

- Good afternoon. Today is Monday, April 27th, 2020. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. My name is Michelle Shoresman and I'm the designated media contact for our public information team. This afternoon, we have four speakers for you. We will begin with San Luis Obispo County district four supervisor and board chair, Lynn Compton. She will be followed by local epidemiologist and Cal Poly professor, Dr. Aydin Nazmi. Following Dr. Nazmi, we will have SLO Chamber of Commerce board president and CEO Jim Dantona and finally we will close with County Health officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein. County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director Wade Horton is also here and available for questions. And just my usual reminder to the speakers, if you receive a question, please repeat the question before answering and thank you to our new American Sign Language interpreter, Shelly Lawrence for being here today. And now San Luis Obispo County district four supervisor and board chair Lynn Compton.

- Thank you, Michelle. Good afternoon. I'm glad to be joined today by two important stakeholders that have been instrumental in our planning efforts to build a phased reopening plan for our community. The stakeholder engagement process you've been hearing about is meant to ensure a thoughtful, deliberate message with consideration of specific industry guidelines as we move forward. It is not a replacement of but in addition to engaging the public. In the news and in our local planning efforts, this document with these stakeholders has been a process that has been produced and a plan for a phase reopening. However, it's really a framework and a living document that will change over time with expert and public feedback in addition to being based on public health and medical data. We know people are anxious to get moving again. And while we don't plan to reopen on May 1st, we do plan to release the full framework to the public for review on that day. In the meantime today and throughout the week, our speakers will discuss some of the framework elements, the criteria for each phase of the framework, and the stakeholder process thus far. This framework will guide decisions on when and how to reopen based on scientific and health indicators. It will guide the loosening of restrictions in a phased gradual way based on our local data. This document will serve as a living public framework that will change and be modified over time as we learn more or have more information. Next I will talk with a little more detail about our stakeholder engagement process over the last two weeks. We empaneled a highly regarded professional group to develop a set of parameters for reopening our community and our economy. That panel includes professionals with expertise in public health, laboratory testing, epidemiology, infectious diseases, the law, and medical research. We received more than 500 comments on the draft from our stakeholders. Our team sorted through and reviewed most of them over the weekend but there are still a few more to review. Through this feedback process, we've learned that some SLO County residents are expressing concern that we're rushing forward too quickly. Others feel that reopening is imperative to the local economy. I wanna assure you that we are focused on the data, not the date for reopening. Based on one the volume of exceptional input, two the need for a deeper dive into industry specific guidelines, and three the resounding feedback we heard from the stakeholders. They want a clear and consistent public message. We've decided we will release the framework at the end of this week. Before I turn it over to Dr. Nazmi, I will close with this. We know a partial opening is gonna be hard and will challenge profitability in every sector. We understand that our community wants us to use public health data as the basis for this local reopening plan. Dr. Borenstein will provide more details of that in a few moments. We want you to know that we hear you and I'm confident we will continue to work together and we will be ready for a reopening all together. Now, I

would like to introduce Dr. Aydin Nazmi as chair of the expert panel of experienced and skilled public health and medical professionals that is developing the recommendations for Dr. Borenstein. Dr. Nazmi.

- Thank you supervisor. Good afternoon, my name is Aydin Nazmi. I'm an epidemiologist and professor for the past 11 years at Cal Poly. I'm chairing the panel to help develop our phase reopening framework working with five other experts representing the healthcare and public health systems. I'm proud to be a member of this team and happy to be contributing to this framework for the good of our community. Our community is living with COVID-19 and we will have to reopen in the presence of COVID-19 and that's okay. As long as we open gradually and thoughtfully, we will be in a good position to recover economically. As supervisor Compton mentioned, loosening of any restrictions will be phased in gradually and based on local data. Both patient outcomes such as new infections, admissions, and deaths and capacity such as facilities, personnel, ability to trace contacts will be the drivers of county guidelines to loosen or tighten restrictions. To protect public health, it is critical that loosening of preventive measures be re-tightened when local or regional data suggests regression of these parameters. Data about these measures will be continually monitored and if there is a spike in new cases or an epidemic curve is eminent, restrictions will be reinstated. In other words, we may have to take two steps forward and one step back. A successful reopening will depend on everyone in our community doing their part. We know you can because you have shown us that you can. Our community is successfully bending the curve and ensuring that we can even begin talking about reopening. We are proposing three phases of gradual reopening. Our panel is proposing to Dr. Borenstein that we reopen SLO County in three phases. Before we enter phase one, two things must happen. First, the governor has to lift the stay at home order or modify it to give control to our County and two public health guidelines as we set out in the framework must be met for loosening restrictions. Before we enter phases two and three, the same public health care in epidemiologic criteria must be maintained for a defined period of time. Ultimately, phase one will be our first step into a modified new normal once the governor lifts his order. We also need to be clear that if criteria for tightening restrictions is met at any point in any of the three phases, we will have to go back to the previous phase and possibly re-tighten some of the restrictions in order to decrease risk. And now I'd like to turn it over to SLO Chamber of Commerce board president and CEO Jim Dantona.

- Good afternoon. I'm Jim Dantona, President-CEO of the SLO Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Central Coast Chambers of Commerce. I was happy to serve as chair of the chamber general business sector group that reviewed the first draft of the reopening framework we were all talking about today. As Chairwoman Compton noted, we had over 500 comments come in to the stakeholder review process which shows how deeply our community care about doing this right. We're in this together and I thank the county for involving so many community leaders to help develop the overall approach and to have input on industry guidelines for reopening which will come later. I'd like to talk a little bit more about the stakeholder engagement process this far. In addition to myself, there were about 20 other chairs for specific communities and sectors that had deeper discussion on the proposed guidelines and how they would be met and applied in each economic sector. Businesses and members of each sector appreciated the opportunity to really discuss in depth how this is going to work. By participating in this discussion, they were able to understand and figure out how to comply with each of the three phases of the

framework so they will be better able to comply. We are working together with the county and business community to make sure we all implement appropriate policies and best practices which could include protocols for physical distancing, protective equipment, and sanitation. We recognize that businesses will need materials like hand sanitizer and masks. We also know we will need to educate businesses, customers, and public agencies on how to fully understand and comply with the requirements of each phase. What has become clear to me through this process having worked in local government before is the county and our cities should be given a lot of credit for working proactively to think about this and not like most governmental agencies waiting to react. Most of us had to react at the start of this crisis. We are not letting that happen again. The goal is to maximize reopening opportunities for SLO County residents, businesses, and organizations in a phased manner while protecting public health and our most vulnerable populations. This framework is intended to be a living document that remains dynamic with the evolution of the pandemic and emergence of new data. Our community is highly engaged and willing to do what it takes to reopen safely with the understanding that the importance of resuming individual and economic activities must be balanced with the health and safety of our community as the COVID-19 pandemic involves a healthy economy requires a healthy population. We have a long road ahead of us, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. If we continue to work together, we can and will save SLO County's economy while also keeping our community healthy. Gives me great pleasure to introduce and now Dr. Penny Borenstein.

- Thank you. I'd really like to thank all the speakers today who are largely focusing on our framework for getting the community back to some level of normalcy. Before I talk about that framework, I will as I always do give you the numbers as they stand today in our county. We stand at a 169 cases. We have over 75% of those recovered and we have now four individuals in the hospital but none in intensive care. So you may recognize that over the weekend, we increased a total of six cases between our Friday report and today and that puts us right back to where we were for the previous two weeks. So there was some concern that we were seeing an increase and at least at the moment as is true with everything in this pandemic, we continue to talk about the situation of the moment but we did have three days last week where we saw higher numbers of new cases and I'm happy to report that at least for the next three days, we did not see that continue and that's the kind of thing that we're gonna be looking at as we go forward. So let me talk a little bit about this plan, the framework for reopening our community. So first and foremost, I want to thank the many partners that were involved in this. I had my mind literally blown by how much work went into this in a week's time. You heard about 20 sectors coming together in committees with committee chairs, our elected officials have themselves been right our elbow as we're looking at the development of this process. We have a project team that Dr. Nazmi has headed up and everyone has given all of their intelligence and creativity and hard work and commitment to getting us to the start of the pre-phase one. So I want to thank all the people that contributed to that. I also want to remind people and why I emphasized pre-phase one is we cannot enter phase one until we get the go ahead from the governor. We feel that we are in a good position to do that. You know that members of our elected community have been asking for us to have that leverage to move forward in a time frame that makes sense for our community. But nonetheless we still are living under and abide by and respect the state order that is in place. This plan as you've heard will be coming out on Monday, I mean on Friday sorry. The M is for May 1st, which is Friday. And I want to ask in addition to all the participants that we've had as we roll this out to the public that we get

additional constructive feedback from members of the public. This is not, it is not an autocracy or a dictatorship nor is this being subject to a vote. But I do want to convey that we are interested in hearing about things that even with the many people who have participated up to this point, there may be ideas or things that we've missed. So we very much want to hear from the public as we move this forward. So let me talk about a little bit about what you will see in this document because it isn't going to be everything. As you heard, this is an ongoing live real-time process that we'll be adjusting as we continue to move forward in this pandemic but we will have some metrics in place. And so to frame those what we want to see from a public health standpoint before we can do any measure of reopening is that a positive cases do not increase over at least a 14-day period. So yes, we had a small uptick but again as I've said to our friends in the media during these briefings, we wanna see trendline. So if we've been flat for you know, three weeks and even if we have some upticks, we're gonna consider that success. So but we absolutely want to see that we continue to have that trendline. We are looking for decreasing numbers or proportion of our cases that are not new in terms of their source of transmission. So we did go back and look at the 14 cases that we reported to you on Friday and in fact all but one of them was a contact of a known case. So that's another metric that we'll be looking at are these new areas of disease that are popping up or are they known in their transmission source. Additionally we keep our eye very closely on our death rate and as you've heard it over and over again in our county, we have been extremely lucky to have only one death amidst all the cases that we've had. And we're also keeping our eye on going on healthcare worker infections so we have seen a small uptick in those but they continue to be relatively rare and that's what we want to see as we move forward. What we don't wanna see and what might give us pause and have us take a step backward or at least a pause is an increase in counts that's significant over at least three consecutive days and by significant, we don't have that exact metric in place yet but we're talking about probably at least a 10% increase over our baseline on going for at least three days. We want to make sure that our case doubling continues to exceed five days. Right now, I don't even know where we're at. I know that we're probably more in the range of 15 days. So if we start to see our cases doubling in a much shorter period of time that is going to give us significant pause. And again with this identification of the source of transmission, we're gonna be looking at things like do we have new chains of transmission that have not been previously identified and we don't wanna see any more than three new sources of transmission in our community. Certain things are going to be ongoing throughout this process. So it's not like everyone can throw away their hand gel. We are going to continue to ask in a rigorous and vigorous way that people continue to do all the infection control measures that have been in place now and hopefully forever. This may be the new norm that we not only see a downturn in COVID but wouldn't it be lovely if we also next winter saw a downturn in influenza or common colds or gastrointestinal disease because we have all learned together what the best ways of preventing infectious spread are. So with that personal preventive hygiene, individual monitoring of symptoms and staying home when you're sick and with this disease particularly protection for vulnerable populations. So you will see, I'll give you a sneak preview that in the first phase, we are absolutely going to recommend to those most vulnerable people that they continue with the stay-at-home measures. In the meantime, I want to remind people that this continues in our county to mean that we recommend that people get out of the house. I know we've had this conversation before. We call it shelter at home, shelter in place. The governor's order is a stay-at-home order but nonetheless we want people to get outside, to get exercise, to take care of their physical selves, their mental well-being but we are imploring our public repeatedly to do so in a way that does not actually present risk or even give the appearance of risk. We want people to feel safe in their communities. So if you go to the beach

and you go with the family unit, stay to yourselves, make sure you have enough spread, you know, six feet is the minimum, 20 feet would be even better. We don't want people gathering in large groups. Continue to do all those hygiene measures that I've talked about. After you've been out in public maybe carry hand sanitizer in your purse or your back pocket so that you can do that in a moment's notice even if you can't find a sink. So all of these measures are gonna be really important to our ability as a community to move forward. And now I'm gonna talk a little bit about masks. That question comes up a lot. We continue in this county to feel that given the success of our measures to date that we don't have to have a mandatory order for every person to wear masks when out in public at all times. I certainly don't want people to be wearing masks when they are outside exercising. A single person jogging or bicycling is only gonna lessen their respiratory functionality if you're wearing a cover over your face, but there are situations when masks absolutely recommended. If you cannot have that six foot separation, if you are in a place and you're working or whatever the circumstances are, at the grocery store or what have you if distancing cannot be maintained that we absolutely make that recommendation that a face covering may offer an additional layer of protection to the people who are in your immediate vicinity. With that we are asking that people who can make masks actually do so. We're gonna need a lot more of them as we begin to come out of our homes. So folks who have the ability to make masks and would like to donate them, they can do so at ReadySLO.org where they'll see a list of drop-off locations and those who are not born seamstresses, we even have tutorials on our website as to how you can make masks. So with that, I'm going to end my formal comments and turn it open for questions.

- [Male] Dr. Borenstein, you mentioned in there about people getting out and we saw that this weekend as we talked about on Friday, what did you see, what did other county leaders and how concerned are you that we're gonna start seeing more people come into our county as some of these restrictions are starting to loosen up and weather gets warmer?

- So the question is as we continue to recommend that people do go outside, what are we actually seeing in terms of the number of people potentially increasing their outdoor activities and do we know if there are tourists coming in and you know, how are we gonna manage the situation if I can paraphrase. So a number of things. We actually do keep in close connection with Visit SLOCAL and we are monitoring on a regular basis what the hotel occupancy rates are. We continue to message both to potential visitors from outside of our county as well as the proprietors of those businesses that they do not advertise. We do not want to see people rushing into our county or coming in any numbers at this point in time. We want to be able to move our community forward in a progressive and sensible way and we are asking for the time being and we know summer's coming and we know we have lovely beaches but for the time being, we are asking our visitors to stay away. We additionally actually monitor the usage of the beaches visually and in concert with looking to the leaders of the communities where the beaches are located, with state parks we're having regular dialogues. I know that Mr. Horton actually is planning to have more of that conversation beginning tonight. And you know, it is something that we very much care about and are gonna keep our eye on the ball.

- [Male] What did you see this past weekend?

- So from our perspective with a couple of exceptions though the question was what did we see this past weekend? We saw a lot of very good responses from our community to distancing when on the beaches, not being there all day and in great numbers such that we, you know had to take any more dramatic actions. We do have patrols in those locations that are not citing people as you've heard up there over and over again, that's not our first tool in the toolbox is to issue \$1000 citations but to use our law enforcement as well as other members of either the city or harbor patrol to actually remind people of how to best practice social distancing. We did not see anything near what has been shown from other communities up and down the coasts and we're grateful for that.

- [Male] You weren't able to determine the occupancy as you said, is it too early to see those numbers in terms of potential people visiting in usually hotels, things like that?

- So the question was do we know what the occupancy of our hotels are? Yes and they are remaining low. They've ticked up a little bit but they are nowhere near not by a long shot anywhere near where we've been in past seasons of this time of year.

- [Male] What is considered out of town? Is that you know people coming from Santa Maria or is it just people in the Central Coast are still allowed to maybe visit some of our beaches and then may be how are you guys spreading that message to neighboring counties?

- So the question was what do we consider out of town and how are we expressing that our definition of that to out-of-towners and other jurisdictions? Again at this phase in this pandemic, we are considering anyone who is not a San Luis Obispo County resident to be an out-of-towner. And and even beyond that, you've heard me say over time that we still recommend that people recreate in their neighborhoods. Now not all of our county lives on the beach so if someone wants to drive, you know a short distance across the county to a beach and can find a parking spot, you know, that's something else we're gonna be working toward is even our own residents, how do we maintain that social distancing? How do we maintain not seeing great numbers of people flocking to our beaches even from within the county? We're gonna be continuing to talk about that but for the moment the short answer is we are asking here and now, we are asking through our you know, your editorial boards, we are asking through the proprietors of our facilities that we all message that we don't wanna see people coming into our county at this moment in time. I know that's a hardship for the tourism industry. That is one of the sectors of the 20 that you heard about. Not everything is gonna be equal for every sector as we move forward and so I again implore the community to be patient and to continue to allow the county to help where individual sectors may be winners or losers to the extent that we can.

- [Female] So I know the phase reopening plan will be out and available Friday but can you share where restaurants fall in that plan and if restaurants are allowed to reopen, will they have to book differently as far as occupancy?

- So the question was, where's restaurants gonna fall in this phase reopening? And I don't want to get, I know I gave you a sneak preview about vulnerable populations and it's not that we are in any way trying, you know one thing that we have prided ourselves in this entire episode is having transparency and open dialogue and communication not just with business owners, but you know every resident. We take hundreds of emails a day so I wanna be as open and transparent as possible. I also know that there's a lot of finishing touches and thoughts that are still going into this. So at this moment in time, I don't wanna get specific about any particular industry but on the question of restaurants, if and when they do come back we have consistently said that it will not be exactly as it had been before we ask them to shutter their doors. The details of that will be forthcoming in the next days.

- [Female] It looked like the county's number of tests done by the public health lab increased a bit this weekend. Can you talk a little bit about why that was?

- Yes good question, thank you. I'm glad that you're paying attention. So the question was how come the number of public health lab tests increased this weekend? So I think it was on Friday that I spoke to the fact that we had a first case of a nursing home associated individual who tested positive, it was a staff member. We also have had a couple of additional cases at California Men's Colony and we very aggressively responded to those with widespread testing and we did those in-house. So that's the reason.

- [Male] Aja Goare had a question for you. She was wondering if you or your office would support a petition from grocery store workers to mandate masks for all customers entering the grocery stores.

- So the question was would my office be willing to put out an order mandating masks for all grocery workers? And as I have consistently said in this, in our protective responses for our community is we will go as far as we need to go in order to maintain the good results that we have seen in terms of disease spread and therefore I haven't felt the need at this moment in time to move forward with a mandated mask order for any sector of our community. I retain that possibility should we need to move there but at this moment in time in our county and what we're seeing, I have not felt the need to go there.

- Done, any other questions? Thank you all again for coming today and for being engaged online and on TV. As a reminder, you'll get all of our updates and information about the county's response to COVID-19 at our response page [ReadySLO.org](https://www.readySLO.org). These include all media releases and guidance documents, updated statistics and more. The framework discussed here today will also be available later this week

online. Please stay tuned for details on where that document will be located. There are also several ways to view these Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon briefings. You can see them on public access Channel 21 at midnight 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. each day until the next briefing occurs. You will also continue to be able to tune in live at 3:15 p.m. at the San Luis Obispo County Facebook page as well as the county's home page and live streams on KCOY and KSBY. Finally we continue to maintain our public health information line and our phone assistance center seven days a week. The phone assistance center is open between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. during the week. Thank you again for turning in today and staying informed in this unprecedented time. Be well and we will see you here on Wednesday afternoon.