



Teresa Frankovich, MD, MPH
Humboldt County Health Officer
529 I Street, Eureka, CA 95501

phone: (707) 445-6200 | fax: (707) 445-6097

September 2, 2020

Dear Humboldt County Residents:

I want to let you know that I am resigning from my position as the Health Officer for Humboldt County. This has been an incredibly difficult decision but while it has been a privilege to work with this county's talented and dedicated Public Health and Emergency Operations Center teams, the emergence of COVID-19 and the response it requires has changed the Health Officer position from the very part-time one I stepped into, back in late January, to one which is more than full-time. It has also become clear that this level of commitment will be needed for the duration of the event. I was happy to accommodate this need in order to help the county swiftly respond to the pandemic at the outset but now I need to make good on some promises to my family.

Over the past seven months Public Health, the Emergency Operations Center team and community partners have built expansive new infrastructure to respond to COVID-19. There is markedly improved access to testing in Humboldt County with our internal lab now able to run over 200 specimens per day in addition to our Optum site; an alternate care facility which will be used by our hospital partners in the event of a surge; robust and expanding contact tracing capacity; and a congregate setting task force that has worked to help long term care facilities protect the most vulnerable in our county.

Through the Joint Information Center (JIC), we have provided on-going education and information to the residents of Humboldt County so that everyone is empowered to become an active partner in efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 locally. The JIC has also been central to the business plan review process which has helped local employers develop a safer workplace for their staff and their customers, benefitting the entire county.

The EOC has been well-designed to expand or contract as the pandemic requires. Still, there is work to be done to ensure we are well-positioned to minimize serious illness and loss of life in our community in this ever-changing landscape.

Recently new challenges to testing access have emerged as the state contract with Optum is slated to expire at the end of this month. We have been exploring all options in the search for more responsive testing capacity. A new alternative being planned through an innovative, regional partnership should bring ample and accessible testing to all residents of Humboldt and Del Norte counties, including Tribal communities. This will be an enormous asset for our county and it would not have been possible without the vision and hard work of this team.

COVID-19 response, in some form, is likely to be needed throughout much of 2021. As I am unable to continue in this full-time position for that duration, it makes sense to plan for a replacement at a time when we are in a fairly stable position and not in the middle of a surge in activity.



Mental Health
phone: (707) 268-2990
fax: (707) 476-4049

Public Health
phone: (707) 445-6200
fax: (707) 445-6097

Social Services
phone: (707) 476-4700
fax: (707) 441-2096

It has been a pleasure working with Director Stephens, Dr. Ennis and everyone involved in this massive undertaking. I am proud every day I walk into this building and the EOC. I am grateful for the opportunity I have had to witness, first-hand, the integrity and commitment of an amazing team and for the incredible support of many of our elected officials and community members, who embody the best of what drew me back to Humboldt. To the many who have written cards, letters and emails to voice their support of me and the entire COVID-19 response team, I want to say thank you. Your kind words and your efforts to keep Humboldt residents safer have energized all of us in Public Health and the EOC during this challenging time.

I believe a candidate with the leadership skills and expertise needed to continue this work, will step forward to help navigate Humboldt through the next phase of response. The plan is for me to continue to serve Humboldt County in a part-time capacity under the new Health Officer and the Deputy Health Officer, Dr. Ennis, to provide whatever assistance I can for the community going forward. Humboldt is my home.

Teresa L. Frankovich, MD, MPH
Health Officer