



To: Sam Biscoe, Travis County Judge

From: Mark E. Escott, MD, MPH, Interim Health Authority-Travis County

Date: October 13, 2020

Re: Bar Reopening Recommendations

In preparation for the following recommendations, I have reviewed the Governor's Executive Order 32, the Checklist for Bars or Similar Establishments, as well as the current COVID-19 trends in Travis County. The county continues to be in Stage 3 of our COVID-19 risk assessment which has been in place since August 25, 2020 following a downward trend in hospitalizations.

While Travis County has been oscillating in terms of hospitalizations over the past month, the trend over the past 7-10 days creates a more concerning picture for the next month. The data related to hospitalized individuals, ICU bed utilization, and ventilator use for COVID-19, all indicate an upward trend with UT COVID-19 modeling indicating a 66% chance of a worsening pandemic locally over the next month.

This data indicates that we may experience an 87% increase in admissions, a 55% increase in hospital bed use, and a 64% increase in ICU bed utilization by November 1, 2020. Additionally, the beginning of influenza season creates a second threat to the ability of our healthcare system to manage a surge which may be exacerbated by increasing community risk at this stage.

While it is important to identify avenues for our business community to reopen and thrive, we must continue to prioritize the health and safety of this community and our ability to ensure that our schools can successfully stay open for in-person learning. Therefore, it is my recommendation that bars and similar establishments be prohibited from reopening at this stage. Further, I recommend that the re-evaluation of risk associated with bar reopening begin following the collection of data for an additional 14 days to determine if this recommendation may be revised.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark E. Escott, MD MPH', is written in a cursive style.

Mark E. Escott, MD MPH FACEP FAEMS NRP
Interim Medical Director & Health Authority
Austin Public Health