FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, July 17, 2020
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*** PRESS RELEASE ***
SAN FRANCISCO ANNOUNCES NEXT STEPS ON CONTROLLING SPREAD OF COVID-19 AND CONTINUED PAUSE ON REOPENING

City will focus on changing behavior, serving communities most impacted by virus, and increasing testing capacity

New Public Health Order to be issued Monday will require private healthcare providers to expand testing to ensure access to testing for symptomatic people, close contacts of known cases, and frontline workers

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed and Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health, today announced next steps for flattening the curve in San Francisco as cases and hospitalizations have continued to rise. The City’s schedule for reopening will remain on pause indefinitely in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in San Francisco and protect community health. The decision by the San Francisco Department of Public Health to pause reopening comes as San Francisco has been placed on the State of California’s county monitoring list, or “watch list.”

The City will follow the State’s restrictions for counties on the watch list, while continuing its work to slow the spread of the virus. Key strategies include increasing public outreach to change San Franciscans’ behavior, focusing on communities most impacted by the virus, and expanding access to testing. The Department of Public Health will be issuing a new Health Order requiring private healthcare providers to expand testing, including to require that symptomatic people those with close contacts of confirmed cases access to same day testing. The Department of Public Health has expanded testing recently in the Bayview, Tenderloin, Mission and other impacted communities in the last week, and will continue that work to provide more testing access in areas of need.

“We are living with COVID, and we all need to do our part to take basic steps to get this virus under control immediately,” said Mayor London Breed. “If we want our schools to reopen, if we want to our small businesses to be able to operate, we all need to do the basics: limit our gatherings, cover your face in public, and wash your hands. We also know that we need to see more testing if we are going to identify cases quickly. This requires the entire healthcare system to expand access so when people need a test, they can get one. San Francisco has flattened the curve before, and we can do it again.”

“In the past weeks, San Francisco has been experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations that have forced us to pause our reopening plans, increase our testing and contact tracing and care for many more COVID positive patients,” said Dr. Colfax. “We need to focus
on these key strategies so San Francisco residents, businesses, the health care system and the City are all working together toward one single purpose. Together, we have the opportunity to flatten the curve once again, if we act now.”

**Next Steps for Flattening the Curve in San Francisco**

**Pausing Reopening**
San Francisco is experiencing a surge of cases and hospitalizations, and reopening cannot continue until the spread of the virus has slowed once again. The pause in reopening businesses and activities will continue until San Francisco Key Public Health Indicators improve, and none of them are in red, or “high-alert.” In addition to the health indicators, other data will inform the decision on how to proceed, including the Reproductive Rate of the virus, the State’s actions, and the impact of the virus in the Bay Area region.

**Following the State’s Requirements**
As of today, San Francisco is on the State’s watch list due to rising hospitalizations. This means that San Francisco must abide by the State’s restrictions, which includes closing indoor malls and non-essential offices, and continue the paused reopening, at least until the State lifts its restrictions. Indoor malls and non-essential offices must close, except for minimum basic operations, effective Monday, July 20. If the State adds more restrictions for counties on the watch list, San Francisco will abide by those restrictions as well. If local conditions do not improve, San Francisco maintains the ability to close additional businesses and activities that go beyond the State’s requirements.

**Changing Behaviors – Face Coverings and Reduced Gatherings**
In order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the short-term and adapt to living with the virus until there is a vaccine, San Franciscans need to redouble their efforts to consistently wear face coverings and limit gatherings with people not in their household. Research shows that if the vast majority of people wear masks that cover their nose and mouth, San Franciscans can effectively slow the spread of the virus and save lives. Many of the new cases of COVID-19 that are part of the current surge are the result of social gatherings among family members and friends, so it is important that San Franciscans limit such gatherings as much as possible. In addition to these behavioral changes, everyone must continue practicing social distancing, hand washing, and staying home as much as possible.

**Focus on Equity and Impacted Communities**
San Francisco has focused on equity and addressing the disparate impacts of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. As part of the City’s five-point plan, San Francisco will continue to focus on the communities most impacted by the virus, especially members of the Latino community, people who must leave home to work, Black and African American residents, and the eastern and southeastern neighborhoods. This focus includes expanding access to COVID-19 testing and conducting targeted community outreach in impacted communities. For example, this week, San Francisco opened a new testing site at the Potrero Hill Health Center, adding to a recent expansion of testing options in the Tenderloin, Mission, Sunnydale and Bayview.
Expanding Access to Testing
The City continues to meet its testing goals, however in the current surge it has taken longer for people to access testing appointments and receive their results. In an effort to address this challenge, the City will issue a Health Order on Monday requiring private health care providers to increase their testing services by providing same-day testing for patients with symptoms and close contacts of confirmed COVID cases. Additionally, private hospitals and clinics must provide testing to asymptomatic workers in jobs where they have more risk of exposure, such as health care, first responders, and jobs with frequent public interactions at less than six-feet apart. Staff and residents of congregate settings also must be provided testing if requested.

The goal of this Health Order is to more fairly distribute testing across city providers and ease the demand on City-run sites so that residents who are uninsured or are members of impacted communities are able to get tested in a timely manner.

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