As COVID-19 hospitalizations spike by over 80 percent statewide

“Entire healthcare system at risk of another capacity crisis,” warn leading Michigan doctors in open letter

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In a dire open letter issued Thursday, leading physicians at hospitals and health care systems across the state of Michigan warn of an impending “capacity crisis.” COVID-19 hospitalizations are up 80 percent statewide in recent weeks, they write, and action is urgently needed to “prevent another catastrophic surge in hospital admissions and COVID-19 deaths.”

“If Michigan doesn't change its approach to this disease,” there is a danger of “exceeding the capacity of our hospitals as we did in Southeast Michigan this past spring,” the doctors warn, recalling the gruesome scenes from April when Detroit’s Sinai-Grace Hospital, completely overwhelmed by coronavirus cases, resorted to piling the dead one on top of another in unrefrigerated rooms.

The overwhelming of the health care system by COVID-19 has already contributed heavily to the more than 80,000 additional “excess deaths” recorded across the US since January of this year, over and above the 220,000 deaths caused directly by the disease.

Signed by 28 Chief Medical Officers and Chief Clinical Officers across Michigan, representing 110 of the state’s 137 hospitals, the statement explains that “regardless of state law, executive orders, or local public health directives, hospitals and healthcare systems across the state are standing as a united front in our policies and interventions in order to fight the spread of COVID-19.”

This is a reference to the fact that this month Michigan’s Supreme Court overturned as unconstitutional Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s emergency orders implementing limited lockdown measures earlier this year. “Our hospitals and healthcare facilities will continue requiring staff, patients, and visitors to follow public safety protocols, including mask-wearing, screenings upon entry to our facilities, and limitation of visitors,” the doctors write.

That the doctor’s statement is addressed not to any government body, political party or union, but rather appeals directly to “every Michigan resident" to practice social distancing and wear masks, is an expression of their complete lack of confidence in the state and both parties, whom everyone knows will continue to allow the pandemic to spread like wildfire no matter how many die.

It was autoworkers in Michigan who downed tools and walked off the job in March, refusing to work in unsafe conditions, that forced a closure of the auto industry and led to the limited lockdown measures implemented by Whitmer, after weeks during which the UAW sought to keep workers in the factories by issuing joint statements with corporate executives falsely claiming the plants were safe. But even the limited lockdown orders have now been lifted and cases are rising sharply.

Michigan has now recorded 7,484 deaths from COVID-19 and over 172,000 cases. The state was an early epicenter of the pandemic, with the Detroit area in particular suffering overflowing hospitals in April, a month that saw more than 100 Michiganders die every day from the virus.

Although statewide death rates in Michigan have been below 20 per day since June, coronavirus infection rates have once again reached and even

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exceeded their previous peaks from April and May. Yesterday, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reported 1,826 new cases, a new record.

Compared to the initial outbreak in the spring, these newer infections are so far affecting a younger layer of the population, which is presently being forced back to work and school under conditions where the virus is spreading. Dr. Adnan Munkarah, Chief Clinical Officer at Henry Ford Health System in Detroit and a signatory of the doctors' statement, warned the *Detroit Free Press* yesterday that "if the infection starts spreading with our elderly population and more vulnerable populations, we are going to be in trouble." He advised young people not to visit their families during the holidays this winter.

The Michigan doctors' warning of an impending health "catastrophe" comes in the midst of an unprecedented political crisis in the state and across the country, in which a network of fascist militias planned to kidnap and kill Whitmer and the governors of other states where limited lockdown measures were implemented. These militias have connections to President Trump, who has encouraged them openly while calling Whitmer a "dictator."

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