



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Thursday, May 14, the State Department of Health reported that the number of COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County is nearing 15,000 and 532 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. As you can see from these two graphs, there has been a steady downward slope in COVID-19 cases and in the percent of positive cases since the virus reached its peak around April 10.

There are four criteria that need to be met before we can begin reopening our economy. First, the CDC requires a downward trajectory of the virus for two weeks and, second, it also requires that our community have the ability to manage any outbreak with contact tracing and surveillance testing. The Florida Department of Health has advised us that they believe these two elements have been substantially met and our experts agree. The third factor is that our hospital capacity can withstand a surge, which we believe it can. So our ability to meet the final factor... that any opening still provides for compliance with physical distancing obligations... is unknown until we actually begin our reopening and see whether people and businesses are able to comport themselves consistent with that requirement.

Based on these factors, today Miami-Dade County Mayor Gimenez and Governor Desantis announced that they will allow county businesses, including retail, and restaurants to open as early as this Monday, May 18. They also provided a 184 page manual with the rules necessary to open. Even though both the State and County officials have approved a Monday opening, our City in coordination with the City of Miami and other local cities are taking it a bit slower because rushing into an opening, doing too much too soon, could easily have dire consequences.

So we are going to give our business community more time to prepare and we are going to open in phases, so we don't get too far ahead of ourselves. Here is our schedule.

First, on Wednesday May 20, we will begin opening businesses, including museums, salons, and retail establishments, at reduced capacities and with numerous protective measures.

A week later on Wednesday May 27 we will open our restaurants at 50% capacity and with numerous protective measures.

We are not opening our beaches, bars and hotels and the County Order doesn't permit the opening of condo pools.

And during this time our City's midnight curfew will remain in force.

For the things that we are opening, there will be lots of measures implemented to promote your health. For instance, when our retail businesses open on May 20, they will be operating at 50% capacity with clear distancing requirements and one-way circulation paths inside stores. And of course masks and plenty of sanitizer.

When our restaurants open on May 27, there will be some considerable changes to the dining experience. In many places we will be enlarging the available outdoor seating areas. Other measures include disposable or touchless menus.

We will also be implementing incentives for all employees to be regularly tested, and providing opportunities for free testing at our Convention Center walk up and drive up testing site.

I'd like to thank our local Chamber of Commerce and Robin Jacobs, Lyle Stern and Emilio Estefan and the panels of residents, physicians and business owners for their efforts to provide input so that our best practices are practical and effective.

The City will have all these rules and guidelines online for patrons and proprietors and there will be more than 50 city staff working full time to make sure everyone knows the rules of the road. Our code enforcement team will visit every business to make sure rules are being followed for your safety.

But we are all going to have to help create and promote a culture of compliance. While our City will be promoting the enforcement of all these standards, it is really up to all of us as a community to make sure they are adhered to. Especially the requirements for social distancing and masks.

And no one should interpret our efforts to open our economy as a signal that there is no longer a dangerous virus in our community. One of the physicians we have been consulting with, Dr. Morris, who directs the prestigious Emerging Pathogen Institute at University of Florida, made this point very clearly:

Finally, we cannot assume we will not stumble. There will be moments where activity happens that is inconsistent with best practices. Where there are simply too many people on one of our promenades. Or people not wearing a mask where they need to. And we will have positive cases and possibly even outbreaks of the virus. The critical question will be: can we minimize these moments and manage the outbreaks when they do occur through our contact tracing. That answer will depend on us and our willingness to truly commit to best practices as a community.

So thanks for all you are doing, and will do. And for your patience and calm. Let's stay healthy and mostly at home.