



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sunday, March 15, 2020

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez: 'Prepare for Students Returning Home from Campuses Shut Down because of COVID-19 Outbreak'

County Judge Richard F. Cortez on Sunday met with senior health and emergency preparedness officials, including Dr. Ivan Melendez, the designated Health Authority for the County, to assess growing concerns regarding the national and state outbreak of COVID-19.

There has not been a single positive case in Hidalgo County, however Judge Cortez ordered his staff to raise their level of vigilance and prepare for any potential outbreak.

These efforts grow more critical as Hidalgo County officials expect the return of students from Hidalgo County who have been attending colleges and universities in other locations in which outbreaks have occurred and have seen their campuses shut down.

Beyond practicing good hygiene, Judge Cortez reminded his staff to encourage the public to avoid mass gatherings for the time being.

Testing protocol for the virus was also discussed. On Friday, state officials said they will initiate a more aggressive testing schedule statewide, but those tests are expected to begin in other regions of the state where an outbreak has already occurred.

Judge Cortez also directed his staff to confer with the county's judiciary, local municipalities and other public institutions to coordinate response.

On Friday it was announced that jury pools would not meet beginning Monday. In addition, an emergency meeting of the Board of Judges will be convened on Monday to discuss how to deal with any potential outbreak as it relates to the judiciary.

"I know the public is worried," Judge Cortez said. "But I want to assure the residents of Hidalgo County that we are preparing for any contingency."

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Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus