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For Immediate Release: January 6, 2022

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Governor Ron DeSantis Puts Seniors First for COVID Tests

Florida secures up to one million tests for residents of assisted living facilities and nursing homes

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced that the state of Florida will be providing up to one million rapid tests as needed for residents of assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Governor DeSantis made the announcement during a visit to the Rehabilitation Center of the Palm Beaches where he met with leaders in the senior care industry and discussed the importance of allocating resources for high-value testing that prioritizes Florida's seniors, all of whom are eligible for monoclonal antibodies as well as other early treatments.

"We are redoubling our commitment to putting *Seniors First* by prioritizing the delivery of test kits to assisted living facilities and nursing homes," said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. "We've secured up to one million tests to be used for those most vulnerable to coronavirus complications, allowing us to put *Seniors First* for early treatments which save lives."

While the Biden Administration has promised the American people 500 million tests and a website from which to order them, they have delivered no tests; there is no website; there is no timetable for delivery. Furthermore, the public health bureaucrats in Washington continue to encourage low-value

testing of healthy, asymptomatic young people to essentially conduct surveillance testing not contingent on exposure, driving up demand for tests despite the Biden Administration's failure to secure adequate supply. With today's announcement, Governor DeSantis is extending Florida's data-driven *Seniors First* approach to encompass all aspects of the state's multifaceted and dynamic response, including *Seniors First* for vaccines; *Seniors First* for tests; and *Seniors First* for early treatments.

"The Department works with partners to ensure providers statewide are informed on COVID-19 treatment options, but also have access to supply outside of state sites – specifically for those who are at high-risk for severe illness," said **Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo, M.D., Ph.D.** "That's the same mindset we now need to have about testing. Those that are at high-risk for COVID-19, such as seniors and immunocompromised individuals, should be prioritized for testing and treatment. We remain confident that the federal government will proceed with our request for 30,000 doses of lifesaving treatment."

"The Division is proud to secure these at-home COVID-19 test kits for our most vulnerable populations," said **Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie**. "This is another example of how the Division is prepared and built for speed. With our partners at the Florida Department of Health and the Agency for Health Care Administration, we will continue to lead the way in responding to COVID-19."

"In the state of Florida, we have some 700 nursing homes and some 3,000 assisted living facilities which is why Governor DeSantis has taken a *Seniors First* approach to ensure that Florida's seniors have access to the vaccines, booster doses, monoclonals, and now tests," said **Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Simone Marsteller**. "There is an entire structure in place to make sure that Florida's seniors and those who care for them have the resources and the information they need. At Governor DeSantis' direction, we have developed Strike Teams that can rapidly administer vaccines and monoclonals to residents of long-term care facilities. Caregivers in our long-term care facilities have done an incredible job over the past nearly two years. I have visited them and talked to them myself, and I salute them. They have kept our residents safe. We are going to continue to make sure that these resources get to our long-term care facilities so residents can continue to be visited by their loved ones and so everyone can remain healthy and safe."

Today, DOH issued updated testing guidance and recommendations to maximize benefits of COVID-19 testing in Florida. A copy of the full COVID-19 testing guidance can be found here.

Earlier this week, Governor Ron DeSantis called on the Biden Administration to release its stranglehold on the supply of monoclonals and increase Florida's supply by at least 30,000 doses per week. In response to this pressure the state of Florida has been notified that planning has begun in preparation of sending 30,000 more monoclonal antibody doses to Florida. The Florida Division of Emergency Management sent a letter to U.S. Health and Human Services offering logistical support to receive these additional doses as quickly as possible, including picking them up and driving them to Florida.

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