



**Dean J. Trantalis**  
Mayor

100 North Andrews Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301  
(954) 828-5004  
(954) 828-5667 Fax  
dtrantalis@fortlauderdale.gov  
[www.fortlauderdale.gov](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov)

May 4, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Office of Governor  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Gov. DeSantis:

I hope this letter finds you well as we continue to address the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. Thank you for your leadership. Florida continues to experience reduced infections and people are looking forward to a return to a level of normalcy in their lives.

In this regard, I would like to recommend that you consider removing the city of Fort Lauderdale from your prohibition on South Florida's ability to begin reopening stated in Executive Order 90-112. My city has developed a plan to reopen many amenities and businesses with critical health safeguards in place, and the latest data from your Department of Health shows we are ready to undertake this move.

The Centers for Disease Control, in conjunction with the White House, set a five-part test for communities to enter into Phase 1.

1. A downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses reported within a 14-day period.
2. A downward trajectory of COVID-like syndromic cases reported in a 14-day period.
3. Either a downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period or a downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period.
4. Hospitals treat all patients without crisis care.
5. Robust testing program is in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging antibody testing.

The data posted early Sunday on FDOH's Health Metrics web page and the separate county-by-county report issued over the weekend by the same agency clearly shows that Broward County, where Fort Lauderdale is the largest city, has met the first three medical criteria.

1. Emergency Department visits with influenza-type symptoms in Broward has been on a six-week decline in Broward. The week of March 22 had 833 cases, while the week of April 26 had 118. Specifically, in the past two weeks, the numbers declined from 277 to 118.

2. Emergency Department visits with COVID-like illness has similarly declined over the past six weeks from 687 cases to 194. Specifically, the numbers dropped from 365 cases to 194 over the past two weeks.
3. For the third category, the compliance with the CDC-White House standard is best illustrated when reviewing new positive test results compared to total tests. Positive tests for COVID as a percentage of total tests have declined since the week that began April 5. Within the past two weeks, the percent positive dropped from 10.3% to 5.7%. The two peak days recently regarding raw data of positive cases – April 23 and April 30 – were in fact due to a substantial increase in testing that occurred on those days, and their positive result-to-total percentage comparison are within the downward trajectory of daily data.

BrowardHealth has reported to Broward County that it can treat all patients without crisis care, thus bringing us into compliance with the fourth criteria of the CDC-White House standards.

Regarding the fifth standard of testing, great strides have been made in Broward County. There are seven testing locations now available. A drive-thru site has opened in Fort Lauderdale's Holiday Park, a walk-up site has opened west of the city limits at the Urban League of Broward County and a mobile testing site has reopened.

The opening of the Holiday Park site was quite a challenge. I deeply appreciate the assistance you directly provided as well as that of your chief of staff, Shane Strum, and your emergency management director, Jared Moskowitz. It is now conducting up to 400 tests a day.

Given this sizable commitment of resources to testing in Broward County, I think we have now come into compliance with the robust testing requirement that is the final of the five CDC-White House standards.

It is my understanding that even further local efforts regarding testing are underway.

Broward County has stated that it has asked the state to distribute locally 20,000 of the 100,000 antibody test kits that it has ordered. I further am told that the county is in negotiations to procure additional antibody testing kits to supplement that supply. Finally, the county has stated it is working with a university and healthcare professionals to conduct a serology study for COVID-19 using these antibody test kits.

The downward trend in the critical health categories shows the level of success that we have had in implementing our stay-at-home order, our closure of non-essential businesses as well as the requirements for social distancing, limited public gatherings and the wearing of face coverings.

We have had a high degree of cooperation and compliance from our residents. With their help, the city has managed to flatten the curve on COVID-19 infections and quash the rate of transmission in our community.

Given these facts, I am asking you to lift Section 2(A.2) of Executive Order 20-112 as it applies to the city of Fort Lauderdale and allow us to enter into Phase 1 like the rest of the state.

In addition, the city would also ask that the closure of our beachfront that was undertaken as part of executive orders 20-70, 20-90 and 20-52 not be extended when it expires May 8 in order to allow us to choose the best methodology and timing for a phase reopening of the beach.

Please remember that Fort Lauderdale took the lead in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak initially.

The city joined in a collaboration with Miami Beach to close our beach front ahead of any other coastal resort community in the country. When Broward County simply decided to ask people to stay at home, it was Fort Lauderdale that united the other cities in Broward to enact a mandatory stay-at-home order – an order that the county then copied.

Just as Fort Lauderdale led the way at the beginning, we are prepared to help lead the way out for the South Florida region.

Our economy is hurting. Businesses are struggling to survive. Unemployment is rising, and people's livelihoods have been drastically impacted. It is time to let us move ahead with reopening our economy.

I created a blue-ribbon working group of business executives, medical professionals and neighborhood leaders to brainstorm regarding a reopening. They developed a 28-page plan to do, with strong and reasonable recommendations of how certain amenities and businesses can open while still protecting public safety.

We would like the latitude as a city to put these plans into action – preferably even greater latitude than allowed in Executive Order 20-112. For instance, we'd like to allow a 50 percent reopening of restaurants and to open places like hair salons and gyms with the safety standards stated in our report. Our city would like to begin a phased reopening culminating on June 1 with restaurants and other businesses that need time to restock, reconfigure and restaff.

The city is very cognizant of the need to be cautious and have safeguards in place as none of us want a significant rebound to occur. We would closely monitor the health data and be prepared to re-adjust our plans accordingly.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. Again, you have my heartfelt thanks for both your help on the Holiday Park testing site as well as my appointment to your own reopening task force. You have been a tremendous help to the city of Fort Lauderdale during this most trying of circumstances.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dean J. Trantalis  
Mayor