

July 22, 2020 - Governor Hogan Press Conference

COVID-19 UPDATES

- Unlike many states across the nation, Maryland's COVID-19 positivity rate continues to remain low and stable. The statewide seven-day positivity rate is now 4.49%, a decline of nearly 83% since it peaked at 26.91% on April 17.
- Positivity rate for Marylanders younger than 35 (6.57%) is higher than the positivity rate for those older than 35 (3.50%).

Testing

- In total, Maryland has now conducted 1,000,179 COVID-19 tests and is consistently reporting roughly 20,000 tests every day. 20 out of the state's 24 jurisdictions have met the goal of testing at least 10% of their population.
- The dramatic rise in infection rates in other states has significantly increased the national demand for testing and caused delays of up to 10 days at commercial labs across the country, including in Maryland.
 - The LabGun COVID-19 test kits acquired from LabGenomics, a South Korean company, continue to be the centerpiece of the state's long-term testing strategy.
 - Last month, the state opened a signature lab at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, which is now staffed up and fully operational to utilize the LabGenomics tests. Unlike many commercial labs, this facility is reporting test results in just 24-48 hours and utilizing several thousand tests per day.
 - The state is on track to have an adequate supply of tests through the end of November, in accordance with Maryland's long-term testing strategy, but is prepared to take additional actions, if necessary, in response to outbreaks, shortages, and delays in other states.

Out-of-State Travel

- Marylanders should refrain from traveling to areas that are experiencing rapidly escalating numbers. Anyone who does travel out of state should immediately get tested and self-quarantine while awaiting test results.

Safer At Home Guidance

- Wear masks or face coverings in public areas, businesses, and on public transportation.
- All Marylanders are still safer at home, particularly older and more vulnerable populations.
- Employers should continue to encourage telework for their employees whenever possible.
- Do not use public transportation unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Practice physical distancing, staying six feet apart when possible, and avoiding all large gatherings.

Local Enforcement

It is the responsibility of county officials to get their local health departments, local liquor boards and inspectors, and local law enforcement agencies to work together to enforce the following:

- Bars and restaurants in Maryland are permitted to be open for seated service only, with strict physical distancing and capacity restrictions.
- Customers must be seated at least 6-feet apart from other guests.
- Standing in bar areas is strictly prohibited.

Contact Tracing

- Maryland's contact tracing operation has increased by 440% since its launch in April.
- From June 11 to July 18, the state's contact tracers consistently conducted outreach to more than 80% of confirmed COVID-19 cases within 24 hours of the case being entered into COVIDLink, Maryland's state-of-the-art data management platform.
- Contact tracers have been successful in reaching nearly 75% percent of cases.
- Marylanders are encouraged to cooperate with the state's contact tracing efforts by answering calls from 'MD COVID,' or (240) 466-4888.

ELECTION UPDATE

- The State Board of Elections is in preparation for the November general election, which will follow CDC guidance and give voters as many options as possible, including early voting and absentee voting by mail. Strongly encouraging Marylanders to vote by mail.

SCHOOLS UPDATE

- Local school systems will have the flexibility to determine, in consultation with their local health officers, how they will open and which groups of students and staff will be able to re-enter school buildings. Depending on conditions in their locality, school systems may be more restrictive than the requirements outlined in the state's recovery plan.
- Nine school districts have announced virtual learning for the fall: Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City (until Oct. 16), Baltimore County, Charles County, Harford County, Howard County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County and Washington County.
- \$255 million CARES Act funding is committed for education priorities.
- Within the framework of local control, MSDE will set a series of guardrails for school systems:
 - Guardrail 1: CDC Guidance
 - Handwashing
 - Physical distancing
 - Face coverings
 - Guardrail 2: State Protocols
 - Schools must adhere to protocols from state health officials for addressing an outbreak

- Guardrail 3: Benchmarks
 - These include identifying learning gaps, maintaining curricular frameworks, following health procedures from MDH and CDC, and ensuring safe transportation.
- All systems must follow CDC guidelines for schools, which stress the importance of handwashing, physical distancing, and cloth face coverings. Face coverings must be worn by all staff and students, particularly when physical distancing is not possible.
- All school systems must adhere to protocols instituted by state health officials for addressing an outbreak. Schools should provide written notification and next steps to all identified contacts. Schools should follow instructions from the local health department for all matters regarding quarantine, exclusion, and return to school for persons with a positive test for COVID-19 and those who had close contact.
- All school systems must meet a series of benchmarks before reopening:
 - Incorporate equity as a component in the local recovery plan;
 - Establish local education recovery stakeholder groups;
 - Identify learning gaps and instructional placement of students;
 - Follow and maintain curricular frameworks and Maryland College and Career Ready Standards;
 - Adhere to components of IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and ADA;
 - Adopt and follow health procedures outlined by the MSDE, MDH, and CDC, including cleaning and sanitization;
 - Ensure safe transportation for all students;
 - Develop a system for tracking attendance; and
 - Follow the Maryland Public Secondary Sports Athletic Association guidance for interscholastic athletics and activities.