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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legal occupancy at restaurants, bars and other food service establishments to be reduced by half

LANSING, Mich. – Legal occupancy load at licensed food service establishments will be reduced by 50 percent by order of the Ingham County Health Department effective March 16, 2020 at 5 p.m. through April 5, 2020 at 5 p.m.

State law provides Ingham County Health Officer Linda S. Vail with the authority to issue orders to protect the public health under Section 2453 of the Public Health Code (MCL 333.2453). Those who disregard the order could be subject to a misdemeanor that includes up to 90 days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$200.

“This is a social distancing measure and is necessary to ‘flatten the curve’,” said Vail. “We know this virus is in our community, likely undetected in some cases. We need proactive actions including reductions in occupancy load to stop the spread of COVID-19.”

Food service establishments include but are not limited to: restaurants, bars, church dining halls, schools, carry out, catering, country clubs, banquet halls, and fraternal organizations. Healthcare facilities, long-term care facilities and grocery stores are exempt from the reduction in occupancy load.

“We are committed to protecting the health of Ingham County residents,” said Ingham County Board of Commissioners Chair Bryan Crenshaw. “This action helps ensure safe restaurants and food service establishments for our residents and the employees who work there.”

“Flattening the curve” means taking steps to assure that large segments of the population do not become ill at the same time as this would burden the healthcare system beyond capacity. Although many may still contract COVID-19 over time, ensuring there is sufficient health care capacity through the course of the pandemic will drastically reduce fatalities.

The health department has a printable sign which venues can post to notify customers of the occupancy restriction. The sign is available for download at:

<http://hd.ingham.org/Portals/HD/Home/Documents/CD/Coronavirus/OccupancyOrder-Ingham3-16-20.pdf>

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