

MINUTES**Senate Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor****House Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor****Thursday, July 23, 2020****1:00 P.M.**

Committee Members Present: Senators Missy Irvin, Chair; Ronald Caldwell, Scott Flippo, Kim Hammer, Jimmy Hickey, Jr., Bill Sample, and David Wallace, Vice-Chair; Representatives Jack Ladyman, Chair; Mary Bentley, Justin Gonzales, Michelle Gray, Lee Johnson, Fredrick Love, Stephen Magie, Austin McCollum, and Jeff Wardlaw

Other Legislators Present: Senators Linda Chesterfield, Alan Clark, Breanna Davis, Lance Eads, Jane English, Trent Garner, Jim Hendren, Ricky Hill, Keith Ingram, and Terry Rice Representatives Harlan Breaux, Joe Cloud, Cameron Cooper, Cindy Crawford, Jim Dotson, Denise Ennett, Brian Evans, Jon Eubanks, Vivian Flowers, Jack Fortner, Tippi McCullough, Ron McNair, Stephen Meeks, Reginald Murdock, Aaron Pilkington, Johnny Rye, Jamie Scott, Brandt Smith, Dwight Tosh, DeAnn Vaught, and Carlton Wing

Call to Order and Comments by the Chairs: Senator Irvin called the meeting to order. Senator Irvin and Representative Ladyman discussed the goals of the committee.

Consideration to Adopt Meeting Minutes and July 7, 2020 [Exhibit C]: Minutes from the July 7, 2020 meeting will be reviewed at a later date.

Status of Covid-19 Testing in Arkansas and Surrounding States Stephanie Williams, RNP, MPH, Chief of Staff, Arkansas Department of Health discussed the Incident Command Activation which consisted of collecting and organizing real-time information on the status of COVID-19. The inventory of respirators and other PPE equipment was maintained, and the status of procuring essential supplies was tracked. There is a weekly disbursement to areas of need and nontraditional users; this includes nursing homes, home care associations, and homeless shelters. The Pandemic Physician Group was formed from across the ADH with key leaders who meet 3 times a week to help provide medical and health guidance in relation to COVID-19. A quarantine facility has also been made available for those who are unable to quarantine at home. While treatment is not provided at the facility, it is equipped with basic provisions and overseen by medical personnel.

Jennifer Dillaha, MD, Medical Director Outbreak Control, State Epidemiologist, Arkansas Department of Health discussed the status of testing in the state of Arkansas as well as the Outbreak Response Team. Before COVID-19, there was a baseline outbreak team of 18 RNs across the region specifically for case investigation. Currently, there is over 100 nurses with additional assistance coming from the National Guard. In regards to contact tracing, there was a baseline of 3 RNs which has expanded to over 80 with additional assistance coming from the National Guard. At the beginning of the outbreak, the CDC had an initial testing capacity of 300 tests per day. PerkinElmer's capacity is now 1000 per day.

Approximately 1.2% of the state's population has had a confirmed positive case of COVID-19. In order to speed up the turnaround time for testing, an additional high throughput machine has been purchased for the state making the total number of machines three. A lack of reagents has led to an increased turnaround time for tests. Once reagents have been acquired, labs will be able to continue with high

volume testing. Individuals needing to be tested may do so at certain pharmacies, clinics, or their local health department.

Status of Contact Tracing in Arkansas Jennifer Dillaha, MD, Medical Director Outbreak Control, State Epidemiologist, Arkansas Department of Health discussed details in regards to contact tracing including the process from start to finish. Efforts to train contact tracers before testing capacity has been increased to ensure there are no delays when school starts. Mike Cima, Chief Epidemiologist, Associate Director for Science, Arkansas Department of Health discussed a mobile app that will be utilized to better notify when an individual is COVID positive and better kick start the contact tracing process. Bluetooth technology will allow for tracking the amount of time an individual interacts with another individual who has their Bluetooth on at a very close range. A total of \$22 million from CARES funding has been appropriated to better COVID-19 efforts and the Department of Health is asking for an addition \$16 million. The \$16 million is a supplemental request that would allow contact tracing contractors to potentially scale up beyond the additional 350 contact tracers initially needed. 201 Arkansans have been hired for those tracing positions. It would also allow them to hire case investigators. \$5 million will go to UAMS Public Health to serve educational institutions in the fall due to returns to campus. The College of Public Health has been participating in contact tracing, but was phased out when the semester ended. Stephanie Williams, RNP, MPH, Chief of Staff, Depart of Health discussed the plan in regards to contact tracing specifically in schools. Once schools return, they will be required to have a point of contact that acts as their liaison. If a COVID case is found within a school, they are responsible for providing information such as: who the teacher in the classroom was, what other students were in the classroom, were student in contact, etc. The schools are not responsible for contact tracing overall. A more standardized implementation of safety guidelines for schools is being revised. Areas of outbreak have occurred due to school sports, but also in poultry plants and manufacturing facilities. All of these may be due to close contact. Restaurants have not been found to be a great source of cases. Only one restaurant facility has been required to close, and they have since reopened. Businesses are expected to comply and enforce public health directives.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:35 P.M.