

FROM THE BOARDS OF HEALTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY, THE CITY OF PITTSFIELD, THE CITY OF NORTH ADAMS AND BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS

The Coronavirus 2019 Disease ("COVID-19") presents our community with a public health emergency of unprecedented severity. This virus is easily transmitted, especially in group settings. In other parts of the world it has already demonstrated the ability to infect large segments of a population and overwhelm the capacity of health care systems to care for ill patients. It has resulted in the deaths of thousands of individuals. It now threatens the health of our community, particularly those most vulnerable to the virus and our health care workers.

The most effective tool we have available to combat the spread of this disease is to rigorously follow a straight forward strategy. That strategy is to STAY HOME. Experience in other parts of the world has already demonstrated that effective "social distancing" is an effective way to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Since the first cases of COVID-19 were recognized in Berkshire two weeks ago, we have witnessed an alarming increase in patients requiring hospital care by our health care system. If as a community we fail to implement an effective STAY HOME strategy, the increasing number of ill patients will overwhelm our ability to provide the care necessary for many of them to survive this infection.

Given the presence of the COVID-19 virus in the Berkshires, even with effective social distancing, the number of cases of COVID-19 in Berkshire County will continue to rise for some weeks as we STAY HOME. Among the steps to protect the health of the public and prevent the further spread of COVID-19, as cases of COVID-19 are diagnosed, public health nurses and other health care professionals will be determining the need for some of us to be placed under "Quarantine" and in some circumstances "Isolation."

Again, full participation by the citizens of Berkshire County is vital to our success in combating COVID-19. Ultimately, it will not be the acute care resources of the health system but our ability to prevent the spread of this disease that will turn the tide in this battle. We all have the responsibility to do what we can to reduce the risk to ourselves, to our families and to our communities. We will only be successful if all of us, not just some of us, adhere to the requirements for social distancing as well as Quarantine and Isolation when indicated.

If we all do our part, together we will save lives and beat this virus.

Mayor Linda Tyer, City of Pittsfield

Mayor Tom Bernard, City of North Adams

James Lederer, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Berkshire Health Systems

Laura Kittross, Director, Berkshire County Boards of Health Association, on behalf of the 32 Boards of Health in Berkshire County