

Ohio Press Conference: 3/25/2020

Open: Fran DeWine started by sharing some personal stories of people making homemade PPE (for personal use if sick, not for healthcare), dropping off gift packs to those you can't be with in person (crafts and such), sharing pictures/videos, writing letters, sign up for Ohio Governor's Imagination Library (ohioimaginationlibrary.org) – book in mail every month from birth to age 5, new recipes. Think about the memories we're making for kids – how will we all look back in 20 years? Look at it as a time of family bonding vs. time of fear.

Governor DeWine Remarks:

- Keeping eye to future with opening of baseball eventually.
- Thanks for various groups and asked some to do more. Example: P&G – engaged youth through social media to follow social distance protocols (6MM views). #DistanceDance
- Update: still don't have enough PPE for health providers. Did get our share from national distribution, but not enough. Still postponing elective surgeries. Appreciate private sector donating to health care.
- Ohio Congressional Delegation: Third package passed overnight – unemployment, food aid, loans, etc.
- General Assembly: bill working way through Senate, going to House today. Thanks for bipartisan support. Good start but a long way to go.

Dr. Acton Remarks:

- Spent morning at Emergency Operating Center – hub of command for statewide response.
- Data points:
 - Total cases: 704 (still saying “tip of the iceberg” due to limited testing)
 - Median age: 51; 47% Female, 53% male
 - 182 - hospitalized, 75 - ICU, 24 - long term care; 116 - health care workers
 - 10 deaths
 - 14764 tests done in Ohio (not sure on negative test data)
 - 140 new cases reported today
- Website: will be updating data in real time as best they can
- County data: based on testing not on where they live
- Not hospitalized: 74%; in ICU: 15%, non-ICU – 11%
 - ICU is critical number – this is the area of most need
- Ages: 70% of cases over age 40; fatalities can happen across any age range
- Call Center (833-4-ASK-ODH) – not a legal aid center for workplace questions, should be used for health questions only.
- Repeating: stay at home, okay to go for walks but maintain distance.

Lt. Governor Husted Remarks:

- Appreciation for members of Congress for relief package; Ohio legislature for package of tools to improve business services (e.g. relaxing licensing rules for commercial drivers renewals) – go to www.coronavirus.ohio.gov/businesshelp
- Utility assistance: usually runs to end of March, can now run to May 1st for low income
- Unemployment website: issues fixed (www.unemployment.ohio.gov)
- Stay At Home Order/Essential Business Component:
 - Read the order – use own best judgement on plain reading of order to determine if covered
 - Again – DO NOT need any official letter or order, but DO have documented why you are open and follow checklist to make sure you are a safe workplace
 - Again – DO NOT call local authorities to get an okay, it is up to business to self-determine
 - Business owners – be prepared with documentation on rationale for staying open
 - You will be called out eventually and if you can't prove why you are open you will be shut down
 - Again – businesses MUST follow safe workplace guidelines. These guidelines are not a short-term thing – will be in place for a long period after this.
 - Reminder of goal – slow the spread of the virus so that hospitals are not overwhelmed and we are protecting all of our citizens.

Q&A Period:

Q: Is the Governor's office aware of people still indicating that they are having trouble getting into the unemployment system via the web site or over the phone? What is reaction? Is it now fixed?

A: DeWine: Apologize for any delays in system. There has been a huge influx of requests in the last few days.

Husted: There have been over 400,000 contacts through the web site yesterday. There are a variety of problems that they are facing – local, site wide. The team responsible for the maintenance of the site is working overtime to keep it functional. Apologize for any delays, asked for patience with the system. Stated that they are bringing all resources available to solve the issues. They hear the messages and are focused on a solution.

Q: Day cares are forcing parents to pay, even though they are shutting down. Are day cares eligible for small business loans and unemployment? Does the pandemic day care license include those with in home childcare? For Dr. Acton – did the health care workers that are infected get the infection through working with patients or did they pick it up elsewhere and came to work while sick? Did they have PPE available?

A: DeWine: For day care – because this is temporary trying to keep capacity in place so they have the ability to pay day cares to stay solvent and be ready to reopen.

Husted: Yes, day care workers are eligible for unemployment and day care owners are eligible for disaster assistance.

Acton: Do not have a breakdown of the history of affected health care workers. Hospitals are doing health checks with their workers to screen for signs, report signs of illness. Some workers did not know that patients had virus at the time and there have been some cases in long term care facilities. Most important thing people can do – before interacting with anyone in person, call first so that they can put the right processes in place.

Q: Controlling Board released federal dollars for states, is that going to be enough money? State has history of poor funding of emergency health (cut 4% this fiscal year) – do we need to take a look at how we fund both state and local health departments?

A: DeWine: Yes. Has said we need to focus more on public health, 113 local departments in addition to state. As a country we're notoriously underfunded public health. One of the takeaways from this pandemic is that we must consistently fund public health. Choice of Dr. Acton was in part to put a focus on public health. Many of our other problems like drug addiction are related to public health. Dr. Acton is an advocate and has been building up the public health initiatives.

Q: Are you aware of any confirmed or suspected cases in adult or juvenile prisons?

A: DeWine: No he is not.

Q: Order for essential businesses – sounds like local health and law enforcement are being inundated with calls related to the order. Why was the order not more specific in listing of businesses?

A: DeWine: Limit to how specific you can be. Leads to questions as to what exactly they are doing and how involved in the supply chain are they. Based it on Homeland Security, also adopted by other states as a uniform standard. It is fact-specific, must be able to drill down. Start making assumption that business is closed, then see if the listed exceptions apply. State is starting to take action today against companies that do not come under the essential categories. Want everyone back in business soon, but models don't show the peak happening until May 1st. Must continue to distance and need everyone on board.

Husted: Difficult because it's relying on people to follow order. Based on Homeland Security, written in plain language, recognizing that it is difficult to define the supply chain. Used the example of cardboard containers – if you're using those to transport food and supplies, then it is definitely part of the supply chain. Impossible to get that deep into the definition for each business. Talked with Ohio business community to provide clarification, working with local officials to get enforcement right. One piece that is in Ohio's regulation but not in other states – Item 18 that states MUST apply the safety and health standards in the order or they face shut down, even if they are essential. Per Dr. Acton, getting this mostly right is extremely helpful – limiting social interactions and using proper hygiene will have a dramatic impact in reducing the spread. Recognize that it is not an easy balance, but it is an informed decision based on information they have available. Continue to provide guidance but enforcement is coming. Not trying to crack down on any specific business but also realize it's not fair for one business to be doing the right thing and another to not be.

Q: Can Gov. speak on drastic actions that were taken early on compared to other states and on the federal level – how does he feel about them today?

A: DeWine: All of our decisions have been based on the best information than they can get. His biggest mistakes have come when he didn't ask enough questions, drill down for enough facts. He's very confident in his team in Ohio and those that they are reaching out to outside of the state. Essential job of government is to protect people – especially those that are most vulnerable. Realizes they are not easy decisions. Working hard to coordinate with all of the state's hospitals so that all citizens have access to the right treatment, no matter what county you live in.

Q: Is there relief available for workers that are self-employed, contractors, 1099-contract workers?

A: DeWine: If you don't pay into unemployment, you're not qualified. However, they realize there are a lot of people in that category so there may be help available through federal dollars. Husted: Federal package would have relief for 1099 businesspeople/self-employed. Will continue to gather details and implement as soon as possible. Followed up with unemployment system director and confirmed that the system is up and running.

Q: Follow up on 1099 workers – any idea what that relief looks like (e.g. one-time check)?

A: Husted: Trying focus on the things they know; don't know that and don't want to speculate. Will get the information out as soon as they have it.

Q: Any thought on calling for a moratorium on evictions?

A: DeWine: They are working on that but nothing to announce today. Believes that bankers are working with people that are having difficulties at this given time. Needs to look at all of the reasons for evictions and not just a sweeping order.

Q: Have any Ohio hospitals had to make determinations on who is getting treatment due to limited resources?

A: DeWine: This is one of the things that scares us and one of the things we're preparing for. Still may happen but trying to everything possible to avoid that.

Acton: This is what keeps her awake at night – have to learn from Italy. Encouraging people to stay home in order to slow the spread so we don't face what New York and Italy are facing. CDC does offer guidance on this issue – ongoing dialogue to plan for every scenario.