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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## With anti-Asian hate in U.S. rising, parents grapple over whether to talk to their children

NEW YORK (Reuters) -After eight people were killed in last week's shootings at three Atlanta-area spas, including six women of Asian descent, Stefany Stuber sat down to talk to her seven-year-old daughter, Olivia.

"I really felt like this was a time for me to speak up and address the situation, address the fact that this has been happening forever, forever and a day," said bartender Stuber, a 40-year-old Korean-American who lives in Philadelphia.

Olivia was attentive and receptive, her mother recalled, and as children often do, peppered her with difficult questions.

"She asked me why somebody would hurt people just because they were Asian," Stuber said. "Would somebody want to hurt me just because the way that I look?"

Across the United States, Asian-Americans and Asians reeled at the news of the shooting spree. here Authorities said the 21-year-old white male suspect told them he had a sex addiction and that the attacks may not have had a racist motivation.

But after a year in which reports of hate crimes against Asians, regardless of their national origin, skyrocketed, the bloodshed caused more outrage, fear and demands here for a government response.

Rights advocates say the surge, against the background of a long history of discrimination, is largely the result of Asian-Americans being blamed for the coronavirus pandemic, which was first identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. Former U.S. President Donald Trump repeatedly referred to COVID-19 as the "China Virus" and "kung flu," rhetoric that some said inflamed anti-Asian sentiment.

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**  
Stuber was adopted by a white couple and grew up in the predominantly white, conservative suburb of Ivyland in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Exposure to Asian cultures was minimal if not completely absent, she said.

Although she never doubted her fami-



ly's love, Stuber said she became accustomed to compartmentalizing comments and experiences that left a deep impact. Among the instances that stuck with her were what she described as the "pet names" she was given by some extended family members, among them "Ching Wong" and "little konichiwa."

"I do understand the underlying intentions behind it, but I also understand the ignorance behind it, and I understand how it made me feel," Stuber said.

As a parent, she has strived to celebrate her and her daughter's Korean heritage but also be open with Olivia about racism and discrimination.

"I want her to understand things because I think, at least for me, understanding things is the first step to coming up with solutions," Stuber said.

Dr. Michi Fu, a Los Angeles-based psychologist and professor, said it is natural for parents to try to hold off discuss-

ing difficult topics "because they feel like they don't have the right tools or they feel like they have to say something perfect."

The trauma of racism, whether experienced personally or witnessed directly or indirectly, can have dire repercussions on a person's physical and mental wellbeing, Fu said.

"If our caregivers can just role model by speaking up, that can send a very clear message."

While providing a new catalyst for anti-Asian sentiment, the isolation brought on by the pandemic might have sheltered some children from directly experiencing it while confined mostly to their homes and not going to school.

Yoko Kobayashi said she and her husband might discuss the rise in anti-Asian hate and some of the events of the past year with their 11-year-old son as part of a broader back-to-school conversation. He is likely to resume in-person learning at the end of August.

"In context of that we will probably bring up that issue that over this past year there's been these things happening," said Kobayashi, a Japanese national who lives in the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington.

In the small town of Floral Park, New York, Annie Lee has been struggling. Lee wants her four-and-a-half and nine-year-old sons to be aware of potential threats. But she is wary of scaring them at such young ages.

"I want them to have a normal childhood and not have to worry about certain things," said the 40-year-old Taiwanese-American. "But at the same time I want them to protect themselves should anything happen."

The extent to which their children should be aware of the discrimination they might face has been a topic of discussion between Lee and her husband Kenji. He was regularly the target of bullying and racial slurs growing up.

"Now that we have two boys, it's something that's very, very prominent in his thinking... How to teach our kids and how to protect themselves. We do definitely have different views on it," said Lee, who with other mothers of Asian descent approached their school district about raising awareness of the increase in attacks and discrimination.



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# U.S. backs distance of 3 feet between students, may help get kids back in schools

(Reuters) - The U.S. government on Friday updated its COVID-19 mitigation guidance, halving the acceptable distance between students who are wearing masks to at least three feet (0.91 m) from at least six feet, potentially easing the path for schools that have struggled to reopen under previous guidelines.

The new recommendation from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a boost to the Biden administration's goal of reopening in-person learning for millions of public school students without sparking coronavirus outbreaks.

"The revised CDC guidance is a great step," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. It "reflects the fact that schools ... are not drivers of infections," he added. Many schools continue to teach students remotely more than a year after the novel coronavirus prompted widespread closures across the United States.

The new guidance was based on data from schools in Utah, Missouri and Florida that suggests transmission of COVID-19 in schools is relatively low when precautions such as mask-wearing are employed, including in cases where students do not maintain six feet of distance. The guidance applies to students from kindergarten through high school and in areas with low, moderate, and substantial community transmission of COVID-19.

Middle and high school students in communities with high levels of COVID-19 should stay six feet apart unless their schoolday contact can be limited to a single small group of students and staff, CDC said.

"I want to emphasize that these recommendations are specific to students in classrooms with universal mask-wearing," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said in a news conference.

Students should continue to maintain six feet of distance when interacting with teachers and other school staff and when eating, the agency said. The CDC has been under pressure to relax its guidance to schools to help get students back into classrooms. Walensky said this week the agency was looking at data in part from a recent study in Massachusetts that suggested tighter spacing had not increased virus transmission.

One of the CDC studies released on Friday looked at 20 elementary schools in Utah during a period of high COVID-19 transmission in the broader community. It showed that in-school transmission rates among masked students were low even though they maintained an average distance between seats of only three feet.

Many schools do not have the space in classrooms to maintain six feet between students.



**BILLIONS FOR TESTING**  
The guidance urged schools to conduct widespread COVID-19 testing of students, saying regular use of such screening offers added



## Editor's Choice



Flooding resulting from a severe weather event with prolonged rains is seen at the Hawkesbury River northwest of Sydney in Wisemans Ferry, Australia. REUTERS/Loren Elliott



Mexican scientist Gustavo Acosta Altamirano shows his new innovation, a nasal mask as a measure to protect against the coronavirus transmission during the process of eating and drinking at the National Polytechnic Institute, in Mexico City. REUTERS/Carlos Jasso



Norway's Daniel Andre Tande falls during his trial round jump at the Ski Jumping World Cup in Planica, Slovenia. REUTERS/Srdjan Zivulovic



Women participate in a protest against Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention, an international accord designed to protect women, in Rome, Italy. REUTERS/Yara Nardi



Health care workers place flowers on top a coffin to representing dead colleagues during a protest against Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro and his handling of the coronavirus



Workers from the beauty industry, including hairdressers and makeup artists, hold a protest in Plebiscito square against the coronavirus restrictions that have shut their businesses, in Naples, Italy. REUTERS/Ciro De Luca



# Warren Buffett Group Lobbying Texas Lawmakers For \$8 Billion To Build Emergency Power Plants



Billionaire Warren Buffett head of Berkshire Hathaway Energy

### Key Points

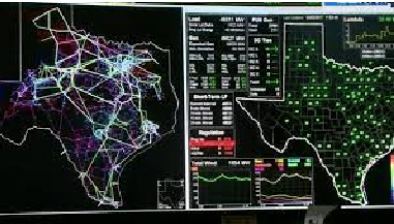
*If approved, the deal would signal a move away from decades of a competitive electricity market in Texas in which all power generators in Texas are paid for the energy they produce and sell, rather than the power they could potentially generate.*

*In return, lawmakers would agree to create a revenue stream for Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway through an additional charge on Texans' power bills.*

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

As the Texas Legislature debated how to respond to last month's winter storm-driven power crisis, executives at billionaire Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Energy were pitching lawmakers an idea: The group would spend over \$8 billion to build 10 new natural gas power plants in the state. Lawmakers would agree to create a revenue stream to provide Berkshire a return on its investment through an additional charge on Texans' power bills. Representatives for Berkshire Hathaway Energy have been in Austin meeting with lawmakers and state leaders for the past week and a half, according to a person working closely on the issue. The proposed company, which would likely be known as the Texas Emergency Power Reserve, would build and maintain plants that sit idle during normal times, according to a slide deck obtained by The Texas Tribune. Whenever demand for power in the state threatened to surpass supply, these new plants would kick in to make up the difference, if ordered to do so by the state's grid operator. "When you flip that switch and say, look, demand has exceeded supply, it has to come on in 10 minutes," Chris

Brown, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Energy, said in an interview Thursday with the Tribune. "That's the Texas Emergency Power Reserve Promise — that's the promise that we're making to the citizens of Texas."



In the presentation, the representatives estimated the cost of that new charge to consumers as \$1.42 per month for residential customers, \$9.61 for commercial customers and \$58.94 for industrial customers. The pitch to state leaders also included a poll conducted by Republican pollster Mike Baseslice suggesting that Texans would be broadly supportive of paying a little more on their power bills to increase reliability. The poll was conducted from March 17-21 among 800 likely voters

in Texas, according to topline of the poll obtained by the Tribune. A senior adviser for Patrick confirmed the lieutenant governor met with Berkshire Hathaway executives earlier this month. And a spokesperson for Phelan said the speaker met with the executives recently. A spokesperson for Gov. Greg Abbott did not immediately respond to a request for comment. If approved, the deal would signal a move away from decades of a competitive electricity market in Texas in which all power generators in Texas are paid for the energy they produce and sell, rather than the power they could potentially generate. Berkshire Hathaway Energy executives say their plan would not create a "capacity" market, but instead, serve as highly regulated back-up electricity generation. The company says that building extra power generation in Texas would help ease fears of a repeat of the February power outages during which dozens of people died. "We're not in favor of all of getting rid of [the deregulated market]," Brown said. "We think competition is to Texas' benefit. We're not dipping into the market at all."



Power grids must keep energy demand and supply in balance at every moment or risk uncontrolled blackouts. The February outages were ordered by the grid operator, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, in a move to prevent a bigger catastrophe that could have left most of the state without power for weeks. Under Berkshire Hathaway's plan, ERCOT would control when the new power plants are activated to avoid the threat of such widespread power outages, and customers would pay a fixed fee only to cover the project's costs, while the price for energy supplied to the market would go to the state, not the company. It's a similar model to how transmission and distribution utility companies are regulated. Brown said that while the company is not against the state's procurement process, it believes it's "uniquely suited" to carry out the idea because of its \$8.3 billion investment and a commitment to have those 10 plants operational by November 2023. "Certainly there's other entities out there that could potentially do it," he said, "that list is pretty short." Texas deregulated its electricity market decades ago, theorizing that the price of electricity in the market — based on demand — would attract a sufficient amount of power supply. When demand for power is high, the price for power increases, and companies that can supply electricity to the grid make more money. The more

cheaply a power plant can generate electricity, the higher the profit margin when they sell it in the wholesale market. Conversely, a plant that has been expensively weatherized to be able to operate in the extreme cold, or a plant that only operates on the few hottest days of the year, represents a big upfront investment for what may be little return in Texas.



Power companies did not prepare plants to withstand severe winter weather, in part because companies build plants as cheaply as possible to maximize their profit margins. When the plants tripped offline during the winter storm, unprepared for the extreme cold, there wasn't enough power generation available to the grid. Power prices spiked, and the Public Utility Commission of Texas ordered ERCOT to set prices at the artificial cap — \$9,000 per megawatt-hour — to signal to power companies that any and all power was desperately needed. But energy experts have expressed doubt that merely having more power plants would have prevented the crisis. Electric generation tripped offline due to freezing temperatures and a shortage of natural gas, which fuels many plants in the state. "We didn't have a shortage of power plants, we had a shortage of power plants that could work in the cold, and the gas to run them," said Dan Cohan, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Rice University. "Texas has an enormous amount of natural gas plants already. It's not at all clear that there's a need to have more power plants built."

Berkshire Hathaway's presentation argues that adding power generation capacity would be more cost effective for the state than upgrading existing plants to withstand extreme weather. Brown, the CEO, said that the natural gas plants would be winterized and maintain seven days of natural gas storage on site to ensure it could operate during an emergency. Last Thursday, the Texas Senate Jurisprudence Committee advanced Senate Bill 3, a wide-ranging winter storm bill that also mandates winterization for power plants and the natural gas supply chain.



J.P. Urban, senior vice president and acting CEO of the Association of Electric Companies of Texas, a trade associa-

tion of electric companies in the state, warned lawmakers earlier this week against subsidizing new power plants in their response to last month's outages. "We believe the program should only focus on bolstering resiliency and existing facilities to avoid disruption in the competitive market," Urban said during a committee meeting Tuesday. But lawmakers responded that they want more power generation on Texas' grid, not just for future storms, but generally for the growing state population. "We're going to be a little bit more open to the types of investments that need to be made," said Rep. Richard Peña Raymond, D-Laredo, responding to Urban. "We're going to need more power in Texas, period. Freeze or no freeze." The committee left the legislation pending on Tuesday, but witnesses and lawmakers indicated they would support the Huberty bill. Even with the support of the Legislature's top leaders, the Berkshire Hathaway deal will need to win the approval of the rank-and-file members — a lesson Buffett learned in a past session. In 2017, after the billionaire met with Abbott and Patrick at the Capitol, the Senate used emergency powers to quickly craft legislation that became known as the "Buffett Bill," a special interest carve-out allowing Buffett to be exempt from a state law that was barring people from owning both a vehicle manufacturing company and auto dealerships.



The bill was effectively killed after Tea Party activists blasted it — and the attempt to fast-track it — as special treatment for a rich and powerful business owner. Other lawmakers and officials have expressed doubts about letting Buffett and his companies play too big of a role in Texas. Speaking at Texas Energy Day at the Capitol Wednesday morning, Texas Railroad Commissioner Wayne Christian, one of the state's oil and gas regulators, criticized President Joe Biden over his energy policies and in doing so, swiped at "Warren Buffett's company." Christian said canceling oil and natural gas pipelines would put more trains on railroad tracks, and "Warren Buffett's company makes a lot of money from it." (Courtesy <https://www.texastribune.org/>)

# COMMUNITY

## COVID-19 Hospitalizations In Texas On The Decline



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 in Texas fell again last Sunday after dipping below 10,000 for the first time since December on Saturday. There were 9,652 people in Texas hospitals with confirmed cases of the disease caused by the novel coronavirus on Sunday, according to the Department of State Health Services. That's the lowest figure recorded since Dec. 16.



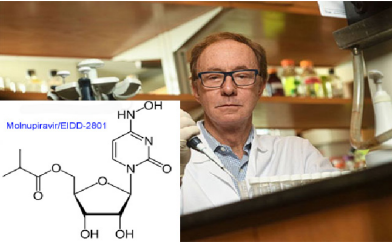
State health officials reported 5,278 new, confirmed cases of the virus Sunday, 1,499 probable cases and 167 more fatalities. Texas has reported 38,643 COVID-19 deaths and more than 2.16 million cases since the pandemic began. The actual number of cases is believed to be far higher because many people haven't been tested and some who get sick don't show symptoms.

Over the past week, more than 16% of COVID-19 tests in Texas have come back positive, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up within weeks. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause severe illness and be fatal. (Courtesy fox26Houston.com)

**Related**  
**Drug Launched At Emory Univ. Reduces Virus That Causes COVID-19 To Undetectable Levels**

An antiviral drug initially discovered by Emory's non-profit drug development company DRIVE appears safe and reduces SARS-CoV-2 to undetectable levels in COVID-19 patients after five days of administration, according to data from a Phase II clinical trial in the United States. Molnupiravir, previously known as EIDD-2801, can be provided as a pill in an outpatient setting, which could be a step up in ease of distribution and

convenience. Although remdesivir and antiviral monoclonal antibodies have received Emergency Use Authorizations from the FDA, they must be given intravenously or by injection. In addition, drugs like molnupiravir could flexibly tackle SARS-CoV-2 variants, which have emerged as a concern in recent months.



George Painter, CEO of DRIVE and director of the Emory Institute for Drug Development

"There's still an urgent need for an antiviral drug against SARS-CoV-2 that can be easily produced, transported, stored, and administered," says George Painter, PhD, CEO of DRIVE (Drug Innovation Ventures at Emory) and director of the Emory Institute for Drug Development. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, DRIVE quickly repurposed a broad-spectrum antiviral drug it had been developing against influenza and equine encephalitis. Molnupiravir is being developed further by Merck and its partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, a closely held biotechnology company, which licensed the drug from DRIVE last year. All funds for the post-licensing development of EIDD-2801/molnupiravir have been provided by Ridgeback and Merck.

In the most recent clinical study, molnupiravir eliminated infectious coronavirus from nose swabs within five days in all of the people taking it. For comparison, a quarter of people receiving placebo still had detectable virus in their nose swabs at day five. Emory physicians were not involved in the clinical trial, which recruited 202 adults with COVID-19 symptoms at outpatient clinics in the United States. The data were presented at the recent Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic

Infections (CROI).



**This scanning electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 (orange) — also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19. (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases-Rocky Mountain Laboratories, NIH)**

While molnupiravir is proven to interfere with coronavirus replication in infected patients, more data is required to determine whether it can prevent severe illness. Merck and Ridgeback say that more results from the U.S. clinical trial will be shared when they become available, and additional Phase 2 and 2/3 clinical studies are underway. Molnupiravir has also been tested for safety in a clinical trial in the United Kingdom. Molnupiravir works by forcing the viral enzyme that copies SARS-CoV-2's genetic material to make so many mistakes that the virus can't replicate. Still, Merck's comprehensive testing indicates that high doses of the drug are not mutagenic in animals. Emory scientists, in collaboration with top coronavirus experts at other universities, have previously shown that EIDD-2801 is highly effective at interfering with coronavirus replication and transmission in animal models and also in mice implanted with human lung tissue. EIDD-2801 has broad spectrum activity against a number of diseases of public health concern, including influenza, SARS-CoV-1, MERS, chikungunya, Ebola and equine encephalitis. The drug was initially developed with the support of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and the Georgia Research Alliance's Venture Development program.

**Emory Healthcare Administers 100,000 Doses Of COVID-19 Vaccine**  
ATLANTA — Emory Healthcare cele-

brated a big milestone last week. The health system has administered 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine as of today to its patients and employees who have met criteria as defined by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). Emory marked this occasion as Georgia Governor Brian Kemp opened up vaccinations to all adults, 16 and older, today. Emory Healthcare patient Alison Danforth, who is six-months pregnant, received the 100,000th dose of COVID-19 vaccine at Emory's Northlake Vaccine Clinic on March 25. Danforth recently had discussions with her Emory obstetrics team and decided getting the vaccine was overall the best choice for protecting herself and her child.



**Emory Healthcare's 100,000th COVID-19 vaccine recipient, Alison Danforth.**

"We are thrilled to have reached the momentous occasion of administering 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to our patients and employees who have met eligibility as defined by Georgia DPH," says Jonathan S. Lewin, MD, CEO of Emory Healthcare. "We are excited to now be able to offer all Emory Healthcare patients and Emory University students, faculty and staff ages 16 and up access to COVID-19 vaccines." The Northlake vaccine clinic can accommodate up to several thousand people a day for both dose one and dose two COVID-19 vaccinations. (Courtesy <https://news.emory.edu/>)