

April 8, 2021

Wave 4 in Michigan

In a “man bites dog” event, the Republican-dominated Michigan State Senate brought forward a bill that, if passed, would almost certainly require every eatery in Michigan to cease indoor dining immediately because of COVID-19. According to *Detroit Free Press* writers, Dave Boucher and Susan Selasky, if Michigan:

“has a test positivity rate of greater than 15% to not more than 20% for not less than 7 consecutive days or if 15% to not more than 20% of hospital beds in this state are being used to treat individuals with coronavirus for not less than 7 consecutive days, (a state) emergency order must close the qualified establishment to indoor dining [emphasis added] and limit the occupancy of a meeting or event held at the qualified establishment to a maximum of 10 individuals from not more than 2 households.”

(<https://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2021/04/08/michigan-senate-gop-bill-indoor-dining-ban-covid-19/7105692002/>)

Republican support for this legislation seemed to rest on the “certainty” that it provided to those firms affected. Restaurants would “know” when they have to close rather than guess whether they might. As of Tuesday, April 6, the seven-day average for test positivity in the state was 16%. The Republicans may have realized that COVID-19 is still here, and that they cannot legislate it away. This is what responsible legislators do.

All of this occurs, as the state tries to achieve some sort of normalcy for the last eight months of 2021. There has been cautious hope that workers can go back to the workplace, summer camps can open, concerts can occur, sports teams can play to larger crowds, and yes, restaurants and bars can open to 100% capacity. Yet, even in the face of accelerating vaccination, the virus is back, and it is affecting younger people as well as the older ones. Hospitals are postponing elective surgeries in advance of expected floods of COVID-19 patients. Wayne State University closed the campus down this week to all but the most essential workers.

There is reason for cautious optimism. Your blogger and his partner have been vaccinated (YB – Pfizer-2; Partner – Moderna-2), but they have been cautious about socializing, and they do not plan on frequenting restaurants anytime soon. Filling up Orchestra Hall, Comerica Park, and the Big House for the Fall seem to be elusive goals. Summer and Fall 2021 will look a lot more like 2020 than 2019.

In his first blog, thirteen months ago, YB spoke of the COVID-19 tax. We are still paying it. We cannot yet avoid it.

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