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Gym that defied governor's lockdown orders not in contempt of court, judge rules

By Blake Nelson

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New Jersey may not “physically bar all entrances” to a gym that publicly challenged Gov. Phil Murphy’s statewide shutdown, a Superior Court judge ruled Monday, nor will the owners be held in contempt of court.

However, the Atilis Gym of Bellmawr must follow state health department guidelines to combat the coronavirus or risk being found in contempt of court in the future, according to Judge Robert Lougy’s order.

The gym claimed victory on Facebook, writing, “BATTLE WON, WAR STILL ON.”

On Monday, owner Ian Smith posted a video saying they would remain open while following “safety protocols,” and he previously said they would remove the gym’s doors if officials tried to padlock them closed.

The business did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The state attorney general’s office, which argued that health officials should be able to shutter the building, said all gyms were still limited to “individual training sessions in separate rooms,” not “unrestricted public use.”

“Although the court did not yet hold the gym’s owners in contempt,” spokesman Leland Moore wrote in an email, the health commissioner could take the owners to court again, “if the gym violates the order in any way.”

The gym gained national attention after publicly challenging orders to stay closed. On Friday, a federal judge declined to intervene on the gym’s behalf after the owners filed a lawsuit arguing that the lockdown was unconstitutional.