COVID-19: Governor Mills Establishes Four-Stage Plan to Reopen Maine’s Economy; Extends Statewide Stay-At-Home Order

On Tuesday, April 28, 2020, Maine Governor Janet Mills extended the statewide stay-at-home order through May 31, 2020, and announced a four-part plan to safely and gradually reopen Maine’s economy. Under the new order, Mainers will still be required to stay at home with the same limited exceptions, including activities such as grocery shopping and outdoor exercise, as provided in the original stay-at-home order. Beginning May 1, 2020, however, the new order eases restrictions on certain businesses and activities that can be conducted in a safe manner. A detailed outline of the plan can be found here.

The governor’s plan establishes four stages for businesses to reopen, although she cautioned that the timeline for the plan is not hard and fast. Rather, the state could adjust the progression of the plan should Maine CDC detect a resurgence of the coronavirus during any of the four stages. Maine CDC will be tracking the coronavirus based on three primary metrics:

1. A downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses and COVID-like syndromic cases
2. A downward trajectory of documented cases and newly hospitalized patients

3. The capacity of Maine’s hospital systems to treat all patients without crisis care and the ability of the state to engage in a robust testing program

The four-stage plan builds on the governor’s current executive orders and allows for the safe reopening of certain businesses not currently in operation. In order to reopen, businesses will need to work with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to develop and implement safety protocols to protect employees and customers. This collaboration will result in COVID-19 Prevention Checklists, which will identify best practices for businesses specific to their operations. Once the checklist has been completed and thoroughly reviewed, businesses that commit to complying with the requirements on the checklist and will be allowed to open.

The following is a summary of the four-part plan to reopen Maine’s economy:

**STAGE 1**

Stage 1, which begins May 1, 2020, continues to prohibit gatherings of more than 10 people. In addition, this stage calls for people to continue working from home if they are able to do so, and continues to recommend that all people entering Maine quarantine for a period of 14 days. The strict requirements for long-term care facilities will remain in place. Stage 1 will now require that people wear face masks in public settings where physical distancing is difficult to maintain. Stage 1 will allow the following businesses to open, with appropriate safety precautions:

- Health care services from Maine-licensed providers
- Personal services, such as barber shops, hair salons, and pet grooming
- Limited drive-in, stay-in-your vehicle, religious services
- Drive-in movie theaters
- Outdoor recreation, such as guided outdoor activities (hunting & fishing) and restricted use of golf and disc golf courses
- State parks, state-owned public land trails, and historic sites; however, certain coastal state parks will remain closed
- Auto dealerships and car washes

**STAGE 2**

Stage 2, which tentatively begins June 1, 2020, will increase the limitation on gatherings from fewer than 10 people to fewer than 50 people. This stage will continue to recommend that people keep working from home if they are able to do so, but will allow employees in certain fields to begin reentering the office. In addition, the recommended 14-day quarantine for people entering Maine will remain in place. Stage 2 will allow the following businesses to open, with appropriate safety
precautions (including opening by reservation only and with capacity limits):

- Restaurants
- Fitness and exercise centers and nail technicians
- Retail stores for broader in-store shopping
- Lodging and campgrounds for Maine residents and those who have met the 14-day quarantine requirement
- Day camps for Maine children and those who have met the 14-day quarantine requirement
- Coastal state parks

**STAGE 3**

Stage 3, which tentatively begins July 1, 2020, and is expected to continue through August 31, 2020 and, in any event, until Stage 4 is triggered, maintains the prohibition on gatherings of more than 50 people, as well as all other restrictions outlined in Stages 1 and 2. Conditioned upon the use of appropriate safety precautions, Stage 3 will allow the following businesses to open:

- Lodging, such as hotels, campgrounds, summer camps, or RV parks for Maine residents and visitors
- Outdoor recreation such as charter boats and boat excursions
- Bars
- Personal services, such as spas, tattoo and piercing parlors, and massage facilities, among others

**STAGE 4**

Stage 4, which currently has no specified start date, will lift all restrictions and allow businesses and activities to resume with appropriate safety precautions.

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