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## ***Governor's Economic Re-Opening Task Force***

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**The Mission:** We will ensure New Hampshire's economy reopens efficiently in a manner that protects public health, while limiting the risk of a major resurgence. The White House Opening Up America Again guidelines are broadly written for all states, and do not address the unique landscape and geography of New Hampshire. The goal of this task force will be to craft a unique New Hampshire approach with a detailed plan to transition to new tools for reopening our economy by segment.

This task force will develop a plan and oversee the state and private-sector actions needed to reopen New Hampshire's economy while minimizing the adverse impact on public health.

**Meetings:** All meetings of the task force will be public and subject to RSA 91-a requirements. The task force anticipates that it will hear from state department leaders, business and industry groups, small business owners, labor representatives, counterparts from Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts as well as the public. All materials will be made available for the public on the State's website for this task force. Transparency must be a hallmark of this effort.

**Phased Approach:** Just as the White House Opening Up America Again guidelines suggest, the task force will look to craft a phased approach to reopening New Hampshire's economy. As the state can safely diagnose, treat and isolate COVID-19 cases and their contacts, New Hampshire can transition from phase to phase.

Further, the task force can look to recommend easing stay at home measures as safe and effective tools for mitigating and containing the risks of COVID-19 become available.

To guard against the risk of reignited outbreaks, the task force should look to develop the state's first phase after New Hampshire reports a sustained reduction in cases for at least 14 days (one incubation period) or a reduction in hospitalizations to ensure our healthcare infrastructure can safely treat all patients requiring hospitalization. Increased capacity for testing will also be considered by the task force. The task force should also consider that restrictions must be eased with sufficient time between each adjustment to carefully monitor for resurgence of transmission.

Ultimately, the goal of the task force should be to craft a roadmap to work with physical distancing measures in a concerted and careful manner, allow businesses across all sectors to open, and continue to control COVID-19 transmission so that we do not experience a regression. Constant reevaluation of the implementation of these steps will be required.

**Principles for Re-Opening:** Stay-at-home and social distancing measures will need to remain in place until transmission has measurably slowed down and we can be certain that that state's health infrastructure can safely manage the outbreak and care for the sick.

However, the following principles, developed with the input of the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will guide the state's reopening planning and decision-making process.

These include:

- **Monitoring data:** Governor Sununu and state officials will continue to be guided by data, and track any changes to case trends, infection and death rates. Our stepwise approach depends on our ability to aggregate and analyze data quickly. Data will include:
  - Number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 as reported on our Epidemic Curve (graphed by date of illness onset), and daily reports of new positive test results.
  - Number of outbreaks at places of work and institutional facilities, including long-term care facilities (LTCFs) and assisted-living facilities (ALF).
  - Number of new hospitalizations and daily hospital census for COVID-19.
  - Number of confirmed deaths due to COVID-19.
  - Healthcare visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) and acute respiratory infection (ARI) as monitored through our influenza surveillance program (surveillance of respiratory syndromes).
- **Maintenance of health care readiness:** Governor Sununu and state officials will continue monitoring the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), available bed and ventilator capacity, and testing materials to ensure it continues meeting the needs of the healthcare system and workers.
- **Increase testing and tracing:** The state currently has a robust testing approach but will continue to work to make testing more widely available and strengthen the epidemiology and contact tracing rapid response teams. The state will ensure that healthcare providers have accurate and updated information about potential therapeutic and preventive treatments as more information becomes available, and that residents of NH have access to necessary medical care, including pharmaceutical therapies.

These steps can help guide the task force in developing tools and approaches that target those with infection rather than mitigation tactics that target entire populations in regions where transmission is widespread.

- **New Industry Return Guidance:** Governor Sununu and the Task Force will work with the Health Department and industry groups to help businesses develop “COVID-19 Operations Plans,” which will include sector strategies for phased opening, including worker and customer protections, and training and monitoring procedures.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** With summer approaching, the task force will also evaluate how to reopen outdoor recreation, retail, restaurants and bars, travel and other activities, focusing on the conditions needed to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks.
- **Public and mental health consequences of maintaining restrictions:** The task force will evaluate the impact to public and mental health of maintaining restrictions on employers, such as the closure of exercise facilities, as well as public and mental health impact of the economic closures.

**Foundation for Guidance:** In crafting guidance for each industry to reopen, the guidance must encompass the answers to several critical questions:

- 1.) How to maintain proper social distancing?
- 2.) How to ensure continuous and frequent cleaning and disinfection of shared spaces. How can public hygiene be improved and cleanings of shared spaces be more routine and robust?
- 3.) What is the proper use and availability of PPE within each industry?
- 4.) What special policies or protocols should be implemented to ensure the safety for high risk populations?
- 5.) What PSAs and marketing of new tools and guidance should be used to publicly promote new behavioral norms?
- 6.) When and how to maintain tele-work policies and practices as appropriate to encourage social distancing?
- 7.) Policies on monitoring and excluding sick individuals from work?

Public health and health care partners will inform our path forward. This will take time but planning for each phase should begin now so the infrastructure is in place when it is time to transition. All guidance or protocols will be reviewed by the New Hampshire Department of Public Health to ensure that they adequately address and account for these considerations.

**Sector Approach:** The task force should approach each industry by NAICs codes. This is easier for businesses to understand and makes the work of the Task Force easier because we are just working with them to help determine protocols/practices for reopening by industry and segment. The task force should consider grouping NAICs codes to allow similarly situated industries to phase forward together. In addition, the task force should solicit guidance from business and industry groups to identify protocols that best meet the needs of each specific industry to develop standards that protect public health and safety.

**Broad Workforce Challenges:** The real hurdle to “reopening” New Hampshire will not just be lifting the government restrictions, rather other real problems for employers will be among these factors:

1) Workforce: Most restaurants could not open for dine-in, because most of the staff is being paid more not to work than they were making while working. The same is true in many other industries, particularly in the service sectors. Moreover, many workers, particularly those over 50, may well not feel comfortable coming to work in the near term. With the increase in CARES Act funding to unemployment compensation, the average worker is getting paid the equivalent of \$22/hour not to work, post taxes. It will be difficult to attract workforce for any employer that would pay below this threshold. This is particularly concerning, since severely understaffed businesses are less likely to fully comply with public health protocols meant to protect the safety of employees and customers.

2) Liability: If an employer reopens, what kind of liability do they assume? If there is an outbreak and several employees or customers get sick and sue, saying the company did not take strong enough precautions, will business insurance cover those claims? What kind of liability risk are businesses exposing themselves to? That is particularly true for businesses a border communities, where residents from other states that might have higher infection rates will be frequenting. How can businesses that follow the protocols laid out by this task force protect themselves from this liability?

3) Supply chain: Many businesses could reopen, but if they are selling goods, it may still be a challenge to restock. What does the supply chain look like for those goods deemed non-essential, as well as restaurants, whose suppliers have severely limited inventory, and what kind of runway do they need to get their supply chains back in order? In this regard, the task force will have to consider that some businesses will need to “open” before they “reopen”—meaning that before the state allows businesses to open to the public, they must first be allowed to open to their employees.

4) Childcare: With schools educating remotely through the end of this academic year, how will families provide childcare for younger children when parents can go back to working onsite? What opportunities to scale will childcare centers have, primarily considering the above workforce limitations and licensing requirements, to absorb this influx of new attendees while ensuring that these children are still meeting their educational needs? These are a sampling of the issues the task force will need to consider before New Hampshire can truly be back “open.” It is also likely that some of the task force’s recommendations will need to be shared with the Governor’s Office For Economic Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) for their consideration in putting forward economic relief to get industries back to a place where they can reopen.

**Immediate Priority Sectors:** There are some sectors that require immediate attention from the task force, given their impacts on other sectors of the economy or specific factors that demand our immediate attention.

These include summer camps, Boys & Girls Clubs and other forms of summer programing for children. Forming guidance for these industries will be challenging but given the difficulty of enabling the workforce to return without adequate childcare during the summer months, this challenge demands special consideration and attention.

Also included here is healthcare and how and when they can safely resume normal functions, so patients can get appropriate preventative care.