



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Well, good afternoon, everybody. Thanks, everyone, for joining us this afternoon. I think, as usual, we're going to start things off. Dr. Daly's going to do our Public Health update today.

Dr. Daly:

Great, good afternoon, everyone. I'm going to provide an update on our case counts first and then talk about vaccines. Today, we're announcing 552 new cases of COVID-19 in New Hampshire. This brings our total case count to 90,525 cases. Of those, we have 3,763 active cases of infection in our State.

The current census of hospitalized patients with confirmed COVID-19 is 130. And today, we're also aware of three more people in New Hampshire who have died due to complications of COVID-19 infection. None of these individuals were associated with a long-term care facility and all were 60 years of age or older. These new cases and deaths are a reminder that we should all continue to wear masks, social distance, and get vaccinated as soon as we're able to.

On the vaccine update side, to-date, now, we have administered 885,000 doses of vaccine in our State. This includes 587,000 people that have received their first dose, which is 43% of New Hampshire's population. Of those, 338,000 are considered fully vaccinated. And that is 25% of our population.

In the last week, we've administered over 100,000 doses of vaccine in our State. In terms of our vaccine supply, this week, we received about 50,000 first doses of vaccine between both the doses that come into the State of New Hampshire, as well as those doses that come into that Federal Retail Pharmacy Program.

I did want to address the Johnson & Johnson, Janssen Biotech vaccine situation. So, as you've heard by now, there have been six cases of a very rare but severe syndrome of blood clots with low platelets that have been identified among the nearly 7 million people in our country who have received the J&J vaccine. This demonstrates that our process for monitoring vaccine safety is working, as it should. And this very rare event has been identified and is being thoroughly investigated.

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, is currently reviewing these events to determine if there are any changes that are needed, regarding the recommended use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine here in the United States. During this time of review, it's recommended that the use of this vaccine be paused.

The vaccine doses in New Hampshire will be held securely and under appropriate storage and handling conditions, so that it can be used if and when its use is again recommended. We have approximately 10,000 to 12,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccine on hold here in New Hampshire. And CDC has indicated that they will not ship any additional doses to our State until this pause is lifted.

We expect to receive additional information from ACIP at the end of next week, when this group meets again, to review additional data. At this time, the Department is communicating with our

Healthcare Providers in New Hampshire to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information and can recognize and report any of these potentially very rare reactions to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

For anyone at home who has concern about this and has recently received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine within the last three weeks, our recommendation to you is that if you do develop any severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination, you should seek medical evaluation. Again, we're not expecting to have this rare complication occur here in New Hampshire. However, we want you to be on the lookout, as well as our Healthcare Providers.

Do note, though, that headache is the normal and expected side-effect of the vaccine. We expect people to have a mild/moderate headache within three days of vaccination and this is expected. The people who are experiencing these rare blood clots developed a very severe headache one to two weeks after vaccination.

So, based on our current data, a person's chance of experience this specific reaction is less than one in a million, right? So, certainly, if you have any concerns about your health, we want you to speak with your Healthcare Provider about those.

We continue to recommend that people do get vaccinated and we have very safe and effective Pfizer and Moderna vaccines available to us right now in New Hampshire. Between the people that have already been vaccinated and those who have registered, we have over 70% of people in New Hampshire who are 16-and-older who have made that choice to get vaccinated. And there continues to be plenty of appointments available, so we encourage everyone in New Hampshire who's eligible to go ahead, sign up, and get vaccinated. With that, I'll turn it over to Commissioner Shibiinette.

Commissioner Shibiinette:

Good afternoon. Just a quick outbreak update, we are announcing the closure of two outbreaks today. The Alpine Health Center and the Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility in Berlin are both closed. We have one new outbreak to announce. The Federal Correctional Facility in Berlin is now an open outbreak. They have 85 residents and two Staff cases in their outbreak. So that brings our total to three institutional outbreaks: the Coos County Nursing Home, the Federal Correctional Institution, and Rockingham County House of Corrections. Thanks.

Governor Sununu:

Great, thank you, Commissioner. Okay. So, a variety of different things to talk about today and then we will open it up for questions, as we usually do. All-in-all, I think it's safe to say we've had a very, very successful week here in New Hampshire. We keep getting shots in the arms. That's the most important thing.

And as of this afternoon, we have over 120,000 available appointments in VINI. So, if you're registered in the system but you haven't booked, or you haven't even registered in VINI, it literally just takes a couple minutes. So, we just want folks to know there's still a lot of appointments available between now and Memorial Day. So we just want to encourage everybody to sign up for a vaccine, if they haven't done so, because, on Monday, April 19th -- that's just a few days away -- we are opening it up to everyone, regardless of where they are from. So, if you're a New Hampshire resident and have yet to register or schedule an appointment, we just strongly encourage that folks do so. On Monday, eligibility

will expand to nonresidents. And we just want to make sure that everyone in New Hampshire has kind of that first shot to get a shot.

Also, as was announced a couple weeks ago, starting on Monday, schools in New Hampshire will return to fulltime, in-person instruction five days a week. I know that's very exciting, speaking as a parent, for all the parents out there. We appreciate everyone's sacrifice. The Teachers did a phenomenal job. The parents, the students did a phenomenal job through the tough times of remote and hybrid learning. And now, we are getting back to the classrooms fulltime.

We know that getting kids back into the classrooms is safe. The CDC, President Biden, they've all said to do so, even before the vaccines came online. And it's the right thing to do for the education of our children, along with their emotional and social wellbeing.

A majority of schools have already been back in-person fulltime, well-over 50%. And almost all the other districts have handled this April 19th deadline to return into in-person instruction very, very well. In a few cases, I think I believe just six overall, the State has granted waivers to districts due to temporary staffing limitations or other extenuating circumstances that risked the health and the wellbeing of those students and Teachers. So, I believe six overall waivers across the entire State, just a phenomenal job of everybody kind of moving forward and making it happen, knowing that it's just much, much better for the overall wellbeing of those students.

So, we have a couple more significant announcements today. As many of you know, this Friday, the State's Mask Mandate is set to expire. We've been very careful from the beginning of this pandemic to take up items individually and make informed decisions. We never set arbitrary dates unsupported by data or science. We look at each step to determine if and when we must renew our temporary restrictions.

Tomorrow, New Hampshire will not renew the State's Mask Mandate. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with Public Health to encourage social distancing and wearing of masks when appropriate. That message will not change whatsoever. What does change is the Government's imposed requirement to do so.

So, the key datapoints that we continue to monitor, we can talk a little bit about those, so folks understand what we're looking at when making these significant decisions. So, first, we have the rate of the COVID-related fatalities.

So, what you see here, what we're showing here is this is the seven-day average of fatalities in New Hampshire since November 1st. And as you can see, this is that fall and winter surge that was just so tough across the State of New Hampshire, at one time averaging just about 12 fatalities a day, really, really tough time in late-December, early-January, and February.

You can see. This is when we began our Mask Mandate. We didn't have vaccines at the time. We were coming into what we knew was a predicted surge. We obviously hit the surge. And now, if you see on the other side, where we are today, we're ending the Mask Mandate on April 16th. We are down to approximately -- we still average about one fatality a day. And of course, one is still too many for all of us. And we acknowledge that. But with over 95% drop in fatalities, vaccines being so readily available, especially to those most vulnerable, this is really what we had put the Mask Mandate in place to protect for. And it worked. It really did. I can imagine these numbers could have been a lot, lot worse without some of those additional restrictions in place. And we appreciate the sacrifice a lot of folks made. We know it wasn't always easy for folks. But we will be ending the Mask Mandate on the 15th [sic].

The hospitalization rates, also, I don't know if we have a chart for that one. Well, that one isn't dropping so much. We don't have the concerns that we had before concerning our healthcare system being overrun, lack of available beds. There's plenty of beds available throughout our system.

Loss of hospital services, there was a concern that hospitals may have to pull back on their services. The workforce shortages that we saw back here in November, December, January, a real critical time for healthcare workforce, but now that we've been able to get them the vaccine, a lot of those folks are back. They're working in the hospitals. And so, there isn't as big of a concern, or really any concern, that the system is going to be overrun, especially as we go further and further down the road with vaccines.

And speaking of vaccines, there's also the vaccination rate, a huge variable that, again, didn't even exist back in November, when we put these Mandates in place. What we're seeing here -- there's a lot on this chart, but it's a really good chart -- so this is back on December 15th, really when we first started receiving vaccine into the State, all the way to today.

So, the first thing we did was allow the folks in long-term care and our Healthcare Workers, those are of our most vulnerable populations to receive the vaccine. And you can see each step that we took, expanding the eligibility for folks to get vaccinated, 65-and-up we started back in late-January, a couple months ago, actually. Then, we did Teachers and 50-and-up, 40, 30, 16-and-up. And you can see the rate of vaccine distribution.

Folks know we are among one other, if not the best in the country. We are really on the tops, in terms of the speed of vaccine. And really what has happened over the past month has been an absolute gamechanger. And Perry Plummer and Beth Daly, and the entire Team deserve so much credit for allowing this next step to really take place.

The white line you see here are those that have been fully vaccinated, the number of citizens that we have. The yellow line is those that have at least gotten a first shot. And right there, those numbers total nearly a million people across the State -- or a million shots administered, which is just a phenomenal number, something that I don't think any of us really thought possible just a couple months ago. But it's going superfast, which is wonderful, which is why that fatality rate is so low and why I think we can have such flexibility moving forward.

It's important to note that this Mandate going away will not limit or prevent the ability of a private business or local cities and towns from requiring masks, as was always the case before the statewide Mask Mandate came into place, prior to the fall surge. Also, a State Mandate does not have to be in place for simply us to know that wearing a face covering when we're able to maintain -- when we're unable to maintain social distancing, it's just a good idea. It's recommended by Public Health. We're strongly behind that message and we encourage everyone to continue to do so.

New Hampshire residents, I think, over the past few months have shown that they know how to keep themselves, ourselves, our neighbors, our communities, our families safe without a State Mandate in place, as we did before the surge. And it's a good reminder to remember why we did this in the first place, back in November. Again, our most vulnerable population wasn't vaccinated yet. We were heading into what we predicted to be that tough surge. Long-term care residents were at grave risk. We saw those numbers escalate, and we needed to insulate those individuals. But now that that population has had more-than-ample time to receive their vaccine, we're just thrilled that by and large they have chosen to do so at such a high rate, which gives everybody, I think, a good pause and a breath that we really are coming out of this very, very quickly.

So, New Hampshire does remain among the fastest in the country in vaccine distribution. All Granite Staters over the age of 16 will soon have had the opportunity to receive at least their first dose of vaccine, if they haven't already. Therefore, we will be extending the Safer at Home Guidance only until May 7th, at which time it's anticipated that those restrictions for business operations will transition from required Mandates to universal best practices.

Consistent with that move, we will be working closely with our Reopening Task Force to simplify and combine all of those effective techniques that we've implemented and learned over the course of this pandemic into a single document that could be used as an optional guide for businesses to help slow the spread of COVID.

So, why May 7th? Again, when you look at the data, because at that time, as of May 7th, over 95% of New Hampshire's citizens who want a vaccine will have received their first shot. That's how fast this whole process is moving. Virtually everybody, there'll be a few that have maybe chosen to go to late-May. But, virtually everyone who has wanted a vaccine will be well in the process of receiving, if not fully vaccinated by that time.

I think it's an amazing testament, frankly, to the citizens of New Hampshire, not just the Team that we have here, but the citizens, themselves. None of it would have been possible just a few short weeks and months ago. But everyone is really doing their part to stare down COVID. And it's just been a phenomenal opportunity for our State.

The pandemic is not over. And we are not claiming victory by any means on any of this. But, our successes to-date have created opportunities, which is good news to share alongside many of the challenges that we still face.

We have stories and pictures of grandparents seeing their grandkids for the first time in a year. Kids and Teachers are safely back in the classrooms. So many individuals are receiving their COVID vaccine, alongside hundreds of the volunteers, the First Responders, the Members of our National Guard. They're working so hard, so many hours that they're putting in. We have truly been in this together since March of 2020. We will continue to move forward together in a measured, data-driven way, as we have always done.

So, let's just keep getting our vaccinations, keep doing what we need to do to keep each other and our communities safe. And together, New Hampshire is definitely on-track, I think, for a very successful summer-and-beyond, without a doubt. So, some good news really hitting us here, and, yeah, don't forget, book now.

There's still a lot of opportunity to get your appointment as a New Hampshire citizen, until we open it up on Monday for everybody without a 603 area code, as we like to say, which is also a great opportunity, right, for our second-homeowners, or our out-of-state students, or temporary workers, whatever it might be. We're going to open that up to everybody. I think we're still one of the first States in the country to actually do that, as well. So, we're just leading the charge. And again, don't want to take a victory lap on those successes. But with those successes come a lot of opportunity. And we wanted to take advantage of that. With that, we can open it up for questions.

Q&A Session

Hi, Governor.

Governor Sununu:

How are you?

Good, how are you?

Governor Sununu:

Good.

I have a question. It has to do with the Mask Mandate. Yesterday, I was speaking with the Heads of two hospital systems in the State who say they are extremely busy. Their hospitals are full. Part of it is an increase, an almost doubling, in the last month in COVID patients. But the other piece of it is that there was a lag in care for a lot of people in this last year. And some of those acuity issues/conditions are catching up with them.

Governor Sununu:

In terms of non-COVID care?

Correct.

Governor Sununu:

Yes, sure.

Correct; but given that, they were saying they would love to see, as a medical community, people to continue mask wearing.

Governor Sununu:

I would love to see people to continue to wear the masks. The only thing that's changing...

Is this counterintuitive then?

Governor Sununu:

No, the only thing that's changing is the State isn't coming down with the Mandate saying, thou shalt must. I get a daily update on every available bed in the State, in terms of hospital, everyone who has COVID in this State and that is in the hospital. And we know that those numbers have been rising. But

there's still lots of capacity all across the State in virtually every -- I can't think of any hospital that is full, per se. There is still capacity in those hospitals. Hospitals have not shut down certain core services.

And to your point, a lot of folks are coming in for all those additional procedures and services. They may have had concern before. That's actually the right thing to do, because folks are being vaccinated. They're feeling more comfortable going out and getting those procedures and going to hospitals. And that's the right thing that we want to encourage.

So, again, we want to encourage folks to wear masks, maintain social distancing, be smart. The citizens of the State know what to do. They know what to do in these situations. And they've been tremendous about it.

But having a State Mandate saying thou shall must, that's a temporary thing. That's a very harsh thing. And that was a hard decision to make on our part, to be sure. We did it as part of the fall surge. The fall surge is maintained, especially on a fatality-rate basis.

A lot of the folks coming into the hospitals that do have COVID now, they tend to be younger. They tend to have less severe symptoms. There's still some folks that may need a vent, per se. But the severity of those symptoms, the length of stay is also being shortened, which is also very, very good news.

So, again, I think a lot more people feel more comfortable going into hospital, getting that care, preventative care, some of those procedures or surgeries they might have delayed. That's all really, really good stuff. And we're just going to keep encouraging folks. Yeah, sure, wear your masks. Maintain distancing.

But just having the State throw down the Mandate, moving forward, given where we are with those datapoints that we just showed, those datapoints are real. And we're just on a continually positive track with all of that.

Governor, isn't the -- are we still waiting to see potentially some of the deaths increase from this spring surge, as you've termed it, that we're still not four weeks' out from when that began? So, I mean, I guess, how much more should we see potentially this increase?

Governor Sununu:

So, look. Well, could fatalities bump up-and-down? Yeah, I suppose. I mean, on any given day, we could have four or five fatalities, then we have zero, and zero, and one, and two. So, depending on where we are, we usually have between 15 or 20 deaths pending that we're currently under investigation. They don't get done in a single day. So, we're always there.

But the level of vaccine that's out there and the fact that, when you get vaccinated, you're fully protected from a fatal incident of COVID, then you add on top of that the incredibly high rate that people are getting vaccinated in the State, not just because the speed that we're putting it out, but also the speed that folks are requesting it, I think, at the end of the day, I was predicting 50% or 55% of our population getting vaccinated. I think I'm going to be way short, which is good news, right? I think it's going to be much higher than that, in the 65% maybe 70%-or-plus range of individuals wanting and getting fully vaccinated. So, that's the key.

And so, the vaccination rate is really what is very, very positive here. A lot of the cases you're seeing in the spring surge are that younger population, not the 60-plus and ups which represented 97% of the fatality rate. So, mathematically speaking, I think it's safe to say we're not going to see the numbers spike up to 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 deaths per day like we were seeing before. It's going to be in a very, for lack

of better term, a manageable level, or expected level, back to kind of the pre-fall surge levels that we saw. And we're already there, which is good news.

Does anyone have an age range on the hospitalizations? Are those still mostly older patients, or are we seeing those ages go down a little?

Governor Sununu:

The ages are definitely going down. We don't have exact data on that. I've talked to a lot of the folks in the hospital directly. It's a little bit anecdotal right now. But I can tell you it's consistent. Everyone has said the average age of the typical COVID patient is definitely younger than it was before, which makes perfect sense, because those in the long-term care, or 60-and-up, they've been vaccinated.

If you go back to that slide, I mean, they've had months to be vaccinated now. They came first in line, as they should have. And that's the good news of all this. They've been in the process since here or even here, right? So, they've had so much time.

So, given the kind of rough spot that we're in right now, at least with numbers, in terms of the transmission and things like that, as you weighed your decision to lift the Mask Mandate, in the pros and cons, what was the harm in keeping it two more weeks, given the nature of where we're at right now?

Governor Sununu:

Well, again, we're rolling out of our restrictions. As I said, we're even rolling out of our Safer at Home restrictions. We take steps with everything we do. So, we've had our Safer at Home restrictions for, I mean, really since the beginning, right, since March of 2020. We only put the Mask Mandate in to manage that fall surge of fatalities that we saw. So that's exactly why we're moving beyond that, because all the data says we are well-beyond that at this point.

So, when you look at the how and whys we did this originally, you look at those datapoints. And the data says we're back to kind of where we were pre-fall surge with the fatalities. So, obviously we're always concerned about cases. But as I've said ad nauseum, and will continue to do so, we're going to see high cases of COVID in this State potentially for years, up-and-down for years. I don't know. I mean, I hope we don't. But I think we all have to expect and accept that you're still going to have a few hundred thousand people in this State that just choose not to get vaccinated. You're still going to have a percentage that might get vaccinated but still get COVID, because it's not 100% preventing you from getting COVID, but it does 100% protect you from dying or having some of those really, really severe symptoms that would put you in a hospital. So, COVID is likely going to be with us, unfortunately, with the highs and lows of that, for some time.

And as Safer at Home expires, does this mean that all gathering guidance lifts, that essentially...

Governor Sununu:

In terms of requirements, yes. Yes, that'll all be incorporated as what we're calling our universal best practices for businesses, families, whatever it might be, just kind of those eternal reminders, if you will, that COVID is still with us. If and when we can, to be safe, to socially distance when we can, use masks when appropriate, and when you feel comfortable doing so.

It's just a matter of the State imposing these very rigid restrictions going forward. That was never intended to be the case. All of this was intended to be temporary. And given the success we've had more than frankly any other State in the country in a variety of these different metrics, we're data-driven in everything we do. And the data says we're at the point where we can move forward.

In terms of waiting a few more weeks, what we didn't want to do is necessarily wait a few more weeks and then just undo everything all at once, right? Rip the band-aid right off. You have to work with folks, right? You have to kind of move at the speed, I think, of the communities a little bit.

The Mask Mandate was kind of the last big restriction we put into place on the fall surge. So obviously it makes that it can be the first thing that we remove, because we're past the fall surge. The other business restrictions, a lot of those, I think we need to keep in place for Employees, right? There's still some Employees that might be working in retail or a restaurant. Maybe they haven't even gotten their first shot yet.

But, again, given that, by May 7th, 95%, 97% of the State that wants a vaccine is going to, at least, have had that first shot, that's really the endgame there. We're there. And so, that's why, again, it's not an arbitrary date that we've picked. We've looked at those that have signed up, received the vaccine, and those that are planning to get -- or scheduled to get the vaccine between now and then. And again, the math just works out. It's a real positive movement for everybody.

Governor, it was reported by ABC News on a conference call with Governors that you expressed some concern about the pause in J&J and what this could do to public confidence nationally about getting the vaccine. How soon do you think the CDC and FDA should come out with a revised advisory, and perhaps a resumption of J&J? And if they don't, could this lead to even more public hesitation about getting the vaccine?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, yeah. So, I think I expressed the, I think, frustrations of every Governor, right, Democrats and Republicans alike, on that call. Dr. Fauci was very clear. This was a one in a million event. You're twice as likely to be struck by lightning than you are with the current data about getting this blood clot. So, those six individuals, that's a very severe case.

But to stop an entire vaccine, the most popular vaccine for the biggest Public Health crisis this country has faced in 100 years, is a pretty extreme step. So, my question to Dr. Fauci simply was, what else is there? You must be seeing some other data, other than a one in a million event to pause this entire thing?

So, of course, the CDC and the FDA have to do their job and doublecheck the data, whatever they're going to do. They couldn't even really explain to us what else the CDC and the FDA were going to look for. So that was a little frustrating. But, of course, they have to do their job and ensure that it's safe.

I just think that it was a bit thrown upon us. You know how I found out? I read the AP story. The White House didn't call us. We read the news that morning and we picked up the phone to them and found out. So, the communication out of Washington has been terrible lately. It really has been horrible. So that was more the frustration.

We have to instill confidence back. If and when it comes back on, I hope it's -- if they can show that it's safe, I hope it's today, right? The sooner, the better, I think, we all agree on that, because it is such a powerful tool in getting through this process.

But, that being said, they have to do their job. It's my job and our job to hopefully reassure the public that it is safe. And I think if you heard my comments that were played on ABC, or whatever it was, I said, look, the challenge we have is re-instilling confidence on something that's been pulled is so much harder than doing the pause or getting it going in the first place, because it just puts a lot of doubt in folks' mind. And that's a reasonable thing.

But when the Federal Government pulls something off the shelf abruptly, everybody goes, whoa, must be pretty serious. So, our question was: what else are you seeing that deems it to be so serious? And they didn't really have an answer for that.

So, again, we hope that they do their -- CDC, FDA does their work. It comes back on and hopefully we can be back up here, re-instilling confidence, so more people are out there getting it, because when you look at the equity population, a population that especially the Administration has been very proactive to want us to reach out to and we very much agree with that, homebound individuals, the elderly, the homeless population, other folks as part of that population, that one shot and done is an amazingly powerful thing, because you're really one-and-done and you don't have to come back three or four weeks later. You don't have to find those individuals again.

There's a reason why there's kind of these barriers that have prevented them being part of a more -- of the more robust healthcare system. So that's why we put so much effort on it. And the Johnson & Johnson shot is such -- the one shot and done is just such a powerful tool. So unfortunately, that population will face the brunt of the potential problem of pulling back.

And so, we will see. We hope everyone just comes back in the mix. In the meantime, I will say that anybody -- or the vast majority of folks who were schedule to receive a Johnson & Johnson shot through the pharmacy system over the next week-or-so, we are doing everything we can. Perry and his Team have been working really hard with the pharmacies to either get them the Moderna or the Pfizer, to get them rescheduled. They might not get everybody rescheduled. I mean, there's a lot of folks. But they're working really hard to get as many folks as possible rescheduled into a different presentation of the vaccine.

And you had it last weekend, yourself. Any symptoms at all after you got the shot?

Governor Sununu:

No, no. I mean, maybe a little sore the next morning, because a needle went in my arm. But, no, I know there have been some folks that were a little achy or didn't feel great the next day. I think that's

become pretty normal for all three presentations of the vaccine. But, no, I was very fortunate, all that adrenalin pumping through, I guess. Afternoon.

Going back to the May 7th date -- and you might have said this, and I might have been preoccupied, myself.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, I talk fast. I'm sorry.

So, the Mask Mandate, in addition to that, how does the restrictions affect businesses now in restaurants that have distancing in place and plastic sheets in place? Does that expire, as well?

Governor Sununu:

So that all -- all of those are part of our reopening guidance that will remain in place until May 7th, whether you're talking about the restrictions we have in a retail store or a restaurant, or a large venue. All of that stays in place until May 7th.

And then, over the next few weeks, we're going to work all those kind of restrictions into more of a comprehensive, universal guidance of best practices. That goes into place as of May 7th. So, all the business restrictions are still there for the next three weeks.

But the reason we kind of are telegraphing that a little bit, if you will, we're letting folks know, because we know businesses need a little time, right? We don't just want to come out and say, oh, and by the way, all your restrictions are done. They need a little time to adapt to that, and also it gives us a little more time to get a larger percentage of their Employees vaccinated and feeling comfortable.

And again, we know a lot of businesses can and should feel very comfortable about still having a Mask Mandate in their stores or for their Employees, or whatever it might be. That's a private business' choice.

So, the best practices, then, that is something that you would restate in a document, or something, after May 7th. And those are suggestions. But if a business doesn't want to follow your best practice, they can do...

Governor Sununu:

That's their choice to do so, yeah. And yeah, so a great question. We will have kind of a document. All the different guideline documents, reopen documents that are currently on our website will kind of fall into a single hopefully easy-to-read, not too long, not too -- it's not like a 60-page thesis, something that's easy and workable for those businesses.

But if a business chooses that they're going to go in a different direction, that's absolutely their choice, given that, by that time, so many folks in our population will have been vaccinated. And those that haven't, for the most part, are just choosing not to.

I had another topic.

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

I guess it's related to COVID in that it's homelessness. But, this week, there were two high-profile sweeps, one in Concord and one in Manchester, of homeless encampments on private property. And a number of people were moved, which means basically they're going to set up camp someplace else. And as you know, a lot of these people are people who, for one reason or the other, either can't go to a shelter or don't want to go to a shelter, due to mental-health issues or other issues. But even if they wanted to, the shelter system in New Hampshire's pretty much been at or over capacity for the last year. So, I know that your Housing Stability Council is due to release a statewide plan, as of June 1st. I wanted to ask a couple questions about that. First of all, are you on-track for that June 1st presentation?

Governor Sununu:

I believe so, yeah.

Okay.

Governor Sununu:

I mean, I will doublecheck. But I haven't heard any differently. So, I'm assuming so, yeah.

Oh, okay. Okay. Can you speak to what some of the short-term recommendations and actions that have been put into place since they convened in December? I think that was one of their asks was to put some short-term things in place, prior to the presentation of the plan. Can you speak to anything that you're aware of that has come out of that Council that has been...

Governor Sununu:

Since December?

Since December.

Governor Sununu:

In just the past few months, they gave a list of recommendations. We worked with some of the Providers, specifically in Manchester and some of the other communities, everything from trying to expand capacity within those specific venues.

I'll say this. I think the biggest opportunity on homelessness really comes with all of this Federal money we're going to receive. Unfortunately, for example, the \$200 million-plus we have for rental assistance which, in theory, were to help folks not become homeless, not a single dollar to-date is allowed

to be used to create bricks and mortar, and more homeless shelters and beds. So that's a frustration, I think, that every State -- I've talked to Governors all across the country. We would love to have the flexibility.

And I'm hoping the Biden Administration is listening. They don't seem to want to give a lot of flexibility. But I know we are all pushing, Republicans and Democrats alike. But that's a lot of money. We won't use that \$200 million in rental assistance. It's available, but the fact is that just not enough folks will likely come forward and even ask for that money. So, we want to be able to reuse it for all of these types of opportunities.

We've made a lot of investments at the State level. Again, I can't speak to exactly what's happening in Manchester and Concord today. And I would just hope that they go about it the right way, making sure that they're offering folks -- they're giving folks enough time to proceed. They're making offers not just for a place to go but the right services. We did that when the State had an issue with folks for months and months. And we worked with them for months and months until eventually I think we got the vast majority of them either replaced into facilities or locations, or not.

But, at the end of the day, they have to do it the right way. And at the end of the day, we have a lot of money coming in to deal with these issues. So, there's huge opportunity here. We just need some Washington flexibility to be able to really capitalize on it.

When you talk about the restrictions, is that separate from the Medicaid Waiver that was discussed? You asked the Council to do everything they can to put in for a Waiver to lift some restrictions.

Governor Sununu:

Oh, yeah. We don't even have guidance. Look, they passed \$1.9 trillion in spending. We have almost no guidance in terms of how to spend it. A lot of this money that we're talking about was done in December and it's out, and it's available today. Folks can go to the CAP Agencies or Housing Finance to get rental assistance, which is great. But, to-date, those dollars are restricted only for rental assistance.

We have a Mortgage Assistance Program that's going to be coming online. We got some guidance for that, which is great. But, again, those dollars can't be used to actually create more shelters or beds, or anything like that. So, it's just guidance and flexibility out of the Federal Government that allows States to design systems as they need, not as Washington sees fit. What's important to New Hampshire and what our needs are might be extremely different than another State. And we just constantly make that pitch to the Biden Administration.

Is that separate from the American Rescue Plan funding that's coming?

Governor Sununu:

The 200 million?

Is that -- that is...

Governor Sununu:

The \$200 million what I believe was passed as part of the December package -- the December 28th package with the previous Administration. Now, the rules on how that dollar -- those dollars are being spent are being designed by the new Administration. So, whether you're talking about the monies passed and authorized in last December, or the dollars spent a few month -- the \$1.9 trillion a few months ago, we have very little guidance and flexibility on any of those dollars right now. They've promised us the final guidance documents in the next few weeks. So, we're a little bit in a wait-and-see mode in terms of exactly how we can spend it.

Would you be prepared to put a significant amount of the American Rescue Plan money toward solving this problem, moving the needle on it, rather than sort of stopgap measures that...

Governor Sununu:

Well, of course. Yeah, look. Stopgap measures don't get anybody anywhere. But the \$1.9 trillion that was put forward, you have over a billion dollars coming to New Hampshire. And by the way, you have a half a billion, another \$450 million, just going to the cities and the towns, and the counties, right? Manchester, alone, is on-track to receive in the realm of \$40 million-plus. Manchester or Concord, or Nashua, or whatever town you're talking about, they're going to have immense resources, as well, to put to this.

When you talk about the homelessness issue, obviously we all have a responsibility to it. But it is a localized problem and it's a localized issue. And so, we always want to work with the locals to find out what the Providers can do, what services are available, where those gaps are. And we're going to have more than enough money to deal with not just that but a whole variety of issues.

In speaking with some of the Mayors who've been serving on the Council, the concern is that there is not a statewide database of resources or shelters, or how the CAP money is allocated and spent. And so, to say it's a local issue is part of the puzzle. But I think what people are looking to the plan for is to say that there is a statewide plan in place.

Governor Sununu:

We do have a statewide plan. It exists.

Okay.

Governor Sununu:

It exists. I don't think we've updated it in maybe 10 years. And that's was my charge. Let's update this and understand exactly from a State perspective where the responsibilities lie and what the opportunities are, and where those gaps in the system are.

But everyone has a responsibility in that. And again, we hear a lot from cities, and Manchester is one, that says, oh, well, we don't know what to do. We will just go tell the State to do it. Well, that's not a solution. We all have to be a partner in that, of course.

I understand. And one more thing.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I got to -- okay, one more, but then we have a whole lot of questions here, but, okay.

Okay.

Governor Sununu:

No, go ahead.

You mentioned doing it the right way. And you had a couple of vans pull away from the Courthouse with 20-some people on it. And of those 20-some people, from my reporting, I find that there's none of them who remained in any kind...

Governor Sununu:

That was their choice. We don't hold people against their will. They all went to a shelter and to opportunities. We had great Providers all come out and kind of talk to them about the opportunities they had.

And I think that's the issue right there is that it's not appropriate placements to take someone out of the woods and put them into treatment.

Governor Sununu:

But we don't lock people in a shelter.

That's a big step.

Governor Sununu:

Well, let's be clear. Let's be very fair here. We didn't take anyone anywhere. We simply said, if you'd like to come, we have opportunities. We have shelter. We have programs. And if they chose to come, they could come. And if they chose not to, they don't. We don't force anyone to do anything. It is absolutely their choice. And a lot of them chose to come, which is great. Some of them ultimately chose not to stay as part of those programs. And again, that's their choice.

It's choice but it's also lack of available mental-health services and other services that can help people stabilize, so that they're ready to take that help. And I'm not being...

Governor Sununu:

In no circumstance there was anyone denied a service. In no circumstance there was anyone denied a mental-health service or opportunity. So that is a very incorrect statement.

There's (inaudible) mental-health services all across the State and you know that.

Governor Sununu:

Okay. When you're talking about the population that you just talked about with those homeless individuals that were offered a place to go and that chose to go there, there wasn't just a room sitting there. In all of those cases, there were additional services provided. So, we're going to move onto other questions.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Hi, thanks. I have two COVID questions and then an unrelated question, but they will be very brief.

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

My first COVID question is, I understand that private businesses can still require masks. But can you clarify? Would that also applies to schools or individual State Agencies and Departments, or Commissions, Boards?

Governor Sununu:

Yes.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Okay.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, they would all be given the flexibilities. Could I have some water? Yeah, the schools have always had the flexibility of masks/no masks, or however they want to manage. They've done a great job with it.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

And my second question, you said by May 7th, you expect that 95% of those who want the first shot will have gotten it by then. Can you clarify? Well, how do you measure that? How do you know how many, because that's not the same as those who are eligible? That's how many want it. So, how do you measure who wants the shot and who doesn't?

Governor Sununu:

A great question; so we look at how many people have gotten in the system, how many people have received a shot to-date, how many people are scheduled to receive a shot between now and May 7th, and how many people are scheduled to receive a shot after May 7th. And so, the ratio of those that will have the shot between the very beginning of this to May 7th, to, I think, the 15,000 -- I'm ballparking that number. About 15,000 folks-or-so are still scheduled for their first shot post-May 7th. But by that time, you will have had 650,000-ish-or-so that have already received their first shot.

So, it's just our systems are good. We can actually see how many individuals have either gotten a shot, on scheduled first shot, or scheduled for a shot but are post-May 7th, because everybody else had had the opportunity to be in the system and move up. So that's really the entire population of our system.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

And this is a follow-up to that question, though. But do you have a sense of what percentage of the population is saying, I don't want a shot and I'm not going to get a shot?

Governor Sununu:

Oh, so when you look at the total number of people that have scheduled themselves for a shot to-date, it's somewhere -- and this is a very rough number, so bear with me -- somewhere in the neighborhood of 700,000-plus individuals that have either received a first shot or will receive a first shot between now and Memorial Day.

We have 1.4 million people total. But remember, you also have to take a lot of the kids out of that equation, because the under-16 still cannot receive a shot. And then, of course, we're going to have some folks still come into the system after-the-fact, which is why I still come back to maybe 60%, 70% of the folks at the end of the day hopefully will have the vaccine, or maybe even more. But I can tell you it's over 700,000 that we can identify to-date. And that number will only grow, as we go forward.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Thank you. And then, my quick unrelated question is about pet parity. We already have a law that says if you hit a dog with your car, you have to notify the owner or Police. And there's a Bill that passed the House recently that would expand that reporting requirement to those who hit cats. So, I was wondering if you would sign that bill if it gets to your desk.

Governor Sununu:

You bet I will, Holly. Cats and dogs, dogs and cats, you can't have one without the other. So, no, I think it's a parity bill. And unless there's something else in there, I haven't seen anything. And unless they were to change -- excuse me -- unless they were to change something in the Bill, but I have full intention of signing it. You bet.

Paula Tracy with InDepthNH:

Good afternoon, Governor. I have a question about the 13 cities and towns in the State that have Mask Mandates. Will they continue to be able to have those Mandates? And also, a follow-up question is, you've used the analogy of a marathon over the past several months. Can you tell us what mile marker we're at?

Governor Sununu:

Sure; sorry, the first question, bear with me. Oh, of course, cities and towns, as they always have been since March, can instill their own Mask Mandates, if they'd like. They have every ability to do that. Private businesses, schools, everyone has the flexibility. It's just not a statewide requirement moving forward.

And the second question was, I'm sorry? Oh, what mile marker are we on, the marathon? We're probably on Comm. Ave. somewhere, right, where it's still a challenge. It's still a struggle, to be sure. But the finish line is definitely in sight. The crowd's getting a little louder, little more positive. The cheers, as you come into Downtown Boston, they get a little more aggressive. So, I don't know, somewhere on Comm. Ave., I suppose.

Amanda Gokee with New Hampshire Bulletin:

Thanks so much. I have two questions. The first one is, if the Governor -- if you could be more specific about what you mean when you say that the State will open up by Memorial Day. What parts of the economy do you see as still being restricted or challenged?

Governor Sununu:

Post-May 7th, virtually none, from a State perspective. No, that's the whole point. We're just going to a best practices' guidelines by May 7th. So, I think we're going to be a few weeks ahead of schedule, which is great, because the vaccine is just coming out so fast.

Amanda Gokee with New Hampshire Bulletin:

Thanks. The second question is that the State's COVID Vaccination Plan sets aside 10% of vaccines for populations at-risk of health disparities tied to race and ethnicity. But vaccination rates are still lagging behind some minority communities. So, I'm curious where that 10% has been distributed so far, and how it's being tracked.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, so, I mean, Dr. Daly can add her two cents in here. She's been right on top of this. That population that you discussed, that's the population that typically doesn't have the best access to healthcare. And so, that's why we're making those extra efforts to be in that community, talk about the vaccine, the safety of the vaccine, encourage them to sign up to get it.

And a lot of parts of that equity population, it's a one-on-one. So, it just takes a lot longer. I think Commissioner Shibinette has been up here a few times talking about all the different -- just the time it takes to sometimes go to each person's house if they're homebound, one at a time, or the time it takes to work with the homeless population to, again, educate them and encourage them to come in and be part of those programs.

The mobile teams that we have going out all across; so obviously we've always talked about that area of the population being a strong point of emphasis for us. And it continues and will continue to be so. We allocated 10% to kind of play it safe, so to say.

It's not that the -- we still have the vaccine, right? We always have kind of a bit of a backlog, if you will, on any given day or any given week, that can be distributed. We never want to be short of that. As I said, it's a little unfortunate that the Johnson -- we have to hold back on a lot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine right now and go to more of a Moderna or Pfizer presentation, just because you have to go back to those populations a second time. But, we can do it and we're obviously willing to do so, and happy to do so, because it's just so important to make sure that those populations have the same access as everybody else. Dr. Daly can put a finer point on that one.

Dr. Daly:

Thank you, Governor. I would just add a couple datapoints for you, since you asked where the vaccine is going. To-date, there have been 236 clinics that we would classify under our equity allocation that has been carried out all across the State -- all over the State. Now, some areas have more vulnerable census tracts than others, which you'll recall that's how we're identifying some of the vulnerable populations.

But all counties have had some of these clinics held. And we've vaccinated 23,000 people. And so, we have, in particular, vaccinated people who are experiencing homelessness, low income, senior housing, and residents for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In terms of the race and ethnicity data, I think we are releasing this data weekly right now on our website, and as part of our daily updates that we do. And the last week's report does show a little bit of improvement, in terms of closing that gap. However, the gap is still there. People who are non-white, their vaccination coverage is about half that of people who are white. And so, certainly, while we are making some progress, there's more room there.

And the last point I just wanted to make about race and ethnicity data is that our population in New Hampshire is more diverse the younger you get. And recall that we are just now opening up vaccination for all of the younger age groups now, so I do expect the gap will lessen in the coming weeks, as well. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

No, that's a great point. I know we talked about showing the race and ethnicity data by age demographic. I don't know if we were ever able to do that.

Dr. Daly:

We have not done that.

Governor Sununu:

We have not done that. Yeah, that's a challenge. And that's a great point that Dr. Daly brings up just that more of that population tends to be younger. But we compare ourselves to the State, as a whole, even though most of our vaccine has been given out to the older population. So, we will continue hopefully to see that gap close.

And again, a lot of it is education. With the amount of dollars that we've put in and the teamwork that has gone into just talking to folks and getting out one-on-one, in all different aspects of communities and neighborhoods where some of these inequities exist, I think they've done a phenomenal job, actually. And I think all States are facing and doing as best they can, is my understanding, with these challenges of making sure that that opportunity exists in all aspects of their communities.

Alli Fam with New Hampshire Public Radio:

Thank you. I've got two questions. So, my first one is, a number of county jails this week were counting on the J&J vaccine to vaccinate inmates. And I'm wondering, do you recommend those facilities order the Moderna or Pfizer instead? And were you able to make those available this week for them? And then, my second question is, the State's vaccine PSA campaign includes billboards and focuses on a lot of digital outreach through media platforms. And I'm wondering if that does include any targeted outreach to share vaccine information with people in some of those vulnerable communities you were just mentioning, and who might not have reliable internet access, especially in light of these hesitancy concerns with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine pause.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, I'll -- if you don't mind, I'm going to answer the second question first, and then I'll ask Commissioner Shibinette to come up. She's been dealing a lot with more of the congregate settings and the jails, to address your first question.

I think the PSA campaign that we've been putting out is incredibly robust. It isn't just digital. It's billboards. It's written material. It's pamphlets. I think they've created something that covers the entire spectrum of opportunity, in terms of getting the information out, encouraging folks to either ask more questions, do more research, or hopefully come in and sign up for the vaccine, either at what we call one of our closed pods, our sites, our mobile sites, the State sites, however they want to do it, right? We want to make sure we're as available as we can. And I think the PSA campaign's very robust in that aspect. I'll ask the Commissioner to talk a little bit about the jail.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Thank you. So, we had five jails that were scheduled to receive Johnson & Johnson this week. One of the jails decided to order Moderna instead. So, we did facilitate them getting the Moderna vaccine. The other four decided to pause. And we will evaluate with them next week to see how long that pause is going to happen, and whether they're going to switch to a Moderna or Pfizer makeup.

Governor Sununu:

Great.

Governor, how much longer is the State of Emergency going to persist?

Governor Sununu:

Great question; I think we have to understand the State of Emergency will likely exist for months, likely until the end of the year, because there are so many Federal stipulations that get attached to that, in terms of us accepting and expending dollars as part of the State of Emergency. So, the State of Emergency, itself, will likely exist for quite some time.

All the different Orders that are attached to the State of Emergency, whether they be flexibilities in reciprocity in licensing, a lot of that will be taken up by the Legislature, which is great. But ultimately, a lot of that will go away, as well, right? Everything kind of gets back to normal in the summer.

There'll be a few of the Orders that still exist within the State of Emergency. But the whole point is to really pare all of that back, and either have the Legislature take it up, now that they're in session, or removing the restrictions, and some of the flexibilities that we can have, as we enter the summer and everyone that wants to be vaccinated gets vaccinated.

And will you be allowing the colleges and universities to mandate the vaccine for return to campus in the fall?

Governor Sununu:

So, the private colleges and universities, I've spoken to them and said, yeah, they're private. They can do what they want. I think we're going to keep talking to the public university system. One thing we're very -- I don't -- we're trying not to get to the point of vaccine passports, per se, where, at least in a public setting, we're saying, if you're vaccinated, you can do this. And if you're not vaccinated, you can't. Now, we're constructively identifying individuals that chose not to get the vaccine. We're creating a system of have and have nots. And I don't think anybody wants that down the road.

Ultimately, the goal is to make sure that those that want to protect themselves have the ability to do so. And those that don't, and have that risk, are carrying that risk. And that's their choice to do so. In some situations, you could also get a situation where let's say half the students are in the classroom and half the students have to go remote, because they're vaccinated. That's, again, not a very good situation. It's not very efficient. You're now identifying all those students that aren't vaccinated.

So, we're trying to discourage that as much as we can and work with the system so that, again, they feel comfortable. And one thing I've tried to remind them all is I know it's April 16th [sic] today. They have to put their mind that it's September 16th. We will be well through the vaccination process. Everyone who wants a vaccine across this country will have had access to one with the maybe exception of teenagers. But that wouldn't really account for the university system population.

And so, to put yourself into that mindset, to start creating controls and systems to control where kids go and how they go, and all of that today, that will be in place down the road, post-the vaccination process, that's a challenge. And so, we try to get their mindset there when making those decisions. And we will continue to work with folks on the public side of things. But, I apologize for the long answer. But, for the private side, private universities are like a private business. They can do what they want, really.

And so, then, for the mandated vaccines, would you like to see those mandates expire, as well, for meningitis, varicella, measles, mumps, rubella? Colleges shouldn't be mandating those, either, you think.

Governor Sununu:

No, those aren't in an experimental phase. Again, let's look at the K-12 system. The Legislature really puts those into a vaccine registry, if you will, or vaccine system, where kids are required to get vaccines to attend public schools. That has always been in place and it should stay in place, of course.

But we're talking about right now an experimental vaccine. If it comes out of the experimental EUA mode, then maybe there's another discussion to be had. And those folks that look at the vaccine requirements as part of our public university system maybe will take it up at that time. But right now, to say we're going to mandate a vaccine that is still in an experimental phase, I think that's a challenge for a lot of individuals, of course.

Governor, quick question, and it might be for Dr. Daly. We've heard of a couple of people who were given an accidental wrong second dose. Is that something you're looking into? And are there concerns? Should they be concerned if they got that?

Governor Sununu:

So, I'll give a quick answer. And if Dr. Daly wants to answer that, as well, of course. There have been a couple of cases of individuals in the State that may have gotten Pfizer then Moderna, or Moderna and then Pfizer. And of course, given the hundreds of thousands of individuals we've faced, I think the State has done a phenomenal job making sure that didn't happen. There was a couple of cases.

The good news is, is that's okay, from a safety perspective. It's not ideal. It's not recommended. We very strongly encourage folks to make sure they avoid that from happening. And I think we've done a good job with that. But, from a safety perspective, the CDC and the FDA have been very clear that they don't believe it poses any additional risk. And those folks are considered fully vaccinated. They don't have to come back for a third shot. I got the thumbs up from Dr. Daly on that one. So, we're good. Yes?

Question and it may be for Dr. Chan about variants of COVID-19 in New Hampshire, whether there's projections, and what should the public know or understand about variants of COVID-19, and if we're concerned on some level about that becoming an issue here?

Governor Sununu:

Sure; no, I think we're watching the variants very, very closely, as much as we can. We're doing some of that testing. Not everyone who gets a test for COVID is tested for a variant. But they do testing throughout kind of a spectrum of the positive cases that do come in to see which ones have variants.

Certain variants are more common, right? The variant that you find in London is more common here than anything. There's some variants, for example, with South Africa or South America that have presented in the area, or even in very rare cases here in New Hampshire. And we will continue monitoring those.

And if the CDC or the FDA comes out with additional recommendations, or safety recommendations around them, right now they appear to be more contagious, but not necessarily, again, more resistant to the vaccines. There's one variant that may or may not be resistant to the vaccine. I think it's the South African variant. But, again, we're going to keep monitoring it, not just on a national but obviously a localized level, as well.

Sorry, I don't want to stretch it out here, but what about those people who are afraid? We've been in this mode for a year. People have kind of gotten used to the way things are.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

What's your message to people who might be a little trepidatious about stepping back from these things?

Governor Sununu:

Well, if you have trepidations about stepping back from things like the mask requirement and the restrictions, again, those folks, I assume, have been vaccinated, right? They've protected themselves and their families, their loved ones, their grandparents, whatever it might be, the 16-and-up.

So, if you have trepidations -- I know folks have maybe gotten -- we've gotten a little used to these temporary restrictions in there. But let's all remind ourselves this isn't the norm. Getting through the vaccine process gets us back to normal and that's exactly where we are.

So, it's very natural, I think, to have trepidation. Gee, we're undoing the State Mask Order. We're still encouraging folks to wear masks. We're still encouraging folks to be smart in the settings that they're in. And Public Health has that charge. They've done a phenomenal job with it. And we're behind them 110% on that.

The only thing that's changing -- and it's a big difference between what the State is forcing and mandating, requiring, sending the COVID Police, as people like to call it. That's a whole different ballgame. And we had to make those extreme decisions during extreme times. We're just not in those extreme times.

So, very natural for folks to have trepidations and concerns, of course. But, that's what the vaccine's for. If we didn't have the vaccine, we'd be in a very different position. If we weren't so fast about it, we'd be in a very different position.

So, folks want to protect themselves, that's their job to protect themselves. And if there's individuals that are choosing not to get the vaccine and kind of provide themselves that shield, take those risks, that's their choice, too.

Just to put a fine point on that, if I'm running a restaurant, on May 8th I can take down my plastic shields if I want to, and I can seat people closer than 4 to 6 feet, if I want to, starting on May 8th?

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

Okay.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, yeah. And my sense...

It sounds simple, but it's a big deal to a lot of restaurants.

Governor Sununu:

Oh, no, it's a very big deal. Yeah, and that's why we're giving them a few weeks to kind of prepare for that. And again, I think a lot of restaurants -- I've realized that some of the guidelines that we've put into place, they've adapted really well with it. They kind of like it. I think some of the customers feel comfortable with it and all that. And they have every right to keep those up, if they want to, if that's what they choose to do. But every restaurant, every business will be able to kind of go back and make their choices, as they should be.

Governor, as we were reminded even over the weekend, when the topic was on Facebook, Hot Dog Day, you're not fond of what the House has done with regard to emergency powers and restricting a Governor's emergency powers going forward. Is there any change in the current Statute that would allow greater involvement with the Legislature that you are willing to support?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, well, so I've been working with Jeb Bradley and a few folks on kind of taking a lot of what we did with our Emergency Orders and re-instilling them with -- putting them into a legislative process. I think, to speak directly -- well, Hot Dog Day's different. I love Hot Dog Day and I hope we do Hot Dog Day. And I told John Burt I would absolutely help him do it. It's a great kind of unifier, if you will, right? Who could be mad having a hot dog and an ice cream on a beautiful summer day with the Legislature?

But where the Legislature went with the budget really says everything gets stripped out. Again, if we get rid of all these Emergency Orders, even I know they tried to get creative with keeping a kind of a Temporary Emergency Order, or I forget the term that they used, it's not going to financially. And we risk losing like hundreds of millions of dollars into the State. And so, we can't do that, of course.

But, look, obviously we always want to have the Legislature have oversight in the things that they need to have oversight on. It comes down to the simple fact that it's not about me, as Governor. It's about the next Governor or whenever that might be.

We don't know what an emergency is always -- or crisis moment is going to look like. Governor Lynch dealt with a lot of crises in terms of weather and being able to respond quickly, deploy machinery, or deploy dollars quickly to take care of those emergency situations. I dealt with the largest Public Health pandemic we've had in 100 years. And I think the Team responded very, very well.

At the end of the day, if this State didn't respond well, if we hadn't had that Team in place, I think it might be a very different story. But we did it right. And to just strip that away from a Governor, or any future Governor, really limits their ability to respond and to protect the health of safety of individuals in a time of crisis. Yeah.

Okay. We good? Good? Great. We good, David? All right. Well, thank you, guys, very much. Thanks, everyone, for joining us today. We will be back. Just a big congratulations to everybody in the State. And as I've been saying lately, a huge thank you, really. Everyone in the State deserves all the credit in the world for keeping us really ahead of everybody else.

And we've done a phenomenal job here in New Hampshire, not just regionally but nationally. If you've read some of these national stories, we're the model. We're the model for economic success. We're the model for vaccine distribution. We're the model for getting PPE and the model for kind of managing ourselves through the process. We've got an incredible Team here.

And I think the responsibility that a lot of our citizens took on during the crisis, we aren't out of the woods yet, by any means. We still have a ways to go here. But we are getting there. We're getting towards the finish line. And the individuals of this State deserve all the credit in the world for that. So, we just want to say thank you very, very much. With that, we will see you next Thursday. Thank you, everybody.