

Governor bans indoor dining in Chicago as virus cases surge

October 28 2020, by John O'connor



In this Sept. 21, 2020, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker speaks in Springfield, Ill. (Justin L. Fowler/The State Journal-Register via AP)

Surging COVID-19 cases in Chicago prompted Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Tuesday to ban indoor dining and bar services and limit the number of

people gathering in one place.

However, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot says she isn't sure Pritzker's new restrictions are targeting the right people and worries that they will adversely affect the city's economy.

The rules taking effect Friday will force diners and bar patrons outdoors and shut down service at 11 p.m. in the nation's third-largest city. No more than 25 people may gather at one time, or fewer if that number would exceed 25% of room capacity.

"We can't ignore what is happening around us, because without action, this could look worse than anything we saw in the spring," Pritzker said, referring to the start of the pandemic, when [health care resources](#) were pushed to the limit because of the overwhelming number of COVID-19 cases.

Chicago, which comprises Region 11 of the state's 11 COVID-19 monitoring regions, joins six other regions subject to what the Pritzker administration calls "resurgence mitigations." A day earlier, Pritzker imposed the restrictions on Region 10, Cook County outside of Chicago and Lake County to the north.

Lightfoot told PBS NewsHour that the greatest challenge the city faces is getting people to follow necessary health protocols at home, where [social settings](#) vary and are more difficult to regulate.



In this Sept. 21, 2020 file photo, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker lowers his head as Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike announces seven additional deaths due to COVID-19 during a press conference in Springfield, Ill. While battling a recalcitrant coronavirus pandemic, Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020, started laying plans for distributing a safe and effective vaccine. (Justin L. Fowler/The State Journal-Register via AP)

"If the governor's order goes into effect, it's really effectively shutting down a significant portion of our economy at a time when those same businesses are really hanging on by a thread," Lightfoot said. "So we're going to continue our engagement of the governor of his team, but it's not looking good."

After a summer of declining case numbers—Illinois fared better than

many other states, particularly in the South and West—they began climbing again in August and jumped precipitously this month. There were 4,000 new infections and 46 additional deaths Tuesday, bringing total cases to 382,985 with 9,568 deaths.

There were 2,758 hospitalized, an 86% increase from a month ago, and both intensive care patients at 595 and the 241 on ventilators represented increases in the 70% range.

Other regions which hit the mitigation bar did so when positive rates of COVID-19 test results topped 8% for three consecutive days. Dr. Ngozi Ezike, the state public health director, said the latest additions, Cook County on Monday and Chicago on Tuesday, have seen the troubling rise in numbers of sick people requiring inpatient treatment as well as a jump in positive test results.

"Based on [current trends](#), we soon could face reduced hospital bed availability and overwhelming our health care systems," Ezike said.

Earlier Tuesday, Dr. Allison Arwady, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, predicted the action taken by the governor, pointing out that while COVID-19 is not as prevalent in Chicago as during the pandemic's early days in March, the number of confirmed cases is doubling every nine days.

"COVID is widespread here in Chicago, and we need you to double down on the things that you know work," Arwady said. "Please as much as you can, if there are interactions you're having that are not essential, back off on those."

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