NEWS RELEASE

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FIRST COVID-19 CASES IDENTIFIED IN ERIE COUNTY RESIDENTS

Results for three county residents confirmed by Erie County’s Public Health Lab late Saturday

Poloncarz declares State of Emergency in Erie County; schools to be closed Monday, March 16

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein and Commissioner of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Daniel Neaverth, Jr. have announced that three individuals in Erie County have tested positive for COVID-19, a disease caused by a novel coronavirus. The cases were confirmed through testing at the Erie County Public Health Lab late Saturday afternoon and are the first confirmed cases in Erie County. Poloncarz joined Burstein, Neaverth, Jr. and other county personnel for the announcement and to detail next steps in the investigation.

The three individuals have been diagnosed with COVID-19 include:

- A female in her 30s who resides in Buffalo, with recent out-of-state travel and a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case
- A male in his 30s who resides in Clarence, with recent travel to Westchester County (NY)
- A female in her 20s who resides in Grand Island, with recent travel to Italy

- Based on an initial review of each case by the Erie County Department of Health (“ECDOH”) epidemiology team, these individuals appear to have had separate exposures to the novel coronavirus.
• ECDOH has begun an intensive investigation to identify the close contacts of these three individuals. Once identified, those close contacts will be notified of their potential exposure to COVID-19 and placed under mandatory quarantine to monitor for symptoms.

• Officials will be in contact today with ownership of the locations that these individuals may have visited in order to notify any and all close contacts of a potential exposure.

• ECDOH will release additional guidance today to the public on its website and to media with details of these locations, dates and times.

• Each of these individuals has remained in their respective residences since their arrival back to Erie County. As of this date, none of these individuals have been hospitalized. Each will continue to recover at home under mandatory isolation, per NYSDOH guidelines.

In response to the confirmation of three positive cases of COVID-19 in Erie County, Poloncarz declared a State of Emergency to be in effect at 12:00 PM today. The State of Emergency will allow Erie County to better respond to this public health crisis and allocate the necessary resources to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The State of Emergency will remain in effect until rescinded by an order from the County Executive.

“Today I am declaring a state of emergency to be in effect following the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our community. In addition, I will be asking the legislature to approve an allocation of $5 million in rollover funding from the 2019 surplus to be dedicated to costs associated with the COVID-19 emergency,” said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz. “I am also ordering that all schools in Erie County be closed tomorrow, Monday March 16 2020. However, teachers and administrative staff should report unless otherwise directed by their superintendents.”

Dr. Burstein reminds county residents and physicians that ECDOH continues to follow the COVID-19 testing criteria established by the New York State Department of Health. “We are sure to find additional cases as more Erie County residents are tested,” Health Commissioner Burstein explained. “Our goal right now is to identify new cases rapidly, and prevent or limit secondary transmission.”

ECDOH has set up an information line for residents to call with questions about COVID-19 at (716) 858-2929. This hotline will be staffed Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. Hours may change based on call volume.

Erie County Department of Health, COVID-19 Information Line: (716) 858-2929 (M-F, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.)

Erie County Department of Health, COVID-19 resources: www.erie.gov/covid19

New York State Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline: 1-888-364-3065


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus: http://www.coronavirus.gov

World Health Organization, Coronavirus: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

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