



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Friday August 21, the State Department of Health reported that the number of COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County surpassed 150,000 and over 2,200 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. This week the number of our fellow Floridians who have perished statewide surpassed the 10,000 mark.

Notwithstanding these numbers, our update this week includes a basis for cautious optimism.

Our trendlines all seem to be pointing in the right direction but are moving slowly and are still higher than we were in April. [You can see from the positives that are being reported daily](#) and the percentages of those who are positive, that we are approaching where we were in June. [Hospitalizations](#) are now hovering well under 100 new patients per day which is clearly better than it was but still too high. As fewer patients move through the system, our ICU and ventilator census will also come down.

If we stay this course and continue with the measures we are abiding by, our experts think it will be a few weeks, perhaps longer, before we have a sustained positivity rate under 5%. That's not a magic threshold, but it is a signal that the disease has become more manageable. Remember, when we began reopening only some things in June we were just under 5% and the resulting surge of new cases took us to unprecedented heights. So it is not in and of itself a greenlight. But it does mean what we are currently doing is working.

In the same way that early on New York felt like a cautionary tale that we wanted to avoid, in some ways it has become an example of how to emerge from this. They are reopening a good deal of their commerce and society. Their infection rate is now below 1% and they have set up one of the best contact tracing programs in the country which has preliminarily been effective at cabining outbreaks and preventing surges. I still don't believe our state contact tracing program is up to the task but we are working with the local state health department officials to upgrade their efforts. Hopefully we'll get them to the point where they can be effective.

I want to take a moment to thank so many of you who are doing your part and more to get us through this. Many of us thought this would not be the slog it has become. And honestly no one wants this to be the new normal. But so many of you have stepped up in such remarkable ways. Through daily food drives, or by figuring out how to still make graduation ceremonies special for our children, or celebrating those essential workers and first responders who keep doing their jobs even in the face of legitimate peril. Our restaurant owners who are finding ways to serve you outside or at home, keeping our commerce alive even in the face of such formidable challenges. And, of course, so many who are doing their part by wearing a mask. All of you are the reason we are getting through this, so thank you.

I have tried to make these messages to you factual and focused on our county and community because so much information we receive is about other places or, frankly, can be erroneous or outright absurd. But in any challenge, whether it is a hurricane or a pandemic, it's vital that you are fully informed and armed with the best information available. I want to thank our City Hall team for all they are doing to make sure we are communicating to you in a timely and accurate manner. Thank you to Tonya and PJ, Aaron, and Amanda from her team; to my staff, Adrian and Michele; and to Ernie from our Police Department, who all work to provide the constant flow of messages sent from our City. My fellow Commissioners and their Aides are doing their part as well to keep you informed.

And I also want to send a very special thanks to my Executive Assistant Samantha Leon. Samantha has not missed a beat in taking care of City business over the last few months. Which might not be that impressive but for the fact that she gave birth to her first child just a few days ago, continuing to attend to city duties even from the delivery room. Little Dominic reminds us that no matter how difficult times can sometimes feel, there is still tremendous joy in the world and amazing possibilities. And that we will get through this because that's what we do.

So thanks for your patience, your calm and sacrifice. Stay healthy and mostly at home.