University *of* MARYLAND
BALTIMORE

Dec. 20, 2021

Dear UMB Community,

The country is seeing a dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases that is taxing many health systems. In fact, the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) now has twice the number of COVID-positive patients they had just a few weeks ago. In addition, they are seeing staff infected with COVID-19 at levels not seen at any other time during this pandemic. This surge is challenging health systems in ways previous surges have not as a result of the severe staffing shortages.

Heading into the holidays, the unfortunate reality is that COVID-19 is spreading in our communities at the fastest rate since the onset of the pandemic. We are at a critical point, and the next several weeks will become increasingly challenging for us all. Throughout the pandemic, we have adjusted our policies to ensure the continued safety of our internal and external communities and those in our care, and this is no exception. **However, University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) policies constitute only a small portion of your overall safety, and we want you to stay safe in all settings.**

To enhance our safety, effective today, Dec. 20:
- All UMB faculty, staff, and students are required to wear a **KN95/N95 mask** or equivalent while indoors at UMB's campus or at an off-campus location occupied by UMB community members (e.g., Shady Grove, MPRC, Donaldson Brown, Columbus Center), regardless of vaccination status.
- **Travel:** We continue to discourage all nonessential travel and require approval for work-related travel. Please follow post-travel quarantine recommendations per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.

The crisis we're seeing at UMMS and other hospitals is directly impacted by our behavior in our communities. You can help us — and each other — by preparing for a safe holiday season. In addition to adhering to our COVID-19 measures, we are asking each of you to take the following steps outside of work, and encourage loved ones to do the same. **It is imperative to**

understand that no single measure is sufficient at this time, and we need to aggressively apply these together to reduce community spread:

- **Get your COVID-19 booster.** Vaccination is the best way to protect against COVID-19. This includes a booster shot for those who are eligible. Boosters are effective within about three days of receipt, so please plan so you're fully protected ahead of the holidays. You can find a location for a booster appointment here.
- **Update your record.** If you have received your booster and signed the Chesapeake Regional Information System for our Patients (CRISP) authorization to share your vaccination data, UMB may already know of your booster status. Please confirm that we have your booster data in the COVID-19 Management Portal.
- **Wear a mask in all shared indoor spaces.** Adherence to wearing masks is essential to mitigate risk for yourself and those around you. We recommend using a high-grade mask, such as a KN95, outside the workplace.
- **Get tested.** If you're planning to travel, consider getting tested before leaving and after returning. Individuals hosting friends or family (particularly vulnerable individuals, such as the elderly or unvaccinated) should ask their guests to get tested. Be sure to plan ahead — home rapid antigen tests are fast and convenient but may be hard to find, and getting results from PCR tests can take a couple of days. As a reminder, testing for nonessential travel is not available through UMMS or UMB. We are aware of shortages of at-home tests and are looking into options. Click here to find a testing location.

Thank you for your continued commitment as we work to keep each other, those we care for, and our communities safe. Warmest wishes for a healthy and happy holiday season.

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
President