



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

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**Governor Sununu:**

Well, good afternoon, everyone. Thanks, everyone, for joining us, another beautiful day in New Hampshire. Once again, we seem to be on a good track. We know there's some pretty severe weather coming in through parts of the State. And so, people should definitely keep an eye out for any of the severe storms that might be brewing up this afternoon and even maybe even a few days later in the week. We seem to be in a little bit of a trend here of these afternoon showers and the wind gusts that come down that can be enough that people need to take warning. We will kick things off this afternoon with a Public Health update. Dr. Chan?

**Dr. Chan:**

Good afternoon and thank you. So we're at approximately 23.7 million cases of COVID-19 globally, including more than 5.7 million people in the United States that have been infected with COVID-19. In New Hampshire, for today's numbers, we are announcing an additional 16 new people infected with confirmed COVID-19 to bring our total to 7,150.

There is one new hospitalization, one person that we're reporting newly hospitalized for COVID-19, bringing our total to 713 total people who have been hospitalized at some point during the pandemic for COVID-19. And thankfully, zero new deaths, however we still are at 429 total people that have died directly or related to COVID-19.

We continue to see good trends in our numbers. But we believe this represents low but persistent community transmission in many areas of our State. The last week, we've averaged just under 20 new infections reported per day. Our percent PCR tests positivity rate continues to be less than 1%, and it's been at that level for the last 10-plus days. And our hospitalizations continue to be low. In fact, yesterday there were fewer than 10 total people currently hospitalized in our State with COVID-19, which is the lowest number so far since the beginning of the pandemic early in March.

So, again, we believe that there continues to be community transmission of COVID-19. The risk is still out there. We want people to continue to practice social distancing. Please continue to wear cloth facemasks when you're out in public settings where you may come in contact with others. Please continue to practice frequent hand hygiene. And anybody that's sick or symptomatic, testing is available and we encourage you to please go get testing for COVID-19.

Early identification, when tied with Public Health contact tracing and investigation, is one of the key strategies to containing and preventing spread of COVID-19 in our communities. And with that, let me hand things over to the Commissioner. Thank you.

## **Commissioner Shibinette:**

Thank you, and good afternoon. Today for an outbreak update, I have no changes in long-term care outbreaks. We have one new outbreak to confirm, which is the Rockingham County Jail, which was announced publicly earlier this week. They have 10 residents and one Staff Member that tested positive. The facility identified a positive case and worked with Public Health to test all of their residents and the Staff assigned to that unit, and that led to the identification of additional positive cases. We are now in the process of testing everybody else associated with that Jail.

Just an update on the educational dashboard, as you recall last week we talked about the importance of transparency when it comes to positive cases and clusters of illness, and outbreaks in K-12 schools. That transparency is just as important on college campuses. We are developing a centralized website that lists educational institutions that have positive COVID-19 cases. That website will include both the K-12 schools, but will also include the college campuses across the State.

To that end, we're already seeing several colleges now publicly reporting new cases identified in students that were identified either through the prescreening or the on-campus screening process. In the near term, we should expect to see increase in cases in 18- to 22-year-olds because of this very robust testing program that the colleges are conducting, as they start to bring students back to campus. It's critical that colleges that are not prescreening students before they return to campus to really help the students understand the importance of self-quarantining, once they get on campus, while they're waiting for test results to come back.

The other update I'd like to provide is on the long-term care ventilation project. We've been talking about this for several weeks waiting for the evaluations to be done. Of total, we evaluated 28 long-term care facilities that had closed outbreaks for their ventilation systems. We really were looking to determine if there was any contributing factors, or correlation, between the type of ventilation system or the air exchange system, and the way COVID spread throughout their building.

We looked at things like the air exchange rate per hour, the types of air filters, how often air filters were changed, and many, many more things. The Engineers conducted the review and didn't find a pattern or any contributing factor that related to the spread of COVID-19 in those facilities.

With that level of expertise, we did ask the Engineers to opine on, is there anything else we could be doing, because really that is the point of looking at these systems. Is there anything we could be doing?

So they did suggest that we look at UV light protection in the duct system. This is a system that is used in some buildings to protect against respiratory viruses. It's not something we see commonly in New Hampshire. But it's something that we are definitely going to look into, and increasing air exchange in both resident room and common areas.

So those are two things that we are going to dig into now. We just got the evaluation engineering results back in the last day-or-two. So we're going to dig into those two recommendations and see if they fit in with our plan for the coming fall and into the winter, and see if they make sense to make those improvements. Thank you.

## **Governor Sununu:**

Great, thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Dr. Chan. Three items to discuss, and then we will open it up for questions. Last Friday, the State submitted their request to the Federal Government for our plan to implement the Federal \$300 unemployment stipend, known as the Lost Wages Assistance Program. And as quickly as yesterday, we received word that the President and FEMA quickly approved our Application. And in total, we expect our participation to put well-over \$300 million into the State's economy and provide those supports to those families and individuals at little or no cost to the State. And again, I think we really struck a great deal with the Federal Government on behalf of the people of New Hampshire.

This approval will allowed unemployed Granite Staters the ability to receive that additional \$300 on top of their regular unemployment benefit, again going back to August 1st. So even those that have applied, it will be retroactive going back to August 1st and should be available in the coming weeks. And we need another couple weeks to get the system fully connected with the new eligibility.

We are also raising at the State level the minimum amount of unemployment to \$100 for anyone who was previously below the \$100 benefit line. And that will allow everybody within the State to participate and be eligible for this opportunity.

Again, big thanks to the team at Employment Security; they really have been working around the clock. And I think we're on-track to get our system up-and-running. We will probably be one of the first in the country, frankly, to be able to take advantage of the new \$300 Lost Wages Program.

Second issue today, another announcement revolves around our Housing Relief Program. Our CAP Agencies today have now launched a new streamlined application for those seeking housing relief. And our hats off to what we call our five CAP Agencies working with Department of Health and Human Services, working with our team at GOFERR to create a new application, instead of the eight pages that you had to go through to apply. It's streamlined down to about three pages now, a much easier process. And we think that'll open up a door, just make it a lot easier for folks to apply, but still be providing the required information, as it pertains to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is certain information. It's not the exact same process. There is certain information to hopefully ensure that folks can get those funds, as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. And there's other funds there also available within those Housing Programs for folks that need relief that aren't directly related to the pandemic. So there are two pathways for individuals. And if they need any sort of housing relief, whether it's on rent or whatever it might be, please contact your CAP Agencies. They can get more information on how to apply at [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov)\apply. That's [goferr.nh.gov](http://goferr.nh.gov). That's where all of our programs are. And again, this is called the Housing Relief Program. Or you can also, again, contact your CAP Agency or even call 211, kind of our State help line, if you will, for folks who need relief supports.

And then, finally the third announcement today has to do with broadband. So a few weeks ago, we did announce the first round of awardees for our Connecting New Hampshire Emergency Broadband Expansion Program. I'm looking at it. I don't think that there's a neat -- we didn't get a neat acronym for that one. But it will help ensure Granite Staters have equitable access to broadband services to meet increased needs for access, such as remote learning, folks working from home, whatever it might be, these types of issues that have truly arisen from the COVID pandemic.

Today, we're announcing the final list of awardees, totaling approximately \$14 million to hook up over 4500 properties across 17 towns in rural New Hampshire. And as you can see on the screen, we've

listed the towns here. Again, just to go through the list so people can know them and they can ask their questions if they are living in these towns or have properties in these towns, it's taking place in Bristol, Canaan, Clarksville, Colebrook, Danbury, Deering, Errol, Hinsdale, Hillsborough, Lempster, Loudon, Mason, Nelson, Springfield, Stewartstown, Stoddard, and Washington.

All of those towns are participating in some way and, again, just allowing this high-speed connectivity to happen for those individuals, thousands of families across the State, I think is just a huge win. We're one of the few States that have actually been able to design and implement a program like this.

I will note, just for folk that may notice, there's one town we listed before. That is Sandwich. And unfortunately the project previously announced for Sandwich has fallen through. And the awardee recently withdrew their proposal from the town and unfortunately no other applicant that was in the bidding process was able to meet the construction deadline. So, unfortunately, Sandwich was on the line to get an award. But the folks that received the contract have withdrawn at this point. With that, we can open up for questions.

### **Q&A Session**

*I have a question for Dr. Chan. Doctor, we're about three weeks out now from the NASCAR race in Loudon. Has there been any contact tracing that revealed illness or any spread of COVID-19 in that event?*

**Dr. Chan:**

Yeah, so we are not aware of any cases, or at least I'm not aware of any cases arising from the NASCAR event, specifically, and certainly not aware of any spread further from the NASCAR event. After any event, typically we would expect to see cases arising up to three weeks out. There's always the possibility that there could be cases identified in the future, especially if there's somebody from out-of-state. But as of now, we haven't identified anybody with infection associated with that event.

**Governor Sununu:**

Great, hi.

*Hi, what is your response to the increasing number of families trying to put their kids into private schools, because they're dissatisfied with the plans that their District has put forward?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, the question is what is the response for the number of families that are looking to private school, or charter schools, or some type of alternate school than the traditional public school currently within their system, if they're dissatisfied with the pathway forward. Clearly a lot of families are looking at options. And what towns choose to do -- some are remaining open. Some closed, very few, but some are closing on the first day. And I think the majority if you -- not the majority but the plurality are probably going to more of a hybrid model, and that is understandable that, for some families, that's just not going to work.

So they are going to look to private schools. They're going to look to charter schools, homeschooling, VLACs programs, a variety of different options. I'll say this. I think as long as a family is finding a pathway that fits the needs of their child, that's the priority. And those are the opportunities we're trying to really expand upon and create.

That's why we put the \$1.5 million into the scholarship fund specifically around low-income families that just don't have the financial means to maybe make those opportunities happen for their kids. Well, now, they can go into the scholarship program and apply for funds to help them just use as they see the best path of education for their kid. So it's all about creating opportunity here in New Hampshire and not having a one size fits all system, not having a one size fits all, and making sure that, at the end of the day, there's always a Plan B and other options for families, if they so choose.

*President Trump is apparently coming to New Hampshire this week. Do you have any information on what his plans are?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, I have no other information. The question has to do with any information that we might have on the President's visit this coming week. I don't have any other information than what has been reported.

I know the event is planned for a hangar or somewhere around the Manchester Airport. I believe he'll be flying in on Friday. I believe it's a single event, a rally or some type. And that's pretty much what we know.

*Your participation in it?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm going to plan on meeting the -- my participation in the event, as always, as the Governor, I'll always be there to greet the President. Yeah.

*Will you be at the rally?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm not planning on going to the rally. I don't know how big it is. But my guess, it's going to be a lot of people. And when I can, I try to avoid large crowds, to be honest.

*Along those lines, will there be a mask requirement, where there'll be more than 100 people?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yes, absolutely. So the question is, will there be a mask requirement having to do with the Presidential's [sic] visit, assuming it is more than 100 people in attendance, which I assume it will be, the answer is yes. There is a mask requirement. And the campaign, I think, in announcing identified to folks

that it was mask-required. I think it was made clear to them and they completely understood it. And I think they've been very good about trying to promote that message, making sure that people are safe, where they can socially distance, when and how they can socially distance, and to make sure they understand with more than 100 people everyone has to follow the rules. Have to wear masks.

*Governor, with regard to the next stimulus from Congress, it's obviously unclear whether there's going to be one. And if there is, when it will happen. How does that affect what you do with the rest of the dollars you have from the CARES Act?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Great question, the question is, knowing that Congress has yet to act on a stimulus package that we were clearly expecting by now, we don't know if and when they may act, hopefully in the near future. We don't know with Washington. How does that affect our decision-making, in terms of the remaining CARES Act dollars?

So, there's still guidelines around those CARES Act dollars. We have to live by the guidelines put into place on those dollars. And they're still there. If Congress were to fail to do something soon, in the next few weeks, at least into September, we would continue to advocate very strongly that they do, obviously. A stimulus package is very important, because the items that they have committed to, I think they have to follow through on for States.

But most importantly, if they fail to act, at a minimum, we would advocate and continue to advocate for more flexibility with those CARES Act funds. We have somewhere between \$200 million and \$300 million at least remaining. We may need those funds, given the increase in COVID numbers we're likely going to see in the coming months, whether it be for PPE or testing, whatever it might be. But having the flexibility, even beyond the direct COVID-related expenses, will be quite critical in the future to either allow for whether it's stimulus or revenue replacement, those types of things, which, again, Congress has talked about.

If they fail to commit and do what they say they're going to do, and actually get together, and put politics aside, and just do what's right, at the end of the day it's up to the States to basically fill in those holes and cover for them. And the best way to do that is to have flexibility with the CARES Act dollars.

*Do you eliminate all emails from your server every 30 days? Or are there some that are kept, like related to...*

**Governor Sununu:**

To my emails like in my office, or...



*Yeah, your emails.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, ever since I became Governor, we've had a policy where, I mean, the vast majority of emails are conversational. And we don't keep any emails beyond 30 days. That's been in place for years, a policy that's been in place for a long, long time.

*So all of them are deleted?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, I mean, if it were a material email and we felt we needed to keep it for some reason, we will keep it for some reason, of course. But otherwise we try to just clear the junk out, for the most part.

*Governor, following up on the stimulus question, how do you balance out the possibility that you'll have flexibility and continue to be able to spend it, or get stuck with a Brewster's Millions situation in the end of December? And you don't want to be stuck with a bunch of money that you can't spend.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I love the Brewster's Million reference because, at the end of the day, if you remember, how did he spend all of his money? He ran for office. And it ended up being a colossal waste of money, which I think speaks volumes, frankly. Anyone under the age of 30, please go see Brewster's Millions. It holds up. It really does. Richard Pryor at his best. So, I apologize. What was the -- sorry.

*How do you find a way that you're not going to get stuck with a bunch of money at the end that you haven't spent?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so if the guidelines do not change, any unspent dollars have to be returned to the Federal Government on December 31st. So we will be advocating. I can imagine, assuming I'm going to be planning on greeting the President, I'll probably put a little bug in his ear, as well. Please, if Congress doesn't do their job, keep doing yours and providing guidelines and flexibility with those guidelines. And hopefully he and Secretary Mnuchin can do that. I mean, I think they can legally. And hopefully they'll open up that pathway for us. We will keep advocating for it.

At the end of the day, come towards the end of December, the one area that's a bit of, if you will, a failsafe is that we can still put money into our own State Unemployment Fund. That is currently allowed. Luckily, we haven't had to. We may need to borrow money potentially into the second quarter of next year. But if we have remaining dollars, whether it's \$1 million left or \$100 million left, if somehow it's unspent, maybe they're lapsed funds that we thought we're going to spend that were allocated, but don't get used up for some reason, we can always move it into our unemployment security system. And trust fund, I should say. It's the trust fund. And at the end of the day, that's probably what we'd do to ensure

that we maximize the use of those dollars and minimize the amount we'd have to send back to Washington.

*I have a question for Commissioner Shibinette on the HVAC system. It's our awareness, I think, that some schools may be conducting studies. I know the State's not doing anything. But are educational institutions, or Districts, reporting anything back to you, in terms of air quality? Or is that staying local?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

I think it's staying local. We're not doing anything collectively in the State looking at HVAC systems. But certainly what we pull out of our engineering studies from our long-term care project certainly can apply to schools.

So that's what we're looking at is some of the recommendations they said. And it wasn't widespread recommendations of do this, do this. It was recommendations as perhaps you want to look at whether a UV lighting system in a duct system would assist in fighting COVID. And that's what we're doing. So if we found that to be true, it certainly could apply to schools. But that's the process we're currently in is looking at that right now.

*Was there anything interesting they did learn about these systems that may impact operations for anyone?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

I thought it was interesting how much they varied. So when you look at facilities that were -- you have some facilities that were built 60 and 70 years ago and some facilities that were built in the last 10 years, right? So one of the big things we look for is the air exchange system, how much outside air replaces the inside air, right? And so, we had some facilities that have regular, very modern, air exchange systems where you have regular cycling of the air. And you have some facilities that don't have robust air exchange systems. Both had outbreaks. And I thought that was going to make a significant difference, and it didn't seem to have the impact that I thought it was going to have and a lot of us thought it was going to have.

So, interesting facts like that I think I'm glad we did the study because we wonder, right? Do these things impact? And I can't say we're going to take it off the table, but we know, if there is an impact, it's minimal.

*While you're still there, I had a question about the number of college students who have tested positive. Are they staying on campus? How many are there? Or are they sent home?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

So, it varies. So I'll put that out there. There are certainly colleges that did prescreening COVID testing. And those students weren't even on campus, right? And so, they stayed in their home State when they got a positive test.

We had some colleges that brought the students on campus and tested them as soon as they arrived. In those situations, if the student lived locally meaning within New England, they were sent



home to quarantine at some colleges. If the student came from another part of the country, rather than sending them on a commercial flight back to their home State, they have a quarantine system set up within each college campus.

So I think it really varied by college on exactly how they dealt with a positive case. I'm very encouraged that we have the robust testing program that we have for the college campuses, for sure. I think we are seeing good results, especially with the prescreening, when we're testing students before they come to campus. And we like to see that, because we identify them before they get instate. And that's what I would encourage.

As for numbers, our numbers are going to be different than the college numbers, immediately. So I saw one college that reported six positive cases. And our files, we had three confirmed positive cases, because there's a ladies and gentlemen in when those positive cases get to Public Health. If they're doing onsite testing, they're going to have the positive case before we're going to have the positive case. So those are things that we are working out prior to going live on our website, which we hope to have up in the next week-or-two, so that it'll have daily case counts by both K-12 school and college campuses.

*Can you give me the schools or the towns in which the schools have had outbreaks on their campus?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Yes, not outbreaks. So positive cases, I can give you some of the ones that I'm aware of that have had students test positive. So all of these have announced publicly at this point: Franklin Pierce; Kimball Union Academy; New England College; Plymouth State. Handful, no outbreaks, per se, but a handful of students that have tested positive. And like I said, all communicated publicly by the schools, themselves.

*So Franklin Pierce, Plymouth State, I'm missing one.*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Kimball Union Academy and New England College.

*Okay. Thank you.*

*In some college towns, there were students who moved into their apartments during the summer and there were some issues with partying in those areas. Do you know of any cases connected to college parties during the summer?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

No.

*Commissioner, in terms of the testing, some of the colleges are experiencing pre-purchased results and they're not getting them in a timely fashion. Is it safe to say we're seeing another backlog for Quest or any of these other national laboratories? What's going on here?*

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

The reporting turnaround time for Quest is still around three or four days. So I'm not aware of -- there are always outliers to that, right? You're always going to have a handful of tests that may be an outlier to that three- or four-day turnaround. But as of right now, we're still seeing three- to four-day turnarounds, probably less in most of the labs.

So, we have not hear about a delay in test results. But the expectation needs to be set, which is, when you take a test, you need to expect for a three-day wait. And in that wait period, people should be quarantining. So if you're going to bring the students on campus and test them, in that timeframe that you're waiting for that test results, the students should be quarantining while they're waiting.

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm going to add one more thing. We will take a couple on the phone, but I think you brought up a really good question about the parties, right? One thing that you're seeing nationally especially is large parties of students, whether they be some on campus, but also some off campus, as well. They could be off-campus housing or apartments, whatever it might be.

I can tell you for myself, personally, and I think I speak for others, this is a very large area of concern. And it's a bit of a plea. I don't know how many 18- to 23-year-olds actually watch the press conferences. But I think a very important public message has to be the responsibility of making sure, as a young adult around the universities, you're not putting yourself in that situation, because it's not just about you. It's about your roommates. It's about your community. It's about your university.

We've seen a lot of very large outbreaks from similar situations around the country, and we just want to make sure that doesn't happen here, or at least we minimize the number of incidences like that that can happen here. It can really have a very detrimental, very rapid domino effect across the entire university and the entire campus that you are a part of. It's not just you and that party. It really does extend beyond that.

We've seen it very clearly played out in a very negative way across the country. And we just hope that the students will really take heed, take it very seriously. We're asking for a bit of a sacrifice here. We're asking, knowing that we want these universities and schools to be open. But it does mean that you really need to curtail the larger gatherings, the parties, and not just on campus but off campus, as well, because it can have a real detrimental effect.

Hopefully, we get through this semester and maybe even into early 2021. We have a little more flexibility, right? Maybe a vaccine or other things come to bear that give us more flexibility. We really don't have that luxury right now. And you've seen entire campuses in other parts of the country have to close because of their massive, very rapid outbreaks in a matter of days, hundreds and hundreds, and hundreds of kids.

So a few off-campus parties end up shutting down the entire system. That is real. That is very detrimental to your university and your system. And we just want everyone to understand the fate of that is really in your control. The fate of that is in the personal responsibility you take to making those

sacrifices, minimizing the socialization, knowing that if you don't have your test result back, you do have to quarantine, and taking the quarantining provisions very, very seriously.

It isn't just about washing hands and maintaining 6 feet. It's really also just making sure that the habits that might traditionally happen on campus life are a bit curtailed for the time being, so we can all get through this in a positive way.

*Have the colleges engaged the landlords? And are there any punitive measures that can be taken, either by the school or by the communities, themselves, to shut those parties down?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so the question is, have the colleges engaged with, you mean, like, the off-campus landlords, effectively. I know some of the universities in our system have. I've heard that directly from the Presidents that they are talking to a lot of the landlords. I can't speak for every college and university in the State. But I do know that some have.

In terms of punitive or some type of enforcement, or action, unless they're really breaking guidelines or anything like that, there isn't. I think it's just a plea to be smart about what they're doing from both the landlord's and the tenant perspective, and understand that unfortunately, in other universities across this country, it has gone very bad very quickly. And we're trying to hope that we don't end up in those situations. Great.

**Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:**

*Hi. This sort of follows up on Adam's question earlier about schools and ventilation. I know a lot of School Districts are taking a very close look at their ventilation systems and seeing where they can make improvements. Does this examination of the nursing homes suggest that that's not the best use of their time? Or are you still encouraging schools to look at that?*

**Governor Sununu:**

We definitely encourage not just schools, not just long-term care facilities, manufacturers, offices, any facility that has an internal air system. I think in almost all of our guidance documents, I think Dr. Chan and his Team have been very adamant about ensuring that we remind folks to review those systems, to take a look.

I guess the good bit of news is that, of the 20 facilities we reviewed, there's no direct causality, in terms of the outbreaks that happened. But there's no doubt that clean air and fresh air, and a well-functioning air exchange system is really important to the individual's health and being able to mitigate the virus. There's no doubt about that.

So schools should definitely take a look at those systems. We're still contemplating whether it's possible to use CARES Act funds. We're trying to see, to make those types of upgrades. Again, the funds right now have to be used by the end of December, and I don't know if upgrades for a lot of those systems could happen in just a few months. Some are more expensive and expansive in terms what would be needed.

But we do encourage everyone to review those systems. Make the upgrades when they can. And if there is a pathway for the State to provide funding and support, it's definitely something that we're looking at.

**Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:**

*Oh, and just to follow up, I want to clarify that the ventilation systems were only studied in places that had outbreaks. Is that correct? So there was no comparison. So we can say that it didn't show any clear effect on how an outbreak spread in the facility. It's that there wasn't a comparison to a facility that had no outbreaks?*

**Governor Sununu:**

That's correct. The first phase was all about making sure that we highlighted those facilities that had outbreaks to making sure that we could put them as a top priority, and understandably so. But we haven't done any in non-outbreak facilities yet to make a comparison, partly because there was no clear evidence that the air exchange system had led to any sort of aggressive aspect of the outbreaks that did happen at those facilities.

**Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:**

*Thank you.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Okay.

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

*A question for the Commissioner and for the Governor; for the Commissioner, is it still the case that we've had no outbreaks at daycare centers, despite the fact that some of the centers were open throughout the worst part of the pandemic? And if so, why shouldn't schools, public and private elementary schools, draw the conclusion that certainly opening elementary schools for in-class education is no different, if not better, than having a daycare center, where kids are running around doing what kids do to each other? Or is there some difference from the virus, etc., that we should be aware of that would make that comparison not apt? Then, for the Governor, you said you would be here, as Governor, to welcome the President any time he comes to the State. The two people who want to replace you, Democrats, Senator Feltes and Executive Councilor Volinsky, say not only should you not greet the President, but you should stop him from coming. And I presume they would not greet him. Two questions: can you stop the President of the United States from coming to New Hampshire? And secondly, if the President were a Democrat, for example, if you are reelected and Joe Biden is President, would you welcome him to the State of New Hampshire, even though he's from the other Party?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure, I'll let Lori take the first part.

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Thank you. So, as it relates to childcare outbreaks, so our messaging around childcare outbreaks, what we've said from the beginning is that we would announce outbreaks if there was a reason to notify the public. So we did not ever say that there was not an outbreak in a childcare center. And we did have a couple of clusters of illness in childcare centers that we were able, through our contact identification, identify all the close contacts and everybody that would have been exposed to the virus. So there was no need to announce it publicly. So, we did have some clusters of illness in childcare.

When it comes to in-person versus remote learning, it really is an individual community decision. I think decision-making, when you look at the prevalence of COVID in your community, it's a very different scenario in Rockingham and Hillsborough County as it is in Coos County. So, making one sweeping recommendation across the State is not going to work for the individual. Very clearly, people in Coos County that have had a handful of active cases now for weeks, if they've had any at all, feel much more comfortable going back to an in-person setting than someone in a community that has a higher prevalence of COVID.

So, the risks and benefits, educationally, is something that needs to be weighed by the Department of Education, the individual schools, the School Districts, and the parents more than anybody. But when it relates to the transmission of COVID, I think every community needs to look at where they're at, when it comes to prevalence in the community.

**Governor Sununu:**

Great. Thank you very much. As for the President's visit, I've always said I think any Governor should do everything they can to make themselves available when any President of the United States were to come visit, or any significant Dignitary. I think it's a sign of respect in welcoming to the State, whether they're Republican, whether they're Democrat. I mean, if the former Vice President, Joe Biden, invited me to greet him when he came to the State, I'd be honored to do it. The man's a former Vice President.

So it has nothing to do with politics. The idea that my political opponents are telling me I should not allow the President of the United States to come to New Hampshire, I don't even know how to answer that. Of course that's not possible, nor would it be appropriate.

So, we're New Hampshire, right? I mean, I understand there's a campaign going on. Everyone is effectively running for office. I mean, if you're not personally running for office, I'm sure we all know someone or are related to someone running for office in some way. That's kind of the New Hampshire spirit. We're a Republican-and-Democrat State. We're kind of a purple State that way. So, the role of Governor's is always to, I think, be a gracious host and allow those Dignitaries to come, and making sure that they're treated fairly.

In terms of not allowing the event to happen, we have said from the very beginning, whether it's a protest or a political rally, or a sit-in, or whatever it is, we're going to treat everyone the same. We don't pick winners and losers. Everyone is treated the same, as long as they're conforming and abiding by the rules that we have in place, and the organizers of those events are doing everything they can to promote what the rules are.

The Trump campaign's saying you have to wear a mask. A lot of the other protests we saw, they were trying their best to socially distance and hand out masks. I think people understand that there's an

important aspect to the pandemic. And as long as they're working hard to try to maintain those health and safety aspects, that's what we ask anybody to do. And we treat everyone the same. That's the most important thing.

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

*Hi, thanks for taking my question. I have two: one on the outbreak at the Rockingham County Jail; and one on return rates for testing. So you mentioned that everyone at the Rockingham County Jail is now going to be tested. Will the State be doing anything similar for other County Jails? Or are there plans to do sort of another look at any potential outbreaks in the rest of the system, as a result of the situation in Rockingham? And then, secondly, I understand that there may be delayed testing results that are outliers. But the fact remains that we're hearing from schools that they're delaying move-in dates because of delays in getting test results back. That includes Keene and Plymouth State. We're hearing this concern from other students. I, myself, got a COVID test two weeks ago and haven't gotten my results. So does the State have any plans to do anything more to speed up those testing results, to help students figure out sort of what they should do while they're waiting for their results, if it's delaying their move back to school, or just any other way to respond to this besides acknowledging that some of these may be outliers? And thanks.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure; so let me do my best with both of those. And I'll let the Commissioner fill in if I make mistakes. First, on the testing around jails, so there are, I believe, 10 inmates and a Staff Member in Rockingham County Jail currently. We will test everybody in that facility, as we've said.

We don't have plans to do sentinel testing all across every jail and every facility in the State. But if there any evidence of positivity or potential outbreaks, of course we would go in, bring our teams in, and perform that type of testing so we can segregate individuals, or provide quarantining provisions, so you don't get widespread issues that get kind of beyond your control. That's obviously a priority of the State, making sure that we're managing those situations, as they arise.

But right now, Rockingham County is the only facility where we know of that has any sort of incident like this. And I think the State and the Teams, and Dr. Chan and the Testing Teams, and Lori have just done a phenomenal job of responding quickly and making sure that we've gotten this stuff down and can respond appropriately.

As far as the testing, I'll say this. I've had conversations with the Presidents of all four of the colleges, within the university system, within the folks at the community colleges. I've spoken directly to make of the Presidents that sit as part of the Private University Higher Education Council, essentially, and Commission, that kind of advocates on behalf of all of the private universities in the State. The vast majorities of school in the State currently have contracts with a lot of these outside testing agencies. It's a provision that we asked about very early on.

I'm interested because I know a lot of the testing delays right now from Quest or some of the testing labs outside of the State, there are provisions in a lot of those contracts that I believe do identify, if there are delays, if they can't meet certain stipulations, if they can't meet certain metrics in accountability, that there are potential repercussions, as part of those contracts. And I'm not sure exactly what they are, as they pertain to Keene State and some of the others that have seen the most significant delays. But I got to commend the university system for thinking ahead that this potentiality could exist.



I think the most important thing is that, if universities feel that it's right to delay before students come in, I think that's the right thing to do. You got to really take precautions. And even if it's an extra week-or-two, and then hopefully working with those outside vendors that are providing the testing to get either the remedy in place or whatever it might be. Those are vendors outside of this State, though.

Again, the vast majority of testing is really done with outside third-party vendors. Usually they do a good job. But we've always said, as part of these press conferences, six weeks ago we were talking about the idea that there would likely be a run on the system, that the delays may increase, as we hit late-August and probably all through September. There may be more delays as public schools come back into play. K-12 will have some testing provisions, depending on if the kids are symptomatic or not. You'll likely just see an increase there.

We've talked about providing more community-based testing, specifically within the public school system, and what that would look like, whether it were rapid ID-type tests and systems, that they could be ordered and put into place on a community level. We don't want to have School Nurses in charge of testing, but on a community-based level so we can, again, control more of our destiny, in terms of having the testing information. I think everyone agrees that would be a very positive step forward.

But right now, we continue to rely very much. And we being the university system, the citizens of the State still rely very much on the testing capacity outside of the State. And there's a bit of a run on the system. So, again, I think a lot of those provisions are probably in place to have remedies to that. But, each one might be a little different for each of those universities.

*Governor, under the new large gathering State guidance, could the Trump campaign be subject to fines, if it doesn't enforce masking at its event?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, I suppose. I mean, I got to tell you. I think they've already done a very good. I mean, the first thing they said when they announced the events was, masks are required, right? So, hopefully the individuals will abide by that. I think they're going to have masks available when individuals come in. They're going to have the hand sanitizer and all those sort of things.

I haven't seen the exact layout in terms of where people are standing or sitting and how it's looking, so I can't talk directly to that other than to say I think they understand the importance of social distancing. And so, I think they're doing what they need to do to make sure it's a successful event from a health and safety standpoint.

*Governor, the one thing that's happening this week, as well, is youth sport programs for high schools are being approved. And...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Or not approved.

*Or not approved, but even schools where high school students aren't going to school but there's going to be a football season this fall; I wonder if you could speak to, what is the real risk of spreading COVID from youth contact sports? What should School Boards be doing to make sure there isn't an increase in positivity?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, so the question is about the real risk for youth contact sports that may or may not be -- well, the ones that are happening in communities. I think there are some instances where schools are going remote, but they're still going to allow certain schools to be play.

To be honest, I might defer to Dr. Chan a little bit to talk about the transmissivity risks between that. I'll just speak, just before he comes up, on the decisions that a lot of these communities are making. I think a lot of communities understand that, while there's concern about entering the classroom, I mean, going back to a question we had earlier, I feel very confident saying that we've put the guidance forward to allow every classroom to come back and open up safely.

Now, if schools are choosing not to do that, that is their choice. We respect the local control and the decisions there. Some are going to a hybrid model. That's fine. Some are going fully remote. But even some of these that are going fully remote, some are even talking about fall sports programs.

So, I commend them, I think, in appreciating the value of the socialization and allowing some of these activities to happen in their community, because it is very important for sports -- or not just sports, but clubs and things of that nature. The social and extracurricular activities that happen in a school that aren't necessarily just within the four walls of the classroom are very important to the whole health wellness and education of the kids, K all the way up through senior in high school. And so, I guess I commend those Districts for taking those steps.

There is a health and safety aspect, in terms of the risk of transmissivity, of course, whether it's football or contact sports, whatever it might be. I've already seen, if you've seen over the summer, some of the youth leagues that have happened. Every once in a while, you see a picture of a bunch of kids putting their arms around each other, celebrating the big win. And I don't think we've had a significant amount of outbreaks or things from that. But obviously it gives you pause for concern every time. And you want kids to be excited and have fun.

But there is that line there, right? You're trying to kind of walk that fine line of allowing the participation to happen, and allowing the kids to socialize and really get into those events, because they're so important to their health and wellness, without creating a dangerous situation. With that, maybe I'll turn it over to Dr. Chan, if he wants to talk about the physical risk.

**Dr. Chan:**

Thank you. So, good question about sports, and I think it's important to remember that this virus, the Novel Coronavirus, we still believe is transmitted primarily through close contact between people. And so, certainly any time you're in a crowded condition, you're in close contact with someone, there is going to be increased risk for transmission of COVID-19, if a person is infected with COVID-19, or has COVID-19, or is infected with a virus that causes COVID-19.

With that said, our communities around the State are seeing low levels of transmission. There is State guidance that is out there around people being able to conduct sports in various forms. And we have been referring people back to that State guidance.

We do ask that, if sports are allowed, that the organizers of the sporting event look to how to minimize, or mitigate, the risk of potential transmission, if there's going to be the potential for close contact. And not all sports may be able to operate in their normal capacity and their normal ways.

We're still in the midst of the pandemic. And so, we need everybody, including sports organizations/sports teams, to assess the risk in their individual communities and look at how to conduct sports as safely as possible. That can include focusing on training or practices, minimizing physical contact to the extent possible. If physical contact needs to happen, or it does occur, trying to keep physical contact brief, looking at how to implement cloth facemasks, excuse me, cohorting of groups of students or athletes, practicing good hand hygiene.

There are a lot of different layers of protection and prevention that we can build into a lot of the operations in our society to decrease the risks of transmission of COVID-19. And that is what we would recommend for any activity, including sports. And so, we have been referring people back to the current State guidance that's out there around sports activities. Thanks.

*Governor, any idea when the COVID-19 school's website will be up that Commissioner Shibinette was referencing?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I'll say early next week. Yeah. Soon. No, honestly we're trying to get up-and-running as soon as we can. Again, the good news is most public schools, I think they're just starting either late this week, or early next week. So we're going to try to get it up soon.

We want to make sure it works. You don't want to rush something up and not be able to fulfill, because the hope is that it's fairly real-time. We want it to be a resource for parents, whether it's in public schools or in the universities, and the cases that we know of, so they can see it in real-time.

Again, just speaking as a dad who has two kids in high school and a 2nd grader, everyone understands the rumor mill can fly. I heard someone had sniffles over there. I heard So-and-So was COVID-positive. I heard So-and-So in that classroom, they're all quarantining. The rumors fly around. And so, we just want to make sure that we have a centralized location where parents can trust and go to, to know the real facts and the situations in their schools, so they can make the best decisions for their kids.

*And it does seem like there's a lot of -- we've asked you this before. But as we get closer to the jumping off point for schools, there's a lot of angst, some Administrators, Teachers, parents, people feeling overwhelmed. At what point, if any, would the State have to step in and try to help more, or do more, in schools, if it looks like a District is getting swamped?*

**Governor Sununu:**

At what point would the State step in, if a School District is getting swamped? Two months ago -- so we've always been very available. What I mean by that is we've always been very available. If a School District needs more PPE, we can help facilitate it. If they think they need more funds, we're there for them. I mean, and I don't think anyone's actually drawn down all of their additional education funds yet.

If they're having staffing issues, we can work on that. If it's a substitute staffing, or we just need additional bus drivers, Districts should always know they can pick up the phone and, again, have great communication with folks up the chain here in Concord to help get better resources or better responsiveness.

So, I would just tell a District, if you're feeling swamped on whatever the issue might be, reach out. Communicate. We're here. I mean, the beauty of New Hampshire is we're New Hampshire. We're not like some of these other States where you're completely disconnected with a lot of the decisionmakers.

We really want to treat people as individuals. It's not about our system up here in Concord. It's about just getting best outcomes for those kids in a safe environment, where they can get a good education, and helping the schools commit to that, because it is a commitment they have to make to those kids and to those families. And it is something that I feel very strongly, and I think most people would agree, has to be seen through.

It's why I'm so passionate about students with special ed needs. If the Districts really think that they still cannot or will not meet those needs of those individual students, let us know, right? We've provided more money than ever before. We've provided a lot of flexibility. But the needs of those kids have to be prioritized, and they have to be met. And we're always here to take that phone call, not just to say, hey, I'm letting you know I can't do it. That's not an answer. Don't tell us what you can't do. Let's work together and find what we can do, and make sure that the kids -- apparently they didn't like that answer. I've gone on too long.

But, no, it's a very important point, right? If you need help, pick up the phone and ask. We can't wave a magic wand and make it all be better immediately. But we can put the right people and resources to explore every opportunity for those kids to making sure that their needs are coming first and being met.

*You mentioned the workforce issue with Teachers, though. If the District is running out of Teachers and Substitutes and they do call you, what exactly is the help that the State can provide there?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So, I'm not sure. So, one thing we're looking at is allowing Districts to give us a bit of a warning sign, kind of a green-yellow-red in terms of what your staffing needs might be. And it's interesting, because the staffing needs aren't just the Teachers. It could be Administrative Staff. It could be Bus Drivers. It could be, hey, the Staff that normally provides lunch for our kids is all out. So our school's okay, but we can't provide meals for our kids, whatever it might be.

So if we can either provide additional resources, I think maybe if it's a short-term basis thing, we could help either get the word out, provide volunteers in. If there was an issue where schools really wanted to remain open, but they don't have enough Certified Teachers, we've really streamlined that process so we can start that process now, which is why communicating with us early on, I think, is an opportunity.

Nurses, if there were School Nurses, or a shortage of Nurses or something like that, we could help provide folks on a temporary basis. So, it's not that, again, we can solve every problem. But, we're going to go to the ends of the earth to making sure that we can within the limit of the law, and regulations, and appropriateness to provide those resources. Keep that system functioning as well as it possibly can in a healthy way for those kids.

It's all about outcomes. It is. I mean, in anything in government and life, it's just all about accountability, getting outcomes that you want. You can talk all day up at a podium. You can talk all day here in Concord. But unless you're really fulfilling for those kids, I mean, the mission isn't being completed. And so, whatever we can do to be part of that success, we want to be there for the Districts.

Okay. Well, thank you. We will be back, I think, on Thursday. It should be a decent week. Be careful of the weather. I know there's a lot of weather warnings out there in various parts of the State. Folks should keep an eye out for that. And again, if you have any questions specifically to the funds that we've put out, you can always go to [goferr.nh.gov/apply](http://goferr.nh.gov/apply). That's where all the different funds, hundreds of millions of dollars of opportunity are there for individuals, families, and businesses.

And as Adam alluded to earlier, if you have questions, whether it's on education, whether it's on opportunities, whether it's issues with Public Health, you can always reach out to someone and, I think, get the help you need. We're that kind of State where I think we've done very well. And that's the process that has kept our COVID numbers down, and I think the opportunity open for folks all across the State. Thank you, guys, very much. Thank you, David and gang. We will see you on Thursday.