

Ian:

Thanks to those of you who dialed in on our inbound participant line. We're dialing out now to thousands of your neighbors and we appreciate your patience while we get started with this live Tele-Town Hall forum tonight. We're going to go for an hour. And we're going to spend as much time as we can on Q&A. But, we will also give you the opportunity to give us your email address to get updates and learn a lot of important information. If you want to submit a question during our live forum, all you have to do is press zero, speak to an operator, give them your question, and that will be your opportunity to submit a question for the Q&A portion of the forum.

Ian:

We will have some introductory comments to start out from Congresswoman Barragan, who's on the phone tonight. Just listen in, and be thinking about questions that you would like to submit for Q&A. When you go ahead and submit those questions, again, by pressing zero, speak to an operator, and you'll have the opportunity to ask your question live. If you're not comfortable asking it live, I encourage you to still submit your questions by pressing zero. And then, you can let your operator know if you want me to read your question over the air instead of bringing it live. Happy to do that for you if you're not comfortable going live. So again, zero for questions.

Ian:

We would also like to keep you better updated via email moving forward. And the way you can do that is by pressing seven on your phone. Again, press seven to give us your email address, and we'll get your email and keep you better updated moving forward. So again, this is a live Tele-Town Hall, and welcome to it. We've got thousands of folks joining us live call tonight. We're dialing out to California's 44th Congressional District. And we're going to be getting started with the live forum in just a minute here. We have your Congresswoman Barragan on the line who's going to be giving you some updates along with some public health officials in Los Angeles County. They're here to answer your questions as well. So, listen in as they give you their updates. Grab a pen and paper to write down important information you hear. And then, press zero to submit a question. Press seven to give us your email address to get email updates.

Ian:

And again, we'll hear from the Congresswoman in a moment, so I'm going to be happy to turn it over to her. But, we are dialing out to tens of thousands of your neighbors right now, and when we have everybody online we'll get started with our live forum. And then, we'll get into Q&A after we've given you some updates. So, thanks again for joining us. Appreciate your time. Appreciate your questions. And appreciate your attention. If you have a pen and paper, now's the time to grab it to write down important information, zero for questions, seven to give us your email address to get updates. And it's my pleasure to turn it over to Congresswoman Nanette Barragan to get us started. Go ahead, please, Congresswoman.

Congresswoman Barragan:

Well, thank you Ian. And thank you all who are on the line for joining our Telephone Town Hall on the coronavirus. I'm your Representative in Congress. And I'm hosting tonight's meeting to hear your thoughts, and to give you the opportunity to ask questions from public health officials and a doctor. There's a lot of uncertainty in our community about the virus, about keeping yourself and your family safe, and what you can and can't do, and for how long. I hope that we can answer your questions

tonight. And I hope we can give you information that will keep you healthy, and reassure you that we will get through this and eventually, get back to some normalcy.

Congresswoman Barragan:

I know you probably heard the announcement tonight from the mayor of Los Angeles. Residents of the City of Los Angeles are required to stay inside their homes and away from people outside their immediate family unless they're engaged in certain essential activities. So, we will also take questions that you have on that. But, our guests tonight are both doctors and public health officials in our community. First, we have Doctor Jeffrey Gunzenhauser. He's the Chief Medical Officer, and Director of the Disease Control Bureau for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. And our second guest is Doctor Elaine Batchlor. She is the CEO of MLK Jr. Community Hospital. They'll be able to answer your medical questions.

Congresswoman Barragan:

And before I turn it to them, I'm going to start by talking about what we've done in Washington and what we hope to do just for a couple of minutes here. We had one bill we passed to make sure that there were medical resources available to fight this virus. For example, there was money for research to develop vaccines, to support education, and prevention efforts by local health agencies to make sure local hospital workers, doctors, nurses, and EMTs would have the protective equipment they need to stay safe as they help people who might have the virus. And we're still working on supply issues. That became law about two weeks ago.

Congresswoman Barragan:

Our second bill was just signed into law yesterday. That is an economic bill to help families. For example, it makes sure that coronavirus testing will be free to everyone in the County who needs a test, even if they're uninsured. Now, one of my bills made it into that to make sure that if you're a senior citizen on Medicare Advantage, that you have complete pre-testing. So, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which is this piece of legislation, also gives paid sick time to workers who might not have that benefit. You can call our office if you have any specific questions as well. It makes sure that low-income kids who depend on free lunches at schools will still get free lunches even though school is out, and will continue to give them that ability when schools are closed to get food. And it lets people continue collecting unemployment insurance for a longer period of time. That's one thing the bill was able to do.

Congresswoman Barragan:

So, we're working on our third bill right now. You may hear about it. This third bill will be a bill that's called a stimulus package. It's going to be something to help working families and people. We don't know yet what it looks like. There's a lot of conversations about whether it's going to be a check, whether it's going to be some kind of a refundable payroll tax credit. I support people getting a check under the circumstances, and so we are going to continue to fight for that. And so, with that, I'm going to turn it over now to Dr. Gunzenhauser. And Ian, I think that you want to go ahead and introduce Dr. Gunzenhauser.

Ian:

Sure thing. Yeah, we're going to get an update from Dr. Gunzenhauser on the Coronavirus situation and how LA County is responding. Dr. Gunzenhauser is the Chief Medical Officer with LA County. So, go ahead and provide your update please, Dr. Gunzenhauser.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

First, I really want to thank Congresswoman Barragan for inviting me to provide some introductory comments here during this very important Town Hall. What we're talking about is this new virus which is causing a new disease called COVID-19. As you all know, in a very short period of time this virus has spread across the globe. It's infected more than 150 Countries, and all 50 States in our nation. As of today, there's more than 215,000 cases worldwide with more than 9,000 deaths. The US has over 10,000 cases. And right here in LA County, as of today we have 231 cases diagnosed. And we had our second death occur today, a relatively young person. This is very sad news.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Some of the basic information. I'm sure most people are very familiar with this. The incubation period is the time after you're exposed until you develop symptoms, can be as long as two weeks, but in most people it's a matter of a few days, perhaps four, five, or six days. Early symptoms include, you can have a headache and some symptoms of not feeling well. But, most people develop fever and some type of respiratory symptom like coughing, or shortness of breath. For most people, about 80%, the illness is relatively mild. And you can take care of yourself with home care which would include rest, fever control, maybe with acetaminophen, and fluids.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

And for most people, they'll recover in a relatively short period of time. However, some people, including persons who are in their 60s or older, people who have underlying health conditions such as diabetes, if you have a heart problem, a lung problem, a kidney disease, or if you're pregnant, or if you have some type of infection that causes your immune system to not function properly, all of these folks are at increase risk for more severe disease which might require them to be hospitalized. And in some cases, the infection can be fatal as you've heard in the news. So really, our goal is to try to protect all the folks in our community from becoming infected, particularly those who are vulnerable as I've mentioned.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

I think most people know how the virus is transmitted. It's transmitted through what we call the droplet method. What this refers to is when an individual is infected and they cough or sneeze, they project droplets into the air that travel about six feet away, and then can drop to the ground. The way the virus gets into a body and infects you is through your mouth, through your nose, or through your eyes.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

So, there's only three ways you can get infected. The first is if a person coughs or sneezes directly on to you and it goes into your eyes, nose or mouth. The second is if you touch the person. Perhaps, you shake their hand and they have virus on their hand, and then you touch your eyes, or something, you can become infected. And the third is a surface, such as a door handle, or the top of a table has been contaminated by somebody who's been infected. And you touch it, and then you touch your eye, nose, your mouth, you can become infected. So with that in mind, protecting yourself is very simple, to stay away from people as much as possible.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

As Congresswoman Barragan mentioned, there's these measures in place to keep us distant from one another. And also, if people are sick they should isolate themselves so they won't infect others. I'll just

briefly comment on what we've done in LA County. Many of you knew about the travelers' screening program in which we identified travelers, and quarantined those who were at high-risk. We've been tracking every case that's been diagnosed. We've been isolating those people so they don't infect others. And the contacts that they've made, those individuals we've put in quarantine and have watched them for a period of time. However, these strategies have not been effective. We've been unable to contain the virus. So, the virus is now in our community and we know it's being transmitted from one person to another.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

As you know, we've watched what's happened in Italy and other locations, so our leaders have been very aggressive in implementing measures to protect all of us. As Congresswoman Barragan mentioned, just about an hour and a half ago, our mayor of our board of supervisors, along with Mayor Garcetti, and the mayors of Pasadena and Long Beach announced what we call the Safer At Home order. Which really, is asking everybody to stay home unless you have to go out, because that's the safest place for you to be. It requires a closure of non-essential retail businesses among other things. And now, it also prohibits any public or private gatherings of more than 10 people. And even if it's just a group of two or nine, we ask everyone to remain at least six feet apart so that we can protect ourselves from becoming infected.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

The last thing I would comment on in the weeks ahead, I would ask that if you develop any kind of illness that's of a respiratory nature, a fever, or a cough, please isolate yourself for at least seven days so that you don't pose any risk of spreading this infection to others. I know that if we all work together we can really contain and limit the spread of this so that we can get through this and be a stronger and healthier community. And I look forward to your questions. So with that, I turn it back to you, Ian.

Ian:

Thank you so much, Dr. Gunzenhauser. And thank you again, everybody who's joined us. If you've joined us a little late, you're on a live Tele-Town Hall with your Congresswoman Nanette Barragan. And she's here to answer your questions along with public health experts. We're dialing out to California's 44th Congressional District, and we've got everybody on the line now. So, we're going to get into Q&A in just a moment here. But, in case you didn't hear, later you can press zero to submit a question, seven to give us your email address to get updates from Congresswoman Barragan's office. And now, we're going to go for another update before Q&A to the Chief Executive Officer of Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital, Dr. Batchlor. Go ahead, Dr. Batchlor.

Dr. Batchlor:

Thank you. And I would like to first thank Congresswoman Barragan for hosting this Town Hall, and for asking me to participate in it. It's a great opportunity for people to ask questions and for everyone to get better informed. I would like to take a few minutes to talk about what hospitals and healthcare providers are doing in response to the pandemic. First, I want to assure everyone that hospitals manage emergencies every day. That is what we do. We are skilled at being flexible and at adapting to new situations. And we are adapting to this situation as well.

Dr. Batchlor:

I'm going to talk about three things that we're doing. One, we are caring for our patients in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Two, we are preparing for an influx of sick patients. And three, we are

encouraging everyone to call their providers before they go to the hospital or healthcare facility so that we can ensure that we reserve these most important resources for those patients who will need them most.

Dr. Batchlor:

So, first we're caring for our patients. Even before COVID-19, we were sort of towards the end of the flu season. We have busy, full hospitals with a high volume of emergency department visits. We typically see over 300 patients a day in our emergency department. We have one of the busiest EDs in the County. We are screening patients in front of the emergency department and keeping patients with respiratory symptoms separate from other patients. We are collecting and sending samples for coronavirus testing when patients meet public health guidelines, and our doctors believe it is indicated.

Dr. Batchlor:

Testing does require a physician order. We are using two labs. We're using the LA County Public Health Lab for patients who meet the priorities of the public health department. And we're also using Quest, a private commercial lab with a facility in San Juan Capistrano. We collect specimens and they're sent to the lab twice a day. And it takes up to 48 hours to get the result.

Dr. Batchlor:

Number two, we're preparing for our influx of sick patients. This means, we're figuring out where we can put additional patients, making sure we have adequate supplies including protective equipment for staff, and supplies and equipment for patient care, and that we will have sufficient staffing. We have implemented a central command center to coordinate all of our coronavirus-related activities. We're keeping all of our staff updated through daily huddles and internet sites, daily emails, and ad hoc meetings. We are also staying connected to State and County Public Health Departments, and to the CDC. And we're participating in regular briefings with them.

Dr. Batchlor:

We are expanding and promoting the use of telehealth services in order to conserve inpatient care for those patients who need it most. We're also canceling elective procedures, and moving as many patients as possible to lower levels of care so that we'll be prepared for patients who will need inpatient care. We are also implementing plans to create alternative spaces for patient care. So for example, at my hospital we will be setting up an additional tent tomorrow, so that we can create more bed capacity, and more capacity to care for patients who are ill.

Dr. Batchlor:

And then finally, I can't emphasize enough that we want to encourage people to call their providers before they go to a facility. Many symptoms can be handled either over the phone or through telemedicine. And we want to make sure that we're preserving our hospitals and our emergency departments for patients who are severely ill. We're also limiting visitors in order to support social distancing. So, I would encourage you to check on a hospital's website before you appear at a hospital to visit a patient. So, I will stop there, and I would be happy to take questions.

Ian:

Excellent. Thank you again, Dr. Batchlor. Thank you, Dr. Gunzenhauser. And thank you, Congresswoman Barragan for putting this forum together tonight. We will start Q&A now. So, thanks to those of you who

have already submitted questions. We're going to get our first one up right away. This one comes from Eddy. Eddy, you're live. Go ahead with your question please.

Eddy:

Yeah. I'm concerned that if people are now showing symptoms of it, that they're interacting with people and not knowing that they might actually have the coronavirus. What do they do with that, and how do they get tested?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

I'm sorry. Eddy, this is Dr. Gunzenhauser. What was your final part of your question? How did they what?

Dr. Batchlor:

How do they get tested.

Eddy:

Yeah. I mean, how do they get tested?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Okay.

Eddy:

Because, they're telling them not to go because, "Oh well, let's save them from people who are sick." Well, what if they're spreading the disease?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Yeah. This is Dr. Gunzenhauser again. I really appreciate your question. This is really important to understand. As we've investigated the 200 and some cases that we've had so far in the County, we do observe that sometimes, early in infection, before it's really clear, some people don't realize that this is what they might have. So, they try to continue doing some of the things that they normally would do like go to work. And of course, that could lead to exposing other people. So, these situations do happen. We recognize that.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

So, that's why we have recommended, that if it's not somebody close in your family, you should have social distancing from everyone. If you're going out to buy food, if you have to make a medical visit, wherever you go, you should try to remain at least six feet away from everyone. We're doing that in our workplace here. We're essential, but when we have meetings we're all sitting at distant places in the rooms so we're not close to one another. I might defer to Dr. Batchlor about the testing, but I generally would say if somebody's ill contact your provider, as she said, in advance. And they can give you advice on whether to come in and give you more advice about testing. But, Dr. Batchlor may have some other comments on that.

Dr. Batchlor:

Yes. This is Dr. Batchlor. We still have limited availability of testing supplies. And we are really prioritizing testing for those individuals who are at highest risk. So generally, that would be people who are quite ill, people who have exposure to known cases, and healthcare workers, and people who are living in congregate housing. So, those would be patients in skilled nursing facilities and other types of congregate living arrangements. People who have mild symptoms are not being tested. They're being asked to go home and take care of themselves at home, and to self-isolate from others for at least seven days after they are no longer sick.

Ian:

Got it. Thank you again, Dr. Gunzenhauser and Dr. Batchlor for answering that question. We've got a similar one from Denise here. Denise, you're up. Go ahead with your question please.

Denise:

I'm a high-risk patient. I'm 60 years old. I have lupus and some other conditions. The first of February I was in the hospital. I was very, very sick. I was having chills, no fever, aches and pains, and headaches. So, I was wondering since my nose was running, did I have any part of the virus and should I get tested?

Dr. Batchlor:

This is Dr. Batchlor. You would need to call your provider and discuss your symptoms with your provider. That would be the best thing to do. If you are not acutely ill, you will probably not be tested, but you'll be advised on how to take care of yourself at home. And if your provider thinks your symptoms are consistent with coronavirus, you should isolate from others.

Ian:

Got it. Thank you so much again, Dr. Batchlor. Does anybody else have any thoughts to offer before we move on from that question?

Congresswoman Barragan:

This is Congresswoman Barragan. This is an issue that every member of Congress has been hounding the CDC and administration for on making sure we're ramping up testing. And we will continue to make that push. And we're just, unfortunately, we did not accept testing when it was offered to us early on and now, we're in a situation where we're behind. And this is one of the issues that we're trying to hold this administration accountable. And working together, to make sure we get the testing that we need as the doctor mentioned. It's not readily available to everybody. It's being really prioritized to those high-risk folks and those who have symptoms right now.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

This is Dr. Gunzenhauser. If I could add one other comment. Denise, the test that we're using is a rather sophisticated test, but it detects the presence of the virus. In your situation, it sounds like you've recovered so you should no longer have the virus. So, the test that's available would not be able to tell you whether you actually had the infection. There may be some other tests developed later that could show that, but at this time nothing like that is available.

Ian:

Thank you so much everybody. And thank you for that question Denise. We're going to get right to our next question. This one's coming from Betty in San Pedro. Betty, you're live. Oh, actually, looks like Betty wanted me to read her question. So, her question is, "The government issued a stay-at-home order. What does this mean and how will it affect people?" Congresswoman Barragan, you want to take that one on?

Congresswoman Barragan:

Sure. So, the governor did issue an order to stay at home. It actually follows the order that was given today by Mayor Garcetti which is San Pedro is within the City of Los Angeles. Effectively, what this is going to take effect at midnight tonight. And it's going to restrict people from leaving their homes unless they're engaged in essential activities. For example, you can go to the grocery store, you can go to the pharmacy to pick up medications and other healthcare necessities. You can go to medical appointments. You should certainly check in with your doctor or your provider first. You could take a walk. You could ride a bike. And you can be in nature to exercise. But, they're asking for six feet between you and others in the community. Again, to follow the CDC guidelines. You can walk your pets and take them to the veterinarian if necessary. You can help someone to get necessary supplies.

Congresswoman Barragan:

So, those are some of the things you can do. Just some ideas of some of the things you cannot do is go to work unless you are providing essential services which is defined by the order that the mayor's office put out. You should not go visit friends and family unless there's an urgent need to. They're effectively closing down businesses that are not essential. And we are happy to provide more information. If you want the direct website that the mayor's office put up just today, is corona-virus.la. That's the website. It's corona-virus.la, where you can read all about the Safer at Home, what you need to know. And again, this follows the governor's order. Rather, the governor's order came after the mayor's order. And this website will tell you, what does the order do, what can you do, what can't you do? There's a lot of Q&A on there that's very helpful, and we're going to try to get this linked up on our website as well.

Ian:

Thank you, Congresswoman. And thank you Betty. Great question. Thank you for submitting it. We're going to get to another question in just a moment, but quick reminder, you can press seven if you would like to get email updates from the Congresswoman's office moving forward. Yeah, seven for emails. There's a little bit of a backup in that queue, but if you press seven we'll get an operator with you as quickly as possible to your email address, and make sure we keep you updated electronically moving forward.

Ian:

We've got another question. This one's coming in from our Spanish simulcast. We're simulcasting this event in Spanish for the Spanish-speaking members of our community. And this one comes from Marta in Compton who's asking, "I'm in my 70s. How can I get my much needed medicine? I don't feel comfortable going outside." Who can take on that question from Marta?

Dr. Batchlor:

This is Dr. Batchlor. So, I will offer a couple of thoughts which is that this is the time when we all need to hang together and care for each other. And we need to be able to call on members of the community who are elderly and people who are high-risk who really should be staying at home and not going out.

So, if you have a neighbor or friend that you can call and ask to go to the pharmacy for you, that would be one option. Another option would be to see whether you could get your medications mailed to your home.

Ian:

Great. Thank you for that answer Dr. Batchlor. Anybody else have any thoughts for Marta before we move on to the next question?

Congresswoman Barragan:

I would just ask Marta, if she can't find anybody, to call our office and we will see if we can find a resource for her to get her medicine to her. So, if she can't find somebody to help, or if she cannot do it by mail, to please reach out to our San Pedro office. The number is 310-831-1799. Thank you.

Ian:

Got it. Thank you Congresswoman. And I'll read that one more time. The San Pedro office is 310-831-1799. Let's get to our next question right away from Steve. Steve, thanks for waiting. Go ahead, please.

Steve:

Yes. Yes, hi. I'm a senior and I've been going to the supermarket, and have noticed during the Presidential press conference I heard a reporter ask the panel of the President, Vice President, and other members that were standing there at the mic if they had taken a thermometer test before they entered the building. And I'm curious to know why at supermarkets, pharmacies, banks, employees and people into crowded spaces or spaces where that six-foot of separation could be limited by obstructions, let's say, cabinets or something like that. Why aren't people tested for fever before they go there?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

This is Dr. Gunzenhauser. Thank you Steve for your question. We have talked quite a bit with businesses about practices that they can implement because obviously, we're interested in safety and so are they. In some situations perhaps at the grocery stores, et cetera, there might be reasons why it might be a little bit difficult for them to do that. I can't really speak for them. Some places they may do that. Some places may be more active. Of course, they have to post signs. There should be signs posted saying, "If you have a fever, if you're ill, we request that you don't enter." They may feel that it poses some risk if they have to get close to and check the temperature of everybody coming in, so there may be reasons why they don't want to do that.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

But, they certainly should be enforcing social distancing. And I think that's something that each of you can appreciate, that if you do stay six feet away or more from other people, then you can prevent yourself from being infected. Now, we use the public health department. We're in close contact with businesses. If we do receive complaints ... And you can go to our website, publichealth.lacounty.gov and go to our environmental health group and there's a place to make complaints. We will respond to those. So, if we hear that businesses that are essential aren't enforcing the social distancing policies in keeping people like you safe while you're there getting the food that you need, we will follow-up with them.

Ian:

And Dr. Gunzenhauser, was that website again, publichealth.lacounty.gov?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

That's correct.

Ian:

All right. Great. Thank you so much. And thank you for your question Steve, much appreciated. We'll get right to our next question. This one's coming from Lola. Hi Lola, you're live. Looks like you're in Carson. Go ahead with your question.

Lola:

Yes. I've been experiencing headaches for the last two days. I've been taking the Tylenol. And my concern is, do I need to be tested?

Dr. Batchlor:

So, this is Dr. Batchlor again. We are encouraging people who have symptoms to contact their physician. If you don't have a physician, you can call the hospital emergency department and we can have a conversation with you. We are not doing testing unless people have severe symptoms, or they fall in one of the high-risk categories that I mentioned earlier.

Ian:

Got it. Thank you for that answer, much appreciated. Thank you for your question Lola. We're going to get our next question right away from Kyra. Kyra in Compton, thank you for waiting. Go ahead-

Kyra:

Hi.

Ian:

... with your question.

Kyra:

It's Kyra, but-

Ian:

Okay.

Kyra:

... my question is about weddings and funerals, where the events are suspended. Does that include weddings and funerals until April 19th?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

This is Dr. Gunzenhauser. Yes, it does apply to those. And I've known some folks who've had a wedding planned and they've canceled it. I spoke this morning with a group where somebody had just passed away and the funeral was so important, and they were expecting hundreds of people to attend. And

unfortunately, according to the orders that have been put out, public or private gatherings that include over 10 people really aren't allowed. And we realize this is really challenging for some of these things, so we encourage people to put these things off as much as they can. And to consider alternative ways to sort of meet the intent, at least in the short-term of some of the things that you're trying to accomplish through those kinds of gatherings.

Ian:

Thank you again, Dr. Gunzenhauser. And thank you Kyra, appreciate your question. We've got our next one coming right away from Derek in South Gate. Go ahead Derek.

Derek:

So, I have a couple of concerns. The first one is you keep referencing if you have a provider go talk to them. What if you don't? And then, my second question is, with regards to the testing, it's been about 10 days since they said everyone would be tested. And now, I mean, I've checked online every day, there are no tests available for anyone to take. So, why the disconnect from the promises to what's being delivered?

Congresswoman Barragan:

Well, before we have the health officials answer this, let me say ... This is Congresswoman Barragan. Number one, if you don't have a provider, you don't have a doctor, community health clinics are a place you can go to. And I know our physicians on the line will be able to talk a little bit more about going to a community health clinic if you don't have a provider or a doctor. I completely agree with you on the testing issue. This administration, he made a statement that was false. And basically he said, "Everybody that wants to get tested can get tested." And we know that's not the case. And this is why we're doing this Tele-Town Hall. We want to have public health officials to answer questions.

Congresswoman Barragan:

I implore you to rely upon what you hear from public health officials, from the CDC, the Center for Disease Control, because we want to make sure people have accurate information. And so, yes, the administration said that. When he said that, a lot of us pointed out that it was not accurate. As a matter of fact, as a member of Congress, I was briefed and this very question of testing came up and the CDC along with officials basically said, "Look, we are failing on testing and we need to get up to speed on it." And so, we are trying to push them to work to make sure we have all the testing available. It's not just about having tests available. We need to have the reagents to complete those tests. So, I'm going to turn it over to the public health officials to also provide some feedback on the few questions that you have about testing and about if you don't have a provider.

Dr. Batchlor:

Congresswoman, this is Dr. Batchlor. That was an excellent answer. Yes, community clinics are available. And they are there to take care of people in the community who don't have providers and who have limited means, or don't have health insurance. And you can probably Google on the community clinics that are in your community if you need their help. You can also call a hospital emergency department and have a conversation with the clinical staff there. Unfortunately, the announcement that everyone could get tested was simply not true. I run a hospital, and outpatient healthcare facilities, there are a limited number of tests. The collection equipment, the supplies that you use to collect the specimens are also in limited supply. And we simply cannot test everyone because of those limitations.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

This is Dr. Gunzenhauser. Just to add some additional information. The testing issue has been a major point of focus for us as well. We have our public health laboratory. I spoke with Congresswoman Barragan not too long ago because she's had a very strong interest in this. And from our point of view, from the cases that have been recognized and diagnosed, fortunately we've had adequate testing to at least manage the really close contacts in some of the high-risk facilities where we've been concerned about the possibility of spread. The test that's been available requires a lot of resources. I have seven staff working full-time. And it takes a long time to run the test that's currently available. And we've worked with a number of partners. We've talked with hospitals. You've heard about some of the commercial laboratories coming online.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

As of today, there have been several thousand tests run in Los Angeles County, but we need a lot more. So, we're still prioritizing the tests that are available to us as Dr. Batchlor said. But, based on the information I've heard, there is going to be some higher-speed, much more automated tests available in the very near future. And so, I'm hoping to see that come to fruition in the next 7 to 10 days or so, and that we'll have a lot more testing available here in LA County. But, we've made the best use of what we had. And we've been able to diagnose and manage the contacts for the cases that we've seen so far.

Ian:

Thank you again to our public health officials and to Congresswoman Barragan for taking on that question. That why we're doing this forum today, so we can get you accurate and reliable information. So, thank you everybody for tuning in. We're going to keep going through questions. We've got our next one coming through, Joseph. Hey Joseph, you're live. Go ahead, sir.

Joseph:

Yeah. I was wondering about the supplemental check that they're sending people. Is that just for the working people or is that for people who are on social security and still work?

Congresswoman Barragan:

So Joseph, first of all, despite what you're hearing about on the news, nothing has been finalized on the stimulus package. There's a lot of proposals out there. The one I support would provide a check to working families and to people on social security. But, we don't know which proposal will pass both the House and the Senate, and the President will sign. This is what is currently being negotiated and currently being considered. I was on a call today with Speaker Pelosi and the Democratic Caucus in which many members of Congress had proposals on what they think the best approach is. But, we have to work with the Senate, which is controlled by Republicans and the President.

Congresswoman Barragan:

And so, I can't answer your question yet, because I don't know what the final stimulus package is going to look like. But, know that we are pushing so that everybody receives assistance. When I say everybody, I mean working folks and those who are on social security. There are a lot of conversations about limitations. So, if you make over a certain amount of money a year, for example, I saw one proposal today that was put out where if you made more than \$99,000 as a single person you would not get a stimulus check. So, again, it's not guaranteed yet. We don't know what it looks like. But, there are conversations on making sure folks who are on social security qualify.

Ian:

Thank you so much. Very much appreciate that answer. And Joseph, thanks for your question. Appreciate your submitting that. We're going to get to our next question. This one's going to come from Maria, who's in our Spanish simulcast. She's in Long Beach and her question is, "I have a salon and I want to confirm that the beauty salons have to close as well." Who would like to take that question on from Maria in Long Beach?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Yeah, this is Dr. Gunzenhauser. I'll have to double-check on that, so maybe we'll get back to Maria. But, I do believe that that's not considered an essential service, so I do think those salons would have to close.

Ian:

Got it. Thank you. Thanks for that question Maria. Yeah. And if you wouldn't mind checking and you can double back to that in a few minutes here and make sure we get an accurate answer. But for now, we'll jump on to our next question from Jackie in Compton. Hey Jackie, you're up. Thanks for waiting.

Jackie:

Hi. I have a question. My mom has dementia, Alzheimer's, and she's 92 years old. And she has two caretakers that come and then, they have other patients. Now, with the stay-at-home order does that mean that they shouldn't continue to come and take care of my mom?

Ian:

Thank you, Jackie. Who would like to take on that question about caretakers?

Congresswoman Barragan:

Well, let me start. This is Congresswoman Barragan. I'm in the same position. My mother has Alzheimer's, she's 79, and she has two caregivers that come. And the way that I have interpreted the order, and if either of the doctors disagree with me, is that somebody who is coming to care for providing ... If they're caring for somebody, that they still can. But, I have concerns as well on how do I protect my mom? And so, I have been making sure our caregivers, they're washing their hands as soon as they walk into the home.

Congresswoman Barragan:

That if they're able to not have ... In my mom's instance, they could still stay a few feet away from her. They don't need to be holding her, or having direct contact, then I'm asking them to do that. I'm constantly disinfecting the surfaces and trying to take as much precaution as necessary. I think it depends on your situation, on how much care your mother needs. I know in my situation they can keep a little bit of distance for the most part. Doctors, do you want to weigh in on precautions that can be taken?

Dr. Batchlor:

This is Dr. Batchlor. I agree with you completely. I, too, have an elderly parent, a 92-year-old parent who gets caregiving. And we know that there are people who need the support of a caregiver, so I think that caregivers are probably considered essential. I'm not the public health department, but that would be my interpretation. And I think the precautions that you just described are very sensible.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Yeah, this is Dr. Gunzenhauser. If I could just add to that. I was on a call last evening with hundreds of providers of what's called In-home Support Services, which is a very essential program in California that provides a lot of care. And many of the providers had the exact question. And I think the things that Congresswoman Barragan outlined are exactly right. It gets back to that whole question, that I think it was Marta from Compton was talking about, "How do I get my medicine?" And Representative Barragan offered, "Hey, if you need help call our office."

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

I think we should look at these caregivers and realize what an important role they're doing. And we all have to figure out a way to keep them safe so that the people that they're providing care for don't have to worry. So, it would be just as if they were a vulnerable person. We want to limit any possible exposure. Do things for them as needed, so that they really don't have any chance of getting exposed so that the one, or two, or three people they are providing care for won't get infected. It's a real challenge, but if we all work together we can figure out ways to solve this.

Ian:

Thank you again doctors. Let's get our next question up live from Cecelia in Long Beach. Thanks Cecelia. Go ahead with your question.

Cecelia:

Hey. I've forgot it. But first I would like to ask the Congresswoman something. Can you tell me what has the administration actually done right? I've heard a negative comment about President Trump every answer given. You missed saying that he's for the check to health. And what happens if a business is reported to not be keeping their customers six feet apart besides talking to them, because that's a great concern. And how long do you think the lockdown will be considering, I guess, we're starting it at 11:59 tonight? How long do you think that will continue on?

Congresswoman Barragan:

Well, thank you for participating and your question. The administration has been briefing members of Congress, and we are working with them in trying to make sure that we have more testing and more resources, federal resources for State and local government. One of the good things I can definitely say is that when the President put out his initial proposal for money, the Speaker said, "This is not enough money." And basically said, "We need eight billion dollars," and the President went along with that. I think that was good seeing that this was a much bigger concern and problem. And so, there are things that were able to get done.

Congresswoman Barragan:

And right now, this is not a partisan issue. It really is Americans coming together to work, to make sure that we get the resources to local and State officials, and to our medical providers so that the American people can get tested, and whoever wants to get tested can get tested. That's what we should be doing and focusing on. And we're continuing to do that. So, I'm trying to answer the questions as best I can. And so, from this point forward, we are definitely working with both the White House and the Senate to make sure that we are going to get people relief as well. There is a division on how we get there on providing working families that support that they need.

Congresswoman Barragan:

And so, how long will this go on? I think that the medical professionals can weigh in on this. I'll tell you what I'm hearing. And this is where I'm hoping the public health officials will chime in, I'm hearing that even if this tapers down a little in the summer, it can come back in the Fall. And so, we should prepare that this may be long-term, especially since a vaccine is about a year out. And so with that, let me turn it over to the public health officials to see what their thoughts are on this.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Yeah. This is Dr. Gunzenhauser. I think you're right Congresswoman Barragan. As she mentioned, the prospects of a vaccine and some type of therapeutic medication are pretty far in the future. I am aware that there are a number of drugs that have shown some benefit in the past, so there are clinical trials that are beginning to look at those. There's a number of medications. Whether they'll prove to work or not will take some time. It does take a while to conduct that kind of trial and get it reviewed. And then, if we do find something that works as a treatment, to get it in to some level of production to where it can be provided to all the folks who might need it throughout the world can be a real challenge. And I think a vaccine will probably take even longer. It's hard to imagine that one would be available sooner than a year.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

So, the question is really, how this can go. The truth is, we don't know. We have seen that in China with very aggressive social distancing and other measures, as of today they reported no new cases in the province of Hubei. But they're still in a situation of extreme social distancing measures. And while there are reports that some of their businesses are opening, and so on and so forth, the truth is that the vast majority of folks there haven't been exposed and aren't immune. So, if they relieve those social distancing measures, if the virus is still present, and it can be easily reintroduced back into the Country as we've seen with what's going on with the global transmission, probably the transmission could resume.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

So, I think the struggle will be, can we through social distancing eliminate the virus? We hope we can do that. Perhaps, we can find a better balance. I think in the short-term, we sort of have to figure out what we all have to do to sort of mitigate the really burdensome things that these measures are causing in our communities. And how do we get through this in a way so that we can get out on the other side whole as a community and as individuals.

Ian:

Thanks again everybody. And thank you, great question. Appreciate you asking it. We'll get another one up right away. This one's coming from Angelo in Carson. Angelo, you're live. Go ahead. Thanks for waiting.

Angelo:

Hi. My question is, let's say someone's infected with the coronavirus and they sneeze, and the coronavirus is out in the surface, or in air, how long does the coronavirus last in the environment? What's the lifespan?

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

This is Dr. Gunzenhauser. Thank you for that question Angelo. This has been in the news a lot. Coronavirus, if it lands on the right surface it generally will last at least a few hours. If it lands on clothing, or something that's permeable, or something, it may last just a few hours. But if it's on another surface such as metal or smooth plastic surface, and if the air conditions are right, there is some chance it could even last for a few days. It's a possibility. But what we do know is, the way to solve that is to use cleansers. And I know these are in short supply, but as was stated earlier, we expect that those cleaning agents will be more available soon and people should have them.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Most disinfectants have either chlorine or ammonia, hydrogen peroxide, or something in there, and almost all of those are very effective against this virus. If you spray that, wipe it on the surface, within about a minute the virus is neutralized. So, I think as you're going around the places where you're concerned there might be virus, if you're in a place where you think people may have been, you can clean it with those cleansers and have assurance that you've eliminated the virus and you're not at risk of getting infected. You asked about airborne. I will say that the evidence that the virus can be transmitted through the airborne route is very limited. We've looked at this very closely.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

We do know that in medical facilities there's certain procedures that can cause an aerosolization. And the virus can then be suspended in the air. And we take extreme precautions to protect people. But, the vast preponderance of evidence around this infection suggests that it's transmitted as I've said, through the droplet method. And that in people, it doesn't normally create an aerosol that would be suspended in the air as with measles, or tuberculosis, or certain other diseases that are known to be transmitted that way.

Ian:

Thank you so much Angelo. And thank you doctor for your answer. Got a lot of great questions tonight. We're going to keep trucking through them and get to the end of the hour with as many questions answered as we possibly can. We've got our next question coming from Maria in our Spanish simulcast. And let me get that up for us. So, our question is from Maria. "If we don't have insurance, what can we do? What guarantees are there that if I can't pay my mortgage, will they foreclose on me?" Who can take on those concerns? Congresswoman?

Congresswoman Barragan:

Yes. Thanks Maria for your question. We know that the federal government has asked that HUD not have foreclosures. And I'm going to have to double-check on this, but I believe the governor had put into place to prohibit evictions from occurring. And I know there's a lot of conversations happening with creditors and financial institutions about foreclosures to make sure that there is no foreclosures happening right now. So, I will circle back with you to get a more specific answer for you and confirm how long that is in effect for. But I know that there has been a request that was put in, even the President had asked to suspend any evictions and foreclosures. And I also wanted to circle back because we just saw within the hour that we've been on the phone, the Long Beach mayor put out a statement that the order that was imposed by LA city and really, the governor, applies there as well.

Congresswoman Barragan:

So, if you're in a beauty shop, that is a non-essential business. Most retail businesses are not essential. And clothes shopping centers are going to be closed. So just to repeat, essential is what will be open. Essential business is grocery stores, restaurants that are only doing take-out, health services, pharmacies, banks, and gas stations, government services. Those are essential. Those will remain open. Something like a beauty shop in Long Beach would be non-essential business that would not be open.

Dr. Batchlor:

This is Dr. Batchlor. I want to address the question about what to do if you don't have health insurance. There are two options for care if you don't have health insurance. One would be the option that Congresswoman Barragan already mentioned, which is to go to a community clinic, a community health center. They are there for everyone in the community regardless of your ability to pay, or your insurance status. The other option is to use the County departments of health services. They are also available to people who don't have insurance and who are not able to afford the price of healthcare. So, those are two options that you can use.

Ian:

Excellent. Thank you doctor. And thank you Congresswoman. And thank you Maria, appreciate that question from our Spanish simulcast. We've got another live question coming right away from Martel in Long Beach. Martel, thanks for waiting. Go ahead with your question please.

Martel:

Hi. My question is, me and my wife are expecting to have our baby delivered any day now. And we're going to be heading to Memorial Hospital. My question is, what do we need to know in advance to arriving to the hospital and also, will I be able to stay with her during the whole process?

Dr. Batchlor:

This is Dr. Batchlor. Those are excellent questions. What I would recommend is that you call the hospital where you're planning to have your baby delivered, now. And find out the answers to all of those questions before your wife is in labor. So, what you'll need to learn is what the specific policies and practices are of that hospital. And if you call them up ahead of time and you ask to speak to the labor and delivery service, I'm sure they'll be happy to tell you what to expect when you get to the hospital. And I would be surprised if they said you weren't able to stay with your wife.

Ian:

Thank you so much. Great question Martel. And congratulations and good luck. Thank you so much. We're going to get our next question now from our Spanish simulcast. Although, we did have a few folks who were asking where they can find a list of grocery stores and resources to help seniors. And I'm going to refer you to a couple of places. First, if you need to call the San Pedro office, that number is 310-831-1799. And then, you can go to the Congresswoman's website at barragon.house.gov. That's barragon.house.gov. That's B-A-R-R-A-G-A-N.house.gov. So, I will ask when we get through our last question in a minute here, I'm going to ask all of our public health officials and the Congresswoman to read any important contact information again, phone numbers, and websites that they feel you need to have to make sure you're getting accurate information and that you're able to get the assistance you need. So, we'll get to that in a moment.

Ian:

So, anybody that feels like they need to write anything down that they may have missed, please do grab a pen and paper and get ready to write down important information when we get to the end of the forum here. For now, we're going to take our next question. This one comes from Raphael in South Gate. Question is, "My wife and I have a small business. We've seen through the news that there's going to be a program to help small businesses. Can you tell us how and when this program is going to be put into place?" Congresswoman Barragan?

Congresswoman Barragan:

Yeah. So, we did pass a bill that provides loans to small businesses, and you can do that through the SBA. But we are hearing from a lot of small businesses, that alone is not going to be enough, that they need more. And just today, we had a call with Nydia of Alaska. She's the Chairwoman of the Small Business Committee in Congress who is trying to get provisions, and to provide more than just loans for small business but actual financial assistance so they can keep employees on during this challenging time. And so, that is something we're trying to get into this stimulus bill that we're negotiating right now. So right now, it's very limited to low-interest loans for small business and private non-profits.

Congresswoman Barragan:

The City of Los Angeles also is offering an emergency MicroLoan Program. But again, the next stimulus bill is the one that we should look to for any financial assistance that's beyond loans. So, we'll know more in the next week when we get this stimulus package put together. And again, it's got to be agreed on by the Senate and the President, and that's why I can't give you an answer now because it's still in negotiation.

Ian:

Thank you so much, Congresswoman. And thank you, great question from Raphael on our Spanish simulcast. That will be our last question of the night. But, we're going to give you some more information in just a moment in case you didn't get your question answered. So, grab a pen and paper to write down important information. And I'll turn it over in a moment to Dr. Gunzenhauser. We'll hear from Dr. Batchlor, and also from your Congresswoman again. But, if you feel like you have a question or concern that wasn't addressed tonight, you can stay on the line at the end of this call and you'll have the opportunity to leave a voicemail message if you stay on the line.

Ian:

So, if you need someone from the Congresswoman's office to get back to you on a question or a concern that wasn't addressed during our hour-long forum tonight, stay on the line, leave a voicemail message, and make sure you leave your name and contact information so that we can get back to you in the next few business days. So again, you can do that just by staying on the line at the end of the forum. For now, let's go ahead and hear from all of our featured speakers one more time. And they can share any last minute advice or any contact information that you may benefit from. Let's start with Dr. Jeff Gunzenhauser, the Chief Medical Officer of Los Angeles County.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

Thank you, Ian. I did want to get back on the question about the hair salons. I haven't quite sorted it out. And we'll certainly work with Congresswoman Barragan to get the best information. We're trying to look at the governor's order to see what might be there. I noticed that in the order that was issued in the County, there's a long list of exceptions to the closure rules, and one of them is personal grooming

services. So, it may very well be that under that order hair salons and barber activities would be allowed, but we'll have to get clarity. We'll look at the governor's order. And any of these points of confusion right now, we'll get answers to and get those pushed out to everybody.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

I do just want to say thank you so much. The questions are extremely thoughtful. I hope you do appreciate how we work together. It's really an honor for me to participate with Congresswoman Barragan in this Town Hall this evening. And with Dr. Batchlor, she and her team represent the best of healthcare, and we have a lot of that here in LA County. And I do want to assure you that we really are doing everything we can to keep our wonderful communities safe. The only information I would provide again is our website. We have really made an effort to provide a wealth of information.

Dr. Gunzenhauser:

So, if you go to the website I mentioned, publichealth.lacounty.gov, right there on the top there's a banner, coronavirus, and you'll find information very relevant for you. And also, if there's questions that aren't answered, we do have a information line for the County, 211. And again, we've worked very hard to make sure that virtually, every question that people have can be answered. And for the ones that can't, they do end up referring you or connecting you with people who can answer those questions. Again, thank you very much for your kind attention this evening.

Ian:

Thank you, Dr. Gunzenhauser. And we'll go on to Dr. Batchlor, who's the Chief Executive Officer, Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital.

Dr. Batchlor:

Yes. I would like to again, thank Congresswoman Barragan for hosting this Town Hall. And Dr. Gunzenhauser for participating. I want to echo his comments, that we have strong leadership in Los Angeles County. We've got strong government leadership. We've got strong public health leadership. And our hospitals are ready and prepared to take care of the community. Our hospital has a coronavirus page on our website. Our website can be found at www.mlkch.org. We're also putting together a communication plan where we will be texting out information, and links to other organizations that have critical information like the public health department.

Dr. Batchlor:

And if you go to our website, we can show you how to sign up for that service. So, thank you very much for participating and for all of your excellent questions. And I hope that we will all take care of each other. And I know that we will get through this better together. Thank you, and good night.

Ian:

Thank you, Dr. Batchlor. And finally, we'll turn it over to Congresswoman Nanette Barragan to take us to the close.

Congresswoman Barragan:

Well, I want to thank the two doctors for participating and being so helpful in getting accurate information to our constituents, and those with concerns. If you had a question that we didn't get to,

you can call our office. Again, the number is 310-831-1799. We are on-hand to answer questions. We will also be on-hand if you have a situation, a case ... I'll give you an example. You have a family member stuck in a Country that can't get back. Give us a call. These are the kinds of things that we've been able to help people with.

Congresswoman Barragan:

If you don't know where to go or have a question on the grocery store, if we don't have an answer we will look it up. We're here to be of service. We are going to get through this. Thank you again for joining this Tele-Town Hall. And make sure you subscribe to our email or our newsletter, because we intend on doing one of these either every other week or every week to make sure people are getting up-to-date information as often as possible. Thank you all again so, so much for joining us tonight. Have a good night.

Ian:

Thank you again, Congresswoman. And for those of you who feel you need to leave a message and get a call back, you can stay on the line. Leave a message, and make sure you leave contact information if you need to reach out in the coming days. Thanks. Stay safe. And have a great night.