



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Thursday July 9, the State Department of Health reported that the number of COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County surpassed 55,000 and nearly 1,100 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. There is not much in the way of good news. And there are certainly lots of opinions. But you should have facts. So today we are going to review datapoints. And so you know, I always use Miami-Dade County statistics as they seem most relevant given how much movement there is within the County. For instance, every day tens of thousands of workers come to our island and at least an equal number of residents leave to go across the Bay. I don't use State data points as I think they are arguably not impacting our community or our hospital system.

Over the last week, [the number of COVID-19 cases each day in our County](#) have each established or come close to each establishing an all-time one-day high. And the numbers are dwarfing the positive cases from when the pandemic had previously reached its peak. Some have argued that we should not be concerned because we are simply doing more testing, so we are bound to find more infections. That is a false argument.

First, if that were so the percentages of positives would remain the same or decrease, but the problem is [the percent of positive cases is also moving up](#). For context, the CDC did not think a community should even reopen if more than 10% of tests taken were positive. As you can see, while we were below that 10% when we began to reopen in June, since the reopening we have gone well past that ceiling. The average positive rate for the last 7 days is over 20%.

Some have argued that since so many of the newly infected are younger, which is true, and that we shouldn't be concerned as they do not feel the impact of the virus and don't get very sick. Of course, that doesn't change the fact that they have older relatives that they come into contact with.

But the premise is absolutely false and proven by the data regarding COVID-19 hospitalizations.

Remember, hospitalizations are not subject to manipulation because of more testing. You're either sick enough to be admitted, or you're not. [The current census of those hospitalized in Miami-Dade due to COVID-19 is 1,748](#). To give you some perspective, that is double the census for nearly the entire period of the pandemic including the period that preceded our shelter in place.

Some argue that, well, maybe the hospitalizations include minor cases. Of course, that is ridiculous because it's a hospitalization, but to prove it so, take a look at patients in intensive care with COVID-19. [Today in Miami-Dade there are 363 people so sick that they are in intensive care](#). That number is nearly doubled from just two weeks ago. And as you can see, it is far higher than at any other point during this virus' existence.

Still some claim "fake news" and say "well, less people will die now." First, spending two weeks in intensive care is not something I would wish on my worst enemy. But we can see that this current spike is also moving people to need medical interventions of last resort. Namely Ventilators. A ventilator's purpose is to take over the body's breathing process when disease has caused the lungs to fail. At its peak in Spring, we had 198 people on ventilators. And as recently as in June that number had fallen to under 50. [In the last two weeks the spike has brought the number of people needing ventilators to 190](#), so there is no question it will soon easily surpass the previous high by a wide margin.

The only silver lining, if you can call it that, is that at the beginning of this virus, most people needing ventilators ultimately died. Now that number seems to be under 50%. Of course, that is little solace.

These are all what are called lagging indicators because the virus usually takes days or weeks to manifest. What that means is that if you have a spike in infections, you won't see hospitalizations from that spike for a few days or longer. And an increase in intensive care admissions will also lag behind hospitalizations. With ventilators and death being the final, lagging data points. So when we are in the midst of a spike in positive cases, as we are today, we should expect some severe difficulties going forward.

Beyond just the COVID-19 patients, this spike is unquestionably straining our County's hospital capacity and obviously its ability to address non-COVID care.

My point is this. There are so many voices nationally and locally that are arguing that we are over-reacting. That this is just a bad flu. Or It's just killing people who might have died anyway. These are false narratives that seek to justify a path of least resistance. A path that validates not wearing masks. A path that allows you to have a house party with dozens of friends. A path where we don't have to sacrifice. But we need to sacrifice because this is not fake news. At the end of this, and it will eventually end, I fear we all will have known too many people who were lost or who lost a loved one, or suffered in the hospital, because of this.

I appreciate the devastating impact this is having on our economy, and especially our wonderful hospitality industry. But that is precisely why we need to all do our part so that we can recover. Wear the mask; it's not a political statement. Exercise physical distancing. We are a community that does its best when we lean into a task together. Please, lean into this.

If we do these things, we will eventually be able to return to normalcy; we will fully reopen businesses safely, with kids at school, and with all the simple pleasures we typically take for granted but now feel so distant.

Until then, thanks for your patience and calm. It is needed. And stay healthy and at home.