



Statement from County Executive Steuart Pittman

This morning I signed a new executive order that permits indoor dining to continue at 25 percent capacity for establishments that collect information for contact tracing purposes and follow all other safety protocols. Outdoor dining remains permitted provided that tents have at least half of the number of sides up at all times.

Yesterday in court, Health Officer Dr. Nilesh Kalyanaraman Dr. Eili Klein of Johns Hopkins Medicine and I described the metrics and considerations that led me to suspend indoor dining from December 16 to January 13. I believe we demonstrated to the court that the county's decision was based on our strong desire to save lives and protect public health and was neither arbitrary nor capricious. However, the prospect of a sudden and disruptive closure of indoor dining prompted me to evaluate the best course of action at this time.

Since December 10 when I announced the four week suspension of indoor dining, much has changed. Catastrophic hospitalization projections, rising case rates, rising death rates, and restrictions put in effect by the state and the county have altered public behavior. Case rates have dropped slightly and hospitalization projections have been adjusted downward. We still expect a challenging surge in COVID hospitalizations and a post-holiday case rate increase, but the improved forecast allows us to maintain our current level of restrictions.

In recognition of the progress our residents have made holding our numbers down in the last two weeks, I am pleased to announce that Anne Arundel restaurants may continue offering indoor dining at 25% capacity. We will monitor community spread daily, consult with public health experts, provide assistance to our businesses and residents, and facilitate the flow of federal relief funds to our people and businesses that are currently struggling. I encourage county residents to support our local restaurants and go to aacounty.org/carryout to find a restaurant to pick up your next meal.

I look forward to entering the new year with a little less conflict and a lot more hope.