



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Hey, how are you. Well, good afternoon, everybody. Now to see everybody here. I apologize we're getting going a little bit late today, just a lot going on. But, for the most part, it's all really good stuff. So, thanks for everyone for joining us.

Obviously, just as a reminder, we've transitioned to our Tuesday/Thursday press conference schedule. And as most people know, last night our Stay-at-Home 2.0 officially sunset and moved into a Safer-at-Home Advisory, which, again, really reminds folks, especially the elderly or those with underlying health conditions, to really make sure that they are staying at home. They're safer. They're healthier at home.

COVID is still an extremely real issue. As wonderful as it is to see our numbers constantly on the downswing, that is still all a function of having the right protocols in place, whether it's physical distancing, the usage of masks, things of that nature. They really do work. And we are just going to keep reemphasizing that time and time again.

Yesterday, indoor dining with some limitations, gyms, museums, libraries, a few other industries opened up under the new guidance. And again, it's more of a big thank you to everyone for coming in, being part of that stakeholder process, allowing those areas to move forward, and obviously with the team at Public Health who I think also did a great job being very detailed on those guidance documents, guidance documents, again, that will likely stay in place for quite some time.

I really want to emphasize. I've had the opportunity to spend some time on the phone with other Governors, talking to the Administration in Washington. And for those of us who are seeing some of the news stories out there, 20-plus States or approximately half the country have numbers of COVID cases rising, in some cases very, very drastically: States like Florida, or Arizona, or California, or Oregon. And you can keep going down the list. These are States that are right now seeing historically high numbers of COVID. They came down for a while. And now they're rising back up.

Here, in New Hampshire, we are continual on a downward trend. I believe the number's about 27 today. I think the three-day average of positive cases is down at around 2% to 3% percent range, again a historically low number for us. That's wonderful.

But that is all a product of the great work that the citizens of New Hampshire have done, in terms of wearing their masks, when they can; wearing them when physical distancing is impossible; maintaining the physical distancing when we can. These are the most important tools we have. The hand hygiene, we talk about all the time, it sounds like simple stuff, because it is. It's all very doable. And when we do it, it works. And that is what has allowed this curve to be flattened. That is what has allowed our numbers to stay low.

And we are always at a risk of a second surge. We talk about it all the time. We don't want to be in those situations that we find some of those other States are finding themselves in. It could happen. And we can manage through it, whatever the case may be. We have the PPE. We have the testing capability.

We have all these tools. But none of us want to be there. None of us want to have to be in that situation and have to make additional very tough decisions.

And it's all beholden on us. It's beholden on us to, I think, understand the importance of wearing those masks and keeping that physical distancing when we can. So, we just want to really encourage people, if we have that discipline, no matter how good our numbers get, if we have that discipline, we're going to stay in a really good position, and, again, a great testament to the citizens of our State.

I want to take a moment and talk a little bit about a non-COVID item, if I may. And then, we will bring Public Health up here. And we will even talk about the Main Street Relief Fund in a little bit. But earlier today, I signed an Executive Order, not an Emergency Order as part of the COVID-19 epidemic, but a more traditional Executive Order, establishing the Commission on Law Enforcement accountability, community, and transparency.

The Commission, which I am creating to be composed of members of the public. Representatives from the NAACP, the ACLU, our State Diversity Council and Human Rights Commission, as well as members of Law Enforcement, and all to be chaired by our Attorney General, Gordon MacDonald has a charge: to engage all interested and relevant public, private, and community stakeholders to develop recommendations for reforms that the Commission deems necessary to enhance the transparency, accountability, and the community relations in Law Enforcement. And I'm giving them a timeframe of 45 days.

Again, this is not an issue where we want long and drawn-out Study Commissions, where we want long and lengthy Reports, which can have their value, to be sure. But to be honest, this is an issue where we need to act now. We need to act soon. We are not at a crisis point in this State. But I am not one to wait for the crisis. I believe that we can always manage a better solution.

So I'm asking this Commission, within the next 45 days, to reach out, engage with community stakeholders, engage with various aspects of the State, whether it be in Law Enforcement or schools, or whatever it might be, and to really come up with some concrete and practical solutions, practical implementations that we can move forward with, when it comes to reforms in our Law Enforcement community.

This all has the support and backing of the Union, of leadership. We're bringing everybody to the table. That's the way we do things and that's the way we've been very successful getting things done, whether it was attacking the mental-health issue, attacking the SUD issue here in this State, attacking the COVID issue. It only gets done when you bring everybody to the table. You be an active listener, and then have the management to actually move forward and actually get some results with accountability on the backend.

So, I think this is just a great opportunity. We've made huge strides in this State over the last three years with creating our Civil Rights Commission, our Diversity and Inclusion Council, the new Units over within the Attorney General's office. We've made great strides. We passed some good legislation. But there's still a gap. We know there's still a gap. And it's nothing that is insurmountable. But I also believe it's nothing that can wait, either.

And so, we're going to move. We're going to move quickly. We're going to put the right people at the table. And we're going to get some results. And I got to tell you, from my own personal perspective, the fact that everyone is willing to step up to the table, everyone wants to be part of this process in a positive and constructive way, it really makes me know that we can get to where we need to be.

It isn't about fighting over this and fighting over that. It's just about putting everyone there and getting it done for the State of New Hampshire. And I'm very confident we're going to be somewhere with action and something we can really move forward on and get some real results for our citizens.

And again, not just in the short-term, but really creating a new dynamic for the long-term, a new structure of something that we can lean on and lean into for the next five, 10, 20, 30 years, something that we know. This is a pivotal moment, an absolute pivotal moment in our country and for our State. And I'm very excited to get this Commission moving forward.

So, I signed the Executive Order this morning. And obviously we want to thank all these folks that are going to sit on this Commission. And there's a lot of work ahead of them over the next 45 days, want to thank them for their time, thank all the stakeholders. At that time, we know there's going to be a lot of discussion on this. And at the end of the day, we're going to have something, I think, practical and meaningful for the State of New Hampshire.

With that, we will have some more to talk about. But, let's turn it over to Public Health. Maybe Dr. Chan can come up and give us a public health update.

Dr. Chan:

Great, thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. So we are now at more than 8 million cases of COVID-19 globally, including more than 2.1 million cases within the United States. Today, we are announcing an additional 27 people who have been confirmed with COVID-19 in New Hampshire. That brings the total to 5,364 people with confirmed COVID-19 in New Hampshire.

There are two additional people who have required hospitalization for COVID-19, and, sadly, six additional people who have died with confirmed COVID-19. Four of these people were individuals living in long-term care facility settings. And so, we still continue to work with our congregate living settings and long-term care facilities to try and address and respond to outbreaks in order to protect pp's health and frankly prevent people from dying from COVID-19.

We have now tested, since the beginning of the outbreak in New Hampshire, we've tested more than 100,000 people in New Hampshire with the PCR-based tests, looking for active COVID-19 infection. These are virus-specific tests not antibody tests. And consistently, the last several weeks, we have averaged around 1,700 of these tests per day.

So despite a relatively stable number of people being tested in New Hampshire on a daily and weekly basis, the good news is that the number of people testing positive has continued to decrease, as is evidenced by the last several days of low numbers. And it's not only the total number of people testing positive, but also the percentage of all tests that have been positive continues to show an overall low number and decline.

As the Governor mentioned, the last several days, we're averaging probably about 2% of all of these virus-specific PCR tests that have been positive, despite a steady number of tests being performed. So that's good news.

Hospitalizations are also decreasing. So, overall, the numbers continue to show a good trend. These numbers continue to show that we believe community transmission is decreasing. Certainly, there are differences geographically throughout the State, with the southern and southeastern parts of New Hampshire continuing to show the majority of infections. But overall, as a State, we are in a good trend.

However, we do remain at-risk, as the Governor mentioned, for increasing numbers of new infections or even a new surge in the outbreak in New Hampshire. This is being watched very closely,

nationally. As you heard, there are States throughout the United States which are beginning to show increases. This is not the case in New Hampshire yet. But we're certainly following the numbers very closely. And we want to try and prevent this, obviously.

The primary way we are going to prevent New Hampshire going into another surge situation, or seeing increasing numbers of cases, and to continue to get community transmission to decrease is for people, individuals, businesses, everybody in our communities to continue to follow the Public Health advice.

Please stay at least 6 feet from other people and wear cloth face coverings over your nose and mouth, when out in public places. Even if you don't anticipate coming into close contact with other people, if there's the possibility you might, please wear cloth face coverings. This is being recognized more and more as an important control measure for preventing and limiting community transmission of COVID-19.

And as always, it remains critically important for people to wash their hands and practice good hand hygiene. We encourage people to even carry around personal bottles of alcohol-based hand sanitizer, so that before you go into a grocery store, for example, and after you come out from a grocery store; before you go into a library, or after you come out from the library, please practice good hand hygiene as a way to prevent spread not only of COVID-19 but really of any virus or other infectious pathogen that might be circulating.

So, overall, continued good news in the numbers; we're watching the national situation, as well as the State situation very closely. But our ability to prevent New Hampshire numbers from going back up depends on all of continuing to follow the Public Health recommendations. So with that, let me end and hand things over to Commissioner Shibinette. Thanks.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Good afternoon. So, today we're going to do a long-term care update. For our outbreak update, we are moving Greystone Farm at Salem from our outbreak list. They are closed and clear. We are adding Holy Cross Healthcare in Manchester to our outbreak list, with 10 residents, three staff, for a total of 13 positive COVID-19 cases.

In addition, as I spoke about last week, we are releasing our long-term care outdoor visitation guidelines today. We've been working with stakeholders since last week and really came together collaboratively and said, what could we do to really acknowledge the importance of the psychosocial value of having those visits to continue or to start up again, and also acknowledging the safety of the residents and the visitors.

So, maintaining the safe distances to ensure everybody's safety and making sure everybody is masked are two kind of fundamental parts of these visitation guidelines. But some of the other highlights, like including everybody has got the 6-foot social distancing. Everybody's got the masking guidelines.

But in addition to that, some of the highlights to the guidance: every facility is going to develop an individual plan. So if your facility is 300 beds, or 20 beds, your visitation plan is going to look very, very different. So, really having the facility develop an individual plan is really important. All of those plans are inline with kind of State and Federal Regulations.

The visitation is going to be outdoor in a very designated area with space that allows for the 6-foot social distancing. The visits will be no-contact visits. So there will be chairs set up so that people can talk and have privacy. But they're going to be no-contact visits.

Visits are going to be limited to two people. And they need to be over the age of 12. So a lot of that has to really do with the compliance with keeping a mask on the whole time, keeping the 6-foot social distance, all very important.

The visits are going to be by appointment. So, ideally, the way facilities will set it up is they'll have a designated area, either in a courtyard, on a front porch, under a tent, if they don't have that space. They'll have tables and chairs set up. And they'll have a staff that's appointed to that area.

So the staff needs to be appointed to that area to supervise and really just be a monitor, make sure everybody's got hand gel available, if they need it, that they're maintaining their 6 feet. But they need to be far enough away. We call it distant supervision so that people have their privacy. We acknowledge that it's been three months since people have been able to visit with their loved ones -- husbands, wives, parents. So, giving them that privacy is really, really important. But we will have staff at all our of facilities supervising.

We will maintain our screening process for all the residents. Every resident is screened multiple times a day in nursing homes. We will be doing active screening for visitors. And then, visitor logs will be kept. So more than what's typical, if you go to a nursing home today, there's a visitor log for anybody that visits a nursing home. This will be a little bit more extensive than that, that has contact information on it, so that if we get a positive case in a facility that has had visits, and that maybe that resident had a visit, we will be able to identify the visitors that have been exposed through that visit.

So, today, the facilities are very busy creating these plans. We've talked over the weekend and early this week. They're creating the systems and the processes to make appointments and designate the right areas.

We expect most facilities will be able to begin outdoor visits by the weekend. So, into the weekend, Saturday/Sunday, that would be the hope. I'm not going to say every single facility will be there.

But it's important to do it right. We want them to get set up the right way so that they have a process and a system that can move forward. We don't want them to rush into this and make mistakes or have people upset with them for not being able to pull it off. So we want to give them the time necessary to really create a great system.

So, the expectation is most of the facilities will be able to do visits by the weekend. But I would say to the family members is just to be patient. We want to make sure that the visit program that we put in place at every facility is safe, both for you and for the residents. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Great, thank you, Commissioner. Before we open up for questions, want to talk a little bit about the Main Street Relief Fund. The final grant submissions for the Main Street Relief Fund were due and it closed out officially last Friday. So, over the weekend, we're able to look at that data, compile the data, really get a better understanding of who qualified, who didn't, under the predetermined qualifications. And we thought we'd give you some of the metrics.

So, just at a top level -- bear with me. I'll try to stay on the microphone. We had just over 13,000 businesses submitted Prequalification Applications. That was the first phase. We opened that up for about two weeks. We had folks come in and it only took about 10 or 15 minutes with just some basic financial information. So, that prequalification process, we had just over 13,000 Applications.

Then, we opened it up for the final grant submissions. And as a reminder, every single one of these individuals got an email that had their link on it where they were to go in and basically just verify all their final financial data. There were a couple of additional questions in there in more of a formalized grant for the more formalized grant process.

And of these 13,000, this is how the numbers really break out. Over 4700 were actually self-employed, which is a disqualifier. But we will talk about self-employed in a minute. There's still an opportunity there. So we had over 4700 people, even though we said this is not for the self-employed. Over 4700 did provide an Application.

There were close to 2300 -- I don't know if you can see that screen okay -- that were disqualified because they didn't meet the qualifications. Maybe they were too large, over \$20 million; maybe they were part of a franchise. They could have been a non-New Hampshire business. We had a lot of non-New Hampshire businesses try to apply. There were three or four different areas where, other than being self-employed, where they may have been disqualified again all under those predetermined qualifiers. So, about 2300 were disqualified.

There are about 569 -- it's a pretty small number, but about 569 that were eligible. But they never completed the process. And we will reach back out to all those individuals. We're not sure why. It's just people that chose not to go through with the final full grant submission process. That's their choice, which leaves us with about just over 5400, 5466 Grants that are officially approved as part of the \$400 million Main Street Relief Program.

So, can we do the next slide? So, of the 466 [sic], when you look at all of those different losses averaged in there, the total losses divided by the \$400 million means that we are going to be covered. Everyone gets their same pro rata share, right? So, if you had larger losses or smaller losses, everyone gets the same percentage of their loss covered.

And the final formula turned out to be about 17%. That's actually quite a lot, frankly, with an average grant amount of about \$62,000. That is a huge opportunity for a lot of these businesses. And we didn't show it here. It gets a little detailed. But, the vast majority, I think 80% or 90% of the individuals that are covered by this, are very, very small businesses. And that's exactly what the Main Street Relief Fund was designed to do, really go after and create opportunity for these very small businesses.

The total money of the \$400 million being spent is only \$338 million. Why? Why isn't the full \$400 million being spent? Because we capped the most you could get at \$350,000, so even if your losses and your 17% of losses was greater than \$350,000, we put a cap on that simply because this program was really designed to make sure you could pay some basic bills. You could pay your utilities, pay your property tax, pay your mortgages, whatever it might be. And over the past few months, we came up with a number of about \$350,000 that we believe should be adequate for that, and, again, allowed for a lot more opportunity for other businesses, in terms of increasing that amount. It allowed more money to be back into the pot.

And it was fair. I mean, this wasn't to make anybody rich. It wasn't even to cover all their losses. It was just simply to allow them to pay some of the bills. And with the average amount going out at about \$62,000, that is a lot of opportunity for a lot of businesses.

Self-employed submissions, so one thing that really shocked me -- and I think I speak for the rest of the GOFERR Team -- and the GOFERR Team and DRA just did a phenomenal job. I got to just take my hats off. They've worked countless hours over the last month making sure that we got this process right. And they've done a great job.

The most shocking number was that just in a process where we said, if you're self-employed, you don't qualify, we still had over 4700 self-employed individuals apply, just in case. I don't know, in case we're going to change the rules. For whatever reason, they chose to.

But that really highlighted the opportunity to me that we have a lot of folks out there that really do need help and just because they're qualified as self-employed, if there's an opportunity to help them, I think we should. And so, that's exactly what we're going to do.

So, in the coming days, we're going to be finalizing a program, very similar to the Main Street Relief Fund, that allows all these self-employed businesses, not just the ones that applied, but we will open it up to other folks that are self-employed, because, again, we told folks not to do it. So, my guess is that there could be thousands more out there that are self-employed. And we're going to make sure that they have the same type of opportunity to help identify what their losses might be, allow the State to come in and provide some type of relief for them, whether it's just for some of their basic costs and whatever it might be.

These businesses obviously don't have employees they have to worry about, because they're self-employed. But they do have a lot of costs. I was talking to a shop owner just yesterday, who is effectively self-employed, didn't qualify. She has a shop. It's just her. And they're in trouble. They're in real trouble. She's trying her best to stay open, but she couldn't qualify, as part of this Main Street Relief Fund.

This is all about creating opportunity. We want to get to yes. We want to get to the ability to provide assistance to as many people as we possibly can. And this is the clearest and largest area that was not part of this initial Main Street Relief Grant process. And so, we're going to create a new process just for them.

Now, how do we do that? Where's the money come from? Well, we only spent about shy of \$340 million, because of that cap limitation of the original \$400 million. So right there, we have \$600 million [sic] of business relief that went unspent. That's going to go into the pot. We will likely add some more money on top of that. And we're not sure exactly where that number will be. But my sense is that the restrictions will be similar. We're just simply opening it up now for folks of more of a self-employed nature and creating that opportunity for them. So we will have more details on that upcoming program. But, we're very excited.

The folks who received a grant from the Main Street Relief Fund will be getting an email in the next day-or-so, and identifying either they received the grant or they did not receive the grant. Everyone will get an email identifying where they are in that process, that it was at 17%. We will show everyone the individual formula that we used, so they can see their own numbers as to how we came to the final grant amount for each of those individuals. It's not \$62,000 for everybody. It's more, or less, for some. And we will show that individually on each of their emails.

And again, those that are self-employed, there'll be an opportunity to come back into a future fund. And then, the checks go. And the checks are going to be cut literally in the next couple days. That's very exciting. We're not waiting around. These people need the money now. Property taxes are due like now in a lot of towns. And we want to get this relief out quickly.

So, over the next two, three, four, five days, the checks really will get cut, will get out there. And so, people will have those checks in-hand very, very shortly, which I think is pretty exciting. It all worked, as it was designed to do, with the one exception of the self-employed. I think we're surprised by that number, but we're not going to leave it behind. We're going to go after it and provide relief for those folks, as well.

I guess that's it. I guess we can open up for questions. Yeah. I mean, I could talk all day. But, prepared for questions, sure.

Q&A Session

Governor, Commissioner Shibinette or Dr. Chan on the testing numbers, in terms of the 1700 averaged daily, how many of those are sort of repeat people being tested in long-term care facilities versus how many are sort of in the community, people at the drive-up locations? Do we have a breakdown on that?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, I'm not sure if we do.

Commissioner Shibinette:

So, I don't have the breakdown with me right now. But what I can tell you is that the numbers that we report out each day are deduplicated numbers. So they're based on number of people. When you look at our report and our daily report, it says number of persons tested. So, that's in the daily report, when it talks about total number of tests. So, the breakdown that we do in our daily report is based on people.

So, there are times, especially with the serial testing, surveillance testing, that we are going to have people that are tested two and three times. So we're in the process of creating a report that will not only show the number of persons, but then the number of overall tests. So I don't have those numbers right now. But I think that we will have a good report that lists that out. But the numbers we are reporting right now are deduplicated. So they're persons, not tests.

Governor Sununu:

I didn't even know that. That was a great answer. I didn't know we did that.

Governor and Dr. Chan, perhaps, what about as we are kind of hitting more of an open society again and even with the distancing, hearing from some people who are still anxious about this, have gotten into a bit of a new normal since March, and they're worried. So what's the message to those people, as we do open up, and as we see other States that have opened up a little earlier start to see spikes?

Governor Sununu:

Well, I'll tell you. My answer's going to be a little strange. If you have anxiety, if you're worried, you should be. You should be. My message to the State is to worry about this, because this is something

that is going to be with us. It's extremely serious. And as much as we don't want people to have that anxiety and worry, it is going to be with us.

And so, if worrying makes you remind you, I better keep my distance; if it reminds you to bring your mask when you go to the store, then that's where we want you to be. I don't want people to have that anxiety. I don't. But, I would never say don't worry. I'd never say, we got it covered. We're in the clear; absolutely not.

We've done so well with flattening the curve because we worried. We took tough actions. We made tough decisions, not just at the State level, but in our own households and communities. And it worked and is working.

It didn't work perfectly. We had six more fatalities today. I mean, I wish we had zero. But, it worked better than most. It really did. And considering how bad the northeast was, wow, did it really work very well here in New Hampshire. So I couldn't be prouder of the State.

But, I'm really not going to be at a point where I'm -- I can't imagine. Maybe someday I'd be at a point. I hope I am, where I'm telling people, don't worry about COVID anymore. We're good; no way. We really have to have that heightened sense in everything we do, whether it's in our homes or to go shopping, whether in our workplace.

Today, at the State House, the Senate came back. It's been very quiet in the State House for the past three months, other than myself and my team. And we're very good about our physical distancing. And we get tested and whatnot.

But we made sure that we're in the hallways. We're wearing our masks. We're doing those types of things, because we're around other people. We have to be very cognizant, when we walk into a new situation.

I was in a restaurant. I went to do pickup last night. I'll throw my plugin for Popovers in Epping, great dinner. Kids and Valerie loved it. But when I went in, they had a sign on the door, Masks Mandatory, in the restaurant, even for customers, right, which I thought was pretty interesting. But they're taking it very seriously. And I thought that's great. That's great.

Businesses have the ability to do that. We're not mandating it at the State level, because frankly that's very difficult to enforce, right? We've always talked about not having the mask police roaming the streets. We're not going to be at that level.

But we have to keep this very heightened message about masking, about physical distancing, about hand hygiene. You're going to hear it ad nauseum from now until I can't imagine when. I don't know. I'm just speaking more from myself in terms of the responsibility that I have in keeping that as a very elevated message.

I wish I could tell people not to worry and don't carry that anxiety. But, you got to worry. It's out there, not just for yourself, but for your loved ones, for your grandparents, for whatever it might be. Yeah.

But the guidance works, too. I mean, that's the beauty of all the work that Public Health has put forth. The guidance is so specific to each industry to allow those flexibilities, but to do it in a safe way. And that's why one of the challenges we have with schools and universities, that's where I worry probably the most, when we're looking at opening schools and universities.

We're going to get there, to be sure. But it's taking a lot of discussion and a lot of practical understanding of what happens in a classroom, what happens in dormitory living, what happens with off-campus living and how that interacts. These are things we're trying to get into the real details.

It's easy to put something on paper. But if it's not practical, if no one's going to adhere to it, because it just wasn't designed with common sense, frankly, then we all just wasted our time. So we're really trying to engage. That's why Commissioner Edelblut put out a survey to all the parents. What do you want to see? Put out to the Teachers: what's practical in your classroom? So the practicality of what we do hopefully can get people comfortable with keeping that heightened awareness with physical distancing and masking, knowing that we're providing the flexibility in the safe way so they can partake in school or shopping, whatever it might be.

So I'm sorry for the drawn-out answer. But that's a very important question. Unfortunately, we are going to be in a state of kind of heightened awareness for quite some time. I didn't know if Dr. Chan wanted to add anything to that.

Dr. Chan:

So, I think that's exactly right in that it's hard to follow that. But I think everything that the Governor said was right on. The only thing that I'll add is that I believe, by the end of the month, all businesses will be open in some capacity or another.

And the goal of the Public Health recommendations that the Governor just mentioned that I talked about beforehand is really to try to keep those businesses open and society functioning, despite COVID-19 being with us likely for months to come. And the way that we keep society functioning, the way that we are able to keep those businesses operating, really is by all of us practicing the physical distancing recommendations, wearing cloth face coverings.

These are intended not to just protect communities' health and prevent COVID-19 from spreading. But it's really meant to try and maintain some basic operations within society so that we're not back to having discussions again about, are there certain businesses we need to close down, right? We don't really want to have to go there again.

And the way that we're going to prevent that from happening is by people, when they're out in public places, maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from other people, wearing cloth face coverings over the nose and mouth, right, covering both nose and mouth, and then practicing good hand hygiene. That's all that I would add. Thanks.

Governor Sununu:

Great. Hi, how are you, Paula? Good to see you.

Good, haven't seen you in a long time. Nice to be back in circulation. Hello, Governor. And I'd like to ask Commissioner Shibinette a couple of questions about the nursing home situation. First of all, visitation, that's very exciting, big change. Will visitors need to have a COVID-19 test? Or is that part of the recommendations for family members to come in with PCR tests?

Commissioner Shibinette:

Sure, we're not recommending testing at this time, mostly because testing is only good for that point in time, right? And we know that, that there is a high degree of asymptomatic-positive people that walk around and they don't realize they're sick. And if we got a test today, that's good for today. You

could come in contact with the virus tomorrow or the next day. If they're going to have weekly visits, are we going to require them to have a test every week? That would seem excessive.

What we do know is that, if we practice some of the things that Dr. Chan and the Governor's talked about, that we can very much lower the risk of any type of transmission of the virus. So, keeping that 6-feet social distancing, having the cloth faces masks, having no-touch visits, having active screening both for the residents and the visitor, all very, very important.

So, I think that requiring testing would be an obstacle that would be probably insurmountable for some families to be able to have weekly or every-other-week visits. So, if we just really follow those Public Health guidelines, I think we can get there.

How about out-of-state or people that are coming from a distance? What recommendations might you have for someone coming from a high...

Commissioner Shabinette:

Yeah, I think that every individual facilities is going to manage that a little bit differently. I think that there is a difference. I don't want to say that out-of-state residents need to do specific things differently, because with our border facilities -- Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine -- we have families that literally travel 30 minutes over the border. We're not going to make them go and get a test, versus maybe a family that's traveling from New Jersey or Connecticut.

So the facility really needs to look at those out-of-state visitors with a reasonable eye. Is this person traveling 30 minutes from an area that has about the same case rate as we have here in New Hampshire? Or are they coming from a hotspot? And can they ask for additional screening options, if the family member's coming from kind of one of those hot zones in the United States?

We really are looking at the facilities to use their best judgment in a lot of ways. I don't want to write arbitrary policies that don't apply to some facilities and create artificial rules that make it impossible for people to come visit their loved ones. So, really, facilities have great judgment on this. And Public Health and the Commissioner's Office, always available for consultation if they need help.

And how many number of long-term care facilities do we have in the State that would be applicable?

Commissioner Shabinette:

I don't have the numbers in front of me, but all nursing homes, all assisted livings that are not in current outbreak. So facilities that are in a current outbreak status cannot have visitors. They have to be out of outbreak status; but every assisted living and long-term care facility.

Thank you.

Commissioner Shabinette:

Yeah.

Governor, as you know, there's been in the past some criticism about the Laurie List and the lack of public access to it. Do you hope this Commission's work leads to more public disclosure of documented cases of Police misconduct?

Governor Sununu:

Absolutely; yeah. Looking at the Laurie List, yes, and making sure that as long of those Officers have received due process, their names should be made public, absolutely. If a Officer hasn't received due process, then of course we have to be very cognizant of that. And even if your name is out there, there's always an appeal process on top of that for that Officer. And that's a point that I know the Attorney General had discussed with the Union and the Patrolman's Association. And while I think traditionally there was some back-and-forth on that, I think everyone -- again, I'm very heartened by the fact that everyone wants to come to the table and make things like that work. They know that this is a pivotal point in time. And they want to take those steps forward.

And so, I'm very hopeful that we will find a constructive way to get there. But, absolutely, if you're an Officer that's received your due process and you're on that list, it should be public. There's a public interest in that.

Governor, just on the same lines, just yesterday Connecticut's Governor issued an Executive Order in reference to the State Police there that immediately specifically bans chokehold by their State Police Troopers and also requires them to intervene if they see another Officer using excessive force. You've made the decision to wait 45 days. Just wondering why you've made the decision to wait for the recommendation.

Governor Sununu:

Sorry, so just to be clear, that's Connecticut. Is that Ned Lamont, Governor Lamont?

Yeah.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so specifically on chokeholds, this isn't just about chokeholds. This is about community interaction. This is about transparency. This is about EES. It could be about protocols, use of lethal force, use of lethal force when it pertains to individuals with mental-health issues.

I mean, if you look at the disproportionate number of individuals who are involved in a shooting that have underlying mental-health issues, something Ken Norton over at NAMI and I have discussed many, many times. That's why I'm putting him on the Commission, because that's type of issue.

I'm against chokeholds. Ban the chokeholds. I don't need to wait 45 days. And I think there's a piece of a legislation that's being discussed right now in the Senate. And so, I'm hopeful that that'll hit my desk. The chokehold thing might come up in the 45 days. But on that issue, in particular, I'll tell you we're against them. And if we can ban them, I think we have to take those steps. And I'm hopeful that legislation will get to my desk.

So you think there might be some decisions made even before this Commission...

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, sure. Absolutely, I mean, things I think that are -- I don't want to say obvious, but -- yeah, that are obvious, like banning chokeholds, sure. And I've looked at the piece of legislation that's currently in the State Senate. From what I've seen and what I can remember of it, it's appropriate and I can imagine signing it, if it hit my desk. Yeah.

Can we get an update on labor negotiations with the SEA? You've heard the honking, I would assume, in the State House today.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I heard the honking.

Any progress? They say 350 days, I guess. That's what the 350 stood for.

Governor Sununu:

I guess my biggest frustration is this. Given where we are today, given I have 100,000 people out of a job today, the fact that Union bosses for the State employees, not the employees, themselves, but it's really the Union bosses driving the fact that they demand a raise, out of touch, completely out of touch with what is happening out there.

I will remind you. The Legislature thought I should give the Union and State employees a \$6 million raise. I offered them \$8 million. I offered them more than the Democrats in the Legislature. They said no. And then, they said no again. And then, they said no again.

And now, we're in a major financial crisis. The idea that we would, then, go and start giving raises, Union leadership over there is clearly completely out of touch with what's going on. I have 100,000 people out of work. But to think that we're going to start giving raises today, my goodness. Get your priorities straight. I guess that sums up where we are on negotiations. I mean, I hope you understand. I don't think I'm having to convince anybody of the obviousness of this awkward situation.

Maybe someone on the phone? Sure.

Kathy McCormack with Associated Press:

Yes, thank you. Vermont is going ahead with a ban on using plastic bags in grocery stores, retailers, and restaurants starting July 1st. This had been approved last year. Has there been any discussion on going back to allowing reusable bags in New Hampshire?

Governor Sununu:

It has been discussed, I can tell you. There's some folks that were talking about, again, it really comes down to the transmissivity issue. I was just talking to Dr. Chan a little bit about the idea that there's still some guidance out there that says if you've touched certain things, we need to make sure -- I think library books need to be quarantined and things of that nature.

In a grocery store, in particular, you have issues with it isn't so much the individuals buying the products. It's more of the baggers, themselves, putting their hands in one bag to another, to another, to another. And if they're reusable, they're not cleaned, you can get into a hygiene situation there.

So I guess that's a long way of saying that it's been discussed. We're looking at all the different variables. I don't think we're at the point where we're ready to go back to allowing the reusable bags just yet. We're just asking folks to be patient. We want to make sure that people are safe.

The grocery stores have been great about kind of working with us on this process. And I remind you that pretty much every grocery store -- I don't know of any that don't -- but pretty much every grocery store, they have their recycling bins there. So we encourage people to use them. And those bags are recycled. There is a way to recycle them smart and safe. And we just encourage people to use that process to make sure that, for those who are concerned about the environmental issues that might come to bear with using plastic bags, and same with takeout bags, or whatever it might be.

It's not just grocery stores. It's a lot of different things. So, save your plastic bags. Recycle them at the grocery stores. At some point, we obviously hope to get back to going back to the reusable bags. But I don't think we're there yet.

Paul Hayes with The Caledonian-Record:

Hi, some of the audio is a little low. I might have missed something earlier. But as far as election season, campaigning season, I don't know if there's going to be any specific guidance revolving around campaigns as opposed to other kinds of gatherings and other kinds of things. I was just curious if that's something being talked about. And generally, how you see the current situation impacting people's ability to campaign, meet with voters, and that sort of thing.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, so the question has to do with campaign. Is there any guidance around campaigns as campaign season picks up? I'll tell you the quick answer's no. We're not going to be creating guidance specifically for campaigns. But all the guidance that we've put out, whether it's the universal guidance.

Now, again, we've removed the issue around social gatherings. But, again, we're encouraging the physical distancing to happen, the mask wearing, where you can't maintain physical distancing. All those still come into play.

I mean, I know I signed up to run for Governor for last Friday. But I haven't asked for \$1. I haven't sent a single email. I haven't even started a campaign. I don't think we even have a fulltime employee on the campaign staff right now. So I haven't really started thinking about it from my perspective. So I can't answer how we're going to deal with it.

It will be a different season, though. It'll be very different. I know everyone else has been out there campaigning all along through this whole COVID process. I have not. I guess you could go back and look at how they've been doing it. I don't know. I've been a little busy, frankly.

But it'll look a little different. If you just take that fact that, as someone who traditionally loves to do a parade, there'll be very few parades. Most of them have been canceled on their own, already. There'll be very few fairs. We love going to the fairs and meeting people and saying hi, and shaking hands and taking pictures and all that kind of stuff. My guess is there'll be very few of those. Those communities are actively choosing not to do that.

So, I think the whole campaign will look a little different. I think there's going to be a little hesitation on doing things like door-to-door or coming to the turkey suppers and things of that nature. They can happen. But they have to happen a little differently with a little more spaces and distancing.

But I haven't even started my campaign yet. So I can't answer for myself. I guess you just have to look at how other people have been trying to do it. I guess I should start campaigning at some point, right? I do want to be Governor again in November, don't get me wrong. I've just been a little busy.

Lauren with New Hampshire Public Radio:

Thanks, two questions. First, I'm curious to know if a member of Black Lives Matter is going to be included on the new Commission you announced today. I didn't see them specifically identified on the list that you guys had sent around. And the second question is, Governor, do you think that Franklin Pierce's name should be removed from university titles here?

Governor Sununu:

Black Lives Matter, in terms of the Commission, we have, I believe, the head of the NAACP and the Manchester Leader of the NAACP, I believe, are both on that Commission. I don't think we specifically outlined it had to be someone specifically from Black Lives Matter, per se.

And the question about Franklin Pierce being removed, boy, I've heard people discuss that. Obviously, there's a national discussion going on in terms of flags and statues, and how you name things, and the relation of those individuals to past history, regardless of how far back it goes.

I'll say this. I think it's a discussion that has to be had, absolutely. I haven't thought about it too much, in terms of Franklin Pierce. I don't know. I'm not a big fan. I don't think he was a very good President. That's more of a civics issue. And I know there's a lot of issues surrounding his background and his support of the south.

Yeah, I think it's a discussion that absolutely has to be had. I don't think just the Governor or anyone should be making the decision solely in a box. But, I think it's something for either the Commission on Diversity Inclusion to take up. There's a variety of different groups that could be part of that discussion and that should be part of that discussion. So, I imagine we will kind of see where that goes.

But I am very supportive of having the discussion. I'm not one of those individuals that's going to say, no, just leave everything as-is. There are always pivotal points in time. We move on for a reason. There's evolution of ideas. There's evolution of priorities, evolution of intentions, evolution of social norms. And I think we're in a really pivotal moment in our Country and our State's history. And it's kind of a seize-the-day opportunity. Let's seize the moment and get it right.

That was it? Oh, okay. Anything else? No?

Can I ask one more question, while I'm here?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, Paula.

When are we going to have early day center openings for the elderly?

Governor Sununu:

Adult daycare.

Right, adult daycare.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so we're working on that guidance now, very challenging, adult daycare. And I don't want to speak for the Commissioner or for Dr. Chan. But, for me, in looking at some of the draft guidance, in some ways it's almost more challenging than the visitation in a long-term care center, because adult daycare is typically much more interactive. It's day-to-day.

Individuals are going back to their homes in their community, and then they're coming back into a center. And that physical transportation, if you will, from one location to another, it just adds another layer of complexity when you bring in the potential for viral spread and how dangerous that might be. So, that's one of those areas where it's really, really challenging. I don't know if you want to add anything to that. But, I think that's one of the challenges we're having.

So we're hoping to get something soon. It might be very restrictive. But it's also very important. It really is. It's one of those issues where there's a lot of folk that are trying to go back to work, but can't, because they might be taking care of an elderly parent or something like that, and because their daycare services just aren't available right now.

And so, it's restrictive in a lot of different ways. And just, again, it's a part of that social aspect. Some of these folks, they thrive on that elderly interaction, that socialization that is just so important for so many reasons, when you talk about folks in that community. So we want to make sure that it can happen in some way. But we're not quite there yet. And we just want to make sure it happens safely.

With regard to the inclusion of Black Lives Matter in the Commission, is that something you'd consider adding a seat for them, because sometimes, at least my understanding is, there's generational differences in the approach and some of the Black Lives Matter, you do have a lot younger activists?

Governor Sununu:

I'd consider anything, to be honest. I mean, I'll have to go back and look at who's on there now, see if there's crossover, because I know we have somebody from the ACLU. I mean, I don't know if there's somebody on Black Lives Matter that's part of the ACLU, or someone on the NAACP that's part of that group, as well. So there could be crossover already built in there. But, we can add a couple public

members, as well. And maybe that's an area where we can add a public members. Yeah, that's an idea. Yeah.

It's one of those things where you create these Commissions sometimes and you realize you could put 25 people on the Commission all with valid reasons of being on the Commission. But, at some point, you kind of have to make it workable.

But I think that, of course, considering Black Lives Matter has really led and driven a lot of the very, I think, positive and responsible discussion, especially here in the State speaking for how a lot of the Black Lives Matter protests and discussions have gone on, incredibly well, incredibly responsible, exactly the way we want to see it happen, because it allows us to take that next step forward. So I think they've just done a fantastic job. So, any chance we can get involved in a conversation of that level is going to be very, very important. Yeah.

And can we get the nursing home inspection reports since pandemic, like a list of when you guys inspected them for COVID-19? Is that something that we could get? And I also have been told that the veteran's home has not been tested.

Commissioner Shibinette:

So, the inspection reports become public once they're approved by C.M.S. And they get posted, just like every other facilities. What I can tell you is all the facilities in this State have had at least one inspection. So 100% of the nursing homes -- I'm not including assisted livings when I say that, but nursing homes.

The veteran's home, we've been in consistent communication to put them on our surveillance program, both the residents and the staff. I know that they had that discussion with Public Health last week about setting up a test date. I don't know that they actually had the specimen collection done or not. But the intent last week was to get them completed and have their baseline done.

By them, do you mean the staff and residents?

Commissioner Shibinette:

Both, yes. And so, understanding that it's very easy for us to go in and get permission from the residents to do the baseline testing, that's not a problem at all. As with any facility, there are staff that don't want to be tested, for one reason or the other. So we can't force staff to get tested, if they don't want to get tested.

The facility, certainly, can put policies in place that require or that even require an antibody testing, or some type of testing. So, what we say is that we offer the testing to all staff at least between seven and 10 days. Those that are not on the surveillance program right now have the option of going to any of our fixed test sites. We often send people there. We can test anybody that goes there, too.

Why is the VA different than all the other long-term care facilities?

Commissioner Shibinette:

They're not any different at all. It was really just coordination of resources. They need to get permissions from different pp people get approvals from different people to do it, get their families in the VA.

It is a Federal issue, then?

Commissioner Shibinette:

They're a VA home versus licensed and certified by the State. They are certified by the Veteran's Administration. So the VA has their own set of standards and guidelines around testing. So it was just making all those braid together. But they're on our list now. So I think it was really, really important to include them in everything that we were doing. So they just needed to get the right permissions in place.

Governor Sununu:

Okay, last questions, anything? 4:00, all right. Well, thank you, everyone, for joining us this afternoon. For all those who received Grants on the Main Street Relief Fund, congratulations. Those checks will be going out very shortly. And again, hopefully, we will have some more details on the new self-employment business fund that we're going to be creating, which is another, I think, great opportunity.

Lots going on in the State, all good stuff, summer's upon us. But let's wear the masks. Let's keep the physical distancing. Keep up those disciplines, it's what's gotten us some great results so far. And we want to carry that all the way through this fall. Thanks a lot, everybody.