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## **Commonwealth of Kentucky launches groundbreaking initiative to test its healthcare workers for immunity and establish nation's top plasma donor pool**

Louisville, Ky., April 15, 2020 ---The Commonwealth of Kentucky, in collaboration with the University of Louisville Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute and the Louisville Healthcare CEO Council, is launching a groundbreaking initiative with three large Kentucky hospital systems; Baptist Health, Norton Healthcare and University of Louisville Health. The purpose is to help its healthcare workers understand whether they were unknowingly exposed to COVID-19, to determine how much immunity was generated by such exposure, and to identify those with the best immune responses as donors of high quality plasma for rescue treatment of patients with advanced COVID-19. In addition, these data will be informative as scientists worldwide are working to determine whether quantitative antibody measurements can be used to predict immunity in the overall workforce. This program represents a unique alliance between government and otherwise competing private groups in order to address an unprecedented crisis.

Testing will begin with high-risk personnel in Kentucky, starting with the healthcare workforce. As the process is scaled up it will be made available to other essential workers. There will be three steps of testing. First, a point-of-care test will provide a yes or no answer on the presence of antibodies. In a second step, positive blood will then be assayed for the amount of antibodies present in the blood. Finally, in patients with high amounts, the neutralizing power of the antibodies will be evaluated. The University of Louisville Center for Predictive Medicine for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases (CPM), has established a high-throughput real-time assay for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies that will be utilized and CPM will use their renowned Bio Safety Level 3 facility to test for the neutralizing activity of the antibodies. "The University of Louisville is committed to addressing all forms of health" said Dr. Neeli Bendapudi, President of the University of Louisville. "We are uniquely positioned to play a key role in this effort because of our talented researchers at CPM and our UofL Regional Biocontainment Laboratory which allows us to establish the very best donors of plasma for patients".

This unprecedented collaboration of the public and private sector has already secured private donations of \$1.75m in the form of a challenge grant to build community-wide coalition of philanthropic support, which will allow the program to scale more quickly and save more lives. Click [here](#) for more details on how you can help. “America and Louisville need more and advanced COVID-19 testing now,” said Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, “I am excited about this ambitious project and its potential to provide useful data for the recovery of our community. University of Louisville’s team of cutting-edge scientists represents the best of who we are as Louisvillians, compassionate, smart and entrepreneurial.”

“This is exactly the kind of collaboration that Kentucky is poised to enable,” said Dr. Cedric Francois, CEO of Apellis Pharmaceuticals and LHCC board member. “We have the infrastructure in our commonwealth to quickly bring this revolutionary technology together by leveraging the great work already being done with the healthcare stakeholders, such as Norton Healthcare’s convalescent plasma program and the extensive work that had already been done to start their antibody serology testing, to improve Kentucky’s response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic and be a model for the rest of the nation”.

“This model for testing is exciting and it is our hope that antibody measurements can be used to predict immunity,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “If so, it will be a critical tool in the reopening of Kentucky’s economy.”

### **Louisville Healthcare CEO Council**

The Louisville Healthcare CEO Council (LHCC) was formed in 2017 to leverage the strengths and assets of its members to solve important problems that extend beyond the scope of any one single member company. LHCC board members include CEOs from Kindred, Humana, Trilogy Health Services, Passport Health Plan, Norton Healthcare, Hosparus Health, Anthem, Apellis Pharmaceuticals, Signature Healthcare, Galen College of Nursing, Baptist Healthcare System, and BrightSpring Health Services. These companies are the titans in the industry, collectively representing over 400,000 employees and \$100 billion in revenue.

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