



# MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

This morning, Thursday, October 1, the State Department of Health reported that COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County surpassed 170,000 and 3,284 people in our County have succumbed to the virus.

Lots to cover this week.

[First our numbers.](#) We seem to be leveling off or possibly increasing very slightly. Our new County COVID cases, our positivity percentage and our new COVID hospitalizations all seem to have remained at around the same level over the last few days. Again, these levels are just above where we were last time we reopened in June.

Last week, late Friday, came some big news in the form of a surprise announcement from Governor DeSantis. Without any real warning to anyone in South Florida, he issued an executive order opening up all businesses that night including bars and venues, and also issued an order preventing local governments from fining people for failing to wear masks. So given this development, I need to tell you what you should expect.

First, all businesses are open. Regarding restaurants and bars, they will need to follow social distancing practices that are set forth in our opening guidelines. If they can achieve that social distancing, they can open up to 100% capacity. If they cannot meet the distancing guidelines, they must reduce their capacity until they are able to. But the Governor's order does not require they reduce capacity below 50%. So, what that means, even if let's say a bar is unable to properly create adequate separation among patrons, it can still stay open at 50% capacity even if it is unsafe according to the CDC guidelines. Businesses that choose to open notwithstanding the lack of separation should provide notice to their patrons that they are not complying with these health and safety rules.

Regarding masks, while we will likely not be giving out many mask citations to individuals for now, given our inability to impose a penalty, we will be giving warnings and providing free masks. Importantly, we are still allowed to require businesses to make sure all patrons and employees are wearing masks per our guidelines. So, what that means, is expect our city and county officers to be checking in. If we see these guidelines being violated, expect prompt action including closures of businesses if employees and patrons are not wearing masks. We'd obviously rather avoid that, so it's important for our business community to embrace this responsibility and make sure their patrons and workers are wearing masks as required.

So you know, I don't support much of the Governor's actions. All of our medical experts tell us that the mask mandate has been a major reason we have been able to reduce the virus without having to shelter in place. It's also been the reason why we've been able to open up as much as we have. So, his Order not only effectively precludes our enforcement of the mask requirement on individuals, but it sends a very misleading message to the community that we no longer need to be cautious. And every physician and scientist with whom we've consulted has said precisely the opposite.

Here is Dr. Marty, the infectious disease specialist who has been advising the County and our City.

Additionally, we will be opening up playgrounds and outdoor fitness equipment, and most park amenities. With regard to our park program, our intention all along has been to follow the public-school reopening schedule. It

looks like a phased school reopening in Miami-Dade by grade level will begin this Monday. So, we will begin after school park programming on the following Monday the 12th.

Last time we reopened; literally thousands of people died in our County and we were compelled to close businesses and entire parts of our economy. That surge is still causing dozens of our residents to die every single day. So, it is really now on us to make sure that people are careful. Please do all you can to create a culture of compliance. And even if you're not going to get fined, wear the mask. Urge others to do the same. With regard to non-COVID business, the Commission approved our new budget for the upcoming fiscal year earlier this week. We were able to navigate the loss of revenue from COVID without any meaningful reduction in public facing services, and without any significant workforce reductions. We were also able to do it without an increase in our base millage rate and we've kept our reserves at 19%, which is higher than what has previously been our average. And, happily, we were able to still invest in some programming and capital improvements that will help us emerge out of this pandemic with an even greater commitment of resources to our parks, and our arts and cultural activities. It's important that we don't let this virus change who we are or what we expect our community to be. I want to thank our Chief Financial Officer John Woodruff, Budget Director Tameka Otto Stewart and staff for their efforts, and my Commission colleagues who have been responsible stewards of your tax dollars.

So, as they say, we continue to live in interesting times. But by leaning on each other, by being careful, soon, hopefully, these times will become less interesting.

Thanks for all your patience, calm and sacrifice. Stay healthy and mostly at home. And let's go Heat!