

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Puerto Rico to Require Mandatory Vaccination or Negative Tests for Employees and Guests of Restaurants, Noncompliance Will Result in Jail Time, \$5000 Fine

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Beginning Monday, the government of Puerto Rico will require employees and customers of restaurants and other enclosed food and drink and entertainment facilities to get vaccinated or show proof of a negative Covid-19 test.

Noncompliance will result in a fine of \$5,000 or six months in jail, the government said.

The announcement was made by Puerto Rico Governor Pedro Pierluisi last week, who said it was his responsibility to protect Puerto Ricans by "taking the necessary measures to guarantee everyone's health."

He further stated that if the latest measures don't slow the spread of the variant, "I will be forced to implement additional restrictions."

The controversial announcement, which received push back from Puerto Rico's Restaurant Association, comes as the USVI neighbor has been experiencing a surge in cases as a result of the Delta variant of Covid-19.

Puerto Rico also has some of the highest vaccination rates in the country, with 61.79 percent of the population fully vaccinated and 76 percent receiving at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

Restaurants and other establishments affected by the announcement, including convention centers and coliseums, can choose to lower their capacity to 50 percent if they decide not to follow the mandates.

The PR Restaurant Association supported the announcement for employees, but the organization said requiring such mandates for customers would negatively impact restaurants and expected that most establishments would lower their capacity threshold instead of asking customers for such information.

According to the Associated Press, Ramón Leal, the Restaurant Association's former president, spoke to the shortage of workers in the restaurant industry and said restaurant owners cannot afford to have someone posted at the door to check customers. "There's a shortage never before seen in the restaurant industry," he said.

Mateo Cidre, the association's upcoming president and owner of several restaurants, brought up a scenario related to customers that are unvaccinated because of health reasons. "Am I supposed to ask him why not, what does he have?" Cidre said, according to the [AP](#).

Puerto Rico's governor also recently announced mandatory vaccination or weekly Covid-19 tests for government employees, hotel guests and employees, government contractors and all health facility workers.