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05/11/20 Governor's Press Conference on COVID-19 (Fort Myers @ 1 PM)

- Palm Beach County now included in Phase One
- Today, 405 new cases for residents from 20,000 test results (2.12% positivity)
 - Under 10% is good, under 8% is really good
 - Florida has been under 5% for the last two weeks
- ICU hospitalizations: first week of April was 850+ patients, now 467 statewide
 - 263 ventilators in use, 6,500 available
- With the 64 phase one counties
 - 200 people in the ICU (from 16 million Floridians in these counties)
 - Of the 405 new Florida cases, only 187 were in phase one counties
 - Percent positive in these counties is 1.43%
 - Continuing to monitor, specifically hospitalizations, ventilators, and percent positive
- Serological (antibody testing) has been unveiled throughout the state for first responders and health care workers
 - Using at drive-thru test sites in Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm Beach & Jacksonville
 - 10% of the people that came through tested positive in Miami-Dade
 - Jacksonville 0.5% out of those tested so far (keeping in mind that they had less hospitalizations than Miami-Dade)
 - They will continue to do these drive-thru sites, continuing to test first responders
- Protecting nursing homes and long-term care facilities
 - In March, they stopped visitation and stopped sending COVID positive patients back to the nursing homes
 - Now with expanded testing in these facilities, even infected residents don't always show symptoms
 - The problem was that the nursing homes got more money to keep the patients there, so now they've granted a waiver request to reimburse hospitals at a higher rate to take in COVID patients through CMS (Secretary Mayhew did this)
 - These are key areas for outbreaks as well as prisons, meat packing plants
 - Hospitalizations are down 5%-6%, including facilities in Miami-Dade and Broward, especially with taking patients out of nursing homes
 - They've now given long-term care patients who have tested positive and don't need hospitalization or need to be discharged a place to go so they don't return to their facilities quite yet
- Testing
 - Made a rule that staff members at long-term care facilities must be tested by the national guard teams because they can interact with so many people
 - The testing RV is a "hub and spoke" model. They go to big areas and collect samples and test those samples on the same day. Results in 45 minutes. Might be replicated with continued success

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- The state is looking to get antigen tests, it's a diagnostic test different from the PCR, results in 15 minutes, just got emergency approved by the FDA. Thinks it can be easily mass approved. The only issue is that it can produce false negatives
- Remdesivir is a therapeutic just got approved for emergency use by the FDA, so Florida is now getting it to send it to hospitals. DeSantis does not know if it's effective, wants to give the option to doctors and let them decide
- PPE
 - By the end of this week, Florida will have sent 25 million masks, 10.3 million gloves, 7 million face shields, and more to health care workers and first responders
 - Just for long-term care facilities: 10 million masks, 1 million gloves, half a million face shields, and more.
- Update on reemployment
 - This weekend will be used for a lot of processing
 - 764,324 payments were sent out
 - 166,609 new claims approved for payment
 - 1.5-1.8 billion dollars has gone out
- Phase one was not a huge change from what was already going on. It was a small step. The biggest change was bringing back elective procedures.
- Dr. Lawrence Antonucci, President and CEO Lee Health
 - Have been planning for this since February, first patient came in March 6th
 - One of the first things they did for protection was to suspend elective surgeries. They used to do 300 a day, that dropped to 110 a day
 - They want to resume carefully and safely
- Dr. John Mehalik
 - On March 20th, they suspended surgeries and were only doing elective surgeries that were urgent or emergent
 - Emphasizes that elective surgeries can only be put off for so long. They need to be done in order to prevent worse issues
 - They have a plan in place to slowly and incrementally do more surgeries. They are prioritizing surgeries based on PPE available and on how long they can wait
- Dr. Valerie Dyke, Dept. Chair Surgery, Gulf Coast Medical Center
 - They have what they need and they feel that the hospital is safe. They want patients to contact them and they will contact patients in order to resume surgeries
 - They want people to feel confident that they can safely have their surgeries
- Dr. Charles Bisbee, Dept. Chair Anesthesiology, Gulf Coast Medical Center
 - They worked together to make a plan to decide what surgeries were urgent and emergent and decrease the number of rooms used
 - Have increased number of elective surgeries by 50%

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- All of the patients are taken care of in a safe fashion: all patients wear a mask, all staff wear a mask, gown, etc. Doing everything they can to minimize spread of the virus
- Again, wants people to not be discouraged from seeing a doctor because of COVID
- DeSantis as Dr. Dyke to explain emergent and urgent
 - Dyke explains that they were sticking to things that had to be done in order to save lives. Now, they are doing surgeries for people who are not at risk of dying but do need these surgeries. Moving forward, they want to be able to do the regular screenings
- DeSantis asks them to explain the reaction of the general population
 - Mehalik explains that they saw a lot of fear in the beginning of the pandemic response, but now they see that people they contact are more comfortable with the data they see and are willing to seek medical care
- DeSantis states that at drive-thru sites, they can accommodate more tests than they are currently doing. If people want to be tested, they encourage them to go get tested at these sites. Even if you don't feel symptoms, they encourage it.

Questions:

- Questions about people not getting unemployment checks
 - Might be missing info, there are lots of unique claimants, but there's a bunch of money going out today with direct deposits
 - They've also extended the two-week reemployment waiver until the end of the month because the economy is not back yet. Will allow them to focus on new claimants made
- Question about not being able to get on the unemployment site or get someone on the phone
 - This weekend they took it down on purpose, you can still apply through PEGA, states he will look into the phone situation
- Florida unemployment claims is projected for 32.5%. Why are they not also being considered for federal aid on the application?
 - A lot of people applying don't normally qualify. Will ask DEO to put out for more info on the CARES act relief money if you don't qualify for state and federal unemployment
 - Mentions that in some cases, the employer contests that they left the job. In others, they are missing social security numbers. Reminds people to remember to put that on their application.
 - States that there are people applying from foreign countries and other states. The social security number makes it easier to catch this fraud.
 - They are close to paying out 2 billion dollars, the bulk of which was in the last 4 weeks after fixing the system

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- Question about what models they are using
 - States that the University of Washington model has not been accurate
 - States he's been following the data he's been receiving, looking at hospitalization rates and the positivity rate.
 - The models are making assumptions that are unreasonable and not taking into account how individual states are handling these situations.
 - Brings up a model that predicted by April 24th, Florida would have 464,000 hospitalizations, which is way more than the system could handle. The actual number on April 24th was 2,100 people
 - He's going based on the data they have and what they know about the community
- State sales tax revenue is way down. Asks what is being done to handle this
 - They are receiving money from the federal CARES act, monitoring collections, monitoring federal activity. He has specifically not looked at the budget because he has been waiting to see what was going on
 - Once he gets a sense of what's happening in DC, then he will look at the budget and make decisions at that time.
 - Does not think they will need a special session for the rest of this fiscal year.