

# Opinion: Lawmakers should back extension of emergency authority for Murphy

CARL GOLDEN | JANUARY 5, 2022 | [OPINION](#), [CORONAVIRUS IN NJ](#)

Amid omicron surge and billion-dollar rise in case and hospitalization numbers, it's the responsible thing to do and in the best interests of the state.



Carl Golden

The Legislature on Monday is scheduled to consider Gov. Phil Murphy's request for a 90-day extension of his emergency authority to deal with the unprecedented and historic rise in COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.

It would be prudent, responsible, wise and in the state's best interest for the Legislature to grant it.

The broad powers that were exercised at the outset of the pandemic nearly two years ago were trimmed back considerably last June and those that remained in effect will expire Tuesday.

Chief among them permits the governor to mandate the wearing of masks in schools, child-care facilities, mass transit, health-care settings and state government buildings. It also gives the administration the authority to oversee vaccination distribution and testing.

The rate of infections — largely the impact of the wildly contagious omicron variant — has set records daily for more than a week while hospitalizations have exceeded 5,000 including a significant rise in patients in intensive-care units and on ventilators.

Underlining the impact of the rapid omicron variant spread, state Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli announced she intended to seek help from

federal strike force as well as the National Guard to head off a curfew in hospitals and health-care facilities and ease the win-win pressures on medical personnel.

**Not 'n**

It reached a low point last month when a number of Republican Assembly members refused to provide proof of vaccination to enter the state house chamber, confronting state Police responsible for enforcing the directive before pushing their way through. It was an embarrassing episode, made worse by shouts of "tyanny" and "treason" in return for a 30-second spot on Fox News.

Through it all, Murphy has maintained public support for his handling of the pandemic, despite

He may very well be playing for time, I pin that the predictions of public-health experts that the micronutrient will undergo use by the end of the month will not pass.

Many of these same experts foresee COVID-19 as being here to stay, becoming an endemic with which the nation must deal every year rather than stamping it out.