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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Beshear Takes Aggressive Steps to Contain Spread of COVID-19

State's first death related to COVID-19 announced

Visit the Governor's [Facebook](#) page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 16, 2020) – Unfortunately, Gov. Andy Beshear announced the state's first death related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) during his update to Kentuckians from the state Capitol Monday morning.

“Sadly, last night, we lost a Bourbon County man who was treated for multiple medical conditions and tested positive for COVID-19, which was a contributing factor,” said Gov. Beshear. “My family and every Kentuckian is lifting up his friends, family and community in our thoughts and prayers. While we have taken aggressive action to combat this world health pandemic, in the days and weeks ahead, we must continue to pull together as Kentuckians to stop the spread of this virus. We are a resilient people. We will beat this virus.”

Gov. Beshear said Bill Sisson, the president of Baptist Health Lexington, relayed his sympathy.

“We are deeply saddened to share the news that the Bourbon County resident who tested positive for COVID-19 at Baptist Health Lexington has passed away from complications due to multiple

medical conditions,” said Ruth Ann Childers a spokesperson with Baptist Health Lexington. “Our sympathies are with the family for their loss.”

Following the announcement Monday, Gov. Beshear outlined new aggressive steps he is taking to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and protect Kentucky families, which include:

Closing restaurants and bars to in-person service

Gov. Beshear said he will direct restaurants and bars to close, although there will be expectations for drive through and delivery. The Governor urged people to order take out when possible and support local businesses and their employees.

“We are to the point now where this is a step we have to take. I want to thank everyone that stepped up and did this voluntarily,” he said. “We are asking so many people to make sacrifices. It is not lost on me that most of these are small businesses. We are going to do everything we can to be there for you. We realize the impact this will have and we will be there for you.”

Unemployment insurance

Gov. Beshear said the state is taking steps to waive the waiting period for unemployment for those who are losing their jobs because of COVID-19 and will waive any work search requirements while the state of emergency is in effect.

“We know the steps we are taking are going to cause people to lose their jobs,” the Governor said. “We want you to be able to qualify for unemployment and we don’t want to create impediments that keep you from being able to get through this. We are going to make sure we get through this together.”

State Capitol closing to nonessential personnel

“This is a big step. I am a person who ran on these doors being open for everyone at all times,” Gov. Beshear said. “We’re dealing with something we could have never anticipated and, in the end, my obligation is to keep people safe.”

“We are taking aggressive action to protect you and the people around you. I am asking you to do your duty as a Kentuckian and as an American to take care of the people around you,” he said. “We are going to take steps to stop any in-person service from state government and make sure we can provide those services remotely.”

Other Monday morning updates

Gov. Beshear also said that Transportation Cabinet Secretary Jim Gray and Kentucky Infrastructure Authority Executive Director Edith Halbleib are self-isolating because they were in the presence of someone who has tested positive in Louisville.

Fourteen Kentuckians on the Grand Princess cruise are home and the last two, who were at a different location, are on their way home today.

Gov. Beshear said that the news update Tuesday at 4 p.m. ET would begin with a special segment for children to help them better understand the COVID-19 virus and the state's response.

Gov. Beshear implored people, with all of the anxiety and disruptions, to fill social media with positive content about helping others, doing their part or supporting a small business. He urged people to use the hashtags #TeamKentucky and #TogetherKy.

“We need to model good citizenship and we need to understand it is all of our jobs to do what it takes to protect our people,” Gov. Beshear said. “This is a test of our compassion. We need to step up and still look out for each other. There are no Democrats, no Republicans. There are just Kentuckians.”

As of 9 a.m. ET Monday the state still had a total of 21 positive cases. One Harrison County woman had recovered and one Bourbon County man, who had other medical conditions, passed away Sunday night.

As of 5 p.m. ET, March 15, the state's current COVID-19 patient information includes:

- 66 M Bourbon, *passed away Sunday, March 15*
- 40 F Fayette
- 46 M Fayette
- 31 F Fayette
- 47 M Fayette
- 31 M Fayette
- 27 F Harrison, *out of the hospital and fully recovered*
- 67 F Harrison
- 68 M Harrison
- 54 F Harrison
- 60 M Harrison
- 51 M Harrison
- 69 M Jefferson
- 67 F Jefferson
- 68 F Jefferson

- 80 F Jefferson
- 73 F Jefferson
- 56 M Montgomery
- 53 M Nelson
- 49 M Clark
- 54 M Jefferson

Actions by Gov. Beshear

Gov. Beshear has continued to take decisive action since the first case was confirmed in Kentucky. To date, Gov. Beshear has:

- Declared a [state of emergency](#) to ensure the state has every resource available to respond
- Issued an [executive order to prohibit price gouging](#)
- Announced Kentucky's COVID-19 informational website, [kycovid19.ky.gov](#) and issued extensive guidance on when to seek care and when to call the state's hotline, **1-800-722-5725**
- [Issued an executive order](#) to waive copays, deductibles, cost-sharing and diagnostic testing fees for private insurance and state employees and asked providers to expand their networks to patients that may go outside their normal providers
- Announced that those without insurance will be able to get a test in Kentucky
- Announced strong actions to [protect the state's most vulnerable populations](#) by limiting visitation to senior care and long-term care facilities
- Signed an [executive order](#) allowing pharmacies to refill prescriptions for up to 30 days to ensure those vulnerable communities or those who need to self-isolate will have their needed prescriptions
- Closed all state [prisons](#) to visitors
- Activated the State Health Operations Center and the State Emergency Operations Center, currently at level three
- Recommended the temporary closure of senior centers to help halt the spread of the virus for those most vulnerable
- Announced that [Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance](#) (KEMI) will provide wage replacement benefits for first responders and medical personnel who have been quarantined for COVID-19
- [Announced new guidance](#) that state boards and commissions cancel any scheduled in-person meetings and instead use video teleconference technology

- Recommended schools cease in-person classes beginning Monday, March 16, and as of Friday, March 14, all 172 school districts, the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf had announced closures
- Announced USDA approved the state's waiver to serve meals during non-traditional instruction days
- Announced the state is taking swift action to get the passengers from the Grand Princess cruise ship back home
- Issued [guidance](#) to state agencies to allow telecommuting where possible to decrease on-site staffing by up to 50 percent to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and suspended out-of-state travel for state employees
- Recommended businesses also utilize telecommuting and allow employees to work from home if possible
- Advised that all community gatherings be canceled|
- Provided tips and guidance to assist with physical and mental health during a pandemic
- Recommended childcare centers create plans so if needed they can close within 72 hours
- Asked hospitals cease elective procedures by Wednesday, March 18
- Held daily and most days, twice-a-day media and Facebook live briefings to inform Kentuckians and provide recommended health and safety guidance

More information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people to follow these [steps to prevent illness](#). Kentuckians can find regular updates and resources including more information about when to seek medical attention and courses of action for those in counties with positive cases at [kycovid19.ky.gov](#). They are also urged to visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#) for up-to-date information. Kentuckians who want advice can call the state hotline at 1.800.722.5725 or call their local health care provider.

To read Gov. Beshear's news releases and watch other news regarding COVID-19 visit [governor.ky.gov](#).

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