NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **CONTACT:**
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Omicron Variant Detected in Georgia Resident
New Variant Reinforces the Need for Vaccination and Testing

Atlanta – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has been notified of a Georgia resident currently in New Jersey who has tested positive for COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. The individual recently traveled from South Africa and was in Georgia for two days before traveling on to New Jersey where the testing and sequencing were done.

The individual is fully vaccinated and is isolating in New Jersey. Contact tracing is underway there and in Georgia to identify close contacts at risk of infection. So far, no additional Omicron cases in Georgia have been identified.

"Vaccination and boosters are key to preventing further transmission of COVID-19 and help prevent new variants like Omicron from emerging," said Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. "Only 51% of Georgians are fully vaccinated and of those individuals less than 20% have received booster doses."

Studies show after getting vaccinated against COVID-19, protection against the virus and the ability to prevent infection with variants may decrease over time. Early data from South Africa suggest increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant, and scientists in the United States and around the world are urgently examining vaccine effectiveness related to this variant.

All Georgians over the age of 5 are now eligible for COVID vaccination. Booster doses of vaccine are recommended for adults 18 and older who completed their first series of vaccine at least six months ago. The CDC also recommends general prevention measures such as wearing a mask in public settings, staying 6 feet from others, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, and frequently washing your hands to protect against COVID-19.

Individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to someone with COVID should get tested.

To find a COVID vaccine or COVID testing location near you log on to dph.ga.gov.

For updates on COVID-19, follow @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Twitter and @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Facebook.

We protect lives.