



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Thursday, June 17, 2021, at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Good to see everyone here, a quasi-full room. Hey, Ethan. How are you doing? Good to see you back. Josh and Ethan are here for the first time in a while. That's exciting.

Well, thank you, everyone, for joining us. It is an interesting day today for a couple reasons. By our count -- this is quite interesting -- it's our 111th press conference since COVID began, which is obviously quite remarkable, when you add in all the individual interviews with the media, where they comprised over 500 COVID-based interviews that have been done since the pandemic began.

But all a part of just being very transparent and very open, it has been a paramount tool for us to use in kind of this time of crisis for the State. And obviously as we're out of it now, it really was, I think, very important for both the citizens and ourselves, as well, to hear some of the pressing issues. And as I said last week, today will be our last regularly scheduled weekly press conference, as it pertains to COVID. After today, we will move forward on an as-needed basis, which obviously just marks the significant milestone. And the folks in this State have just done a phenomenal job, very, very well. And we continue to be a leader in the county, as it pertains to our management of the COVID crisis. So let's kick things off with a Public Health update from Dr. Chan.

Dr. Chan:

Good afternoon. So two updates from me this afternoon: the first is a numbers update and then I was going to give an update on some updated recommendations for facemask use. First, the numbers: we are reporting 30 new people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 today. In the last week, we have averaged between about 30 to 40 new infections per day, which is a decrease from last week.

Currently, there are 265 people with active infection in New Hampshire. And the test-positivity rate continues to slowly trend down. And we're currently averaging about 1.3% of all PCR and antigen tests combined that are positive for COVID-19.

In terms of hospitalizations, there are 17 people hospitalized statewide with COVID-19. And then, unfortunately two new people that have died from COVID-19, we're announcing today, both of whom are associated with long-term care facilities. But we continue to average less than one new death from COVID-19 per day in the last week.

So when you look at our metrics and you look at the level of community transmission statewide, the State, as a whole, currently is at a low or minimal level of community transmission for COVID-19. And when you look regionally by counties, most of the counties in New Hampshire currently are at a low or minimal level of community transmission or will shortly be at a low or minimal level of community transmission in the coming days.

So, because numbers are dropping, because we have increasing vaccination and immunity from COVID-19, and as risk to communities from COVID-19 decreases, the goal, as we've talked about all along, is to try and deescalate use of some mitigation measures, in particular facemask use. And so, we are updating our guidance online, our recommendations for facemask use that we had initially published about four weeks ago. And at that time, we had talked about reevaluating our facemask recommendations in the coming weeks, based on the level of community transmission.

Given that risk is decreasing, we are now recommending that asymptomatic persons -- that's people who do not have symptoms or are not showing symptoms of COVID-19 -- can choose to go without facemasks in most indoor and outdoor locations, particularly lower-risk settings. Now, there are still some settings where we generally recommend that people wear facemasks.

At the individual level, anybody who desires maximal protection for themselves from COVID-19, or desires protection for family members or household contacts who may be medically vulnerable or unvaccinated, can certainly choose to continue to wear facemasks. And we would encourage them to do so, in the interest of their own health protection.

We recommend that people who are immunocompromised and may not be able to mount a full protective immune response from COVID-19 vaccination also continue to wear facemasks when they are out in public locations and around other people, again in the interest of protecting their own individual health.

Certainly when a business or organization requires facemasks to enter their facility to protect their Employees and their customers, and their attendees to an event, people should still follow the requirements of that business or organization. And I will make a quick aside here that there are still locations where facemasks are required, either by the business and organization or by Federal Mandate.

Healthcare Agencies, healthcare facilities are still required by Federal Authorities, by CMS, to have everybody face-masked in their facility. So that's one location where facemasks are still required, based on Federal Regulations.

Similarly, public transportation is another area where, at a national level, facemask use continues to be recommended. So there are still locations in New Hampshire, and as people travel, where facemask use will still be required.

And then, finally, we continue to recommend that people who are at increased risk of getting infected and spreading COVID-19 wear facemasks when they are in high-risk locations, especially ones that are indoors and crowded, and where people are unable to maintain physical distancing from other people as a general recommendation.

So, again, the goal is to continue to have the numbers of COVID-19 in our community decrease. As the numbers continue to decrease, the goal is to be able to pull back on use of some of these mitigation measures, particularly over the summer, when use of some things like facemasks may be more difficult. And we still encourage people and strongly recommend that people who are not yet fully vaccinated take the opportunity to do so.

We expect that COVID-19 vaccination will likely open to additional age groups, come the fall. This is what we're hearing from the Federal Government and continue to stress the importance of the COVID-19 vaccinations to protect one's own health and the health of one's family and community, and to help keep the numbers low for longer term. And with that, I will end and hand things over to Dr. Daly for a vaccination update. Thanks.

Dr. Daly:

Great. Good afternoon, everyone. I have a brief vaccine update and I'm going to talk about contact tracing, as well. To-date in New Hampshire, 1,486,000 doses of vaccine have been administered. This includes 821,000 people who have received their first dose of vaccine and 718,000 people who have now been fully vaccinated.

There continues to be plenty of vaccine available to meet the current demand for vaccine. And at this point, over half the New Hampshire population is considered fully vaccinated. Thanks to so many people who have made the choice to get vaccinated, we are able to further adjust our COVID-19 mitigation strategies. And one important mitigation strategy has been requiring people who have potentially been exposed to COVID-19 to quarantine. And quarantine is an effective strategy to control transmission of infectious diseases, because it keeps people who have been exposed to an infectious disease at home so they cannot spread it to others, should they go on to develop symptoms.

We do know that quarantine places significant burdens on individuals and families. And only a small proportion of people go on to test positive following a potential exposure. However, quarantine requirements were necessary to protect others, when there was no vaccine available and when our vaccination rates were low.

Now that our vaccination rates are high, especially among populations most vulnerable to dying from COVID-19, and the levels of community transmission are low, we believe that it's the right time to further relax our quarantine requirements, as we transition away from containing COVID-19 to trying to manage and control the spread of COVID-19 like we do other respiratory viruses.

So, going forward, we will no longer require quarantine for people who have had contact to someone with COVID-19 outside of their home. This means that DHHS will no longer conduct contact tracing for exposures in community settings as part of our case investigations.

Due to the higher risk of living with someone who has COVID-19, we will still continue to require quarantine for people who live in the same household as a person with COVID-19. We will continue to investigate all cases of COVID-19 that gets reported to our office. And we're also going to continue to respond to any suspected outbreaks, when we see three-or-more cases associated with the same location.

The fact that we are not performing contact tracing for potential community exposures does not mean that the risk of COVID-19 has been eliminated. It is a recognition of the fact that over half the New Hampshire population has been fully vaccinated at this point and our transmission is so low in our communities.

Members of the public should assume that when they're in public settings, they could potentially come in contact with a variety of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. And so, we encourage you to get vaccinated, which is the best way to protect yourself, and also to continue exercising other good disease-prevention measures, like handwashing, staying home if you're sick, and avoiding being around other people who may be sick.

We also still encourage anyone who does get diagnosed with COVID-19 in the future to go ahead and tell their non-household contacts that they may have been exposed, and that, if you're ever told that you have potentially been exposed to someone with COVID-19, we want you to still monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. And if they do develop, to go ahead and stay home and get tested. And it's really critical that people take this seriously, in terms of staying home if you're not feeling well.

And then, lastly, some higher-risk settings, such as healthcare workplaces may still ask their Staff Members to stay out of work following an exposure. And if a workplace experiences an outbreak, we may also recommend that they do keep some of their Staff at home, if they've been exposed.

Over the last 16 months, more than 125,000 people in New Hampshire have quarantined due to their close-contact exposure to someone with COVID-19. And we really appreciate the cooperation and assistance of the public with our contact tracing process, which we believe helped to control the spread of COVID-19 in our State. With that, I'll turn it over to Commissioner Shibinette.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Thank you. Just a brief numbers update: we're closing one long-term care outbreak today. Sullivan County Healthcare's outbreak of COVID-19 is officially closed. That leaves us with one active outbreak at Birch Healthcare Center. For our Homebound Program, we have vaccinated 5,025 people in their home. We have 53 people left to vaccinate before our program ends. That's all I have. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

53 people, you couldn't have gotten the last 53 before the -- that would have been a great milestone. But you guys have done a phenomenal job, without a doubt. But that's great, the fact that we've come so far so fast, which is really great, on a variety of things. And I think you said one outbreak?

Commissioner Shibinette:

One outbreak.

Governor Sununu:

One outbreak, awesome, really awesome. Okay. So, couple things today and then we will open up. There's probably lots of questions on a whole variety of things. First, Main Street Relief Funds, these are the Relief Fund Program that we created out of the CARES Act. A few weeks ago, as we mentioned, the State is standing up a Relief Program, if you will, in response to the Federal Government requiring us to take back some of last year's CARES Act business relief funds. We've had this kind of ongoing discussion with the Federal Government. And they're quite insistent that we have to recoup some of the CARES Act funds.

So we've created a way for folks to hopefully be able to keep as much of that money, as possible. I've always said we don't want the money back. So GOFERR and the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration will be reaching out to the previous Awardees of those CARES Act relief funds and grants from GOFERR, including things like the Main Street Relief Fund, the SELF Programs, the Self-Employment Relief Fund. We're one of the only States in the country that did a Self-Employment Relief Fund. And here's how we're going to ensure that businesses can really getting back or holding onto as much of the money, as possible.

First, any business that potentially would have to pay \$10,000-or-less in recoupment, there is a de minimis. That's our de minimis amount. They can keep the money, essentially. We've looked at studies and looked at previous examples, not, again, under the direct CARES Act. But there are previous studies

that have shown that a de minimis amount of repayment is appropriate. And so, anyone that owes \$10,000-or-less will not have to repay any funds.

Any business \$20,000-or-less, so, in other words, if you have to repay \$20,000-or-less back to the State -- or I should say \$10,000 to \$20,000, will be able to simply self-certify their total expenses, CARES Act-relate -- I'm sorry, COVID-related expenses up to the amount of the recoupment owed. And we will talk about what qualifies as an expense in a moment.

So, under \$10,000, it's a de minimis amount. You can keep the money. \$10,000 to \$20,000, you can self-attest to what were COVID-related expenses. And any business with over \$20,000 in potential recoupment dollars will also be able to offset their recoupment up to the amount of the recoupment owed with these types of expenses, as long as there's some basic documentation of these proof of expenses. It could be a QuickBooks printout. It could be very simple receipts, whatever it might be. There's a lot of flexibility there. But, again, all these businesses, anyone who would potentially be susceptible to recoupment of dollars, now has a pathway to hopefully keep those dollars simply by showing some of the expenses that are related to COVID.

So, what is an expense? What's an eligible expense? And again, all this will be on our website for businesses that are interested. It could be rent, mortgage payment, utility cost, if a business has closed, right? So, that would be a COVID-related expense. Even though the business wasn't operating, everyone had to pay their rent. That would be a very normal cost.

Reopening costs after closure, and that could be a variety of different things. Costs for PPE, air filtration systems, if you had to include any physical safety measures, such as barriers or anything that was meant and/or designed to protect the public from the spread of COVID, that would all come under costs, and a lot of other things, frankly. These are just some examples.

Costs to recreate outdoor seating for a restaurant, that would work, as well. So there's a lot of -- anything that is really COVID-related, an expense -- there's a lot of flexibility there. And again, for those businesses that would have to recoup over \$20,000, they can submit some basic documentation and again hopefully be allowed to keep those dollars.

Applications for this additional Relief Program will open for all the folks that would potentially qualify for this recoupment. That will open on next Thursday, June 24th, and remain open for about a month, all the way until July 22nd, using the GOFERR portal. That's goferr.nh.gov/apply. It's the same website we've been using the whole time. All the information is up there and those Applications open on June 24th. And again, the Team at GOFERR will be available to help proactively reach out to these businesses, as well as answer any questions for folks that might be subjected to some potentially recoupment dollars.

A few more updates on just three other programs that we're officially launching today, all of which we've talked about. We're sending \$112 million in American Rescue Plan funds to local cities and towns. So, that's a lot of money coming out of the most recent legislation that passed just a couple months ago. That's half this year and half the next year. So, because our unemployment rate is so low, you could call it a penalty, if you will. We don't get all the money up front. We just get half and half. But that's a lot of money going to cities and towns. And all cities and towns will be able to share in those dollars.

Municipalities have until August 18th at midnight to request their share of the funds. I guess technically they could decline them. I don't think that's very wise and I hope nobody declines them. It's money that could be used in a variety of different ways.

We've already held some open discussions with the cities and towns. There's FAQ sheets out there on how they can spend those dollars. But that's all going to be opened up. And municipalities have until August 18th to draw down those dollars.

Our Live Venue Assistant Program, it went live this week. And Applications will close on July 9th. So if you are one of the live venues that got really hurt by the COVID pandemic, these are the venues that were just hurt a little longer than frankly most other businesses. They can apply for some of those funds. That will close on July 9th.

And then, the third program that we've talked about, we're allocating \$10 million for our Hotels and Lodging Relief Program to help qualifying New Hampshire hotels and lodging establishments. Federal Government did one for restaurants and we're doing -- which all our restaurants should partake in, as long as they qualify -- we're doing a similar program specifically around hotels and lodging, as they're so critical to our travel and tourism, and hospitality industry, which is so strong here in New Hampshire.

Applications open up next week. And again, the program will run through July 13th. So those Applications open on Tuesday, June 22nd. If you have a lodging or hotel establishment, you can apply for additional relief funds. And that will run until July 13th. And again, additional details are at our traditional website, goferr.nh.gov/apply.

And then, finally, some folks were asking. This Saturday, June 19th, is when the Federal unemployment benefits end in New Hampshire. We made this announcement approximately 30 days ago. You have to give a 30-day runway for the official end of that program. So we've been very clear that the program and the benefits will be ending, moving on simply to our State program.

We still have our traditional State unemployment. Our movement on this issue has really been staggering in terms of the number of people that we've gotten back into the workforce. Over 10,000 people since we first announced some of these changes that we're making into the process, over 10,000 people have gotten off unemployment, back into the workforce, and, as a lot of folks know, that we hit a very low milestone, if you will, of 2.5% unemployment, which is just slightly below where we were just prior to the pandemic. And no sign of slowing down, I mean, there's still so many high-paying jobs out there. It's unbelievable.

A lot of flexibility; it is an Employees' market, so to say. Employees can really dictate the terms, if you will, for a lot of different opportunity, whether it's working remotely, whether it's working part-time or fulltime. Employers are really just want individuals to come back into work, be part of their economic opportunity. And that creates a lot of economic opportunity for all those families out there with very, very high wages and a lot of flexible jobs available, which is really great. With that, we can take a few questions. No? Okay. I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding.

Q&A Session

Seem a little concerned about the Delta variant and how that might expand here in the months ahead.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, well, when you look at -- so, a lot of folks are talking about the Delta variant now. And again, I'll defer a little bit to Dr. Chan on the scientific aspects of it. I'll say that we're really treating it as any other variant.

There's a little bit of an unknown, in terms of how aggressive it is, how contagious it might be, its viability against the vaccine. All of those things look very positive right now, which is great. And we have to understand that next week there could be another variant, and next month another variant.

So, we're going to be constantly watching and looking at the data on a national perspective, because when these variants come in, sometimes we just see a couple cases here-and-there. Maybe other parts of the country have a lot more cases than we do. So we really try to look at a lot of the national data, the international studies and whatnot. And Dr. Chan and his Team do a phenomenal job.

So, I think we take every single variant very seriously. And if something were to change, if it looked like the vaccine wasn't as viable against an aggressive variant, we could take a look at that. And we'd make an assessment as to what steps need to be taken.

The good news is, is we have a lot of tools in the toolbox and to our availability. I don't think and pray that we never get back to a point of shutting everything down and all that kind of stuff again. But, no, we take it very seriously. We look at the variants, all the different levels of how it spreads, where it's spreading, and how it can be affected. And then, again, all the more reason, get the vaccine.

If you haven't been vaccinated yet -- and there's still a decent amount of folks out there that haven't -- it's never too late to get the vaccine and say, gee, these variants are really out there. And we know a lot of folks that have them. I'm going to talk to my Doctor, go to my pharmacy, and be part of that solution for myself, my family, and my community.

Can we hear from Dr. Chan briefly? It's just...

Governor Sununu:

Sure, yeah.

Is it dramatically more contagious than the other variants?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so by definition variants of concern are more contagious. We've seen that not only with the Delta variant, which is also -- or has been called the B1617.2 variant. That's the variant that originated -- or was first identified out of India. But, yes, the Delta variant is more contagious than the initially circulating variant. But so are some of these other variants. The B117 variant or the Alpha variant, these go by different names.

I will just reemphasize one of the points that the Governor made, which is that the vaccines we have currently available continue to show high efficacy and effectiveness and preventing disease from even these variants, even the Delta variant. The one additional point to make, though, is that there are some early studies showing that one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, like one dose out of a two-dose series appears to be less effective than against some other variants.

So, there's still protection offered by one dose. But, we continue to emphasize the importance of being fully vaccinated. So if you're getting the Pfizer or the Moderna vaccines, get two doses. Two doses continues to be highly effective, even against the variants like the Delta variant. Only a single dose of a two-dose series is less effective.

What's the status of the State's contact tracing operation for now? I mean, I know they've been sort of dormant for a while. But given these variants, is there still the infrastructure in place, should the State decide to use this to trace an outbreak?

Dr. Chan:

I'm going to let Dr. Daly answer that. Thanks.

Dr. Daly:

So, we continue to have a contact tracing operation place, and we've been able to be flexible, in terms of how many Staff are in the operation throughout the pandemic, starting from a very small number of Contact Tracers, surging to even to having as many as 150 Contact Tracers on Staff. And over the last several weeks, as our case counts have come down, we've demobilized Staff, as we've no longer needed them.

As I mentioned, we are going to still investigate cases and ensure that their household contacts are quarantined. But we're not going to continue to do community contact tracing, meaning if a case says that they ate a restaurant on a certain day, or in their workplace, while they were potentially infectious, we're not going to go ahead and conduct that investigation and notify those people that they need to quarantine, because of the high vaccination rates that everybody has the opportunity to get vaccinated, and the decrease in case counts. And so, balancing that burden of quarantine, when few people actually go on to test positive afterwards, with the burden of quarantine and the risk to the public. So, we can scale back up if we need to. And we have that capacity to do that.

Dr. Daly, before you get away, can I ask about how many vaccines you expect to order next week? And I also wanted to ask you about creative efforts. I heard that at Bike Week the New Hampshire National Guard is offering vaccinations to bikers that are here. And I just -- it didn't come up in other conversations. Are there other things that you guys are doing to try to be creative about trying to get to people who are hard to reach?

Dr. Daly:

So we have an adequate supply of COVID-19 vaccines in this State here that we can distribute, as needed. So we don't have a specific plan to order more until we deplete that supply and need to order more. And so, I can't tell you exactly how many we might order next week. It depends on how many vaccines are being ordered. But we have plenty to meet the demand that we currently have.

As we work through the summer period, we do want to continue our efforts to increase vaccination. And we do have Mobile Teams and Contractors in place that can provide these types of popup clinics. That includes working with our Regional Public Health Networks who are doing that type of work now and our local Health Departments. And we are looking for people who want to partner with us and have a popup-type of vaccination event available.

For example say Hampton Beach on a hot summer day, or a concert at Meadowbrook, or something like that, are you looking to try to partner with those people in those locations, where there's high volumes of people who might, on a whim, decide to get a vaccine?

Dr. Daly:

We're willing to consider any of those types of opportunities to vaccinate people. We would want to have a conversation about how many people we might be able to reach and what the uptake might be in that setting. But open to all those ideas, the goal is to get more people vaccinated. Thanks.

Governor, can I go back to your comments on jobs for a moment?

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

We're hearing some industries continuing to struggle, in some cases having to reduce hours or not having the full Staff capacity to be able to open 100% capacity.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

They just don't have the Workers. Where are these people? And is this going to have an impact on the economy?

Governor Sununu:

Well, there's, I mean, a couple things. I think there are Workers out there. I think they're reengaging. And we've seen over the past couple weeks they continue to reengage at an aggressive level, over the past couple weeks.

You have to appreciate I think a lot of businesses have moved here. A lot of businesses are expanding here. There's just so much business growth. Even though our population continues to grow and a lot of people are obviously moving into the State, but we also have just a lot of business growth that is even outpacing that. We're just the place to be for business. And that's a really good thing, but it does put a strain on the system.

I -- we might have talked about it a little bit a couple press conferences ago. I still think there's a lot of potential folks who -- maybe a mom or a dad that were home with their kids while schools were in a temporary hybrid mode, or shut down, or whatever it was, or a fully remote learning environment. Maybe they're reskilling. Maybe they're taking that summer vacation that was robbed of them last year, whatever it might be. And I think you'll continue to see folks reengage in the workforce, specifically September, October, November timeframe, as kids get back to school.

So, summer is a tough time, to be sure. It's always a tough time. Summer was a tough time to hire folks. And I'm speaking from someone who was in a summer business for a little while. It was always a challenge to hire folks for summer work, and whether it was students or internationals.

We made a strong plea to the Biden Administration, the exact same plea we made to the Trump Administration to open up more of the International Worker Visas, especially the Seasonal Temporary Worker Visas, which just really helps fill some of those positions at a resort or whatever it might be. But unfortunately they haven't really opened it up as aggressive as we would like it. It hasn't happened in many, many years. The previous Administration didn't, either.

So, I think they're out there. I think you're just going to see a lot more people might just be a little delayed in engaging. I don't think they're necessarily on the unemployment rolls. But I don't think they're -- I think they're able-bodied Workers that are still spending time with their family, maybe over the summer, and hopefully will reengage at a more aggressive level September/October. So it's been tough on businesses, to your point. The money's out there. People want the service. But a lot of folks have just had to pull back on their hours simply from a lack of manpower.

Is there any update on Canada and opening the border?

Governor Sununu:

No, no update. We should know, I think, on June 21st. The agreement with Canada has to be reupped or changed, or hopefully just thrown away. I would love it if the border just completely opened. I talked with some of my counterparts, the Premiers of the Canadian Provinces, as well. And they agree. They want that border open.

We've offered them vaccine and all of that. The Biden Administration won't let me send it to them. So we're just kind of in a little bit of a wait-and-see mode. We're ready to go. I just hope the Federal Governments on both sides of the border see that it's really time to open that northern border.

Governor, we're hearing from some Nursing Students who were licensed under the Emergency Order whose Licenses have now expired, essentially. And they're having trouble navigating this new system in trying to get licensed, having to come to Concord to fix that problem. Is there anything your Office is doing or can do to try, since they basically cut their teeth in the pandemic and help these Nurses to get them back into that workforce?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, so a couple things. A lot of the licensing reciprocity and the streamlining of licensing that we allowed through the Emergency Order, whether it be Nurses or other fields, whether it be across border or relicensing folks that might have been retired, we provided a lot of flexibility and asked the Legislature to look at taking some of those up on a more permanent basis. In some cases, they are and will. Some cases, they're not.

If there's any questions, we encourage everyone to contact the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification. We call it OPLC. Lindsey Courtney, who runs that organization, and all the different -- there's a lot of different licensing that falls under there. If you have any questions, feel free to contact

them and they can help you at least navigate the system to know what's allowed, what's not, what has changed, now that the Emergency Order has ended.

Sounds like there's quite a backlog, though, in terms of...

Governor Sununu:

Oh, I imagine so. Yeah, look. We provided a lot of streamlined licensure and it was awesome. It really, really worked. And again, some of that, it would have been great to go into perpetuity. But the State of Emergency is over. And so, we have to get back to kind of a normal phase. And I think we saw some things that worked well, some things maybe that didn't work so well. And it's really up to the Legislature to decide what to continue on into the perpetuity.

Next week, when the Legislature appears, we have a budget agreement, at least among conferees. There's a lot of stuff in there you like. There's some stuff in there you may not be wild about. There was a nonbudgetary policy in there. What's your sense of what the public should know about the budget for this...

Governor Sununu:

There's a lot of really good stuff in there. Yeah, there's a lot of stuff in there I'm not thrilled with, either. I got to be honest. I don't know. I know they were still in meeting, I think, when I came here. So I'm not 100% sure where it ended up. It looks like there were just a few more issues that they were sorting out. I fought very hard to get paid leave in there, something I believe very strongly in. Did that get in?

It did.

Governor Sununu:

It did? That's terrific. Paid leave for the citizens of New Hampshire would be a huge win. But the biggest win there is the tax cuts, the property tax relief, \$150 million in property tax relief that goes back to folks all across the State. I mean, there's just pages and pages of really good things in there, to be sure.

They all mean something different for different people, right? So, I think maybe what we will try to do is put together -- I got to get an assessment of it. I think they'll take the final vote on whether this passes both bodies of the Legislature next week. So there'll be a big push to make sure that everyone's comfortable with it.

But with all the tax cuts and all the property tax relief, the increased in education funding that came out of it, I mean, I could go on and on about the stuff that's in there, it's a really, really, really good budget, as far as I can tell. I don't love everything that's in there, to be sure. But I don't get everything I want as Governor. Sometimes I sign things that I don't absolutely love.

There's 1.4 million people that I have to consider. It's a \$13 billion budget. I may not like the way this \$1 million is spent and that \$1 million is spent. But at the end of the day, I have to kind of look at it as a collective and decide whether to move forward with it.

So, I give the House a lot of credit and the Senate a lot of credit. I think they worked very hard. They did. And if you saw where our revenue projections have gone, just from when I proposed the budget back in February, they just keep going up. And they keep changing. And they keep getting refined.

So, the beauty is, as the process goes on, it gets tighter and tighter, and frankly better and better, because we have more data. We know more trends. We can make, I think, better and firmer predictions about where we can go with our revenues. That allows us a lot of confidence to make those tax cuts.

We're increasing the cap that we have on our Rainy Day Fund. We're going to be increasing that, so we can put more into essentially our savings account. That's a really good thing for the folks of New Hampshire, takes a lot of risk and liability off the State. So, a variety of really good things; and on the financial side, I'm very, very happy with it. And hopefully we can get it done.

So, where are you on the abortion provision on the mandatory ultrasounds for all abortions in New Hampshire? What do you think about that?

Governor Sununu:

Well, again, I said I'm not going to veto the budget on the provision that allows abortion in months 7, 8, and 9, similar provision they have in Massachusetts or New York, or 43 other States have similar types of provisions. They're all a little bit different.

But most of the States you mentioned do not mandate ultrasounds for proceeding...

Governor Sununu:

The ultrasound provision -- I'm sorry? Um-hmm [yes], yeah, some States don't mandate that. This one does. Like I said, there's things I love in it, things I don't. I'm not going to veto the budget over it.

I mean, is it fair to say you don't like that provision or it's not a big deal?

Governor Sununu:

I didn't propose any part of that on the late-term abortion, right? None of that was my proposal. I'm a pro-choice Governor. I support a woman's right to choose. I've always said that I -- as a lot of folks are -- do not support abortions in months 7, 8, and 9. All these other different provisions with it, the Legislature put in. I'm not going to veto the budget over it.

Just to pick up on some of the questions, some Providers have noticed that adding in the requirement to get ultrasounds, which applies to abortions before that 24-week limit, like all abortions, (inaudible), that adding that requirement would add healthcare costs onto the procedure, especially that might impact low-income people and add an option that they right now get to choose. Are you...

Governor Sununu:

Well, it's concerning. But again, I appreciate this could add potential healthcare costs. I don't like that at all. But as I've said, I'm not going to veto this \$13 billion budget with all the tax cuts and all the other stuff. I mean, there's so many other pieces to this. That's one provision. And so, I might not love all the details of that provision. But, again, at a bigger picture, there's a lot of really positive things for the citizens of New Hampshire with that budget.

To put it another way, if there were Bills that came for the Legislature next year that's essentially stripped out this ultrasound piece, would you support that Bill?

Governor Sununu:

Well, I'd have to look at that. I mean, it's a hypothetical Bill. So you have to appreciate it. But I'd obviously look at the pros and cons of both. One thing I've always said around this issue of abortion and all of that, we're one of the few States that really doesn't have a lot of data.

I mean, I'm a data guy. You've seen me up here with my charts. I'm a data guy and we don't keep a lot of data and information about this stuff. So that's a bit disconcerting [ph] in itself. I think we should. I mean, we should know what the impacts are. We can guess on the impacts, how many people it would impact or not. But we don't keep a whole lot of data on this. And so, I guess that's would be one of my first proposals is, if you want to change make changes to this stuff, we can talk about the pros and cons of all of that. But let's understand the data first. That's just, I think, a good place to start.

Governor, what's your message to Granite Staters as we head into the summer? I mean, it's the height of tourism season. Masks are coming off. Numbers are going down. You're ending these weekly press briefings. What's your message to Granite Staters? And also, I mean, is it over? You've made the analogy at the briefing of where we are in the mile marker on the marathon.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I was going to put my sunglasses on and just say have a good time.

Okay, yeah. I mean, have we crossed the finish line?

Governor Sununu:

I'll say this. Have we crossed the finish line? Good question. I'll say this. We keep saying the light is at the end of the tunnel. We're at the end of the tunnel. Okay? We're there. We're in the light. It's summer.

I think we've crossed the finish line on the crisis. We've crossed the finish line on the Emergency Orders. We've crossed the finish line on the -- I don't want to abuse the word "pandemic". I know we've talked about that. Pandemic is a global word. But we've crossed the finish line on that aspect of it.

But as was discussed today, it doesn't mean that we just ignore COVID. It's not here. We have variants that are out there. We still have -- we have loosening guidelines on the mask provisions, which is great. But there are still provisions there, just a warning that folks should be cognizant of it.

We're going to keep an eye on our vaccination rates. We're going to keep an eye on a lot of things. So it's not over because there's still work around COVID, but nothing we can't manage, nothing that puts us in a crisis mode. So this is as normal as we're going to see for a long time. And so, what's the new normal? This is it right here. I mean, this is really it. So, from the emergency and pandemic standpoint, yes, it's over.

What's the update on the emergency with boarding crisis in this State? And would you consider that to be the next crisis that the State is...

Governor Sununu:

No, that's the previous crisis. We've been in that crisis since I took office and that was a mess back in 2017. We addressed it aggressively. We've talked about this a lot. Commissioner Shibiinette did a phenomenal job getting the emergency boarder number to zero pre-pandemic, which was great.

Obviously the pandemic really created a contraction of events that kind of brought all that to bear again. The Emergency Order that I signed about a month, six weeks ago, whatever it was now, has seen a huge advancement, very, very quickly, in terms of getting that number down.

Every once in a while, we might hit a day that's zero. And then we will bounce back up to five or 10, or whatever it is. Some of the other positive datapoints there is, for those that have been waiting, the time that individuals are waiting has been also been drastically reduced. It's not days upon days, upon days anymore. So even when there is a wait, we're moving people through the system fairly well.

We're getting them assessed. We're opening new beds. We're putting a lot of money out there to incentivize both the Emergency Response Teams, so people can get help in their community. There are designated receiving facility beds, making investments in hospitals for new beds, bringing in new Private Providers. So, lots of really, really good stuff going on.

I think we're going to -- I think we've done a good job getting the number lower. I think kids is also another issue. We really don't want to take our eye off that ball. Very different situation with children and how they're cared for, making sure that specialization is there. They're in a place for kids. Kids and adults are very different and as they should be treated differently. And I think we have done a good job of identifying those differences that we need to design into the system.

We have a lot of those differences in the system now. We just want to enhance them and make sure we have excess capacity -- a little bit of excess capacity in the system to handle any surges that might happen.

Really interesting, some of the stuff is seasonal. You can see a seasonal surge with the number of kids that might come in looking for mental-health assistance. Maybe in October, kids get back to school, stresses of school, whatever it might be. Sometimes even in the beginning of summer months, there's different stresses on family dynamics or whatever it might be. So, you see some of the surges with work, depending on how strong our economy is.

So, not that we can predict all of this, but we know it kind of comes-and-goes. So, I say that to emphasize the point that one day we might be at 0 on a waitlist. One day, we might be at 5, 6, 10. But we're really putting the infrastructure in there to make it very responsive and be able to handle it.

It isn't a, gee, we have 60 people waiting for Emergency Room -- and emergency bed. What do we do now? Those days are over. We have the things in place to, I think, provide those services, move those people through the system as fast as possible, and just get them the help they need.

Another question on the budget, so a few minutes ago House and Senate Negotiators came up with a compromising on curbing emergency powers. And I wanted to ask you about one piece of it. So one piece would require Executive Council input into any spending decisions that are made. 14 months ago-or-so, when this came up, you opposed that when it was kind of asked for by Democrats at the time. You opposed that and said that, because of the nature of the pandemic, the nature of the emergency, that your Agencies needed to make split-second decisions. If that goes through in the budget, would you support that? And how do you feel about that?

Governor Sununu:

So, again, I don't know exactly the wording they came up with. But I'll say this. One thing that I spoke with the Legislature very clearly about is if there -- when the CARES Act money came out, again, the Legislature wasn't even in session. Those dollars had to come out very, very quickly. We set up GOFERR. We moved those dollars faster than anyone in the country. We did it very transparent. We did it really well.

What I said to them is, going forward, in an emergency situation, the Governor always needs -- there needs to be a bit of a separation. The Governor will always need emergency use of funds without the bureaucratic mess of going through a Fiscal Committee or a Council and all of that for things that directly relate to the health and safety of individuals: testing materials; HHS-type costs; those types of things.

In terms of more relief funds and economic stimulus funds, as we're doing with ARP now, yes, you should bring it through a Fiscal Committee, as long as they're willing to meet. You bring it through the Committee, and then you bring it to the Council. That's what we're doing with the ARP money now, those kind of American Rescue Plan money. It's all kind of a COVID-related Bill. But that will go through a Fiscal and Governor-and-Council process, as well. And so, kind of having that separation of how the dollars can be fast-tracked on a health-and-safety issue for the Governor, because if people need health-and-safety services, you don't want that being slowed down. But relief efforts, if you have to take a couple extra weeks, go through a legislative and Council process, that's fine. I'm willing to understand that and move forward with it.

But what's being contemplated isn't exactly a hybrid like you're presenting. It's sort of black-and-white. I mean...

Governor Sununu:

I'd have to take a look at that. I'm just telling you that's what I had originally discussed with the Legislature. I've been here. I don't know what they ultimately came up with it. So, that would be -- I can tell you that would be a really hard thing for me to go along with to say that if I need to buy testing materials, if I need to bring in vaccine and use our dollars for vaccines, that it might take weeks for it to go through a legislative and Executive Council process. That would really be a dangerous situation for our

citizens. So, if that's contemplated, then obviously we're going to have to make some adjustments there. I can't see signing off to it. But I really don't know what's in the Bill. You have to forgive me.

One more, another way to frame it is if these changes to emergency powers and your ability to declare the State of Emergency and the Legislature's involvement, if they were employed back in March 2020, how do you think you would have gone about this emergency, this crisis, this pandemic?

Governor Sununu:

Well, again, from what I understand, some of the changes that they're proposing, and maybe have moved through in the Committee, the Governor can still declare a State of Emergency, of course. It just says that the Legislature comes back after so many days. And I think they were debating on 21 days or 30 days, whatever it is. And they say this should continue, or it shouldn't, or they do nothing, right? But the Legislature has that checks-and-balance power to basically undo the State of Emergency.

Also, I think what was agreed to -- and I completely understand this -- they didn't have the flexibility to say, well, this Emergency Order probably shouldn't go forward. We're going to debate and talk about this in an open and public forum, and get input on it. And if we don't like it, the Legislature has the power to remove that. I understand that and I'm supportive of that, if they want to make that change, as well.

Some of the rules that revolved around the majority that -- or how many folks had to meet to get a quorum, or did you need a 2/3 or a majority vote to get this done? We've tried to provide some more flexibility with their rules.

So all this stuff that we call 417, this curbing of State of Emergency or just it's not so much curbing of the State of Emergency as it is just making sure the checks-and-balance system, I think, is working appropriately between the Executive and Legislative Branch. We've been working with them on that quite a bit.

I didn't like a lot of the concepts. But, again, we worked it out. We, I think, understood some of those balances and tried to find real solutions. And I think the Legislature's done a very good job with that, frankly. Again, I might not love every aspect of every last rule and every last line in there. But when that budget crosses my desk, I have to look at the budget as a whole. And I'll do that to the best of my ability.

Cathy McCormack with The Associated Press:

Hi, and thank you for taking our questions these many months. I have two quick questions. One, regarding variants, can you tell us now how many Delta cases we have? And I know it's not a lot, but can you give us a better idea on how many fully vaccinated people have tested positive for the virus? And do we have any information on the circumstances in these cases?

Governor Sununu:

Sure; so I believe we have 13 cases of the Delta variant that has been identified here in New Hampshire. As far as I guess we'd call the breakthrough cases, if you will, sometimes that term is used to identify individuals that are fully vaccinated but, one way or another, still are infected with the vaccine, it's still an incredibly low percentage. I know that. 335, so about 335 individuals out of over 700,000.

Now, knowing that the efficacy of these vaccines has always been identified at 90% or 95%, depending on what data you're looking at, that's still a fraction of a fraction of a percent, which is great. So, it appears to be even more effective than we even thought, which is good.

There's always going to be some breakthrough cases, of course. We just know that. That's the law of averages and statistics, unfortunately. But the fact that we've kept it to under 500 cases out of over 700,000, I think, is great news.

Kimberley Haas from the Seacoast Current:

Good afternoon, everybody. My question today is for the Governor. As we know, this is the last time everybody will gather together on a regular basis to be informed about what's happening with COVID-19 in our State. What will trigger a future press conference? For example, like, we know that our death toll has passed 600,000. And we still have quite a way to go in this fight, as Americans. What will trigger a future press conference? And where can our readers and listeners continue to get updates? For example, will the State's website continue to be updated? Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Sure; so I'll kind of take the second-half first. Yes, the State's website will continue to be updated indefinitely, which is great. That dashboard that we've created that has a lot of the data, the trends, the FAQs, the guidance documents, the Relief Programs, it's all there at our State website. And I think Health and Human Services has done a very good job of managing that.

You referenced 600,000 deaths. That's a national number. And I don't want to comment on where we are nationally. I'll say that America, as a country, is ahead of the rest of the world, far and away, which is really a blessing. And New Hampshire is even ahead of the pack there, which is really, really good.

So what will trigger a future press conference is a newsworthy event, as it relates to COVID. And I can't tell you really a whole lot more than that. We don't have a whole lot planned right now, as we go forward.

The State has really got out of being the primary vaccinator for the State. There's plenty of testing materials. There's plenty of PPE. We've stockpiled PPE in case for another emergency. We're managing and monitoring the variants. We have our website up-and-running. So there's a lot of data that's constantly given.

If there's something that requires an immediate notification, as it pertains to COVID, that cannot otherwise be gotten out in, again, an effective way through any of the other means of media, or our websites and dashboard, of course we will be right here. And look, even if there's not, my chances are we will probably come back in a few weeks in July and just give people a general update. We're not going away for good, by any means. But obviously if there's something that is newsworthy, as it relates to COVID, we will be right here. Great.

A little bit of a yearbook question here, but what do you consider in this process your biggest success, your biggest failure, and what have you learned?

Governor Sununu:

Oh, biggest success, biggest failure, and what have I learned? I feel I should lie down on the couch for that one. Well, I think the biggest success is the Team, right? I mean, we just got this phenomenal Team. We have a phenomenal Team that most people -- I've said this a few times that you'll never know their names. You've never seen their faces, but so many folks that make this work. And by this I mean the vaccination sites, the stockpiling of PPE, all the individuals at the National Guard. You've seen General Mikolaities and Colonel Fessenden up here a few times, and Perry Plummer and his Team, and all of that. So, there's so many individuals. The big success here in the State is the Team, without a doubt about that.

The biggest failure? I have to be honest. I don't think we've had any real failures, per se. It doesn't mean that things haven't gone wrong and there hasn't been bumps in the road. But I don't think anything has failed.

I think one of, I guess, maybe a regret -- can we use that word? And I've said this before. I think early on we really relied on the Federal Government for everything. We had to. We had nothing. And maybe over-relied on them a little bit, as it pertained to PPE, we were probably a little overconfident that, hey, we're going to send this to you. You have this much allocated. It's coming. And then, it literally wouldn't show up, or it would show up broken, or something like that. So that was a little bit of a frustration, to be sure. But, again, the Team responded and was able to fill those gaps very, very quickly. What was the last one?

What did you learn?

Governor Sununu:

What have I learned? And this is one. I guess it's something I always suspected but, boy, it really came to fruition. When times are good, that's when you work the hardest to get your Team and your infrastructure, and your financials all done right, right? The best time to balance a budget, when times are really, really good. The best times to hire good people are when times are really, really good, so that when the crisis hits, you're not scrambling. You can lean right on that Team.

You've set your philosophy, your goals, your metrics, your expectations. They know that going into it. And so, yeah, I mean, the biggest lesson, I think, out of this -- and I think I speak for a lot of Governors, or the Administration -- is work hard in the easiest of times to get your infrastructure right so that if crisis were to hit, you can lean right on them. And you can hopefully not miss a beat in terms of being able to respond. That's just off the top of my head.

Governor, I just have sort of like three quick questions for you.

Governor Sununu:

You bet. Let's go.

I want to ask about how New Hampshire Public Radio had a story yesterday that there were about 6,000 applicants for the Housing Relief Fund. And 3,000 of them are still waiting to get relief.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

There's only two weeks left until the Federal moratorium on evictions expires. What is the State's plan to get Applications processed faster, because the State has already tried to revamp its system to make it go faster and there's still a backlog?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, a very good question, very big issue, to be sure. There's a backlog of a few thousand folks that is trying to get their housing relief. We have the money. They will get processed. If they apply, they're going to get their money and that's very important.

We're just trying to get more people. It's almost like the business situation. It's a manpower issue. We've really worked on streamlining the Application as best we could. It's a Federal Program that we're administering. It's not the easiest of Applications. But we're kind of stuck with what we have and it's just a manpower issue, unfortunately.

So, we're just trying our best to hire more folks in, maybe looking at, as we hit the summer months. Summer's tough because there's so many more demands on the system. We have more demands in travel and tourism, and more demands, for example, for Staff on the beaches and things like that.

So, where we draw from, we've really leaned on the National Guard and we can do that. But, boy, they've given us so much over the past 18 months. We have a lot of -- well over 100 individuals, maybe even over 200 individuals deployed overseas right now, a lot of our National Guard. So, those systems are being strained, as well.

So, we are looking for kind of reallocating some of the manpower in individuals that are currently Employees of the State to maybe help process some of those Applications for the CAP Agencies. But it has been a challenge. And we're going to move them as fast as we possibly can.

The good news is, is the economy's strong. There's a lot of potential relief there for -- it's for utilities. It's for rent. Landlords can take advantage of it, as well. So, we will just keep putting as much Employees on it as we can to hopefully get them processed and get that backlog moved through. But it's a real issue.

Second question, and apologies if you've already made your position on this.

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

There's a Bill heading your way that (inaudible) that would end the gun line in New Hampshire. This is the State Police background check for handguns. And it would replace it with the FBI. What is your position on this?

Governor Sununu:

I've taken a look at that. I'm not firm on it one way or another yet, to be honest. I understand there's strong arguments on both sides. So I really haven't committed one way or the other there. I'm talking to some of the folks in Washington, because this would kind of send our process to Washington. And if I've defined myself as anything, it's someone that just doesn't trust Washington very much. So I have concerns over that.

Will it speed up our process or secure our process? It could. I think the Department of Safety has done a very good job. I think COVID created a backlog with all the systems. And so, I don't want a backlog that happened during COVID to define a new system, if it's not truly necessary.

So I've been talking to the Department of Safety, some folks in Washington, D.C. At the end of the day, we will just make the best -- we will kind of put all the pros and cons on the table. But if we think Washington can do it, we will move forward with it. But if we have concerns that they're going to just slow the system down and create a problem for owners, for individuals who want to purchase a firearm, then that would be a problem.

What about moving the State Primary to (inaudible)? I know you've been leery of that.

Governor Sununu:

So, the idea of moving it to August, probably going to veto that. And I don't see the benefit of it. I really don't. If you were going to really move the Primary, moving it four weeks doesn't achieve some of the goals that they were trying to achieve, which is giving more time for the General Election, more time to integrate with Independent voters or whatever it might be.

Adding a few weeks to the process, I don't see the benefits. And I haven't vetoed that yet. But I can tell you I'm very strongly leaning to vetoing it, because I just don't see the benefit. I think it creates confusion in our system. We got a great system. Unless we really need to change something, I'm always hesitant to do that.

What's your preferred like time area for the Primary? And if you do veto that Bill, how would you respond to criticism that you, as an Incumbent Governor, have benefitted from the late Primary over the last few elections?

Governor Sununu:

That I've benefitted from a late Primary?

As an Incumbent, not having to face a difficult Primary and having an opponent who does have to face a Primary...

Governor Sununu:

I never thought of it that way. But look, I guess all -- any Governor in my position would -- if you're any Governor in my position that's being asked to move the Primary would be faced with the same question. So I haven't really thought about whether it's an advantage or a disadvantage. I apologize. What was the first half of your question?

Oh, it was just...

Where would you put it?

Yeah, where would you put it?

Governor Sununu:

What's the Primary this year?

So the Primary's...

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, sounds good. I like where it is. I think it's pretty good. Now, if there's a compelling argument to move to like June to get to more voters or something like that, if it were a substantial change like that, then I think we'd be able to look at data and trends.

We have some of the higher voter turnout. I want to make sure that doesn't get affected by it. I'd obviously confer with Bill Gardner on his thoughts on it, because he's just the guru. He understands this at such an in-depth historical level. He's always -- I mean, that guy can predict almost to a person how many people are going to vote in a Primary. He really understands this. And so, I'd really lean on a lot of his expertise, as well. But I think this Bill just moves it to August and I don't see the benefit of that.

I have one last question.

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

This is about the Bill formerly known as the (Inaudible) Bill. And it's the latest iteration of it that has gone through House Bill 2 right now. One provision is it -- and it again kind of bars Teachers and other Public Officials from teaching certain concepts in certain ways. It also provides avenues to bring complaints. And one avenue that kind of stuck out to me is the State Board of Education can actually impose professional penalties on Teachers that violate this new Law. And so, my question is: if you sign this budget and this Law

moves ahead, and Teachers now have to worry about whether certain way that they teach a certain history class, or a social studies class, might land them -- not only their school and financial toll, but themselves in professional jeopardy, does your Department of Education plan to produce guidance for Teachers to try to navigate?

Governor Sununu:

I would imagine so. Yeah. Yeah. I would imagine so. Look, I believe any system that has accountability has to have accountability. And the State Board of Education does a great job. They're probably an appropriate group to kind of assess those types of complaints or concerns, if there were any.

But obviously you don't want to leave folks completely in the dark, I think, to the heart of your question. And so, it would be appropriate to put up some guidance, training, things of that nature, possibly, in terms of what difference, so they know what expectations are.

I want to quote your words in March. You indicated (inaudible). And at that time, you were talking about House Bill 544, that Bill.

Governor Sununu:

Yes.

And so, you said you would oppose it. You said Bills that start restricting free speech, you may not like what people say. But you can go and talk to your kids schools. And then, you said, you don't start doing it. The Government is going to say, you can't say certain things. That is ripe for a lot of bad gray area, if you will, a lot of bad interpretation. And it just sends us down the wrong path.

Governor Sununu:

Yes.

The language that is going forward in the budget still does impose restrictions on how Teachers can teach certain topics. You had mentioned the gray area back in March and the reason you didn't like the last version.

Governor Sununu:

Well, let's be clear a couple things. Back in March, they kept using the term "divisive concepts". And they said, what do you think of divisive concepts, was the heart of that question. And what I was trying to say and I think I said with that answer is, that's a very gray, amorphous thing. What's a divisive concept to me could be a very different divisive concept to someone else, that could be split up for political reasons. And I think that's why Bill 544 didn't even get out of the House of Representatives. It didn't come to my desk. It never went anywhere, because I think it was just...

They put it in the budget. I mean...

Governor Sununu:

What's that?

They've put it in the budget.

Governor Sununu:

But they didn't. 544 is not in the budget.

Well, it was in the House-passed version, to be clear.

Governor Sununu:

Oh, in the House-passed version. Yes.

Yes, so it did get out of the House...

Governor Sununu:

Oh, yeah, so the budget today, though, again the version today, it doesn't use the term "divisive comments". And it doesn't say Teachers shall or shall not. What it says is Teachers can't discriminate. That's it. A Teacher cannot teach things that inherently discriminate against their students in the classroom.

It's actually very clear language. I think Senator Bradley did a very good job saying, look, we have Discrimination Laws that are on the books. We're going to strengthen and enhance those. And it's something back in March, that's exactly where I thought it should go. We have things on the books.

Didn't have a whole lot of accountability attached to it for parents or folks that had concerns with that, but we've kind of strengthen. And I mean all those sentences in that Bill say is you're not going to discriminate against a student, or teach something that's discriminatory, simply based on their skin color, or their gender, or sexual identity. I mean, it doesn't just include race. It includes all these different things. Doesn't say this could be taught and that can't be taught. It says, don't discriminate. And that's exactly where we should be.

So just to summarize, your contention is that that sentiment, don't discriminate, doesn't have the gray areas that you mentioned back in March as the reason you didn't like the original version. Are there any...

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, well, it doesn't talk about you shall not teach these divisive concepts. I think that's where -- I mean, we've seen that in some courts across the country. They are getting hung up on and overturning some of these Bills. I think maybe the former President might have tried something that was overturned by the Court and said, you can't do that.

So, whatever you do with the Bill, it's only as good as it is sustainable. If it gets thrown out by a Court, well, what have you really achieved? And I think Senator Bradley took that approach and tried to say, well, we already have good Anti-Discrimination Laws on the books. Let's strengthen those and get out of this kind of gray area of divisive concepts and thou shalt, and all that kind of stuff.

But in the non-school portion of the Bill, it takes about allowing Public Employees who opt out of essentially training, (inaudible) for I don't want to participate in implicit bias training. Therefore, I won't participate in it. You could argue that if you don't want to participate, then you're probably not going to benefit from it.

Governor Sununu:

Okay.

But if somebody who has thought implicit bias training is important, the...

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, but I'm not going to mandate it for the citizens of the State. It's important.

No, for Public Employees, that they can opt out under the Bill.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

You think that's totally fine with you?

Governor Sununu:

If people want to opt out, yes. I mean, look, we're going to make it very available. We're going to talk about it in our communities. We're going to talk about it. And what that training looks like for Law Enforcement might be very different than what it looks like for other aspects of our communities.

So, I think there's just an opportunity to work on that sort of stuff, to get it right, to not make it inherently discriminatory. And if it's good for some folks, they can do it. And if folks don't want to partake in it, they don't.

Governor, you said you're a local-control guy in education. You're comfortable with the idea of a Teacher potentially teaching this class on American slavery. Someone might get offended in that class. They report this Teacher to the Board of Education. That Teacher gets hauled out of the community and district before a State Board to answer for what they've taught. That's okay with you?

Governor Sununu:

Look, anyone who gets licensed in this State, there are Boards where, if you violate your licensure, whether you're a Teacher or an Engineer, that there's a Board that oversees that makes sure you're working within the guidelines of both the Law, the Rules, and the Regulations. So it's no different than anybody else. I mean, it's the same as anyone else who's licensed.

We license Teachers, right? You have to go to school. You have to get training. There are certain expectations and standards to be met. It's not a free-for-all, unless you're homeschooled. It's a very different story when you're homeschooled. But in our public school system, that's licensed and there's an accountability system to that. It's just like everything else.

In the realm of ideas, though, this isn't the same as...

Governor Sununu:

Not ideas, discrimination. Discrimination, something that is clearly just if something -- someone feels like -- if a child feels like they're clearly being discriminated, based on their skin, their sex, their gender identity, whatever it is, could be any one of those things, then there can be repercussions for that. It's not a system without accountability. That's all. Oh, sure.

And I got one more, sorry, Governor. On the abortion issue, you say you're pro-choice. You're going to put your signature on a group of abortion restrictions that collectively few, if any, pro-choice people would support.

Governor Sununu:

Other than all the Democrat States that already support similar provisions?

There are a lot of pro-choice people...

Governor Sununu:

New York?

There are pro-choice people who are upset with this move, essentially. They're saying that you can't call yourself pro-choice. So the question is, on what do you base your credibility as a pro-choice person that you support these restrictions?

Governor Sununu:

I've always said that I've always been pro-choice. I've always supported a woman's right to choose. We've always supported healthcare. I've signed those Planned Parenthood Contracts, all of that. So my record speaks for itself. I've always said that if abortions in months 7, 8, and 9 is no different than many pro-choice individuals, as well as these extremely liberal States that have the exact same type of core provisions, right?

They have different restrictions in place, in terms of exemptions.

Governor Sununu:

No, but you're talking about abortions in months 7, 8, and 9. That was your question. And I'm telling you all these liberal States already have that.

Yeah, but...

Governor Sununu:

So this isn't some radical idea. That's not a...

24 weeks, Adam is right.

Governor Sununu:

But that's the core of it, right?

Well, okay. But there are other things.

Governor Sununu:

Look, I don't want to get into a debate about it.

I mean, I say collectively, not just the late-term abortion ban.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so you're asking me -- so are you saying -- you're asking about ultrasound now?

The mandatory ultrasound.

Governor Sununu:

Well, that doesn't define whether you're pro-choice or not. Ultrasound doesn't define -- being pro-choice or not pro-choice isn't about whether you're for mandatory ultrasounds or not mandatory ultrasounds. Those are two completely different things.

So we're talking about a pro-choice issue in months 7, 8, and 9. I've always said, as many pro-choice people have said, they are against those late-term, months 7, 8, and 9 abortions. And this is not some radical idea.

Those folks that are trying to make this claim and all that, I understand. Go talk to the folks in Massachusetts. Go talk to the folks in New York or any of the number of very liberal States that already have these core provisions in place. This is political. You guys are falling into a political fodder. That's all. My record stands on its own. And it's been very clear.

Governor, I just have one question. I mean, you keep saying Massachusetts and New York. What is your understanding of the exemptions they have?

Governor Sununu:

Do they ban abortions in months 7, 8, and 9?

Well, what about the conditions under which an abortion is permitted?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, those are different.

What is your understanding of what they are?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, those are not the same as this. Yes, to be sure. But, again, first of all, let's be very clear. None of this was my proposal, right? It really wasn't.

Well, there are plenty of things that aren't your proposal.

Governor Sununu:

You want to veto a \$13 billion budget? That would be irresponsible, because I support the concept that they're putting forth, the core concept of not allowing abortions at such a late point in a pregnancy, as many, many, many pro-choice folks do, because I disagree with your assessment that most pro-choice -- that's not true, at all.

I didn't offer any...

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, no, no. But I'm just saying it's clear what other States have done. The core provisions of this are the same as many, many other States. Some of the stuff around the edge, the ultrasounds, what is an exception or not exception, those might be different. And I might agree with some and not agree with others.

But it doesn't go against my core tenet of not allowing abortions in those late months. And I've always said that. I've never strayed from that since I've become an Elected Official many, many moons ago.

Okay. Anything else? Boy, that's going to be the last question after 111 press conferences? Dear Lord, all right. Well, look, we've done a great job. Big thanks to the whole Team in terms of managing the COVID crisis.

We're already well on our way of a great summer. We hope everyone has it. Lots of job opportunities out there, lots of economic opportunities for individuals. Folks should go out, take advantage of that. Enjoy the summer. Find that next job, find that next reskilling.

We will be back probably sometime in July and we will give folks an update to see where we are. And hopefully we're just still right on the same path. Everything looks very, very good from here on out. Thanks, guys.