

Today, the COVID-19 Legislative Workgroup had a meeting. This group was put together by President Ferguson and Speaker Jones and consists of both Senate and House members. The presentations from this meeting should be posted [here](#). Below are the notes from the meeting.

After President Ferguson and Speaker Jones provided opening remarks, there was a series of presentations.

Dr. Ingelsby and Dr. Sharfstein from the Bloomberg School of Health provided an overview of “where are we now and what has been learned about COVID so far. 1-2% case fatality rate for recognized, diagnosed cases. But, the real case fatality rate will be lowered when we have more testing. Mild cases are like the flu. Severe cases require hospitalization and possible intubation. Fatalities are highest over 85 years. 1.7% overall cases in children nationwide (only 3 deaths). Underlying health conditions have highest risk for severe symptoms. Without social distancing – 1 person can affect 2 or 3 more but some say up to 5 with new cases every 3-5 days. Without vaccine or therapy, the only way to slow down is social distancing. In places with social distancing and societal engagement, those countries are managing it and functioning at a more normal rate. If our hospitals get overwhelmed, fatalities would go up because of the lack of ventilators.

In Maryland, we are unaware of any situation where a person who needed a ventilator was not getting one. There is still a serious shortage of diagnostics, especially rapid testing. Still capacity for out-of-state commercial labs but results can take 5-7 days. Greatest cases are Prince Georges, Montgomery, Baltimore, City, AA. MD/DC/VA is a designated hot spot now by White House. Don't know when peak will come in Maryland. Other countries have seen peak about 4-5 weeks after large scale social distancing. White House model shows peak on April 18th but others show later. Around country people are starting to at least think about how to reduce social distancing. He says that we need the capacity to do widespread testing and PPE availability for all health care workers and need to have a true down turn in numbers and have our public health system able to track those individuals to be able to isolate and see who they may have had contact with.

Dr. Sharfstein – 1) Communications – critical part of the response. MD is doing relatively well because the communication has been clear. This needs to continue. The more people hear from different sources to protect themselves; the more people will follow. 2) Partnerships – no public health agency has the ability to do this all by itself. As leaders of the State, how can we reach out to other resources. Ideas include – making sure TV, radio, faith and community groups have the right information. Nursing homes – opportunities for others to support nursing homes; sew masks; raise funds; think outside the box. Call centers, etc. needed. Who are the institutions in your State that can help with public health. 3) Social support – partnerships with dorms, hotels, etc. to house workers and those recovering. We need an adaptive response to blunt the peak and then will loosen things. Need a dimmer switch not an on/off switch. This is happening in Singapore right now. Last concept for economic recovery – need to hold it in treading water mode and then can bring it back. Need to invest in things to control the disease. Need job programs to do contact tracing; pay hotels to house health care workers.

Secretary Robert Neall presented and stated that the State is working on people, places and things. The people is getting more individuals tested. Commercial labs are accelerating results. MDH has signed an agreement with University of Maryland that will be able to test 20k a day. The places is getting more testing tests and alternative care locations. The Convention Center is getting ready for operations, which will be a step down care unit (250 beds) . MDH also has procured 100 module units (1000 beds) for onsite surge. The things are procuring the following items: lab test chemicals; drugs (specifically the sedatives needed for intubations – hospitals are reporting shortages); ventilators and PPEs. For ventilators, the State has procured 1178 ventilators but has ordered more than twice that amount. The

State has distributed additional PPEs from Maryland stockpile. For process, the State will be managing the ventilators centrally but the PPE are being managed by local health agencies.

Questions raised on nursing homes – Secretary Neall said that there are 230 nursing homes. Over 90 homes have an outbreak (which could just be one case). MDH has instituted strike forces and are working to prevent additional outbreaks. The nursing homes constitute about 600 cases statewide (about 10-12% of overall cases). MDH has accelerated the distribution of PPE to protect all staff and residents. This started on Sunday.

From a question, Dr. Sharfstein said that in lessening restrictions we would need to have more testing and the ability to trace and quarantine.

The Secretary of Education spoke and said that all students will be advancing to the next grade in the Fall. Getting better at resource learning. Senator Pinsky asked whether there has been consideration for year round school. Secretary Salmon said may be revisited but focusing much of the resources right now on distant learning (concerned about resurgence in fall or winter). Homeless youth has been a huge worry about getting these students connected. Have been working with DHS on connections. Been very diligent on getting students the materials that they need. Timeline for waiver decisions and additional days of remote learning - decision will be made way before April 24th. Graduation timeline – trying to wrap up the issues of graduation requirements by end of April for waivers (including service hours; assessments, etc.).

Other Comments:

Senator Smith wants to focus on housing issues and CARES Act for next meetings. Senator Smith recommend also putting together recommendations for the Administration to move forward. Delegate Pena-Melnyk concerned that individuals can't get through the call system for unemployment. Need to put pressure to get more workers. Also, think that they should have a homework hotline set up. Delegate McIntosh wants to flag the issue of food banks being in dire straits by next week. Collectively, we need to make sure that we are helping to get more resources to the food bank. Appropriations is doing a briefing on Thursday on the CARES Act. Senator Griffith concerned that the COVID-19 Grant Program has been closed. Need to explore whether those funding options may be or could be reopened.

Next meeting April 15th at 10:00 AM. Plan to meet each week at 10 AM.

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