With Improving Public Health Metrics, Mills Administration Exempts Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey From Quarantine & Testing Requirement

July 1, 2020

The Mills Administration announced today that it is exempting visitors from the States of Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey from the 14-day quarantine requirement or negative COVID-19 testing alternative, effective this Friday, July 3, 2020.

The decision comes after the Administration reviewed public health data in other states to determine the appropriateness of additional exemptions, like those previously extended to New Hampshire and Vermont. In evaluating these exemptions, the Administration takes into consideration several data measurements, which include but are not limited to, the prevalence of the virus and the positivity rates in other states. In reviewing these metrics, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, for example, demonstrate a lower positive rate than Maine's. Additionally, the prevalence of the virus in these states is similar and continues a downward trend.

Even with this update, Governor Mills continues to strongly recommend that visitors from these states obtain a test before visiting Maine, in order to "Know Before You Go". Visitors can find COVID-19 testing sites near them via the website https://get-tested-covid19.org/. Those taking reservations for lodging facilities in Maine should advise all visitors that testing is encouraged, even if no longer required for people coming from certain states.

Furthermore, with more people coming to Maine's coastal towns and cities, the use of face coverings will become even more important. Governor Mills will issue an Executive Order requiring Maine's large retail stores, lodging establishments, restaurants, and outdoor bars and tasting rooms in the coastal counties of Hancock, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Cumberland, and York, and in the more populous cities of Bangor and Brewer and Lewiston and Auburn, to enforce the State's face covering requirement. In the last week, states across the country, such as North Carolina, Nevada, Washington, and Oregon, have implemented similar strong measures related to face coverings, given the evidence that masks significantly reduce transmission of the virus.

> *"When our Administration unveiled the Keep Maine Healthy Plan last month, we said that we would continue to monitor public health data in other states and evaluate whether we could offer additional exemptions to Maine's quarantine and testing requirements," said Governor Mills. "In reviewing the objective metrics over recent days and weeks, the States of Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York demonstrate low positivity rates and other encouraging trends in the prevalence of the virus. As a result, we will exempt these states from Maine's quarantine or test policy. At the same time, as I have said repeatedly, we will continue to remain vigilant against this virus, and Maine people and visitors, as well as businesses and facilities operators, must take every step to protect themselves, their customers, and others around them. Especially seeing the dangerous trends in southern and southwestern states after they lifted restrictions dramatically, we have to take this virus seriously, and we must continue to protect one another."*

"Maine's updated policy on visitors is a holistic review of public health metrics that have guided Maine's fight against COVID-19 from the start," said Jeanne Lambrew, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services. "Maine people should be proud of our successes to date, but residents and visitors alike must remain vigilant by wearing face coverings and practicing physical distancing and good hand hygiene."

"From the beginning of our reopening process, we have focused on protecting public health and supporting economic activity," said Heather Johnson, Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development. "Every day we work to strike that all important balance, and, with this move, believe we are taking another reasonable and responsible step forward."

The Mills Administration's exemptions come as other states, such as New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, institute and expand their own mandatory 14-day quarantine requirement for some travelers. Other states, such as Rhode Island and Hawaii, have followed Maine's lead in adopting a negative COVID-19 test as an alternative to quarantine. The Administration will continue to evaluate public health data in other states to determine whether additional states can be granted exemptions. The Administration is particularly focused on northeastern states within driving distance of Maine where most of Maine's visitors come from.

"Today I am encouraged as we take another step in reopening our economy and supporting the tourism industry. The decision to add three Northeastern states to the exempt status is welcome news to the Maine Tourism Association and others in the hospitality sector," says Tony Cameron, CEO of Maine Tourism Association. "The industry is committed to following all health protocols set forth in the Keep Maine Healthy plan."

"The Olympia Companies believe that the Governor's decision is an important step towards welcoming more of our most loyal and valuable guests from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, back to Maine for the summer," said Rick Martin Director of Operations, Olympia Hotel Management. "The health of our guests and neighbors is a priority, and I'm confident Maine's tourism industry will ensure safe and healthy experiences throughout the state."

These updates also come after the Mills Administration's approval of almost $9 million in grant awards to nearly 100 municipalities as part of its effort to bolster local COVID-19 prevention and protection efforts under the Keep Maine Healthy Plan. These grants, which utilize Federal funding, help municipalities keep Maine people and visitors safe from COVID-19 by supporting the implementation of measures that promote physical distancing, best public health practices for local businesses, and public health education campaigns, among other initiatives.

Last month, the Administration unveiled the Keep Maine Healthy Plan, which is a multilayered approach that aims to protect Maine people, protect visitors, and support Maine small businesses by reducing to the greatest extent possible COVID-19 risks associated with travel inherent to tourism. The plan includes three cornerstones: 1) testing as an alternative to the mandatory 14-day quarantine; 2) increasing symptom checks at places where visitors tend to go; and 3) supporting local COVID-19 prevention and protection measures.

With the vast majority of Maine's economy reopened under Stage 3 of the Restarting Maine's Economy Plan, and with more people interacting, it is critical that Maine people and businesses take steps to protect themselves, their businesses, and others by wearing face coverings, keeping six feet apart whenever possible, and washing hands often with soap and warm water.

Adjusted for population, Maine ranks 7th lowest in the nation in terms of positive cases; 9th lowest in the nation in terms of deaths; 6th lowest in terms of patients ever-hospitalized out of the 36 states reporting; and 4th highest in the percentage of people who have recovered out of the 42 states reporting.

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