



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu  
Press Conference  
Thursday, July 30, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

---

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, good afternoon, everybody. Had a good full house this afternoon. Thanks, everyone, at home for joining us. I know a lot of folks, like myself, just finished watching the funeral services for Representative John Lewis over at Georgia. And I got to say. I thought President Obama did a terrific eulogy. Regardless of party or politics, Representative Lewis was a pretty amazing individual, to be sure, on the frontlines of so many pivotal points in our country's history, and clearly an inspiration for a lot of the work that we have to do, going forward. So, it was quite a moving ceremony.

I do want to start with a brief update, as it pertains to COVID, before I bring Commissioner Shihinette to talk about our status of public health here. On unemployment and the status of our economy, we got some more very good news today, as it relates to our growing economy.

For the first time since the COVID crisis began, we actually had twice as many people come off unemployment benefits as went on last week. That's a very, very good sign. Overall, continuing claims had the highest percentage drop in New England, New Hampshire did. Our current unemployment rate of 8.4% continues to definitely beat the averages across the country. But we still have a lot of work to do.

We're definitely not raising the victory flag any time soon. But our economy is clearly coming back. We have about 220 jobs on our Unemployment Security Portal -- 220 Employers I should say have listed jobs available in the State on the Employment Security Portal. And well over like 1,000, like 1200 jobs are available right now. So there is opportunity out there for folks for those who are looking. I guess, with that, I can turn it over to Commissioner Shihinette.

**Commissioner Shihinette:**

Thank you and good afternoon. Today, for a Public Health update, we are announcing 33 new positive cases in New Hampshire, for a total of 6,544; two new hospitalized cases, for a total of 692; and four new deaths to report, all from long-term care facilities.

In addition to those numbers, we are announcing one outbreak that is closing today, which is Birch Hill in Manchester. It's great to be announcing them. Their outbreak began on April 27th. So it's been a long run. And we're happy that they're closing today. We have no new outbreaks to announce.

Couple of other quick details around turnaround times, Quest Labs, which we had reported earlier that were having a backlog and longer turnaround times, they have started pool testing at Quest Labs, which is a great addition. It's something that our Public Health Lab here in New Hampshire is validating right now to increase our capacity. Quest started their pool testing and expect their backlogs to be caught up by today or tomorrow, and back to their three- to five-day turnaround coming on the end of this week, early next week.

The other thing that I want to just mention, and we will have further details on next week, is that we are beginning to transition our asymptomatic testing locations into the hospital systems. We've been

talking about this for the last couple of weeks. We are just tying up our loose ends with our Contracts with our hospital partners.

As you recall, we have nine temporary sites stood up around the State. We will continue to have those sites over the next several weeks, as we start to transition. So there will be duplication basically in a lot of regions.

So we start the transition on August 1st. We will probably continue with our sites through the middle to end of August the way they are currently set up. And then, we will start looking at geographic regions to make sure we have coverage everywhere.

Early next week, either at Tuesday or Thursday's press conference, I hope to have a new map set up with locations. Some hospitals have several locations to be able to get tested. So we will have a new map set up with the locations and the contact information, and how to set up testing. Thank you.

### **Governor Sununu:**

Great. Thank you very much, Commissioner. One thing, before we open it up for questions, we want to talk about a lot of our funds. We come on every week and we kind of introduce new funds and new opportunities, whether they're for private businesses or hospitals, or nonprofits, whatever it might be. And there's a lot of opportunity out there.

And I was asked a question this morning. I was at an event in Nashua. And I was asked a question. Governor, what's open and what isn't open? And we want to just kind of give a little bit of a summary of some of the open funds that are available for, again, whether they're businesses, nonprofits, or individuals across the State.

The good news is this. They can all be found in a centralized location at [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov). So, GOFERR, and we will go over each one of these individually. But there's six or seven, maybe eight programs that are available now that people can apply into. And we just want to take a quick second and just kind of summarize them. We know we throw a lot at folks kind of time and time again, but just to be a bit of a summary here.

So, we have currently eight programs available to New Hampshire residents. The first one is our Empowering Youth Program. So the Empowering Youth Program is run by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, designed to provide funding for summer and that bridge into fall programs for middle and high school-aged youth.

So, \$2 million is being made available to New Hampshire nonprofit and for-profit summer and schoolyear youth programs that serve middle and high school students. Applications can be found again at [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov)\apply. So if you put the \apply in there, all of these applications are in one centralized location.

I saw Norm Bouthilette this morning over in Nashua. He does a great job running the Boys & Girls Club of Nashua. And he was telling me how they had just put in their application. So, we're really hoping that these programs get going as we finish out the summer, and most importantly bridge into the schoolyear. Applications will be taken on a rolling basis. And they close at 6:00 p.m. on August 17th, so still a couple more weeks for those organizations to get their applications in.

Second, the New Hampshire General Assistance Preservation, what we call the GAP Fund, this is a big one for us. We have a lot of programs that are helping the self-employed or the Main Street Relief Fund, nonprofits. If any folks have fallen through the gaps, if you will, for whatever reason they didn't

qualify or eligible for any of those, we kind of all set up -- I'm a big believer. Always come prepared with a Plan B. And that's what this GAP Fund is.

So there's \$30 million allocated. As was previously announced, the application period will close on August 4th, 2020. And a variety of different folks can apply to this. They can use a little more discretion in terms of how these funds will be distributed, primarily to businesses and nonprofits across the State. And again, it's [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov)\apply.

The third fund that we have out there right now is the Traditional Veteran's Services Support Program. So the program that we announced a few weeks ago, but then put more details on earlier this week, will provide grants to eligible organizations and businesses that offer traditional services to New Hampshire Veterans that have either experienced, or anticipate an increased service demand as a result of COVID-19.

The services could include transportation to healthcare appointments, employment supports, home services, physical therapy, a variety of different traditional programs that our Veterans rely on but have come up short, for whatever reason, over the past few months, because of COVID-19. So it all has to be COVID-related. But there's clearly a need out there. And this fund will hopefully bridge that gap for our Veterans.

The application period will close at 4:00 p.m. on August 10th. And again, those are for those, not the individuals, themselves, but the organizations should be applying into that fund to make sure we are opening up those services and making those opportunities available.

Another Veteran's program that we created was the Veteran Services Organization Support Program. So what this one is, is more like our VFWs, our American Legions, Disabled American Veterans Chapters that have lost revenue as a result of COVID-19. So there's a slight difference. These are more of the institutions, if you will, that provide a lot of the community supports to our Veterans across the State. Again, August 10th at 4:00 p.m. is when the application period closes at [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov)\apply.

Next, we're going to go over three programs that are going to launch, or in a way, relaunch today and tomorrow. So these are programs, some of which we have seen before. And we're kind of doing a second and third round of funding.

The first one being the Healthcare Provider Program. This is one of the very first funds we created very early on. We wanted to make sure that Healthcare Providers weren't shutting their doors to the citizens of New Hampshire. It was a very proud moment when kind of the Federal Government took our model a little bit and created their own \$100 billion fund for hospitals and Healthcare Providers across the country.

So we're going to reopen the Emergency Healthcare System Relief Fund for a third round of funding. We've already done two. To-date, we've given out well-over \$50 million. This round will send out about \$15 million or \$16 million to Healthcare Providers.

Funding is available to all Healthcare Providers. This is an important one, because it could be a Primary Care Physician, Dentist, Behavioral Health. Behavioral health organizations are out there. We want people to get those supports, get those services. It's so critical, especially in a time of the pandemic that we've seen. We've seen a lot of people not seek out services, when we know that the need is there. So we want to support those organizations so they could be reaching out to their community. This third round of the application goes live today, runs until August 13th, and again [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov)\apply.

The second of these three programs is, again, a continuation of something that we created a while ago, understanding that long-term care facilities and Long-Term Care Providers were going to be very negative impacted, especially on the revenue side, with the COVID crisis. To-date, we have given out

about \$11 million. And we have another \$19 million remaining in the fund. So we want to really encourage some of these organizations to apply for these funds. It's available to all Long-Term Care Providers.

Even if you've already received money in the first round, we know that a bunch of them are still looking for additional funds. They can come back and apply for the second round. The application will, again, run until Thursday, August 13th, at [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov).

And finally, I think this is -- is this the next one? I think this is the next one. I want to make sure I got my numbers right. No, we got one more after this. The Safer Scholars Campus Modification Program, and what this really is, this is the \$10 million that we announced a while back. It took a little while, because this is very unique program where we're really providing supports to private, nonprofit colleges and universities, as they start to get ready.

We know we've put a lot of money into the UNH system, the university system, the Community College system, from everything from COVID supports to tuition reimbursement, scholarships, things of that nature. But this program goes specifically to the private, nonprofit colleges and universities in our State. We have an amazing array of opportunities for students.

This program launches tomorrow. And those organizations, again, can apply. The qualifying colleges and universities must be New Hampshire-based, first off; approved by the New Hampshire Higher Education Commission; and have a physical campus here in the State; and endowment reserves less than \$300 million.

We really wanted to focus on those organizations that just didn't have capital available to them. We want to make sure those doors are open as much as possible. Those COVID costs can be recovered. We heard from them all across the State. And we're able to provide this \$10 million.

The application goes up tomorrow and will be open for one week, again, at [goferr.nh.gov/apply](http://goferr.nh.gov/apply). But, again, that one isn't so much for the individuals or the students. It's more for the institutions, similar to what we've done for the university system and the Community Colleges.

And finally, the New Hampshire Housing Relief Program, this was launched last month. This is a great, great program. The CAP Agencies, in conjunction with Health and Human Services, are really combining. We have \$35 million available to individuals to pay rent, to pay utilities, to make sure that, in tough economic times, they can stay in their homes and have the economic support. It avoids evictions. It helps folks avoid a lot of different issues that can come up during COVID.

But, again, a \$35 million program, run through the five CAP Agencies we have in the State; this is an ongoing program. So we're not putting an end date on this one, because we know there's going to be an ongoing need throughout the fall. And folks can, again, apply at [goferr.nh.gov/apply](http://goferr.nh.gov/apply).

And then, the final thing we want to talk about today before we jump into the questions is our NASCAR race. We know that the NASCAR race is coming this weekend. It's an exciting weekend. But it obviously looks I'd say a little different but really a lot different, I think, than what we're used to.

Last week, I did write a letter to NASCAR President Steve Phelps. And we did inform him of modified quarantine requirements and restrictions for the Race Workers that are traveling into New Hampshire as part of NASCAR. They'll be here for a couple of days. But, again, we wanted to make sure that they had very strict stipulations, maintaining public health and safety.

It does mean that Staff, Drivers, and other NASCAR Representatives will be restricted to traveling to only the New Hampshire Motor Speedway and their hotel. They don't go out to dinner. They don't go out and get coffee, nothing like that. They're really quarantined in that bubble, if you will, between where they sleep and where they work for the day-or-so. Some of them might be here for a couple days, I

suppose, for the one or two days that they are here. But they cannot go out in public, which, again, includes some of the more traditional public venues that they might visit.

We also informed them that there would be a need for modifications to the opening/closing ceremonies, as well, just to ensure social distancing, everyone standing 6 feet apart between the groups that are on the track. If you watch NASCAR, as I know a lot of us do, the traditional pre-ceremony, you have a lot of people down there on the track. And we're really having them maintain that social distancing.

So it'll look and feel a little bit different. But it looks like the weather should be decent and the race will go on, hopefully. We worked with the New Hampshire Motor Speedway and NASCAR Officials just to have this assurance. Crowd size is expected to be about 12,000 people. That's about 20% capacity, so well-under normal capacity for the stadium, which allows for a lot of that social distancing.

We've been told by the Speedway also that nearly 90% of the expected crowd, based on the ticket sales, is from the New England area. Those coming from New England, as we have stated before, do not have to quarantine, if they are going to stay overnight. It's just a one-day event, but in case they were going to stay overnight, 90% are from the New England area where, traditionally, the lower COVID rates have been seen across the country.

And again, I guess just the last reminder is all these guidance -- I mean, I don't want to go into two many details. But all of these guidance, whether it's wearing masks kind of in the general public areas of the track, the temperature screenings and the checks that'll happen, as you come into the track, all done in conjunction with the Department of Public Health here at New Hampshire. Dr. Chan and Lori, and their Teams just did a tremendous job reviewing those guidance documents.

So, we feel very confident that, again, having that elevated message of wearing your mask, making sure the signage is where it needs to be. It's going to be all over the place, frankly; and just making sure that we're welcoming fans to the Raceway but also making sure that folks are staying safe. I guess, with that, we can open it up for questions.

### **Q&A Session**

*Can you talk to us a little bit about Bike Week, Governor?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure.

*Are the same protocols going to be in place for, say, the races that they're going to be held? Are you working through that? And is that through the actual venue, or for the City of Laconia? How is that going to work?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, any races that are done in conjunction with Bike Week at some of those smaller tracks which follow the smaller track guidance that we've put together -- the NASCAR guidance is just such a big venue. We really did a very specific guidance document for them. And we were much more restrictive, because we just knew the crowds could potentially be larger.



But there is guidance for those racetracks or for the restaurant venues, or the retail venues. They all have guidance documents, regardless of what the actual event around Bike Week might be. Again, Bike Week is a whole series of events, like sometimes all across the State. They're all connected around Bike Week. But they are all individual. They're run by individual Managers. They're not all coordinated all the time. So, that's why we're very specific about the guidance documents we've put together over the past couple months. There's something there for everybody.

*Governor, with the expanded unemployment benefits lapsing, you and a lot of other folks have talked about sort of the unintended consequence of perhaps that keeping people out of participation in the economy. But a lot of people say there's a positive, that it's helped take a lot of the bite, I guess, out of the economic impact of what's been going on over the last few months. So, what do you anticipate, in terms of negative impact, with people losing that benefit? Are we going to start to see more privation, more of that impact, I guess, of the economic pain we're seeing?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, I don't know if anyone really knows what's going to happen over the next couple weeks with the numbers. We know there are jobs available. We have 65,000 people currently that are receiving current unemployment benefits. We don't have 65,000 jobs available. So there is going to be a gap there.

My hope is that, over the next week, that Congress gets together and really finds some sort of ramp, if you will. It's probably not \$600 a week. It's probably something in the middle. I think most everyone on both sides of the aisle can agree it's hard to be paying somebody more at home than they'd be paying working, right? So, I think that's the balance they're really trying to find in Washington. There may be a lapse for a few days. Hopefully, they get something done. But, again, it'll be likely something very different.

So, I don't know if we know the true impacts. Unemployment benefits will be reduced if the Federal Government doesn't keep supporting their side of that benefit. But they still have unemployment benefits here in New Hampshire, right? We still have an unemployment program. There's money in the fund. The fund isn't going bankrupt. People aren't being kicked off the unemployment rolls, nothing like that.

It's just this extra bonus that the Federal Government has been adding on, whether that continues or not. Either way, our economy's moving fairly well. We're on a very good track. It'll be interesting to see whether this really incentivizes more people to spur back into work.

What was interesting about this week's unemployment benefits numbers, we were down about 9%. The rest of the country was up about 3%, right? So, I would have thought more people seeing that Congress wasn't acting were going to jump the gun and try everything they could to get off unemployment and really get back to their job, whatever it might be. So we just don't know.

I think what we expected to see this week, we saw a little bit in New Hampshire but not on the national level. It'll be interesting to see what happens, because it really is a national driver. But I think they'll come to some resolution. I do.

*I want to ask about housing and evictions. I asked you this about a month ago. Just to start broadly, a lot of Housing Advocates are really worried about this week and then next week, particularly as that unemployment boost federally ends. The moratorium that was lifted the beginning of this month included a 30-day extension. That's about to end. We're at about the end of July now. And people are saying this is a confluence of factors that could lead to evictions. So, is that going to be a problem for the next few weeks?*

**Governor Sununu:**

That's why I created a \$35 million fund for folks to help pay their rent and pay their utilities. I mean, that's exactly what this CAP Program fund is all about. And I mean, it's doing great. And I think a lot of people are trying to apply in. And that'll help.

We will also be able to gauge the need there, as well, because the CAP Agencies are across the State. We will be able to gauge what the need is. If we have to put more money in, we always have the opportunity to do that. But I think we will really see the impact of that.

*But I have a follow-up question about that relief program. So, my understanding is, as of July 23rd, of that \$35 million that is in that pot, only about \$200,000, according to DHHS, has actually been disbursed. And so, Advocates are looking at that and saying, yes, there is a \$35 million program. But it's taking so long to get this money to people that they may be evicted before they even get this money. What are you doing to kind of address this and to try to make sure...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Are you hearing the same stories that people are applying and not getting funds, because that's a different...

*No, what it appears is the process is slow, owing to the fact that the CAP Agencies do not have the staffing in order to take in the large volume of requests over the last few weeks, and the fact that there's a lot of paperwork requirements for tenants to prove that they do need this assistance. So, the worry is that, as this eviction kind of potential comes up over the next few weeks, the money's not coming out from the State. And there are tenants who are going to...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, again, we maintain a great relationship with all the CAP Agencies. And we will work with them very directly one-on-one. And again, we're happy to address those issues, if they come up. I mean, no one's brought it to our office.

But I'm always for streamlining a process on applications. This money is not designed to be held by the State. We got to get it out, to be sure. So we're happy to look into that. But I have a lot of confidence. The CAP Agencies are run very, very well. And if there are issues, they'll bring it up to our level and we can address them.

*To be clear that a reissuance of the moratorium that you had issued earlier, was that completely off the table at this point?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Nothing we're considering right now, no. No. I got to tell you. The one area where we're concerned about evictions, it's on the residential side, sure, but also commercial evictions. That's coming up, because there are landlords that have commercial properties, as well, in terms of overall economic impact. That's a big one, as well, that we're looking at.

I think the hope was that the Main Street Relief Fund, putting up \$350 million so people could pay their utilities and rent, would cover a lot of that. Some landlords are working with their tenants. Some aren't, on both the residential and the commercial sides. So there's kind of both sides of that coin. But, again, that's what we do all day. We will keep watching it day-in and day-out.

*Governor, I know you Tweeted about this today. The President has suggested the idea of delaying the election over voter fraud concerns. Your reaction to that, what would happen here in New Hampshire?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, like I said, make no mistake, our election is going to happen on November 3rd, end of story. Our voting system has integrity. It's reliable. It's safe. It's secure. We've done it right for 100 years. And so, yeah, our elections are definitely happening on November 3rd. I can't comment as to the nature or the wise of his Tweet, but...

*Do you have any reaction to the Ruling by Judge Laplant about Libertarian ballot access?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, again, we didn't get involved in that whole issue because there's an inherent conflict of interest, because I'm on the ballot, right? So, we said, no, go take it to the court. Let the Judges decide exactly what you want to do. And that's it.

*And on the NASCAR front, is there anything in addition for functions? And excuse me if you've answered this already. But on the NASCAR front, are they testing the Pit Crews and ancillary people that you mentioned that are going to be subject to either staying in the track or at their hotels? I mean, do we know what...*

**Governor Sununu:**

I don't know. I can't speak to the testing protocols of NASCAR other than to say probably only if they're symptomatic. But I don't know. You'd have to ask NASCAR if they have additional testing protocols that they implement.



*Is there or should there be a duty to report Employees at a business which have COVID-19? Carol Robidoux at Manchester Inklink had an interesting story today about a country club in Manchester that closed, due to a Worker testing positive. Yet, there was no public notification of that information.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Nor should there be.

*There shouldn't. Why not?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm going to take you back to 1988. What if you had asked that question and said, should we start exposing everyone who has AIDS? I mean, we're talking about private information of an individual. For the Government just to come out and say, we're going to put up a blacklist of everybody who has COVID-19, no. No.

*But that couldn't necessarily be traced. They have maybe tens and twenties of Employees. How would you know which Employee?*

**Governor Sununu:**

But you're saying expose their names?

*No. Just that it was closed.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sorry.

*Well, the business not the individual.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, if the business were to close?

*No, to disclose the businesses where a closure is prompted by COVID?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, again, you're walking a really dangerous line. We have a lot of small businesses here. It's going to be real easy to determine who has COVID and who doesn't, if a business were to close. Fred's Flower Shop has four people in it. A business closes. No, you're really walking a very dangerous line.

*You're drawing a comparison to AIDS. I mean, the transmission of AIDS...*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, I thought you're talking about individuals, putting out individuals' names.

*It's more fraught than transmitting COVID is obviously a less intimate thing.*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, but, again, it's private healthcare information that you can't be putting out on individuals, by any means. And it's not just names. There is indirect exposure that you can give. You can actually identify someone indirectly by giving their business, or giving their neighborhood, or even in a small town, if you remember. We weren't even giving exact numbers in small towns, because it was going to be so easy to kind of figure out who had COVID. So, you got to really walk a very careful line there. The Federal Government's very clear about that.

*But, Governor, doesn't DHHS put out norovirus outbreaks? There are businesses identified in those circumstances.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, do we? I'll turn it over to the Commissioner. Yeah, sure.

**Commissioner Shibiante:**

So, in the case -- and I'll use your example, Manchester Country Club. I think that's who you said. The reason why we don't announce is because we've done contact tracing. And our investigation has revealed that there was no or minimal exposure to the public. And that's how we make the decision on whether to announce or not.

So, the person at that Country Club could have been someone that washes pots in the kitchen that never had interaction with the public. And when we did our contact investigation, they said, oh, my only close contacts was this person and this person. So we quarantined them. And there's no exposure to the public.

As in other cases, when we had something at the DMV back early on, we did put out public messaging because our contact tracing investigation said we can't be sure that there wasn't a close contact with the member of the public. So when that happens, we do put out public notifications. So it really is based on what comes out of our contact investigation.

*But other than the DMV, I mean, have there been any public notifications of anything other than outbreaks at nursing homes and long-term care settings?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

So, my answer to that, no, because our contact investigation did not reveal that there was an exposure to the public outside of just general community transmission. So we need to remember that COVID right now, we've said over and over, is widely being transmitted for community transmission. So, you're at a general risk of getting COVID just being out in the community: at the grocery store; at a restaurant. Anywhere that you're in an indoor space, you have a risk of getting COVID.

If we believe, because of a positive case, in any business at all, from a local restaurant to a country club, that the public is at a higher risk of contracting COVID, because there was a positive case that had close contact, we will put out a public notification. So if we haven't done that, it's because, no, it hasn't happened.

*And so, on the public outbreak front, I mean, it's good news that Birch Hill is off. How many outbreaks are still active?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Three.

*Three, and is the Greenbriar among them in that one?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Just check my list; yes.

*Okay. Because they've obviously had a lengthy problem, I believe, since May. They've had outbreaks and they've had a pretty lengthy record of deficiencies, both State and federally cited. So, I guess my question is: are there specific Policies that the State is imposed, or seeking to address the problems at that facility, due to their track record?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Any type of corrective action would be in their Plan of Correction, if you're citing a State or Federal Survey that you found on a website. Then, their Plan of Correction would be there. Or you could request a copy of their Plan of Correction if it's been submitted.

Facilities that are larger have longer outbreaks. If you look historically at the buildings that we've had that are 200 and 300 residents, they tend to have longer outbreaks, because there is more people to transmit to. They have more staff. They have more residents. Our facilities that have 20 and 30 residents in their building tend to have shorter outbreaks. It makes sense, because there's less people to transmit the virus to.

We work with every single facility that has an outbreak. Every single nursing home has had a survey, whether they've had a COVID outbreak or not. We do infection control assessments with them every time that they have an outbreak.

I can't tell you. We have an entire unit at Public Health dedicated to just nursing home outbreaks, or institutional outbreaks. That's all they do day-in and day-out, 12 hours a day, is talk to nursing homes that have positive COVID people.

So, I think we've got guidance covered for sure. If they have found deficiencies in nursing homes, we have a system that is set up to take care of those. If, for some reason, Health and Human Services has issued a citation or a deficiency, there is a process where they submit a Plan of Correction. We go back. We make sure they followed their Plan of Correction and everything is in good order.

We're following the same system that's been in place since probably the 1980s when it comes to Plans of Correction. If they're not correcting the action, you would see more steps from the State and from the Federal Partners, if they're not correcting the deficiencies we find.

*I want to ask about NASCAR generally, this race coming up. Is it fair to say -- and this is also for the Governor, as well, for both of you.*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Oh, good.

*Is it fair to say that this is the largest event since the beginning of COVID-19 in either New Hampshire or in Northern New England, because you mentioned 20,000 people?*

**Governor Sununu:**

12,000, but, yeah. I would imagine so. Yeah. I mean, off the top of my head, I can't think of a larger event.

*Yeah. So can you just again -- we're kind of days away -- what are the conditions that you think make it appropriate to hold the largest event yet, when just a few months ago we had a ban on 10 people-or-more?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so it's not just the size of the event. It's such a large venue. So you can bring 12,000 people in. And that's still only 20% of capacity. It's just a fraction of the capacity, which means there's a lot of the social distancing, which is very important.

The mandate of masks, when you're up and walking around, I think when you're sitting you don't have to wear your mask. But if you're up walking around, getting food, you got to have your mask on. You're going to the restroom. You got to have your mask on.

Everyone gets temperature checked and screened, and goes through the screening process when they come in. We have this whole new set of protocols just for the Staff that is running the event that we've created for them, so they kind of sit in their own little quarantine bubble. They don't mix and mingle with the public.

The vast majority of individuals that are coming to the race are from the lowest area of COVID, about 90%-or-so. 85%, 90% are from New England. And New England is right now one of the lower areas. So there's very few people, if any, coming from outside of New England, or areas of high incidence.

And just I mean, there's like 40 pages of NASCAR guidance that have gone into this, all kind of the backroom-type stuff that typically would happen with congregation and the team meetings, and all of that. That's all gone. There's no RVs. There's no multiday event. They've really, really skimmed this thing way, way back. It's people showing up for one day, taking all the right protocols, watching the event, and going home.

*Are you worried at all, though?*

*So there's no RVs?*

**Governor Sununu:**

There's no camping this year. No.

*But are you worried? I mean, obviously...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, we will watch it. Well, I got to say, I think, again, Public Health and ourselves, and NASCAR, and everybody really came and I think found what we believe is a safe solution. No, I'm not worried. But it'll be interesting to see kind of what happens. And I mean, we will watch the numbers, if there were an outbreak, of course. We have the best contact tracers in the country. We're going to know pretty quickly.

But one thing I'm interested is the response of the fans. What is their response? Are they comfortable with that? What's the attitude there? Are people really following those guidance and rules? And they're going to have a monstrous Staff there just really making sure that they're buttoning down.

It's not Canobie Lake Park, but it's similar, right? It's a large gathering. I got to say, from what I've seen already, I don't mean to divert topics, but it's similar. Canobie Lake Park, a tremendous job, I mean, every Staffer is right on folks to keep their masks up, to maintain 6 feet. I mean, they are really, really good about it, because they know how important it is.

Nobody wants to have an event and have an outbreak. That would be potentially devastating for them. So they are going -- excuse the pun -- the extra mile, right, to make sure they get it right. And I commend them for that. So given all that they've put into this, I think it's the right approach. And we're confident it can go off safely.



*Governor, it won't be too long until people have to start thinking about home heating. Any of the CARES Act funds, is there any plan to perhaps set aside some of those to assist beyond what comes in from LIHEAP?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, so LIHEAP, so the CAP Agencies, this fund would go for utilities. That would count as a utility. If we have to put more stuff in, in terms of home heating or LIHEAP -- I mean LIHEAP's a great program, by the way. I think it was underutilized last year. It's run by the Office of Strategic Initiatives. And we're happy to put more dollars in there, as well. I mean, utilities, paying rent, basic necessities, that's exactly what we really need to be going for here. And I think we've done a very good job keeping our focus there.

But you bring up a good point. This fall, there'll be new needs that kind of start arising. We have about a quarter billion dollars that we have left unallocated so far. So we have some room, knowing that we could have a surge in the fall.

*So, the utilities assistance fund, then, that's something that could...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Potentially help with, yeah.

*So it's already dedicated, I guess?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, it already is. But you're right. We could go through the LIHEAP program, which kind of starts up in the fall, if you will. Or you could potentially just go through the CAP Agencies, or a little of both, right? You just want to make sure it's available as easy as possible.

LIHEAP program's very, very good. But not everyone has ever used it before. Whether it's unemployment, LIHEAP, some of these assistance funds, families are relying on them when they've never had to apply in. So that's why we're trying to make it as easy as possible. So we want to make sure there's as many doors as possible, as well. We will do a few on the phone.

**Holly Ramer with Associated Press:**

*Hi, I have one question for Commissioner Shibinette, and then a question for the Governor. On today's call with the Reopening Task Force, Trish Tilley was talking about how Public Health has been working very closely with the overnight summer camps. And she said at least one of them has had great success following the guidelines to where they have had no positive cases. So my question is, does that mean that there are others that have not been successful in following the guidelines and that they've had cases? And should I ask my other question now?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Was that for the Commissioner or for me?

***Holly Ramer with Associated Press:***

*Yes, that was for the Commissioner.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, okay. Yeah, do you know? I'm not sure. I hadn't heard of anything.

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Thanks for the question. I'm not aware of any outbreaks at any of the overnight camps. Doesn't mean that there hasn't been an isolated positive or something like that. We give guidance to people on a regular basis. We have members of our public and our families that could call and say I saw someone not following the guidance. And we call and we correct that. So, those things may have happened. But I'm not personally aware of anything like that going on.

***Holly Ramer with Associated Press:***

*Thank you. And then my question for the Governor, just to follow up on the earlier question regarding your reaction to the President's Tweet about delaying the election, does the fact that he even suggested that affect your support for him at all?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, look, the President says things and Tweets things all the time that we just call the balls and strikes like we see them. I don't know why he Tweeted that out. I don't know what his thought process is there. I can only speak for New Hampshire. We have a great system. It's a great system. So, that's it.

***Rick Green with The Laconia Daily Sun:***

*Hi. You mentioned, Governor, last week that you'd have some news on the Emergency Broadband Expansion Program, which earlier mid-July was set as a timeframe for awarding Contracts. Have any Contracts been awarded? And has that program been a disappointment?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, it's definitely not a disappointment. I was hoping to have an announcement today. We're pushing it one more week. They're finalizing the Contracts with a few last cities and towns. So a lot of the Contracts are there. I think they want to release all the Contracts kind of in a batch this week, where there's still plenty of time to get those projects done. That's the good news.

But I literally got off the phone with some of those folks this afternoon. And they're literally just making sure they're dotting the Is and crossing the Ts. They're very complex projects, frankly, just when you look at all the different landowners and hookups, and all of this sort of thing.

But, we will have a robust presentation on the projects, on the Contracts, on everything probably Thursday of next week. At least that's the deadline I gave them. So, I'm going to be here talking about it. So one way or the other, we will do a little map and a bit of a presentation.

But, no, it's not a disappointment at all. Again, we tried something no other State even tried, right? Very few States could even try doing the broadband program because it's such a short timeframe. So we just pushed really hard. We tried to go as fast as we possibly could. And we're going to get some good projects out of it, to be sure. Great.

*One other follow-up here, so following up on what Josh had asked about some of the business contacts, would it be helpful to update any of the guidance to assist in easing contact tracing, if businesses had to gather a little bit more information, a phone number or something like that, from people to make sure that they could contact them more easily had they been to that business, because obviously you're not going to know who comes and goes all the time? And what else has to go on once one of these outbreaks happens in terms of cleaning? Are there any mandates from the DHHS side before these businesses might reopen?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, I'm going to have Commissioner Shibiinette answer that.

**Commissioner Shibiinette:**

Thank you. We do have guidance on cleaning and sanitation. And we are normally contacted through Public Health. And we give direct guidance in case every workplace is a little different. As for collecting information, when you look at a close contact, it is not someone that you pass in a hallway. It's not someone that you stand next to for 30 seconds or a minute. Or it's not even someone that hands you your drink at a Dunkin' Donut drive-thru, right? So, a lot of people confuse those two things.

So, a close contact typically you're looking at about a 10-minute timeframe. A lot of the businesses that have customers that they're with for 10, 15, 30, 60 minutes, they have that contact information. I think it would be pretty disruptive to, let's say, a Dunkin' Donuts that if everybody that came through the drive-thru, you said you're going to have to give me your name and your phone number. So, it may make some things easier. But I think how much it would disrupt the business would be problematic. Based on the fact that we haven't had to do a lot of public notifications about businesses, I would say that our contact tracing investigation leads us down the right road.

*A question on ventilation, generally, I guess for the Governor. And I'm sorry. I wasn't here on Tuesday, if you answered this already. So, obviously you're undergoing a review of nursing homes right now and looking at particularly their ventilation systems. This is something that School Administrations have brought up, as well, as a big problem. What is the State's plan for all these facilities, like nursing homes and schools, that are deficient with their ventilation systems? Is there a plan right now? Is there something in the works in terms of being able to help them?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so we announced last week that we are starting a program -- or I should say this week, I guess, that we're starting a program. We started on Monday where we're looking specifically in the areas that had the long-term care facilities that had outbreaks. We're going to go in and look at those ventilation systems.

But, frankly, we're just trying to get ahead of the game. We're just trying to see. Again, those folks, when they were going through their outbreaks, obviously we couldn't send a team in. They were dealing with healthcare of the individual as they should.

But now we can kind of go back and look at everything from how the air was moving, patient-to-patient contact, patient-to-staff contact, asymptomatic contact, how the air flows room-to-room, right? Is it an older system? Do they need to change their filters?

So, knowing that, we will wait to see kind of what the data brings. But we are already putting on the table potentials, right? Is there the potential to upgrade the system, clean the filters, if we find that there is a direct link?

We don't know for sure if there's a link. There's been discussion that this could be airborne. This is not an airborne virus right now. It travels with water particulates. They typically don't travel too far. We've discussed that quite a bit. They tend to fall to the floor or glom onto something. But if it were truly airborne, it's a whole different ballgame.

So, we just want to see how that air is being ventilated. Is there a connection? Is there a correlation? And then, from that data, we can extrapolate to either take it to another phase and look at other institutions, look at schools, look at anything like that. But we got to kind of have the data first. And then, figure out, okay, if we're going to do something, is it CARES Act funds? Is it stimulus funds? Is it upgrades of the system?

I don't think it's realistic to say we're going to go in and tear out every ventilation system of every long-term care facility across the State. But there's probably some upgrades or some assistance that we could provide based on what we learn.

*What do you think the bulk of that cost to repair is going to fall to? Is it going to fall to the localities, like counties for nursing homes, or Districts for schools? Or is it going to be largely State money, or largely Federal money?*

**Governor Sununu:**

As much as the State can carry, we want to carry, because my sense is this would be a statewide problem. It's a COVID problem. I don't think any facility would be immune to it. I mean, maybe a newer facility or something has some of the more hi-tech equipment in there, or a sanitization of air equipment or something like that, some of the UV equipment.

But for especially around the older facilities, if we have to help make upgrades, we're happy to do that. We're not making any financial commitments, nothing like that yet. We just don't know what the data will show us.

And if the data comes back and says, look, the places that clean out their air filters, they were in good shape. But the ones that don't, don't. Well, that's an easy problem to fix, right? If they come back and say, boy, any place that is transmitting air from room-to-room, those are much, much bigger and long-term problems but we have to address.

*I'm sorry. I don't think you addressed schools, did you?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Schools would be in the same boat. I mean, I think what we'd learn from a long-term care facility, we will try to extrapolate to other facilities that have similar-type systems. Remember schools are so different now. I mean, Dover High School is a very modern high school with lots of air exchangers and vents.

Some schools in our State have nothing. They have windows. They literally are opening the windows, which isn't the worst thing in the world in the COVID epidemic. You want actually fresh air flowing through.

Some just have air systems, but they're antiquated, right? They're not getting the job done. They're moving air very slowly. Or they're not filtering it and cleaning it the way they should. So, I think you're going to see a spectrum of issues that are out of the long-term care facilities. And then, we can translate that into the opportunities to create for schools or whatever it might be.

*No plan for funding for those upgrades in schools in the next four weeks before they open?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I don't know. You know what? I mean, I think if we can get some data in the next couple weeks, we will move as fast as we can. So I don't want to say no. I mean, that would be hard to do, do anything in the next couple weeks as we just started this whole project.

But, if we can extrapolate something out and move quickly on some areas of need, I don't want to say no. But that might be a challenge. But even if a school is already open doesn't mean you don't help them out. So that's a possibility, too. We just don't know what the data's going to tell us.

But I don't know of any other State that's doing this. I've talked to other Governors. No one else has really said they're looking at this. So, I talk to other Governors a lot and I try to get data in what they're doing and what we're doing.

So, we will share the information nationally, as well, just in case we find anything out. It's a bit of a research project, but I think with real positive end goals in mind, and where we can turn it into something tangible for these facilities.

*Governor, when it comes to the self-attest for the 14-day quarantine, I know you said before you're not a big fan of models. But you have to account for some people not being truthful about that. Do you have an estimate? When you went into this, did you figure that this number of people are going to lie to us about this?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, that's a interesting question. How many people did we estimate would lie about the self-attestation? It's a good question. But, no, I didn't make an estimate on it. I don't know. It'd be a very tough thing to estimate. How untruthful is America, right? On social media, it's one thing. Face-to-face, it's another. I don't know.



No, look. We assume that everyone is telling the truth. We assume that they are. And again, because we have such good contact tracing, and when you go into a hotel, we know where you sign in. So that's one area where you do have to give your name and phone number. If there were outbreaks there or anything like that, we'd know it pretty easily. And we haven't found any super-spreader events or anything like that. So I think, for the most part, people are being safe and cautious.

*Are the hotels that these NASCAR people at, are they having blocks of rooms that are separated from the public? Is there any...*

**Governor Sununu:**

They're all different. Yeah. NASCAR runs, the teams are independent. So I believe my sense is they make their reservations on their own. But they all know what the rules are. They have a copy of the letter that says what the rules are for the hotels.

There is enforcement tied to this. So if they break the rules, the teams are fined. There's a whole penalty enforcement piece that's added to this, which they take very seriously in NASCAR. So, no, we made sure that we buttoned it up pretty tight.

*What are we talking about for fines?*

**Governor Sununu:**

That's a NASCAR fine.

*It's not \$100. It's going to be...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, no, NASCAR fines pretty heavily is my sense. But I don't know.

*But just to be clear, the 14-day self-quarantine attestation process is waived for these folks?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yes, yes, because we're in a way waiving the 14-day attestation, because they have to live under these different confines. So it's a different style of quarantine, if you will. They're quarantined to their job, essentially, for the one or two days. Most of them will be here for one day. There could be a couple here for two or three days. So it isn't a long-term event. That's the good news. And again, I think NASCAR takes their enforcement policies very seriously.

*Do they mostly fly in? And do they fly into Laconia or Manchester? Or do they drive?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I don't know. I mean, I look every year. I see the big NASCAR trucks coming up. So there's obviously a lot of equipment to be driven in. I couldn't tell you if the individuals are driving or flying. I'm not sure. Okay. Well, thank you guys very much. I hope everyone has a great weekend. We will be back on Tuesday. Thank you.