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Governor Bryan Prepared to Loosen Covid-19 Restrictions Territory-Wide: 'We Can't Do This Forever'

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Governor Albert Bryan during the 2018 General Election.

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Governor Albert Bryan is ready to ease Covid-19 restrictions in the U.S. Virgin Islands imposed 1 year and 7 months ago, telling the Consortium during an interview Friday that once St. Croix — which is seeing a surge in active cases — gets under control, many pandemic-induced rules will start lifting.

"We're waiting for St. Croix to calm down. Once that surge is done, then we're going to start to lift a lot of restrictions," Mr. Bryan said. "I want to do it; you can't do that with St. Croix going through this little surge. Once we get St. Croix below 100 we will feel more comfortable about

freeing up because we can't do this forever; we've got to get back to business."

As of Saturday there were 204 active Covid-19 cases territory-wide: 156 on St. Croix, 41 on St. Thomas and 7 on St. John, according to the V.I. Dept. of Health.

The governor said while rules for Virgin Islanders will be eased, restrictions for visitors coming into the territory will remain in place. Currently, airlines are to require that passengers show a green QR code before allowing travelers to the USVI to board, though the program is not equally applied. And all visitors to the territory must submit an acceptable Covid-19 test result to the [USVI screening portal](#) and receive clearance via email with a green QR code prior to traveling. Upon arrival, travelers must provide the green QR code. Virgin Islands residents can submit either a negative Covid-19 test or proof of vaccination through the USVI screening portal.

"On a local level we've got to free up restrictions but for people coming in from other places," those restrictions will remain in place, Mr. Bryan said.

The administration continues to push vaccination as the safest bet against the virus, but it was unclear as to whether Mr. Bryan would stick to [the plan of arriving at 70 percent inoculation](#) before fully reopening the U.S. Virgin Islands. The territory was only 44 percent fully vaccinated as of Monday, while 51 percent had either received a first dose or both, according to live-tracking data [compiled by the New York Times](#).

Yet leaders around the country are finding ways to open up their jurisdictions with or without the 70 percent vaccination target. And even in well-vaccinated states outbreaks continue to occur. According to the Wall Street Journal, a recent Covid-19 surge in Maine [has filled hospitals](#) and put dozens of mostly unvaccinated people on ventilators, setting records for the state.

Last week, V.I. Dept. of Health Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis said health officials were seeing a high number of active cases among children and young adults on St. Croix. She said a majority of the cases in the past few weeks were in the 0-17 age group.

She reported that the current median age of all positive cases in the USVI was 27.5 years as of Monday, and that contributing factors include outbreaks within daycare centers and school-age children, with outbreaks among the latter being attributed to household exposures.

Dr. Ellis encouraged parents to get their children vaccinated against Covid-19 if they are eligible. "It is especially important for children 12 and up as well as those that work with children to get vaccinated and keep our schools safe and our students safe," she said. Dr. Ellis also urged parents with children 11 and under to get vaccinated themselves, which she said would help keep children safe.

The story has been updated to provide clarity relative to the requirements of traveling to the USVI.