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Northern Virginia Localities Urge Governor to Set Regional Targets for Reopening

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The chief elected officials of the five largest localities in Northern Virginia have [sent a letter to Governor Ralph Northam](#), supporting his "Forward Virginia" reopening plan in general but urging him to implement it for the region only once regional threshold metrics have been met. Although the metrics appear likely to be met statewide by May 15, this does not appear to be the case for Northern Virginia. The 2.5 million residents of the city of Alexandria and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William represent nearly a third of the population of Virginia and half of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths.



"We eagerly wish to rebuild our economy and help our residents recover," wrote Mayor Justin Wilson (Alexandria) and Chairs Libby Garvey (Arlington County), Jeff McKay (Fairfax County), Phyllis Randall (Loudoun County) and Ann Wheeler (Prince William County). "It is only through our regional achievement of these milestones that we will be positioned to avoid a more damaging return to business closures later in the summer."

The [Forward Virginia](#) plan requires the following metrics be met before the first phase of reopening can occur statewide: 1) a downward trend of positive test results over a period of 14 days; 2) a downward trend of hospitalizations over a period of 14 days; 3) sufficient hospital beds and intensive care capacity; 4) increasing and sustainable supply of personal protective equipment such as masks, respirators, gloves and gowns; and 5) increased testing and tracing. According to an [analysis by the region's public health directors](#), all five metrics for Northern Virginia are either unmet or cannot be determined based on currently available data.

Regardless of the timeline for reopening, it is critical that everyone continue to vigilantly practice the actions proven to help stop the spread of COVID-19. These include staying home as much as possible and especially when sick; frequent hand washing; covering coughs and sneezes; cleaning and disinfecting surfaces regularly; staying at least 6 feet apart from other people when outside the home; and wearing a cloth face covering over the nose and mouth when it is essential to be in public and physical distancing practices are difficult to maintain.

For more information about the county's response to COVID-19, visit www.pwcgov.org/COVID19.

