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South Carolina

OFFICE OF
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Mayor Tecklenburg's Coronavirus Press Conference Remarks, March 24

Charleston, S.C.--Today, at a 2:30 p.m. press conference, Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg gave the following remarks regarding the city's continued efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19:

Good afternoon.

For the past several weeks, governments and residents across our state have been working to slow the onset of the coronavirus pandemic here in South Carolina.

Schools and city public buildings have been closed. Bars and restaurants have stopped serving onsite. Large gatherings have been banned, and citizens have been urged to stay home, stay distanced and stay smart.

But with yesterday's announcement that the Covid-19 pandemic has officially reached the acceleration phase in our our state, we must now take even more dramatic action, while there's still time to save thousands of lives right here in Charleston by flattening the curve.

That's why, in light of the large gatherings we've seen in public spaces both here and around the country, I've today ordered the temporary closure of all city parks and playgrounds.

And it's why I will tonight introduce a citywide stay at home ordinance for emergency action by our City Council.

Put simply, this ordinance would require the closure of non-essential businesses here in the city of Charleston, and direct our citizens to stay at home, except for necessary trips to the grocery store, the pharmacy, or for other essential services and activities. This action would last for a period of 14 days, and would be taken under the city's broad emergency authority to protect public health and safety during times of emergency.

But before we take that step, I believe we owe our citizens and business owners a clear explanation of the facts that make this emergency action necessary.

First, there's the fact that our state public health agency, DHEC, has now officially told us that the coronavirus pandemic is in the acceleration phase in our state. This means that there is significant community spread, and that we've entered the period of maximum danger for our citizens, with infection rates and deaths due to this disease set to rise exponentially.

Second, there's the simple fact of population density. Three of the four largest cities in our state sit side by side here in the Lowcountry, with a total population in the hundreds of thousands. We cannot and must not allow this deadly, highly contagious disease to spread uncontrolled among our residents.

And, finally, there are the numbers with regard to the disease itself. Modeling at both Columbia University and here locally shows that Charleston is facing thousands of deaths -- most of them unnecessary -- if we don't stop the spread of this virus and prevent our local hospital system from being overwhelmed right now. This moment -- with the pandemic still in the earliest part of the acceleration phase -- is our last, best chance to keep that tragedy from happening here in our city.

Fellow Charlestonians, yes, the days ahead may be long. They may call for a level of service to others that's uncommon in our age.

But if a lifetime in Charleston has taught me anything, it is this: There is no challenge that we cannot face together. There is no trial that can break our faith. There is no pathogen that can lessen our love for our families, our friends, or our fellow Charlestonians.

We can and will bend the curve on this disease in our community. And we will do it the way we do everything here in Charleston: We'll do it together.

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