

November 24, 2020

An Open Letter to All Tennesseans

We write today with an appeal to all Tennesseans.

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic is surging once again in our state. Daily new cases, transmission rates and hospitalizations have surpassed the July levels, making this second wave bigger and more deadly than the first. Medical experts and elected officials across our nation are sounding a warning about the rising numbers, and we – the state hospital leaders – share their deep concerns, especially with Thanksgiving and the holiday season beginning this week.

This is why we have come together to urge all Tennesseans in the strongest terms to fight community spread and flatten the curve of this virus. We will accomplish this by limiting the size of formal and informal gatherings and by wearing masks. These are science-based and proven measures that will slow the spread of the virus.

Today, there are more than 700 patients in Middle Tennessee hospitals with the coronavirus, the most since the pandemic began in March. This is a 72% increase since November 1. Models are forecasting an additional 10% increase in COVID-19 patients by the end of next week. This weekly growth pattern is expected to continue until there is a slowdown in cases.

If this trend continues, our hospital systems could soon be overwhelmed, and that would compromise the ability to serve all patients, not just those with COVID-19. Currently hospitals are experiencing staff shortages due to both the rising volumes of patients needing care and to the absence of medical professionals who have contracted the virus or are in quarantine because of a COVID-19 exposure. The cause of most of these exposures are coming from outside the hospital - from the rampant community spread of the virus in our state.

We know that this has been a long and challenging year. All of us would love nothing more than gather and celebrate the holidays with family and friends. However, we must stay the course. Now is the time to take heed, keep socially distant and wear masks, even indoors. Consider having a virtual Thanksgiving dinner, and if you are gathering with people who live outside of your household, limit the dinner to eight.

An Open Letter to All Tennesseans

Page 2

We must act, and act now to protect hospital capacity and to support those who have been on the front lines of this fight for months - our medical personnel, first responders and essential workers. We are Tennesseans. In the most challenging times, we have always answered the call to act. And once again, by working together, we will get through this for our neighbors, friends, and family.

Sincerely,

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