

STATE OF MICHIGAN
COURT OF CLAIMS

STEVE MARTINKO, et al,

Plaintiffs,

OPINION AND ORDER REGARDING
PLAINTIFFS' APRIL 23, 2020 MOTION
FOR A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION

v

Case No. 20-00062-MM

GRETCHEN WHITMER, in her official capacity as Governor of the State of Michigan, DANIEL EICHINGER, in his official capacity as Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and DANA NESSEL, in her official capacity as the Attorney General for the State of Michigan,

Hon. Christopher M. Murray

Defendants.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This matter was filed by five Michigan residents who claim that three of Governor Whitmer's executive orders, Executive Orders 2020-21 and 2020-42,¹ and now Executive Order 2020-59, infringe on their constitutional rights to procedural due process and substantive due

¹ Plaintiffs recognize that EO 2020-21 was rescinded by EO 2020-42, and they claim that EO 2020-42 "extended the timeline originally set by [EO] 2020-21 and grossly expands its restrictions on businesses' and individuals' fundamental rights." After the verified complaint was filed, EO 2020-42 was rescinded by EO 2020-59, which (among other things) eliminated the prohibitions on traveling intrastate to another residence, from not using motorized boats on the waterways, and to an extent allows the re-opening of some businesses and state parks. Although plaintiffs challenge the same restrictions set forth in EO 2020-42, the Court will for clarity sake refer to the restrictions within the current executive order, EO 2020-59, unless the timing period is relevant to any issue.

process. Specifically, plaintiffs’ verified complaint alleges that the “mandatory quarantine” imposed by EO 2020-59 violates their right to both procedural due process (Count I) and substantive due process (Count II), and that the intrastate travel restrictions contained in EO 2020-42 also violate their rights to procedural due process (Count III) and substantive due process (Count IV). They also allege in Count V of their verified complaint that the Emergency Management Act, MCL 30.401 *et seq.*, is an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power to the Governor. Plaintiffs have requested the Court issue a preliminary injunction—but not a permanent one—restraining these defendants from continuing to implement the provisions of EO 2020-59.² Once restrained, plaintiffs seek a declaration that the challenged restrictions and the EMA are invalid.³

II. JURISDICTION

Defendants first argue that this Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction because plaintiffs seek only injunctive relief based upon federal constitutional claims, which deprives the Court of jurisdiction to decide the matter. Defendants rely upon MCL 600.6440, which provides:

No claimant may be permitted to file claim in said court against the state nor any department, commission, board, institution, arm or agency thereof who has an adequate remedy upon his claim in the federal courts, but it is not necessary in the complaint filed to allege that claimant has no such adequate remedy, but that fact may be put in issue by the answer or motion filed by the state or the department, commission, board, institution, arm or agency thereof.

² On April 23, 2020, the Court denied plaintiffs’ motion for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order on the ground that plaintiffs had not shown the threat of immediate and irreparable harm of physical injury or loss of property.

³ The Court appreciates the speed at which counsel submitted briefs, and for the high caliber of the briefs submitted.

Because a federal court can exercise jurisdiction against state officers in their official capacity when seeking only prospective injunctive relief, defendants argue, MCL 600.6440 applies and the Court lacks jurisdiction to decide the matter.

The legal principles put forward by defendants are sound, but they do not apply to plaintiffs' case. First, the statute refers to claims filed in the Court of Claims against the state, its departments, agencies, etc., and does not pertain to claims brought in this Court against individuals, as plaintiffs have done here. Thus, it is irrelevant whether claims against state officers in their official capacity brought in federal court might essentially be considered claims against the state. Second, with respect to defendants' argument, plaintiffs seek declaratory rulings on each of their three challenges, and one of those challenges—the claim that the EMA violates the separation of powers doctrine—is based upon state law. So too is their challenge to the intrastate ban on travel to vacation rentals. Additionally, in their complaint plaintiffs seek “other and further relief as the Court deems appropriate,” which whatever that could end up being, it would go beyond the declaratory and limited injunctive relief requested in the complaint, and could include damages, even if only nominal. Because plaintiffs' claims and forms of relief do not meet all the requirements of MCL 600.6440, this Court does not lack subject matter jurisdiction.

III. MOOTNESS

Defendants also argue that plaintiffs' case is moot because they only challenge EO 2020-21 and EO 2020-42, which have been rescinded, and EO 2020-59 is the only existing executive order containing these restrictions. True enough, but as defendants seem to recognize, it was *after* plaintiffs' filing last week that the Governor issued EO 2020-59, and plaintiffs have not had time to seek to amend their complaint, and several of plaintiffs' challenges to the prior EOs—the stay-at-home provision and the ban on intrastate travel to vacation rentals—remain within EO 2020-

59. Those two challenges are therefore not moot, as the Court can still render complete relief against those provisions. See *CD Barnes Assoc, Inc v Star Haven, LLC*, 300 Mich App 389, 406; 834 NW2d 878 (2013). The remainder of the challenges to EOs 2020-21 and 2020-42, as well as to the Department of Natural Resources rule⁴, have been removed by EO 2020-59, and are now moot.

The Court therefore concludes that the only remaining ripe challenges to the executive orders are (1) the stay-at-home provision, (2) the prohibition of traveling to a third-party vacation rental, and (3) the limited public access to certain public land. And, of course, plaintiffs’ challenge to the constitutionality of the EMA remains a live controversy.

IV. STANDARDS FOR A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION

“The objective of a preliminary injunction is to maintain the status quo pending a final hearing regarding the parties’ rights.” *Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Mich v Dep’t of Community Health*, 231 Mich App 647, 655–656; 588 NW2d 133 (1998). The status quo has been defined as “ ‘the last actual, peaceable, noncontested status which preceded the pending controversy.’ ” *Buck v Thomas Cooley Law School*, 272 Mich App 93, 98 n 4; 725 NW2d 485 (2006), quoting *Psychological Services of Bloomfield, Inc v Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Michigan*, 144 Mich App 182, 185; 375 NW2d 382 (1985). In *Mich AFSCME Council 25 v Woodhaven–Brownstown Sch*

⁴ Specifically, plaintiffs challenge a Department of Natural Resources rule, implemented in furtherance of EO 2020-42, that “restricts the use of powerboats on public waterways yet allows sailboats and kayaks.” Plaintiffs likewise question a DNR rule, also implemented in furtherance of EO 2020-42, that “further restricted access to public lands, parks and trails to residents of ‘local communities.’ ” Much to the pleasure of outdoor enthusiasts, EO 2020-59 seems to have eliminated the restrictions on use of powerboats and use of state parks during certain hours of the day.

Dist, 293 Mich App 143, 146; 809 NW2d 444 (2011), the Court of Appeals instructed that, “[w]hen deciding whether to grant an injunction under traditional equitable principles,

a court must consider (1) the likelihood that the party seeking the injunction will prevail on the merits, (2) the danger that the party seeking the injunction will suffer irreparable harm if the injunction is not issued, (3) the risk that the party seeking the injunction would be harmed more by the absence of an injunction than the opposing party would be by the granting of the relief, and (4) the harm to the public interest if the injunction is issued.^{5]}

Not surprisingly, the Court will first turn to the initial consideration, i.e., whether plaintiffs have shown a likelihood of prevailing on the merits. Though plaintiffs do not have to prove they *will* succeed on the merits, they do have to prove that they have a *substantial likelihood* of success on the merits. *Int’l Union v Michigan*, 211 Mich App 20, 25; 535 NW2d 210 (1995).

V. THE MERITS

A. BACKGROUND AND FACTS

Michigan residents, like all other Americans, cherish their liberty. We always have, though the liberties and freedoms we seek to protect have changed over time. At and before our founding, our forefathers fought for the inalienable right to own property, freely engage in commerce, represent ourselves through our own elected representatives, worship where and how we wanted, etc. The Declaration of Independence’s list of grievances against the King of England prove as much, as do several of the amendments to the United States Constitution, and in particular, the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.

⁵Quoting in part *Alliance for the Mentally Ill*, 231 Mich App at 655–656.

Today we have all the freedoms and liberties that the founders fought for, and our branches of government exist in large part to ensure that those rights remain intact. See Declaration, ¶ 2.⁶ The liberty and freedoms at stake in this matter do not in large part involve those rights and liberties the founders fought so hard for; instead, plaintiffs focus on the right to freely move about one's community and state, to do commerce when one pleases, and to travel about the state for vacation purposes. It is the restrictions to those activities within EO 2020-59 that plaintiffs challenge here.

As any reader of this opinion knows, the challenged executive orders were issued to address the public health crisis occasioned by the world-wide spread of the novel coronavirus, which hit our great state in early March. Specifically, on March 10, 2020, was when the first two cases of the virus were diagnosed in our state⁷, while the first death resulting from the virus occurred on March 18, 2020.⁸ As a result of the quick spread of the virus within our state borders, and to meet the myriad challenges that immediately arose Governor Whitmer issued numerous executive orders, including EO 2020-21, EO 2020-42 and EO 2020-59. The main element of the executive

⁶ The Court realizes that the Declaration is a political document, not a legal one, but it is good evidence of the founding political theories and objectives. See *Troxel v Granville*, 530 US 57, 91; 120 S Ct 2054; 147 L Ed 2d 49 (2000)(SCALIA, J., dissenting)(“The Declaration of Independence ... is not a legal prescription conferring powers upon the courts[.]”); *Derden v McNeel*, 978 F2d 1453, 1456 n4 (CA 5, 1992)(“[G]eneral statements about inalienable rights ... tell us little about the prerogatives of an individual in concrete factual situations.”); *Coffey v United States*, 939 F Supp 185, 191 (EDNY, 1996)(“While the Declaration of Independence states that all men are endowed certain unalienable rights including ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,’ it does not grant rights that may be pursued through the judicial system.” (citation omitted)).

⁷ Executive Order No, 2020-21; Detroit Free Press, *Coronavirus Timeline* <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/03/18/coronavirus-timeline-first-case-michigan-first-death/5069676002/> (accessed April 28, 2020). This article contains a compilation of information from the state Department of Health and Human Services.

⁸ Detroit Free Press, *First Michigan Death Due to Coronavirus is Southgate Man in his 50s* <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2020/03/18/coronavirus-deaths-michigan/5054788002/> (accessed April 28, 2020).

orders is the requirement that most residents remain in their home unless engaging in certain essential activities, or certain limited outdoor activities. The result of the order, from an economic standpoint, was thousands of Michigan residents being unable to work unless they could do so remotely, the closing of all restaurants, bars, and other small and large businesses.⁹

At the time the first stay-at-home order was issued on March 23, 2020—only 13 days since the first confirmed case in this state—there were already 1,328 confirmed cases and 15 deaths.¹⁰ Today, just over one month later, Michigan has over 36,000 confirmed cases of the virus and over 3,000 related deaths.

B. THE MERITS

In their complaint, plaintiffs do not challenge the Governor's authority to issue the executive orders on this subject-matter. Instead, plaintiffs challenge the scope of the order through separate claims based on procedural due process and substantive due process. Although these claims entail different considerations and standards, see *In re Forfeiture of 2000 GMC Denali and Contents*, 316 Mich App 562, 573-574; 892 NW2d 388 (2016), the Court will address the claims together since, under these circumstances, each protected right is subject to the same overriding principle. In other words, the constitutional right asserted does not make a difference when considering this issue, because both are subject to a balancing with the state's interest to protect the public health. This holds true because, and perhaps contrary to common knowledge, most, if not all, individual constitutional rights are not absolute and are subject to a balancing with the

⁹ Michigan was not alone in this regard. The Court takes notice that the worldwide economy has come to a virtual standstill as a result of state and national actions taken to control the virus.

¹⁰ Detroit Free Press, *Michigan Coronavirus Cases, Tracking the Pandemic*, <https://www.freep.com/in-depth/news/nation/coronavirus/2020/04/11/michigan-coronavirus-cases-tracking-covid-19-pandemic/5121186002/> (accessed April 28, 2020).

countervailing state interest. See *New Rider v Board of Ed of Independent School Dist No 1*, 480 F2d 693, 696 (CA 10, 1973) (“Constitutional rights, including First Amendment rights, are not absolutes.”) and *In re Abbott*, 954 F3d 772, 784 (CA 5, 2020) (Recognizing, when addressing Texas emergency rules during the coronavirus pandemic, that individual rights secured by the Constitution could be reasonably restricted during a health crisis).

As can be seen, then, there are two competing constitutional principles at play. First, as plaintiffs note in their verified complaint, in *Ex Parte Milligan*, 71 US 2, 120-121; 18 L Ed 281 (1866), the United States Supreme Court recognized—in a case that arose during the height of the Civil War—that our rights enshrined in the Constitution do not become less important or enforceable because of exigent circumstances:

The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all times, and under all circumstances. No doctrine, involving more pernicious consequences, was ever invented by the wit of man than that any of its provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government. Such a doctrine leads directly to anarchy or despotism, but the theory of necessity on which it is based is false; for the government, within the Constitution, has all the powers granted to it, which are necessary to preserve its existence; as has been happily proved by the result of the great effort to throw off its just authority.

Though our individual constitutional rights cannot be suspended or eliminated, they are, as noted, subject to reasonable regulation by the state. And, when it comes to the power of the state to act in the best interests of the public health when faced with a serious contagious disease, which is the state interest acted upon by the Governor,

“[w]e are plowing no virgin field in considering the questions here involved. Numerous decisions, both federal and state, have considered the questions now before us. They are not all in accord and in some instances are not reconcilable. There is, however, a very marked trend in them in one direction, that which upholds the right of the state, in the exercise of its police power and in the interest of the public health, to enact such laws, such rules and regulations, as will prevent the spread of this dread disease.” [*People ex rel Hill v Lansing Bd of Ed*, 224 Mich

388, 390; 195 NW 95 (1923). See, also, *Jacobsen v Commonwealth of Mass*, 197 US 11, 25-26; 25 S Ct 358; 49 L Ed 643 (1905) (upholding state’s power to require vaccination over plaintiff’s Fourteenth Amendment liberty interest to not be told what to do), and *In re Abbott*, 954 F3d at 784-785.]

As noted earlier, plaintiffs’ due process claims set out in Counts I and III are challenges to the quarantine¹¹ requirement and (as amended by the changes contained in EO 2020-59), the prohibition on intrastate travel to a vacation rental. Plaintiffs’ specific assertion is that, although the state may have the ability to quarantine those who are infected with the virus, the state cannot quarantine everyone without some showing that the individual(s) are infected. Because EO 2020-59 does so, the executive order violates their right to procedural due process. The same holds true, they argue, for the prohibition of intrastate travel to a third parties’ vacation home.¹²

In addressing this argument, it is imperative to recognize the limited question the Court is empowered to decide. Except in limited circumstances mentioned later, it is not for the courts to pass on the wisdom of state action that is granted to it by the general police power or by statute. Certainly the state cannot simply ignore the individual rights enshrined in our federal (or state) constitution in the name of a public health threat. Judicial review of state actions is therefore (and quite obviously) appropriate and necessary. But the *depth* of that review is limited, and does not include delving deep into the pros and cons of what is the better plan of action between two reasonable alternatives. This point was well-made by three concurring Justices in *Rock v Carney*,

¹¹ Plaintiffs characterize the “stay-at-home” provision as a quarantine, which defendants quarrel with, but quarantine is defined as “a restraint upon the activities or communications of persons ... designed to prevent the spread of disease or pests.” Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (11th Ed).

¹² Plaintiffs have not asserted that they own a second home in Michigan or that they had rented a third parties’ vacation home for use during a time in which any executive order remained in place.

216 Mich 280, 283; 185 NW 798 (1921), a case involving the state's response to the spread of venereal diseases during World War I:

The questions involved in this litigation are of supreme importance, not only to the individuals composing this commonwealth, but also to the numerous boards of health and to the state itself. We approach their consideration with a due regard of their importance. Neither a desire to sustain the state, nor a supersensitiveness prompted by the delicacy of the examination here involved, should in any way enter into or control our decision. Policies adopted by the legislative and executive branches of the state government are not submitted to this branch for approval as to their wisdom. They stand or fall in this court because valid or invalid under the law, and their wisdom or want of wisdom in no way rests with us. If valid, they must be upheld by this court; if invalid, they must be so declared by this court. If these defendants have transcended their power, they must be held liable, and they may not be excused from liability by the fact that their motives were of the highest. If they had not transcended their power, they are not liable, and supersensitiveness or preconceived notions of proprieties, no matter of how long standing, do not render them liable. The case must be determined by the application of cold rules of law.

Thus, whether and to what extent this Court agrees with policy implemented in the executive orders is of no moment or consideration. Instead, the Court must dutifully apply the “cold rules of law” to determine the validity of the challenged provisions of the executive order.

Binding authority from the United States Supreme Court and the Michigan Supreme Court compels this Court to conclude that plaintiffs do not have a substantial likelihood of success on the merits. This is not because the rights asserted by plaintiffs are not fundamental—being forced (with some important exceptions) by the state to remain in one's home, in turn causing many residents to be unable to work, visit elderly relatives, and to generally move about the state. But those liberty interests are, and always have been, subject to society's interests—society being our fellow residents. They—our fellow residents—have an interest to remain unharmed by a highly communicable and deadly virus, and since the state entered the Union in 1837, it has had the broad

power to act for the public health of the entire state when faced with a public crisis. As the *Jacobson* Court so aptly held:

The defendant insists that his liberty is invaded when the state subjects him to fine or imprisonment for neglecting or refusing to submit to vaccination; that a compulsory vaccination law is unreasonable, arbitrary, and oppressive, and, therefore, hostile to the inherent right of every freeman to care for his own body and health in such way as to him seems best; and that the execution of such a law against one who objects to vaccination, no matter for what reason, is nothing short of an assault upon his person. *But the liberty secured by the Constitution of the United States to every person within its jurisdiction does not import an absolute right in each person to be, at all times and in all circumstances, wholly freed from restraint. There are manifold restraints to which every person is necessarily subject for the common good. On any other basis organized society could not exist with safety to its members. Society based on the rule that each one is a law unto himself would soon be confronted with disorder and anarchy. Real liberty for all could not exist under the operation of a principle which recognizes the right of each individual person to use his own, whether in respect of his person or his property, regardless of the injury that may be done to others.* This court has more than once recognized it as a fundamental principle that ‘persons and property are subjected to all kinds of restraints and burdens in order to secure the general comfort, health, and prosperity of the state; of the perfect right of the legislature to do which no question ever was, or upon acknowledged general principles ever can be, made, so far as natural persons are concerned.’ In *Crowley v Christensen*, 137 US 86, 89; 34 L Ed 620, 621; 11 S Ct 13 (we said: ‘The possession and enjoyment of all rights are subject to such reasonable conditions as may be deemed by the governing authority of the country essential to the safety, health, peace, good order, and morals of the community. Even liberty itself, the greatest of all rights, is not unrestricted license to act according to one’s own will. It is only freedom from restraint under conditions essential to the equal enjoyment of the same right by others. It is, then, liberty regulated by law.’ [*Jacobson*, 197 US at 26; citations omitted in part; emphasis supplied.]

The role courts play under *Jacobson* and *Lansing Bd of Ed* is not to “second-guess the state’s policy choices in crafting emergency public health measures,” *In re Abbott*, 954 F3d at 784, but is instead to determine whether the state regulation has a “real or substantial relation to the public health crisis and are not ‘beyond all question, a plain, palpable invasion of rights secured by the fundamental law.’ ” *Id.*, quoting in part *Jacobson*, 197 US at 31. Part of this review includes

looking to whether any exceptions apply for emergent situations, the duration of any rule, and whether the measures are pretextual. *Id.* at 785.¹³

Turning to plaintiffs' specific challenges, the stay-at-home provision, the most restrictive portion of the executive order, was first implemented by the Governor on March 23, 2020, thirteen days after the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in the state. Though there were at that point approximately 1,328 cases in the state and 15 reported deaths, Governor Witmer was not acting on a blank slate. Instead, it was common knowledge that the virus had already rapidly spread throughout the state of Washington, was prevalent in several other states, and was devastating parts of Italy, China, and other countries. Indeed, the speed at which the virus spread was well known at the time the stay-at-home provision was implemented. It is true that this measure is a severe one, and greatly restricts each of our liberties to move about as we see fit, as we do in normal times. But the governor determined that severe measures were necessary, and had to be quickly implemented to prevent the uncontrolled spreading of the virus. As noted, Michigan was not alone in this regard:

To be sure, [the order] is a drastic measure, but that aligns it with the numerous drastic measures Petitioners and other states have been forced to take in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Faced with exponential growth of COVID-19 cases, states have closed schools, sealed off nursing homes, banned social gatherings, quarantined travelers, prohibited churches from holding public worship services, and locked down entire cities. These measures would be constitutionally intolerable in ordinary times, but are recognized as appropriate and even necessary responses to the present crisis. [*In re Abbott*, 954 F3d at 787.]

¹³ Plaintiffs' correctly note that *Jacobson* did not involve a state-wide requirement to stay at home, and instead addressed an involuntary vaccination program. But most cases have different facts, and it is the legal principle set forth in the decision that guides future courts. Thus, despite some factual differences, the Court relies (as did the *In re Abbott* court) upon *Jacobson* as it is the most relevant decision on this issue from the Supreme Court.

Plaintiffs suggest that the better—and more constitutionally sound decision—would have been to quarantine only those who have the virus. It may have been a better option to some, as doing so may have had a less severe impact on the movement of the Michigan population, and may have reduced unemployment. Or, as plaintiffs argue, a more narrowly tailored order by region may have been more reasonable for the entire state. But some of that is simply hindsight, and to accept it would be to impermissibly delve too deep into the choices made. Additionally, the Governor’s concerns were not limited to what was most convenient or palatable at the time, as she also had to protect, to the extent possible, the health and safety of all Michigan residents and to not overburden the health care system. The introduction to EO 2020-59 outlines some of the other serious considerations that went into issuing the stringent order:

To suppress the spread of COVID-19, to prevent the state’s health care system from being overwhelmed, to allow time for the production of critical test kits, ventilators, and personal protective equipment, to establish the public health infrastructure necessary to contain the spread of infection, and to avoid needless deaths, it is reasonable and necessary to direct residents to remain at home or in their place of residence to the maximum extent feasible.

And, contrary to plaintiffs’ arguments, the Supreme Court has upheld, against a constitutional challenge, a state’s quarantine of individuals even when they are *not* infected with the disease being controlled. See *Compagnie Francaise de Navigation a Vapeur v Louisiana*, 186 US 380, 393; 22 S Ct 811; 46 L Ed 1209 (1902).

As noted, the Court’s role is not to pick which alternative may be more reasonable, more preferential, or more narrowly tailored, as the latter is in deciding some constitutional cases. Monday morning quarterbacking is the role of sports fans, not courts reviewing the factual basis supporting executive action to protect the public health. Instead, it is the role of the executive and legislative branches to determine what *steps* are necessary when faced with a public health crisis.

In re Abbott, 954 F3d at 792 (“Such authority [to determine what measures are best to take] properly belongs to the legislative and executive branches of the governing authority”); *Rock*, 216 Mich at 296; *Lansing Bd of Ed*, 224 Mich at 397.¹⁴ Under federalism principles, it is the States that retained the police power, and that power—though not unlimited—is quite broad. See *Nat’l Federation of Independent Business v Sebelius*, 567 US 519, 536; 132 S Ct 2566; 183 L Ed 2d 450 (2012) (“The States thus can and do perform many of the vital functions of modern government—punishing street crime, running public schools, and zoning property for development, to name but a few—even though the Constitution’s text does not authorize any government to do so. Our cases refer to this general power of governing, possessed by the States but not by the Federal Government, as the “police power”) and *Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mich v Governor*, 422 Mich 1, 73; 367 NW2d 1 (1985) (discussing the scope of the police power and how that power extends to enacting regulations to promote public health, safety, and welfare, and providing that regulations “passed pursuant to the police power carry with them a strong presumption of constitutionality.”).

What the Court must do—and can only do—is determine whether the Governor’s orders are consistent with the law. *Rock*, 216 Mich at 283. Under the applicable standards, they are. The undisputed facts known at the time the first stay-at-home order was made, and the undisputed facts known today, compel the conclusion that the order had a real and substantial relation to the public health crisis. The challenged measures relate to limiting human interaction which helps control the spread of a virus considered to be extremely communicable. To make it voluntary, or more limited in scope, were perhaps other avenues to pursue, but even accepting that proposition does

¹⁴ As will be discussed shortly, the Legislature has also spoken on the issue of how to address emergent situations. MCL 10.21; MCL 30.401 *et seq.* Additionally, the Court takes notice that the Legislature recently established an oversight committee to review the measures implemented through the Governor’s various executive orders.

not make what the Governor reasonably chose to do invalid. Instead, the Governor's determination as to the speed and ease with which the virus spreads, and the potential impact that spread would have on the health care system, and the threat it had to the lives of thousands of Michigan residents in a short period of time, allows for the conclusion that the two challenged provisions had a real and substantial relation to the public health crisis. *Jacobson*, 197 US at 31. There is nothing presented to the Court to draw any other legal conclusion.¹⁵

Nor is there any evidence (or even a suggestion) that the stay-at-home provision was a pretext to accomplish some other objective. Additionally, the record is clear that these measures are temporary, and limited in time to address the speed at which the virus spreads, the status of the available health care system, and the need to get Michigan residents back to enjoying their liberties. Indeed, since this lawsuit was filed last week, the Governor issued EO 2020-59, easing some of the very restrictions challenged by plaintiffs, and has indicated more lifting of restrictions are imminent. Plaintiffs have not shown a substantial likelihood of success on the merits in their challenge to the executive order restrictions.

C. CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE EMA¹⁶

Turning again to *In re Forfeiture of 2000 GMC Denali and Contents*, the Court set forth the rather difficult standards governing a challenge to the constitutionality of a state statute:

A party challenging the constitutionality of a statute has the burden of proving the law's invalidity. *Gillette Commercial Operations North America & Subsidiaries v*

¹⁵ Plaintiffs submitted documentary evidence which, if believed, could allow a governor to issue a more narrowly tailored order. But because this Governor made a different conclusion that was likewise based on other supporting evidence related to the virus, her decision had a real and substantial relation to the public health crisis.

¹⁶ Plaintiffs do not challenge the Governor's exercise of authority under either statute, nor whether she needs legislative approval to continue her emergency declaration.

Dep't of Treasury, 312 Mich App 394, 414-415; 878 NW2d 891 (2015). The challenging party must overcome a heavy burden because “[s]tatutes are presumed to be constitutional, and we have a duty to construe a statute as constitutional unless its unconstitutionality is clearly apparent.” *Mayor of Cadillac v Blackburn*, 306 Mich App 512, 516; 857 NW2d 529 (2014). When interpreting a statute, our primary goal is to “give effect to the intent of the Legislature.” *Superior Hotels, LLC v Mackinaw Twp*, 282 Mich App 621, 628; 765 NW2d 31 (2009). To do so, we examine the plain language of the statute itself, and “[i]f the language of a statute is clear and unambiguous, the statute must be enforced as written and no further judicial construction is permitted.” *Whitman v City of Burton*, 493 Mich 303, 311; 831 NW2d 223 (2013). [*In re Forfeiture of 2000 GMC Denali and Contents*, 316 Mich App at 569.]

As far as the Court can discern, plaintiffs’ challenge to the EMA is an as-applied one:

A constitutional challenge to the validity of a statute can be brought in one of two ways: by either a facial challenge or an as-applied challenge. This is an as-applied challenge, meaning that claimant has alleged “‘a present infringement or denial of a specific right or of a particular injury in process of actual execution’ of government action.” *Bonner v City of Brighton*, 495 Mich 209, 223 n 27; 848 NW2d 380 (2014), quoting *Village of Euclid v Ambler Realty Co*, 272 US 365, 395; 47 S Ct 114; 71 L Ed 303 (1926). “The practical effect of holding a statute unconstitutional ‘as applied’ is to prevent its future application in a similar context, but not to render it utterly inoperative.” *Ada v Guam Society of Obstetricians & Gynecologists*, 506 US 1011, 1012; 113 S Ct 633; 121 L Ed 2d 564 (1992) (SCALIA, J., dissenting). See also *United States v Frost*, 125 F3d 346, 370 (CA 6, 1997). [*In re Forfeiture of 2000 GMC Denali and Contents*, 316 Mich App at 569-570.]

Plaintiffs’ challenge to the delegation of power from the Legislature to the executive will likely not succeed. It is certainly true that the Legislature cannot grant some vague, unfettered discretion to the executive to carry out what is a legislative function. But if the challenged legislation contains sufficient guidance to the executive on how to execute the law to further the Legislature’s policy, it does not violate the non-delegation doctrine. *City of Ann Arbor v Nat’l Ctr for Mfg Sciences, Inc*, 204 Mich App 303, 308; 514 NW2d 224 (1994) (“[T]he standards must be sufficiently broad to permit efficient administration so that the policy of the Legislature may be complied with, but not so broad as to give uncontrolled and arbitrary power to the administrators.”).

As defendants point out, plaintiffs allege in their complaint that the powers granted to the Governor are “limited,” and none of the provisions in the act are such that the executive would have “uncontrolled, arbitrary power.” *Dep’t of Natural Resources v Seaman*, 396 Mich 299, 308; 240 NW2d 206 (1976). The provisions of the EMA are not vague, and contain specific procedures and criteria for the Governor to declare a state of disaster or emergency, and what conditions qualify as a disaster or emergency. See MCL 30.402(e) and (h); MCL 30.403(3) and (4). The EMA also grants the Governor additional, specific duties and powers when addressing any declared disaster or emergency, MCL 30.405, and sets for a comprehensive state and local jurisdictional system to address declared state-wide disasters or emergencies. MCL 30.407-MCL 30.411. As a result, plaintiffs are unable to establish a likelihood of success on the merits on this claim.

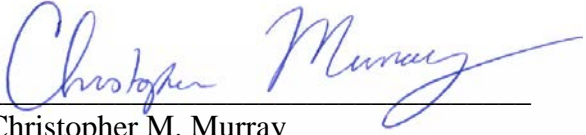
D. HARM TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Finally, and for many of the same reasons, the Court concludes that entry of a preliminary injunction would be more detrimental to the public than it would to plaintiffs. Although the Court is painfully aware of the difficulties of living under the restrictions of these executive orders, those difficulties are temporary, while to those who contract the virus and cannot recover (and to their family members and friends), it is all too permanent. That is not to say that every new virus will require the action taken here, but given the authority of the Governor to do so in the face of these circumstances, the Court must conclude issuing injunctive relief would not serve the public interest, despite the temporary harm to plaintiffs’ constitutional rights.

VI. CONCLUSION

For these reasons, plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction is DENIED.

Date: April 29, 2020



Christopher M. Murray
Judge, Court of Claims