<u>**Call to Order**</u>
The Harford County Health Officer Update was called to order by County Council President Vincenti, with all members in attendance. The County Council serves as the Board of Health for the purposes of the session.

<u>**Board of Health Update**</u>
Dr. Russell Moy, Harford County Health Department (HCHD) Health Officer, provided an update to the Board of Health.

I.  **COVID-19 Update**
    A.  Key COVID-19 statistics as of 6/2/2020 include the following:
        1.  Worldwide, there are 6.3 million cases with 376,000 deaths.
        2.  In the U.S., there are 1.8 million cases with 105,000 deaths.
        3.  In Maryland, there are 54,175 positive cases and 261,640 negative tests with 2,474 confirmed deaths.
        4.  In Harford County, there are 891 cases (compared with 795 cases this time last week) with 48 confirmed deaths (compared with 45 deaths this time last week).
    B.  In Harford County, age-specific data, as of 6/2/2020 shows that:
        1.  Those between the ages of 18 and 64 make up 71% of COVID-19 cases, but account for only 6% of COVID-19 deaths.
        2.  Those age 65 and older make up 28% of COVID-19 cases, but account for 94% of deaths.
        3.  Those under age 18 account for only 1% of cases and no deaths. Statewide, of Maryland's 2,474 deaths, there has only been one death to a person under age 18, the 15-year old from Baltimore County with multi-system inflammatory syndrome, the rare COVID-19 related disease in children.
    C.  In Harford County, nursing home-specific data shows that nursing home resident and staff COVID-19 cases make up 26% of the County's COVID-19 cases, but make up 54% of the County's COVID-19 deaths.
    D.  This confirms the understanding that although everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19, it is those who are at higher risk, including older people and those with underlying medical conditions that are more likely to die from the virus.

II. **Reopening Plan**
    A.  Now that Maryland's reopening is about 2 weeks old, since Governor Hogan lifted the stay-at-home order on May 15th and we are now well into Stage 1 of the Reopening Plan, it is important to track our COVID-19 related numbers.
    B.  From a State perspective, the metrics being tracked include:

1. Number of new COVID-19 cases – and over the last 14 days, the number of daily cases has come down from 1,091 on May 14th to 848 cases today June 2nd – a 22% decrease.
2. Number of new COVID-19 deaths – and over the last 14 days, the number of new deaths from a high point of 34 deaths on May 14th to 10 deaths reported today.
3. Number of hospitalization numbers have also been on a steady downward trend – with 1,538 hospitalizations on May 14th to 1,372 hospitalizations reported today June 2nd – an 11% decrease.
4. ICU bed usage numbers have also been on a steady downward trend – with 569 ICU beds on May 14th to 481 ICU beds today, June 2nd – a 15% decrease.
5. The State's positivity rate, which again reflects the number of positive COVID-19 tests compared with the number of negative COVID-19 tests done in the State is another metric being carefully followed. The lower the positivity rate, the better, preferably below 12%.
   a) The State is now calculating its positivity rate as a 7-day rolling average to reflect the most recent data collected – and as of today, that rate is 10.5%.
   b) Harford County's 7-day rolling positivity rate in testing is even better at 6.6% which is the lowest positivity rate of the 11 largest Maryland jurisdictions that has at least 800 COVID-19 cases. In fact, we have the 8th lowest positivity rate when compared with all 24 Maryland jurisdictions, regardless of population size and the number of reported cases.
   c) As a reminder, the reasons a low positivity rate in testing is a good sign is, first, it suggests that the spread of COVID-19 in our county is relatively low, and second, it is not because we are not testing a lot, it is because it shows we are testing enough of our population to make informed decisions about reopening.
   d) For that, credit goes to Harford County providers who have been ordering these tests, especially to Upper Chesapeake Health that is running the Drive-Thru COVID-19 testing site at the Forest Hill VEIP which has conducted over 3,000 COVID-19 tests since opening in March.
6. Despite the good positivity rate, one of the areas that we could probably improve on is the percent of our county's entire population that have been tested for COVID-19. Statewide, Maryland has tested 5.2% of its population, while Harford County has tested 3.9% of its population.

C. From Harford County, the numbers show:
1. We continue to have a low number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population and a low number of COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 population for the 11 largest Maryland jurisdictions that have had at least 800 COVID-19 cases.
2. Right now, Harford County has a COVID-19 mortality rate of about 19 per 100,000 population and that is compared with the Maryland State average of 41 deaths per 100,000 population.

D. In summary, those of us in public health are carefully watching these COVID-19 numbers, as the State enters its 3rd week of the reopening plan. We should stay focused on answering some basic questions to be sure that we are on the right track:
1. Is the rate of COVID-19 cases and deaths decreasing? Right now, the numbers are trending slowly down in the right direction.
2. Is COVID-19 testing widespread enough to identify new cases? Right now, the answer to that in Harford County is yes, our positivity rate is good, showing that

our testing is widely available and that the spread of COVID-19 in the general population is relatively low.

3. Do hospitals have capacity to treat a surge of COVID-19 hospitalizations? The answer to that is yes. Statewide data is showing that hospitalizations and ICU bed usage is trending downward and hospital bed utilization is only at 45-50% capacity. The latest data shows that Upper Chesapeake Health's hospital bed reserve capacity is also good.

4. Finally, are we finding and isolating most new cases before COVID-19 spreads? For this last point, it is important to review what is happening at the State level as it relates to contact tracing.

E. Contact tracing is the process of identifying people who may have come into contact with an individual with an infectious disease, in this case COVID-19.

1. The contact tracer reaches out by phone to someone who has tested positive for the virus to determine their whereabouts and to identify their close contacts for the 2-week period of time when they may have been infectious.

2. In this way, contact tracers help to contain the spread of the infection so that those who were exposed do not have the opportunity to possibly unknowingly spread the virus to others.

3. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were about 250 individuals doing contact tracing in Maryland, including about 10 staff in the Harford County Health Department's public health outbreak investigation unit.

4. Understanding the importance of contact tracing, the State of Maryland contracted with a nationally recognized organization called the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), which immediately expanded the State's number of contact tracers from 250 to 1,400.

5. This statewide project is called COVID Link and there is a tab on the state's website at coronavirus.maryland.gov that describes the project in greater detail.

6. Starting later this week, Marylanders who have tested positive for COVID-19, as well as their contacts, will be getting phone calls with a caller ID that says "MD COVID". These contact tracers will follow up with individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19.

7. The contact tracers will provide education and information, but will also get a detailed history of that person's contact over the past 2 weeks.

8. Then the contact tracers will call those individuals who may have had close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual and inform them that they may have been exposed. Sometimes they are first ones to inform a person that they have tested positive – and then they have to inform them to self-isolate for 10 days. Sometimes they are the first ones to inform a person that they may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 – and then they have to inform them they have to quarantine for 14 days.

9. Contact tracers have a challenging job. A contact tracer may have to tell a person that they have been exposed to COVID-19, but are unable to say which COVID-19 individual was responsible for the exposure because of federal HIPAA confidentiality laws.

10. It is critical that these discussions take place, because this is the best way to contain the spread of an extremely contagious virus.

11. In summary this enhanced contact tracing project, called COVID LINK, will begin later this week and probably will be one of the most important strategies for

preventing a possible resurgence of COVID-19, the "second wave" that is being discussed.

**III.  Health Officer's Plans**
   A.  Dr. Moy shared that on a personal note he will be retiring from his position as the Harford County Health Officer this fall after 31 years of service in the State of Maryland system, the last 9 years with the Harford County Health Department.
   B.  He extended his sincere thanks to Council President Vincenti and all of the Board of Health members, County Executive Glassman and the entire County Government team, community partners, as well as the community at large.  Special thanks goes to all of the Harford County Health Department staff, including senior staff and Marcy Austin, Deputy Health Officer.
   C.  Dr. Moy stated that he believes the health department has managed a number of challenging public health issues over the years, including the opioid epidemic, tobacco and vaping crises, and the Coronavirus pandemic in a calm, rational, data-driven, and compassionate manner.  He believes that the health department is on stable ground and ready to see the County through to the future.  Dr. Moy will be ready to provide assistance for assuring as smooth a transition as possible over the coming months.

APPROVED _____   6/9/20
                    President                                              Date