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**Community Perspectives on Coronavirus Preparedness and Response**

Good afternoon Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and members of the subcommittee. On behalf of New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and New Jersey Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli, thank you for inviting the New Jersey Department of Health to participate in today's hearing.

I am here before you as the Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories, and Emergency Preparedness. I am responsible for public health emergency management, emergency medical services, and the Public Health and Environmental Laboratories. My goal today is to share with you New Jersey's experience preparing for and responding to the novel coronavirus public health crisis. More so, I will share with you experience working with our federal partners at the US Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I am hopeful that by sharing with you how New Jersey has responded to the novel coronavirus public health crisis, that you will be able to strengthen and enhance the coordination between critical federal agencies and all states, including New Jersey.

Throughout January, the Department of Health actively monitored the public health situation arising from Wuhan City, China. Our public health experts and epidemiologists readily identified a concerning novel pathogen that undoubtedly had the potential to escalate into a global pandemic. Under the leadership of Commissioner Persichilli, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, I established an internal Crisis Management Team, using National Incident Management System principles, to coordinate preparedness and response activities from across the department. Shortly thereafter, on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 102, creating a statewide Coronavirus Task Force, led by the Commissioner of Health. Since their creation, the Crisis Management Team and the Coronavirus Task Force have provided the State of New Jersey with an incident command

structure that has allowed all departments to effectively organize, prioritize, and coordinate their preparedness and response activities. Simply stated, New Jersey continues to successfully manage this public health crisis because of our strategic organizational structure, subject matter expertise, and our collective institutional knowledge.

While I certainly could continue describing all the great work New Jersey is actively doing, I must draw your attention to the most important aspects of any nationwide public health response – coordination and communication.

On a Sunday, February 2, during the afternoon of Super Bowl Sunday – the New Jersey Department of Health was notified that Newark Liberty International Airport would be officially designated as the eleventh funneling airport in the United States, with the first flight arriving within 24-hours, with more than 350 travelers onboard from China. Within moments of receiving this news, our Crisis Management Team began working feverishly to secure housing, transportation, and wrap-around services for these individuals potentially facing quarantine upon their arrival. Because we had established a Crisis Management Team that was well organized, highly disciplined, and remarkably proactive, we were able to effectively coordinate a measured response in a moment's notice. More importantly, as New Jersey began facing its first cases of novel coronavirus just last week, the Crisis Management Team and Coronavirus Task Force continue to effectively coordinate all aspects of the state's response and ensure that our communications remain organized, timely, and in the public's best interest.

Throughout the past eight weeks, my team has been in lockstep with our friends and colleagues at the US Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC – both at headquarters and within Region 2. The daily interactions, and near real-time communications during fast-moving situations, has allowed the State of New Jersey to effectively communication and coordinate our activities between all our stakeholders. As novel coronavirus continues to affect New Jersey, the strong relationships we have with our federal counterparts ensures that we can communicate candidly and resolve issues immediately as they arise; in a dynamic public health crisis such as this, maintaining tight coordination through streamlined, clear communications greatly increases the effectiveness of our collective response.

But despite our great partnership with our federal colleagues, the State of New Jersey expends more than \$1.8 million dollars per month responding to novel coronavirus. While our CDC award of \$1.75 million dollars is greatly appreciated, it certainly will not cover the continued expenses incurred by the state or the healthcare and public health infrastructure serving on the front lines – specifically local health departments, acute-care facilities, and EMS agencies. Recognizing that medical supplies are facing a historic shortage, and the healthcare supply chain is nearly frozen for respirators, disinfectants, and other personal protective equipment – we urge you to consider additional federal funding to New Jersey and the distribution of items from the Strategic National Stockpile.

New Jersey remains committed to fighting novel coronavirus and protecting the public health and safety of all people living in, and traveling through, New Jersey. As the country continues to respond to this public health crisis, we ask that you to remain attentive to the evolving needs of each state, specifically New Jersey, and mobilize the information, resources, and funding needed to protect the nation’s public health and safety.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify and I welcome your questions.