



Media Release

Date: March 24, 2020

From: Joe Passiment, Chairman, Beaufort County Council
Billy Keyserling, Mayor, City of Beaufort
Lisa Sulka, Mayor, Town of Bluffton
Harry Williams, Mayor, City of Hardeeville
John McCann, Mayor, Town of Hilton Head Island
Joe DeVito, Mayor, Town of Port Royal
Colin Moore, Mayor, Town of Yemassee

Re: Statement from Beaufort County Council Chairman and Regional Mayors

The United States has the third largest number of COVID-19 infected residents in the world. South Carolina lost two more residents yesterday to this disease and more than 100 new cases were reported Monday in our state.

Every community in our nation is yet to feel the full effects of this virus, its casualties and unfortunately, its fatalities. We are in the second phase of this pandemic which means more people will be infected before this rate decreases. These figures will only grow as more people realize they have symptoms and have had contact with an infected person.

This news comes on the heels of recent reports of major gatherings along the County's beaches, rivers and other waterways.

Governor Henry McMaster issued an executive order for local and state law enforcement to break up any groups which are comprised of three people or more. Law enforcement officers have the authority to disperse a group and charge those people with misdemeanors. This order does not apply to businesses or employers.

On behalf of each local governmental organization, we are asking for all local residents to create a culture of infection control and lead by example. This is a social and behavioral health issue. Every person needs to make short-term concessions to prevent the Coronavirus pandemic from exponentially spreading and causing more harm to our community and overwhelming our local healthcare systems.

This is a real health crisis with potentially tragic consequences, and we need every person to do their part by:

- **Social Distancing:** This means only be around people with whom you live, only interact with others from a distance and only go out when necessary.
- Stop gatherings at the beach, sandbar, parks, and public spaces. Per Governor McMaster's executive order, law enforcement officers will be dispatched to disperse the group and charge those in violation of this order.
- Washing your hands thoroughly several times a day.
- Staying at home.

- Working from home.
- Limiting your errands to once or twice a week.
- Canceling any visits from friends and family planning to travel to the Lowcountry.
- Supporting local businesses for your essential needs.
- Obtaining your information from credible sources such as:
 1. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov>)
 2. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (<https://www.scdhec.gov/>)
 3. Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>)
 4. South Carolina Emergency Management Division (<https://www.scmd.org/>)
 5. Beaufort County – Beaufort County Emergency Management Division (<https://www.beaufortcountysc.gov/>)
 6. Beaufort County and municipalities’ social media pages.

As leaders of your county, towns and cities, we are working around the clock to protect and provide for our region. We must all do our best to protect our hospital and emergency services, so our system is able to manage patients during this time.

Thank you for leading by example and creating a culture of infection control. We need everyone to be a part of the solution for each’s personal health, public health, safety and welfare of our communities.