



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Contact: sfeocjic@sfgov.org

***** PRESS RELEASE *****

FIRST CONFIRMED CASE OF OMICRON VARIANT DETECTED IN THE UNITED STATES

The California and San Francisco Departments of Public Health have confirmed that a recent case of COVID-19 among an individual in California was caused by the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529). The individual was a traveler who returned from South Africa on November 22, 2021. The individual, who is a San Francisco resident, is self-isolating and is experiencing mild symptoms. We are continuing to speak with the individual about any persons with whom they have been in contact.

Genomic sequencing was conducted at the University of California, San Francisco and the sequence was confirmed at CDC as being from the Omicron variant. This will be the first confirmed case of COVID-19 caused by the Omicron variant detected in the United States, though there are likely other cases that have not yet been detected.

“San Francisco has one of the highest vaccination rates and lowest death rates in the country because of the actions our residents have taken from the beginning of this pandemic to keep each other safe. We knew that it was only a matter of time until the Omicron variant was detected in our city, and the work that we have done to this point has prepared us to handle this variant. We continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated, get boosted, and take steps to keep each other safe,” said Mayor London N. Breed.

“We are still learning about the Omicron variant, but we are not back to square one with this disease. From what we know now, San Francisco is relatively well positioned to handle COVID-19 and its variants because of our high vaccination rates, our high booster uptake, and other local health measures such as masking and testing,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “We will stay alert and vigilant and do what we need to do to protect ourselves. This means getting vaccinated, getting your booster, wearing a mask indoors, and taking the other steps we know help slow the spread.”

On November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified a new variant, B.1.1.529, as a Variant of Concern and named it Omicron and on November 30, 2021, the United States also classified it as a Variant of Concern. CDC has been actively monitoring and preparing for this variant, and we will continue to work diligently with other U.S. and global public health and industry partners to learn more. Despite the detection of Omicron, Delta remains the predominant strain in the United States.

The recent emergence of the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and [general prevention strategies](#) needed to protect against COVID-19. Everyone 5 and older should get vaccinated boosters are recommended for everyone 18 years and older. San Francisco has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world at 81% of the eligible population, and is currently administering boosters to more than 5,000 vaccinated individuals a day. The City also has in place other safety protocols, such as universal masking in indoor public settings, and proof of vaccination requirements for certain businesses, as well as a robust testing and surveillance system. These safety measures put the City in a good position to fight COVID variants, such as Omicron.

For more information on the Omicron variant visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/index.html>.

###

sfeocjic@sfgov.org • 415-558-2712