. Vaccines must pass rigorous testing for safety and effectiveness in multiple clinical trials with thousands of participants.

Texas is experiencing the consequences of a novel virus for which no immunity exists anywhere in the population. Generations ago, we faced similar threats from other infectious diseases such as polio, smallpox, and measles. But thanks to widespread vaccination, pandemics due to these diseases are a thing of the past. The drastic measures needed to gain control over this pandemic are a testament to the importance of vaccines as a backstop against health and economic disaster.

For now, without immunity-building vaccines or proven treatments, the best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed. We encourage you to remind constituents frequently about ways to prevent COVID-19 exposure and spread:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover coughs and sneezes and throw used tissues in the trash;
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in homes and businesses;
- Stay home if possible, especially if feeling sick;
- Avoid close contact with others who are sick; and
- Stay six feet apart from other people in communities where COVID-19 is actively spreading.

With recent disaster declarations from Governor Abbott and President Trump, our elected leaders are acting decisively to slow transmission of COVID-19. However, it will take every single Texan working together, adjusting our usual behaviors in the coming days and weeks to keep ourselves and our neighbors out of harm's way. Our coalition stands ready to help you communicate clearly and expertly with your community during this time.

We invite you to refer to the enclosed resources for additional guidance.

- CDC – Share Facts About COVID-19
- CDC – If You Are at Higher Risk
- CDC – What To Do if You Are Sick
- CDC – The Journey of Your Child’s Vaccine

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