Architect of Florida's coronavirus dashboard says she was fired for not doctoring data

Lia Eustachewich

2-3 minutes

May 19, 2020 | 11:03am | Updated May 19, 2020 | 4:37pm

The woman behind Florida's digital coronavirus dashboard claims she's been booted from her post — for refusing to doctor data to support the state's plan to reopen.

Rebekah Jones said that for "reasons beyond my division's control," she was removed from her position as the architect and manager of the Sunshine State's interactive site on May 5, Florida Today reported.

In an email to CBS12 News, Jones said her removal was "not

voluntary" and that it was because she refused to "manually change data to drum up support for the plan to reopen."

She announced her ouster last week in an email to colleagues, saying her department is no longer responsible for updating information on the site "in any shape or form."

"I understand, appreciate, and even share your concern about all the dramatic changes that have occurred and those that are yet to come," Jones wrote.

"As a word of caution, I would not expect the new team to continue the same level of accessibility and transparency that I made central to the process during the first two months. After all, my commitment to both is largely (arguably entirely) the reason I am no longer managing it."

Jones said she was in the dark about the team's objectives going forward and "what data they are now restricting."

She led a team of Florida Department of Health scientists and public health officers that created the dashboard, applauded for its accessibility by Dr. Deborah Birx last month.

"That's the kind of knowledge and power we need to put into the hands of American people so that they can see where the virus is,

where the cases are, and make decisions," Birx told CBS' "Face the Nation" at the time.

The site, however, crashed and went offline, Florida Today reported, noting that certain information went missing or was hard to access.

Enlarge Image
Rebekah Jones at the Florida Department of Health

Rebekah Jones

Florida has 46,442 total cases of COVID-19 with nearly 2,000 deaths.

The state Department of Health didn't return messages from Florida Today or CBS12 News.