

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Big Horn County Board of Commissioners Statement**  
*Regarding COVID-19 in the County workforce*

**HARDIN, MONTANA** (July 29, 2020) – The Big Horn County Board of Commissioners made the following statement today:

We have heard that there were some who took offense to a particular County department being named, along with another County department, as the workplaces of recently confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 among Big Horn County employees. We based our press release on other counties' press releases dealing with the same subject in which specific departments were named. We care about all the of County's employees and their families. There was no intent to cause offense and we regret if it was taken that way.

Our primary goal in sharing the information about the range of employees of Big Horn County who have tested positive was to further emphasize two points that have been made frequently by our public health staff. First, the virus is affecting everyone in the County, whether Native American or non-, male or female, old and young, healthy or with pre-existing conditions, rich and poor, homeowners or homeless, employed or unemployed. It is in every town and across every area of Big Horn County. The coronavirus is not just a "Reservation problem" or a "Hardin problem". COVID-19 respects no borders, so we cannot let ourselves be divided. We will only defeat this virus if we come together as a whole and take precautions to protect not only ourselves but each other. We are in this together and must fight this common enemy together.

Second, anyone who contracts COVID-19 is not to be shamed or shunned. Rather, that person should be supported and assisted by their family, friends, co-workers, and community. When a person tests positive for the virus, they need to be able to share that information with their loved ones to prevent further spread, and they should also receive compassion and support. Having tested positive for COVID-19 is not a stigma to be overcome. Again, the virus doesn't care who you are – it merely continuously seeks a host in which it can further replicate – and a host which, if we take the necessary precautions, can be made more difficult for the coronavirus to find.

We hope that you will show your neighbors as well as our employees the compassion and support that they deserve – whether they work for Big Horn County government or anywhere else. There is no shame in contracting COVID-19. As was the point of the previous press statement, the virus can affect everyone in our County. Please, take the precautions necessary – stay home if you can, keep a social distance of more than six (6) feet from others, wear a mask when required and when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands for 20 seconds and often. If we all take these measures, we will stem the growing tide of COVID-19 in our County. Please do this not only for your own sake but for the sake of every member of our community. We are all in this #aparttogether.

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Big Horn County is the sixth largest county in Montana, at approximately 5,023 square miles, and with a population exceeding 13,000. The local government was established January 13, 1913. Hardin is the County Seat. <https://www.bighorncountymt.gov/> For more information about the County's COVID-19 response, please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/BHCMTResponds>.