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# CELESTE WILLIAMS

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT FOR UNITED STATES CONGRESS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CORONAVIRUS CASES IN ARKANSAS REACH GRIM MILESTONE — NORTHWEST ARKANSAS EMERGES AS EPICENTER**

**Bella Vista, AR — MAY 29, 2020**

With COVID-19 cases on the rise in Northwest Arkansas, Congressional Candidate Celeste Williams urges leaders to protect our communities by providing overdue protections for all essential workers.

*“The latest numbers are deeply concerning,” said Celeste Williams, Nurse Practitioner and Candidate for U.S. Congress in Arkansas’s Third District. “Our government and business leaders had time to prepare while our cases were relatively low. COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease and we will not be able to get our economy back to normal until we contain its spread. Our community is only as safe as our most vulnerable neighbors.”*

Williams has a plan to ensure safety, *“Our communities need multi-lingual public health information and testing services; free, accessible testing; federal paid sick leave; appropriate PPE for their jobs; contact tracing for every positive case; and we’ve needed these things for months.”*

Northwest Arkansas has become the state’s new hotspot for COVID-19 infections with [85 new cases](#) reported in Benton County and [25 new cases](#) in Washington County, accounting for more than [40 percent](#) of the new cases in the state. Among the new positive cases in Benton County reported Thursday, [85 percent](#) are from the Latinx community and [76 percent](#) are from Rogers. Since testing has been made widely available, [74 percent](#) of those who tested positive reported no symptoms which is why widespread testing and quarantine are essential to stop the spread.

*“As our state continues to reopen, **Arkansans shouldn’t be asked to choose between their health and their paycheck.** Workers at food processing plants, sites increasingly emerging as hotbeds for the virus, must be ensured proper protections, hazard pay, paid sick leave, and on-site testing.”* Williams said.

Health Secretary Dr. Nate Smith named this spike in cases as a [“second wave”](#) for Arkansas, adding “it is now focused in northwest Arkansas, there seems to be rapid increases in Latino communities....We’re also seeing younger individuals.”

*“I have been speaking with medical colleagues throughout Northwest Arkansas, and we’re concerned about the increase in community spread, patients presenting to the E.R. with COVID-19 symptoms, and with hospital admissions. The spread of this illness is within our control if we all do our part. Our government needs to test, trace, and isolate. As individuals, wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and staying home will reduce the spread of this disease,” Williams said. “I know that in this community, we care for our neighbors.”*

## **CORONAVIRUS TIMELINE**

MARCH 11 - Governor Asa Hutchinson reported the first case of COVID-19 in Arkansas in Pine Bluff, Jefferson County ([source](#)). By this date there were already 1,190 COVID-19 cases in the U.S., and the disease was spreading rapidly ([source](#)).

APRIL 20 - Arkansas was one of only 5 states to not issue a “stay at home order.” ([source](#))

APRIL 22 - Tyson Foods issued a statement warning of rapid spread among meat processing facilities: “COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred in 30 facilities operated by Tyson Foods, Smithfield, Cargill, JBS and other meat companies. Government officials said at least 3,300 workers in meat processing plants have been sickened by COVID-19 and at least 17 have died.” ([source](#))

MAY 15 - Rep. Steve Womack voted no on HEROES Act ([source](#)) that contained \$875 billion in state and local government aid to benefit first responders, as well as direct payments to individuals, rent & mortgage relief, **COVID-19 testing and tracing, supplying PPE for workplaces**, small business relief, safe voting, and prohibitions on price gouging and evictions ([source](#))

MAY 15 - Gov. Hutchinson announced COVID-19 testing available for everyone without restrictions ([source](#))

MAY 28 - Single biggest increase in community spread cases reported in Arkansas ([source](#))

## **FACTS ABOUT MASKS**

FACT: Mask wearing among at least 80% of the general public significantly reduces the spread of coronavirus ([source](#))

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