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PRESS RELEASE

New Protocols following Surge of COVID-19 Cases

Belmopan. October 26, 2020. 6:00 p.m.

The National Oversight Committee (NOC) met this morning for its weekly consideration of Belize's COVID-19 situation. The NOC took special note of Director of Health Services (DHS) Dr. Marvin Manzanero's report of October 26, 2020 and was concerned at the 332 new cases occurring over the past week. Even more alarming was the fact of six more deaths, including the first pediatric fatality.

In consequence of these developments, the NOC agreed to fast track private sector rapid testing, with an accompanying protocol for the contact tracing that would need to occur with private sector detection of positive cases.

The NOC believes that Belize is experiencing a COVID-19 surge, with the likelihood of this being heightened because of the General Elections on November 11th. The NOC therefore stresses, in the middle of public reports about continued lax behaviour and violation of the safety protocols mandated by law, that it is now more critical than ever that Belizeans adhere to the legal and protective guardrails: physical distancing; hand washing and mask-wearing; no gatherings of more than 10 persons; and a ban on all non-family, close quarters interactions.

In this light, the NOC felt obliged to turn down all requests made for the relaxation of the restrictions pertaining to clubs, bars, casinos, and street vending. The NOC did, however, approve the protocols presented by the National Fitness Association (NAC) for the reopening of gyms. Again because of the current surge, the NOC decided that notwithstanding the meticulous and commendable work of the NAC proposal, the approved resumption of operations by gyms and fitness centers would now take place on November 30th instead of the requested date of October 30th.

Finally, the NOC agreed to recommend to Cabinet, for COVID-19 safety reasons, the imposition of a curfew on election night beginning at 8:00 p.m. and lasting until 5:00 a.m. the following day.

Ends