

- Good afternoon. Today is Monday, April 20th, 2020. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. My name is Michelle Shoresman, I'm the designated media contact for our public information team. This afternoon we have three speakers for you. We will begin with San Luis Obispo County District Four Supervisor Lynn Compton. She will be followed by president of Madonna Enterprises Clint Pearce, that's Clint, C-L-I-N-T, Pearce, P-E-A-R-C-E. 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 speakers please remember to repeat your questions before answering. Thank you again to Robin Babb our American sign language interpreter. And now San Luis Obispo County District Four Supervisor Lynn Compton.

- Thank you Michelle and good afternoon everybody. To begin with I'd like to say we have a remarkable community with individuals who are making unbelievable sacrifices and stepping up to the plate in this time of crisis. Our communities have certainly united together to do what's right for our neighbors, our family members and all of our friends. Together we've accomplished what we originally set out to do with our Shelter At Home program. That was to flatten the curve for COVID-19 cases and to establish and open the Cal Poly Alternate Care Site to accommodate patients if local hospitals reach their capacity. Together we've helped each other, we've cared for our neighbors in need, and we cared for those in our most vulnerable communities such as the homeless and the elderly. Currently we're working on a plan to safely relax some of the current restrictions in place in phases. And with medical oversight as soon as humanly possible. As we have mentioned before our San Luis Obispo County order allows for a local interpretation of essential business services where the governor's overlapping order lacks specificity. We're also going away from the essential business services definition and moving more toward businesses that can operate safely and sustainably without affecting others and changing our curve. As you know we are all bound by the governor's order. We have extended our local order last week to enable us to have maximum local control and to keep the more essential services open while the governor's order was still in place. Extending our order gives the county officials some latitude to interpret the governor's order. As such I'm pleased to announce that based on the current epidemiological situation that we have in our county, our team of medical experts in epidemiology and disease management believe they can relax some of our current county standards and restrictions in place and still stay under the umbrella of the governor's order. We've worked over the weekend to find ways to lift certain restrictions. Dr. Borenstein will clarify these later in four areas that we've revisited including non-urgent healthcare needs, dog grooming and veterinary needs, recreational fishing and the construction industry. We are not waiting around for the state to prepare for our future. We certainly know we are governed by the state's order but we want to be prepared. We did not initially wait for the state when we put in place our local order and it was the right thing to do for our community and we are not waiting now to prepare for this phased approach on reopening. Many individuals are working on that reopening phase plan right now and we will have a draft in about a week for public viewing. We're doing this in preparation for when the governor lifts his restrictions or amends it, and we're certainly ready and will have things in place for when that occurs. Thank you very much I'll answer your questions later, I'm now gonna turn it over to Clint Pearce, president of Madonna Enterprises, thank you.

- Thank you Lynn. My name's Clint Pearce and I'm here representing REACH, an economic impact organization serving the central coast. I'm on the founding board of directors of this organization and we are proud to partner with the county in supporting our region through the impacts and recovery of COVID-19. My family owns and operates a local hotel and restaurant as well as other businesses and I know first hand how hard this has been on the business community and our local workforce. We are all struggling to adapt to these challenging times as we do our part to end the spread of the infection. Thankfully this great sacrifice has been successful thus far in slowing the spread. REACH is partnering with the county including the public health officer to develop the SLO County roadmap to phased reopening. Over the course of the next week, REACH and the County are focusing specifically on phased reopening of SLO County. We're bringing together industries across SLO County to review high-level guidelines for a phased reopening of the county. We're bringing together a broad cross section of community leaders who will weigh in on draft guidelines to relaxing some restrictions. They will provide insight and expertise to a panel of medical experts to help provide more clarity in how the guidelines will be implemented across various types of businesses and community events. This project is being managed by the County and REACH, and being overseen by a panel of county supervisors and local mayors. A broad cross section of community stakeholders will review medical recommendations for a phased approach to reopening. Stakeholders include elected officials, community groups as well as local industries, including education, faith communities. As well as local industries of tourism, hospitality, building and design, transportation, manufacturing, agriculture and general business. We need a safe plan that works for our community. Together we will pave a smooth path ahead for our local businesses. Local community, government and business leaders, are working around the clock to get this done in a rapid timeline. This is a herculean effort that would typically happen in 12 months but we're doing it in two weeks. We know it won't be perfect out of the gate but the county is committed to working with the community and we're gonna keep refining as we learn more. Now I would like to invite up Dr. Borenstein.

- Thank you, good afternoon. I'm Dr. Penny Borenstein your county health officer. So, as I do everyday that we come before the media we want to let you know where we are in the number of cases in our county. We are at 132 today which is an increase of zero cases since yesterday. That's what we like to see. We've continued to retain that low rate and we continue to do our testing ongoing. And we are seeing a very small percentage of the ones that we test as having this disease so that is good. Collectively we have now done nearly 900 cases at the public health lab, nearly 900 patients have been tested through us, and as I've been telling you that we've been working hard to get the number of tests done in the private sector. I am now able to report to you that we have last week's numbers and we have nearly 400 tests that were done in the private lab sector in commercial labs. We are still going to work on getting the numbers from the beginning of this pandemic but at this point we can tell you is that with that number, it looks like our private sector is doing about three times the amount of lab testing that we are at our public health labs. So, we feel that we have pretty solid testing going on and our supply chain for the moment appears to be good. You've been hearing from the other speakers, given that our low number of cases and the fact that we are doing considerable testing, still not as much as we would like, but we have the components in place to really be turning the dialogue to this phased reopening. So, the process that we are undertaking is that we have a draft plan now done, Mr. Horton, the County Administrative Officer, Emergency Services Director and myself have reviewed it. It has the

high-level framework of where we want to go in this process. It is going to be vetted by all of those constituencies that you heard Mr. Pearce mention, all the different sectors related to business as well as government, public, private schools et cetera. And then we will be in a position in a week from now to turn it over to the public for their information about where we were heading. Notwithstanding that we are moving very aggressively on this timeline even in this interim period, we are continuing to take a look at things that we can do notwithstanding the state order. So, over the weekend myself, Mr. Horton and our County Counsel Rita Neal, we basically scoured the governor's order, we looked at our own order. We looked at all the kinds of questions that we've been getting over time as to what's allowable and what's not. And we have begun to take a fresh look at areas that we can, again, in a careful and controlled and safe manner, open up for some areas of business. And so, today I want to just mention the four areas that we think can make changes in how we have up until now approached it. In some of these cases they were never legal restrictions, they were recommendations to cease activity. In other cases the governor actually in his order came forward with some clarifying language. So, what we're prepared to talk about today is just these four areas, but we will continue to do this kind of analysis between now and getting our plan fully in place. So, the four areas I want to mention are in healthcare services. I have had dialogue with our hospital presidents and the hospitals are trying to move forward as quickly as they can to restore elective surgeries. Once they are ready and have everything in place they are looking forward to doing that in the relatively near term. I do not have a date for that but I know that there are quite a few people in our community that are waiting for that service. And the term elective surgery is a little bit misleading because those who need a new knee or have an abscess, or things that the individual patient feels like, "This is not elective, I need to have this." Probably a better way of saying it is non-urgent healthcare, Non-emergent healthcare. So, we plan to move forward with that in concert with the hospitals but I have given my approval as the health officer for that process to begin. I am also asking our healthcare community to begin to look at other areas where the healthcare system has really put a pause. So, chronic disease management, well visits for children. I am looking forward to my colleagues in the healthcare sector to begin that process, opening their doors to these kinds of services. Again, with all the precautions in place and personal protective equipment as needed. Secondly on the front of animal welfare and grooming, we are able to now allow that service to go on. We've consulted with our County Animal Control Officer Dr. Eric Anderson and both mobile and in-house animal grooming falls under our interpretation at this point of essential services. That is a change. We also want to clarify this has always been allowed but there has been a lot of misunderstanding I think in the area of recreational fishing. So, I want to acknowledge that all recreational fishing including individual boat owners and rented boats and private charters that can maintain that physical distancing is an allowable activity. Also fishing suppliers can resume as long as they provide the service curbside or through mail delivery or online services. Actually I shouldn't say resume, the mail delivery and the online services has always been allowed but we want to clarify that fishing services at storefront and through curbside delivery is part of the fishing allowance. And lastly in consultation with our county planning director we now can say that all county construction projects will be moving forward. Building permits will be issued by the county and the planning and building department will be coming out shortly with an outline of how this will occur. So, those are the areas that we are looking to assure the public as both real as well as a symbol of areas in which we can begin to get back to some measure of normalcy. And let me tell you why we're here. So, I want to show a chart, this is the kinda data that I look at every single day but I haven't shared it with the public. So, what this chart shows is going back to April 3rd, is the date at which we began to see our day over day increase of cases of COVID-19 being less than five. So, if you

look across this chart you can see every single day the number of cases that we have reported in this county numbered between zero and four, and the average over this 18 day period is in fact around 2.5. So, I point this out because, just not be a casualty of this incident. Because I think this is the picture that our community needs to see. There are still concerns with this disease, do not get my wrong it is still present in our county and we will continue to see cases. But we have been flat for nearly three weeks, we have done a really good job as a community and we hope this continues. I monitor it everyday and we will continue to do so, and we will react in the moment should circumstances change. Now let me say in the moment, doesn't mean if we have one bad day, we're all gonna go back into hibernation, but this is the kind of information that I think the public needs to see and understand about what's going on in our community because it is quite different fortunately for us than what is being seen in other parts of the world, the nation and even neighbors adjoining our county. So, with that we can take the kinds of actions that I've been describing today. I genuinely am thanking the community but I also have been very impressed by all of the innovation and resiliency, and creativity that has come out of our business sector. That's why we wanna look to our business partners for what more along these lines they can do as we begin this phased reopening. But I'm just gonna cite a few examples of things that our business partners have been doing all along to try to retain commerce during these difficult times. So, I'm just gonna name a couple of examples, Paso catering company and other food service providers such as Spoon Trade have found creative ways to maintain their regular clients during this time by reworking their menu to include meals to-go, and feeding families of four at very affordable prices. Another one is Timbre Winery which offers curbside pickup and is donating a percentage of their sales to local restaurants so those other restaurants can support their teams and families. The San Luis Obispo Repertory Theater has brought actors from across the nation together to create a humorous virtual talk show to be a central hub for local arts organizations that are unable to perform in their usual manner. And then finally and I think many of you if you turn on TV we all see the equivalency of Zoom meetings these days, but I am always really impressed, being somewhat of a musician myself I am really moved by how musicians across even international boundaries sometimes, can find themselves right on the same beat and actually creating virtual concerts remotely and through creating performances for us. So, those are just some of the examples of ways that we have continued to show our humanity and our spirit and our creativity. With that I am opening it up to questions to our media partners.

- [Dave] A question for either Supervisor Compton or Mr. Horton. As you know Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham sent a letter to Governor Newsom today detailing the SLO County roadmap to recovery, basically talking to the governor about that and how that'll be implemented in his support for that. Can you just share with us your reaction to that and your anticipation of that plan going into action pretty soon.

- Thanks Dave. The question was in regards to the letter that was authored by Assemblymember Cunningham signed onto by two County board members and also the mayors. And what are the thoughts of that letter. Basically the letter said is that SLO County has done an outstanding job, and that we're ready to take the reins. So, we're ready for the governor to give authority back to SLO County so we can move forward implementing our plan based on science, based on public health, but get people back to work, look at how we're gonna get our kids back to school and then how we're gonna get our

folks back in their places of worship. And I think the timing of this letter is very appropriate as Dr. Borenstein showed earlier in the discussion here, our community's done a fantastic job. We've bent the curve, we're ready to move forward, we're ready to move forward, again, in a safe way and with public health at the forefront, We'll be ready to implement or plan. This plan will be complete within a week, we'll be able to share it with our community within a week. And what we've done is as a community we've worked together to bend the curve, and as a community we're developing this plan together so we can move forward again and start looking at how we return to a new sense of normal.

- [Dave] Wade if I can ask you then also Dr. Borenstein afterwards, any concerns about doing this too soon, too fast, too quickly? We've seen some experts nationally saying, "Hey, let's not rush into this, "things are going well but we can't do it too fast."

- So, the question was, any concern with moving forward too fast and Dr. Borenstein will follow my answer to this question. Well again, we're looking at science, we're making science based decisions, public health based decisions. And as Dr. Borenstein has shown for the three weeks it's shown that our case count and the increase in case count has been below five. That's a very important threshold and that's why we can be confident that we are ready to move forward, again, in a very systematic matter. Protecting public health, but the same time giving our county back going again. And I'll turn over to Dr. Borenstein to share her thoughts on this.

- Yeah I think it's an extremely important point to make sure that we don't flip the switch. We've been saying that consistently. This is going to be a measured, a phased approach to returning to business as we know it. And it'll be over a period of months, and it will come with ongoing surveillance, ongoing contact investigation, I mean, case investigation, contact tracing. We have been doing this consistently all along so some of the measures that you've heard out of the federal plan and state plan, we feel ready to take that on. We feel that we have a decent amount of testing going on so that we are comfortable knowing where we are. I am sure that the number of true cases are considerably higher than what we've seen, but I feel that there is reliability to the ongoing number of cases and the change that has occurred over time. So, we have our testing in place, we have our communicable disease epidemiology surveillance case management in place. We are going to be working with all of the sectors that you've heard of about how they can do it safely. We have a decent, I say decent, not foolproof, but we have a fairly reliable PPE chain now. I've talked to both hospital CEOs today who said they feel they have all the PPE that they need to begin to move forward. And all of this if you look at the governor's six tiered points about what it will take for us to open up, is that last one is having a plan in place should we need to revert. And so, part of our plan will always have an eye on if the situation changes, and we need to take a step back because we moved too soon, we are prepared to do that as needed.

- [Reporter] What would be the plan for preventing a second round of Coronavirus outbreak in the county?

- So, the question was, what is the plan for preventing a second round of Coronavirus. And I don't think that any of us have a crystal ball and that what we need to do is continue all of the good measures that hopefully everyone in the population has now learned about how to prevent infectious diseases. I know you've heard it a thousand times but I'll say it one more time, good hand washing, staying away from people who are sick, staying home when you're sick, sanitizing highly used equipment in your home. Doorknobs, light switches, computer mice et cetera. And taking all of those cautions. We have talked a little bit about face masking, and that may become part of our strategy should we start to see an increase in cases, but at this point we've been effectively able to manage things without. We don't know with this disease if there's a seasonality, we don't know if there's a natural curve and it will just fade away after a period of time. I have always said that ultimately we have to get to herd immunity either through a vaccine or enough people getting it. So, there's a very decent chance that we will see future outbreaks, and hopefully those will be manageable as this one has been and hopefully without the dramatic steps that we've had to take up to this point.

- [Reporter] How quickly could the plan be implemented if the governor allows it, and what sort of businesses are being targeted for reopening first?

- The question was, how soon could we implement our plan and what businesses are being targeted for reopening. So, the timeframe that we set for ourselves is that within one week's time we will have a plan before the public. That plan will be vetted by myself and other key leaders, certainly our Emergency Services Director, our Board. And we hope to be able to move aggressively after that. By aggressively I mean that we will start the process of taking action. That doesn't mean, I know I've said it several times, I'll say it one more time, it doesn't mean that on May 1st we open everything for business. We're looking at every sector of our population, every service sector. Again, education is unlikely to be in phase one, as you've seen in the national and state plans. Our colleges, other places where there's large congregated settings, I've said it here before, there's not likely to be, I said about the Mid-State Fair, I have not asked them to cancel but I want them to have a plan in their back pocket and know by what date they would need to cancel in order to make that decision. Those are the kinds of things that we'll be looking at and talking about over the weeks and months to come. But every sector of our service delivery, of our education system, of our faith-based systems, will absolutely be party to the changes that are forthcoming.

- [Reporter] Would people still be asked to stay at home and if so to what extent?

- The question was, will people still be asked to stay at home and if so to what extent. So, our order and the governor's order which have the words stay or shelter at home, have always been a little bit of a misnomer because I have repeatedly said it does not mean staying locked up in your house. So, that will not change, that people need to go out of their house, they need to go out of their house for provisions,

they need to go out of their house for fresh air, for exercise, for wellbeing. That will continue but what we envision is more opportunity for, perhaps you haven't bought a new shirt in six weeks, we hope that in the weeks and months to come that that will be an opportunity. Getting a haircut, things of that sort. Yes however, still with social distancing, and with limited congregation of people coming together in large numbers. So, that will mean that many of the things that we are used to doing will remain off limits for some period of time ongoing.

- [Reporter] Melissa Newman had a question for Clint Pearce. She was wondering if all the small businesses that were unable to get the loans, what sort of help are they able to receive from REACH?

-The question is, for all those businesses out there, especially small businesses, what kind of help can they get from REACH? Well, REACH along with the coalition of Chambers of Commerce can be very helpful in getting those business owners to the local banks. Even the large banks but local offices. That is the point of contact, it has to go through a banking institution. And that process has been slower than I think almost everybody would've liked. But it seems that the pipeline is flowing now and businesses are getting funded. It looks like Congress is going back and maybe reauthorizing more funds, because a first batch has already been used. So, I would say to get in contact with REACH, get in contact with your local chambers, and they will really help you make actual contact with your bank. 'Cause that's where the rubber meets the road.

- [Michelle] One last question.

- [Reporter] How long is Cal Poly committed to the Alternative Care Site being open?

- The question is, how long is Cal Poly committed to Alternative Care Site being open. And I'd like to address that as, President Armstrong has been a great partner with this. Right now we haven't determined what the exact end date's going to be because again that's gonna be driven by where we are. This is a fluid situation, we don't exactly know what's gonna happen in the next few months but what we do know is we'll have a plan in place to address it. And having the Cal Poly Alternative Care Site open, that is one of the insurance policies that we have that allows us to be aggressive in opening up and getting back to a new normal. Because one of things we've done is we've taken this time to build up hospital capacity, we have Alternative Care Site, we have that surge capacity. We built PPE supplies, that personal protective equipment. And we've also got more ventilators into this county. So, with those measures in place that allows us to open up and start taking steps, again, based on science, based on protecting public health, but getting to that new normal. And again, President Armstrong's been a fantastic partner, Cal Poly's been a tremendous partner in all this and we'll be discussing how long Alternative Care Site will have to be stood up in the coming weeks. Thank you.

- Excuse me, thank you all again for coming today. Remember there are a number of ways to stay informed with the latest information and resources for residents of San Luis Obispo County related to COVID-19. We continue to update readyslo.org and maintain our public health information line recorded message in English and in Spanish daily. Our phone assistance center is also open during the week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on weekends from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., our next regular briefing is scheduled for Wednesday here at 3:15. And after today these briefings will be re-airing on public access channel 21 after each regular briefing until the following one. You can also continue to tune in live at 3:15, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department's Facebook page. And on the county's homepage as well as the live streams of KCOY and KSBY. Thank you, be well, and we will see you on Wednesday.