

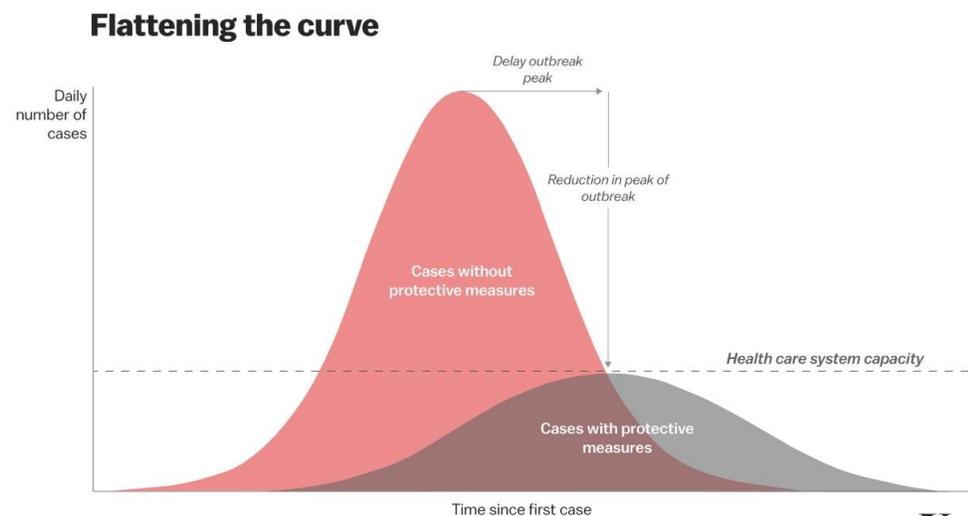
March 12, 2020

AOS91 Administration and Community Leaders:

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 represents a serious current and growing threat to public health in our communities. A severe lack of testing capabilities to this point has caused a false sense of security among state and local leaders. Although the first confirmed infection in Maine was reported just yesterday, COVID-19 has almost certainly been spreading in Maine for 2+ weeks. ***The likelihood that one or more individuals in the communities served by this school system is infected with COVID-19 is very high.*** Local leaders should be working from this assumption and acting now.

Governor Mills is understandably trying to limit panic – and no doubt she does not want to be accused of overreacting – but her decision yesterday to keep schools open is at least three days behind what the data is telling us should be done. Frankly, schools should have been closed this week, but in the absence of a confirmed case the delay in action was completely understandable. In my opinion, which is informed by my statistical training and experience with forecasting models, ***continuing with school next week would put our communities at considerable risk and as such represent a failure of leadership.*** As we are now ramping up the testing capabilities, the number of confirmed cases in the state and level of anxiety in our representative communities are going to increase significantly next week.

Our immediate goal should be to “flatten the curve” – ie. to take actions now that will help spread out the total number of infections over a longer period of time so that our local healthcare system is not overloaded at one time. This is not the seasonal flu, and up to 20% of people who get the virus may require a ventilator to recover.



While young people are least likely to develop severe illness from this particular virus, they are effective vectors for spreading the disease. For example, ***MDIHS represents one of the largest “network hubs” of social contact on MDI and surrounding areas, and make it one of the greatest risks for amplifying the local spread of coronavirus*** – other schools in the district represent similar risks. Removing these network hubs now, and encouraging students and their families to practice social distancing, will go a long way toward “flattening the curve”. Cancelling school for at least two weeks is recommended, but prepare the community for a much longer recess. Large companies like The Jackson Laboratory are preparing to implement plans to stagger work schedules and encourage working from home if possible to limit social contact, and local churches should be encouraged to cancel in-person services for at least the next two weeks.

As leaders of this community, you are in an unenviable position. If you act decisively today, you will be accused by many in the community of overreacting. It’s unavoidable, and you should be prepared to weather the criticism. ***Two weeks from now, if you are still being accused of overreacting, your actions today will have succeeded in keeping the community safe. That is the best possible outcome.***

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Munger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Steven Munger, Ph.D.
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