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Pointing to Omicron Variant Concerns, Bryan Holds Off on Further Easing of Restrictions

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Governor Albert Bryan on Monday said he would hold off on his plan to [further ease Covid-19 restrictions](#), a decision Mr. Bryan said is tied to concerns over the fast-spreading variant of the virus named Omicron.

"As many of you know we have been signaling that we would make changes to our existing Covid protocols for the last several weeks. Given the downward trend of our positivity rate and the number of active cases right now, it's really looking good — our active cases are at 82 and our 7-day positivity rate is at 1.43 percent. However, with the news of the Omicron variant making its way across South Africa, Europe, Canada and now the United States, we will make that choice to really hold steady to the existing protocols that are in place right now out of an abundance of caution," Mr. Bryan said.

The governor has also observed Covid fatigue throughout the community, and he singled out supermarkets where he has noticed shopping carts are no longer being sanitized.

"I know that we are eager to be done with Covid. I'm sick of Covid, I'm sure you're sick of Covid too. But Covid ain't sick of us; it's not done with us yet," the governor said. "That is why we must continue with our masking requirements and our restrictions on mass gatherings."

Speaking during the press briefing, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said the Omicron variant of Covid-19 had not been identified in the USVI or on the mainland U.S. as of Monday, though the strain may already be here.

As of Monday there were 82 active cases territory-wide: 70 on St. Croix, 11 on St. Thomas and 1 on St. John. There were three persons hospitalized for Covid-19 at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, none of whom were ventilated. There were no hospitalizations on St. Thomas.

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