Mills Administration Announces That Indoor Dining in Androscoggin, Cumberland & York Counties Can Resume on June 17 With Added Health and Safety Precautions

June 15, 2020

Decision follows a stabilization of new cases and hospitalization rates in the three counties

The Mills Administration announced today that indoor dining in Androscoggin, Cumberland, and York counties can voluntarily resume on Wednesday, June 17, 2020 with added health and safety protocols outlined in the COVID-19 Prevention Checklist. The decision to allow inside dining in these three counties follows a plateauing of new cases in recent weeks, based on the 14-day moving average, as well as the stabilization of hospital rates in the same counties. Previously, only outside dining, takeaway, and delivery services were permitted at restaurants in these three counties. With this change, restaurants statewide will now be open to both inside and outside dining with added health and safety precautions.

The Mills Administration is also further aligning re-openings in these counties with the rural part of the Restarting Maine's Economy Plan. Also effective Wednesday, June 17 in Androscoggin, Cumberland, and York counties, bars, breweries, and tasting rooms are permitted to open for outdoor, seated service while gyms, nail salons, and tattoo parlors may also reopen, all with added health and safety protocols. Additionally, the Administration is also expanding capacity limits at retail establishments, allowing up to 5 customers per 1,000 square feet, given the decreasing risk associated with retail shopping and the assumption that stores will continue to require staff to wear cloth face coverings and follow strict public health precautions. This change replaces the customer limits established in a previous Executive Order.

The Administration continues to remind Maine people to follow State requirements and U.S. and Maine CDC recommendations, such as wearing cloth face coverings, staying six feet apart whenever possible, and frequently washing hands with soap and warm water. New research demonstrates that wearing face coverings can significantly slow the spread of COVID-19, underscoring the importance of wearing them.

"Maine people and businesses have worked hard to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and the stabilization of cases and hospitalizations in York, Cumberland, and Androscoggin counties help demonstrate that," **said Governor Mills.** "But this pandemic is not over. As we reopen restaurants for indoor dining and other businesses in these areas, we remain vigilant. Businesses must strictly adhere to health and safety protocols and all people should wear face coverings, stay six feet apart whenever possible, and frequently wash their hands. If we continue to protect ourselves and one another by taking these steps, we can reopen our economy in a safe way and limit the spread of this dangerous virus."

"Businesses and customers alike have an important role to play in turning the tide on COVID-19," **said Heather Johnson, Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development.** "By

continuing to follow COVID-19 Prevention health and safety protocols, we can protect the health of Maine people and the health of our economy."

"Maine's hard work has limited the devasting impact of COVID-19 compared to other eastern seaboard states. To keep it that way, the Department will intensify its efforts on testing, contact tracing, and public health education as restaurants and other establishments open statewide," **said Jeanne Lambrew, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services.**

In Androscoggin County, the average number of new daily cases began increasing in early May and has plateaued at roughly 10 cases per day. Similarly, Cumberland County experienced a gradual increase in cases in May, with another increase in late May related to an outbreak at Cape Memory Care. In the past week, the number of new daily cases has stabilized at roughly 20 per day. In York County, new daily cases are averaging between 5-7 per day.

Hospitalization rates, too, have largely stabilized in all three counties. In Androscoggin County, roughly 5 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 at any one time, approximately 2 of whom are in intensive care. In Cumberland County, hospitalizations reached a peak in late May as a result of the outbreak at Cape Memory Care. Over the past week, hospitalizations in Cumberland County have held steady at roughly 25 individuals, approximately 7 of whom are in ICUs. The same trend was seen in York County, where hospitalizations also peaked in late May, with roughly 5 ICU patients and 3 non-ICU patients. In the past week, however, rates have stabilized, with approximately 3 ICU patients and 3 non-ICU patients at any one time.

The public health risk posed by indoor dining is higher than that of other indoor activities, and higher than that from outdoor dining, because remaining seated in an enclosed space for an extended period of time can increase the risk of exposure. This risk can be mitigated by the added health and safety precautions required by the COVID-19 Prevention Checklist, such as the use of spaced tables, plexiglass barriers, servers wearing face coverings, and other measures. Even with these measures, people are urged to follow precautions when dining inside given this risk.

"We'll continue to monitor the data closely," **said Dr. Nirav D. Shah, Director of the Maine CDC.** "Maine people have limited potential spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 by being responsible in physical distancing, wearing face coverings, and handwashing since March, and we trust that high level of responsibility will continue as restaurants throughout the state reopen."

It is possible, if not likely, that there will be an uptick in cases as a result of the increased interaction of people as the reopening process moves forward. Maine CDC will monitor epidemiological data, as it has throughout the entire reopening process, including case trends, hospitalization rates, and reports of COVID-like symptoms, as well as health care readiness and capacity. If a review of these metrics in their totality and in context finds evidence of a concerning increase in COVID-19, the Administration may move swiftly to limit harm and protect Maine people, including the potential rollback of indoor dining or other sector-specific re-openings in a region or community.

With these changes, Maine has reopened much of its economy and is either on par or ahead of other northeastern states. Adjusted for population size, as of June 14, Maine ranked ninth lowest in the nation in terms of positive cases; 12th lowest in the nation in terms of deaths; 6th lowest in terms of patients ever-hospitalized out of the 36 states reporting; and 10th highest in the percentage of people who have recovered out of the 42 states reporting.

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