

Below are summaries of both the COVID-19 Legislative Workgroup and the Governor's Press Conference:

COVID-19 Legislative Workgroup

Today, the Joint COVID-19 Response Legislative Workgroup received briefings from several entities.

Maryland Department of Commerce Secretary Schulz explained to the workgroup that it usually takes about six months to a year to set up the systems necessary for new grant or loan programs. Part of the delay is the Department working to identify legitimate and eligible applications. They have so far seen a number of fraudulent applications and situations where people have submitted more than one application for a loan or grant program. The Department has now identified the full 5,000 applications eligible for the Maryland Small Business COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grant Fund, and emails were sent on Monday to applicants about the process for moving forward. Some of the grant money has been awarded and the Comptroller's Office has issued checks.

Now that the Department has identified the grant awards, it can now go into the Maryland Small Business COVID-19 Emergency Relief Loan Fund applications, some of which have been awarded. However, the Department has received notice from more than a few applicants that they no longer need the State loans, because they have received loans through the federal program. The Department has increased the number of personnel handling the applications to allow for faster processing of applications. In addition, the Maryland COVID-19 Emergency Relief Manufacturing Fund grants are moving forward quickly and are geographically diverse. 44 manufacturers have been issued funds totaling about \$3.3 million for items like face shields, masks, gowns, battery packs, and other PPE. The Department is reviewing an additional 230 applications. Lastly, the Department has assembled 13 industry advisory groups to provide guidelines for the reopening of businesses. The recommendations are being consolidated right now by the Department and reviewed by the Governor's Office and MDH.

Joe DeMattos, President of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), informed the workgroup that Maryland has about 16,000 residents and 36,000 employees at skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers. Currently, there are 3,218 COVID-19 positive cases among residents and 1,489 cases among staff. There have been 525 reported deaths of residents and 8 deaths among staff. The State is working on a testing strategy for nursing homes. There needs to be statewide, staged testing. Centers will need to test residents and employees more than once, which will likely result in workforce shortages.

Department of Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson explained to the workgroup that the Department had contracted with Sagitech for a full modernization of the State's unemployment insurance system in 2015. The modernization was intended to be tested and launched later in the year. When the federal CARES Act passed, it provided new federal unemployment insurance programs with new eligibility standards. Since the Department had Sagitech as a vendor working on the system for the last 5 years, it decided it would be better to have a comprehensive system where a claimant need only apply one time for regular unemployment insurance and federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). The State experienced significant challenges with the system after the launch, even though the State was given assurances that it could handle the anticipated large volume. In a matter of days, the vendor was able to resolve many of the issues, performance has significantly improved, and continued maintenance takes place at night. For perspective, the Department is handling 358,000 weekly unemployment certifications, whereas they were handling about 29,000 prior to the crisis. Over the last week, the Department has issued \$170 million in benefits, compared to about \$7 million weekly pre-crisis. The vendor is currently testing a mobile app, but the Department has no intention of launching the app unless they know it will work. The state unemployment trust fund remains healthy, as Maryland businesses continue to pay taxes on time. The federal government has offered 0% loans, but Maryland is not there yet in terms of needing it. Instead, states are asking the federal government to replenish state unemployment trust funds with grants, not loans.

Governor's Press Conference

This afternoon, Governor Hogan held a press conference to provide an update on the Maryland Strong Roadmap to Recovery. In the last several days, Maryland has expanded testing capacity for universal testing at nursing homes and

poultry processing plants as well as for health care workers and first responders. He also advised that the CDC is on the ground to help with contact tracing. Maryland originally had a goal of 6,000 hospital beds, but has now exceeded that goal with 8,100 beds including ICU beds. As it relates to PPE supply, Maryland has acquired: 4.5 million units of KN95 masks; 3.5 million units of gloves; 1.1 million face shields; 600,000 units of N95 masks; 150,000 gowns; 47,000 gallons of hand sanitizer; and 5,000 units of infrared thermometers. There is also now an online platform that connects Maryland PPE suppliers with potential buyers from other states. <https://marylandmanufacturingnetwork.com/>

Maryland has signed a contract with the National Opinion Research Center, the nation's oldest and largest university research firm, to perform contact tracing at a pace of up to 1,000 cases per day. Contact tracers hiring is underway with over 900 applicants so far across the State. Moreover, Gilead has donated 1,600 doses of Remdesivir to Maryland, which will be sent to Prince George's County and Montgomery County because they have the most COVID-19 cases.

Maryland is beginning to see encouraging numbers in terms of COVID-19 cases. Over the last 7 days, the Administration has seen good trends in hospitalizations and ICU numbers have been flat for 8 straight days. If these trends continue into next week, they can lift the stay at home order and implement Stage 1 of the recovery plan. However, the Governor announced the resumption of elective medical procedures and the Maryland Department of Health will issue guidelines (attached). Also, effective tomorrow at 7am, safe outdoor activities, such as golf, tennis, boating, fishing, and camping, will be permitted. State parks and beaches will be reopened for exercise, but people must continue to follow physical distancing and take actions to keep themselves and their fellow Marylanders safe. Dr. David Marozzi, the COVID-19 Incident Commander, emphasized that the virus is still with us and we need to continue physical distancing, washing hands, congregating in small numbers, and wearing masks.

Dr. Karen Salmon, State Superintendent of Schools, announced the closure of schools for the remainder of the school year to protect the health and safety of students, teachers, and staff. However, there will be continued online and distance learning opportunities. The State Department of Education is releasing a comprehensive plan for education, which lays the groundwork for the coming months to improve online learning and to address lost learning. It will continue to be updated as issues come up. Nothing in the plan is a mandate or requirement, but rather consists of recommendations that can be adopted by local school systems. Dr. Salmon said that schools may be reopened under Stage 2 or 3 of the Governor's recovery plan by either bringing students back in alternating groups or based on the individual needs of students. She also noted that decisions on graduation ceremonies will be made by local departments, but must be in compliance with the Governor's executive order. Dr. Salmon also announced that \$34 million in payments have been made to 3,700 child care providers. Moreover, 8 million meals have been served to school age children.