

**Amended Declaration of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
as a Communicable Disease of Public Health Threat Constituting a
Public Health Emergency for Virginia**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is actively responding to the spread of COVID-19, a respiratory infection caused by a novel virus that was first discovered in December 2019 in China and quickly spread around the world; and

WHEREAS, the State Health Commissioner first declared COVID-19 (then-termed “2019 Novel Coronavirus”) a Communicable Disease of Public Health Threat for Virginia on February 7, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 primarily spreads from person-to-person via respiratory droplets and can be spread from an infected person who does not have symptoms to another person; and

WHEREAS, outbreaks of novel viruses that can easily spread among people are always of public health concern; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 cases, outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths continue to be reported to the Virginia Department of Health; and

WHEREAS, despite the availability of multiple vaccines, vaccination coverage varies by locality and it is anticipated that there will be continuing spread of COVID-19, primarily among unvaccinated persons; and

WHEREAS, variants of concern have been identified in Virginia and information about the characteristics of these variants is rapidly emerging, but could include increased transmissibility, increased disease severity, significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failure; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to § 32.1-13 of the Code of Virginia, the State Board of Health is authorized to make separate orders and regulations, not provided for by general regulations, for the purpose of suppressing nuisances dangerous to the public health and communicable, contagious, and infectious diseases and other dangers to public life and health; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to § 32.1-20 of the Code of Virginia, the State Health Commissioner is vested with all of the authority of the Board of Health when it is not in session; and

WHEREAS, isolation and quarantine can be necessary effective public health measures to control the spread of COVID-19;

NOW THEREFORE, I hereby declare that COVID-19 is still considered a Communicable Disease of Public Health Threat. Therefore, the provisions of § 32.1-48.05 *et seq.*, of the *Code of Virginia* may be invoked for public health investigations of persons known to have been, or suspected of having been, exposed to COVID-19, or known to be, or suspected of being, infected with COVID-19, such that I may issue orders of isolation and/or quarantine as necessary and appropriate to control this infection in Virginia.

I also hereby declare that a public health emergency resulting from COVID-19 continues to exist in the Commonwealth, affecting the health and safety of Virginians, and exerting economic and financial hardships on Virginians. The Commonwealth should: 1) take all available and necessary steps to provide financial and any other available benefit assistance to the residents of Virginia; and 2) enter into or continue participation in any agreements, contracts, or programs whose primary purpose is to make benefits, as well as any other assistance, available to more fully address the deleterious economic and health-related impacts COVID-19 is having on the residents of Virginia.

This Declaration shall be effective July 28, 2021, and shall remain in full force and effect until amended or rescinded.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Office of the State Health Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Virginia this July 28, 2021.



M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA
State Health Commissioner

7/28/21
Date