

- Good afternoon, today is Friday, April 17th, 2020. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 response media briefing. My name is Michelle Shoresman and I'm the designated media contact for our public information team. This afternoon we have two speakers for you. We will begin with San Luis Obispo County District Two Supervisor, Bruce Gibson, and he will be followed by County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein, County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director, Wade Horton is also here and available for questions. Speakers, please remember to repeat your question before answering, and thank you again to Robin Babb, our American Sign Language interpreter. And, now San Luis Obispo County District Two Supervisor, Bruce Gibson.

- Thank you, Michelle. And good afternoon everyone. I want to start first today, speaking about something that I know, is on all of our minds and that is the reopening of our community and our economy. Now Supervisor Compton spoke to this on Wednesday and I'm pleased to join her on a subcommittee of the Board of Supervisors, to help craft a plan that's going to carefully guide us out of the stay-at-home order and into a phase reopening of our life in this county. Together, along with local medical community, our business community, nonprofits and other groups, we're gonna be working to develop practical guidelines, that will help our community stay healthy, as we work to recover economically. There are a couple of important points I want you to know about this plan. First, it will be put in place only when Governor Newsom gives us authority, to do so. We're not sure exactly when that's gonna be. But when it does happen, we'll be ready to act. And the other point is that this plan's gonna be based on science and data. And it's going to be a framework for decision-making that takes care of the public's health. These are fundamentally important points. There's a lot of work ahead in the next couple of weeks, and we'll be talking about that as this plan is rolled out. In the meantime, we know that many in our community are struggling to put food on the table, struggling to provide even some of the most basic necessities. The county has partnered with the SLO Food Bank, to stand up a program that has provided over 2,600 food deliveries, so far, to those most at risk in our community. And by the end of today, we will have provided another 559 more. Through this program, we deliver food to those who can't get it easily. Those who can't leave their homes because they're either self-isolating, or self-quarantined. Or those who can't get access to food due to other COVID related impacts. Now this program has actually resulted and developed a great partnership with the California National Guard, which has very graciously provided us a place for secure storage of food and medical supplies, out at Camp San Luis. And we thank them greatly for that accommodation. Many of our county employees are helping this effort as sworn disaster service workers, using a wide variety of their skills to help us manage logistics and tracking and take care of the everyday business of making this particular program work. And you know, a lot of other good folks are helping our neighbors who are in need. We're actually getting a surge of donations from both local businesses and individuals. And I wanted to take off from there and ask you, if you are able, to please consider a donation to the SLO Food Bank. They would love to have your cash, because your cash donation can be multiplied four times as they go out and purchase food on the open market. They respectfully and gently request that cash donations are preferred. Actual donations of food are not as effective because they don't take advantage of that leveraging that they can accomplish. I also want to highlight an important program that helps people buy food. CalFresh provides funds, it's a federal program administered by the state and the county. CalFresh provides funds that vary depending on the specifics of a household. But for instance, a single recipient might be receiving as much as \$194 a month, in order to purchase groceries. These funds come on a card, works a lot like a debit card, which can be used at any grocery store. And by the first of next month, will be available for online purchases of food at Amazon and Walmart, as well. Now it just takes

10 minutes to apply at getcalfresh.org. And I want to let you know that our Department of Social Services has actually been working really hard to streamline and reduce the amount of time it takes to actually get those benefits in hand. And the results have varied a bit. But our department tells us that they have cut an average of five days off the time, between the application and actually folks getting to have benefits. And finally, I want to mention some of the other incredible work that's happening in our communities. As I look to communities all over this county, I see wonderful folks, neighbors helping neighbors. It is truly the best expression of the American spirit. And I want to just give you one example of that effort, that happens to come from Cambria. In Cambria, a variety of community members, from Special District Board representatives to the faith community, to nonprofit community, and just folks who care about their fellow residents, have stood up a food distribution program for many members of the community, who have lost their jobs with the stay-at-home order. There's a large service worker community in Cambria, largely Hispanic. And these folks in Cambria are stepping up to make sure that their neighbors receive the food they need, including a really innovative program where contributions are made to support restaurants preparing full, cooked meals for those who don't have kitchen facilities in their lodging. This speaks volumes and to watch that community get together, organize themselves, make sure that no person is left behind, has been truly inspiring. So with that, I thank all who are contributing to our communities, countywide. I hope you stay well and enjoy the coming weekend. Thank you.

- Thank you, Supervisor Gibson. I'm Dr. Penny Borenstein, the County Health Officer and I do have our new numbers for today. The county of San Luis Obispo stands at 127 cases. I'm happy to report that of those, 85% are in the recovered category, and we have three individuals in the hospital, two of whom are in ICU. So as you can hear, we continue to have a flat curve. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the community for all of the diligent efforts that we have taken, up to this point. Many of the counties around us are not quite as fortunate and we are in a good position. And we want to make sure not to squander that opportunity. So at the time being, we are going to continue to need, to continue on our course, of social distancing, of potentially wearing masks, if needed, on staying home when you're sick, hunkering down at home, as we have done. However, we are as you've been hearing, and Supervisor Gibson is speaking to the plan, to move into a new phase. So we've achieved this milestone of flattening the curve. And we want to bring the community along to the next milestone, of loosening the restrictions. We are prepared to do that, but we need for everybody to continue to understand that this is not going to be a light switch, where we go from where we were in January, back to that place. We will go to a new place. But we will continue to look at the data and continue to ask of people, that they sacrifice and that they continue to observe all of the hard-fought measures that we've put into place. Yesterday, you heard the President announced a set of guidelines for governors in three phases. And we are looking toward being ready to pull that trigger, if you will, when we can do so. So we are still under the State order. And I will speak for a moment about where we are in the county, with respect to our shelter-at-home order. But we are largely prepared, at this point, to move forward into phase one, the specifics of which we will know more about as we roll out this plan. It is in development. And we hope to have something before the public in the coming week, or weeks. Just want to remind people that now is not the time to loosen all of our resolve and all the measures that we have put in place. We don't want to be like the counties around us, who are really struggling with nursing home outbreaks, with prison outbreaks, with jail outbreaks. We can be very proud in this county, that we have done everything that we've done to arrive at this moment. But it really could be a rapid change, if we're not to keep our resolve. Let me talk for a moment about the shelter-in-place order. It expired yesterday

and we have a new one in place now for 30 days. Now I know that that is going to make people slump in their chairs and feel that, "I don't know if "I can do what we've been doing, for another 30 days." So let me address that head-on, by saying, we have put this local order into place at a time that we are still living under a State order so that we can have local control over the content of that order. And we can have local interpretation through our own county council on our San Luis Obispo County order. We will, and intend to lift that order just as soon as we can. We will replace it with something that is most likely, far less restrictive. But we can do that at any point. With this order put into place for another 30 days, it gives us that opportunity to maintain local control, and to revisit it at every point along that 30 day period. Built into the order is a two week review, but the community needs to understand that at any point that we are ready to move forward, and that the State gives us that allowance to move forward. We can make changes to the protective measures that we have put into place. So with that, I will open it up for questions and either Supervisor Gibson, Mr. Horton and myself, are available.

- [Man In Audience] Dr. Borenstein, I have a question for you. We talked about the plasma treatment, convalescent plasma, a couple of weeks ago, I think, and you said you'd reached out to some of those that have been recovering. Is there an update on that? Have you found anybody that was willing to do that, or just an update on that?

- Yes, the question is, is there any new information regarding plasma donations, from people who have recovered from this disease? Yes, we have a plan in place. We have reached out to, I don't know all of them because it's a moving target as to who's recovered, but we are continuing to reach out to all of our recovered patients to give them notification of the opportunity, to donate their plasma. It's called convalescent plasma. The idea being that they have antibodies. Those individuals have antibodies in their blood that can be used as treatment for patients who are suffering significant impacts from this disease. We have had a couple of people who are going through the process of screening and have expressed a desire to give. And we hope that there will be many more to come.

- [Woman In Audience 1] We're wondering if the social distancing and hand washing, and all those, has that had any impact on flu, people contracting the flu people, people dying from the flu, anything like that?

- The question is, do we think that all of the good hygiene measures, like hand washing and related infection control measures have had an impact in the occurrence of flu, in our community? And that is a good question, but a really difficult one to answer because we started to put those measures in place just as the natural seasonal curve of our influenza seasonal, not epidemic. Our influenza season, typically peaks in January, February, and then starts to fall off in March and, often is gone by April. That is exactly what we've seen. So it is really difficult to know if we had an earlier end to the season because of these measures, or if that was going to happen anyway.

- [Woman In Audience 1] Gotcha. Have you guys seen any recent flu deaths at all?

- The question is, have we seen any recent flu deaths? No, we have had, to the best of my knowledge, up till this point, four deaths from influenza. The season is from November 1st to April 30th and that has not changed recently. Any other questions?

- [Woman In Audience 2] Could you maybe describe a little bit, about what, when you talk about moving into phase one, what that would look like for people during their daily lives?

- Yes, so a combination of what the governor has put out in terms of the types of things that will allow us to move forward and the President's plan. It does not envision in that first phase, that schools will reopen. It does not envision, I'll tell you what it doesn't include. And then I'll back into some of the things that it might include. Certainly the highest risk individuals, those of older ages, as well as those with medical conditions, are still advised to stay at home. All the social distancing measures would still be in place. We would ask that people still, to the extent possible, use that six feet for distancing. It remains to be seen whether, in addition to recommending face coverings, we may go a step further. I'm not at that place in our counting. We're gonna use the data and the ongoing situation to guide us. But we do want to get people back to work. I very much am concerned that all of these measures, do have health impacts. I mean, I care very much about the economic impacts as well, for our community. But as your Health Officer, I also am concerned about health impacts, whether it's, mental illness or people not eating as well, because they're not using their regular patterns, not sleeping as well, all of those things. We want to alleviate those conditions, as soon as possible. And so that means getting people back to work. And many of those businesses that have been shuttered, we will work with the business community, with the faith community, with the education community, ultimately, in phase two, to find ways to get them back to their routines. But with different provisions in place. So again, be that the number of people that can enter a business, where they can enter the business, what the physical setup of that business looks like, how many of them can be in there at the same time? All of those things are part of this plan, that are evolving. But all of those considerations are part of a phase one, getting back to business, if you will.

- [Woman In Audience 1] And it seems, sounds like you guys are pretty ready to move to that phase as soon as the governor shifts the state off of its overall shelter-at-home. Is that sound right?

- We are in many ways. I still maintain some concern about being able to track the disease. As far as case investigation and contact tracing, I have very good comfort that our county can do what it needs to do in the face of the number of disease that we've been seeing and that we may see an increase of, moving forward. Testing is still an issue and we are continuing to push every angle with getting additional equipment, additional materials, working with our healthcare sector to continue to push out testing because ultimately we're gonna really need that information to understand where we are in this epidemic. That said, I, you know, I don't want the community who's listening to this, to feel that we're not doing everything we can to get back to business.

- [Man in audience] I've got a question for you again. You started the pop-up clinic last week, in, I believe, San Miguel. There was another one this week in, South County. An update on those? Any more planned? Have those proven to be successful?

- Yes, so we have done, today actually, as we speak. One is going on in South County. So I don't know the outcome of that. We, in addition to these community pop-up clinics, the question was I'm just remembering. I don't always remember to repeat the question, was, have our pop-up clinics been successful? We've done one in North County, in South County. And we anticipate doing more of those. So we have had success with identifying areas that we believe are in need of additional testing because we think that those are areas that are not using the regular healthcare system, as readily. It includes communities, as you said, in San Miguel, and today in Oceano. We, in addition, are doing that type of

testing at food distribution sites. So we're trying to reach out to a population that is, to a large extent, not as visible and maybe more vulnerable. We know that our homeless individuals do have more medical issues. And so, we're trying to make sure that we cover all the bases. We will continue to do that type of work, as we go forward. The good news is, that of those efforts that we have stood up, we have not tested anyone positive. So, further congratulations to our community for everything that we have done to keep a lid on this disease, in our community.

- [Man In Audience] That's great to hear. Any kinda number of people you tested in those clinics?

- They're relatively small numbers because we are still requiring that people have symptoms. As we move forward, and if the testing becomes available and we do expand the criteria for testing, we will probably see greater numbers, going forward.

- [Michelle] Any more questions?

- Thank you.

- Thank you all once again for coming today and for tuning in online, and on TV. Remember, there are numerous ways that you can get your information, current and up to date, on the San Luis Obispo County response to COVID-19. We continue to update ReadySLO.org and maintain our public health information line, that is a recorded message, with daily updates. Our phone assistance center is open until 5 p.m. today. Over the weekend, it's open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. And again, all of our information on ReadySLO.org is available in English and Spanish. Our next regularly scheduled briefing will be Monday at 3:15. Please remember to tune in on San Luis Obispo County Public Health's Facebook feed, as well as the county's homepage and live streams at KCOY and KSBY. Thank you, be well and have a safe weekend.