



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu  
Press Conference  
Tuesday, June 23, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

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**Governor Sununu:**

Good afternoon. Good to see everyone. Thanks, everyone, for joining us today. A variety of different issues to talk about today and then we will open up for questions at the end. And before we get started, I want to remind folks, especially in the nonprofit world, if you are a 501(c)(3), an organization, as we know businesses have been affected by COVID. A lot of the nonprofits have been affected by COVID. And we have a \$60 million fund that is being managing out of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. The final day to submit your Application for that grant process is this Thursday.

And again, that's \$60 million Nonprofit Relief Fund. They set up a process there. I think they've done a great job. But there still is a day or two left to get your final Application in this Thursday for all the 501(c)(3) nonprofits that can potentially access those funds. And you can go online to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's online grant portal. So they have a very good website set up there. I think the grant process is pretty straightforward, fairly simple. And I just want to encourage everyone to take advantage of it, while they still can, for the next couple of days.

Additionally, back on April 14th, we announced the Long-Term Care Stabilization Program, which provides a \$300 weekly stipend for frontline workers at New Hampshire Medicaid-funded residential facilities and social services organizations, really making sure that the workforce was there for folks, specifically, in aspects of long-term care or residential services, and specifically around those folks that get paid Medicaid rates, which are traditionally much lower than many of the private rates out on the market.

The program has already directly benefited over 23,000 frontline Medicaid workers from nearly 300 long-term care Providers. And as of last Friday, about \$30 million have already gone out the door. Knowing that we are going to maintain our focus and efforts around long-term care, we know where the heart of a lot of our COVID-19 crisis is not just today but going to be in the near future, given that those that are more elderly, that have other underlying health conditions tend to be in those facilities. Outbreaks in those facilities tend to be a little more of a challenge, although I think the State's done a tremendous job really handling them to-date.

But we want to make sure the resources are there. And so, we're announcing today that we're extending that stipend program for those Medicaid workers through July 31st to help ensure that, again, we have the workforce there to care for our loved ones. They've done a terrific job so far. We want to stay behind them 100% and, again, really make sure that a lot of our efforts and resources are exactly where they need to be.

With that, I'll ask Dr. Chan to come up for a public health update.

**Dr. Chan:**

Great, good afternoon. Thank you, Governor. So we are at more than 9.1 million cases of COVID-19 globally currently, and including more than 2.3 million cases within the United States. We will be announcing an additional 15 new people in New Hampshire who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 to bring the total to 5,571 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Hampshire to-date.

There are zero new hospitalizations. We're still at 558 people who have required hospitalization at some point during the course of their illness in New Hampshire. And unfortunately four new deaths to report today that are COVID-19-related; we have 343 total people who have died from COVID-19. All four of these individuals were residents of long-term care facilities.

We continue to work to increase testing in our communities. We continue to see a good trend in the numbers, not only the numbers for people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 are dropping. The percentage of all tests that are positive remains low, at around 2% to 3%. Hospitalizations continues to decrease.

But COVID-19 is still around in our communities in New Hampshire. And we remain at-risk for an increasing number of infections. And we've seen this occur nationally in a number of other States around the country. We have not seen increases, or an increasing trend, in New Hampshire or in the northeast, but certainly New Hampshire and surrounding States remain at-risk. So we continue to need everyone to work together and work with the Health Department to continue to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and prevent a resurgence.

I just want to make brief mention to our Public Health investigations and Public Health contact tracing. If a person is diagnosed with COVID-19, they will get a call from a Public Health Investigator, right? Throughout the entire course of this pandemic in New Hampshire, we have and continue to investigate each and every case of COVID-19 that comes to our attention and is reported to us.

So, somebody who is diagnosed with COVID-19 will get a call from a Public Health Employee to not only check on their health but to discuss who they have been in close contact with. We ask that these individuals pick up the phone and engage with us, and follow Public Health Guidance.

We will, then, reach out to their identified close contacts in an anonymous manner, meaning we will not share the person's name and we will do this anonymously, and notify close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-10 and should stay home, as well, because they might be at-risk for developing disease. And in this way, through Public Health investigation, through testing, connected with Public Health investigations and contact tracing, we can help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Please continue to engage with us and our Public Health Department in these measures and these processes to try and control spread of COVID-19. It also remains very important for everybody in our communities to stay at least 6 feet from other people when out in public places. Please continue to wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth when in public places, where social distancing may not occur 100% of the time. And as always, please continue to cover your coughs and sneezes. Practice good cough and sneeze etiquette, we like to say, and practice frequent hand hygiene.

Thank you very much. And I will hand things over to the Commissioner.

## **Commissioner Shibinette:**

Good afternoon. I just have a brief update on testing. So, yesterday, we began publishing two separate data tables when it comes to testing. You'll notice the first one, which was the number of persons tested, which is the table that we've always reported out. That is the deduplicated number of people in New Hampshire that have been tested for COVID-19. Very important data, when we look at surveillance and number of people in our communities that's been tested, we want that deduplicated data.

The second table that we started yesterday -- and we did a pilot yesterday. And we still have to make some adjustments to that table -- was the total number of tests performed. So that number is very different, as we continue to do our surveillance testing in nursing homes. You have a lot of the same people being tested every seven to 10 days.

So, in our prior table and what we were reporting prior to yesterday, those numbers aren't going to be captured in our testing data, because it's deduplicated. So our new table, which, like I said, we did a pilot yesterday. We did make some tweaks and there will be corrections to that data today. And you can expect to see the total number of tests data table go up dramatically, the number of tests conducted. We will start reporting those two tables out on a regular basis, so that you can see not just the number of people in New Hampshire that have been tested, but also the number of tests that we are conducting every single day.

Long-term care update, there really is not a lot of updates for long-term care. The outbreak list remains the same. No one's been added. No one's been removed. We did start a visitation program last week. I've heard from a number of facilities that are very successfully doing outside visitation. They're being very creative in how they're doing it. Some have set up tents, umbrellas, courtyards, all kinds of different things. We're hearing a lot of really, really positive feedback from our long-term care partners about really getting this program up and running. That's all I have. Thank you.

## **Governor Sununu:**

Great, well, thank you very much, Commissioner. Thought I'd cover a couple areas of new funding that we're announcing as part of our Federal CARES Act funds today. Again, we're always trying to identify areas of need where some of the gaps in the system might be, where some of the maybe unexpected needs have arisen strictly because of the COVID crisis. And sometimes it's a need because of a lack of workforce or a lack of services. Sometimes it's a need that develops because there's an increased demand on those services within the community, so we need to expand them.

The three areas we're focusing a lot of our efforts and these are going to be efforts that go out very, very quickly -- again, the beauty of CARES Act funds is that it can be nimble. We can get the dollars out very quickly. So the three areas are specifically first around our kids, mental health and substance use disorder, and finally our veterans, veterans' programs and veterans' services around the State with individuals that have clearly been touched and affected in a negative way by the COVID epidemic, making sure that we can provide the right programming and resources for them.

We know that no area has been left untouched by the epidemic. And so, today's commitments are really about bridging a lot of those gaps. And it doesn't mean that this is the end of the financial commitments for these programs. In some of these instances, it's really about making sure that, as we're in the summer months, specifically around children's programs, children's programs around prevention

programs, substance use disorder, some of the undiagnosed mental-health issues with adolescents that we see out there, some of the community-based programs, making sure that these are up and running and that we can bridge, as we enter the schoolyear, come this September.

We just don't want to wait. We don't want to wait until September to see where we are. We know that there are gaps in that system today. And so, we want to make those investments right on the frontlines as quickly as we can, so we're not waiting for today's problems to turn into tomorrow's crisis.

Specifically first the program around the youth-focused programs, they're the kids' programs, if you will. And I had a meeting last week with the Governor's Youth Advisory Council on substance misuse and prevention. This was a group that a created in my first term as Governor.

We had a meeting with them last week and they brought up some very direct concerns, specifically around the prevention programs which may exist but just aren't being really utilized, the issue of undiagnosed mental illness, a lot of isolation with a lot of teens and younger kids, and what that can do, the stress and anxiety that that can cause. It's not something that you can just ignore. When you do, you know that you're really asking for larger problems down the road. And so, we want to be preventative and proactive about those types of programs.

And we know that, when faced with social isolation, whether it's those feelings of anxiety that kids have, or undiagnosed mental-health issues, they can turn to self-medicating with illicit drugs. We know that that happens all over the State. And we just want to be very proactive on it.

So, today, I'm authorizing of the \$5 million, specifically \$2 million to be used to benefit youth across New Hampshire. And this is a program that has been designed by the Governor's Youth Council. These young men and women did a tremendous job very, very quickly, standing up and understanding where those needs were, helping us identify how best to utilize those funds and how to make them a reality. And I just can't thank them enough. Dave Mara, out of my office; Tim Lena, who really drives a lot of the prevention programs and understanding of those programs in the State, who has really led this Council not just to put words on paper but actually allow us to take some real action and move forward very, very quickly.

So, whether it's providing things as simple as PPE for youth summer programs to make sure that they're up and running in a safe way and the kids feel comfortable coming into those programs; training for Teachers on effective remote-learning strategies, including trauma-focused social and emotional learning lessons. As a lot of folks know, I'm very passionate about social and emotional learning. The ChooSELove program is something that we advocate very strongly here in New Hampshire. But there's a variety of programs, as well, and making sure that those programs are available. They're robust, because we all know that they do work.

And providing the mental-health resources for schools, such as the Student Assistant Programs, suicide awareness trainings, things of that nature that we really focused on in the past, but, again, just because we're in the COVID crisis, we don't want to let those gaps happen. We want to create those programs, make sure that they're available today to bridge into September.

Sometimes if you wait until September to start moving forward with things, maybe they get going by October, November, December. It's too late. It's too late. We got to be there for these kids, the quicker, the better. And the CARES Act funding allows us to be very, very nimble.

I'm also committing an additional \$1 million to the New Hampshire's Internet Crimes Against Children program, what we call the ICAC here in New Hampshire. And these are the individuals in various Law Enforcement Agencies around the State that are making sure that the internet and online predators are held responsible, and, frankly, they're held at bay.

We know that, as kids are home, they're online more. That's what's happening, whether it's gaming or using social media, or whatever it might be. As folks are quarantining, or taking that Safer-At-Home Advisory to heart, which we want them to do, but we know the online modes provide a lot of that social interaction. And that is really ripe, if you will, for predators. And they are out there. There's a lot of them.

And our ICAC unit here in New Hampshire has done a tremendous job over the past few years. We've seen that program grow continuously. I know there was an effort to defund it through the Legislature last time and we fought back. We got that money back in. And now, we're putting even more efforts on it because I believe that we need it now more than ever.

And so, we're asking them, as strong as they work, as 24/7 as that job is for a lot of those men and women in Law Enforcement at the ICAC, we're asking them to double their efforts. We need it now more than ever, knowing that this is a new dynamic and an enhanced dynamic, if you will, and could be in a very negative way that we're facing, as part of the COVID epidemic.

We're also committing right now an additional \$2 million for these kids programs and youth programs into direct organizations that are already existing, whether they be teens centers, Boys & Girls Club, Girls Inc., the Police Athletic League, all these different types of programs that are currently existing but maybe they're having workforce challenges getting up and running. They can provide a great safe harbor for a lot of these kids with a lot of the prevention programs, the mental-health awareness programs, the social interaction in a safe way.

We want to make sure that those organizations have what they need on the frontlines. And we just don't want to wait. We want to make sure they have it now. And so, again, we're going to make sure that those folks are identified over the next week. They're on the frontlines. We will create the guidance, because this really is filling a COVID gap, a COVID need. We will create the guidance for them and get the money out there so they can get up and running, or, at least if they're up and running, enhance those programs that we think are going to be so important over the next coming months, as we enter the summer.

Secondly on SUD and mental-health programs, substance use disorder, we know that in tough economic times and times of high anxiety, while we've seen some of our numbers drop, in terms of overdoses and fatality rate with opioids in the State over the last two or three years, that's phenomenal. But we shouldn't take that for granted.

We know that, given the very tough economic times that we're likely going to be experiencing over the next few months, those numbers could skyrocket at any point. And we want to make sure that those programs have what they need.

I think the Governor's Commission has done an exceptional job in terms of allocating the dollars that we've created. We've essentially tripled or quadrupled even the amount of money that we traditionally put into those programs. But we're putting another \$6 million on top of that just to make sure that the gaps in these programs are covered today.

The pandemic has reduced access to healthcare. It has created more barriers to healthcare and recovery sport services. And the issue of COVID has an especially negative effect in that community of people that are looking for treatment and that are looking for recovery. Often, they do have other underlying health conditions and again it kind of exacerbates the negative effect.

So we're going to be working with Health and Human Services over the next week and really identify the best facilitating way to get those funds out. But we just want to make sure that those that are

on the frontlines that are trying to provide those services have the resources they need to create the opportunity for our citizens.

And finally, an area that we're really focusing on is our veterans. These are our heroes. We know it. And again, this is an area, a constituency, if you will, that is not immune to the negative effects of COVID. And the three areas we're looking to invest \$7 million in right away: first is homeless and housing programs specifically for veterans.

We did a great program about a week ago focusing on homeless issues. We want to make sure that the veterans aren't left out of that mix, by any means, and making sure that we have some dollars specifically dedicated to our homeless veterans.

Traditional veteran service programs to provide direct services to our veterans, like financial assistance or local organizational support, there's a lot of local organizations that provide social connectivity or other services for veterans. And maybe they're American Legions or VFWs, things of that nature. We want to make sure that we're supporting them, as well, because they do provide a vital connection, a connectivity, and a network not just for the local community but throughout the entire State for our veterans to get services and know what opportunities are available out there for them.

And then, finally, of course, with our veterans, as always, we want to keep our focus up on the mental-health supports. Again, for a lot of veterans, they might be home. They might be home alone and isolated. They might be hesitant to go and seek out some of those support services that they would traditionally get knowing that maybe they're elderly or they have other underlying health conditions. We want to make sure the funding is there. We're proactive. And we're putting the resources for our veterans to make sure that they're not lost in this mix.

These are, again, just three different areas that we've identified today. We've been talking about for a couple weeks. Talk is cheap. It's really putting the money and the effort, and the resources out there and having those organizations that are already established in the State to be those facilitators for us. I think it's given us a lot of confidence that we can move quickly and get a lot of these resources where they need to go.

One last thing before we open up for questions, we want to honor someone today who's been with us every step of the way throughout the COVID crisis. He's served the State in a variety of different areas, and he's retiring. And a lot of you know Perry Plummer, who is currently the Assistant Commissioner over at the Department of Safety. But I met Perry when he's the Director at the Fire Training Facility. And then, he ran our Emergency Center and the IPOC, did a tremendous job managing Homeland Security and emergency operations for the State, before we promoted him.

But he is moving on into retirement. I guess that's a thing now, retirement. They tell me. I can't imagine it. But I want to bring up the State's Adjutant General. General Mikolaities will be presenting Perry with the New Hampshire, the National Guard Distinguished Service Medal. So, General, I will let you take it away.

### **General Mikolaities:**

Thank you, sir. So, today we just want to recognize the outstanding efforts of one of New Hampshire's best public servants. And I want to begin with just giving you the definition of teamwork. Teamwork is a collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal, or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way.

This epitomizes Perry's service to the State of New Hampshire. So, on behalf of the New Hampshire National Guard, I'd like to read to you the citation for the New Hampshire National Guard Distinguished Service Medal.

"The New Hampshire National Guard Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to Mr. Perry E. Plummer for his distinguished service to New Hampshire citizens in the Military community while serving in positions of increasing responsibilities within the Department of Safety, from April 22nd, 2011 to June 30th, 2020, culminating in your position as the Assistant Commissioner."

Assistant Commissioner Plummer has served in three critical roles over his previous nine years: As the Director of Fire Standards and Training and the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, he addressed critical training needs and eliminated course waiting lists.

As the Director of Homeland Security Emergency Management, he cultivated a partnership with the New Hampshire National Guard that ensured rapid and effective responses to multiple states of emergency. His efforts and commitment were instrumental in leading the State through 17 national disasters and five states of emergency.

Most recently, as Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Safety, Mr. Plummer served brilliantly as the De Facto Incident Commander for New Hampshire's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, building an inner-agency taskforce and leading a whole government effort to effectively mitigate the pandemic's impact.

Assistant Commissioner's Plummer's many years of highly effective service as a public safety official demonstrated his devotion to the State of New Hampshire and its citizens, and to its inner-agency partners, including the Department of Military Affairs and Veteran Services. His work ethic and tireless efforts set the standards for others to emulate.

Mr. Plummer set a standard of excellence in the field of emergency management that will endure New Hampshire for years to come. His accomplishments and outstanding devotion to those in need during our crisis reflect great credit upon himself, his family, the New Hampshire Department of Safety, and the State of New Hampshire.

And without further ado, with social distancing, I'd like to give you this New Hampshire Distinguished Service Medal, which I'll leave here. And you'll be missed. Thank you.

#### **Commissioner Plummer:**

General, thank you very much. This is a tremendous honor, a surprising honor. With that, I'd like to just thank the Governor for his steadfast leadership over the nine years to all the disasters that I've been with the State, in the weeds, and he's there every step of the way. And I appreciate his support of everything that I have been involved in. And working together has been a true pleasure.

Serving the citizens of the New Hampshire for 34 years, nine with the State and the rest with the City of Dover, it's been a true honor. I couldn't ask for more. And I just want to say thank you very much to the citizens for all your support over the last 34 years. So, thank you very much.

#### **Governor Sununu:**

Thank you. I can't get it done: three [sic] words that have never come out of that guy's mouth. Awesome, you're going to be truly missed. With that, we can open it up for questions.

## Q&A Session

*Governor, if you don't mind if we can get Dr. Chan up, I think we're about three weeks out from the first big protest march. And I was just curious if contact tracing had revealed any cases, or any known transmission from those larger events that started three weeks ago.*

**Dr. Chan:**

So, the question is: have we seen any increases or outbreaks related to protests, or any other group gatherings. And I think the short answer's no. I'm not aware of any cases or clusters, or outbreaks associated with large group gatherings like the protests.

I mean, obviously, we're investigating each and every case. We would reach out to people, as I mentioned in the beginning, to get information on their close contacts so we can try and prevent further transmission. But I'm not aware of any cases that have come from exposure to large group gatherings like protests.

*And you touched on it, but is there still a struggle with people's willingness to pick up the phone? Is it still an issue for some people to actually interact and engage with the contact tracing?*

**Dr. Chan:**

Yeah, so Public Health investigation always has a number of challenges and getting individuals to engage, and not just in the COVID-19 pandemic but in any disease investigation that we conduct, as sometimes runs into challenges. Reaching people, getting accurate information, getting individuals to tell us who they have been in contact with and names, and contact information.

This is always challenging. And I think we understand people's hesitance sometimes to give out that information. And that's why we continually reinforce the importance of engaging with Public Health in those contact investigations. We have the ability and the authority, if you will, to collect that information. And it is important in any investigation, certainly in the pandemic, COVID-19 situation for us to be able to effectively conduct those public health contact investigations and contact tracings, so that we can use that as a tool to try and prevent spread of COVID-19 person-to-person. Thanks.

**Governor Sununu:**

Great, thank you. Yes, Paula. How are you?

*Good, how are you, Governor?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Good.



*I have a question about summer camps. And we talked a little bit earlier about the impact that COVID-19 is having on some of them in terms of they're not being able to open this year. Have you thought any more about perhaps CARES Act money for those guys?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, we've provided guidance for both overnight summer camps and the day camps to open up. Some have chosen to do that. Some have not, we've heard, for a variety of different reasons. We've heard different stories. Some have been for financial reasons. Some, they just couldn't get enough campers to come back to make it financially viable. Some didn't want to deal with some of the testing protocols.

But given that we are allowing people to come from out-of-state, we are asking them to test beforehand and be tested while at camp to ensure that there aren't going to be outbreaks, and also make sure the camps can handle any sort of potential quarantining situation, if that were to arise. So some camps can manage those guidance and some camps can't. So it's not just a financial situation where, if we just throw money at it, all the camps will open up. It's unfortunately. That would be an easy thing to solve.

So, summer camps are tough. We want them to open. We want them to have that experience. But we have to make sure it's done in a safe way. And unfortunately some just won't be able to manage through it.

*But I was asking about next year, if they weren't able and they're going to close, I think the Camper Association was saying that almost 20% were not going to be able to return next year. Would there be money from the CARES Act past...*

**Governor Sununu:**

There could be. I see what you're saying, just in terms of pure financial support, so even if they've closed so they don't go bankrupt or defunct. That's possible although those funds would have to be spent now and invested now. So we could do it, potentially. We haven't looked at that, but I guess that is a possibility. Right now, we've just been focused on trying to get them the flexibility to get open.

*Governor, as you know, you've released a Letter of Withdrawal from Eddie Edwards.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, Eddie's letter, yes. I'm sorry. Yeah.

*Nomination and you made some pretty strong allegations against the Democrats on the Council. Do you agree that they were guilty of what you called structural political racism in rejecting him?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I'll say this. The Democrats on the Executive Council -- Councilor Pignatelli, Councilor Volinsky, Councilor Cryans -- they all promised him a hearing. And Eddie's an incredible individual, had an incredible background, eminently qualified, and they strung him out. For over 100 days he waited patiently for a hearing that they said they would have and they never did. He's an incredible individual that just wants to serve his State.

So it's an unfortunate loss. Unfortunately, it's another aspect of why I've heard from other individuals that say, look, I want to serve the State but I'm not going before those Democrats on the Executive Council, because they have their own biases. They have their own agenda. And people don't want to be put through that. So you have really good people that want to stand up and serve the State that are saying, we don't want to do it, because we don't want to have to go through that.

I sat on the Executive Council for six years. We never had any incident like that, like not even remotely close to that. You always give someone a hearing. You always let them have a voice. And then, you take a vote. And if you don't think they're qualified, that would be the Council's right.

They didn't even let him have a voice in this process. So I think everybody can sympathize with his frustration in the fact that he was trying to be patient with the process. But after, what, almost 15 weeks now, yeah, my sense is and from the letter, I understand, he's given up other jobs because he was waiting patiently. He's lost other professional opportunities. He's sacrificed a lot through this. So, everyone can understand it. As for the issues of race, frankly, that's a question for Eddie. But I think he expressed his feelings very clearly in that letter.

Okay. We have some on the phone, maybe?

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

*Hi, thank you. Senator Maggie Hassan is among a group of Senate Democrats expressing concern about nursing homes' access to adequate personal protective equipment shipped through FEMA. They're worried about availability and some defective equipment. I was just wondering, how much is New Hampshire relying on FEMA for shipments these days? And do nursing homes have what's needed regarding PPE?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, nursing homes do have access to what is needed for PPE. FEMA has set up a schedule where every State gets their share of PPE. For a while, they were shipping it directly to the State. And we still are on the line for future shipments. But they're also shipping it directly to healthcare facilities or long-term care facilities. And we have a list of those that they have shipped to directly.

I can tell you that, speaking for the team, we're going out. And I think New Hampshire's gotten very, very good at going out and finding PPE in many other ways. So we do not just rely on FEMA's allocation or exactly what they're sending. It's great when they send us stuff and we're always happy to take it, use it, distribute it, make sure that it's what we were expecting and what we can use.

Not every piece of PPE that has come from FEMA has been usable, frankly. Most of it has. I mean, they were sending things like latex gloves, which really aren't used in hospital settings anymore, things of that nature, early on.

But we rely on frankly Perry Plummer, who we just honored today, has been instrumental. All those planes you've seen land with millions and millions, and millions of pieces of PPE, whether they be masks, or gowns, or whatever it is, we've been very successful there. None of those planes really land without Perry's help in making all that happen. And so, we've been very fortunate.

In fact, we've been so fortunate that not only did we start but we're continuing the program where we are helping the Federal VA get PPE not just for New Hampshire but for the entire country. They're using New Hampshire as the facilitator for PPE for the entire country. And we're proud to do it. We're proud to do it.

Now, we keep creating our own stockpiles and planning for the future, and making sure our facilities have what they need. But we've just been very successful at it here. So we don't solely rely on FEMA by any means. It's nice to get what they send. But we have our own ways of doing it. And so far, it's been very successful.

***Michael Kitch with the Laconia Daily Sun:***

*Hi, good afternoon, Governor. My question has to do with a story that appeared in this morning's Union Leader about comments that you made, I guess, during a hearing yesterday on the capital budget and as it pertained to efforts to redevelop the land of the Laconia State School. And my question is: do you or do you not support the present effort that's underway by the Lakeshore Regional Planning Commission? And following on that, what is your position on the Bill that will come up before the House on next Tuesday to create an authority that would have the ability to issue Bonds and also market the property?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so very supportive of the Lakeshore Redevelopment Commission's initial mission, which was to get the property in a position so the State could sell it. The State has been trying to sell that land, as you know, for decades, I mean, years and years, with very little results. We've gotten offers that we've turned down. Frankly, that was probably a bad idea. There's some environmental concerns there. There's some historical preservation potential concerns.

So, we set up that Commission and pushed forward with it knowing that we'd have to spend a little money, maybe \$1 million or a few hundred thousand, maybe a couple million dollars here and there just to get it to a place where it could be attractive for someone to come in, because it is a beautiful piece of property. It should be on the property tax rolls of Laconia. It should be redeveloped by a private developer, tons of opportunity there. And so, that was the mission of the Commission.

Yesterday, I was quite surprised when they came in and said, by the way, we now want \$16 million. The State is going to pay to build water towers and redevelop, and do all these things that frankly the State should not be in the business in. That is for a private developer to do. That was never a part of the initial discussion or mission. So, yes, I expressed a lot of reservation/concern. And I said, this is a terrible idea. And the fact that it was kind of sprung with very little notice was completely inappropriate.

So, I believe that there is a piece of legislation that is tied up into one of the Omnibus Bills that would essentially take the Commission and turn it into something similar that you see at the Pease Development Authority. That's a terrible idea, a horrible idea.

The Pease Development Authority situation is something that was borne out of the closing of Military bases, frankly, has gone on for now close to 30 years, if not more, about 30 years, I think, it's been, has to keep getting extended. It works fine, but even most of that land has been privately developed. And I've been a big advocate of kind of tailoring back privatizing the land, instead of the State essentially being a landlord.

So what I see in that strategy of creating something similar to the Pease Development Authority is a strategy to keep the State involved in a quasi-development project for the next 20 years. That is not the purpose of what we're trying to do at Laconia.

We're trying to get that property available to sell. And that's exactly what we should be doing. And that was the original mission. It was the right plan. It's what everyone agreed to and wanted to move forward with.

So, yeah, I was pretty frustrated with it. And I don't know exactly which Bill. I have to go back and look to see all these Omnibus Bills, where they put 20 or 30 different Bills together. I got to see where that one ended up. I don't know if it's an Omnibus Bill I would support.

And one of the challenges with these Omnibus Bills is you got 30 Bills there. You could have 15 good and 15 bad. And you got to make some tough decisions whether you veto or move something forward. But I don't know where that one is. But I can tell you, in its purest form as a Bill, I do not support it at all. Sorry, not a COVID question, but we got a lot to manage at the State to be sure.

**Michael Graham with New Hampshire Journal:**

*Yes, Governor, you just spoke eloquently about the treatment of Eddie Edwards, the second African-American nominee of yours to receive treatment you don't approve of by the Executive Councils, and the silence of the Democrats statewide over this treatment. But what Democrats are talking about, in relation to the overall topic of racial justice, is Police reform. Both Congresspeople Pappas and Kuster support stripping Police of qualified immunity. They've backed a Bill in Congress to do that. Do you think that ending qualified immunity should be part of the Police reforms that you're leading with your new Commission, and in particular, the State version of it, executive immunity that Police Officers enjoy here at the State level in New Hampshire?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, again, we kicked off the Commission and the Taskforce yesterday. I think it got off to a great start. Attorney General MacDonald launched things off. Again, it's a great Commission. There's, I want to say, about a dozen or 15 folks that are on it. We probably could have put 45 different individuals, qualified stakeholders with a valuable input for that Commission on there.

It'll be their task over the next 45 days to go out and solicit input all across the State from all the different stakeholders, all the different communities, and work very quickly to put a robust agenda of real action items, practical action items, on my desk so that we can move forward. Some we could maybe move forward with an Executive Order. Some may require more in-depth legislative process. But that's okay. Some might require funding. Some are kind of short-term issues. Some might be long-term. But what I told them is everything is on the table. Absolutely every idea should be put onto the table.

What happens in Washington, I'm not going to comment on that as much, because I focus on what happens here in New Hampshire. And I don't know the details of what was passed or approved and voted on down in Washington, D.C. So I want to be careful not to comment on that.

I'll simply say that here, in New Hampshire, all ideas are on the table, whether it's looking at the Laurie List, the protections that that provides, and the transparency that I think is necessary through Officers that already gone through due process, that are on that list. Those names should be made public.

Now, there's an appeals process, as well, of course, if Officers want to appeal that. But for those Officers who have received their appropriate due process, those names should be made public. There's a public interest in having that happen.

How that looks and what form it takes, I mean, there's a couple different ways that that could go. And that's why I put the Attorney General in charge of this group. I think he and his team will have a very good understanding of how to implement a lot of the ideas. Taking them from idea to implementation is very important, and doing that in a very short amount of time.

So I have a lot of confidence in the group. I think the individuals there are great. They're outspoken. They're working collectively, all in a positive way. And they understand the mission and I just think New Hampshire's going to end up with some very good results in the next few weeks.

***Annie Ropeik with New Hampshire Public Radio:***

*Hi, thanks for taking my question. This is about reusable bags. Any sense of when the ban on using those at grocery stores might be lifted, as the economy starts to reopen here?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, the question is about reinstating the ability to use a reusable shopping bag at a grocery store. I think I was one of the first States -- we were one of the first States to ban them because of that transfer, especially around the baggers putting their hands in one bag to another, to another, to another. I know there's been a call to undo that ban. We're not quite there, I think in hopefully something in the short-term.

But when it comes to flexing open opportunities in the State, whether it's the economy or public health, or whatever it might be, we are flexing opportunities open. But we're taking it very cautiously. And I think there's a value in being cautious about what we do.

We've seen other States move too quickly, too abruptly, and not just around reusable plastic bags, but whether it's around opening businesses or the messaging that seems to kind of dissipate. I think the positive messaging and important messaging of wearing your mask, of keeping social distancing, we're taking it in a very stepwise manner, being very data-driven about what we do, because we're trying our best to make sure we don't end up in the situations that you see in other parts of the country.

We know it could happen here. I've always said I expect a second surge or spike in our numbers significantly down the road. I'm a math and statistics guy. And the Law of Averages say something very well could outbreak here.

But I think if we keep that message elevated, we keep wearing those masks. We keep doing the smart things for a little longer, maybe, than other folks are doing them. That puts in a much more positive place. And if it means keeping reusable bags out of the public mix for a little while longer, so be it. I think it's a small sacrifice to make.

And I know it sounds like a small thing, but a lot of drops in the bucket can add up to, I think, the cultural awareness and the awareness in our communities that we have to stay vigilant on this crisis, as we move forward, because we are still in a COVID crisis. We are going to be in a COVID crisis, not a COVID problem, not a COVID issue, but a COVID crisis for the next few months, at least, probably until the end of the year. And people have to think that way.

I go back to the question I was asked last week. What do you say to people when they say, gee, Governor, should we still be worried? Should we still have anxiety over this? Absolutely. I hate giving bad news and no Governor likes to give bad news.

But the fact is that we have to be vigilant about what we're doing, how we do it, how we interact in our communities. And so, right now if we have to keep reusable bags out of the grocery stores a little while longer, so be it.

***Harrison Thorp with Rochester Voice:***

*Yeah, thank you. A couple quick questions: one, Governor, how do you see the overview of how the beachgoers are acting at the beach? Are they being responsible? And the other is: a couple weeks ago, you had the Main Street Relief Bill. You said a lot of self-employed people were left out of that. Has there been any movement forward to beginning to form some kind of a plan for helping them out?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so two questions: first on the beach; and second on the self-employed financial assistance that I think we can provide. So, first, on the beach, obviously there was a very large crowd at Hampton Beach this weekend. As much as we limited parking, there was a lot of traffic. I'm shocked that people waited through that hours and hours of long traffic to get out there. Hampton Beach is great, but there were large crowds. And we've been really working hard on a couple different levels there.

Bear with me. First, I want to talk about the trash situation. I was out there on Sunday morning. I saw the trash sitting everywhere. God bless it. We had about less than a dozen people. We've been trying to hire for weeks. It's been very, very difficult to hire staff there. And we had about a dozen individuals that I think did an amazing job and a very thankless job as it was out there, collecting and trying to manage the trash situation as best they could.

We have lots of jobs available. So if you want a job at Parks, and it's great. You get to be out at Hampton Beach. And again, we've also brought in some additional help on the private contracting side to help with the trash management. We've increased pay for those individuals, as well, to make it a little easier to hire and retain them. And we've asked for help on some of the other parts of the seacoast.

So we're really putting all efforts on that. It was a little disheartening to see so many people just obviously intentionally been littering. So that's obviously not great behavior. But, working with the town, who's been amazing, the Town of Hampton, Law Enforcement in Hampton, and the Parks have all really been working hand-in-hand together. And I can't thank all of them enough. They've done a great job in a very tough situation.

Second was the traffic obviously we talked about. It's a little bit designed that way, frankly. And it is designed so we don't want 100,000 people descending on Hampton Beach. That creates a public health concern for myself. I think I speak for Dr. Chan and the entire team, and everybody that just knows that that can be ripe for a potentially challenging situation.

It is outdoors. It's a nice breeze. That obviously helps. It's not everyone crammed into a single facility or anything like that. But at the same time, a large crowd, we want to be able to maximize the ability to physically distance as much as possible.

There was a small issue with parking. But, again, we're keeping a lot of those spots cordoned off, because we're trying our best to limit the crowd as best we can. So provide an opportunity for the businesses and for the beaches to be open, but also have a limitation on the crowd and in keeping Route 1A closed, again, just allows for that physical distancing. I know it makes for a tough traffic situation.

And then, finally, there was an issue on Saturday night where I think some folks had come out of some of the restaurants and whatnot and gotten a little rowdy. And hats off to Hampton Law Enforcement. The State Police handled it absolutely perfectly. They really did. There were no arrests. There was no extreme violence, or anything like that, I think a lot of rowdy individuals. And we've created a plan to make sure and to help mitigate that in the future.

So, there were some challenges on Hampton Beach. I was there Sunday morning. Like I said, it's an amazing place and we want people to enjoy it, but in a limited fashion, to be sure, because public health has to come first. Sorry for the long answer.

Your second question was about the Self-Employment Relief Fund. I was hoping today to be able to make an announcement. It will come Thursday. On Thursday, we will have the final details of the Self-Employment Fund ready to be released and announced.

I can tell you it's likely going to work very similar to the Main Street Relief Fund with the private businesses, where self-employed individuals were not allowed to participate. We know there's thousands of them out there that do have similar financial needs to keep themselves and their businesses moving forward.

So it's going to work in a very, very similar way. We're just kind of dotting the Is and crossing the Ts to make sure that the system -- it worked very, very well the first time. We just want to make sure it works just as well the second time.

I believe the vast majority, if not all, the checks from the \$400 million Main Street Relief Fund have been sent out. We've gotten a lot of surprised, I think, individuals. I've gotten personal texts from people I don't even know that have gotten my number and just said, hey, Governor, I'm So-and-So from this business. I wasn't expecting funds. I didn't know if this was really going to happen, but you've saved our business and all of that kind of nice stuff.

And I don't know if we've saved anything. I don't know. I hope we've really helped and been able to fill some gaps, and help people not have to go bankrupt, or pay their taxes or their bills. And if we can do it again for the self-employed, we're going to do it. We will make that announcement on Thursday. And maybe there's even more opportunity down the road. You never know. Any way we can get these funds out into the economy helping people pay their bills, that's what it's all about. Great. Yeah, let me go over here, Adam, if that's okay.

*So, as legislation is starting to arrive on your desk, especially some of these big Omnibus Bills, are any that you're seeing that you do intend to veto?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I have no doubt I'll be vetoing some of these Omnibus Bills, yes. There's some that are very concerning. I can tell you that Unemployment Omnibus Bill that they put together was a disaster. I mean, it would have violated Federal Law. The Department of Employment Security came out and basically said, oh my, gosh, whatever you do, do not vote for this, because we will be in massive violation and at-risk for lots of money here in the State. And we won't be able to move forward with unemployment.

The Democrats voted for it anyways. I don't know what they were trying to do with that. But I'm not going to let our unemployment system fail because they're trying to score political points. We're going to veto that one.

There's going to be a bunch others, I'm sure. I mean, I think there's still some more they're even putting together. So it's not even finalized yet. I believe they come back. I want to say the Senate comes back next Monday. And then, they'll kind of get everything wrapped up by next Tuesday. So we will see where it all shakes out by then. But, I'll sign some and I'll veto some. I'm sure.

*Can I ask a question about body cameras?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Paula, you can ask anything you want. About what?

*Body cameras.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, body cameras, I thought you said body piercing. I was like, no, I can't -- no, I really thought you -- I was like tattoo parlors and body piercing.

*No, body cameras have been used by various Police Departments across the State. Some communities are able to afford them. Others are not. Do you have a position on body cameras? And would that be something that you would want to look to find money for?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure. Yeah. No, I think there's any opportunity there, to be sure. I don't know if we're in a position to force all communities to have to do it for whatever reason. But I know a lot of communities have done it. I think it protects both Law Enforcement and the individuals that are, in theory, being filmed, from the Law Enforcement's perspective. I think it works both ways in a beneficial manner. But, again, I'll leave it up to the Law Enforcement to determine the value of that, the pros and the cons. And we've talked about it a lot at the Department of Safety about trying to find the funds to make it happen statewide, I mean, but from a State Police perspective. Yeah.



*Governor, just following up on Hampton Beach, in addition to the youth gathering, it's been pretty busy. There are restaurants. We received some pictures of some very long lines, some relatively crummy distancing by people, at least, even though they're outdoors. I'm just curious if you've received any complaints from that location, or anywhere else in the State, based on restaurants that are essentially not adhering to some of the guidance that the State is putting forward?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No. The question being: have we heard about restaurants kind of throwing the guidance out the window and doing what they want? No, not really, I mean, maybe some small instances here and there. I mean, I honestly can't think of anything in particular. I can tell you that.

A lot of the lines, essentially just to your question on Hampton Beach, they will form outside. Been trying to get them to keep their 6-foot distancing. I know it can be a little hard, especially on a crowded day. We want to keep encouraging it. A restaurant can only control so much outside, if the line is going down the street. You can't ask them to really control that as much. We're just asking individuals to understand that responsibility.

But in terms of what's happening within the restaurants, themselves, we've got -- unless there's something I'm missing here -- nothing but really good reports. They're still trying to utilize the outdoor dining, because that hasn't been curtailed and will not be curtailed through the summer, at least from the State's perspective.

They have the 50% indoor on the seacoast area, like Rockingham County, 100% indoor in six of the counties in the State. And I think everyone's taking it very responsibly. The idea that the staff has to be wearing a mask, we encourage people to wear masks if they're going to be walking through the public areas of the restaurant, of course.

And I don't want to speak to Hampton Beach, in particular. Frankly, there were a lot of folks from out-of-state in Hampton Beach. So, one thing we've talked about is more signage, more messaging, more reminders to them that, yeah, you've come to the Live Free or Die State, but we still have our restrictions here, too. And you got to abide by those. So we've talked about enhancing the signing there and helping restaurants get that message out. So, overall, I think considering what they had to deal with at Hampton this past weekend, I think the businesses did a very good job.

*And given what Dr. Chan said about no cases coming from the mass gatherings, what's your reaction? I mean, obviously, you knew that, because you had that information, yourself. But what's your reaction to that? Does that indicate to you that it's safer to gather in public?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No. I wish it did. I think a couple things. I think the data has yet to bear out completely. And I think Dr. Chan would agree. We always want to keep looking at the data. I mean, we're a few weeks out from the protests. If you look at what's happened in other States, they waited four or five weeks from the time that they started their larger openings.

And I'm just going to throw my opinion out there. This is not really based in fact, other than kind of anecdotal, what a lot of what we've heard is. Especially of what you see in those southern States, it's

very hot right now. So you have a lot of folks at home. Maybe they're online. They're doing their thing. Or at work on a hot day, they're staying indoors.

At night, when you go out to cool off, they're going out to bars. They're going to restaurants. They're getting into those very crowded, very tight atmospheres with maybe not the best ventilation in the world. It's those indoor atmospheres that, I guess, get me the most nervous, and I think is responsible for a lot of the breakouts. And that's why you see a lot of the breakouts happening in the 20- or 30-year-old range, right? It's that socialization that's happening.

I don't know if there's data to support whether it's happening on beaches or not. I haven't seen that. Maybe there's a little bit of data there. But I haven't seen anything to bear that out. It's those indoor stories that we hear. We've talked about it. A group of 20 people go out and, within hours, they all have COVID. I mean, literally they all have COVID, because they went to a bar together in a close tightknit bar. And they're all regretting it, of course, because, even for a young person, it's a tough thing to work through. You're putting your family at-risk. You're putting loved ones at-risk, your grandparents. Anybody in your household that might have an underlying health condition is now at-risk.

So, those are real stories and they're not just one-offs. They're stories to the tune of seeing some States like Florida with five or six times their previous high. That's real. That's real data that gets me nervous.

So, I don't want to say I'm not concerned about the protests or I'm not concerned about the beaches. I'm more concerned about those closed-atmosphere gatherings, which is why, when we talk about opening up the colleges and universities, we're going to try our best to be sticklers about that guidance.

We know it's going to be tough. But, to have a college student sit in isolation for four months until Christmas vacation comes isn't realistic. You have dormitory living. You have fraternity parties. You have parties, or whatever it might be, social gatherings of all types.

It's those indoor ones that make me the most nervous that I feel could be potentially replicated here, which is why we got to keep the public service announcements and the messaging up as strong as we can, and why I've always said my biggest fear is come this fall, our immune systems get a little weaker. We're out in the sun less more. We're indoors a little more. It gets a little colder. And with more of a compromised immune system just is ripe for the virus to spread.

So, you see it with the common cold. You see it with the common flu. I think you'd be crazy to say we're not potentially going to see it with COVID. So those are the things that get me still very concerned. And so, unfortunately, it doesn't make me feel much better.

Again, I hate to give bad news, but my job's to plan for the worst. It really is. It's to really think about the worst and design a system that is planning for the worst, can help be preventative, and get us to more favorable conditions. And so far, it's worked. It's been great. But we will keep working.

Is that okay, Dr. Chan? I hope you all notice Dr. Chan's haircut today, by the way. He looks great. I don't know. I'm going to get some texting about that later. People love the old haircut. And this is a good one, too. But people love the flowing locks of Dr. Chan.

Okay. Anything else for today? Well, great. Well, thank you, guys. Again, congratulations to Perry, off into retirement, whatever that means. You'll have to tell me about it. We have a great team here in the State, an awesome team, could not be prouder of them. And they all stand out. They all have their roles. They do an incredible job.

We still have a lot of work ahead of us. We're in a COVID pandemic. We're in a COVID crisis. We can provide flexibility. But, again, wear your mask. Keep that physical distancing. Summer is here, so we

can get out a little bit more, which is nice, and be in fresh air. But let's be responsible about it. Keep that curve flattened as much as we can, as we hit the fall, and put New Hampshire in as good of a position as we can to be successful for the long-term. So, thank you, guys, very much.