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# Governor Mills Presents Safe, Gradual Plan to Restart Maine's Economy

April 28, 2020

*Governor will extend stay-at-home order with modifications to allow for activities and business operations deemed safe*

Governor Janet Mills today presented her Administration's plan to gradually and safely restart Maine's economy. The plan, which comes as the State appears to be successfully flattening the curve, establishes four gradual stages of reopening, the first of which begins May 1st. The stages focus not on essential v. non-essential designations like those used to originally limit business operations and activities, but on the ability of a business to operate or an activity to occur in a manner that protects public health and safety. As the Administration gradually eases restrictions on some businesses and activities, it also implements protective protocols, along with broader additional health and safety measures, to protect Maine people.

To that end, the Governor also announced today she will extend the State's stay-at-home order in the form of a new "Stay Safer at Home" Executive Order. The new Order, which she will issue by Thursday, will continue to have Maine people stay at home with limited exceptions for already permitted activities, such as grocery shopping or exercising. However, the new Stay Safer at Home Order will also allow Maine people to visit businesses or participate in activities that are deemed safe to open under Stage 1 of the reopening plan. The Order will extend through May 31, 2020 but is subject to change.

*"I am proud of the work Maine people have done to mitigate the spread of the virus and to flatten the curve, but our work is far from over," said Governor Janet Mills. "While this plan presents a path forward for gradually and safely restarting our economy, it should not lure Maine people into thinking that this pandemic is almost over or that things will be back to normal soon. The hard truth is that they are not; that they likely will not be for a long time; and that, with this plan, we are inventing a new normal – a different way of doing business, shopping, traveling, and enjoying the Maine outdoors in ways that keep us all safe."*

*"This plan offers a measured approach to restarting the economy that prioritizes what is most important: the health and safety of Maine people," said Heather Johnson Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development. "There is no doubt these have been challenging times, but the Department will work closely and collaboratively with our private sector partners to ensure that we are able to reopen businesses in a manner that protects public health."*

*"The Maine State Chamber of Commerce appreciates the Governor's thoughtful leadership throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dana Connors, President of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. "Our first*

*concern, as always, is protecting the health of Maine people, and we support the Governor's gradual approach to reopening the economy and her Administration's commitment to working closely and collaboratively across economic sectors to determine how to do so safely. Maine businesses are eager to do their part to stem the tide on this virus, and we look forward to our continued partnership to that end."*

*"Maine hospitals appreciate the balanced approach the Governor and her team are taking on restoring a broader array of healthcare services available to the public," said Steven Michaud, President of the Maine Hospital Association. "There are many variables at play in re-starting these services. We look forward to continuing to work with the administration on meeting the healthcare needs of the public in a safe and responsible way. We also appreciate the patience Maine people have shown and will continue to show their healthcare providers as we move toward restarting some services."*

*"The Maine Medical Association wants to thank Governor Mills for her science-based public health focus during this unprecedented time," said Dan Morin, Director of Communications & Government Affairs for the Maine Medical Association. "Her trust in front-line physicians is greatly appreciated. We look forward to working with her office to keep all Mainers healthy."*

The Governor's plan establishes four stages, focused first on resuming those business operations and activities which can be conducted in a safe manner. This means that they involve a low risk for potential transmission of the virus. The earlier stages permit small businesses to reopen, but only with additional safety precautions.

Progression through the stages will occur month-by-month, depending on the success of previous stages. For example, Stage 1 will begin on May 1, if there are no new trends that change the plan. Stage 2 will begin in June, and Stage 3 will begin in July and continue through August. Stage 4, which lifts the most restrictions, will start at a point to be determined in the future. A month-by-month breakdown of the stages allows for sufficient time to assess the effectiveness of the health and safety precautions adopted and evaluate the potential need to adjust course.

However, the month-by-month plan should not be considered a hard and fast timeline. Throughout the process, the Maine CDC will monitor and report to the Governor epidemiological data, such as case trends and hospitalization rates, as well as health care readiness and capacity, to inform decisions on the appropriateness of proceeding through stages and lifting restrictions. If Maine CDC detects a resurgence of the virus, the State will move quickly to halt progression through the stages and reimplement restrictions to protect public health and safety. As the Governor outlined in her vision for restarting the economy, public health considerations will be the foremost guiding factor in the reopening process.

*"The health and safety of Maine people will guide each phase of this process," said Dr. Nirav D. Shah, Director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "We'll continue to work closely with our colleagues at DECD on an approach that balances the health of Maine's people with the health of our economy."*

The Maine CDC will be tracking three primary metrics in its evaluation of whether or not to progress through the stages: 1) a downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses and COVID-like syndromic cases; 2) a downward trajectory of documented cases and newly hospitalized patients; and 3) the capacity of Maine's hospital systems to treat all patients without crisis care and the ability of the state to engage in a robust testing program. The Administration will also continue to evaluate standards outlined in the Governor's vision statement, such as testing capacity and contact tracing, to inform decisions about proceeding.

## The Plan to Restart Maine's Economy

The staged plan builds on the Governor's current Executive Orders, which already allows grocery stores, pharmacies, financial institutions, home repair services, child care agencies, and car repair services, [among others](#) (PDF) to operate, and then allows for the safe reopening of those businesses not currently operating. The upcoming four stages as contemplated by the Governor's plan are:

**Stage 1 (May):** Beginning May 1st, Stage 1 continues the prohibition on gatherings of more than 10 people, the quarantine of all people entering or returning to Maine for a period of 14 days, and the special precautions for older Mainers and others at risk of COVID-19. It calls for people who are able to work from home to

continue to do so, including State employees. It will also newly require that Maine people wear cloth face coverings in public settings where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain, and continue strict requirements for long-term care facilities. Guidance on cloth face coverings will be issued in the coming days. Stage 1 also allows for the limited expansion of certain business, religious, and quality of life activities, with appropriate safety precautions. These include:

- Health care from Maine-licensed providers, with recommendations that they prioritize care for patients with time-sensitive conditions; assure the safety of patients, staff, and communities; manage the use of essential resources such as personal protective equipment and testing supplies; and pace re-opening services to the level of community COVID-19 activity, maintaining capacity in our hospitals for potential outbreaks
- Personal services: Barber shops, hair salons, and pet grooming
- Limited drive-in, stay-in-your-vehicle religious services
- Drive-in movie theaters
- Outdoor recreation: guided outdoor activities (hunting & fishing) and restricted use of golf and disc golf courses
- State parks, state-owned public land trails, and historic sites; although certain coastal state parks will remain closed
- Auto dealerships and car washes

**Stage 2 (June):** Tentatively beginning June 1st, Stage 2 contemplates revising the limitation on gatherings from less than 10 people to less than 50 people. It also calls for people who can work from home to continue to do so but allows for employees in certain fields to begin to reenter the office as needed, including State employees. It maintains the 14 day quarantine for all people entering or returning to Maine and the special precautions for older Mainers and others at risk of COVID-19. With appropriate safety precautions, Stage 2 would allow for some degree of opening with reservations, capacity limits, and other measures for:

- Restaurants
- Fitness and exercise centers and nail technicians
- Retail stores for broader in-store shopping
- Lodging and campgrounds for Maine residents and those who have met the 14 day quarantine requirement
- Day camps for Maine children and those who have met the 14 day quarantine requirement
- Coastal State parks

**Stage 3 (July & August):** Tentatively beginning July 1st, Stage 3 contemplates maintaining the prohibition on gatherings of more than 50 people and other Stage 1 and Stage 2 restrictions, including the 14-day quarantine on people entering Maine. With appropriate safety precautions, Stage 3 would allow for some degree of opening for:

- Lodging, such as hotels, campgrounds, summer camps, or RV parks for Maine residents and visitors. The Administration is developing guidelines to assist them in safely reopening, and reservations should not be taken until those guidelines are issued.
- Outdoor recreation such as charter boats and boat excursions
- Bars
- Personal services such as spas, tattoo and piercing parlors, and massage facilities, among others

**Stage 4 (Timeline Undetermined):** Stage 4 contemplates lifting restrictions and allowing all businesses and activities to resume with appropriate safety precautions.

The stages outlined above are advanced as a framework for planning. Innovations or expanded testing and other capacity could accelerate this pace, as could a determination that certain parts of Maine, such as some rural areas, may be able to ease restrictions safely. At the same time, a surge in COVID-19 in parts or all of Maine could result in significant adjustments to this plan and a return to more restrictions.


The Mills Administration does not currently anticipate that it will be safe to accept cruise or commercial passenger ships with more than 50 people this summer. The Administration will review this assessment in September 2020. This prohibition excludes passenger ferries working between Maine ports. Additionally, the Administration is currently working with stakeholders to develop plans for a safe return to school in the fall.

**Establishing Safety Precautions:** In order to reopen, various sectors of Maine’s economy will be required to work with the Department of Economic and Community Development to implement practical, reasonable, evidence-informed safety protocols and modifications that protect the health and safety of employees and customers. These accommodations may be as simple as closing break rooms, providing flexible working hours, employee training, and installing plexiglass shields, or as complex as adjusting a business’ sales process and reducing occupancy to ensure employee and customer safety.

This collaboration between DECD and the private sector will result in what will be known as a COVID-19 Prevention Checklists. These checklists will identify best practices for the business specific to its operations as well as general best practices related to physical distancing, hygiene, personal protection, and maintenance of clean workplaces, among others. The checklists, which will differ sector to sector, will undergo a rigorous review process including from government officials, health experts, and industry representatives. Once completed, businesses that commit to complying with the requirements on the checklist will be provided a badge to post on their business door or website, their names will also be posted on the DECD website and they will be allowed to open. Health providers in Maine will follow U.S. CDC and professional association guidelines.

Last week, Governor [outlined her vision for a gradual and safe reopening of Maine’s economy](#) amid the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, emphasizing four principles that will guide the State’s decision-making process, including protecting public health, maintaining health care readiness, building reliable and accessible testing, and prioritizing public-private collaboration. The Governor also invited Maine people to offer their ideas through a portal launched by DECD. To date, more than 1,600 submissions have been received.

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