



I would like to start by urging the public to not panic about [Coronavirus](#). Though the spread of the virus has people around the world understandably concerned, here in the United States (US) you are more likely to contract the flu than Coronavirus. For perspective, as of this writing there have been at least 2,800 people killed worldwide from Coronavirus compared to at least 16,000 deaths in the US alone from the flu this season according to the [Centers for Disease Control & Preventions](#).

While I am not downplaying the global impact of Coronavirus, there is still much to learn about the illness. I hope you find some comfort in knowing your county officials and our community partners have successfully addressed threats posed by several communicable diseases in the recent past, including West Nile virus (2018), chikungunya (2017), Zika virus (2016), Ebola (2014) and H1N1 (2009).

That said, it is season here in South Florida. Our roads and businesses are busy. People fly in from all over the world to enjoy all that Palm Beach County (PBC) has to offer. Exercising caution to remain healthy is never a bad idea whether your worry is the latest pandemic sweeping the globe or the common cold. I urge you to use some of the same kinds of preventive measures used to avoid [influenza](#) and other illnesses. Some ways I protect myself and others is washing my hands frequently and using hand sanitizer; avoid touching my eyes, nose and mouth; staying home when I am ill and stocking up on essentials when well so I do not have to venture out for soup and tissues when I am not. I also happen to be a firm believer in the flu vaccine. One thing I can't really avoid is crowds!

Speaking of the masses, [Census Day](#) is around the corner. It is imperative that we count every single person in a household within our county as well as the state on April 1. The results determine the number of congressional seats assigned to each state and how more than \$675 billion in federal funds annually is allocated to state and local governments. Florida is the third largest state in the US, and PBC is the third largest county in Florida.

Each household will receive an invitation to complete the Census in mid-March and will include directions on how to complete the Census online or by telephone. You should complete the Census as soon as you can. Everyone living at the address counts – grand and great-grandparents, parents and guardians, children of all ages, in-laws, relatives, extended family members, friends, roommates, and room renters. Please share this information with your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

As always, I invite your comments on any issue of interest to you. As your Commissioner, I am here to help you. You may write me at 301 N. Olive Ave., West Palm Beach, 33401 or at MBerger@pbcgov.org. You can call me or my staff at 276-1310 or toll free at 877-930-2205. Please visit me on the Web at www.pbcgov.com/d5.

Yours in Public Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Mary Lou Berger'.