

- Good afternoon. Today is Wednesday, May 6th. 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 two speakers for you. We will begin today with Congressman for the 24th Congressional District of California, Salud Carbajal. He will be followed by County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein. We also have County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director, Wade Horton, here to take your questions. Thank you to our American Sign Language interpreter, Robin Babb. And with that, I'm pleased to introduce Congressman Salud Carbajal.

- Start with it on so that they know we're being extra cautious and then I'm gonna take it off. Well thank you, Michelle, for that introduction and good afternoon to the general public and to those joining us here today from the media. To date, our community has been under shelter at home orders by the State of California for 49 days. This has been a challenging time for all. Finally, we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel with Governor Newsom's announcement moving towards re-opening our communities slowly. Here in SLO County, we have been fortunate to have experienced a low number of cases relative to what other communities across the nation have seen to date. I wanna commend the SLO County Administrative Officer, Wade Horton, and County Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein, for their leadership in making sure that SLO County has been well prepared including for a worst-case scenario. During this time, I too have been sheltering at home, but still connecting with stakeholders throughout the 24th Congressional District here on the Central Coast, and, of course, with my colleagues throughout the country. This has been via phone and video conferencing. I have been in constant communication with federal, state, local government officials, businesses, workers, food banks, schools, hospitals, our agriculture community, bankers, and family support agencies to make sure I understand the unique needs and emerging concerns here for Central Coast residents, so that I can be a more effective representative in Washington. At the federal level to date, Congress has passed four bipartisan economic relief packages. On March 4th, an \$8.3 billion appropriations package was passed, followed by March 14th, the Family's First Coronavirus Response Act. That was followed by March 27th, the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act, which provided the following: Direct payments to individuals, funding for SBA programs, the Paycheck Protection Program, the PPP, the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program, the EIDL Program. It increased and expanded on employment insurance for workers. And most recently, on April 23rd, Congress passed an additional \$484 billion Interim Economic Relief Package. My office has been actively fielding phone calls and emails from constituents regarding stimulus payments, small business SBA funding, and unemployment benefits to name a few of the issues. We continue to receive daily information from federal agencies on how they are distributing and dispersing the funds that have been allocated by Congress. And I continue to provide that information to local agencies and constituents. If you have any questions or need information regarding these programs or other federal agencies, please don't hesitate to reach out to my office at 805-730-1710. Or you can send me an email via my website at carbajal.house.gov. In the next week or two, I likely will be heading back to Washington to vote on the next relief package that we are now calling CARES 2.0, and of course, other legislation that is pending. As we move to re-open our communities, please continue to heed the advice of our local public health officials so that we can move forward safely and avoid a resurgence of infection. Stay safe and do not hesitate to reach out to my office should you require any assistance. With that, I'd like to turn it over to Dr. Penny Borenstein. Dr. Borenstein.

- Thank you so much, Congressman. It was really great to have you with us. I know you've been working hard on our behalf, so thank you for that. There's another group that I want to thank today before I go into my regular talking points, and that is nurses. For those of you who are not aware, today begins National Nurses Week, May 6th through May 12th, and I want to send out my personal thanks and gratitude to all the nurses on the front lines. This is hospital-based nurses, nurses in hospice situations, clinics, our public health nurses, and all that they are doing for our community now and as they always do, giving up their hearts, their intelligence, and their absolute commitment to our community to keep us all healthy and safe. So thank you to all our nurses on National Nurses Week. With that, I will talk about our numbers. So we now stand at 208 cases in San Luis Obispo County. That is an increase of four from yesterday, and we continue with five individuals in the hospital, three of whom are intensive care. Those are the same numbers that we've had in hospital situations for the last couple of days or so. Of the 208, 160 have recovered. That's under the new longer definition of 10 days to recover and so we are slightly lower than where we were, but still that means 77% of all of our cases have recovered from this virus. The vast majority of them not needing hospital-based care at all. As I mentioned on Monday that we may well see additional cases as we ramp up our testing, thus far we haven't, but we are just getting into the expanded testing. So to remind folks, we now are operating five days a week, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM in two locations in this county. That is in Paso Robles at the Vet Center, and in Grover Beach at Ramona Gardens. Appointments are being taken and they are being filled up rather quickly. So as we move out, we will continue to do this on a five-day-a-week basis, but I can tell you that as of today, with only two and a half days, we have already tested over 500 people. We are beginning to get results back and they continue to be small in number. We're grateful for that. We have additional plans in place to further expand our testing in two weeks time. Or sometime perhaps in the middle part of next week I'll be able to provide more detail, but we are planning additional community sites with another vendor that will rely on our county staff and our Medical Reserve Corps and other individuals who will provide the service in our county, but with the laboratory testing material and the actual testing support coming out of a company, Optumserve, that's based in Los Angeles. So stay tuned for more information on that. And then lastly, I want to talk more about the confusion that I think has come from the difference between our county START Guide, which is our county's plan for re-opening safely in our county through three phases and the state's Roadmap to Recovery, or re-opening, that the governors began talk about on Monday that we are now beginning to move into the state's second phase, or the beginnings of re-opening at the state level. I think because there are discrepancies and differences between those two plans, it has created some measure of misunderstanding. So I'm gonna try to put this as succinctly and clearly as I can and we are available for questions. We, as a local jurisdiction of the State of California, continue to operate under the state's Stay at Home Order. What we anticipate happening on Friday is a small movement into the next phase at the state level, whereby every county is anticipated to be able to resume retail business through curbside or pick-up of material at all of our retail stores. So again, that is bookstores, toy stores, clothing venues, antique stores, sporting goods, shoe stores, et cetera. That is still a limited approach and in some ways, we have already done some of those things in some industries so that is not a lot of movement for this county. What we are working toward with the state is to be able to submit, as soon as we have the details on the criteria, is a plan for this county that shows that we are ready to move more quickly through the state's phase two. So the state's phase two includes things like in-retail business shopping. It includes restaurant in-person dining, and other food facilities that go along with that, like food trucks, like wine tastings, like bars that serve food, et cetera. We do not know at this

point if, because we do not have the details of the criteria yet in our hands, we believe that we are in a situation that we will be able to meet the criteria. We feel ready to contain this virus according to our plan, our START Guide, and all of the measures that we've taken, but we will not know until we are able to see the details and submit to the state whether or not we can move into those accelerated parts of the state's phase two. To be clear, the state does not include in its phase two some of the elements that our county START Guide, or our county's plan, has for re-opening in the first phase. So those elements that people might have thought, oh, we're ready to go, we are not. And those elements are gymnasiums, personal care such as hair salons, body artists, barbers, nail salons, and also in-person religious worship services. We are poised to move as quickly as we can. We believe that we have all the mitigation measures and all the protective measures in place and our surge capacity in place, but we are still not in a position to move more aggressively forward than the state will allow us to do. We have information ready to submit to the state once we see what all that is going to be required to submit as part of our containment plan. With that, I will open it up for questions. I will leave you with that.

- [Man] Dr. Borenstein, you said 500 people have been tested at this new expanded site covering Paso Robles. There's been no results back yet, or what have you been able to find?

- Yes, so the last time I heard, we were in the dozens not the hundreds of results that have already been submitted back to us through the online portal, and of those maybe as high as 50, so maybe 10% of all the tests that were done, we now have results for, and of those, we have seen one positive.

- [Man] When you open up those additional sites, will the same criteria still apply in terms of who gets tested first, those sorts of folks at high risk and healthcare workers, et cetera? You notice there's a lot of people who are interested in testing if they fall outside that.

- At this time, including the clinics in Paso and Grover Beach, as well as the new clinics that we hope to bring online in two weeks, we haven't opened it completely open to anyone who wants a test. They still need to have at least one symptom of COVID-19, but we have moved away from it being only for high risk individuals. We have moved away from having any, you know, that you have to have a certain constitution of symptoms. It doesn't have to be fever. It can be you just had a headache or you just had body aches. At this moment in time, except for the congregant settings that we are testing very aggressively, like our California Men's Colony Prison or a nursing home or should we have cases in other particularly high-risk settings, we're limiting the testing to individuals with at least one symptom.

- [Man] Speaking of CMC, we saw about 200 or so staff members tested earlier this week. Any sort of early indications what those results are?

- So we have not completed all the testing, but that which we have done has not yielded any more positive cases from that facility.

- [Man] Do you interpret that the county submitting that plan at that station I think, right? You're still waiting on the details. What's the time frame that you're receiving from the governor's office when you might be able to receive those details and submit that plan?

- Right, with the governor's expectation of doing a state-modified order on Friday, we would like to be poised to have our plan submitted as close to Friday as possible, but we don't know. I'm hoping today. I'm hoping tomorrow, as soon as possible that we will get the very specific criteria of how we can move forward into the full stage two of the state's plan.

- [Woman] Dr. Borenstein, do you have a timeline of when those additional testing sites might be opening?

- We are looking at the third week in May, so beginning around the 19th of May, and we're still working through the logistics of getting that testing set up. We are likely to, in those first days, target our congregate settings so they may not be open to the public until a little bit later in the process.

- [Woman] And does the county plan on releasing data on racial demographics of the positive cases as the number of positive cases grows?

- This has been an ongoing case, an ongoing challenge for us. We do know that nationally, absolutely this disease is playing out differently in different racial groups and different ethnicities. There's no reason to think that we are spared from that, but many of the test results that we get are from private labs and we don't actually have that information available for a large portion of our cases.

- [Man] From Michael Torres, he wants to know, once the state has said it's okay to open up, how long is it, the same day, how long will it take for the county to move forward?

- We are simultaneously working on a couple of fronts to try to move forward as quickly as we can. I'm putting together our containment plan based on what I believe many of the criteria will look like. Simultaneously, our county counsel is working on a modified order for our county so that it will integrate well with what the state rules are. But we will need some time. I don't know if that's measured

in hours or a day, but we hope to be able to move very quickly upon seeing what is required of us. Thank you.

- All right, just a few reminders for the day. All of our updates and information about the county's response to COVID-19 are available on [ReadySLO.org](https://www.ready-slo.org), including the information that Dr. Borenstein shared about our Grover Beach and Paso Robles testing sites. You can sign up for an appointment there on [readyslo.org](https://www.readyslo.org) and if you do not have internet access, then you can also call the appointment phone bank at 888-634-1123. Additionally, if you have questions about actions taken on the federal level and want to reach out to Congressman Carbajal or his staff, please call 805-730-1710, or access their website at carbajal.house.gov. Our Phone Assistance Center remains open daily and so does our public health information line. That is a recorded message. Thank you again for tuning in on our Facebook page at San Luis Obispo County Public Health, on our county's website at www.slocounty.ca.gov, on KCOY or KSBY. And you can also go back and watch these press briefings later on Public Access, channel 21, at midnight, 8:00 AM, and 5:00 PM until our Friday briefing. Thank you again for staying engaged. Be well and we'll see you at 3:15 on Friday.