

- Today is Monday, May 18th 2020. My name is Michelle Shoresman. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon we have three speakers for you. We will begin today with Cal Poly President Jeffrey Armstrong. He will be followed by San Luis Obispo County District 4 Supervisor and Board Chair Lynn Compton, and we'll close today with County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. We also have Wade Horton, County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director to take questions as needed. Thank you to our American Sign Language Interpreter, Robin Babb, and now Cal Poly President, Jeffrey Armstrong.

- Thank you very much, good afternoon everyone. I very much appreciate having a few minutes of your time to bring you up to date on what's happening at Cal Poly. We appreciate the work of San Luis Obispo County Public Health county and city government. The partnerships among these groups along with K through 12, Cuesta, and Hancock Community Colleges are strong. We especially appreciate the partnership with the ACS and we're committed to maintaining that. Cal Poly is not closing this fall and while we have to be prepared to deliver courses 100% virtually should it be necessary, we are cautiously optimistic that local conditions will allow for students to return to campus for significant in-person experiences in courses, why? We remain optimistic that SLO County can reach Stage 3 of the governor's roadmap to pandemic resilience by August 26, which is our deadline to make a final decision for the fall quarter. We're confident that the county and campus will have the ability to test, trace, and separate anyone who is showing coronavirus-like symptoms at the time. Collectively, this will enable us to engage in significant in-person courses and allow the majority of our students to return to campus and the community. This plan is about minimizing risk and protecting those who are most vulnerable. In order to plan for the fall, we've identified laboratories, projects, performances, and other classes that are best offered in person through our learn-by-doing pedagogy. This represents approximately 15% of over 7000 courses planned for the fall. The remainder of the courses will be offered virtually. Should we be in Stage 3 as planned, a significant number of these courses can migrate from virtual to in-person classes. A key provision of our plan is to provide vulnerable faculty and students the option to remain 100% virtual throughout the fall. This will be the case for lectures larger than 35 students as well. It is important to note that no faculty member or student will be forced to transition to in-person classes. If our county in California remain in a shelter-at-home order, or early Stage 2 during mid August, then we must be ready to go to 100% virtual instruction at the beginning or any point during the fall quarter. We'll also maintain the option of delaying the quarter by two or four weeks if we believe this will allow us to maintain in-person classes. I realize that the ongoing uncertainty can be frustrating or unsettling, I share those feelings. But we have to make our decisions based on facts and evidence, and in some cases, we just don't have the relevant facts until later this year. Our plans are based on what we know along with an appreciation of what we don't know. Cal Poly has a mandate to provide our learn-by-doing polytechnic programs to the state, so some in-person courses are essential for student success. I think we all hope and expect Cal Poly to be back to a new normal this fall and of course all of our students will need to find places to live as 95% of our students have their permanent homes more than 100 miles away. We're encouraging all of our students without vulnerabilities who are able to make their living arrangements now with an eye on the entire academic year. Given SLO County's low infection and transmission numbers, it is a relatively low-risk place for the students to be. We do know that students, tourists, or any individuals returning to the area pose as a risk, but we believe our county being in Stage 3 coupled with our plans will allow us to manage risk. We hope this will also minimize the negative

impact on our campus in the SLO area that having students away from campus would have. We will be housing fewer students on campus. Our best-case scenario is to house 7000 students versus our capacity of 8300 students. This would include doubles for first-time freshmen, with sophomores and other students in single rooms and apartments. If needed, we could drop the number to 5200 with each student in a single room. If we are in Stage 3 and have the testing, tracing, separating, and mitigations as planned, we can retain doubles. This is critical as the pre COVID-19 vacancy rates in San Luis Obispo are 2%. We believe that 7000 students are not much of a higher risk than 5200 than students. To reiterate, this also assumes the students who are vulnerable choose to take 100% virtual pathway. So in conclusion, we're developing plans based on science and data, plans to be verified and endorsed by the County Public Health Department and the CSU long before August. Plans, when implemented, that will allow in-person classes in a manner that minimizes risk to our campus and community while at the same time providing a virtual learning pathway for those on our campus who are most vulnerable. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. It's now my pleasure to introduce Lynn Compton, Fourth District Supervisor and Chair of the Board.

- Thank you, President Armstrong. I'd like to begin first with a message of encouragement for everybody. I'd like to start by saying how proud I am of this community and all of those involved in this. We have a remarkable community with individuals who are making just absolutely unbelievable sacrifices. Businesses are trying to adapt as best they can and volunteers are making face coverings for their local friends, neighbors, and businesses. All of you at home are continuing to do your part, which is evident when we look at our numbers here of new cases and hospitalizations which continue to remain low. As we continue to adapt and reopen together, I urge you to stay vigilant and continue to do your part. Stay at home as much as you can while getting enough exercise for your overall health. Please stay at home if you are sick, except to get medical attention. Practice physical distancing, especially in public settings. Wear cloth, face mask coverings if you can't stay at least six feet away from others who you don't reside with. Get deliveries and takeouts to limit person-to-person contact as much as possible. Wash your hands and avoid touching your face, and please continue to unite together to do what is right for all of our neighbors in this community, our family members, and all of our friends. So I wanna thank you all for that. I wanna talk a little bit about Stage 2 and we are in Stage 2 of the State's Resiliency Roadmap. As a reminder, our county now falls under the authority of the state's stay-at-home order as we did not renew our order last weekend. When and how much we open is now determined by the state's criteria exclusively. Today, the following limited business and activities are resuming in San Luis Obispo County. So all businesses that were open to operate with modifications during our own county's stay-at-home order, curbside retail, related manufacturing, related logistics, childcare for those outside of the essential workforce, office-based businesses, although telework remains strongly encouraged, and some selective services like car washes, pet grooming, and landscape and gardening enterprises. Outdoor museums and open gallery spaces and other public spaces with modifications too can be open. In a few minutes, our County Health Advisor, Dr. Penny Borenstein, has some really good news to share with you that will hopefully move us forward with more reopenings very soon. And I have to say, this is probably the best news I've heard in two months. While we don't know exactly when, or how we will move into Stage 2, our local businesses should start preparing, we expect it to be soon. Here are a few things that you can do, if you are a local business, to prepare. Adapt your workplace to be ready to reopen once we get the go-ahead from the state. Review public health guidelines for your particular industry. Show the

public that your business is ready to reopen safely by filling out our Business Readiness to Open Self-Evaluation and Certification form, available at emergencyslo.org/reopen. Assess your workplace risk and develop a plan specifically to protect you, your employees, and your customers. This plan should include disinfecting protocols, symptom screenings of employees, ways to ensure the employees and customers maintain physical distance requirements, train your employees to limit the spread of COVID-19 on and off the workplace, including how to screen themselves for symptoms and to remember to stay at home if they in fact show symptoms. Allow employees to continue to work from home whenever possible. I know local businesses want to keep employees and customers safe. We trust that you're gonna do the right thing as we continue to move forward with COVID-19 in our SLO County. I'm gonna now introduce Dr. Penny Borenstein, our County Health Officer and she will share the good news with you.

- Thank you, Supervisor Compton. Good afternoon, so, before I get to that news, as always, I will tell you where we stand in this county in terms of our COVID-19 cases. We have 246, that's an increase of three from yesterday, and we have still two individuals in the hospital. Both are in intensive care, and at this time we now are back up to 84% of all of our cases have met their definition for recovered. So, continues to see good news in this county. Along with that good news, as you heard Supervisor Compton address, we have now heard definitively from the State Department of Public Health as well as some of you may have heard in the governor's press briefing today that the State is now issuing new epidemiologic criteria for counties to meet to be able to attest to moving forward into the full state, or Resiliency Roadmap Stage 2. So as you know, for us, that pertains to the opening of in-restaurant dining and also for in-store retail. So, the criteria are two, two new criteria, and within each of those two criteria, there are two ways to achieve it. One has to do with hospitalization rates and one has to do with case counts. So, first, with respect to the hospitalizations, a county must attest to having less than 20 cases over the prior seven-day period on any given day. For us, our number, our highest count of hospitalizations over that period is six. So, we are in good shape. And I'm sorry, I did say over the past week, but it's actually over the past two weeks. This past week, I think we've had no more than three cases. But over the two-week period, our highest number is six and we're allowed up to 20 individuals in the hospital with COVID-19. So, we easily meet that mark. Alternatively, other counties can meet the hospitalization stability criteria by not seeing an increase in hospitalizations of more than 5%, we also meet that metric. So, one way or the other, or perhaps we will record both, we will meet the hospital stabilization criteria. The second new metric is around case counts and if you recall, we had barely missed that one per 1000 over a 14-day period. So with our population of 283,000, we needed previously to have less than 28 cases over a two-week period, and we missed that mark by a small number. Now that metric has been put up to 2.5 per 1000, or as it will be written in the attestation form, 25 per 100,000. Same thing, 2.5 per 10,000, 25 per 100,000. In any regard, we stand at 15 per 100,000. We will easily be able to meet that metric. An alternate option is that of all the testing that has been done and the results received, that no more than 8% of all the test results can be positive for COVID-19. And that's over a seven-day period. In our last seven-day period, we saw less than 1% of all of our testing in this county as having a positive result for COVID. So again, as you heard Supervisor Compton say and from many of us who have been trying to have this dialogue with the state that we stand ready in all of the dimensions of being able to safely move into the next phase of our new normal, with opening of businesses, opening of restaurants, opening of some other things, like the office-based services, areas that we've already been able to move into, we feel that we are absolutely going to meet

these criteria and be able to attest. So now it's only a matter of timeline. I will pre-assume that you were gonna ask me, so, when is this going to happen? We are still hopeful that today, we will get the formal attestation form from CDPH. I've already begun to fill it out in a Word document that we just have to transfer to the actual state form. Our board of supervisors will be taking up the issue again tomorrow on the full attestation package, and hopefully will be lending their support on more time our moving forward. And with that, we will be able to submit the full documentation to the state. As to what happens then is as has happened in the first attestation process is CDPH, the California Department of Public Health will review all the documentation, make sure that everything meets the criteria that they've set, and then post it on their website, thereby giving the county the allowance to move forward. I am hopeful and I will be continuing to communicate with the State that we would like that to happen as immediately as possible. But I cannot stand here and predict exactly what day that will happen. So there's good news that we think that we have all of the data and criteria available to move forward into opening more of our economy, more of our businesses, and we hope that that will happen within a matter of days. And with that, I will turn it over for questions.

- Dr. Borenstein--

- Yes?

- [Man] So, with the new criteria in place, what other types of businesses could be reopened besides the in-restaurant dining and the retail, anything else?

- The only other component of the State's Stage 2 that is not yet already open statewide is schools and we continue to work with our schools, our superintendents, and the Director of the County Office of Education to look at what they are planning to do and whether it meets public health criteria. Number of the districts are hoping to be able to move forward with some summer activities in person, but that's a process that we are continuing to engage with the school systems on. Other than that, at this time, there are no additional business sectors that are in Stage 2.

- [Man] Also, gatherings of people, what's the number right now that are not inside your, with your immediate family? Friends, other people you may know, what can people do?

- So, the State has no allowance at this time. They have not made any commentary on gatherings. It's still under a stay-at-home order. We in the county are asking our residents that if they are going to proceed with any type of in-person gathering to families coming together in a home, as long as there are no vulnerable individuals, or even restaurants, as we're looking at the restaurant planning, that all mixed groups of people remain below the number 10.

- [Man] And last question, either you or Wade here, is a tremendously a busy weekend on the beaches, and I wanted just to get a reaction from the county on what they saw or didn't see. I know the hotel restriction just went into effect. But if you were out at the beach, you saw a lot of people here, no matter where you're at this weekend.

- Yeah so, I actually looked at some video from a number of different places, both people who were horrified by what they saw and others who said, hey, look, everything looks great. And from my perspective of what I'm seeing, including video cams in our own EOC that sort of looks at what the beach traffic, of human traffic as well as car traffic looks like, there definitely are more people that are using our beaches. I'm not too concerned about that as long as people continue to be smart and sensible, and for the most part, travel in family groups, spread themselves apart. Six feet is the minimum. We have lots of wide open beach. So, if people can spread out 10 feet, 15 feet, all the better. I'm glad that it's outdoors, is a little safer than those kinds of gatherings of large number of people indoors. But we still want people to use common sense, to spread apart, to not engage with people who are not members of their household. To continue to do all of the smart things about hand-washing and hand sanitizer when they are touching the rails at the beach or what have you. Just, we continue to want to keep our numbers as good as they are. So with that, as you know, we did put out a request to our greatest areas of tourism that they hold off for a period of time. We're seeing that that's being somewhat effectual. Working with our lodging community, we think that they are very much working with us in that regard, and we are gonna begin to do some spot checks and code enforcement on that. Yes?

- I was just gonna ask how the 50% occupancy is being enforced.

- Yeah, so through compliance checks. We're not gonna go to 100% of businesses on a daily basis. But we are going to be checking on that.

- [Woman] Is there a fine or a penalty if they're over the 50%?

- Yes, built into the order is the opportunity to cite people for fines, with fines or even jail as we have said throughout this entire pandemic process, we ask for compliance. We're not gonna be issuing high fines to individual who are trying to do the right thing, if they're slightly above the number. We're not looking to do a gotcha. But we are looking for compliance and partnership with our lodging industry and if individual businesses are flagrantly violating our order, then we do have means at our hands to cite them for that.

- [Woman] With Memorial Day weekend approaching, how important is it that they are complying?

- Yeah, typically, Memorial Day weekend sees a lot more visitors and so, we are asking for our lodging partners and our visitors to take heed and to not use this as the time to come to our county.

- [Woman] After quarantine, so just to clarify, the governor's new criteria does not mean that restaurants can open up like today or tomorrow for in-person dining, correct?

- Correct, we still have to await the State's approval of our attestation and posting on the website that we are now a county that can move forward into the full Stage 2.

- [Woman] And you said that one of the criteria is only 8% of the cases can test positive in the last seven days of testing. Is there plans to increase more testing in the county?

- So, yes, when we first started testing, we were seeing rates as high as 10% because we were testing only the sickest people. Over the course of this event, over two months, we have seen that number drop steadily. We monitor it consistently, and so as I said, we stand less than 1% today. That may continue to go down as we add to the denominator, as we do more tests, the percent of people who actually test positive may continue to decrease and that's a good thing. It tells us that we are trying to capture as many people as we can for testing and we want to see that we're picking up very few cases among them.

- [Man] I have a couple questions for President Armstrong. This may also be suitable for Wade as well. The Alternate Care Site, let's say we go to Stage 3, students start to return back, what's the future of that facility? Is that gonna remain in tact in some capacity? We heard that there was negotiations to, excuse me. Allow some students in once they, if and when they do come back, and what's the future holds for that?

- So, we've had discussions all along and we plan to certainly keep the ACS as long as the county needs it. It's very important, it's part of everyone's plan, and we have had discussions if there are not patients there, then there are areas at the rec center that we would be able to use, and we'll have alternative sites for our students. And then we also have to plan for quarantine and isolation should we have cases with our students, and we will handle that likely through our residence hall space or another mechanism, as the recreation is appropriate. And we would only mirror what's going on in the community. I mean, obviously, we're in Stage 3. I suspect other recreation centers in the county would be open, and so it's important to have that flow.

- [Man] In terms of the community, you might be interested to know athletics, I know it's very fluid with the NCAA. What can you tell us? Again, if you're in Stage 3, best-case scenario, can we expect to see sports? Particularly football where you get a large number of people in a stadium.

- Well, I'm certainly concerned about our student athletes and also our students in the liberal arts performing, and part of that is having an audience. The simple answer is I do not know. The governor did make some comments today about sports in California without spectators. So, we will be working with our conferences. We're in the Big West, as you know, with football which involves multiple states. Big West, excuse me, for all sports other than football, which is largely California and Hawaii, and then the Big Sky for football, which is multiple states. So, it really is gonna depend on where California is and best-case, at least the beginning of the fall, may be without spectators. But there's just a lot of boxes to check and a lot of plans to get approved, and it's very complicated with the multiple conferences once I got them right. Big West, no football, Big Sky, football.

- Any other questions? Okay. Thank you all again for being here today and for tuning in online and on TV. Just my usual reminders, the end of the conference here, please remember that all our COVID-19 information is available on [ReadySLO.org](https://www.ready.slo.org). We also continue to operate multiple ways that you can get in touch with someone to ask your questions. We have our Phone Assistance Center open where you can talk to a live person Monday through Friday, eight to five, and weekends, eight to four. We maintain our Public Health Information Line, recorded message, and we also still have in place the Enforcement line available Monday through Friday between eight and five. Thank you again for tuning in today on San Luis Obispo County Public Health's Facebook page for this briefing, and these could also be found on our county's homepage and live streams of KCOY and KSBY. Finally, if you happen to miss this briefing, you can see it between now and Wednesday on public access 21, channel 21, at 8 a.m., 5 p.m., and midnight. Thank you all for staying engaged and we'll see you on Wednesday.