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JEFFERSON COUNTY AUTHORIZES \$6.4 MILLION FOR EXPANDED COVID-19 TESTING

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – The Jefferson County Commission today voted to allocate up to \$6.4 million in CARES Act funding, to increase COVID-19 testing in the county, particularly in underserved communities. The funds will enable the University of Alabama at Birmingham Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center to expand its testing operations throughout the county.

The grant will fund eight mobile testing teams throughout Jefferson County, with a goal of performing 50,000 COVID-19 tests before the end of the year. For the past 11 weeks, the MHRC has conducted testing twice a week at two mobile sites in the county. The grant funds will also purchase additional testing equipment for UAB laboratories to meet testing demand and support outreach to the community to improve participation.

“The Jefferson County Commission understands how critical more testing is to both combat COVID-19 and provide for the health of our citizens,” said Commission President Jimmie Stephens (District 3). “UAB’s Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center working with Cooper Green is a perfect combination to reach the citizens in the county who are most underserved and hard to reach when it comes to COVID-19. This is important work that needs to be done to help prevent further community spread — especially as we head into the fall and winter months.”

The effort is a partnership between the MHRC, Live HealthSmart Alabama, UAB Medicine and Cooper Green Mercy Health Services Authority.

“We are grateful to the Jefferson County Commission for the opportunity to expand UAB MHRC/Live HealthSmart Alabama’s community-based Mobile COVID testing across the county,” said Mona Fouad, M.D., director of the MHRC. “For almost 20 years, the MHRC has worked side by side with members of vulnerable communities, building a foundation of trust and communication. When COVID hit, we listened to our communities to understand their concerns and testing barriers they face. Our community testing model addresses the barriers of transportation and health care access with patient navigators who understand the challenges, frustrations and fears of community residents and, most importantly, by bringing testing into the heart of the community.”

Jefferson County will work in partnership with the MHRC, HealthSmart Alabama, UAB and Cooper Green Mercy Health Services Authority to promote the mobile testing locations in the community.

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