

Gov. Pritzker, Dr. Ezike Urge Businesses to Comply with Public Health Measures, Caution Residents Against Unsafe Behaviors Over Holiday Weekend

Liquor Control Commission, Gaming Board Warn Businesses of Penalties, including Closure and Revocation of Licenses, if Measures Are Ignored

Ahead of the holiday weekend, Governor JB Pritzker and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike, joined by the Illinois Restaurant Association, are urging businesses to comply with public health measures and issuing a warning to residents about the continued need to take precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19. States across the country are seeing rapid increases, including skyrocketing positivity numbers in tests. Wearing face coverings, distancing from others and practicing good hygiene are critical to reducing transmission of the virus and remaining in Phase 4.

“The virus is not taking the holiday weekend off, and neither can we. Letting our guard down now would fly in the face of the progress we’ve made over many months,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “We have seen that mitigation measures have worked in our state and we’ve seen too many other states rapidly lose ground in the fight against the virus. If establishments cannot abide by capacity requirements, I will not hesitate to close them to keep people safe. We must continue to take the proven steps that keep us safe: wear a face covering, watch your distance and wash your hands. While other parts of the country are refusing to follow the science and seeing their positivity rate and hospitalizations increase, Illinoisans have come together to keep each other safe. Let’s keep being all in for our communities.”

Several states are seeing large increases in COVID-19 cases, and numerous outbreaks have been identified among younger adults, with some states resuming previous mitigations and closures. While younger adults may not have as severe outcomes as older adults, many younger people have died or suffered serious complications from COVID-19. In addition, an increase in the positivity rate means the risk of exposure is greater due to more virus circulating in communities.

“Bars, by design, are social settings where people gather closely together for extended periods of time. Additionally, people often need to raise their voices or shout to be heard, which means droplets from seemingly well but infected individuals could spread further than the recommended 6 feet of distancing,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike.** “All of these factors increase the risk of transmission and can lead to more cases and outbreaks. Over the holiday weekend, we strongly urge people to be socially responsible and avoid crowded bars and restaurants. If you do go to one of these

venues, please make sure to keep distance between yourself and others and wear a face covering.”

Ahead of the July 4th weekend, the Illinois Liquor Control Commission (ILCC) and the Illinois Gaming Board (IGB) have sent communications to local authorities and business owners encouraging them to follow public health guidance and outlining enforcement actions that can take place if they don’t.

ILCC has directed its commissioners to use the authority granted under 235 ILCS 5/7-5 of the Illinois Liquor Control Act to issue cease and desist warnings — and, if necessary, orders — based on Phase 4 safety requirements. The Act allows commissioners to issue a written order temporarily ceasing a liquor license and immediately closing the licensed premises without a hearing, for up to 7 days, if the establishment is operating in violation of the law by threatening the welfare of the community. During this 7-day period, a licensed liquor establishment is given the opportunity to be heard and to come into compliance. The letter is attached.

IGB has communicated with all video gaming locations, terminal operators and casinos in the state to remind them of the consequences of failing to comply with health and safety requirements, which includes consequences up to and including license revocation. The message is attached.

For the small minority of business owners who have chosen to put themselves and others at risk, the Illinois State Police has worked closely with local law enforcement as well as state regulatory agencies like ILCC and IGB on an incremental approach, beginning with education and warnings, with potential fines and suspension or revocation of licenses in cases of repeated and egregious violations.

“With record-high COVID-19 outbreaks across the nation, our communities must remain vigilant to prevent a resurgence in our state,” **said Chima Enyia, Illinois Liquor Control Commission Director.** “As we prepare to celebrate Independence Day, it is crucial that we do so responsibly, ensuring our licensed liquor establishments adhere to the parameters of Illinois’ revitalization efforts. If necessary, state and local liquor authorities may take immediate action against the license of establishments found to be threatening the welfare of the community.”

“The IGB reminds all Illinois gaming licensees and patrons that responsible and compliant gaming in the time of COVID-19 means wearing a face covering, maintaining social distance and following IDPH guidelines,” **said Marcus D. Fruchter, Administrator of the Illinois Gaming Board.** “We’re in this together, so we urge everyone to take these effective actions to maintain the progress our state has made against the pandemic and to reduce further risks to our health and economy.”

“If you take this precious time to celebrate, please do so responsibly. Abide by occupancy restrictions in bars and restaurants so we can continue to fight the spread of COVID-19,” **said Illinois State Police Director Brendan F. Kelly.** “Your loved

ones and first responders want you to return home safely and continue to stay healthy. We can do this together.”

“In recent days, we have seen cities and states nationwide slide backwards in their re-openings,” **said Sam Toia, President and CEO, Illinois Restaurant Association.** “We cannot allow this to happen to restaurants and bars in Chicago and across Illinois. We have launched a social media campaign – “Covered Faces Keep Open Places” – to urge restaurateurs, bar owners, employees, and diners to strictly follow local and state public safety guidelines during the holiday weekend and beyond to ensure we stay on a steady path to reopening our economy.”

People who choose to go out need to take precautions. Evidence shows that social distancing and wearing face coverings can slow the spread of the virus. Until there is a vaccine or a highly effective treatment that is widely available, the risk of severe illness or worse remains.

For health questions about COVID-19, call the hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email dph.sick@illinois.gov.

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