



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Wednesday, May 20, the State Department of Health reported that the number of COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County has surpassed 15,000 and 589 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. Today also starts our City's phased reopening that we are commencing based on data that the virus has been lessening. The data we are looking at today supports that, but needs some explanations. As you can see, the daily count of new COVID-19 cases as well as the percentage of positive tests while tracking downward have dramatic spikes. We have been told by State authorities the reason for this is inconsistent reporting from labs and a failure to timely enter test results. What we don't know, therefore, is what the chart would actually look like if data was timely entered. The State Department of Health still believes that the trajectory has already plateaued and is going down... but there is not perfect clarity.

What that means for us is that we cannot interpret our phased reopening as a signal that the virus has left our community. It clearly hasn't. What it does mean is that our efforts to shelter at home and limit social interaction have caused the virus to diminish. So we must make sure we don't conduct ourselves in a manner that creates a new outbreak of the virus. We have to be diligent as we reopen and continue to manage risk and abide by all the guidelines.

At every juncture our decisions have been informed with various health care professionals. One of them, Dr. Kenneth Ratzan, is a Miami Beach resident and Chief of Infectious Diseases at Mt. Sinai. His counsel is worth considering:

So given that admonition, let's talk about our phased reopening, which as you know is a little behind the County and State's reopening.

Here is our schedule. As you can see, we are starting with most businesses and retail, including salons and museums. If all goes well, next week we will authorize opening all of our 800 restaurants. Remember right now hotels, gyms, and beaches are among the places not open. And our midnight curfew remains in place.

So today, Wednesday, May 20, our City began its first phase. Here is what to expect. You will be required to wear face coverings indoors. More and more experts indicate that this is more important than they initially thought. Retail establishments will be limited to 50% capacity and will keep space for proper social distancing. Salons will have even stricter limits. Clothing stores will not open up fitting rooms. And, of course, there should be hands free sanitizer readily available. Many businesses are doing even more and doing it creatively. Lincoln Road will have its own campaign geared towards its unique profile.

In a week on May 27, we will open restaurants, which will also have a different look. Facial coverings indoors, and the same capacity limits as businesses. There will not be any self service like buffets or salad bars. Most places will require reservations and allow customers to remain in their cars while they are waiting. And sanitizers will be available. We will also be closing many streets throughout the City to traffic to give restaurants more opportunity for outdoor dining. For instance, Ocean Drive will be entirely pedestrian all the time.

These are just some of the measures in place. They can all be found online at a newly created City website so you can see what is required and recommended, and if you're a business owner and need some help navigating these requirements, please don't hesitate to call our hotline. We are not looking to rack up "gotchas"... rather we are going to focus on preparing you to make your patrons feel safe and, most importantly, to be safe.

A brief comment on houses of prayer, which may also reopen today. One of the challenges of religious services is that they often last far longer than a dinner or a visit to a store, and the longer people remain indoors together the greater the risk of passing the virus to others. Our religious institutions can once again provide services to the community, but under the same guidelines as other places. Namely they need to require social distancing, adhere to capacity limits and make sure congregants are wearing facial coverings. I also asked a group of our faith leaders to put together their guidelines for their congregations so please be on the lookout for advice from your faith leaders as to their schedules and additional precautions they will implement, to make sure our celebrations of faith remain safe.

Many have asked about hotels and our beautiful beaches. We will see how well the next week goes, and if it seems like we are managing the virus, avoiding crowds, and people are still adhering to all these guidelines, I believe an early June opening would have the support of many on our Commission if the County is like-minded.

So that's it. This is not the end of our challenges, but rather the end of the beginning as we move slowly and deliberately toward a reopening of our economy. It's important to give ourselves and the families that rely on us, the opportunity to get back to work. But it's most important to make sure we do it safely.

It may not be easy. The goals of social distancing and reopening our economy can be competing and will create some obvious tensions. But we are not Anytown USA. We are Miami Beach, a City with one of the most recognized brands in the world. We do things here every day that other places couldn't dream of doing even once. So while I may project caution and restraint, don't for a moment think I am not convinced that if there is any place, anywhere with the human capital, ingenuity and spirit to figure out how to navigate out of this quagmire, it is our City.

I have faith in our Manager and his Staff, my fellow commissioners, our business and hospitality community and, of course, our residents. Let's show the world how to do this right!

Thanks for your patience and calm. And stay healthy and mostly at home.