



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Wednesday, April 29, the State Department of Health reported that COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County surpassed 11,800 and 324 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. Today, let's only focus on the Miami-Dade County daily positive cases over the last 14 days. We're using a two-week window because the CDC does not recommend moving toward opening up of any major areas of commerce until there is a true downward trajectory for 14 days. While there has been some downward movement since the peak on April 17, obviously, this path remains jagged but ultimately pretty flat.

Another prerequisite to opening up areas of commerce is that there is adequate testing, and the ability to trace contacts of newly infected people and surveilling infection, generally, throughout the community. We clearly don't have that capacity as of yet. But I am pleased to announce some promising developments. First, we have been advised by the Governor's emergency management team that they will be establishing a full testing center at our Convention Center in the next week or so as there is already medical staff on-site. It will likely be a hybrid site for both drive through and walk-up testing, but it will require appointments. That will give us much more capacity than we have had. More importantly it will give us some capability to manage the virus if there are outbreaks.

Also importantly on the testing front, the Rockefeller Foundation has announced that we are one of ten communities that will be included in its COVID-19 National Action Plan. The initiative will deliver very substantial expertise and personnel to expand our local capacity to monitor future infection waves and do critical contact tracing of infected individuals. Stay tuned for details about both these testing developments.

We are today, however, like the County, opening up our parks, marinas and golf courses. No one should interpret these actions as receding from the requirements of physical distancing. Rather, we believe that people need more space to practice distancing safely. Accordingly, while most parks are open, there will be substantial limitations on sports, no tot lots and no equipment will be available, and some parks will be totally closed because they provide no real opportunities to spread out. Also, the County order requires the wearing of masks when outside at these venues. We have extended that county requirement to our beach walk... so you will need to wear masks there as well. You can find a full list of the parks that are open, and all the guidelines for parks, golf courses and marinas, on the City's website.

We don't have a fixed timeline that provides for the opening up of retail and restaurants, museums, or hotels, or beaches. And we won't rush in to open them. The decisions as to "when" we reopen will be

based on advice from the world class team of infectious disease experts who are guiding us through this process. So while the question of “when” we will begin reopening is still unknown, we do need to figure out the “how” we will reopen. In addition to speaking with physicians, to answer this question, we have been consulting with the local business community including retail, hotels, restaurants and arts and culture, whose sectors have been devastated by the closure. We have also been reviewing the work product of other similar efforts by County and State working groups advising those governments. While we will continue to receive extensive input informally from our local community, I have reached out to representatives of those sectors most impacted by the closures, to give the City more formal feedback and input on reopening strategies. I am grateful that business leaders Robin Jacobs, Lyle Stern and Emilio Estefan have agreed to organize and lead advisory panels in retail & general business, hotel & lodging, restaurant & bars, and arts & culture. I would also like to thank the M.B. Chamber of Commerce which has agreed to take on the task of creating online portals for a fulsome participation by the community of these ideas and strategies. As we adopt the best practices that will allow us to safely open our community back up, I am confident this group and others will do what they do best... assure that our community returns even greater and grander.

On March 23 we became the first City in Florida to shelter in place. Within weeks the entire state followed suit. I know how these past 5 weeks have been exhausting and overwhelming. So many aspects of our lives have been disrupted in immeasurable ways. And the economic anxiety has been for too many, too severe.

I wanted to take a moment to once again thank you, our residents, for handling this with calm. Yes, now and again I get an email unsuitable for this message or yourz9, children.. I recognize that the strain of this moment can be wearisome. But most of you, even in your most vigorous disagreement about ... say, our beach closures or face covering requirements... still manage to be courteous and understanding. So thank you.

In our most difficult moments our best does seem to shine through. No better example is our feeding program led by Commissioner Richardson. We have partnered with private groups like Feeding South Florida, Farm Share, and Seniors in Action. Father Carr at All Souls Episcopal Church converted part of his church into a full food packaging and distribution center. Dozens of individuals and businesses have donated money in support, and local restaurants like Silverlake Bistro, A Fish Called Avalon, and the Chef's Warehouse are pitching in with meals. Volunteers include our City Commissioners and their aides, and entire companies, like Keller Williams Realtors, sending their employees. And of course, our City employees, our Fire, Ocean Rescue, and Police departments and community development team led by Maria Ruiz, are lending their hands. So many have reached out that we have started a wait list for people who want to pitch in.

The point is, we know what we will rely on to get through this... the unshakable spirit of a community that knows we are at our best together even when we are apart.

More sooner than later, this will be over and COVID-19 will be another moment in the past that we talk about, remembering how it brought out the best in us.

Until then, thanks for your patience and calm. Stay healthy and at home.