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## **PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Earlier this month, the federal and state governments declared states of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hunt County, along with other surrounding counties, followed by issuing shelter-in-place orders earlier this week. Based on available information and in light of input from Hunt Memorial Hospital District officials, Hunt County officials believe that this order will allow the County and its citizens to do their part in slowing the spread of the virus and preventing a strain on our hospital capacity, first responders and medical supplies.

The reasons for the County's shelter-in-place order have become even more important since it was enacted on Monday. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has predicted an uptick in cases in the weeks to come. Our health care professionals and first responders are already facing a shortage of necessary equipment and testing. This problem has become so acute state-wide that the Governor issued Executive Order GA-09 on Sunday, which resulted in the Texas Medical Board taking the extraordinary and unprecedented step of issuing Emergency Rules Tuesday prohibiting non-urgent elective surgeries or procedures. This action was taken to help hospitals reduce "depletion of hospital capacity or personal protective equipment needed to cope with the COVID-19 disaster."

Another consideration is the inevitable spread of COVID-19 in the North Texas region within a one-hour drive from Hunt County. Yesterday, Dallas County reported 78 new cases, and at least 56 new cases just today – nearly doubling their total number of confirmed cases in just two days. Medical professionals with knowledge of the virus state that many infected and contagious people do not show symptoms and are not aware they have the virus. Hunt County is in a precarious situation because of: (1) its close proximity to millions of people in or near virus hot zones; (2) the numerous highways that cross the county which bring daily traffic from those places; (3) the fact that 6 counties touching our county borders now have positive cases; (4) our small population compared to other areas, which causes the County to be a lower priority when dispensing medical supplies; (5) the many Hunt County residents have essential jobs in hot zones; and (6) the residents who live in hot zones who have essential jobs in Hunt County.

Hunt County officials are focused on providing every resource possible to minimizing exposure and to provide support and protection for our hospital, medical personnel and first responders during this time. While the shelter-in-place order is inconvenient for everyone, and will be a financial hardship for local businesses and citizens, County leadership believes it is necessary to protect human life, health and safety. The Commissioners Court will be reviewing its shelter-in-place order on a regular basis to assess whether it remains appropriate and effective. However, the Court remains hopeful that by taking swift action as recommended by medical professionals, our citizens will be better able to safely and effectively combat COVID-19 in Hunt County and return to their normal lives more quickly.