



Lenny Curry, Mayor

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Mayor Lenny Curry's Written Statement for the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis:

Good afternoon and thank you to Chairman Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, and all subcommittee members for affording me this opportunity to speak to you today. This is my fifth year serving as mayor of Jacksonville, the most populous city in Florida, 12th largest in the nation, and at 840 square miles, the biggest by landmass in the contiguous United States.

The citizens of Jacksonville are a kind, generous and resilient people, as we have demonstrated in the aftermath of numerous hurricanes and tropical storms in recent years. And as they continue to demonstrate throughout this pandemic. I am proud to serve as their mayor. Without the strong support from President Trump and his administration, the early preventative and protective measures taken by my office and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, and the responsible personal measures taken by Jacksonville citizens, the great improvements we've made over the past month would not have been possible.

When we saw this virus coming, the actions we took were focused on flattening the curve and protecting our health systems. It was never about imposing an indefinite lockdown. We were working to prevent the dire situations we saw with overwhelmed medical systems in countries like Italy, where doctors were forced to make impossible decisions about who gets an ICU bed and who doesn't, or who gets a ventilator and who will struggle without.

Now that we have flattened the curve in Jacksonville, we must figure out how to work, live and go back to our lives in a responsible way. This virus is with us and we must learn to live with it and move forward. While the medical community is working hard and there are some promising leads, the fact is we may not have a vaccine for quite some time. But we can't afford to quarantine indefinitely. Doing so puts too great a burden—financial and otherwise—on our neighbors and our families.

One area in which we've seen a major impact of the shutdown is in overdose incidents. Since we declared a state of emergency on March 13, our overdose 9-1-1 calls have outpaced the 2019 numbers every week. We've had 1,141 overdose emergency calls since then, compared to 815 over the same period last year.

But that's not the only area where we're seeing the impacts of the national shutdown. Many have lost income or even their jobs due to COVID-19. Many are struggling with stress, depression and other

mental health issues. Many more are anxious to know how they will keep their homes, pay their bills, and put food on their tables.

We've taken some major steps to try and help those affected in our city. We curated a list of available resources for citizens on our City website, with information about financial relief, mental health services and business resources. We set-up a small business loan and grant program with a local credit union to help keep employees on payroll. We started a mortgage, rent and utility relief program that will provide \$1,000 in direct assistance to 45,000 Jacksonville households thanks to federal CARES Act funding. These programs, along with the safe, smart, and incremental re-opening of our city and economy, have lessened the impact to important economic measures such as consumer spending, small business revenue, and hourly small business employees as compared to other regional metropolitan areas.

Personal responsibility plays a big role in how we move forward. In Jacksonville, we are encouraging citizens to wear masks in public settings where it may be difficult to maintain social distancing, such as grocery stores, gas stations and other locations. I wear a mask when I'm out in public. Doing so not only protects me, it protects my family and my fellow citizens.

Another big focus in our reopening strategy is testing. A recent Harvard study said that in order to safely reopen our communities, we need to test 152 per every 100,000 people each day. With an estimated population of 960,000 in Jacksonville, that would be just over 1,400 tests per day. Our daily testing capacity already exceeds that amount, but we're working to do even more. Currently, we have more than 30 COVID-19 testing locations listed on our City website. And we're using part of the \$159 million in CARES Act funding we received to stand up additional testing locations throughout Jacksonville for a six-month period. We're working hard to ensure that all citizens who wants to be tested, can.

This has been a months-long crisis and has had a significant impact on the City budget. Normally when the City issues an emergency declaration, such as with a hurricane or tropical storm, it lasts only a week or so. This one started on March 13 and is still going. Continued emergency reimbursements from FEMA would help us better manage the financial impacts to our city and continue the important services we provide our citizens. We would also appreciate the continued federal assistance with testing, contact tracing and other important measures in the days ahead.

Again, I appreciate this opportunity to share Jacksonville's story. With the continued support of our federal, state and local partners I am confident that we will reopen our nation in a safe and responsible way. Thank you.