**For immediate release:**

**Health Department and Commissioners Support Use of Face Coverings**

**Westminster, MD (April 15, 2020) –** In response to Governor Hogan’s Executive Order requiring Maryland residents to wear masks or cloth face coverings in retail spaces, food service establishments, and on public transportation starting Saturday, April 18th, the Carroll County Health Department and Board of Commissioners jointly issued strong recommendations for Carroll County.

The recommendations are based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Research shows that the coronavirus can be spread by people before they have symptoms and by people who may never get symptoms. Wearing a cloth face covering helps protect people around you if you are infected but do not have symptoms.

“My face covering protects you, and your face covering protects me,” said Ed Singer, Carroll County Health Officer. “Carroll County is seeing significant community spread of COVID-19. Cloth face coverings are another important way to help slow the spread in our community – another easy way to save lives.”

“We must all do our part to protect everyone in our community, including the essential workers who are providing vital services every day,” said Steve Wantz, President of the Carroll County Board of Commissioners. “Especially in a close community like ours, wearing face masks protects our family and friends, our neighbors and our colleagues.”

Residents should wear homemade cloth masks or face coverings. Surgical and N-95 masks must be reserved for health care workers and other medical first responders.

Face coverings can be made out of household items such as t-shirts and bandanas. They should fit snugly, cover the nose and mouth, have multiple layers of fabric, and be washable. Residents should use face covering guidance from reputable sources such as the CDC. They are not advised for people who have trouble breathing, or for children under two years of age. In Hogan’s Executive Order, adults should make reasonable efforts to have their children ages 2-9 wear face coverings.

Face covering guidance from the CDC can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html> Face coverings should be removed carefully after use without touching eyes, nose, or mouth, and should be washed regularly.

Face coverings are not a substitute for social distancing. Residents should still abide by Governor Hogan's stay-at-home order and continue to maintain a safe distance from others when out at the grocery store or other essential businesses. The Executive Order includes additional guidelines for physical distancing at retail establishments. Routine hand washing is also important to slow the spread.

For more information on COVID-19, visit the Carroll County Health Department’s website at cchd.maryland.gov/covid-19/ and the Maryland State Department of Health at <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/> Residents can also call the COVID-19 call center at 410-876-4848 between 8 am – 5 pm daily.

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