Democratic governor extends Michigan stay-at-home order to June 12 while relaxing social distancing restrictions

Stephen Fuller
25 May 2020

On Friday, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer extended the stay-at-home order from May 28 to June 12 while relaxing restrictions on gatherings of under ten people and the operations of some businesses. This comes on the heels of the restarting of automotive production earlier in the week, bringing up to 150,000 workers across the state back into the factories and putting them at greater risk of coronavirus infection as the pandemic continues to rampage throughout the state and across the US.

While the state's rate of new COVID-19 infections and deaths stabilized over the past week, medical professionals have warned against a large-scale reopening. As of Sunday, the number of total confirmed cases in Michigan rose to 54,365, with 5,223 deaths from the coronavirus.

Rob Davidson, an emergency physician in West Michigan and executive director of the Committee to Protect Medicare spoke with the *Detroit Free Press*about the danger of reopening with the continuing shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing. "In the midst of that lack of testing, he [President Trump] is pushing Americans to reopen the economy quickly, pushing governors across the country to reopen hastily, and as medical professionals, we're concerned that he's ... pitting public health versus the economy and he's putting people's health and safety at risk."

The state of Michigan enacted one of the strictest stay-at-home orders in the country on March 23 as it was becoming clear that the virus was rapidly spreading in the state. A few weeks later Michigan had the highest death rate in the country, with the city of Detroit at the epicenter. In the following weeks the virus spread throughout the state, with outbreaks in counties with smaller cities and rural areas.

A study by the Brookings Institution in early May showed a marked increase in infections outside metro areas, with 31 of Michigan's 83 counties reaching "high-prevalence status" for coronavirus. High COVID-19 prevalence counties are those that show 100 or more cases per 100,000 population. The virus has spread widely through the state, of the 80 counties outside of Metro Detroit, only 3 have no cases reported; 28 counties have exceeded 100 cases.

Washtenaw, Kent and Genesee counties have 1,282, 3,308, and 1,936 cases, respectively. Metro Detroit, or Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties have 34,371 cases and 4,093 deaths. Clusters of outbreaks have become common across the state.

At a youth treatment facility in rural Vassar, Michigan, 25 out of the 34 female residents tested positive, along with four staff members. The numbers came after a six-week struggle by the facility to get tests for its residents.

Twenty-three residents tested positive at the Medilodge nursing home in Gaylord, located in northern Michigan. Healthcare workers at Michigan nursing homes have been speaking out about a lack of PPE. A worker at a nursing home in St. Clair Shores spoke with the *Detroit Free Press*, "My co-workers feel endangered by the lack of PPE. They are afraid for their families at home. Some of my co-workers have been refusing work because of they don't have enough safety equipment to do their jobs without fear."

An outbreak at Herbruck's Poultry Ranch near Lansing led to at least 84 cases spread across five counties. The first case at Herbruck's—the largest egg

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producer in Michigan—was reported in mid-April. According to a company press release, the outbreak spread among a group of poultry workers on the night shift. The company also said many of the workers that tested positive were asymptomatic.

The Herbruck's outbreak likely led to the spread of at least 60 more cases at the nearby Meijer Distribution Center in Delta Township. Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail said, "If you look at a number of the folks that are infected at the Meijer warehouse, as well as Herbruck's, a number of them live in that 48911 zip code and are refugees, so some of our population we've been talking to in 48911 are connected to both of those outbreaks." Both facilities remained open during the outbreak.

Michigan prisons have been hit especially hard by the virus, logging more deaths than any other state. The Michigan Department of Corrections reports 3,289 cases and 62 deaths. Inmates are packed together in unsanitary conditions, infecting staff and creating vectors of transmission in the communities where they are located.

The lifting of restrictions includes retail stores, auto shops, and nonessential medical services. In northern Michigan, bars and restaurants will be opening at reduced capacity. Houses of worship are now exempt from any restrictions, with in-person services starting this week.

With over 70 percent of Michigan counties reporting deaths from COVID-19, the reopening of auto factories, lifting of restrictions, and the warm weather for Memorial Day weekend celebrations create conditions for another surge of the virus, resulting in more outbreaks and deaths. Small rural hospitals will be unable to properly treat a surge in patients.

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