

As of today, we have 1,721 new cases reported and 906 people in the hospital — and today is the second highest day in both of those categories since the pandemic started. We also have 1,271 people who have died, and we continue to pray for those we've lost and their families.

North Carolina has been careful in lifting COVID restrictions. And it's because public health experts warn that removing restrictions too fast or all at once can cause a dangerous spike in the virus that would overwhelm our medical system.

Our cautious approach is like a dimmer switch, rather than an on/off switch. Over the past weeks and months, even as we've slowly turned the dimmer switch up and eased restrictions, we've seen community spread of the virus increase in North Carolina.

Daily case counts have gone up. The percent of tests returning positive has stayed high. Since May 19, the number of people hospitalized has increased 56%, from being in the 500s to now over 900 in just a little over a month.

Doctors and health care experts have warned that hospital capacity can be overwhelmed in the blink of an eye. And once we see that capacity is gone, it can be too late to reverse the tide.

Testifying before Congress yesterday, Dr. Anthony Fauci said that North Carolina could see a "insidious increase in community spread, which will be much more difficult to contain as the community spread amplifies itself."

Dr. Fauci cautioned that leaders in our state have to act to blunt the surge of cases. He also testified that the next couple of weeks are critical for our country in our fight against COVID-19.

The numbers we see are a stark warning, and I'm concerned. As we have watched and studied and dissected these numbers in recent weeks, that concern has grown. Since the beginning of this pandemic, I've been clear that data and science would lead the way.

It's clear that our numbers will keep us from moving ahead into the next phase of easing restrictions. So today, **I'm announcing that North Carolina will pause and continue our Safer At Home Phase 2 for another three weeks.**

This is not where we planned to be, or wanted to be. But it is one of two important decisions that we need to make to effectively fight this disease.

The other important decision is requiring face coverings when people are out in public. **People must wear face coverings when in public places, indoors or outdoors, where physical distancing of 6 feet from other people who aren't in the same household or residence isn't possible.**

**They will be required for all employees and customers of retail businesses and restaurants as well as workers in manufacturing, construction, meat processing and agriculture settings.**

There are exceptions including people with medical conditions and children under 11, people who are at home and people who are walking or otherwise exercising outside when not within six feet of others.

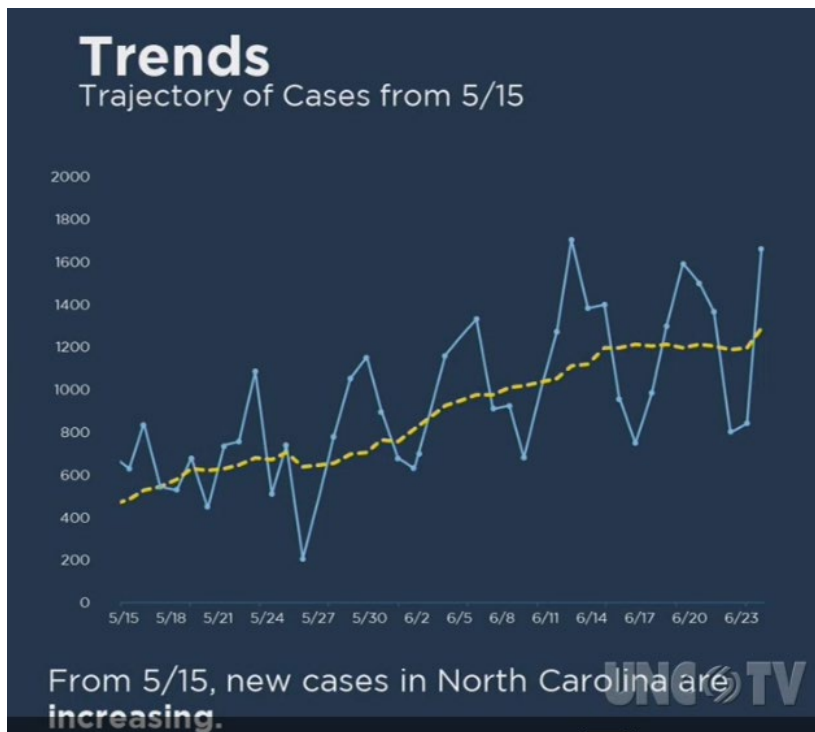
Overwhelming evidence that is growing by the week shows that wearing a face covering can greatly reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially from people who have it and don't know it yet. This is a simple way to control this virus while we protect ourselves & the people around us.

One important point here. Required face coverings not only cause zero harm to our economy — they in fact help our economy by making it safer to shop, do business, and keep our small businesses running.

We're adding this new requirement because we don't want to go backward. We want to stabilize our numbers so we can continue to safely ease restrictions, and most importantly, get our children back in school.

I urge everyone to be a leader in wearing face coverings. I encourage businesses to be strong in enforcing it. Slowing the spread helps our economy, and these face coverings do that.

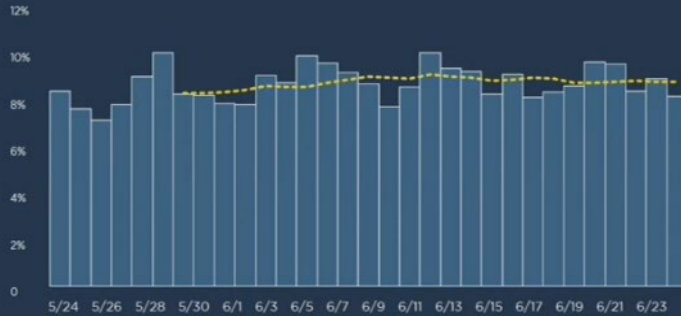
As we watch the trends during this pause, we hope to be able to ease restrictions on playgrounds, museums and gyms on July 17, when this order expires. I know this virus has been very difficult for business owners who are anxious to open their doors. We want them to open safely.



# Trends

## Trajectory % of Tests that are Positive

Percent positive for SARS-CoV-2 by date of report among ELR labs



The trajectory of positive tests as a percentage of total tests **remains elevated.**



# Where We Are Today

## Trends

Trajectory of COVID-like syndromic cases



Trajectory of cases



Trajectory of positive tests as a percentage of total tests



Trajectory of hospitalizations

