



## Concentric by Ginkgo and XpresCheck™ Confirm First North American Detections of Novel BA.3 Sublineage of Omicron Variant through CDC COVID-19 Air Travel Biosecurity Program

December 18, 2021

BOSTON, Dec. 18, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Ginkgo Bioworks (NYSE: DNA) today confirmed that it has collected, identified, and sequenced three samples containing the novel BA.3 sublineage of the Omicron variant. Samples came from passengers on flights originating from South Africa who arrived at Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) in early December. These samples were collected in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and XpresSpa Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: XSPA) as part of a SARS-CoV-2 surveillance project that involves voluntary sampling of arriving international travelers at select United States airports. The program is implemented through XpresSpa Group's XpresCheck™ subsidiary and Ginkgo's public health and biosecurity initiative, Concentric by Ginkgo.

The sequence represents the first time the BA.3 sublineage has been identified in North America. State and local public health authorities have already been alerted about these cases and are taking all appropriate measures to ensure that the individuals receive the health support they need and that the spread of the viral strain is contained to the extent possible.

This joint program leverages Concentric's large-scale group testing infrastructure and XpresCheck's in-airport testing platform to detect COVID-19 variants among international travelers. The goal of this program is to create a system that detects and provides information about the virus. Currently, the program is operating at four large airports: JFK International Airport (JFK), Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR), San Francisco International Airport (SFO), and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL). The program recently [reported](#) the first detection of the Omicron variant among inbound international travelers from a sample collected at a United States airport.

As part of this program, Concentric performs viral sequencing on samples that are positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Through testing and sequencing conducted through this surveillance program, Concentric confirmed the presence of the new BA.3 sublineage of the Omicron variant. There is presently [limited data](#) available on BA.3 and only six cases have been reported worldwide to date (none of which were in the United States). Scientists at CDC and throughout the world are working to learn more about this and other sublineages of Omicron. These samples will aid them in that goal.

"Early detection and sequencing of new variants entering the United States are crucial to our ability to better understand the virus and assess the threat it poses to public health," said Dr. Duncan MacCannell, Chief Science Officer for CDC's Office of Advanced Molecular Detection (OAMD).

"These first US BA.3 sublineages detected through the traveler-based surveillance program provide insight about the Omicron variant to public health agencies, and expand our understanding of travel-related transmission of SARS-CoV-2 variants."

"These findings further demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of this collaborative airport-based surveillance program to quickly identify SARS-CoV-2 variants and variant changes that could have public health implications." said Dr. Cindy Friedman, Chief of CDC's Travelers' Health Branch. "We thank the travelers who participated and encourage more travelers to do so as post arrival testing after international travel is an important part of the COVID-19 public health response to help protect communities across the country."

To date, over 9,000 arriving international travelers have voluntarily participated in the joint air travel COVID-19 surveillance program. The program continues to collect samples daily. In addition to samples collected at the airport, participants receive a free home kit to collect a sample 3-5 days after travel that they mail to the lab for PCR testing; positive samples undergo genetic sequencing. CDC recommends that all travelers get tested 3-5 days after international travel.

"Proactive pathogen monitoring is so important - it allows us to build a weather map of how the virus evolves and spreads by characterizing what is entering the country," said Matt McKnight, Chief Commercial Officer at Ginkgo Bioworks, who is leading the Concentric by Ginkgo initiative. "It's been exciting to engage travelers in the program, helping them to stay on the go and in the know, while also providing critical information to scientists, public health authorities, and communities, allowing all of us to better understand and respond to the virus as it continues to evolve. Scaled biomonitoring programs like this one, conducted in partnership between the public and private sector, will form the foundation of next-generation biosecurity and sustained public health, through this pandemic and potential future threats."

Doug Satzman, XpresSpa Group CEO, stated, "We are pleased that the biosurveillance program we developed in collaboration with the CDC and our partners at Ginkgo Bioworks is playing such an important role in detecting new variants and mutations of the COVID-19 virus entering the country. This further underscores the importance of COVID testing across our nation's airports and the leading role that XpresCheck can play monitoring the potential risks that may be entering our borders."

Today, Concentric by Ginkgo's integrated platform leverages a [lab network](#) that consists of dozens of partner labs to provide testing in 18 states (including the District of Columbia), primarily in K-12 schools, helping keep schools open and kids in class. Concentric's network has enough contracted and validated labs to serve millions of individuals with pooled tests every week and Concentric stands ready to invest to expand this partner capacity.

### About Ginkgo Bioworks

Ginkgo is building a platform to enable customers to program cells as easily as we can program computers. The company's platform is enabling biotechnology applications across diverse markets, from food and agriculture to industrial chemicals to pharmaceuticals. Ginkgo has also actively supported a number of COVID-19 response efforts, including K-12 pooled testing, vaccine manufacturing optimization, and therapeutics discovery. For more information, visit [www.ginkgobioworks.com](http://www.ginkgobioworks.com).

### About XpresSpa Group, Inc.

XpresSpa Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: XSPA) is a leading global health and wellness holding company operating three distinct brands: Treat™,

XpresCheck™, and XpresSpa™. Treat is a travel health and wellness brand that will be providing on-demand access to healthcare through technology and personalized services. XpresCheck is a leading on-site airport provider of COVID-19 screening and testing with 14 locations in 12 domestic airports. XpresSpa is a leading airport retailer of spa services and related health and wellness products, with 43 locations in 21 airports globally.

To learn more about XpresSpa Group, visit: [www.XpresSpaGroup.com](http://www.XpresSpaGroup.com).

To learn more about Treat, visit: [www.Treat.com](http://www.Treat.com).

To learn more about XpresCheck, visit: [www.XpresCheck.com](http://www.XpresCheck.com).

To learn more about XpresSpa, visit [www.XpresSpa.com](http://www.XpresSpa.com).

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#### **Ginkgo Forward-Looking Statements**

This press release contains certain forward-looking statements within the meaning of the federal securities laws, including statements regarding the potential of Ginkgo's biosecurity capabilities and partnership with XpresSpa Group, Inc. These forward-looking statements generally are identified by the words "believe," "project," "potential," "expect," "anticipate," "estimate," "intend," "strategy," "future," "opportunity," "plan," "may," "should," "will," "would," "will be," "will continue," "will likely result," and similar expressions. Forward-looking statements are predictions, projections and other statements about future events that are based on current expectations and assumptions and, as a result, are subject to risks and uncertainties. Many factors could cause actual future events to differ materially from the forward-looking statements in this document, including but not limited to: (i) the effect of the business combination with Soaring Eagle Acquisition Corp. ("Soaring Eagle") on Ginkgo's business relationships, performance, and business generally, (ii) risks that the business combination disrupts current plans of Ginkgo and potential difficulties in Ginkgo's employee retention, (iii) the outcome of any legal proceedings that may be instituted against Ginkgo related to its business combination with Soaring Eagle, (iv) volatility in the price of Ginkgo's securities now that it is a public company due to a variety of factors, including changes in the competitive and highly regulated industries in which Ginkgo plans to operate, variations in performance across competitors, changes in laws and regulations affecting Ginkgo's business and changes in the combined capital structure, (v) the ability to implement business plans, forecasts, and other expectations after the completion of the business combination, and identify and realize additional opportunities, and (vi) the risk of downturns in demand for products using synthetic biology. The foregoing list of factors is not exhaustive. You should carefully consider the foregoing factors and the other risks and uncertainties described in the "Risk Factors" section of Ginkgo's quarterly report on Form 10-Q filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC") on November 15, 2021 and other documents filed by Ginkgo from time to time with the SEC. These filings identify and address other important risks and uncertainties that could cause actual events and results to differ materially from those contained in the forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made. Readers are cautioned not to put undue reliance on forward-looking statements, and Ginkgo assumes no obligation and does not intend to update or revise these forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise. Ginkgo does not give any assurance that it will achieve its expectations.

#### **Forward-Looking Statements of XpresSpa Group, Inc.**

This press release may contain "forward-looking" statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. These include statements preceded by, followed by or that otherwise include the words "believes," "expects," "anticipates," "estimates," "projects," "intends," "should," "seeks," "future," "continue," or the negative of such terms, or other comparable terminology. Forward-looking statements relating to expectations about future results or events are based upon information available to XpresSpa Group as of today's date and are not guarantees of the future performance of the Company, and actual results may vary materially from the results and expectations discussed. Additional information concerning these and other risks is contained in XpresSpa Group's most recently filed Annual Report on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K, and other Securities and Exchange Commission filings. All subsequent written and oral forward-looking statements concerning XpresSpa Group, or other matters attributable to XpresSpa Group or any person acting on its behalf are expressly qualified in their entirety by the cautionary statements above. XpresSpa Group does not undertake any obligation to publicly update any of these forward-looking statements to reflect events or circumstances that may arise after the date hereof.

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