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Covid-19 Cases Surge to 115 in USVI; Bryan Pleads with Community to Follow Protocols During Holiday Season

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Linda Straker **December 21, 2021**

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"As we get ready to celebrate the Christmas holidays, I want to urge you to be as safe as possible and to be in accordance with the guidelines put forward by the CDC and our local health department." Those were the words of Governor Albert Bryan, speaking during Tuesday's press briefing as he pleaded with residents and visitors alike to follow Covid-19 protocols during the holiday season.

The call to follow guidance comes as Covid-19 cases have seen a dramatic increase in the territory. As of Monday there were 72 active cases. On Tuesday, cases jumped to 115, an increase of 43 new infections.

“As you may be aware, the Omicron variant is now the most dominate strain of Covid-19 in the U.S. mainland, accounting now for 73 percent of all new infections in the states as of last Friday,” he said in the briefing which was broadcast live via social media.

There are currently no confirmed Omicron cases in the territory, according to the V.I. Dept. of Health.

“This is a real cause of cautious to us because many of our family and friends are returning home from the mainland and other places for the holidays and all those people are going to be attending family gatherings and other events,” said the governor.

Reminding the public that the territory’s travel protocols continue to be effective especially at ports of entry, the governor said residents should not have a false sense of security during the holidays, "especially with this new variant which we know is very, very very communicable — you catch it like that," he said.

“We have to get back to basics; everyone is realizing that we are right in the wearing of the mask, and it has proven effective against protection from droplets leading to a significantly less chance of catching or spreading Covid-19,” he continued.

Explaining that the protocols the administration has put in place have led to the territory’s success thus far, he said the positive benefit is not only health-wise but economical. “Where everybody was saying drop the mandates we stood to them," he said. "I think we are at a comfortable place now and I want us to remain in that nice place doing what we did and need to do,” he said.

Making a special appeal to operators of mass gathering venues, he said, “I want to make a special plea to the restaurants, the owners and operators of the bars, nightclubs and the taverns, please take special care for this whole holiday season to just follow the guidelines for safe operations.”

“If you feel that you are going to need the assistance of any kind of managed crowds or people, please reach out to our health department, we have some resources,” Mr. Bryan said while calling on the operators to comply with the terms and conditions of their business license.

“We also ask that you follow the hours of business closure with the guidelines of your license. You see, you don’t think about it, but we have officers who have been working 24 hours trying to keep people safe out on the street and they are exhausted. We want your season to be prosperous too, so you help us to help you,” he urged.

Speaking directly to all citizens, the governor stated, “Residences and guests, I say guests because you are our guests here, please follow the protocols in place because the easiest thing for me to do is to revert back to where we were – early closures, more mandates and wait until Omicron passes through. But the hardest thing to do is to rely on you and everyone to govern themselves accordingly to keep the community safe.”

“I am going to take the gamble on you, but it is up to you to ensure that we don’t have to put in those mandates next week or the week after. You know what to do, just keep safe and do it,” he pleaded.