Republic of Palau

Ministry of Health

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH

DIRECTIVE NO. 60-20

CERTIFICATION OF UNAVOIDABLE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a severe acute respiratory illness that was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and that occurs through human-to-human respiratory transmission and presents symptoms that are similar with influenza; and

WHEREAS, as of March 17, 2020, there are over 180,000 confirmed cases globally, including confirmed cases in the neighboring U.S. territory of Guam, over 78,000 recovered, and over 7,000 related deaths worldwide of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 as a highly communicable disease which presents a major threat to public health in the Republic of Palau; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on February 11, 2020, and further characterized it as a Pandemic on March 12, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommend that all countries and territories implement aggressive measures to prevent and control the transmission of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, since January 23, 2020, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and its partners have been implementing ongoing preventive measures and activities in an attempt to minimize the risk of import and local transmission of COVID-19 in Palau, including health screening at the Palau International Airport and Malakal seaport; and

WHEREAS, extensive preparations are ongoing at Belau National Hospital (BNH) and the Alternative Care Site to receive, triage, and provide adequate medical care, quarantine, and isolation for potential and confirmed COVID-19 cases; and

WHEREAS, a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach is necessary and warranted in order to effectively prevent and contain the threat of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, such an approach can only be achieved through partnership and collaboration between the MOH and its local, national, regional, and international partners; and

WHEREAS, ongoing efforts to prevent and prepare for the entry of COVID-19 into Palau requires the full and urgent cooperation of all government agencies; and

WHEREAS, the MOH needs to implement necessary clinical and public health measures, including infection control, social distancing, and other relevant measures pursuant to the Palau Pandemic Flu Response Plan; and

WHEREAS, with the COVID-19 outbreak being characterized as a pandemic by WHO, pursuant to 34 PNC § 332(a)(3) the Minister of Health therefore certifies the situation as an unavoidable emergency in Palau; and

WHEREAS, the certification of COVID-19 as an unavoidable emergency pursuant to 34 PNC § 332(a)(3) permits ready access to the Hospital Trust Fund for continuing prevention and preparation efforts; and

WHEREAS, this funding will support continuing efforts to prevent importation and containment of COVID-19 in the Republic, and to prepare for any such entry that may occur in the future;

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as the Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau, pursuant to its laws and Constitution, and after consultation with the National Emergency Committee (NEC), I hereby declare that an unavoidable public health emergency exists in the Republic of Palau. In order to respond to this emergency, the following rules and activities shall be in effect until further notice:

Section 1. Belau National Hospital. Measures to be implemented at BNH include, but are not limited to, following:

- Activation of the BNH Emergency Operations Plan;
- Reduction of chronic disease clinics including hypertension, diabetes, heart, and asthma clinics at, and non-emergency surgeries at BNH;
- BNH in-patient visiting hours to be limited to one (1) hour per day;
- All admitted patients to only be allowed to be accompanied by one (1) caretaker at any given time;
- Recommend that those who are 55 years or older reschedule any non-essential appointments and visits and avoid visiting the BNH unless they are seeking urgent medical care;
- Recommend that individuals in high-risk populations, such as those with chronic diseases, reschedule any non-essential appointments and visits, and void the BNH unless they are seeking urgent medical care;
- Individuals who are 55 years or older and those in high-risk populations receive priority attention with respect to COVID-19-related services;
- Restrict loitering at any and all MOH facilities;
- Encouraging MOH personnel to remain at home if they are sick;
- Restrict congregation at mortuary to one (1) hour maximum for viewing of deceased;
- Implement health screening at all BNH points of entry; and
- Suspend all MOH employee travel oversees.

Section 2. Public Health Measures to be implemented include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Activation of the MOH Public Health Emergency Operations Plan;
- Discourage mass gatherings of fifty (50) people or more (e.g., parties, meetings, social gatherings, cultural and sporting events, and other type of assemblies);
- Encouraging the general public to exercise self-care and self-quarantine if they are sick;
- Encourage social distancing of at least six (6) feet between individuals whenever possible;
- Impose mandatory fourteen (14) day self-quarantine for all travelers with a travel history from or through COVID-19 affected geographical areas;
- Encourage the general public to contact the BNH ER if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, and shortness of breath;
- Encourage employers, businesses, and conference organizers to engage in virtual meetings;
- Encourage employers to provide adequate paid sick leave for sick employees;

- Encourage all schools and child-care centers to dismiss sick children and students, and to promote preventive measures in all education and child-care settings;
- Encourage agencies responsible for elderly care to implement preventive measures to limit the risk of infection of the elderly;
- Expand and intensify risk communication efforts to all population groups, especially the at-risk populations, to promote proper hand-washing and respiratory etiquettes, and other relevant preventive measures;
- Encourage all in the community to observe all MOH alerts, advisories, information releases, and technical guidance; and
- Maintain MOH collaboration with NEC and other relevant community partners to execute and implement all necessary COVID-19 prevention and containment measures in the community.

Issued this 17th day of March 2020 at the Ministry of Health in Koror, Republic of Palau.

Emais Roberts, MD, FACS
Minister of Health