



# MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Monday, March 30, the State Department of Health reported that COVID-19 cases in Miami Dade surpassed 1600, and 7 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. It is clear we are a hot spot and conditions are likely to get worse before they improve. So you know, we are no longer reporting our City data as it has also become apparent that a good deal of the reported data isn't reliable or even reflective of the extent of the infections in our Community. With such limited testing, and reporting failures, I think the wisest course is for you to assume everyone you come upon may be infected and act accordingly to minimize the risk to you and your loved ones. While this may sound stark, experts agree that it is only through strict adherence to social distancing protocol that we will get through this quicker and hopefully safer.

So here is what's happening in our City.

The City is providing support for a private drive through testing center on Collins Avenue that is expected to open by week's end. This is not a City run center – we are just providing infrastructure support and a location. You can only get a test if you fit the CDC guidelines and make an appointment. Please don't show up without an appointment, you will be turned away.

Our own local hospital is doing its part by substantially reducing its bed count to assure it has capacity for any increases or surge, and addressing the attendant equipment issues. I would like to thank all our hospital and health care personnel, and our first responders, who are reporting to work everyday notwithstanding the peril.

A couple things we need to go over.

First, with regard to condominium common areas – this afternoon County Mayor Carlos Gimenez ordered the closure of all condominium and apartment buildings' pools and gyms. Please abide by this directive.

Second, regarding grocery stores and pharmacies. We need to do much better. If you can order for online pick up or delivery – do so. It makes much more sense than in-person shopping. I visited every supermarket this weekend. Some – like Trader Joes -- were scrupulously following recommended counter measures and adding some of their own. But not everyone was that exacting. Publix needs to do a better job of controlling access to stores and frankly cleaning their carts all the time. On Friday early evening, one publix had simply stopped cleaning their carts for the day due to staff shortages and no wipes were available. Pharmacies the same. I visited the Walgreens on 41<sup>st</sup> street – they

didn't have any cleaning tools available – not anything -- and no one was controlling physical distancing.

In order to improve this situation, the Manager will be directing our police and code officers to issue warnings to all businesses that are violating his emergency orders or are failing to adhere to the guidelines we are implementing. I appreciate that this may feel like public shaming, but candidly we need these businesses to step up. And we need to step up.

While businesses that are open need to be responsible, we need to be as well. Please keep your distance from others when going out to get essentials, and take the recommended precautions. Again, assume everyone could be a risk. The best protection you have is your vigilance and your good judgment.

Unfortunately, These rules must also apply to public gatherings of any kind including religious services. Our City orders, the county order and, frankly, good judgement demands that we not organize in-person prayer groups. Many rabbis have reached out expressing great concern that minyans are still happening informally or at homes or outside. As difficult as it may seem to comply with this... we must. It is a threat -- a grave threat -- to sponsor gatherings even to pray.

Finally, we need to pay special attention to our senior community, as they are especially susceptible to the worst impacts of this virus. We have closed our trollies – called or visited the seniors we have access to, and reached out to the County Department of Health to make sure staff at senior residential communities understand the need to promptly respond to potential infections in a senior housing facility. Candidly, our senior residential facilities are run by mostly private entities or the county. I was not convinced everyone was on the same page so we will continue to take some additional steps to make sure each center knows what to do and who to contact if someone shows virus symptoms.

And if you are a senior citizen 65 or older, and you need a meal, call 3-1-1 and the County will immediately address your needs.

A year ago almost to the day, my Dad, Seymour Gelber, passed away at the ripe old age of 99. He was a great guy who spent a lifetime serving this community as a prosecutor, judge and our Mayor. I celebrated my Dad this weekend thinking of him and wondering how he would be navigating this challenge. My Dad grew up in the Depression and spent his early years as a buck sergeant in the Army Air Corps. He believed that his path of service was molded during the War when everyone in his generation faced a common threat and prevailed only by relying on each other. When he was Mayor during Hurricane Andrew, he saw the same thing – the worst in nature bringing out the best in people.

We are already seeing that today. People – even those tremendously challenged by this moment – are still reaching out and asking how to help neighbors and perfect strangers. One couple emailed their desire to fund meals for kids in our feeder pattern who are on supported lunch. Commissioner Richardson is working with residents packaging meals for our seniors and they have delivered 6,000 bags. Commissioner Steinberg has started a program so children and families can send thank you

cards to our heroic first responders and hospital personnel who are putting themselves in peril every day to help us.

And I notice that people in their simplest moments are a little more polite and empathetic to each other.

I think my Dad would have expected nothing less.

Thanks for your calm and patience. Stay healthy.