



MEDIA RELEASE

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MAYOR, CHIEF DECLINE ACCESS TO STATE COVID-19 DATABASE: 'THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO ACCOMPLISH SAME GOALS'

Mayor Indya Kincannon and Police Chief Eve Thomas announced today that the Knoxville Police Department will opt out of a state program that allows law-enforcement officers across Tennessee to access a database of persons who have tested positive for COVID-19.

"The initiative was well-intended, aimed at protecting first responders and the people they serve, and safeguards were put in place to protect confidential information," Kincannon said. "But there are better ways to accomplish the same goals, and we will continue to take the appropriate steps to assure public safety."

Part of the answer, Mayor Kincannon said, is to purchase and distribute more Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to firefighters, paramedics and police officers.

"Allowing law enforcement access to the state database was problematic," Mayor Kincannon said. "Few people have been tested, and many others are asymptomatic carriers, so this could present a false sense of security. More importantly, we don't want to create any public reluctance to be tested out of fear that confidential information might inadvertently be shared."

Mayor Kincannon pledged "to continue to protect our first responders so that they can continue to protect our city."

Steps being taken, the Mayor said, include:

- Purchasing more N95 masks and other PPE;
- Making sure that all first responders wear face coverings when interacting with the public in close proximity, unless doing so prevents them from doing their job effectively, such as when chasing a suspect on foot; and
- Supporting collaborative community efforts to increase testing capacity, so that ALL first responders can be tested every two weeks until a COVID-19 vaccine is available.