Maryland governor re-imposes restrictions as COVID-19 cases reach record levels in the Washington, DC region

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On Tuesday, Maryland's Republican governor Larry Hogan announced that the state would be re-imposing restrictions on public spaces and businesses as daily numbers of COVID-19 cases have doubled in the past month throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, which includes Washington, DC and Virginia.

On Tuesday, the Washington, DC metropolitan region saw 2,859 cases and 27 deaths. This is roughly 30 percent more cases in one day than what was being recorded in the region as recently as a week ago.

Maryland has reported nearly half of these cases, with a running daily average of about 1,270 over the past week. Until Wednesday, the state was in "stage 3" of its reopening process, which allowed "high risk" activities to go on without restriction. In March, Hogan had ordered the state to shelter-in-place as COVID-19 initially swept through the area.

The new restrictions, which went into effect Wednesday, require restaurants and stores to cut their indoor services by 50 percent. In addition, other gatherings have now been restricted to 25 persons. "We're now seeing widespread community transmission. More people are getting infected with the virus, more people are being hospitalized and going into intensive care, and more people are dying," Hogan said at a press conference Tuesday.

Various metropolitan and heavily populated suburban jurisdictions in the state have gone even further than the statewide measures. In Montgomery County, the most populous region of the state, Democratic County Executive Marc Elrich on Tuesday imposed measures restricting indoor businesses to 25 percent maximum capacity and gatherings to 25 people or less. The city of Baltimore also enacted similar measures that are set to go into effect Thursday.

Hogan's decision to re-impose social distancing measures comes as daily COVID-19 cases in the United States have cleared upward of 130,000 cases per day and has recorded over 10 million cases as a whole. Daily hospitalization numbers also exceed 60,000 persons.

The re-imposition of safety measures in the Mid-Atlantic follows the region's various Democratic and Republican governments' efforts to reopen their jurisdictions with reckless abandon over the summer. This was after the region had barely avoided the surges of COVID-19 that had been seen to the north in New York City in spring.

While initially posturing as more responsible than other state governments, as well as the Trump administration at the federal level, the Mid-Atlantic governments have all embraced the genocidal policy of "herd immunity."

An open letter to Maryland's governor last week, penned by Democratic leaders throughout the state, declared that "[I]t seems as if the state's resolve has weakened since we collectively achieved… positive progress in our battle against this virus. Maryland's case rate has steadily risen since June and we are now experiencing the highest case rate of the year" of 14.98 positive diagnoses per 100,000.

As recently as a week ago, Hogan had denied any plan to halt his state's reopening. "The weeks and months ahead will be difficult, and our collective actions will determine whether we can continue safely on the road to recovery and if we can keep Maryland open for business," Hogan said last Thursday. The governor maintained that, if only the public would "just

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wear the damn masks," reopening could proceed.

In August, Hogan intervened directly in a local jurisdiction's effort to keep schools online, demanding that the county executive reverse itself and let religious and private schools open in person.

The decision to re-impose restrictions comes as school systems throughout the region are planning to reopen classrooms to in-person instruction. While Washington, DC Public Schools temporarily halted stated plans to begin reopening in-person classes for over 7,000 students earlier this month, other jurisdictions are continuing apace with plans to reopen.

In Northern Virginia, the Fauquier County Public School system returned 70 percent of its 11,000 students to classrooms this week. In Fairfax County, with over 180,000 students and the largest school system in the region, plans are continuing to return students to classrooms next week.

Teachers in Northern Virginia are being frog marched into spaces which hold the potential to become mass death chambers. On Tuesday, local news stations reported teachers posting video testimonials begging not to be forced to teach in person. "COVID for me would be very serious and possibly deadly. And no job—no matter how much you love it is worth ending up on a ventilator or in a coffin," stated Cheri Sanford, a behavioral specialist in Fairfax County Public Schools, in an online testimony.

Despite decisions being made around the region to halt reopening, Virginia Democratic governor Ralph Northam has refused to re-impose restrictions. This has occurred as the state has recorded upwards of 1,400 daily cases, the highest in the region, and a positive rate of 6.2 percent. The percentage of positive cases exceeds the 5 percent threshold that the World Health Organization has advised should trigger social distancing measures and shelter-at-home requirements.

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