



**Parliamentary Statement: COVID-19**  
**Delivered by Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, MP**  
**The Minister of Health & Wellness**  
**Wednesday, April 15, 2020; 2:00 p.m.**

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Mr. Speaker, I rise to update this Honourable House and the people of Jamaica on the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Mr. Speaker, as of Wednesday, April 15, the National Surveillance Unit has advised that there are 125 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Jamaica.

The 20 additional confirmed cases include 5 males and 15 females, with ages ranging from 2 years to 43 years. Two (2) cases are imported – one is a 2 year old male from St. James, and the other is a 43 year-old female from St. Catherine. The other 18 individuals are from St Catherine and arise from an on-going investigation of a BPO in St. Catherine, Alorica.

Mr. Speaker, this brings to 52, the number of confirmed cases working at Alorica®. Their ages range from 18 to 34 years. They include 41 females and 11 males. There are 47 individuals from St Catherine, 3 from Kingston and St. Andrew, 1 from Clarendon and 1 from Portland.



There are now 33 imported cases, 34 cases are contacts of a confirmed case, 6 are local transmission cases not epidemiologically-linked and 52 cases are under the Alorica investigation.

Some 51 (41%) confirmed cases are male and 74 (59%) are female, while the ages of all confirmed cases range from 2 to 87 years old.

Mr. Speaker, the St. Catherine Health Department is actively following this situation at Alorica since Friday, April 10. So far over 300 interviews have been conducted with workers and quarantine orders have been served on over 800 persons.

Contact tracing has begun in earnest in all affected parishes. Over three hundred samples have been taken from employees and their relatives. Confirmed cases are being placed in isolation facilities. The sampling is expected to continue over the next five days. All employees are to be sampled.

## **Testing**

Mr. Speaker, a total of 1,391 samples have been tested resulting in 1,258 negative and 125 positive, with eight results pending.



## Testing Protocol

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our testing protocols, specimens must be collected from and will be tested for COVID-19 for the following persons:

- i. All suspected cases (as per the case definition)
- ii. All symptomatic contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases
- iii. All asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases
- iv. All SARI cases from ALL Hospitals
- v. All admitted LRTI / Pneumonia from ALL Hospitals
- vi. All Influenza- Like-Illness Cases
- vii. All health care workers who have been assessed to be at risk from exposure to COVID-19 cases
- viii. All symptomatic health care workers irrespective of contact history

By Friday of this week, we will add a second facility to do COVID-19 testing. The National Public Health Laboratory, will be able to do 350 samples per eight hour shift.

## Mobile Sampling

As has been previously announced, Mr. Speaker, Jamaica is expanding sampling and testing for COVID-19. As part of those expanded testing efforts; the Ministry will, beginning this Friday (April 17, 2020), commence mobile testing for COVID-19 in two health regions (the Southeast Regional



Health Authority/SERHA and the Northeast Regional Health Authority/NERHA).

### **PPE & Other Equipment**

Mr. Speaker, with the threat of COVID19 the MOHW has moved proactively to procure medical equipment and supplies needed in the Public Health System. To date orders valuing over \$1B have been made. Major items delivered to date include 35 Ventilators, 6 ICU beds, 50 Physiological monitors, over 2.2 million PPE items.

### **Isolation and Quarantine facilities**

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has established three types of spaces in regions, namely, space for quarantine, isolation in hospital and transition-care facilities for recovering patients, who are awaiting discharge testing.

There are two national quarantine facilities in the Southeast Regional Health Authority and one in the Western Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Speaker there are 22 Hospitals with wards for COVID-19 patients; 232 COVID-19 beds ready for use and up to this morning there were 57 beds occupied which means  $[232-57] = 175$  available.



A further 41 beds are to be ready in Southern Region within next 3 weeks; 10 to be available in Northeast Region as needed and a further 3 to be made ready in the Western region

This means a total of 54 additional isolation beds. In fairly short order, 286 within the next 3 weeks.

In addition the numbers of High Dependency unit Beds and ICU beds will continue to increase over time.

Currently 66 patients remain in isolation and 21 persons are in quarantine at a government facility.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to report at this time that persons in isolation remain stable, and there are no critically ill patients at this time. There are 15 patients in our transitional care facilities, who remain stable as well and are awaiting discharge testing.

For the persons in quarantine, they remain asymptomatic and afebrile.

The health departments across the island are currently tracing approximately 432 close contacts of the confirmed cases.



Mr. Speakers, the total number of persons recovered and released from hospital is 21 while, there have 5 COVID-19 deaths.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me again appeal to members of the public to remain calm, take the necessary health precautions that has been posited through our multi-platform integrated public education and communication strategy.

We ask, Mr. Speaker, that members of the public continue to support us in our efforts to overcome this public health challenge.

Thank you.

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