

# German states abolish isolation requirements for coronavirus patients

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On Wednesday, the state governments of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria abolished the isolation requirement for those infected with the coronavirus. The state of Schleswig-Holstein followed suit on Thursday. The state of Hesse plans to do the same in the coming weeks.

The abolition of the isolation requirement is a political crime that gives free rein to the coronavirus. Millions of people will be infected with the virus and suffer long-term consequences as a result of this decision. A significant number will become seriously ill, end up in hospital or even die.

The end of the isolation requirement is not just a further relaxation of the rules, but essentially means the end of all protective measures against the coronavirus and the complete adoption of the right-wing 'herd immunity' policy—that is, the deliberate and permanent mass infection of the population. This policy is justified with the argument that the coronavirus is ultimately nothing more than a flu.

This argument can only be described as criminal. Worldwide, more than 20 million people have already died as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In Germany, more than 1,000 people still die every week from COVID-19—more than twice as many as during the most severe flu wave in 2017/18.

Moreover COVID-19 is caused by a virus that can attack almost every organ of the body, even in a seemingly harmless case. Between 10 and 30 percent of those infected develop Long COVID, which is not yet considered curable. The symptoms, ranging from fatigue to accelerated heart rate, all have a profound impact on the quality of life of those affected.

Recent studies show that multiple COVID-19 infections, which will inevitably occur as a result of this policy of mass infection, significantly increase the

risk of Long COVID and a fatal outcome, as well as reduce life expectancy.

If left to spread unchecked, the coronavirus is capable of mutating in short time periods, bypassing vaccine protection. This is shown by the spread of the BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 subvariants, which officially already account for 12 percent of infections taking place in Germany. The two subvariants have such a high immune escape that vaccinations and antibodies from previous infections or immunizations have only a weak or even no effect against them.

Treating the coronavirus like the flu means consciously accepting mass mortality and extensive damage to the health of the population. Nevertheless, other German states are already planning to follow the example of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein.

The Hessian state government plans to lift the isolation requirement in the near future. State Health Minister Kai Klose (Green Party) cynically described the protective measure as a 'comparatively severe health intervention.'

Berlin does not rule out the repeal of isolation requirements after the current coronavirus regulation expires on December 21. Thus, Health Senator Ulrike Gote (Green Party) stated that there are 'good arguments that infected people without symptoms do not necessarily have to go into isolation.' The coalition government (Christian Democrats, CDU; Social Democrats, SPD; and Greens) of the state government of Saxony and the coalition led by the Left Party (along with SPD and Greens) in the state of Thuringia made similar statements. All three states are pushing for a unified approach by all federal states.

With the end of the isolation requirement for infected individuals, all other remaining preventative measures

are to be dropped. Schleswig-Holstein plans to phase out the mandatory mask requirement on buses and trains at the end of the year and is appealing to the other state governments to do the same. Bavaria has already signaled its approval. For example, Minister President Markus Söder (Christian Social Union, CSU, the Bavarian sister party of the CDU) said, 'It is hard to understand why there is a mask requirement on trains but not on planes.'

At the federal level, the health policy spokesman for the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) parliamentary group, Andrew Ullmann, echoed the proposal, pleading for a 'mask recommendation instead of a mask requirement.'

Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD) has criticized the relaxation of coronavirus regulations in recent days, but his criticism is as cynical as it is mendacious. He helped draft the Infection Protection Act, which already repealed a large part of the measures in August and gave the state governments the opportunity to prepare even more far-reaching abolition of protective measures.

Especially on the issue of quarantine, Lauterbach's role as 'chief infector' has been evident. In early April, he himself proposed lifting the quarantine requirement. He ultimately back-peddled due to massive public backlash. Nevertheless, on April 28, the federal and state governments—with Lauterbach's support—reduced the isolation period to five days.

The figures available make it clear that the pandemic is still running rampant. Each week, about 7500 people are hospitalized nationwide in Germany and more than 1000 people die. There were 86 outbreaks and 24 deaths in medical treatment facilities just last week, according to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), the responsible government health agency. In nursing homes and homes for the elderly there occurred 296 outbreaks and 135 deaths.

Clinics are expected to be overloaded and perhaps collapse entirely in the winter due to increased hospitalizations, staff absences due to infections and energy shortages as a result of the economic war against Russia. In the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, for example, the chairman of the Hospital Working Group warned last week: 'Shortage of specialists, competing legislation at federal and state level and, last but not least, the coronavirus pandemic and the energy crisis will not make it any easier for

hospitals to fulfill their care mandate in the coming year.'

The spread of the BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 variants—also known as 'Cerberus' (hellhound)—will only exacerbate this situation. BQ.1 currently accounts for four percent of infections and BQ1.1 for more than eight percent (four percent the previous week). However, since these values are transmitted to the RKI with a delay of several weeks, it can be assumed that they already account for a much higher proportion of infections in Germany.

Workers and young people must understand the lifting of the isolation requirement in this context as a deadly warning: Having already accepted tens of millions of pandemic victims worldwide—including more than 156,000 in Germany—the ruling class now wants to extend the suffering and death caused by the virus in perpetuity.

To end the pandemic, a strategy is needed to eliminate the virus worldwide. At the same time, billions must be invested in health, safe jobs and education. Such a policy, however, is at odds with the interests of governments that put profits before human lives. A fight against the pandemic therefore requires a fight against capitalism and for a socialist transformation of society.



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