

## **DECLARATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

**WHEREAS**, in December 2019 a novel coronavirus, now designated COVID-19, was detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Outcomes have ranged from mild to severe illness, and in some cases death; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization Director General declared the outbreak of COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), advising countries to prepare for the containment, detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of onward spread of the disease; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared that the COVID-19 outbreak should be characterized as pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, the identification of “community spread” cases of COVID-19 in the United States signals that transmission of the virus is no longer strictly limited to travel to China, or contact with travelers who have visited China; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, the mayor is designated as the emergency management director of the City of Laredo, and may exercise the powers granted to the governor on an appropriate local scale; and

**WHEREAS**, a declaration of local disaster and public health emergency includes the ability to reduce the possibility of exposure to disease, control the risk, promote health, compel persons to undergo additional health measures that prevent or control the spread of disease, including isolation, surveillance, quarantine, or placement of persons under public health observation, including the provision of temporary housing or emergency shelters for persons misplaced or evacuated, request assistance from the governor of state resources, and access funds available for disaster relief and reimbursement at the state and federal level; and

**WHEREAS**, by this Declaration of Public Health Emergency, I declare all rules and regulations that may inhibit or prevent prompt response to this threat suspended for the duration of the incident; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the authority granted to the Mayor under the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, I hereby authorize the use of all available resources of state government and political subdivisions to assist in the City’s response to the situation; and

**WHEREAS**, I, Pete Saenz, Mayor for the City of Laredo, together with the Laredo City Council have determined that extraordinary and immediate measures must be taken to respond quickly, prevent and alleviate the suffering of people exposed to and those infected with the virus, as well as those that could potentially be infected or impacted by COVID-19; and

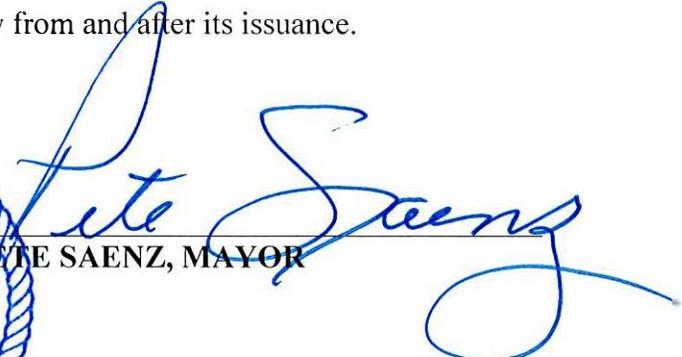
**WHEREAS**, the City of Laredo will continue to work collaboratively with Webb County as well as the local health authority to ensure that all appropriate measures are undertaken to limit the spread of COVID-19 within the City of Laredo and Webb County.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE CITY OF LAREDO THAT:**

- (1) That a local state of disaster and public health emergency is hereby declared for the City of Laredo pursuant to §418.108(a) of the Texas Government Code.
- (2) Pursuant to §418.108(b) of the Government Code, the state of disaster and public health emergency shall continue for a period of not more than seven days from the date of this declaration unless continued or renewed by the City Council.
- (3) Pursuant to §418.108(c) of the Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster and public health emergency shall be given prompt and general publicity and shall be filed promptly by the City Secretary.
- (4) Pursuant to §418.108(d) of the Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster and public health emergency activates the City of Laredo's emergency management plan.
- (5) Pursuant to §418.020(c) of the Government Code, this declaration authorizes the City to commandeer or use and private property, temporarily acquire, by lease or other means, sites required for temporary housing units or emergency shelters for evacuees, treating patients or for other related emergency activities subject to compensation requirements.
- (6) Pursuant to the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, the Mayor for the City of Laredo, in coordination and consultation with the Local Health Authority and Director of Health issue further guidance set out within the Declaration Regarding Public and Private Gatherings attached hereto as **Exhibit "A"**, and incorporated herein.
- (7) The Local Health Authority or Director of Health may update restrictions set out in **Exhibit "A"** as necessary to respond to the evolving circumstances of this outbreak without the issuance of a new Declaration.
- (8) As Mayor, I further reserve all other authority and powers conferred by state law to respond and exercise same as necessary to the situation which is the subject of this Declaration.

This Proclamation shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance.

**SIGNED 16<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MARCH, 2020.**

  
**PETE SAENZ, MAYOR**



## EXHIBIT "A"

### DECLARATION REGARDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GATHERINGS

1. The virus that causes COVID-19 is easily transmitted, especially in group settings, and it is essential that the spread of the virus be slowed to protect the ability of public and private health care providers to handle an influx of patients and safeguard public health and safety.
2. Because of the risk of the rapid spread of the virus, and the need to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, this Declaration recommends a protocol that prohibits all indoor public and private gatherings within and enclosed space of 50 persons or more anywhere in the City of Laredo beginning on the day of execution and continuing for as long as reasonably necessary unless extended consistent with requirements of state law.
3. For all other gatherings, it is strongly recommended that social distancing protocols established by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and found within the "Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission" issued by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") on or around March 12, 2020 (available online at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf), as well as "Interim Guidance: Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)" issued on or around March 15, 2020 (available online at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Mass-Gatherings-Documents-FINAL.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Mass-Gatherings-Documents-FINAL.pdf)) including canceling, rescheduling, or not attending events with more than 50 persons.
4. Further, organizations that serve high-risk populations (defined below) should follow CDC guidance for social distancing.
5. Definitions and further guidance:
  - a. For purposes of this Declaration, a "Mass Gathering" is any event or convening, subject to the exceptions and clarifications below, that brings together or is likely to bring together fifty (50) or more persons at the same time in a single room or other single confined or enclosed space, such as, by way of example and without limitation, an auditorium, theatre, stadium (indoor or outdoor), arena or event center, meeting hall, conference center, large cafeteria, or any other confined indoor or confined outdoor space.
  - b. A "Mass Gathering" includes events in confined outdoor spaces, which means an outdoor space that (i) is enclosed by a fence, physical barrier, or other structure and (ii) where people are present and they are within arm's length of one another for extended periods.

- c. This Declaration also does not prohibit gatherings of people in multiple, separate enclosed spaces in a single building such as a multiplex movie theater, so long as 50 people are not present in any single space at the same time. This Declaration also does not prohibit use of enclosed spaces where 50 or more people may be present at different times during the day, so long as 50 or more people are not present in the space at the same time. For any gathering covered by this subsection c., compliance with Social Distancing Recommendations, including providing hand sanitizer and tissues and increasing cleaning of commonly touched surfaces is strongly encouraged.
  - d. For purposes of clarity, a “Mass Gathering” does not include the following: (i) City of Laredo International Airport; (ii) public or private schools and places of worship; (iii) museums (so long as visitors are generally not within arm’s length of one another for extended periods); (iv) spaces where 50 or more persons may be in transit or waiting for transit such as bus stops; (v) office space, hotels, or residential buildings; (vi) grocery stores, shopping malls, outdoor markets, or other retail establishments where large numbers of people are present but it is unusual for them to be within arm’s length of one another for extended periods; (vii) hospitals, medical facilities and shelters; and (viii) jails and detention centers. In all such settings, it is recommended that the public follow Social Distancing Recommendations, and harm reduction measures such as hand sanitizer and tissues should be provided when possible. However, any specific large gathering space that is part of any building included in this subparagraph d. is subject to the prohibition on Mass Gatherings if the space holds 50 or more people.
  - e. “High-Risk Populations” include people who are:
    - i. 60 years old and older;
    - ii. People with certain health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease and weakened immune systems;
    - iii. People who are pregnant or were pregnant in the last two weeks;
    - iv. People experiencing homelessness.
6. The Health Director may update restrictions set out in this Exhibit as necessary to respond to the evolving circumstances of this outbreak during the duration of the Mayor’s Declaration of Public Health Emergency and any extension by the City of Laredo City Council.