



# Lackawanna County

Commissioners  
Jerry Notarianni • Debi Domenick, Esq. • Chris Chermak

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Commissioners

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December 27, 2021

## **DECLARATION OF A DISASTER EMERGENCY FOR THE COUNTY OF LACKAWANNA, PENNSYLVANIA**

**WHEREAS**, Its been two years since the discovery of the SARS CoV-2 virus that caused the disease COVID-19. Since then, the virus has mutated and caused different variants; and

**WHEREAS**, variants that are more contagious, cause more severe symptoms, or decrease the effectiveness of existing health measures such as treatment or vaccination are called variants of concern. There are currently five variants of concern which include the Delta variant and the Omicron variant.; and

**WHEREAS**, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) declared that the Omicron variant, first discovered in South Africa on November 9, 2021, and designated as a variant of concern on November 26, 2021 is now the dominant variant in the United States comprising nearly three quarters of all new COVID-19 cases; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 20, 2021, the World Health Organization (“WHO”) declared that the Omicron variant is spreading faster than any other variant including the Delta variant; and

**WHEREAS**, preliminary international research indicates that the Omicron variant decreases the effectiveness of certain vaccines and treatments; and

**WHEREAS**, given the characteristics of the Omicron variant along with the reported statewide and local hospital capacity issues, healthcare systems may become quickly overwhelmed; and

**WHEREAS**, masking, social distancing, testing, and vaccinations, especially boosters, are critical to containing the spread of COVID-19.

**WHEREAS**, emergency management measures are required to reduce the severity of this disaster and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of affected residents in Lackawanna County; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 7501 of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Act (35 PA CSA §7501) authorizes the Lackawanna County to declare a disaster emergency “upon the finding a disaster has occurred or is imminent”; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 1.3-302(t) of the Lackawanna County Home Rule Charter authorizes the Board of Commissioners to make provisions for any matters of County Government involving health, safety, welfare or public emergency.



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**NOW THEREFORE**, we, the undersigned Commissioners of Lackawanna County, pursuant to the provisions of §7501 of the Emergency Services Act and §1.3-302(t) of the Lackawanna County Home Rule Charter, do hereby declare the existence of an emergency in Lackawanna County due to COVID-19.

**FURTHER**, the Commissioners direct the Chief of Staff and the Lackawanna County Emergency Management Director to coordinate the County's activities of the emergency response, to work with all state and federal authorities, to take all appropriate action needed to alleviate the effects of this disaster, to aid in the restoration of essential public services, and to take any other emergency response action deemed necessary to respond to this emergency.

**FURTHER**, the Commissioners hereby create a Leadership Council to advise the Chief of Staff and County Emergency Services Director in response to COVID-19 that shall consist of the Board of Commissioners, the Chief of Staff, the Department of Health and Human Services Administration, County Emergency Services Director, the Human Resources Director, the Solicitor's Office, and any and all additional members as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Commissioners. This Leadership Council shall meet as needed in response to COVID-19 without the need to formally advertise times and places of meetings due to the exigent and evolving circumstances of this disaster, although, as time permits, every effort will be made to list the times and places of such meetings in advance on the County website.

**FURTHER**, the Board of Commissioners, pursuant to 35 Pa C.S. §7501(d), authorize the temporary suspension of all formal requirements in light of the exigencies of this disaster emergency, including all time-consuming procedures and formalities proscribed by law (excepting mandatory constitutional requirements) pertaining to the performance of public work, entering into contracts, the incurring of obligations, the employment of temporary workers, the rental of equipment, the purchase of supplies and materials, the levying of taxes and the appropriation and expenditure of public funds.

**FURTHER**, all hearings and meetings, including for boards, commissioners, and authorities, for purposes of official county business shall be conducted virtually during the period of this emergency declaration.

**FURTHER**, all county buildings shall remain open to the public for essential business, all members of the public are requested, and urged, to refrain from accessing them unless necessary.

**FURTHER**, all County residents, businesses, organizations, and visitors are urged to abide during the period of the Emergency Declaration by the recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control, as well as guidance issued by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Department of Health regarding receiving vaccinations and boosters according to CDC guidelines. In addition, all residents are encouraged to wear a mask in public areas and to socially distance.

**AND FURTHERMORE**, this Declaration shall remain in effect until January 31, 2022, or until rescinded or extended.



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This Declaration shall take effect immediately.

Authorized this 27th day of December 2021.

**Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners:**

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Debi Domenick, Chair.

ATTESTED:

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Brian Jeffers, Chief of Staff

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Jerry Notarianni

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Chris Chermack