With Improving Public Health Metrics, Mills Administration Ends Early Business Closing Time

January 28, 2021

Governor Janet Mills announced today that she will end the 9:00 p.m. early closing time for businesses, effective Monday, February 1, 2021. The decision is the result of Maine's improving public health metrics, including a decrease in Maine's positivity rate and new COVID-19 cases per million.

Starting February 1, those businesses that had been subject to the requirement may resume evening operating hours while continuing to follow other public health and safety requirements outlined in the COVID-19 Prevention Checklists.

> *"We are beginning to round the corner on the post-holiday surge of COVID-19. With these improved public health metrics, and with the holidays behind us, it is appropriate to remove the early closing time requirement,"* ***said Governor Janet Mills****. "At the same time, this pandemic is far from over. As we continue to get shots into as many peoples' arms as quickly and efficiently as possible, it is crucial that Maine people continue to wear masks, watch their distance, and avoid gatherings whenever possible. Doing these basic things will help us put a lid on this virus and get back to normal faster. That will be great for Maine people and great for Maine businesses."*

The early business closure addressed a higher risk of COVID-19 transmission during later hours when people are more likely to lower their guard and not adhere to critical public health and safety measures. The early closure measure – similar to that in other states – allowed businesses to stay open with daytime operations and continue curbside pick-up and delivery service after 9:00 p.m. The requirement began on November 20, 2020 and was extended on December 30, 2020.

On Thursday, January 28, 2021, Maine reported a seven-day PCR positivity rate of 3.64 percent, a decrease from 5.89 percent on December 31, 2020. Further, Maine's 7-day new case rate has declined by 35 percent in the last two weeks.

Checklists for Indoor Amusement; Outdoor Amusement; Movie Theaters; Performing Art Venues; Casinos and Seated Food and Drink Service have been updated to reflect this change. All COVID-19 Prevention checklists can be viewed on the Department of Economic and Community Development's website.

To help businesses impacted by the pandemic, the Mills Administration created the Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program and the Tourism, Hospitality, and Retail Recovery Program, awarding $235 million to 5,294 businesses and nonprofits across the state. In total, the Mills Administration has provided more than $250 million to support Maine businesses throughout the pandemic.

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