

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gov. Kevin Stitt and others on Wednesday announced the creation of the Oklahoma Pandemic Center for Innovation and Excellence in Stillwater. It will house the state's public health lab, which will move there by the end of the year.

“Today is a milestone day for the future of the public health response of

the great state of Oklahoma,” Stitt said. He said the center will be the

first of its kind in the nation, combining agriculture, human medicine, food safety, public

health testing and preparedness, and animal safety and health. Interim Health Commissioner Dr. Lance

Frye said it “will propel Oklahoma to the forefront of public health preparedness and

response.” Stitt said the center will bring together local and national experts. Although it

will not be on the Oklahoma State University campus, it will include partnerships with

OSU, the Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine, the University of Oklahoma and

many other public and private entities, Stitt said. Secretary of Science and Innovation Elizabeth

Pollard said federal CARES Act funds and the \$58.5 million bond for a new

public health lab will be used to fund the center. In addition, operating funds

of the Oklahoma State Department of Health will be used, Frye said. The state

plans to use \$25 million in CARES Act funds, said Travis Kirkpatrick, Oklahoma State

Department of Health deputy commissioner. It will also use the \$9.5 million appropriated budget

for the public health lab, Frye said. Frye called it an investment in the

future of the state and its response to pandemics. He said the state had

not invested in infrastructure and was not prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that

“we want to make sure that doesn't happen again.” The facility initially will be

located in leased space at 4615 W. Lakeview Road. Featured video Gallery: COVID-19 basics

everyone needs to know as the pandemic continues Barbara Hoberock 405-528-2465 barbara.hoberock@tulsaworld.com

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