



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on November 29, 2021

## Omicron “Is Coming”: NY Governor Declares State of Emergency

The Omicron COVID variant has not made it to the United States yet, but New York Governor Kathy Hochul has already declared a state of emergency in a bid to combat it. The move serves as one of the recent displays of COVID-related policies having little to do with actual public health.

Once numerous countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and also the United States had [closed](#) their borders to travelers from South Africa and other African countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) announced Omicron to be a “variant of concern” on Friday, Hochul decided to act preemptively against it the very same day.



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“We continue to see warning signs of spikes in COVID this winter, and while the new Omicron variant has yet to be detected in New York State, it’s coming,” the governor posted on [Twitter](#) as she announced the emergency.

Referring to high COVID-19 transmission rate as “a disaster” that “occurred in New York State,” Hochul [directed](#) “the implementation of the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and authorize all necessary State agencies to take appropriate action to assist local governments and individuals in containing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from this state disaster emergency.”

For that matter, the governor [ordered](#) “to boost hospital capacity and address staffing shortages ahead of potential spikes in COVID-19 cases this upcoming winter.” Ironically, staffing shortages are caused mainly by the COVID vaccine mandate for healthcare workers. The mandate has been disrupting the state’s medical services for the last couple of months and promoted Hochul to call on the feds to deploy medically trained National Guard members, as well as Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs), as *The New American* has [reported](#).

While that is being done in the name of “public health, welfare, and safety,” some of those New Yorkers suffering from anything other than COVID could be denied medical care: Hospitals with less than 10 percent staffed bed capacity, or those designated by the state, will be authorized to screen patients and restrict admissions or postpone “non-essential” and “non-urgent” procedures to keep beds open for severe COVID cases.

The new protocols will begin on December 3, and will last at least until January 15, and then will be reevaluated depending on COVID rates, according to the announcement.

Also according to the announcement:

The Hochul Administration continues to take comprehensive steps to prevent the spread of



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COVID-19, including mask protocols in health care and P-12 school settings, correctional facilities and detentions centers, public transportation and at transportation hubs, and implementation of [the HERO Act](#) which requires all employers to implement workplace safety plans in response to COVID-19.

According to [state data](#), 90.3 percent of adult New York residents have received at least one dose of the shot, and 80.5 percent are fully vaccinated. Despite that high vaccination rate, Hochul noted in her executive order that the virus is transmitting at rates not seen since April 2020, when New York saw the highest COVID rates partially attributed to the [policies](#) of Hochul's predecessor, Governor Andrew Cuomo's.

According to [local media](#), the statewide positivity rate for last week jumped to 3.8 percent, while in some regions, the rates were even higher: nearly 10 percent in western New York and almost nine percent in the Finger Lakes.

Hochul urged New Yorkers to "take advantage of our greatest weapon in this pandemic: the vaccine," even though the efficacy of the existing vaccines against the "highly mutated" Omicron is unknown, yet likely decreased.

New York Health Commissioner Dr. David Chokshi also emphasized the importance of mask-wearing in most public settings and by virtually all populations, regardless of their vaccination status, according to [ABC](#) local affiliate.

"Today, I am also issuing a Commissioners' advisory strongly recommending that all New Yorkers wear a mask at all times, when indoors and in a public setting, like at the grocery, in building lobbies, offices and retail stores," Chokshi said. "This includes those who are vaccinated and those who have had COVID-19. Higher quality masks can offer additional protection, and masks are still required for everyone in public transit, health care settings, schools and congregate settings."

The commissioner added that Omicron's arrival is anticipated "in the coming days."

The outlet also reported that outgoing New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said, "What we are saying clear as a bell today is what has worked up to now continues to be the key," and that "vaccination and obviously masks play a very important role as well."

Mayor-elect Eric Adams [joined](#) de Blasio in stressing the importance of vaccination.

"I want to send a clear message: anyone that believes we're going to play off a different playbook under the next administration of not pursuing vaccines, they need to believe that is not true," Adams said. "We are going to be on the same playbook, we must get vaccinated in a real way, and I am going to continue to advocate that." The officials also said they would focus on promoting booster shots, which they believe would help against the new COVID variant.

White House COVID-19 advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci [urged](#) American to be prepared to "do everything and anything" when Omicron arrives, while South African doctors said the variant causes "unusual, but mild" symptoms.

On Monday, the WHO [said](#) that Omicron poses a "very high" risk of infection that could have "severe consequences" globally, mainly because its mutations "may be associated with immune escape and higher transmissibility."



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