



Governor Northam's Briefing Overview

April 6, 2020

Highlights from today's briefing from Governor Northam are below.

COVID-19 numbers in Virginia

- Virginia currently has 2,878 positive cases, up 241 within the last 24 hours. The number of deaths has increased to 54 with three new deaths in the past 24 hours.
- A total of 24,521 people have been tested.
- A total of 497 individuals are currently hospitalized. It was shared that the hospitalization numbers come from the [Virginia Health Information](#) website, which tracks hospital claims and therefore, the data lags versus the data from VHHA, which is based on hospital census information.
- A question was asked as to whether Virginia can begin to post COVID-19 recovery numbers. The State Health Commissioner responded that they do not have access to this data.
- The Governor shared that Virginia has a lot of people who likely have COVID-19, but we don't know that they have it because they are not having symptoms and we do not have access to more widespread testing.
- New numbers on surge timing based on the University of Washington model were raised during the briefing by a reporter. When asked about reports that Virginia's surge is likely to be April 20 versus May 20 based on this model, the Governor responded that the models change day-to-day because the data is changing day-to-day.

Supplies and equipment needs

- The Governor shared that Virginia has signed a \$27 million contract with the Virginia-based company, Northfield, to obtain PPE, with the first shipment expected next week.
- He also announced a contract with Estes to support distribution of supplies to where they are most needed.
- Shipments of food to food banks, hand sanitizer and masks have already been made.



- A third shipment of supplies from the national stockpile has also been delivered to Virginia hospitals.

Testing

- Virginia continues to work toward a rapid result test that has a turn-around time of 15-30 minutes.
- Access to the test kits continues to be a challenge.
- Turn-around times for private labs continue to be long but they continue to work to improve those turn-around times.
- It was also shared that some additional private labs are opening in Virginia to help manage some of the testing burden.

Face covering

- The Governor acknowledged the CDC's recommendations that individuals cover their faces when outside their homes and recommended that Virginians follow this guidance.
- He shared that the use of face coverings can help reduce the spread of the virus through the air and can restrict individuals from touching their faces.
- With this, however, he emphasized that non-medical grade face coverings do not provide medical-grade protection and individuals should continue to stay at home and to practice social distancing when outside the home.
- He also recommended that face coverings be washed at least once a day with soap and water.

Alternative healthcare treatment sites

- Following last week's announcement that the Dulles Expo Center (Northern Virginia), the Richmond Convention Center, and the Hampton Roads Convention Center have been selected as alternative healthcare treatment sites, Virginia is moving forward to prepare those sites, which is beginning this week.



Long-term care facilities

- When asked about how Virginia is approaching long-term care facilities, the Health Commissioner shared that Virginia's 35 local health districts are in close contact with LTC facilities within their districts.
- When a COVID-19 case is identified in a LTC facility, public health officials work with them to isolate person infected, implement protocols to protect others at the facility and investigate contacts that person may have had.

Construction projects

- A question was raised as to why construction, including non-essential construction, was still happening. The Governor responded he is not aware of any issues or problems related to this.

Non-essential businesses

- The Governor continued to receive questions about why non-essential businesses have not been ordered to close. He once again referred to the guidance that these bricks and mortar businesses ensure no more than 10 patrons are in a businesses at a time.

Department of Corrections

- A reporter raised that a number of positive COVID-19 cases have been reported among inmates and staff at the Department of Corrections.
- The Governor indicated that he is utilizing the protocols in place to determine where pardons may be appropriate and does not plan to issue another Executive Order granting broad clemency.
- Sec. of Public Safety Brian Moran reminded the group that the Supreme Court would not allow former Governor Terry McAuliffe to restore the rights of convicted felons in a blanket action. It found that clemency may only be given on an individual basis. Sec. Moran stated that process is "clumsy" and "extensive."
- Sec. Moran shared that there are 2,351 inmates who are either characterized as geriatric inmates or were convicted prior to 1995 when parole was abolished. The Parole Board is



actively reviewing these cases and 95 inmates were released in March, representing a 153% increase from the prior month.

- Sec. Moran shared that approximately 90% of these individuals were convicted of violent offenses so that is also be considered as the Parole Board considers appropriate action.

National Public Health Week

- The Governor once again shared that this week is National Public Health Week, providing an important reminder to thank and acknowledge public health workers for the critical work they are doing across Virginia.

To watch the Governor's briefing, click [here](#).

Virginia Uses Genetic Technology to Combat COVID-19

Today, Governor Ralph Northam announced that the Department of General Services' (DGS) Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) is one of the first public health labs in the nation to use genetic technology to help public health officials better understand and track the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen prevention and response efforts. DCLS is using next-generation sequencing to genetically decode some Virginia samples that contain the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. Looking at this genetic fingerprint can help public health officials track how the virus is changing and provide insights into how it is being transmitted. DCLS is working alongside the CDC and international public health and university partners using specialized lab equipment and computer software to piece together the genetic makeup of the virus found in COVID-19 patients. Hidden in the genetic makeup of the virus are clues to its origin. In Virginia, the sequences uploaded so far show evidence of multiple introductions of the virus into Virginia communities, suggesting that the emergence of COVID-19 is due to multiple distinct events. This is suggested by looking at the similarity of the virus in Virginia to the virus sequences obtained from Asian and European patients. There is also clear indication of person-to-person spread within suspected COVID-19 outbreaks.

For more information or to read the full release, click [here](#).