Coronavirus Information

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Dear neighbor,

As you have likely heard, New York State now has two confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. The first case was confirmed in New York City over the weekend. The individual had recently returned from travel to Iran where she contracted the virus, and is now being isolated and cared for in her home in Manhattan. Although she is not in serious condition, close contacts of the individual who may have been exposed have also been identified, contacted and are being monitored to prevent the spread of the virus. The second case, confirmed as of this morning, was found in a man in Westchester who works in Manhattan. He had not traveled to any outbreak-affected countries. This individual has an underlying respiratory illness and is in serious condition; He remains hospitalized. Health officials are testing his relatives and seeking others who have had close contact with him.

It's important to know that around 80% who contract the coronavirus will experience mild symptoms, such as a fever, cough, and additional respiratory problems similar to a cold or flu. Around 20% will experience more serious symptoms, including elderly individuals and those with underlying conditions.

Despite this development, New York City's Health Commissioner, Dr. Oxiris Barbot has stated, "New Yorkers remain at low risk for contracting COVID-19." However, New York City and State are still taking proactive measures to prepare for a potential outbreak and are ready to mobilize quickly.

Over the weekend, the State received federal authority to administer its own testing for the virus, which will be conducted in Albany. This will allow officials to test for the virus much more quickly. The State has also implemented new, more rigorous, cleaning protocols on public transportation and at schools. Additionally, the legislature has allocated $40 million in emergency appropriations to help NYS tackle coronavirus. Cost-sharing fees for emergency room, urgent care and office visits related to COVID-19 testing have been waived at the directive of the Governor, and New Yorkers with Medicaid will not have to pay a co-pay for any testing related to coronavirus.

Here are some tips from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for preventing coronavirus:

- Wash hands often with warm water and soap and avoid touching our faces.
- Always remember to cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue to prevent the spread of germs.
- If you start to feel unwell, contact your doctor.

Click here for the New York City Department of Health's website with more information on the virus, the symptoms to be aware of, and prevention. It is also updated daily with any confirmed cases or pending tests.

A couple other notes I wanted to share:

To prevent the spread of misinformation, it's vital to know the facts. In times like this, misinformation often spreads quickly. Only get information from sources you trust, such as government websites or credible news sites.

There is never any reason for xenophobia or prejudice. We have seen a disturbing rise in anti-Asian bigotry following the spread of this virus, and that's never acceptable. Furthermore, there is no reason to avoid Chinese-American neighborhoods, businesses or restaurants. I continue to support these businesses, and I urge you to do so as well. In times like these, it's more important than ever that we support and respect one another.

If you have any questions, you can always call my office at **718-238-6044** and we will try to connect you with the answers or services you're looking for.

Sincerely,

Andrew