



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu  
Press Conference  
Thursday, June 25, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

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**Governor Sununu:**

How are you? Well, good afternoon, everybody. Nice to see everybody today, Thursday. For a second, I thought it was Tuesday. But, couple things that we want to talk about, and then I'll bring the Commissioner up for a public health update. And then, we will visit a few more -- or actually, there's a variety of things here. And then, we will open it up for questions.

So, first, we got some more good news on the unemployment front today. So our current unemployment number is down to about 92,000 individuals, still a sky-high, unbelievable number, considering where we were just four, five months ago. But, from a peak of 116,000 down to about 92,000, that's about a 6% drop week-over-week, which is about twice the national average. And for the first time, the number of people coming off unemployment exceeded the number of people going on unemployment. So, again, another very good positive sign that we are on the right track. Still a long way to go, to be sure, but New Hampshire's, I think, doing very well with getting the economy back underway.

Also, I want to mention that, earlier today, the New Hampshire Motor Speedway, as many folks may have seen their announcement, discussed moving forward with hosting fans at their August 2nd Foxwoods Resort Casino 301 NASCAR race, so holding one of the nation's and New England's premiere NASCAR race has always been a real point of pride for New Hampshire, and a priority to at least get the race underway.

And working with Department of Public Health, the Speedway, NASCAR on a national basis, putting together, I think, a good guidance document, that's been something we've been working with over the past couple weeks, working very closely with them. The Speedway will be allowed to operate with up to 35% capacity in the stands. And the guidance document, I think, did a very good job of outlining how people can sit, making sure there is appropriate physical and social distancing there; the guidelines for employees, wearing masks for the employees; and just making sure that right now the one-day event is something that some fans can participate in. It won't be the 60,000 fans we traditionally see, but up to 35% of folks in the stands, I think, will be a good thing.

And then, also looking at the concepts of concession lines, enhanced cleaning of some of the public areas, how to manage high-traffic areas or other lines in those situations, again, I think NASCAR and the folks at New Hampshire Motor Speedway up in Loudon put together a very good document. So we're excited to make sure that folks know that that opportunity will be available this August 2nd.

With that, I'll turn it over to the Commissioner for a public health update.

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Thank you, Governor. For a public health update today, we are announcing 40 new cases of COVID-19 in New Hampshire for a total of 5,638; two new hospitalized patients; and 10 new deaths, eight occurring in long-term care facilities.

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A couple of notes is our active hospitalization numbers are probably the lowest we've seen since probably early-April. So it's in the low-40s, which is a great number to be looking at for trend-wise, for active hospitalizations.

This week, we are working on long-term care guidance around communal dining and activities, and recreation in parts of the State. So Public Health is working on guidance for really the parts of the State that are not seeing high numbers. So think northern New Hampshire, even central New Hampshire, where our community transmission is fairly low. We will be looking next week at releasing some guidance around having less restrictions around dining rooms and activities, and things like that. It won't be 100%. But it is our first step in really encouraging more peer-to-peer interactions, while socially distancing, obviously, within the nursing home, as well. Thank you.

### **Governor Sununu:**

Great. Thank you, Commissioner, very much. Few more items, and then we will open up for questions. First having to do with lodging here in New Hampshire, so hotels in New Hampshire have been open for about three weeks. And with smaller inns and hotels, they've been able to open up at 100% capacity. Larger hotels and campgrounds, until now, have still been operating at a 50% occupancy.

And we're announcing today that, starting Monday, June 29th, this coming Monday, all hotels, inns, and campgrounds in the State will be able to operate at 100% occupancy. The data continues to trend in a positive direction with no direct evidence of severe breakouts of COVID-19 due to lodging, which gives us a lot of confidence that being able to take this step is a prudent measure.

The out-of-state quarantine will still remain in place. You must have self-attested to quarantine at your home in your home State for the previous 14 days, only leaving for essential purposes to be still coming from out-of-state, but, again, allowing this opportunity for lodging to go to 100% after being able to review the data, not just here in New Hampshire but even nationwide, in terms of how hotels and lodging have or have not been affected by and have not affected the spread of the virus, again, allows us, I think, with a lot of confidence to be able to open things up to 100% specifically within lodging across the State.

We also want to talk today about the Self-Employment Fund as a predecess (ph) -- no, a follow-on, I should say -- I almost got my words wrong, but a follow-on to the Main Street Relief Fund, obviously the very successful fund with over \$330 million being released by the Main Street Relief Fund over the past week.

We identified a big area of need within that self-employment community, those who claimed to be self-employed, thousands of them. We estimate somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 individuals across the State have been either going through the unemployment process or identified themselves through the Main Street Relief Fund. But there's clearly need there on the self-employment side.

So, today, we're here to announce that the New Hampshire Self-Employment Livelihood Fund -- we call it SELF, the Self-Employment Livelihood Fund, which will build off the success of the Main Street Relief Fund and support obviously a key backbone of New Hampshire's economy. One of the most valuable things we can do with this money is allow it to get back into the economy with those that have been affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. And from bed-and-breakfast owners to shop owners, or numerous small what we call the mom-and-pop businesses, which are really the backbone of our economy here, there are many self-employed businesses struggling. And now, we can provide some relief.

An eligible self-employed business in New Hampshire has to meet certain criteria, such as the following. You obviously have to be located in New Hampshire. The owner or owners of the business must be the only employees. And the business must not be a not-for-profit. We have another fund available for not-for-profits through the Charitable Foundation.

The business cannot be permanently closed, but not including those that are temporarily closed for COVID-19. So if you've officially shut the business down, declared bankruptcy or not, with no intent of opening it anytime in the future, this is not for you. These funds are really being designed to help you keep your businesses floating in some fashion, be able to pay some of those business expenses moving forward.

The business cannot currently be in bankruptcy. And the business must have gross receipts in 2019 of under \$1 million. And again, for self-employed, that will likely be the vast majority of all the self-employed individuals in the State.

The individual award amounts will be calculated similar to the Main Street Relief Fund with the maximum award that a business can receive being \$50,000. The Main Street Relief Fund had a \$350,000 cap, because it included larger businesses, more employees. But, for the self-employed, we're going to cap it at \$50,000.

And again, we know there are thousands of self-employed businesspeople that have received unemployment benefits through the expanded COVID-19 qualifications by the Federal Government. And although those benefits have clearly helped a lot of individuals, many of those businesses still had very significant losses in earnings.

We do want to recognize that, in a limited number of cases, the unemployment benefits have more than made up for the losses of those earnings due to COVID-19. And those business owners would not be eligible for an additional fund through the program. In other words, if you've received expanded unemployment benefits, that will be kind of credited, if you will, or discounted against your losses, similar to what we did with the PPP funding or other additional Federal funds that may have come in through the Main Street Relief Fund. We just want to make sure we're accounting for all the financial opportunity that individuals may have received, either through the State or the Federal Government.

Here's a bit of an important aside. If you are someone receiving the minimum unemployment benefit, which is, right now, approximately \$768 per week as a minimum -- that includes the Federal Stipend -- and if you make over the \$16,500 annually, we encourage you to contact the Department of Employment Security as they will need additional information from you to consider increasing your weekly benefit and for you to be eligible for the SELF Program.

The reason really being is that if you're making the minimum amount on unemployment as self-employed, what we've found is the vast majority of those individuals likely have not filed Federal Taxes, for whatever reasons, if they're under certain thresholds. That process is one of the tools that we're going to use to ensure that there's no fraud, that we can audit the numbers, that those folks coming into the system are legitimately self-employed.

And so, if you are legitimately self-employed but you haven't filed those Federal forms, we just want to encourage everyone to work through the Department of Employment Security. And all these rules and guidelines, and these recommendations will be on the website, as it becomes available.

The other caveat here is that, while it is only June, the Application for this program is not going to go live until July 6th. The reason being is that next week is a holiday week. And what we didn't want to do is create a lot of confusion with folks coming in and applying through a fund. State Offices will be closed for at least some of the days over the holiday. There'll be a limited number of people. People

intend to take time off. And we just want to make sure that we have that one-on-one availability for folks, if they do have questions in the process. So we're giving everyone enough time to plan.

Because the Main Street Relief Fund was also so successful, we have a system place. We are ready to go. And actually, we think we can get this program not just up-and-running on July 6th, but actually move the process along much quicker. I can't believe it'd be quicker. I think the first program only took a month to get the checks out. This one will move even faster than that, which is great and provide a lot of opportunity.

But those Applications will be allowed to be submitted starting on July 6th. And that process will go through July 17th. So between the July 6th and 17th is when the folks for the Self-Employment Fund can apply. And we will have information on the website in terms of not just the dates but some of the processes.

So there's a couple extra steps in there. We just want to make sure those on self-employment have the right forms in, have the right documentation in to make sure that those that need the help and that could qualify for the help really do get it at the end of the day.

CARES Act funds, in terms of Volunteer New Hampshire, so a huge opportunity here. We announced a lot of smaller programs earlier in the week around kids, around veterans, and some other areas. And one of the key focus areas that we've been very passionate about, not just through COVID, but really since the beginning, Volunteer New Hampshire and long-term service programs that we have in the State provide a tremendous opportunity to individuals and communities.

And today, we're announcing \$1.5 million investment of CARES Act funds to Volunteer New Hampshire. And I just want to remind folks. The commitment to these programs is very, very deep. And sometimes you don't even know these programs are in your community.

It could be AmeriCorps. It could be Senior Corps. It could be the Vista program. It could be a program like City Year in Manchester. All these programs are part of these long-term service commitments. And Volunteer New Hampshire has been a great facilitator for a lot of these organizations and the funding for these organizations for some time.

And we're making an additional \$1.5 million, knowing that so many of these programs are going to fill the gaps that COVID-19 has created in many of our communities. So, again, just another, I think, real positive opportunity for us using the COVID dollars quickly and rapidly, and getting them out to create some progress for our local community.

And lastly, I want to talk a little bit about -- I guess second-to-lastly. I got two more, and then we will jump into questions. As we continue to move forward with our very positive testing data, we know we're on a good track. But we also know that families and children, in particular, continue to face challenges through COVID-19.

Next week, the State will be delivering Health and Wellness Kits to schools and regional pickup sites across the State. The National Guard will be packing and delivering these Health and Wellness Kits, which could include things like dental kits provided by the New Hampshire State Oral Health Program, prescription disposal pouches for the safe disposal of medications, flyers and information on healthy habits of wellbeing, things like the ChoosELove program, other social-emotional learning programs that will be available for kids and families in their communities. So, those kits are being delivered by the National Guard, being packed by the National Guard, and delivered all over the State, which, again, is just a great kind of direct opportunity we're trying to create for folks.

And finally, as before we really open it up, I want to provide one last update regarding childcare in New Hampshire. Back on May 15th, I announced a \$25 million in CARES Act funds to be allocated to our

early childhood care and education system. And this coming Monday, Department of Health and Human Services will notify just under 600 childcare programs in every county of the State award notifications totaling \$15 million for programs including family childcare, afterschool and recreational programs, summer camps, things of that nature, with \$15 million of that original \$25 million being distributed, again, providing, I think, a lot of opportunities for those programs, not just to survive but really thrive when we need them the most, and being stood up at a local level for kids and for families.

Over 22,000 children and their families currently participate in these types of programs. And we just want to reassure them that those programs will be getting help to stabilize them and can continue to provide those very critical services.

Over the coming days and weeks, we will continue to work with Health and Human Services to continue to identify other key areas of need within the childcare system, so we can just keep striving for more continual improvement and being able to fill those gaps in wherever we can. It's something that every day, every other day, somebody's bringing something else to our attention, where there is a gap, there is a need. And we can move very, very quickly, very nimbly to get some resources where they need to be and just create those opportunities on a very individualized level.

With that, we can open it up for questions.

### **Q&A Session**

*Governor, couple quick ones on the NASCAR race: will fans be required to wear masks?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Not required; I think we will have signage encouraging them to wear masks at all locations, but not required. It's an outdoor venue. There will be physical distancing there.

*And as you know, there's a big buildup to the race: people camping overnight; events going on during the week. Will any of that be allowed, or it's strictly...*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, it's strictly a one-day race, no camping, nothing like that. It's come in, enjoy the race, and head home. So it's just a one-day event for the fans right now.

*And what gave you the confidence to allow this to happen?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I think we looked at data in terms of large gatherings in outdoor space, the ability for the venue to very safely physically distance. I believe in the guidance, for example -- I don't have it in front of me, but they can only fill every other row, for example. They're going to keep parties at least two seats apart, things of that nature. And that's how we resolved and came to the 35% number.

So, outdoor, a lot of physical distancing, you don't have all the other extracurricular activities, as you were talking about. We're not doing the camping and making it a larger overnight event that tends to



have a little more control issues with it in a situation like the COVID pandemic. Full masking for all the employees; the fact that it's gone off so successfully in other parts of the country already, we've seen those models play themselves out. And they're handled very well.

NASCAR's been a great partner, I think, with us, here in New Hampshire. And I think I speak for other parts of the country, as well. I think they're working hard to get it right. And again, just working with them, there was nothing that we asked them to do where they said they couldn't do it. So, every time we asked them to make an additional stipulation, they were willing to do it and very happily.

So I think we're all excited just to get the race underway. And I mean, 35%, that's a lot of fans, frankly, given it's a big venue. I think it holds just under 60,000 people right now. So we can still have a few thousand fans being able to watch the race.

*Governor, speaking of other parts of the country, in recent days we've seen sort of this in different States in the papers. We've seen surges in different areas of the country. Given this race and given kind of the attraction of the NASCAR races from around the country, have you given any thought to the risks there of other hotspots in the country, people coming into New Hampshire?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so two questions there; one being: are there hotspots in the country and people coming into New Hampshire? So, the race could draw some people from out-of-state. We know that. Again, at 35%, I don't know if you're going to see a massive amount of people flying in for this one event. My guess is the vast majority of individuals at this race will still be from New Hampshire, as they usually are.

It's an outdoor event. When you look at some of the hotspots you're seeing around the country -- and there are a lot flaring up, I think 25 States showing record numbers -- we don't want to put ourselves into that situation for sure. But the vast majority of the data looks to be that you're getting the larger outbreaks in bars, in areas that are of close contact, not in these larger outdoor settings like a beach or a protest, or something like that. So, being outdoors, having it being for a limited time, having a system where you can ensure the physical distancing through the vast majority of the event, I think, again, just gives us a lot of confidence that this won't be a situation where you can see a lot of outbreak.

*And just to follow on that, can you comment on these outbreaks? How do you feel New Hampshire is situated? I think it's 26 states have shown a 14-day positive increase in cases. New Hampshire hasn't. But does that change your calculus for the rest of the summer? Are we still...*

**Governor Sununu:**

I don't think it changes our calculus for the rest of the summer in seeing what the rest of the States are doing. But we're watching it very, very closely. So we've always been treading very lightly. We've always been taking it step-by-step, not just arbitrarily pulling anything open. We still have restaurants at 50% capacity. And right now, it doesn't look like restaurants are a big factor in the outbreaks you're seeing in other countries.

Some bars, larger gatherings, things of that nature, where the physical distancing isn't available, or the proper ventilation is more restrictive, that seems to be where a lot of these outbreaks are happening. And that's why you're seeing it happening specifically in the 20- to 30-year-old range, right? It's a lot of

young adults that just aren't worried about it right now. They should be, but they're not. They're not wearing masks. They're in close atmospheres, a lot of late-night venues, frankly, where people are just getting together to socialize and you're getting these outbreaks.

So, we're watching that very carefully. We have some venues of that nature here. But all of our bars in New Hampshire are restaurants, as well. I mean, they're all serving means. So, we have a few locations that are more bar-type areas, more bar than restaurant, if you will, but not many. So we're keeping an eye on that, because we want to be cognizant of those venues. But we don't have a large amount of them.

And we're also watching Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, those types of locations. All of New England is doing very, very well with their numbers, which is a very positive thing. But we know, and I think we suspect, that it's not likely that we would see a massive outbreak without one of those locations also seeing increases in numbers, because their densities are so tight. You're likely going to see an outbreak there probably even before you'd see one here.

So, we're all sharing data, working in very close conjunction with one another. I've been talking to folks in Florida, Arizona, Texas, on a regular basis, asking them to figure out why is it? Why are these outbreaks really happening? And that seems to be the one area of consistency.

There could be other variables driving those numbers, to be sure. But the one area I think everyone can agree on is some of those. When you do the contact tracing, you have individuals. The most common thing is that they were in close contact with a lot of folks, usually at a bar or something like that. And that's obviously not the NASCAR race. So that gives us confidence in moving forward with something like that.

*Governor, with the lodging going to 100%, it's not hard to imagine a lot of people this summer looking at a map online and saying, okay, where's a safe place to go and choosing New Hampshire. Can we trust that this whole self-attest to self-quarantining ahead of arriving here, is that going to be safe, especially if people do choose New Hampshire and we get a big surge of tourism here through the rest of the summer?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, I think so. Being someone who used to be in that business, in terms of lodging, the vast majority of out-of-staters that come to our tourist or resort destinations are usually from -- if they're out-of-state, it's still Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York. And frankly, they're all on very similar par with us, in terms of their rate of COVID right now.

So, even if you do get out-of-staters beyond New England, it's going to be likely in a very small amount. I don't anticipate a lot of people flying into Manchester from Florida or Colorado, or Arizona, or California, or something like that. It could happen.

But really the out-of-staters that we're looking at are specifically in the greater New England and northeast area. And those areas are showing very positive signs, as well. So, I think, again, it gives us a lot of confidence. We want folk to do the self-attestation. We want folk to take the quarantine very seriously. But we also know that they're coming from places of very similar outbreak as New Hampshire.

*Would you accept the possibility of fining people who come from out-of-state, like has been done by other States like Connecticut, New York?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah. No. We're not looking at fining people because I'm not sure how you prove that. I don't know how I fine someone and prove that they didn't quarantine back home. I mean, we allow you to quarantine back home before you travel and self-attest to that. So, I don't know how that would even be implemented here.

*Do you think folk who run lodging should expect the self-quarantine provision to be in place for the summer tourism season? As you know, your Reopening Taskforce had recommended getting rid of that.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, I think so. I mean, we have no plans of removing it right now. It seems to be a good provision. We want to keep it in place. It also allows us to look at the data and see where folks are coming from. And just, again, the more data we have, the better.

*Hi. A lot of colleges and universities across the State have unrolled their plans, either recently or at the moment, for students returning to campus in the fall. And a lot of students are worried that they'll be sent home midsemester again. Obviously, there's a lot of uncertainty, as we look at the fall. But, given that you said you expect a spike, do you think those fears are well-founded?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so a couple colleges have submitted. I've seen one for UNH. I've seen one for Dartmouth. There may be some others in there. Those are kind of the larger ones. First, I'll say at least I looked at the Dartmouth plan this morning and it was solid. It was done, I think, very, very well. And they work with public health. I mean, I don't know a better way to say it.

So, the plans that we've seen, I think, are taking the guidance and the necessity for guidance very seriously, which is, first, the good news. They all include provisions for testing. They all include provisions for quarantining, things of that nature, that we've asked them to incorporate.

I guess the heart the -- sorry, I'm just thinking -- the heart of your question is: should students be concerned about coming back about seeing a surge? Yes, it very well could happen, absolutely. I don't think that should necessarily delay your plans. You have to make that choice on an individual basis, whether it's right for you and your family, whether to proceed down that path.

Right now, our numbers are very, very good. I don't mean to always sound so dire about that risk of the second surge, but I really do believe it'll ultimately happen. Because the universities have set up a lot of systems within their confines to deal with quarantining, to deal with students that may become COVID-positive, those systems are kind of built into their guidance and are in place. So we feel very confident that, if there were an outbreak, the schools should be able to manage it and allow the classes to proceed through whenever their semester is going to end.



I think a lot of them might be ending their semesters early. I forget which schools it were. Some of them are looking to end around Thanksgiving and basically send the kids home, which I think is a smart thing to do. Get the students here. Keep them on campus. Hopefully minimize the chances for any sort of large amount of outbreak, and then get them through their classes and get home.

And I think things will look very differently towards the end of this year and early next years, in terms of a vaccine and where we are with our numbers. We don't really know what it will look like. But I think we will be on the positive side of things.

*The Secretary of Education has issued her guidance on CARES Act money and nonpublic schools. I'm not sure if you've seen this yet.*

**Governor Sununu:**

I saw a briefing on it. So I do know what you're referring to.

*Do you anticipate the CARES Act money will be going to any private or religious schools here in New Hampshire?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, the way the guidance document is written for the use of CARES Act funds in public schools that have public schools -- and I should say K-12 schools received about \$32 million or \$35 million, somewhere in there. I don't know the exact number, which is a lot of opportunity. All the CARES Act funds go to the public school systems.

Now, as with other programs, they have to supply those services to any of the private schools in the area. For example, as we do now, if a student is going to a private school, often they'll still get special ed services through their public school system. That happens now. And it would be a similar program.

The cash and the funding doesn't go to the private school. But the services should be provided. And I believe that each District will have the choice whether to provide services for all students or just low-income students. I mean, they can kind of choose one gate or the other. But either way, the funds only go to the public schools. But the services are provided to all schools, very similar system to what we have now.

*I wanted to ask about housing. So you put a moratorium on evictions for nonpayment on rent. I believe that moratorium expires July 1st. There are a lot of Affordable Housing Advocates in the State who are worried about that because, when that moratorium lifts, there could be a lot of evictions. And also, next month, July, is the end of the \$600-a-week Federal boost to unemployment benefits. And so, Housing Advocates this week were calling that a potential perfect storm, they called it, this summer of evictions of low-income people losing those people who are unemployed, and also thus facing an eviction. I guess, do you have any plans right now to extend that moratorium? And if you don't, what is your kind of hope for how that might transition, without there being a big...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so the eviction and foreclosure moratorium will end on July 1st. We made that announcement a while ago so that people can plan, first off. We're allowing for that offramp to be much larger. Again, I'm doing this off memory. But typically you're given about a week-or-so to actually kind of figure something out with your landlord. In this case, we've extended that greatly. I think you have three or four weeks now to work it out. So, we're trying to create that offramp and opportunity.

Also, there's a lot of relief funds that we've created, primarily through the local CAP Programs and CAP Agencies that individuals can use for rent relief, utility relief, whatever it might be. So we haven't just created the moratorium and said goodbye and good luck. We're creating financial opportunities, as well. So, again, people can bridge that gap, have more time to work out a payment plan, whatever it is, and really tap into some of these funds and resources provided through the CARES Act.

So, again, we don't anticipate a large amount of people. And it could happen, of course. But we don't anticipate a large amount of people being evicted or foreclosed on. We've really tried to provide a lot of financial support, as well, to create that offramp process.

At some point, this was going to have to go away. And my thought process was, well, let's have it go away now. We've given people a lot of relief. The economy's on a positive swing right now, which is a lot of opportunity being created. And we have funds that we can allocate for just these purposes.

*There's an effort in the Legislature. There's a Bill that's moving forward. It'll be voted on next week that require landlords to come up with a six-month arrangement to pay back rent that they haven't paid, before the landlord can take the possessive action. Would you support that? The idea is to, again, as you said, extend that offramp so that people who are just getting back on their feet can pay back the rent that they haven't been able to pay for a few months and transition.*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, I don't know that bill in particular. If I remember correctly, I think, as you've stated, they can't evict somebody, I think. That's what they're calling possessive action. They couldn't evict someone for a total of six months.

I think one of the challenges there is someone has to pay. Those landlords still have to pay their mortgages, right? So, I understand it's creating more opportunity for the tenants to stay longer. But you're creating a massive cash problem for the landlords. You don't want to pull money out of one pocket and put it in the other to the effect of maybe making those landlords go bankrupt, either, right? So, you're really trying to find that balance.

An additional six-month window could create a lot of problems because what's going to happen is we will get to the end of that six months. Let's say it's December. Well, now, there's no more CARES Act money available to create this offramp and everyone's really falling off the cliff, so to say. So, this is one of those fiscal cliffs, if you will, that we want to make an easy offramp. And now is the time to do it, because we have additional funds available. But I apologize. I don't know what Omnibus Bill that's sitting in, to be honest.

*It's in one of them.*

**Governor Sununu:**

It's in one of them. So I'm not saying, well, I'll sign it or veto it, because they've attached everything to everything at this point.

*And just to clarify, it's a six-month payment plan, not six months that you can stay as a tenant. So the requirement is that it's a payment plan of at least six months in duration to pay off your arrears rent, I guess.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so if it was just a payment plan to just catch up with arrears, that could be a possibility. And I don't know exactly what the situation is, or if it's you got to at least put 20% of your rent down or something like that. That might not work for the landlords. So, I'd have to take a look at the Bill, in particular.

But I can tell you one of the concerns of dragging this out to the end of December is we will be out of CARES Act money to help those tenants have a smoother transition. And so, that's why I think now's probably the more appropriate time to do it.

*I have a question for Commissioner Shibinette about nursing homes. This week, we heard from Hackett Hill that they have an OSHA investigation related to the death of an employee. And the statistics that we have show that there are six healthcare workers that have died. Can you give us some more detail on whether these people worked in nursing homes or hospitals, and whether there are other investigations going on into the deaths of people in these...*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Sure, so we've been reporting out healthcare hospital cases, hospitalizations, and deaths right from the very beginning, when we started our dashboard. The investigations into Healthcare Worker injuries or deaths is conducted by OSHA, not by the Department of Health and Human Services. So we don't have any knowledge of ongoing investigations.

We don't release details about those Healthcare Workers, just based on privacy and the ability to constructively identify someone, if there's such a small number, right? So, releasing additional details would really be a problem for us for constructive identification and just for privacy matters.

*I'm sorry, Commissioner.*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Yeah.

*Do you have an update at all? I know it's been about a month since we heard about the case of a youth with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome. How's that child doing at this point?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

So I don't have an update on that, but I can connect with Dr. Chan. So, maybe he could give an update on Tuesday.

*And just one follow-up, there's been a lot of talk at the national level about testing being contracted by the White House. Is there anything in your system, if, at the Federal level, we saw less support, that would have to scale back in terms of testing and the operations here?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

No, so I think we are looking at what is a sustainable testing plan going through the summer and into the fall. And it was one of the reasons why we started reporting out the two data tables, right? The first table shows the number of people tested, which is a lower number, when you look at the trend line, than our height maybe a month ago. But if you look at our numbers of total tests conducted, they're pretty stable, over 2,000, which is really where we want to be.

Sustainability-wise, right now our testing program relies on National Guard at our fixed testing sites. They're great partners to have. We want to keep them as long as we can. But if we're continuing to test through the fall, a couple of reasons we want to pull the healthcare systems back into this, right?

Number 1, when people go to a fixed testing site, we're cutting the Primary Care Physician out of that interaction, right? So, we want people to really be able to connect with their Primary Care about, are you having symptoms? What is your care, if you're having symptoms, even if you're COVID-negative? And if you're COVID-positive, what should you be looking for, for the next step, if you need hospitalization?

So, what we're working on right now is a plan with the hospitals and our other healthcare partners across the State about moving some of our testing into the healthcare systems and having hospitals conduct some community-based testing off their campuses. And there are hospitals doing it right now.

If you look at Littleton Regional Hospital, for well over a month now they've partnered with ClearChoice and they have a testing tent set up right on campus. And they're doing widespread community testing, so very similar to that.

So we wouldn't be looking to scale down testing. We really want supply and demand to be equal. That's the goal all along, but really moving it to perhaps a healthcare system. The Department will always coordinate long-term care testing. We're keeping that, even if we do community-based testing to the healthcare systems. Outbreak testing will be done by us. The coordination of our surveillance programs at long-term care facilities will be done by us.

*I have a question about Lyme disease. Are the symptoms similar for COVID-19 to Lyme disease? Or are there people that are being found to have Lyme disease that thought they had COVID?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

I am not aware of a differential diagnosis of Lyme disease for a potentially COVID patient. And I have not heard about those cases. I'm not saying it has not happened. But it's not something that's happening on a regular basis that would come to our attention.

*Just a quick question on antibody testing: what is it showing in the measure of kind of how far has the virus spread through the State? And what is the potential for...*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

So, I think that our antibody testing has been pretty consistent, right around 2%, 3% positivity rate. We're running about the same positivity rate on our PCR testing, so not unexpected at all. I think it does show that a very small portion of our population is coming back as being exposed previously, and maybe been asymptomatic, or just having mild symptoms.

Until we have widespread testing in the state, right -- I mean, even right now I think we're right around 137,000 people tested. That's only 10% of our population. I don't think that we can really be definitive about how much of our population is exposed, unless that number increases exponentially. And I don't know that it's going to.

Testing supplies, testing personnel, testing sites is certainly not a barrier to getting tested. It really is just supply and demand. And our supply equals the demand. The people that want to get tested are being tested. And we're seeing community transmission, just not above 2%, 3% positivity rates.

*I ask because obviously the possibility or perhaps the likelihood of a second wave, I would imagine how many people have already got the virus would really play into how severe that second wave might look. But right now, it sounds like you're saying it's kind of hard to tell with the levels. We never know kind of where the virus is.*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

It is hard to tell. And if we just go by our number of positive cases that we know about, right, even if we include our positive antibody tests and our positive PCR tests, those numbers are so low. They're not even anything approaching close to herd immunity, right?

So, if we get a second wave of COVID-19, we can expect it to be as severe, if not more severe, than our first wave of COVID-19. So that has been the messaging all along is, don't let your guard down. Yes, you should have anxiety, because it can be scary.

But we're doing a great job in New Hampshire, when you look at the map. We are doing a great job with social distancing and masking. And those are two very big key components to keeping this virus at bay.



**Governor Sununu:**

Thank you, Commissioner. Do we have some on the phone? Great.

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

*Hi, thank you. Now that we have a plan in place for NASCAR, what are the prospects looking like so far for another big event, bike week, to be held in August?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I haven't heard if bike week has permanently rescheduled to August or if they've actually picked a date yet. Do you know if they've picked a date? Is that what's implied in the question? Oh, is she there? I'm sorry.

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

*I believe it's in August. It's in August.*

**Governor Sununu:**

They're going to do sometime in August? So, NASCAR is very different than something like bike week or a fair, because NASCAR has fixed seating. You can control who comes in and out. All the tickets are bought ahead of time. You can control the crowds and the exact number of individuals that come in.

So, in many ways, the NASCAR race is of much less risk in a much more controlled atmosphere than something like bike week or the Deerfield Fair, or something like that. And unfortunately, we heard the Deerfield Fair's cancelling. It's probably a smart idea. It's one of my favorite events of the year, but I've never been there where you're not shoulder-to-shoulder with half the State at one time, and obviously could very well be a spreading event, given its very tight compactness.

So, the bike week is very similar. If you've been up to bike weeks, the crowds can get very big. There's no controls. There's no fixed seating or anything like that. So I think if that were to proceed, it would have to be done with a lot of caution and hopefully with a lot of input of Public Health. I'm not sure how it would happen, frankly, in a practical manner.

And even bike week probably draws in even more people from out-of-state than even the NASCAR race does. That's just the nature of that event. It's a great event, traditionally. But it would be very challenging. I can tell you. I've talked to folks at other venues, such as the SNHU Center in Manchester. I talked to RJ up at Meadowbrook. I guess we don't call it Meadowbrook anymore. What do we call it?

*Bank of New Hampshire Pavilion.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Bank of New Hampshire Pavilion, sorry, I'm old-school that way. And just talked about concerts or large sporting events and what they're foreseeing, but most of those venues they said, at earliest, maybe it would be in the fall or something like that, because most of those larger venues rely on national tours that book way in advance, similar to NASCAR.

Now, NASCAR has kind of a fixed tour. They were out of the gate early. I think they were able to put some good guidance documents together and move forward quickly. But, concerts and things of that nature are even more challenging in some ways.

So, we're going to keep working with all these different venues and these potential large-group gatherings. Most of them have canceled. Bike week sounds like it still could be out there. But, we'd have to work with them very closely to make sure they proceed with caution and we don't create a super cluster event of outbreak.

**Michael Graham with New Hampshire Journal:**

*Yes, I'd like to follow up on the education questions, if I can.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Okay.

**Michael Graham with New Hampshire Journal:**

*Okay, great. You were talking about the CARES guidance that just came in that Commissioner Edelblut talked about and the possibility that funds would provide services to kids in nonpublic schools. And I'm wondering, as parents continue to tell pollsters that they're uncomfortable with the idea of returning to the traditional 25 kids in a room model, do you see a role for nontraditional school like homeschooling, charter school, private school, etc. for solving the problem of getting people to feel comfortable this fall? And specifically on homeschooling, Senator Jeanne Dietsch says that one reason your Commissioner is promoting homeschooling is because a small number of homeschoolers are child abusers and they don't want to enter the system because they want to hide what's going on in their house, including drug abuse. Does that factor into your view of homeschooling in New Hampshire and how you should move forward?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Wow. Well, I will answer that question. Let me take the second half second, because I hadn't heard that. That's quite shocking. The CARES Act funding that comes in is going to be used for COVID-related expenses in the school setting. When it comes to making sure that kids have services or services that may have needed to fill those gaps, given the COVID crisis, given some of the gaps that might have been created with remote learning at the end of last year, or some of the needs that might be realized in a classroom as we enter in September and October, that's exactly what those funds are for.

To the first part of your question, I think you were asking about parents that may have concerns about going back to larger classrooms and things of that nature. You mentioned charter schools and private schools, and public schools. Those are still classroom settings. And my sense is you're going to have very similar dynamics in each of those areas. I don't think one is better or safer, necessarily, than the other. We will provide guidance documents for all of them and look to all of them to, again, utilize their best practices, in terms of masks or physical and social distancing, things of that nature. So, those are all classroom-setting situations: kids in a classroom; kids in hallways; kids in the lunchroom, whatever it might be, whether they're public, private, or charter.

Homeschooling's obviously a bit different. And my sense is -- and I think most people would agree -- there will likely be a lot more people that choose to do some type of homeschooling pathway. We're

going to make sure that we provide robust opportunities, either for the health of their child or the health of themselves, or their family, don't feel comfortable, given the COVID crisis, sending their children into those classrooms. And that's a very reasonable expectation that you'll have some percentage. I don't think it'll be very large, but some decent percentage of folk that just have extra concerns this year.

And so, we're not going to leave them hanging. We're going to provide as many robust programs as we can, whether it be homeschooling, VLACS, whatever it might be. We want to create that flexibility. Doing the traditional remote learning as we did towards the end of last year likely is not the straight path, if you will, and straight option, given that it would be a lot to ask a Teacher to manage half the kids in the classroom and half the kids in a remote-learning atmosphere at the exact same time. That's not a practical expectation. So, again, for those who choose a homeschooling pathway, I think it's a great pathway, frankly, and it very well may work for a lot of folks.

I had not heard the comments of Senator Dietsch making claims of homeschooling parents and drug use, and all of that sort of thing. I think from what I just heard from you, anyone who makes a statement like that, that's an outrageous statement and an outrageous claim. So, homeschooling is a robust option for families in this State. It has been for quite some time.

Commissioner Edelblut has done a tremendous job with public schools, with private schools, with charter schools, with homeschools, with all the avenues of education in this State. He's just done a tremendous job. He's knocked it out of the park in so many different ways.

And so, anyone who wants to criticize a system or a pathway, there isn't a single pathway of education for any family in this State. Everyone has their own pathway. And we have to be very respectful of that.

The four walls of the classroom, for most kids, are just great. But for some kids, there's going to be an alternative. And it's our job at the State level, one way or another, to make sure that we're providing a positive atmosphere, a good educational atmosphere, the right curriculum, a pathway for those students, whatever that choice might be.

And given COVID, that doesn't limit. We shouldn't be limited in that. Actually, we should be expanding those opportunities as much as we can, given that there will be a lot of anxiety and concern over the public health aspects of the classrooms. And that's a very reasonable expectation.

***Alex with New Hampshire Public Radio:***

*Hi there. So, I have a question about the \$50 million for broadband expansion. We're hearing that people are generally glad that this money is available. But, based on the requirement to qualify and the short timeline, it seems like there might be a very limited pool of applicants. So, what does the State have planned for those that don't get their project proposals in on-time and who don't otherwise qualify for these funds? And then, on top of that, what's the State's plan for after December, once these funds are kind of done with, to continue the broadband expansion?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, I allocated \$50 million for broadband expansion across the State a couple weeks ago. I have not heard concerns that Districts and localities will not qualify. I have heard concerns that getting their Application in on-time may be a challenge. To be frank about it, this is an immense opportunity. They got to get it done, because the dollars have to be spent in a very limited time. So, we don't have time to wait. This is a huge opportunity.

Whatever they can do to get those Applications in, get it done. And if you have questions, you can contact the folks at the Office of Strategic Initiatives who are helping manage this process, or the Public Utilities Commission, who is working kind of hand-in-hand on this.

This is a tremendous financial opportunity. So it's really not about folk being able to qualify. There is a short timeframe to get your Applications in, in that procurement process. But that's because getting fiber in the ground and getting the projects underway in a very short timeframe is paramount.

A lot of States are not even trying to take this pathway. We are. We are. We're jumping right on it, because it's an awesome opportunity for families, for individuals, for schools, for libraries to get fiber hooked up in some fashion for folks that work remotely from home, whatever it might be. Huge opportunity there, so we're moving very quickly. And we expect the towns to move quickly with us. If they do, there's just going to be an immense amount of opportunity to expand broadband capacity in our State.

Great; anything else in the room? Wow, okay. That's great. Well, look, we appreciate everyone's time this afternoon. We hope everyone does have a good weekend. We think it's going to be a great weekend.

Like we talked about earlier, the Self-Employment Fund will start officially on July 6th. So that should give time for folks to, if they have any questions, contact the Department of Employment Security. Make sure they can look online, see what forms and information are going to be necessary for that Application process. There's plenty of time to get the information out there, plenty of time to get your Application in the right way. Check all the boxes and be part of some real, I think, very positive economic relief for the State.

And who knows? Maybe we can do it again and again. Any way we can get these funds out to the frontlines so people can pay their utilities, pay their taxes, and keep their businesses and families viable is just a great opportunity. We're proud to do it. So thank you, guys, very much. And we will see you on Tuesday. Thank you.