I wanted to provide you notes from this week from the COVID-19 Legislative Workgroup.

COVID-19 Legislative Workgroup

On Wednesday, the Joint COVID-19 Response Legislative Workgroup held a briefing on three different models tracking the spread of COVID-19. Dr. Justin Lessler from Johns Hopkins University provided modeling data that would help governments, hospitals, companies, etc. with planning scenarios. There are six scenarios: 1) Continue current stay at home measures, 2) the MD Roadmap to Recovery (minus contact tracing), 3) Self-isolation and household quarantine, 4) Self-isolation, household quarantine, and delayed contact tracing, 5) Self-isolation, household quarantine, delayed contact tracing, and social distancing, and 6) Self-isolation, household quarantine, contact tracing, and social distancing. The model looks at each scenario and resurgences of the virus. The different scenarios show different peak periods, shallower peaks, and slower periods to reach peak. Based on a mathematical extrapolation of the current 858 deaths, 260,000 Marylanders have likely been infected, which is only 4% of the population putting the State far from the herd immunity level that New York City is currently approaching. Pandemics end with enough herd immunity or when there is a vaccine.

Dr. Lei Zhang from the University of Maryland, College Park presented an Interactive Impact Analysis platform created in conjunction with Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Baltimore. It can be accessed at: data.covid.umd.edu. The universities have been running the largest transportation data center in the nation, which can track almost all movement, including personal movement data. They have access to location data from over 150 million cell phones, which allows them to identify trips and visits people are making. The tool can provide summary statistics of people that are staying at home, how many trips people are making, whether they are going to work, where they are going based on business sector, and trips made for non-work purposes. The tool can even provide data to a single point of new outbreak like a single church. According to their summary results, Maryland has been in the top 6 states in the nation in terms of social distancing. However, after April 14th, there has been a reduction nationwide in social distancing due to "quarantine fatigue". Currently, the data is showing major reductions in social distancing. The platform also has a Society-Economy Reopening Assessment (SERA) tool, which will be available next week. It provides data and insight on both the reopening of businesses and post-reopen decision support by offering detailed economic and business impact estimates. It can also analyze causes for new outbreaks and suggest containment strategies.

Dr. Jeffrey Shaman from Columbia University discussed trying to understand the broader prevalence of respiratory viruses in communities. One study, conducted over 19 months, looked at seven types of respiratory viruses, including coronavirus. They found that people are unwittingly shedding virus because their symptoms are not severe: they still go to work, still travel, etc. allowing the virus to circulate. The researchers built a mathematical model looking at China where 86% of infections were undocumented. The simulations showed that, without transmission from undocumented cases, confirmed cases would have decreased 79%. This means that there is stealth transmission of the virus, which is difficult to contain without very strong testing and contact tracing. By contrast, SARS and MERS did not have mild symptomatic features so people sought clinical care and there was not a lot of stealth transmission. The key thing to do is increase testing and contact tracing using South Korea as the model.

Following those presentations, members of the workgroup discussed some of the top concerns of their constituents, which included unemployment insurance; digital learning and the digital divide in urban and rural areas; developing plans for lost learning time; lack of broadband access in parts of the state; food stamp eligibility for college students; insurance policy coverage for small businesses; whether contact tracers will look like the people in communities they enter; Strike Teams for group homes; MD Department of Commerce grant awards; and establishing advisory groups to assist the legislature on the economy and needed community resources.

The meeting can be listened to and the presentations reviewed [here](#).

The workgroup meets every Wednesday at 10:00 AM.

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