



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu  
Press Conference  
Thursday, June 18, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

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**Governor Sununu:**

Okay. Well, good afternoon. Good to see everybody. A few things to cover before we jump into questions; thanks for joining us. We start off by noting that we notice tomorrow is Juneteenth, and marks the celebration where we recognize the abolition of slavery. And it's an interesting story here in New Hampshire in that I signed an Executive Order. I think I was the first Governor to sign an Executive Order recognizing Juneteenth a couple years ago. And then, we signed a Bill codifying it into law last year.

So we do have that coming again. And again, once again, we will observe it. And it's just a time, I think, for everyone to reflect and recognize African-American freedom and achievement. It's kind of a new holiday that we celebrate that's getting a lot more recognition across the country, and very timely, I think, given a lot of the injustices we're seeing out there and the issues surrounding race, and recognizing that. So, tomorrow is Juneteenth. So we can all reflect upon it.

Before we do the public health update -- and we're going to talk about some new guidance documents, as well, I wanted to just give everyone a brief update on the Main Street Relief Fund, which we announced the final Grants are being awarded earlier this week. This morning, emails went out to everyone who submitted the final grant submission letting them know whether their submission was approved, or denied, or disqualified for the various disqualifications and guidelines that we had created around the program. And for those approved, the first rounds of checks should be going out later today, as planned. So that's fairly exciting.

To those businesses that filled out the final grant submission but were denied and they may believe they were denied incorrectly, we did create an appeals process that is expedited, while ensuring that the proper checks are against the fraudulent claims. So in other words, if folks really think that for some reason they checked a wrong box or there's something that we missed on our end, we want to make sure that there is kind of a due process there, an appeals process. And we're happy to review those in an individualized basis.

And as we said on Tuesday, given the high amount of submissions for the self-employed that were originally not eligible for the Main Street Relief Fund, we will be announcing a new fund next week to help those self-employed businesses. So we will have the details all prepared for next week on the next round of business relief specifically focusing on the self-employed.

As many of you know also, I did get a COVID test a couple weeks ago. And it did come back negative. But this is part of our ASAP testing program, a program that is really designed around encouraging those that are asymptomatic. We want to just remind folks to go online. Get your test, it's incredibly easy, completely painless. Literally takes a couple minutes out of your day, it's just so easy to do.

And that's for employers, as well. I know a lot of employers have contacted our office asking the best way to get their summer employees tested or their traditional fulltime employees tested. And again,

even though you don't have symptoms, anyone can go online and get a test. And we just want to really encourage people to do that.

They can go directly to the Rite-Aid website, or the ConvenientMD website, or the [nh.gov\COVID-19](http://nh.gov/COVID-19). That'll give you all the different opportunities in your area and across the State to receive the COVID-19 test. The registration literally takes a few minutes before just being able to pick your time, go on in as early as the next day, in most cases. Get your test and get the results a few days later, so very easy, very convenient.

With that, Commissioner, why don't we go into the public health update?

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Good afternoon. So, today New Hampshire will be announcing 17 new cases of COVID-19 for a new total of 5,450; two new hospitalizations for a total of 533; and one new death at a long-term care facility for a total of 331.

Now, as you can say, our data is certainly trending in the right direction, which is what we like to see. Our current hospitalizations around all of our hospitals in the community who report to us every day is also showing a very good trend of declining rates of hospitalizations at our community hospitals.

We are right around 109,000 people tested in the State of New Hampshire, which is a good rate. But, as the Governor mentioned, we'd like to increase that number more in the coming weeks, as we ramp up with people coming back to work and different things opening up, getting your test, even if you're asymptomatic, very important, not just for your own wellbeing but to protect the people around you.

For outbreaks, the only thing I have to announce is that we are taking two facilities off our outbreak list. One is Mountain Ridge in Franklin and Ridgewood Center in Bedford, both clear and off of our outbreak list. We have no one new to add. Thank you.

**Governor Sununu:**

Great, thank you, Commissioner. We have some reopening guidance we want to talk about this afternoon, the kind of last large hurdles, I think, that we've discussed previously, knowing that these were the areas of our industry and economy that were really the hardest, and we've spent the most time on, trying to get right, if you will. Looking at some of the other models you see across the country, what works and what doesn't work, and just trying to provide that flexibility while maintaining that balance with Public Health and making sure it's still a preeminent priority.

Allowing these things to go forward knowing that the masking, physical distancing, always the best tools we have in the toolbox, and the personal responsibility that we all take, whether it's visiting a retail store or a restaurant, or a gym, whatever it might be. There's always better precautions that we can take. And we'd just ask everyone to really stay on their toes, if you will.

We talked a little about the worry and anxiety around COVID and it is good to carry a little worry and anxiety, because we see numbers spiking in other parts of the country. And we're going to keep reminding folks almost ad nauseum, if you will, the importance of that personal hygiene and physical distancing.

But, today, we're posting out new guidance on that same webpage, the [nh.gov](http://nh.gov) website. There's a Safer-at-Home button. And if you click on that button, all of our guidance documents are there. But,

today, we are submitting new guidance documents surrounding amusement parks, movie theaters, performing arts centers and music venues, and adult daycare. All of these really present the biggest challenges that we have. And we've worked with Public Health to help ensure that we're taking the most appropriate steps.

Most of these areas talk about specifically areas of limiting capacity, typically something at a 50% capacity. The encouragement and requirement of masks in certain times; and again, it's just about allowing these venues to open up and making sure that they have the space and the distancing to allow individual parties, families, to have that physical distancing and so they can partake in these various venues without fear of large amounts of outbreak, including those super-cluster events that we talk about from time-to-time.

In addition to these new guidance documents, we also just remind folk that we do periodically update other guidance documents, and so to check in periodically. We do make small tweaks and updates. As some of the larger-type things, like restaurants or lodging, enter Phase 2 or Phase 3, whatever it might be, we will always make larger public announcements. But we just want to remind folk to always check back periodically at the Safer-At-Home button within that website to see any of the other updates that we may be making.

And lastly, before we open up for questions, I just want to remind folks that we are coming upon a pretty significant anniversary, a sad anniversary, frankly, here. It was last year on June 21st. This year, it coincides with Father's Day. But, a year ago from this Sunday, the seven motorcycle riders who we now remember as the Fallen Seven were killed in a very tragic crash up in Randolph, New Hampshire. They were part of the Jarheads, a motorcycle club of Marines and their loved ones, and just out for a ride when they were tragically killed by an oncoming vehicle.

And if you remember, there were a lot of things that surrounded that issue, in particular, and that tragedy. We had what I think a lot of folks will remember as a very touching tribute, a overwhelming tribute in terms of the motorcycle ride that happened. And a lot of us that were there -- and it seemed like half the State was there, because we all came out for it. You had the flags that were being posted on the overpasses, the 100-plus-mile ride that happened from Laconia all the way up into Randolph. Everyone really coming out for that, tens of thousands of people participating, either riding or kind of observing, it was quite something to see, everyone really coming together.

But, it is a time, I think, just I wanted to remind folks. We are coming upon that anniversary. It was a real tragedy, brought a lot of people together. But it really was a tragedy. And I would just ask that we all remember those Fallen Seven. We lost a lot of our heroes that day, to be sure.

With that, we can open up for questions.

### **Q&A Session**

*Governor, do you mind giving us a quick compare-and-contrast on some of the things that are being done, or worked on, in States like Arizona or other States that are seeing an uptick, Oregon. Has anyone been able to divine things that they might have done or not done in the last couple of months that we want to avoid here in New Hampshire? Is there any kind of read on that that you can give us?*

## **Governor Sununu:**

We've looked at a lot of the different things that other States have done. And I'll say this. Without going in particulars about one State or another, I think what the most common thing I see in some of those other States -- I'll do my best not to be overly critical. But one of the biggest differences is when some of these other States opened up, I think they opened up not just too fast. That's a very easy way of saying it, but, in doing so, lost the importance of the message of the dangers of COVID.

I've always said there'll be a second surge. There are. And we're already seeing second surges across the country. Some States may see third and fourth surges. You just don't know how that's going to play out. But we are going to see additional surges here. It has to be managed within our healthcare system. And you have to keep an elevated message of caution.

I don't think some of those other States were coming out telling people that you should be still worried and have some anxiety about COVID, but I am, because it is exactly what we have to do so we don't fall into those same situations. There are clearly smart ways to open up the economy, stepwise, looking at data, taking additional steps, not rushing into it, because it's not just opening up.

It's about the messaging, I think, around it and why I'm just going to keep repeating and repeating, and repeating how important the physical distancing, wearing of the masks, taking things stepwise, knowing that if we have to pull back, we're ready to pull back, absolutely. And we will do it if we have to, if our healthcare system can't manage the numbers, if we see overwhelming numbers of outbreaks in certain areas.

So, I don't think it was -- and the other thing I'd remind folks is every State is different, right? I mean, no two States have taken the same approach to this. There still are restrictions in a lot of those States, even in a State like Florida or Georgia. There are still some reasonable restrictions there. But, for the most part, they came out so fast, so hard. And I just don't think the message was really in-tune with some of the risks that this virus still very much poses.

We saw the story of the 16 individuals that went out for a birthday party at a bar. Every one of them got COVID, right? We've seen some success stories, too. I don't know if this one's been verified. But I heard a story of two individuals that ran a salon and they both were symptomatic and COVID-positive, which means they were coughing and things like that. They treated about 160 individuals. But because they wore masks and those individuals wore masks, I believe, to-date, there's no reported COVID transmission, proving that masks really did work. I mean, could have actually saved lives, frankly, in that situation.

But the importance of if you're sick, you need to stay home. If you have underlying health conditions, you need to be home. We are into a Safer-at-Home Advisory. We're not in the Stay-at-Home Order. But, again, that elevated message and the importance of the risks -- I mean, it is life-or-death in my situations, especially for the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

I've now known three or four individuals that have gone through it. Two of them have gone through very easily and two of them have had to be intubated, and have been in ICUS. And God bless it, all of them have come through. But we know not everyone has come through. We've lost a lot of individuals here.

But we've done the right things. We've maintained that strong messaging. I think that's the most consistent difference between New Hampshire and other States in New England, and what you're seeing in other parts of the country.

We're not immune from a surge, by any means, especially knowing that schools are going to open and universities. I'm going to keep talking about that because those guidance documents will be released likely shortly after the 4th of July. But our plan is to open them up. But it's possible we see COVID in those situations, and we just need to be prepared for that, know the risks of that. And keep an elevated message for those individuals, those young adults in college, or do the best at what we can for the Teachers and the students that will be in the K-12 classrooms.

*Do you have dates...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, hi. Paula, how are you?

*Good, how are you, Governor?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Good.

*Nice to see you.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Good to see you. Oh, we switched, sorry. I'm getting confused. Everyone's moving around today, musical chairs.

*I wanted to introduce you to Katherine McLaughlin of Gilford, who's our Intern this summer.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Of course, how are you? Oh, nice to see you.

*She's going to be helping.*

**Governor Sununu:**

I noticed you didn't ask a question last time. You were the only one that didn't ask a question.

*I have one today.*

**Governor Sununu:**

You have one today. Okay, good.

*I have a quick question relative to the Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community, and Transparency, big name. Does it have an acronym?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Does it? I haven't added the letters together. I like acronyms. I didn't do one for that one.

*Did you consider Criminal Defense Attorneys to serve on the Commission?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I did and they will. So we are going to make that change, actually. Yeah. So we heard from a variety of folks. Look, that group was put together and I think it's a great group. It's all very positive. And we could have probably ended up with 40 people legitimately have legitimate reasons to be part of that group. We just couldn't do it for everyone. One of the few exceptions we are going to make, because it was clear that it was just an oversight in our part, was to have Criminal Defense Attorneys, as well. So, great question.

*And also, I heard the Black Lives Matter is also. Do you have a Representative from Black Lives Matter that's adding?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yes, sorry, Ronelle Tsheila, she is a community organizer. I was trying to get her title, but I think she just goes by part of the community organizer for Black Lives Matter. She's been great. We've maintained a very good relationship and good communication, and I asked her to serve as one of the public members.

*And any other additions since we talked on Tuesday?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, just the Criminal Defense Attorneys.

*And do you have a date for when they're going to meet?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Gordon MacDonald is setting the meetings. I believe they start early next week, maybe even as early as Monday or Tuesday of next week. But Gordon is kind of taking the lead on the Commission. And I know he's been reaching out to all the different members.



*This actually bodes quite well on her question, but in reaching out to Black Lives Matter Manchester, why did you think it was important that that voice be represented on the Commission? And what do you hope that voice brings to the Commission? And what have those conversations been like?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so in reaching out, I reached out to Ronelle just the other day to be one of the public members. The Black Lives Matter here in New Hampshire has been one of the leading voices around this entire issue over the past month. I think they've done a tremendous job of having the right message at the right time, in the right way. It's been very successful, and it's been something that has been resonating not just within their community but all throughout the entire State.

And you saw, whether it's the small protest, the candlelight vigils, the larger marches, whatever it was here in the State, all done very successfully. And that allowed that message not to disappear or kind of underlain by the rioting and the violence, and the things you see in other parts of the country. And that's a testament to all the people in New Hampshire, I think, taking the message very seriously, understanding there's something important not just to be said there, but real action to follow onto it.

No, it was kind of an obvious choice. They've been a leading voice of this effort from the very beginning. I guess I talked to Ronelle the morning of the march they did in Manchester. I've talked to her a couple times since then. Yeah.

She, I think, is a great representative. And I believe she started the Black Lives Matter group when she was in high school in Manchester and she's in college now. But she's been there right from the very, very beginning, from years ago. I want to say back in 2016-or-so.

So, again, she has great history with what this message is all about and the actions that I think a lot of us agree have to come out of this. And again, we're putting a pretty tight timeline of 45 days on it. So, we all want to get to work and get it done.

*Governor, as you said, if numbers are trending in the right direction, at least from New Hampshire's standpoint, more people are going back to work. More people are getting tested. And yet the numbers continue to look positive. Are you still in kind of a two-week timeframe in terms of relaxing more restrictions, whether it be restaurants, weddings, those kinds of things, as more things open and things are looking good?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, potentially. So the question is really about the gaiting procedure. We're sticking with the original plan. It was a good plan in the beginning. We're sticking with it, which is we make some motions to open some things up. We look at the data for two or three weeks. And then, we can take additional steps.

It doesn't mean everything always has additional steps. Sometimes it could be longer, depending on, as we get to some of these more challenging issues, like, for example, amusement parks, right? So one of the stipulations of amusement parks is a 25% capacity. Will we go beyond? In a couple weeks, will we raise that 25% capacity? Probably not, actually. We will probably wait a little longer on that one, if at all. We may be there for the whole summer. We don't really know yet. But those are more tougher situations. They are of higher risk. We just know that.

Movie theaters at 50% capacity; I can't imagine going much beyond that, given the inherent risks that can happen in close and tight atmospheres. Now, at 50% capacity with a lot of the good ventilation that happens in movie theaters and whatnot, we think there's a way to really manage any severe outbreaks. But that's one, again, where I don't know if we go much beyond the guidance that we've created now, at least in the indefinite future.

*These last re-openings rules that you announced today, what would you advise people over 60, particularly in the indoor venues, if you will? If they're not symptomatic and they take the proper precautions, even though they are a risk population, is it okay for them to go to a movie theater?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Is it okay for someone over 60 to go to a movie? Not advised, not advised at this time. Yeah, we're not going to prevent it. But again, there is a reason we keep that elevated message. If you have an underlying health condition, if you are over 60, it's really not advised that you venture out into some of these areas of higher risk.

People can make their personal decisions. But there's a lot of inherent risk there, to be sure. And frankly, for individuals in households with those individuals of higher risk, again we're asking people to take all the precautions necessary and advised, as part of those guidance documents. Take those very seriously, because it's not just you. But it's the loved ones that you potentially put at-risk.

*Governor, just following up on the question, you're talking about thinking going in the right direction and maintaining caution. You've taken a hands-off approach, when it comes to political gatherings, no matter what strike they are. Obviously more organized political events are starting up, as well. I'm curious, with the Vice President starting off on a campaign tour, the President starting to campaign in an active way again, would you welcome them to New Hampshire? And if they did come, would you appear for them?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Like as it pertains to COVID?

*Sure, no, if there's a big rally, for instance. If the President sought to...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I'm not planning on going to any big rallies, regardless of whether it's the President. I mean, I really limit, at least in the indefinite future. I'm limiting. I'm going to continue to limit my interaction. I'm at home. I'm at work. I wear my mask if I have to go to the grocery store. I got ice cream the other day. Unfortunately, I'm living a pretty boring life right now, unfortunately. I do a lot of takeout.

No, I don't plan on going to any rallies. But, again, if people want to hold political rallies, they are allowed to do so. We encourage them, if you're going to do something, do something outside where people can have distancing, where there's going to be fresh air, hopefully. Do something under a tent. It's summer. Why not? It's the best way to do it anyway.



No, we're not banning those rallies, or anything like that, because there is a voice to be heard, or a free speech voice, if you will. But again, whether it's myself, or you, or anybody, just be very cautious about going to those events. There's no reason why you wouldn't want to wear a mask. Or there's no reason why you shouldn't find an event where you can maintain the physical distancing, of course.

*I know you have multiple plans from education and higher education, in particular, on your desk. Can you give us a ballpark on the cost of those plans, from the least-restrictive to most-restrictive? Is it going to be expensive, in any kind of additional way, to bring students back to campus for higher ed, or even just for regular school?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Good question, the question is: is it going to be expensive, given the various options that we have in bringing kids back to school, K-12 or through the university system? There's going to be cost. I guess what I deem expensive today is very different than what I would have said three or four months ago. We're dealing with such incredible numbers right now in terms of cost.

We will be able to handle the cost. I can tell you that, because the Federal Government has provided a lot of opportunity through the CARES Act funding. So, it won't be expensive in that it's nothing we can't handle.

But there's another \$32 million just for K-12 schools. I have another \$9 million of discretionary funds, which I'm planning on allocating in a variety of ways, but specifically with programs or children that have kind of fallen through the cracks. Special ed, which just we've talked about a couple times, just did not go off at a local level, did not go off, as we anticipated, for a variety reasons. We're going to try to make sure we have programming this summer for them. It could be PPE. It could be testing and things of that nature.

So, nothing that we can't handle, in terms of cost. And luckily, the Federal Government is stepping up and helping with that. I mean, it's still taxpayer dollars, to be sure. But the Federal Government is helping with it.

On the university side, I saw a presentation done by the university system this week. Looks like they're making some recommendations to severely cut back in costs over time. I think that's a very smart thing to do. The times do dictate that.

But we've already allocated some money into the university system and the private system to cover their COVID costs. And there may be some other financial opportunities, again, to cover those costs to the tune of \$10 million or \$20 million.

And the numbers that we're talking about, billions, lately, it doesn't sound like a whole lot. But it is. When you look at \$10 million or \$20 million here or there, it can really make the difference. So I don't think it'll be so expensive that we can't manage it. But there will be some cost there.

*Scott Mason, are we going to have a public hearing to hear about Scott Mason? And I have been hearing from the North Country. There's some concern about his involvement with the Northern Pass. Can you comment on that?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so I imagine if the Council wants to hold a public hearing, that's their choice. And they can do that. It'll probably have to happen telephonically. But we have all the technology able to do that, which I think is great.

You don't want that Department to go without a Director for too long, of course. And Glenn Normandeau has agreed to stay on for a little while longer. And thank you very much, Glenn. Yeah. I think he's done a very, very good job there.

But the opportunity to bring Scott in, it's important to do it now, given that we are entering the new budget season pretty soon. We're going to have to be making tough decisions not just with this year's -- we don't want to say budget cuts, but depending on where we have to go with some of the programs, we still don't know what opportunities the Federal Government will be able to provide.

But we are actually already entering the next budget phase. Those first steps that we take on the '22/'23 budget -- I think if I have that right -- the '22/'23 budget -- I always get the fiscal years wrong. That actually starts in August and we're already talking about capital budget now. So to get the Directors and leadership in there to help make some of those decisions will be very important. Scott's an incredible individual. Oh, Northern...

*Yeah, apparently he worked...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Northern Pass has nothing to do with Fish and Game, so that's a dead issue. So I can't imagine that would come to bear.

*And can I ask you another question?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Course.

*Few months ago, I asked you about your trek across the Appalachian Trail and you reminded us all...*

**Governor Sununu:**

I started sweating when you asked that question. I never know what's going to come.

*How long on this journey are we now? And what have you learned? Or are there any parallels that still stick in your mind, when you think about your experience traveling by foot over those woods?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, boy, so kind of the same question, right?

*Yeah, just an update.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I'm going to give you a little bit of the same answer. One of the things, hiking the Appalachian Trail, when you hike over 2,000 miles over a period of five months, it's all about priorities. I mean, out there it was, where am I going to get my next drink of water? And am I going to make it to where I'm trying to go for the night?

But, it does just remind you. It's a very humbling thing. And it reminds you, I think, to be humbled in life. And if there's ever a time to be humble, it's through the COVID-19 pandemic and understanding what businesses are going through, what families are going through, the anxiety, the public health issues, the sickness, the fatalities.

There are uncountable number of strains on individuals going on right now. And so, whatever we do with our decisions, we don't make in a callous way. We don't make them in an arbitrary way. We don't make them just sitting in a silo.

We really look at data and dig deep to try to make the best decisions that we possibly can in these very uncharted waters. I guess similar to the Appalachian Trail, every step you took was kind of uncharted water. But it's hard to draw a parallel to anything, what we're going through now, frankly.

But, with life experiences, it's all about making the best decisions, knowing your priorities, and knowing that some of those decisions are going to be very tough. And you're not always going to please everybody with them, to be sure.

*Governor, lawmakers have been taking up a lot of Bills now for the first time since March. Are there any that are specifically on your radar at this point? Are there any that you care to comment on at this point?*

**Governor Sununu:**

There were a few Bills that the Senate and the House, that I was hoping they would take up and they didn't make any movement on, which I think is a real loss. I've been fighting for student debt assistance since the last budget. We had \$16 million, not even a taxpayer dollar of which would have been included, but just to help retain our students, right? Help pay down their debt, get them a job here. Retain the workforce, help pay down their debt, which we know is very high.

And the fact that Democrats have never taken that up, it was promised. That was part of the deal of getting the last budget done is that they would take up the Bill and bring it forward. And once again, they just found an excuse not to do it. So, millions of dollars of student debt assistance thrown right out the window by the Democrats, very frustrating.

I can tell you the Student Sexual Assault Bill is another one that specifically was driven out of an incident here in Concord that was very obvious to folks, that, when you have students in a school setting with individuals of authority -- teachers or anybody of authority -- in there, that Bill would have provided protections for those students.

There were multiple Bills. None of them were brought up by the -- the Democrats didn't let any of them even come up, wouldn't even bring any of them up. And I was floored by that one. I mean, that's a Student Sexual Assault Bill. Who doesn't want that to happen?

You have lots of choices with those Bills. Some were better than others. I would have signed any of them. They chose not to vote on any of them. They threw them all out. I just don't even understand that.

And then, I had a program that I really pushed for pregnancy protection, protection for women in the workplace that were pregnant that just, again, allowing the pregnant women to have some basic accommodations made for them, if they have other conditions that are making the pregnancy more difficult so they're not losing their job, or they don't have to be home, or whatever it might be.

Again, I think that's kind of obvious stuff, but, again, wouldn't even bring it up for a vote. I mean, that was something that we all kind of agreed. Of course that should go forward. And the fact that it's not even included, wasn't even brought up for a vote, I was appalled.

So, I mean, those are the three I'm thinking of right now: the student debt, the sexual assault on students, and the pregnancy protections. Why the Democrat Party wouldn't think to even allow those to come for a vote, you can go ask them. I was shocked by it, huge missed opportunity. I'll fight for them again. I'll get a better Legislature next time and we will get that stuff done.

We have some on the phone?

***Kathy McCormack with Associated Press:***

*Hi, thank you. Yesterday the GOFERR Legislative Advisory Board was told that most licensed overnight camps and nearly half of the day camps won't open this summer because of the virus. The State Camp Directors Association President had asked for some form of assistance for camps to help with lost revenue and fixed costs, such as property taxes and insurance. Some camps may not make it to next year. What avenues are available to them for assistance?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So the question is about if summer camps or day camps that are choosing not to open, obvious they're going to face some financial constraints, what avenues available are there for assistance? Well, I'm going to imagine. Are those camps mostly nonprofit? I don't know. I mean, if they're nonprofit, we have a \$60 million nonprofit fund that they could potentially apply into. And that's being run by the Charitable Foundation, the CDFA.

If they're a for-profit business, then they technically could have applied to the Main Street Relief Fund, if they're for-profit. We didn't exclude that. I'm assuming they're all under \$20 million in revenue, unless there's some massive camp out there and really high costs that I'm not aware of. So they could have gone to either of those.

I suppose if we open up another opportunity for, like, another round of the Main Street Relief Fund down the road, they could apply there, if they were private, or if we put more money into the nonprofit

organization. So whether they're private or nonprofit, there is an avenue for either of them that they could pursue.

**Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:**

*Yes, hello. First quick question for Commissioner ShibiNette: I'm wondering if there have been any COVID fatalities among people under 60 without comorbidities. And for Governor Sununu, you mentioned what didn't pass in the State Senate. What did you think of the unemployment insurance legislation that passed, particularly the provision that says that if a worker feels like they may be in danger from going back to work, they might be exposed to COVID, even if the employer has met the requirements of the CDC, etc.? And in that background, we just had a report today that shows that New Hampshire's one of the slowest States, when it comes to getting people off of unemployment and back to work.*

**Governor Sununu:**

And so, was there a last question there, a second question, Michael? I missed it.

**Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:**

*No, it's just that it seems significant that the new report came out today showing New Hampshire's ranked 50th when it comes to moving people off of unemployment and back to work.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Okay. So, I mean, I'll answer my question. Then, I'll bring up the Commissioner to answer the public health question. The unemployment piece of legislation that was going through the Senate is a terrible piece of legislation. And even the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner at Employment Security, I believe, testified to that fact and made it very clear that that Bill would have basically put us out of compliance with a lot of the Federal Guidelines in the long-term and put all of our unemployment and all these other unemployment programs that we have at-risk. They made that very clear. And they still voted for it.

I don't know what the Legislators were thinking. These are the lawmakers and they were told that they would effectively be going against all the Federal Guidelines and the Federal requirements putting all of that money at-risk. Why we would do that, I don't know. So it was a terribly crafted piece of legislation.

We put in expanded eligibility criteria and expanded flexibilities, some of the most expansive of flexibilities in the entire country, to be sure. Overall, again, our unemployment rate is still going down very quickly. But, the idea that we're ranked 50th, or whatever you're saying, in terms of getting people off unemployment and getting them back to work, we have a lot of expanded criteria.

Our criteria mirrors a little bit of what the Federal Government has done with the additional \$600. And again, in the next few weeks, we will see our criteria start ramping down. The Federal Government's additional \$600 stipend ends at the end of July. And again, as businesses start to really open up and ramp back up, we obviously hope to get them to work.

There's a lot of available jobs out there. We want to encourage people to get back to work. But we understand, with all the incentives that are out there that it's a challenge right now, given that there's a lot of money to be had on the unemployment side.

Also, I would just recognize that if you look at the States that have been able to process the number of applicants into our unemployment system, we are one of the highest in the Country. We have one of the best systems, in terms of processing those folks. So we have just simply more folks within our system that have been processed.

So you almost have to look at it as a weighted average, if you will. There's still States with well-over 100,000 people unprocessed in their unemployment system. So obviously their numbers of getting them off unemployment aren't going to look as good, because, technically, they're not even in unemployment. They've just been waiting for a check for 10 weeks.

So, our system is just a little more ahead of the game. Our data is a little more accurate. I think other States' data just aren't quite as accurate. But as we enter the summer months, as we keep flexing things open, there's job opportunities that are out there.

And eventually we're going to get our economy really cooking again. We got great underlying fundamentals with liquidity in the market, with cash in the banks, the ability to loan \$2.5 billion of PPP money that has been put out there, half a billion dollars nearly already of business support and cash that we've put out there, all the money we're putting back into the cities and towns into the State. So there's a lot of money moving out there.

There's still a lot of stress, of course, into the system. And there's still a lot of businesses that are struggling. We know that. But there's also a lot of cash into the system, which I think, ultimately, will allow us to bounce back faster than most.

I'll turn it over to Commissioner Shibinette on the public health question.

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Thank you for the question. So we have had a few deaths of people under the age of 60. We reported one out just this week. I don't have information on their underlying conditions. It's not something that we typically report when we report a death, if they have underlying conditions or not. Yes, we've had a few deaths of people under 60. But the underlying conditions are not known at this time.

**Casey McDermott with NHPR:**

*Thank you. So these questions may be best-suited for the Commissioner. They're public-health oriented. I have one about contact tracing and two about long-term care. The first one about contact tracing is that NPR released a new analysis today that says that New Hampshire has about 125 contact tracers, which puts us below the level recommended by Experts, based on our number of cases over the past 14 days. What is our current benchmark for contact tracers? And how far are we from reaching that?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Okay. So I can answer the first question. I did see that story today and did do a little research into the model that you referenced in that story. I don't think the model accurately reflects what's going on in New Hampshire. So I'll start there. The model makes a lot of assumptions about numbers.

So for example, it assumes that every case has 10 close contacts to be contacted and investigated. Our average in New Hampshire is three. So any time that you see a model that says that it's going to accurately reflect what we need for contact tracing, and it applies to the entire country, so you can use the



same formula for New York City as you can use for rural New Hampshire. That, in and of itself, should tell you that it's not going to be an accurate reflection. Rural New Hampshire and the amount of contacts that you get from one positive contact is going to be very different than someone that lives in an inner city. And that's just one example in that model that our average number of contacts that we get out of one case is three. That model assumes 10.

And so, I didn't dive into the rest of the assumptions in that model. But, I definitely don't think that one model fits all when it comes to predicting what's going on with COVID in the nation. And it certainly isn't reflective of what's going on in New Hampshire.

We have anywhere from 120 to 130 people in our contact tracing. We have done contact tracing since the very beginning. We are having no problem keeping up with it. And if we need more, we have the ability to get more. So contact tracing is not a limiting factor in our response to COVID.

**Casey McDermott with NHPR:**

*And then, on the long-term care front, two questions: first, can you describe what, if any, specific steps the State took early on knowing that there may be certain nursing homes that were known to have poor track records, when it came to infection control, staffing shortage, emergency planning, or other issues that may make it more difficult for those facilities to contain a crisis like COVID-19? And then, the second question is: do you have any indication at this point that any of the institutional outbreaks originated from someone who was transferred from a hospital setting to a long-term care setting?*

**Commissioner Shihinette:**

Okay. So early steps, right from the very first week, we started working with facilities around providing them with documents on what we knew to be best practices around COVID. Those best practices have certainly changed over the last several months.

We worked day-to-day with the facilities, when they even got their first positive case. We restricted visitors. We had weekly, sometimes twice-a-week conference calls. We remained completely accessible to every facility in the State. And then, we, additionally, surveyed every facility in the State.

New Hampshire long-term care facilities historically does do much, much better, survey-wise, than a lot of our peers across the Country. If you look at nursing homes and you compare New Hampshire survey results to those in other parts of the Country, you'll see that New Hampshire has historically done much, much better.

I think that New Hampshire nursing homes were as prepared as they could be for COVID, and just like the rest of the nation. We're fighting an unknown virus. And they employed all of the techniques that they know how to use to prevent the spread of an infectious disease.

When we figured out -- not they, when we -- the Public Health Department, the United States, the CDC, the FDA -- when we all figured out there were other things that we could do to make our response better, the nursing homes, then, stepped up and changed what they were doing. And I think that you will see that this is a trend across the Country that, as we learn more about the virus, we pivot and we do better.

And if anything, the flattening of the curve has allowed us to get better at what we do. So if we have a fall surge, we will be in a much better places, because we have our systems in place and we are much more educated.

The institutional outbreaks on whether any of them transferred from a hospital, I'm not aware of any outbreaks that were caused by that. I am aware that there may have been a transfer from a hospital that tested negative in the hospital and then was retested in the long-term care facility, then turned positive. But it didn't spread within a facility. So, an overall institutional outbreak, I am not aware of.

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm going to add my two cents in there, just as a reminder, given how hard New England was hit as a whole, if you look at the data that shows the number of residents within long-term care with COVID, the number of residents in long-term care that, unfortunately, where COVID proved to be fatal, we're still one of the lowest States, especially in the northeast. And I think that's a testament to, again, the Commissioner and her staff being right on top of it, not just at a couple facilities but making sure all of the facilities had the tools they needed, the PPE they needed, the resources they needed to understand how best to deal with that kind of outbreak.

So, it's unfortunate that we've had some of the fatalities that we've had. We always say one is too many and it really is. There's hundreds of individuals that have lost their lives, unfortunately, here in New Hampshire. But overall, I think, our long-term care facilities have done a good job.

**Rick Jurgens with Valley News:**

*Yes, Governor, let me ask you to change your focus a little bit. The pandemic hit during the second year of the State's implementation of a 10-year plan to improve mental healthcare services in the State. And I just wanted to ask you. There's been some progress, but there still remains adults and children boarding in hospital emergency rooms waiting for space. My question is: what is your level of confidence? What assurance can you offer that the State will be able to continue to implement that 10-year plan, given the different budget issues and deficits that the State is facing? Will there be the resources? Will there be the leadership attention to continue forward on that plan?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so let me take a step back. Let's talk about mental health, in general. When I came into office in 2017, the mental health system of New Hampshire was a disaster. It absolutely was a disaster. For 10 years, I don't know what those other administrations were doing, but they really let it wither on the vine. And we attacked it head-on, just like we attacked DCYF head-on. We attacked the SUD issue head-on. We've shown very good results there. And we attacked the mental-health issue head-on. And the data is showing some very good results.

We rebuilt our 10-year plan. We took all the recommendations of that 10-year plan and basically compressed them into a couple of years, because nobody wanted to wait 10 years. We wanted action now. And some of the legislation that was passed in the last session, some of the initial steps we took. And then, we did some more of the long-term legislative fixes have been phenomenal, everything from staffing, from preventative services.

At one time, I think the number of people waiting in our emergency rooms early on, when I became Governor, we had inherited this thing. And you had 60-, 70-plus people waiting in emergency rooms for services. At one point, about a month and a half ago, it was down to zero. We had actually gone to zero, somebody that nobody thought was even possible.

I think we're floating around 10 or 15 individuals right now. And one is too many. We always say that. But, at the same time, that's a much more manageable number. We're looking at making additional investments into additional capacity. I think New Hampshire Hospital and frankly Commissioner ShibiNette deserves all the credit in the world for getting that number down, for making real transitional change at New Hampshire Hospital, so we could get those individuals out of emergency rooms, get them processed, and get them the help they needed. And that's why the number got to zero. It was a phenomenal achievement. I was quite shocked the day she came in and said, believe it or not, we hit zero. But we did it.

And so, again, we still have a ways to go. It's one of those issues where working with NAMI and Ken Norton and his team has been an incredible experience. It has just been awesome, because they really bring good stakeholder advice. Individuals that are on the frontlines, families that have gone through these issues. And that is what has driven our legislation, not a bunch of Bureaucrats sitting in a backroom trying to hope for the best.

We engaged the public. The Mental Health Plan was written by families. It was actually written by families, not just the Department. And all the public hearings and all the comments that went into designing that plan, never before has that been undertaken before. And it's gone off very, very successfully.

So we do have plans in the next few months to expand our capacity even beyond New Hampshire Hospital to make sure that we can always work to reduce that number. Like we say, we want to get to the point where one, or two, or three is a high number for us.

It seems impossible, but I don't think anything's impossible. With what we've been able to achieve in the past few years, I think, if you remember, New Hampshire once had, in the '80s going into the '90s, one of the best mental health systems in the Country. That's where we were ranked. And unfortunately, it withered on the vine in the mid-2000s up until about 2016/2017, when we started making real fundamental changes.

I believe New Hampshire can be the best in the Country again at community-based mental health. I firmly believe that. We've already seen huge results. And again, one of the reasons I asked now-Commissioner ShibiNette to become Commissioner ShibiNette, because she had such great frontline experience with some of our key issues of long-term care and mental health.

So we've put a lot of effort on it. And I'm not up here to pat myself on the back. I'm here to pat all the individuals that made the success of New Hampshire's new mental health system really thrive. We got a ways to go. We still have some things in that 10-year Mental Health Plan that we're looking to do. As you pointed out, we're only in Year 2 of the 10-year Mental Health Plan. And we have a few things to really attack.

One is if we can expand our capacity beyond New Hampshire Hospital and help get some of those individuals out of the emergency room, that would just be phenomenal. We have a plan to do it. And hopefully it'll come to fruition in the next few months. And we do have the resources.

I've always said that mental health, SUD, DCYF issues surrounding around the abuse of children, there's certain things that are just off the table, when it comes to potential budget cuts. And if anything, in times of tough economic crisis, you have to actually put more resources there.

Let me take even another step here. I had a meeting this morning. I created a Youth Council early on, specific around SUD issues and some misuse issues with kids. And I wanted a Youth Council and kids out of high school because, again, they're seeing things on the frontlines that we're not seeing here.

I still consider myself a pretty young Governor. But I know that even with a high schooler, I don't completely understand what's happening in the hallways of a high school, what peer interaction is all about, what is moving the dial, when it comes to substance misuse.

And one of the issues is, as they have prescribed and told me, and we had a meeting about this morning, is undiagnosed mental health issues in adolescents. We kind of threw that out completely, in terms of having the right programs and services there. And so, what happens? There's kind of a self-medication that happens with using other substances, when those kids can't get proper help with mental-health issues.

We're going after it. We really are. We're not leaving any stoned unturned. We're really going to keep tackling this issue head-on. And I'm pretty excited just even through this crisis, in the next couple months, you're going to see some more substantial steps taken.

And even though all our effort seems to be focused on COVID right now and some of the bigger issues that are kind of national issues that we have to deal with, it isn't that we're ignoring our responsibility on the other end. If anything, we're putting our foot on the gas and we're going faster.

Great, what else we got? Adam?

*One more for you, what do you think about this effort from the Trump Victory Organization, the combined effort of the RNC and the Trump campaign, to essentially pick sides in the primaries here in New Hampshire on the Republican's side, asking the RNC Members essentially to sign off on allowing to help certain people, ending the traditional neutrality of primaries?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I know the President did endorse someone for a Congressional race and did endorse someone for the Senate race. And I know there was an idea of signing a letter on some RNC rule. The letters aren't going to be signed, is my understanding. So, I think that's leadership.

*So we're remaining neutral, essentially?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, absolutely, yeah. I mean, well, look. Let me say this. Anyone could endorse anyone they want. Yeah, well, the President can endorse anyone they want. I think the Party leadership here in New Hampshire said, look, we're going to stay neutral, because there's a primary. And a primary's a good, fair process. So, I think they're just kind of staying out of the idea that they're going to endorse, which, traditionally the Party traditionally has, I believe. No, the President can endorse anyone he wants.

*Quickly cycling back to Tuesday's legislation, I'm just wondering your thoughts on the Bill on elections and specifically the section allowing for no-excuse absentee ballot voting?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, look, New Hampshire doesn't need what they now call nationally no-excuse absentee voting. If you're concerned about COVID in any way, you can check a box that will say concerns over COVID. And you can vote absentee. So why you'd need anything beyond that, it's doesn't make any sense.

*Governor, after the Randolph accident, you ordered a review of DMV practices. And one of the things that recommended was for Legislature to allow New Hampshire to join the State-by-State Driver Verification System. Did that happen? Do we know whether...*

**Governor Sununu:**

So that's a great question. The question really revolves around, after the Randolph accident, I think not just New Hampshire, but across the Country, Massachusetts, especially, and Connecticut, and some other States. But, what was, I think, found is virtually every State across the Country had massive deficiencies specifically around the interstate reporting system. If someone gets a ticket there or a violation there, is it reported back to their home state and vice-versa? How is it done with a paper system versus a centralized computer system?

So I think in about 30 days, we did an entire review of our system. We had some backlogs here and there, nothing like you saw in other States. And I think within 30 days, we were able to clear out virtually all the backlogs, which was great.

I think your question revolves around the idea that we're going to really come back to the concept of an Interstate Compact where we can be part of that centralized system and transmit that data a little easy. I'm 100% for it. My understanding is I don't know if the legislation ever passed to do it. I'll have to check on you. I hope it did. I don't know if it got tied up as part of these Omnibus Bills, because it was going to happen, I believe, this legislative session. I don't remember signing it. So I don't know if they're taking it up as part of one of these Omnibus Bills. But I can find out for you. I hope they are. Yeah.

Boy, remember that? I mean, you're reminding me. That was another 30 days of -- that was a little bit not behind closed doors, but we knew how important that was. And we had to dig deep to realize the inconsistencies within our own system. And then, I believe we kind of became a model for other States. Other States were trying to figure out how we fixed our problem so fast. And Commissioner Quinn and Elizabeth Bielecki, over at DMV, I just think did a fantastic job just jumping right on top of it, leaving no stone unturned. Yeah. It's amazing, with COVID, you forget all these other really, really giant things that we did. But, could understand how.

Okay, before 4:00, I think I won \$1. We actually got our press conference done before 4:00. It's going to be a beautiful weekend. And hopefully, I'll actually see the sun. I noticed, when I walked outside, it was like 90°. I couldn't believe it. So I think it's going to be a beautiful weekend. We want everyone to be safe, be healthy.

Again, always check in for the business owners on the guidance documents, if there are updates. We obviously are putting new guidance out there. And for all those folks, the 5500-or-so businesses that are getting their Main Street Relief Fund check, look to your mailboxes, because hopefully the check

should be there today, tomorrow, and over the next couple days, and provide some real relief for a lot of the businesses across the State. All right. We will be back on Tuesday with some more announcements. Thank you, guys.