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Dr. Charles Stringham

Board Members,

Ken Tipton, County Commission Chair

Marlene Brissenden, County Commissioner

Jim French, County Commissioner

Ron Cerri, County Commissioner

Mike Bell, County Commissioner

Mike Allen, Humboldt County Sheriff

# Humboldt County Health Board

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## COUNTY CONTINUES TO STRESS PREVENTATIVE MEASURES IN WAKE OF STATE'S NEW PLAN

WINNEMUCCA, Nev—Monday, August 6, Governor Steve Sisolak announced plans to exchange Nevada's phased approach to COVID-19 control for a more flexible and responsive long-term reopening strategy.

Governor Sisolak's new plan, "Road to Recovery: Moving to a New Normal," trades broad guidelines for narrower reopening criteria, evaluating individual business data rather than entire industries, and honing in on municipalities and even individual zip codes instead of entire counties.

So what do the changes mean for Humboldt County? Manager Dave Mendiola said the state's new assessment is good in its intent, but challenging in practice as the municipality attempts to show state leaders it is doing everything it can to mitigate the virus.

Under the new plan, each county is evaluated for Elevated Disease Transmission based on three criteria: 1. Number of tests per day per 100,000 residents, 2. Number of positive cases per 100,000 residents in a rolling 30-day period, and 3. Two-week test positivity rate. A county is considered to have Elevated Disease Transmission if the county meets at least two of the following conditions:

- The 14-day average number of tests performed per day per 100,000 residents is less than 150.
- The number of positive cases per 100,000 residents in a rolling 30-day period is greater than 200.
- The number of positive cases per 100,000 residents in a 14-day period is greater than 50 AND the 14-day average daily test positivity rate is greater than 7%.

The state also assesses hospital capacity, access to personal protective equipment, testing capacity, case investigation and contact tracing, protection of vulnerable populations and enforcement when evaluating risk.

Counties that were determined to be at "high risk" were initially flagged on August 6 and asked to create an action plan that targets sources of infection and community spread.

If counties were found to meet two or more of the criteria again on Thursday, August 13—which Humboldt initially did in all three areas—they had to enact the approved plans to help reduce the spread of the virus in their communities.

Thursday, August 20, the COVID-19 Mitigation and Management Task Force reviewed Humboldt County's progress, agreeing to continue to receive updates from local leaders regarding enforcement, public communication and outreach, and ongoing collaboration plans for mitigation efforts.

Thursday, August 27, the state removed Humboldt from the list, stating it no longer meets two of the three criteria; the Task Force said it will continue to receive ongoing updates from local officials to ensure county data trends are sustained.

Mendiola said it will be difficult if not impossible for Humboldt to meet the state's testing threshold: the county would have to test at least 27 people every day—which is about double of local testing averages.

Humboldt also surpassed the allowable case rate and test positivity rate in recent weeks after the state began combining positive numbers from the Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribe with those of Humboldt County—even though each is a separate governmental entity.

Fort McDermitt has confirmed 84 cases since the second week in July; Humboldt County has added 19 cases in the same time period.

Still, Task Force members were pleased that Humboldt County has been successful in engaging the Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribal Health Officer in keeping case numbers updated.

Mendiola said Humboldt may be flagged again in the future as it tries to mitigate and manage the virus.

But the manager said the Humboldt County Health Board, led by Humboldt County Health Officer Charles Stringham, MD, continues to exercise faith in the preventative measures that have helped fight the virus's spread from the beginning: wearing a mask, maintaining an appropriate social distance and washing hands.

"We know these important measures are the real strategy behind overcoming this virus," he said, "and we invite our communities throughout Humboldt County to remain vigilant against the spread of COVID-19."

The COVID-19 Mitigation and Management Task Force will meet next on Thursday, September 3, to continue to assess the status of Nevada's counties, including Humboldt, and what actions, if any, should be taken.

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