



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Well, good afternoon. Good to see everybody. I'm not going to lie. I walked outside. It was a amazingly beautiful day out there, was very warm. It did not feel like October. But I think we're going to kick things off with a Public Health update from Dr. Chan.

Dr. Chan:

Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. So, as a State, we are approaching a total of 10,000 infections that we have had over the course of this pandemic in New Hampshire. So today, we are announcing an additional 82 new people diagnosed with COVID-19, bring the total to 9,994 people with COVID-19 in New Hampshire during this pandemic. 58 of these new individuals were tested and tested positive by PCR. And 24 were positive by antigen testing. In fact, currently we're seeing, on average, about 80 new infections per day statewide that we've been reporting out. That has been somewhat stable the last one to two weeks.

There are 832 current people with active infection, which is consistent with where we were last week. And the 14-day rate of new infections is about 83 total new infections per 100,000 population over the last 14 days, which is up slightly from last week.

Our test-positivity rate continues to be about 1%. In terms of hospitalizations, we are reporting two new people hospitalized with COVID-19 today. And statewide, currently, 18 people are hospitalized throughout the State with COVID-19. Again, those numbers are stable with what we have been seeing and reporting over the last couple of weeks.

And unfortunately, one new person we're reporting today has died from COVID-19. This is an individual associated with long-term care facilities. And so, 470 total people have died during this pandemic in New Hampshire from COVID-19.

As community transmission increases, we know that the risk of COVID-19 to people in our communities is also going to increase. And so, we continue to stress the need for everybody to help stop COVID-19 from spreading further within our communities and from spreading person-to-person. We continue to stress the need for vigilance and recommend people avoid gatherings where groups of people may be together in crowded indoor conditions. We continue to recommend people practice social distancing, wear cloth face coverings when in public places, and practice good hand hygiene.

And before I hand things over to the Commissioner, let me also, in a related but slightly different topic, just put a plug here for the flu vaccine. We are entering the time where influence virus begins to circulate. We have not had any confirmed flu infections reported yet to Public Health. But it's around this time where we oftentimes will see influenza virus begin to circulate.

And so, we recommend that everybody six months of age and older seek out the flu vaccine this season. The influenza vaccine will not protect people against COVID-19. But the flu vaccine will help

protect people from influenza infection and flu-related complications. It will help prevent symptoms of the flu that could be confused with COVID-19, because the symptoms are so similar. And it can help prevent people from needing to be excluded from school or work, or childcare, due to the symptoms. And finally, the flu vaccine can help decrease the burden on our healthcare system, decrease the number of people needing to be tested for flu or COVID-19, and help decrease the need for hospitalizations.

So, we continue to strongly recommend and encourage people to get the flu vaccine. I got mine this week. And now is the time for people to go get theirs. Thank you.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Good afternoon. I'm going to do a brief update on long-term care outbreaks, and then go over some of the datapoints that we have been sharing all along through COVID on the long-term care outbreaks. So, we are closing Warde Health Center in Windham today, as their outbreak closed effective today. So that leaves us with three active outbreaks: one at Bedford Hills; one at Pine Rock Manor; and one at St. Teresa's [sic] Rehab and Nursing Center.

Some of the slides and some of the datapoints that I want to talk about today, the first one being -- and we've had this slide up several times through the course of the pandemic -- is the number of our long-term care facilities with cases since back in March. So this is not current, but all the way through the pandemic. And you will see here, as compared to the other New England States, we're about on average at about 44% of our long-term care facilities having at least one case, not outbreaks, but just at least one case of COVID-19. So we're about average there.

Our next slide talks about the long-term care deaths as a percentage of licensed beds in our State. And this is something that we've reported on several times. So you'll see here that New Hampshire is at about 2.8%. And that basically trends lower than most of the New England States -- well, all of the New England States that we're reporting on here today for the percentage of deaths, or the number of deaths, as compared to the percentage of our long-term care facility licensees.

The next slide is a datapoint that is frequently reported out on. And I want to provide a little context to it. 81% of our deaths are in long-term care facilities, 19% in our community. And what we've said all along -- I just gave you context on the 81% -- what we've said all along is the reason why this percentage is so high is because our community deaths are so low.

So if we go to the next slide, this is our community deaths per 100,000 of our populations. And this is a newer datapoint that I wanted to share because I wanted to give context to that previous datapoint. So, in New Hampshire, our number is 6.5. And in all of these other States that you see reported -- Connecticut, Mass., New York -- their percentage of total deaths in long-term care is lower than New Hampshire's. But this datapoint shows very clearly why. Our number of deaths in our community are very, very low. And I think this datapoint indicates, and this graph indicates that very well. So that's all I have to share. Thank you so much.

Governor Sununu:

Great, well, thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Dr. Chan. A couple things just to review and then we can open up for questions; first, we will start off with what's on a lot of folks' mind, which is hockey. As many people know, we are in a bit of a two-week -- in the middle of a two-week moratorium on hockey, as we reassess. I think there were six or eight different outbreaks associated with hockey and

the rinks. We want to allow some time for the rinks to get cleaned, hopefully get some of the teams tested, and just hopefully start anew. And it's our hope that we can still save the majority of the season by taking this pause.

Earlier today, the Governor's Reopening Task Force put forward some new ideas and discussed new ideas on amateur hockey. I'm going to be reviewing those, along with Dr. Chan and his team at the Department of Public Health. And we hope to have a review and maybe just some new guidance documents out as early as tomorrow to give the teams time to understand what is going to be asked and required of them, as looking at not just how the games are played on the ice, but everything from some of the academies, some of the tournaments, all the different things that really come into play and that have adversely affected the transmissivity rate within that community.

The guidance, which it is still technically in draft form, will be reviewed hopefully in the next day or so. The organizations, the Coaches, the parents, we're going to make sure that they all have those tools that they need to manage and move forward.

And it is just on all of us. A bit of a cautious warning again: it is on all of us to keep social distancing in place, not just on the ice and in terms of play, but outside the rink, in the stands, when waiting for games to start. Really hoping and asking for folks to forego some of the team gatherings or the parent gatherings that happen before, after, and during the games; maintaining sitting socially distanced in the stands. All of these are pieces of the puzzle that are really necessary to be successful for the long term.

And we're taking this pause just for that purpose to make sure that we can still recover most of the season. But we will be reviewing those guidance recommendations from the Task Force and hopefully have something finalized in the next day or so.

The Main Street Relief Fund, just a brief update, as we announced last week, our second round of Main Street Relief is now opened for all small businesses, private businesses in the State. We did our nonprofits. And this is a second round for the private businesses.

This second round equating to approximately \$100 million will have an open application period through Friday, October 30th. So you still have about 8 1/2 days to get your applications in. It's very, very similar to the first round.

Businesses have to be a for-profit business with their principal place of business here within New Hampshire, and to have operated since May 29th of 2019. So we wanted to make sure that they have been in operation for at least a year. That allows for auditing purposes and making sure that reducing and minimizing the potential for fraud.

At our request, GOFERR has been exploring a lot of opportunities to ensure that sufficient outreach is being made in all aspects of New Hampshire business communities. And the team has collaborated with stakeholders and community groups, including the Equity Response Team. If you remember, this is one of the concerns brought to us early on in the process, making sure that there is equity within minority communities or disadvantaged communities, communities that even might have English as a second language as a barrier, right, making sure that everyone really has a shot. All the businessowners really have an equal shot to get this grant funding.

And so, the team is really, I think, going above and beyond. I think they're doing a great job over the last week and will continue to do so, engaging with those minority businessowners, using volunteers to spread the word, using the chambers of commerce and a variety of other organizations within those communities to make sure that everyone has a shot to apply. It's a very simple process to apply for the Main Street Relief Fund.

At the same time, they're making sure that the tools are available, as well. So we talked about whether it's English as a second language, making sure there's translations services, or whatever it might be to make sure that all those barriers are overcome and it could be successful.

As of today, a datapoint, over 2,000 businesses have submitted applications for this second round of funding. And as with all the other funding streams, applications can be found at GOFERR, goferr.nh.gov/apply. And you can see it up there on the screen, as well. And it's about eight more days to get your applications in.

Also, as we announced a few weeks ago, the State is currently receiving tens of thousands of the BinaxNOW rapid tests. The BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests are coming into the State. We get about 25,000 per week. It's going to be a great tool, a very important tool in responding to COVID-19.

And so, in order to help quickly test symptomatic individuals, the State has placed BinaxNOW cards -- and they really are little cards. They almost look like a little credit card, if you will. That we've placed them across the State for community testing, and anyone who is symptomatic and wants to take a test, we very much encourage them to do so. They can take advantage of these tests and get results in about 15 minutes. It's a super simple, super easy test. And for those are symptomatic, it is very, very accurate. And we want to really encourage people to reach out and take advantage of that.

They could be folks in the school community, frontline Healthcare Workers, Emergency Responders. Anyone can really have access to these tests. They are available right now at 12 community testing sites and our National Guard testing sites in Concord and Londonderry, with more of those sites coming on next week. And what we're putting up here is a map. In total, between now and the end of the year, we will probably have about 400,000. Nearly half a million of these Binax tests will be available here in New Hampshire.

And so, you can see this map and get more details at nh.gov. And then, you just hit the Get Tested button. It's right there. And then, you can click on the COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing Locations Map. And this will pop up. You can zoom in. You can see all the different sites and locations. So we just really try to make it super easy for folks to understand where they are, where they can get this test as well as other information, whether it's urgent care hospitals, whatever it might be. We just tried to make it very transparent and easy. We don't want those barriers to exist. But right now, 12 community testing locations have those Binax cards. Take advantage and there'll be more cards, tests, and locations across the State coming very, very shortly.

We're approaching Veteran's Day. We get all wrapped up with COVID and other things. But we are approaching Veteran's Day in just a few weeks' time. And we're reminded frankly of a lot of those sacrifices that those men and women, and our Veterans, and their families, have made for us. And as we always say, they stood very strong and proud for our country. And we need to do the same for them.

But the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the Veterans community have been well-documented. And they are very clear, very stark. The pandemic has really exacerbated many of the challenges related to issues of mental health or homelessness, substance abuse, PTSD, issues around PTSD. So, as the COVID pandemic has sprung up, there's more isolation. A lot of folks are more hesitant to go in and seek out or receive services.

So, earlier this year, as a lot of folks might remember, we allocated over \$7 million to ensure that Veterans continued to receive many of these vital services and community supports. And today, we're proud to announce an additional investment of \$2 million through the end of the year. The process to get a lot of this money out went very, very well.

I was just over at Liberty House this past week. They're finishing their construction project. Liberty House is a homeless home for Veterans in Manchester. I had spent some time in the old Liberty House. It was a tiny fairly rundown home, frankly, for I think about nine individuals. Well, the new location is just absolutely beautiful. They're going to finish construction in the next couple months and be able to hold up to close to 30 Veterans with a full suite of services.

So, it is just really great to see how some of these dollars are being used. And they're just getting out there very quickly. And the services are there. The need is there. And we're allocating another \$2 million to those programs in the next couple weeks.

And one last thing before we take questions: unemployment. So our unemployment numbers continue to drop precipitously. I think we, as of this morning, we have about just over 27,000 or 28,000 individuals seeking unemployment in a week-over-week number, which is great to see the number continuously fall. Our unemployment rate probably somewhere around the 3.7%, 3.8% range right now, it continues to drop, which is all very positive news.

But the State's unemployment program, we want to remind folks, continues to be safe and secure. There's a lot more discussion and news reports nationally on fraud within the system. And we want folks to feel secure. Here, in New Hampshire, we have some of the best and brightest that manage our system.

People do continue to attempt to try to victimize, though, filing for unemployment. And we have to be very cognizant of them. The common thread in all of this attempted fraud is identity theft, resulting from the large-scale data breaches, because so many folks are now in the system, that are frankly not associated with the State system over the past decade. So there's a lot of data breaches, not with our system, per se, but with a lot of the other systems that are out there that manage this. And folks are using that, in terms of identity theft.

Some States have already fallen victim, very seriously, to, in some cases, hundreds of millions of dollars of fraudulent checks being sent out. Here, in New Hampshire, we have detected about 6,000 individual cases, just over, maybe about 6500 cases of fraudulent claims being filed using stolen identities with less than 100 actual payments of those fraudulent cases going out the door. So, 98% of the time, we're right on it. We catch it. There have been a few cases, but less than 100 fraudulent checks out of the hundreds and hundreds, frankly over millions of checks that have gone out since the beginning of March. So the team is doing a very, very good job.

But the point of what I'm bringing up today is we want folks to understand how this is happening, why it's potentially happening. And we all have our responsibility to kind of keep our eye out to make sure that our patterns, our habits, and our behavior around this system is, frankly, being aware of this potential threat.

So, it can take a few different -- people can see it in a few different ways. So, there could be unauthorized changes being made to unemployment accounts. So we want folks to really keep an eye on their account. Go online, verify the information. Make sure that the folks that are authorized to see and use the accounts are the folks you really want to be authorized to see and use that account.

There have been cases of individuals posing as Government Officials contacting people by the telephone and urging them to repay any overpaid benefits over the phone with a credit card. So just be very cognizant of people posing as Government Officials to contact you over the phone. Please know that the State will never ask you for credit card information. So if folks are calling you about unemployment information and asking you for credit card information, that is a clear red flag and a warning sign that someone may be attempting identity theft.

We're never going to contact you and ask you to provide your username or password. Never give that over the phone. That is nothing we would actually ask. We're never going to contact you via text message. So if you get text messages concerning your unemployment insurance, please do not respond, and let the State know as soon as you possibly can.

So, again, as I just said, just be sure you're reviewing your correspondence from the Department. Check if there's any changes made to your account to either your banking information or your mailing address. You will always receive a notice directly from the Department to confirm changes that you've authorized. So you can go into your account. You can make changes. We're always going to confirm that those changes are actually made to your account. So you'll receive some follow-up correspondence from us.

And then, just to check your account and take appropriate measures to safeguard your identity, especially on personal devices. If you're using a phone and a computer, multiple devices, make sure a lot of the safeguards on those devices are truly in place. And if you do have a problem and detect a problem, please call the Unemployment Hotline at 271-7700. And please report it.

So we've done a great job to-date. We're seeing more and more of this spike up across the country. And we just want to make sure folks are vigilant and right on top of it. One of the many things that we have to be vigilant about through this COVID pandemic, but hats off to the folks at the Department of Employment Security. Rich Lavers and Commissioner George Copadis, and their teams just do an unbelievable job fielding thousands of phone calls, really minimizing any potential fraud within our system. Compared to other States, we truly are one of the best. We still are that gold standard, as I like to call us. And they continue to do a great job.

But we just want reminders out there, especially as we hit the holiday season, for folks to keep an eye out for potential fraud within the system and potential identity theft that we have seen in other parts of the country. I guess, with that, we can open it up for questions. Good afternoon, Paula. How are you doing?

Q&A Session

I'm very happy to be back. Good afternoon, Governor. There's been a Study Committee on long-term care that is recommending that the \$300-a-week bonus that was provided to those who work in Medicare facilities be reinstated. I don't know where that money would come from, or what there might be for a potential for that.

Governor Sununu:

Right now, we're not looking at that. We had done that out of CARES Act funds. As we get close to December, all the CARES Act funds have to be spent by the end of December. We did put that in place and then we extended it. I think we've put over about \$75 million into those Frontline Worker stipends to-date. So we've done it twice already. And that was really at the height of the pandemic. And when you were looking at long-term care facilities, we had well-over 20 outbreaks at that time.

So, those individuals continue to do amazing work. There's no doubt about it. We appreciate everything that they're doing and have done. My hope is that, whether it's after the election or even into early next year, the Congress actually starts doing something -- no one is surprised with my frustration

with Congress lately -- with a stimulus package, additional relief package, more flexibility, whatever it might be. But one of the limitations we really have simply is in timing at this point.

But right now, we're not looking to do it. It doesn't mean we couldn't do something down the road and hopefully with some support from the Federal Government.

And could I ask a further question? Your Open Up Committee had a number of calls today relative to the hockey. And a lot of the callers were concerned about one provision, which is that there would have to be testing prior to, basically start out with COVID-19 testing. One Physician was a Pediatrician, said that that's just a shot in time and that it doesn't necessarily go forward. Things can happen. So there's some pushback on that one particular issue. Do you think that that's something that you would be willing to waive?

Governor Sununu:

I'll talk to Dr. Chan about -- I mean, I don't know exactly what was said at the meeting and what those recommendations are. I mean, I literally think it got over just about an hour ago. So, we will take a look at that.

I can tell you assuredly that testing is important. Yes, it might just be a shot in time, but it's a very important shot in time, especially when you're looking to start something up again. So I'm shocked that anyone would imply that testing isn't an important piece of the puzzle. The whole point is to hopefully hit the reset button, so that when these teams come back that these players, coaches, even the parents, we encourage everyone to get tested. So when they come back, they're coming back knowing they don't have the virus, knowing that they're not going to be a spreader.

It doesn't mean that it couldn't happen again down the road, as outside influences come into play, whatever it might be. There could be other community transmission. But my goodness, testing is such a vital important part of the process. And yes, it's a snapshot in time, but that's exactly what we're doing. We're taking a pause in time. So I see it as a very important tool. But I'll confer with Dr. Chan and his team, after we've all kind of had time to take a look. I don't think either of us can really comment on the details of that right now.

But Governor, could you or Dr. Chan comment on whether, through this contact tracing, there were a lot of cases and many of them got into a number of schools? Did a lot of this virus get -- did a lot of it occur on the ice? Or did most of it occur outside a rink or arena in gatherings of people who play?

Governor Sununu:

Through the contact tracing, I think it's clear that it moved in a variety of different areas, whether it was on the ice, whether it was parent-to-parent, whether it was parent-to-player, player-to-player. The net result was that you had well-over 100 kids, close to 150 individuals that were infected. You had a very inordinate amount of outbreaks, six or seven or eight outbreaks very, very quickly.

And remember, we had been working with the hockey community for a couple months, as we saw one outbreak and another, and another, and another. So, of course, we had to do something. It's my understanding that, yes, the contact tracing has identified it's being passed both in some of the social gatherings that happened before, during, and after games with parents. It has happened player-to-player. And it is having a domino effect in our schools.

That's one of the biggest concerns that we have is that these over 100 kids getting infected, unlike any other sport in the State, frankly. A lot of sports are just either managing differently. They have different variables that come into play that haven't allowed the virus to spread as aggressively.

But either way, as the virus is spreading, these kids are going into school and being that kind of trigger, if you will, for some of the cases we've found in our schools. And we don't have many cases in schools, luckily. I still believe we don't have any. I don't think we have any full outbreaks in schools right now. But we do have clusters here-and-there. And these kids, unfortunately, are being kind of that first domino.

So you don't want to let it go unchecked and allow that to really go out of control. And we will have the repercussion of not just shutting down a hockey season, but shutting down an entire school. That's at risk. And we have to be very cognizant of that.

Governor, wanted to ask you about homelessness in Manchester.

Governor Sununu:

Okay.

I have a letter from the Mayor and the Fire Chief of Manchester saying that their grant funding requests for homelessness outreach through the COVID-19 Response Unit was denied. According to them, the State said that the State didn't feel it qualified as an emergency. Can you explain?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, so the Department of Justice has funded the Homeless Grant Programs in the City of Manchester well through next year, I think through March of 2021. I believe the denial that they're discussing is grant money that wouldn't even come into play six months from now. And we have 220 cities and towns that need help now.

I believe Manchester's received almost \$1 million of the \$3.4 million. Nearly 30% of the money has gone to Manchester. And again, they're fully funded for those programs through March of 2021. So doesn't mean that we can't come back and look at it, but let's take a look at that in January and February, understanding that there are real needs today in other cities and towns across the State. Dover, I think Lancaster, those cities and towns would be denied money if all the money just went in today.

So there'll be other opportunities down the road, to be sure. But, again, they've received over \$1 million. It's not like they're not going without. And those programs go five or six months from now. So we have plenty of time to come back to that same issue and see if it's something that we would continue on in the future.

I have some questions actually for Dr. Chan, if you don't mind. Just wanted to clarify the numbers of cases, just because I guess there was some math that our folks are trying to figure out. But 82 new cases, which takes the total close to 10,000, correct?

Dr. Chan:

Correct, 82 new people diagnosed with COVID-19, which takes the total close to 10,000. The total is 9,994.

Okay. Can you comment on the red zones, where they are now? Still I think Manchester and Nashua, and Grafton County, what your thoughts are about how that's going. And also comment on a good piece of information, I guess, which is that our hospitalizations seem to be low, compared to what we're seeing across the country in other places where hospitals are getting really filled up again. So, red zones, hospitalizations?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, no, good questions. I think what you're talking about red zones refers to the map that we have on our website relative to the community transmission metrics that we've put out there and how we're tracking those on our map. And so, for those who may not be familiar with the data that we've put on our website, it's publicly available. We have classified different communities, primarily at a county level, but also with the Cities of Manchester and Nashua as having minimal, moderate, or substantial levels of community transmission.

And so, the red in the map that you're referring to indicates a substantial level of community transmission that we've defined based on metrics. And so, there are three -- pulling from my memory here. So the Cities of Manchester and Nashua have been in the substantial transmission category now for at least a couple of weeks. Merrimack County actually is in the substantial transmission category. Part of that is because of one of the outbreaks that we have at a long-term care facility, which has bumped the numbers from a moderate to a substantial transmission category. So these are numbers that are being updated and changing on a daily basis. But those are the three areas on the map that are at substantial.

And then, there are a few other counties that have a moderate level, or yellow, on the map, moderate level of community transmission. Those are the counties of Belknap, Rockingham County, and Hillsborough County. I might be missing one. Hillsborough County is actually, as a whole -- this is Hillsborough County minus the Cities of Manchester and Nashua -- is actually right on the cusp, I think, of going from moderate to substantial.

So, again, these are numbers that are changing on a daily basis. We update the map. We update the data at the end of the day on a daily basis. But we encourage everybody to be monitoring this, whether they're connected with schools or long-term care facilities, or hospitals, or just people in the community. This is one of the ways that we are looking at and tracking levels of community transmission. And these metrics are looking not only at the number of new people diagnosed with COVID-19. It's looking at hospitalizations. It's looking at test-positivity rates.

Primarily what's driving communities into the higher levels of community transmission is the number of new people that have been diagnosed with COVID-19. That gets to your, I think, second question, which was about hospitalizations.

Hospitalizations continues, thankfully, to be low in New Hampshire. We had, at the lowest point, we were reporting out maybe one new hospitalization every two or three days, and had a hospital census statewide of maybe about 5 to 10 people hospitalized throughout the State on any given day.

Those numbers have gone up slightly from a couple of months ago, when we were sort of at our lowest point. But certainly the numbers are still low, certainly much, much lower than they were during the first sort of peak of the pandemic here in New Hampshire, back in April and May. And we want to keep it that way.

There are other States across the country. In fact many other States across the country are seeing increases in the number of COVID-19 diagnoses. And that has been followed by increases in hospitalizations. Hospitalizations is usually going to lag behind increases in case counts, so to speak.

And so, as we see increasing community transmission in New Hampshire, the concern is that, as the community transmission gets going, gets fueled, that it could spread to more vulnerable populations: people in long-term care facilities; people who have chronic medical conditions where infection could end them up in the hospital.

And so, it's certainly possible that hospitalizations could go up in the future. We've seen this pattern in other areas around the country. Thankfully, hospitalization's still low right now. And we want to do our best to limit community transmission and protect those in our community who are most vulnerable and most at risk for needing hospitalization, if they become infected.

Governor Sununu:

Great, do we have some questions on the phone?

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Hi, I have one question for Dr. Chan and one question for Governor Sununu. My question for Dr. Chan is, from State-to-State there are differences in how the positivity rate is calculated. Some places use unique people tested. So each person is counted just once, no matter how many times they're tested. Other places use specimens tested. So can you kind of clarify what number New Hampshire uses? And then, for Governor Sununu, following up on the news the other day about the Fat Katz restaurant in Hudson being fined, I was wondering if any action is being taken against the individual who went there, while aware of their COVID-19 diagnosis, and the other person who was supposed to be on quarantine. I know way back in the beginning with our first patient, there was an official order of isolation. And I'm wondering if that was contemplated in this case, as well.

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so sorry, trying to think of your first question, was about how we calculate the percent test-positivity rate. And you're right. This is one of the difficulties coordinating the response to the pandemic around the country, right? Part of the challenge is that people are tracking different metrics in different ways and reporting out on numbers in different ways, which makes it very difficult to compare State-to-State.

We have tried to put out the data in different ways to make it readily available. So we've put out data in terms of the number of people that are tested for COVID-19. But when we talk at least at these press conferences and what we report out publicly about test-positivity rate, we take into account the

total number of tests that are being conducted, even if somebody is tested multiple times over the course of the pandemic, right? To an earlier comment, just because someone tests positive once doesn't mean that several weeks, months down the road they might not then become infected.

And so, we want to capture the totality of the testing that's taking place in the State. And we believe that taking into account the total number of tests, even if somebody has repeatedly tested multiple times over the course of a pandemic, that is going to best capture the intention of tracking test-positivity, which is, are we capturing infection that might be circulating in the community?

And so, when we report out our test-positivity rate is around 1%, that's taking into account all tests that are conducted, including antigen tests. We have made efforts to try and capture negative antigen tests that are done. We have a new reporting system where we have asked Providers to report in all antigen tests, positive and negative, so that we can more accurately capture the totality of testing that's being conducted in the State, PCR tests and antigen-based tests. Thanks.

Governor Sununu:

Thank you very much. And Holly, I think your second question was specifically around the facility that did receive a fine. And all fines and penalties are really handled out of the Attorney General's Office. But the facility did receive a fine for allowing certain things to take place that should not have been taking place. But it's my understanding, at least as far as I know, the Attorney General is not looking for any fines or penalties for the individuals that were visiting that facility. The fine was more about the operations that that facility was undertaking.

Donna Jordan at The Colebrook Chronicle:

Yes, thank you very much. Good afternoon. I'm sorry. I'm way up north and I have three questions for you today.

Governor Sununu:

Okay.

Donna Jordan at The Colebrook Chronicle:

Your job, as I've seen it, over the last seven or eight months, is to provide these important updates and precautions about public health issues to the residents of the State. My job is to transfer that message through my newspaper, the same expectation I'm sure you have of everyone in that room. My question is: there's still a number of people -- you see them mainly on social media -- who have been clear they will not wear a mask. They aren't concerned about this virus in any way. They unfortunately are crass and bold. They say, look, it's only elderly people in nursing homes that get this. It's no different than the flu, etc., etc., etc. I'm sure you understand what I'm saying. What message do you want us to share for those people who might not be listening to those public health reports? My second question is: at your last press conference last week, I said to you, why is Coos County in this green bubble? Why are we so protected? And then, in the last seven days, we had 12 reported cases, which is more than half of what we've had since March, and it put us into a yellow zone for quarantine to travel, if we're going to places like Vermont. 8 of those cases reportedly are at the Federal Prison in Berlin. I'm wondering if that's considered a contained outbreak, and maybe the community spread isn't as dangerous, or the same as it is, if it was 12 people out in the

community. And my last question: we are already receiving cancellations here at The Chronicle for activities that were scheduled for next month. Towns are already preparing for town meeting dates and times, and locations. What sort of guidelines are we going to be looking at for the actual Town Warrant Articles meetings? A town has to prepare space for every single registered voter for town meetings, whether they show up or not. And many of the Town Halls are small and packed during town meeting. It's probably something you'd prefer to wait until after the New Year to answer. But towns are already preparing for their meetings. I'm wondering if there's been any thoughts given to guidelines at this stage. Thank you. That's what I have.

Governor Sununu:

Great, so if you don't mind, Donna, I'm going to answer the first. I'll take parts 1 and part 3. And I'll leave the second question having to do with the numbers in Coos, specifically around the Prison, and whether it's a contained -- or how they qualify that outbreak, or the situation, I should say, at the Prison.

Your first question was the message to some folks. Yeah, look, we see people on social media. And there is a small contingency of individuals in the State that are just being very defiant about wearing a mask and taking some of the precautions.

My message to those individuals would be, first and foremost, obviously, they're wrong. COVID is very real. If you're not worried about it for yourself, I suppose that is your right to do so. But be worried about it for those you may transmit it to, loved ones, the elderly, whatever it might be. You don't want to be -- I keep using the analogy of dominos -- you don't want to be that next domino that causes it to really become something very dangerous.

There are case after case after case across this country and across New England where folks thought it wasn't a big deal. You had well-over 100 people being infected 7 hours north of here up in Millinocket at a wedding. And that has resulted in real fatalities. They didn't think it was a big deal, either.

You have individuals who you've heard these terrible tragic stories of individuals who said, I didn't think this was a big deal. And unfortunately, they're passing away, right? Those are fatalities. And people that are time and time again saying, geez, I didn't take it seriously. Please, everyone has to take it seriously. This is a very serious deal.

So, unfortunately, there are just too many examples of people that didn't take it seriously and either them, themselves, or a loved one, or a family member succumbed to the virus. And it is very real. It is very serious.

And so, I would ask them to look at some of those examples. They're real-life examples. If you're not going to listen to the Governor, if you're not going to listen to Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx, and Dr. Chan, and all these amazing Experts out there that know the science and know what's going on at a very real level, listen to those independent third parties, if you will, and those tragic stories, because there are just too many of them. And we hear about the new ones coming online every day of folks that didn't take it serious.

The quick answer for your last part about what about town meetings, specifically, or cancellations of things in March: no one knows what March is going to look like at all. Everything could be different. The vaccine could be out. There could be success with it or not success with it. We don't know what funding might be available. We don't know what the situation might be.

So, I cannot comment on any guidelines that may be put in place for town meeting or events in March. We're very good in New Hampshire about taking these things one at a time, with specific examples to provide as much flexibility but maintain as much safety as we can for our citizens. So I guess we will kind of take a look at where we are maybe the end of January or early-February. We will work.

We have such a great one-on-one relationship with so many of these towns. I actually just swore in the new President of the Town Clerks just the other day. So we just have a great relationship with all of them and we will work with them one-on-one, because every situation's a little bit different, but really not a time to do that probably until early in '21, because we just don't know what things are going to look like.

I feel confident it will look better. But we don't know how much better and at what level. With that, I'll turn it over to Commissioner Shibinette for the second question.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Thank you. Your question was in regards to the Federal Prison and whether it's a contained outbreak or not. And I'm really not addressing that specific case as much as all outbreaks in congregate living settings, which are Prisons, jails, nursing homes, and a variety of other settings.

I think the one thing that you need to consider is that although a Prison System feels contained, the people that work there, similar to the people that work in a nursing home or any other congregate setting, are members of our community. So if there is an outbreak inside the walls of a jail, or a Prison, the Corrections Officers and the Staff, the Clinical Staff that take care of those incarcerated people are still shopping in our grocery stores, going to gyms. An incarcerated person may need to go to a hospital and could expose Healthcare Workers.

So we really don't look at, because the outbreak happened in a secure facility, that it is a contained outbreak. It does have the potential to put other people in the community at risk.

Governor Sununu:

Thank you, Commissioner.

Jordan H. with the New Hampshire Public Radio:

Hi, I was wondering if you can talk a little bit about the State's Vaccine Plan that was sent into the CDC last week. What is in that Plan? And also how things are going with the Vaccine Registry, since New Hampshire still currently does not have one and Experts have said that that would be pretty important, when rolling this out.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Hi, this is Commissioner Shibinette. So, yes, we submitted our Vaccine Plan on Friday to the CDC. It is in draft form. And that's really important, because the CDC is going to give us feedback on that Plan. And then, we will make a series of amendments over the coming weeks and months, because, as we know, a lot of our plan is really guided about information we get out of the Federal Government.

And as an example, we submitted the Plan on Friday. And then, late-Friday afternoon, we received additional information about long-term care testing with vaccinations, late-Friday afternoon. So we

would already need to amend that Vaccination Plan just to include some of the guidance. So we expect and we knew right from the get-go that we were going to be doing a series of amendments to that draft.

I know you had a second part of your question on the vaccinations. So, if you could just repeat? Oh, the Registry, yes. So we are very, very quickly standing up our Registry. We expect our Registry to be stood up sometime first week in December and should be ready to go to help us with the mass vaccination efforts. If, for some reason, we have our first round of vaccines before the first week of December, we have two or three other options that we will use until the Registry is up.

Governor Sununu:

Oh, we're all set? Okay. Great, thank you so much. Anything else here? Paula, how are you?

Is it true that Trump is coming in the next couple of days or weeks before the election?

Governor Sununu:

What have you heard, Paula? Let me know.

I was at a press conference this morning where Steinhauser said that he's coming on Saturday, Sunday?

Governor Sununu:

I believe it's Sunday.

This weekend.

Governor Sununu:

I've heard that he may be coming on Sunday.

Okay, and where?

Governor Sununu:

I've heard it will be somewhere in the Manchester area.

And will you be involved at all?

Governor Sununu:

Well, I've always said if a President or Vice President comes to the State, I'm always going to at least make every attempt to try to at least greet them or whatever. I really don't know the timing or the schedule, though.

Are you planning to campaign with him?

Governor Sununu:

I don't go to the rallies. So if it's a rally, I probably won't go to the rally. I don't go to rallies like that. Yeah. And I got 10 days in my own campaign, too. So we will see how the schedules meet up. But obviously, as I always do, I'll make every effort, at a minimum, to greet him, as the Governor should.

Do these things concern you as a potential for super-spread events?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I got to tell you. I think they did early on. But we took a lot of precautions around them. And I'm just going to comment on the -- there was a rally with the Vice President, I believe, over in Pease earlier this week. From what I saw -- I wasn't involved. I couldn't be there. And I don't go to rallies. But from what I saw, it was outdoors. They had a lot of distance between the seating. It was out in the fresh air. They had told everyone they needed to wear masks, because it was over 100 people. They were abiding by our guidelines. So, from what I saw, they were taking the precautions they needed to take.

So, I don't know really what this potential event might be. If it's a rally, hopefully they treat it the same way. But from what I saw just on the news clips, it looked like they had taken the right precautions, which, again, allays, I think, a lot of our fears and concerns that they're going to be events. And I don't believe we have any cases from previous rallies or events, regardless of Political Party, of who's holding them. I don't think we have any. Our contact tracing hasn't showed any significant amount of cases, or if any at all, from previous rallies.

So it can be managed. I think we've shown that we can do it right. And if people follow the right protocols, it can be done safely.

Regarding the unemployment fraud cases, do we know how much money that 100 checks that went out the door amounted to? Was it a few thousand?

Governor Sununu:

No, it could potentially be in the thousands, but less than 100 checks. The average check is a couple hundred dollars. So, given that we've put out just shy of \$1.5 billion, you don't want any fraud. You want zero. But the fact that the potential checks that have went out the door amount to maybe \$20,000 or something like that, it's a pretty good track record of those individuals over at Employment Security.

Well, that's what I was wondering about is every year there are people trying to fraudulently get unemployment in every State. So, I mean, are there more?

Governor Sununu:

How are we so good? Is that your question?

No, I mean, are there more of these cases? The 6500 number, is that more than we'd see in a typical year?

Governor Sununu:

Oh, that's a good question, for the State of New Hampshire?

Right.

Governor Sununu:

I don't know. I really don't know. I'm going to assume so, just because we have so many more people in the system. There's so much more money out there. So, I'm going to assume so. But that's really a guess on my part. I could have Commissioner Copadis or Richard Lavers follow up with you on that, as well.

But I can tell you it's much more severe, in terms of the stories we've heard from other States. I think we spoke at this press conference. There are a few States that have sent like literally hundreds of millions of dollars potentially overseas. It's an outrageous amount of money, because they didn't take the precautions that we take. They didn't have the protections that we take. And frankly, they didn't have the expertise that we have.

And Richard Lavers and his team specifically within Employment Security just do a phenomenal, phenomenal job. Remember, we were getting over 10 times as many people entering into the system, right, from 18,000 people in the system to 118,000 people in the system, or more, frankly, in about a week. And that onslaught is ripe for a problem. But the fact that we were able to stand it up with so much manpower, with the right training, with the right leadership has really allowed us to be one of the best in the country in terms of minimizing that fraud.

But we just want folks to -- the message today is about be cognizant that it is out there, whether it's identity theft through some of these other larger systems, not through the State system. We don't have any evidence of that. But there are other means that people try to steal your identity and essentially claim your unemployment insurance for you.

Okay. Great. All right. Well, thank you guys very much. Thanks for joining us. Have a great weekend. We will be back next week. We continue on a great path here in New Hampshire. Thank you.