

Summary of Briefing with U.S. Senator Kelly Loeffler  
March 17, 2020

**Comments from Joan Carr, Chief of Staff for Senator Kelly Loeffler**

- Thank you for being on the front lines.
- Senator Loeffler is working closely with President Donald Trump, Governor Brian Kemp and business leaders across the state.

**Comments from Senator Kelly Loeffler**

- I appreciate your time and know you are working hard on the ground. I am focusing full-time on COVID-19 in both Washington and Georgia. The purpose of the call is to share what's going on in order to help you better prepare and to provide insight into what my office has been doing and learning. I want to keep an open line of communication with local government.
- My staff is teleworking except for staff that need to be in the office to keep things moving. We are here for you.
- This is uncharted territory. We are in this together. These are uncertain times and people are concerned. It is important to remember that the overall risk to individual health remains low. Most people that contract COVID-19 will recover. People should remain calm.
- I recently traveled to the CDC in Atlanta with President Trump and Senator David Perdue and saw researchers applying their expertise to diseases. I was impressed with the speed by which they detected this virus. I can confirm they are working hard on the response.
- Mitigation and control are critically important now to minimize the health and economic impacts.
- All levels of government and all Americans need to take the recommendations that came out from the President yesterday seriously to flatten the curve. This will help to reduce the severity of the virus and help to avoid shortages of medical treatment and equipment.
- Georgia's infrastructure is strong. Our state was able to take in 500 cruise ship passengers at Dobbins Air Force Base. Only about 30 of them were from Georgia. Many governors from other states refused to take back their own people. Georgia is a bright spot in the fight against COVID-19.
- You can expect numbers to go up, that is why the next two weeks are so critical. Everyone should take the recommendations seriously – don't gather in groups of more than 10 people; avoid eating in restaurants and bars; limit discretionary travel. Check the [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov) for more information.
- The Small Business Administration has many resources. The Senate is looking at a bill to provide even further resources. She is proposing an economic package to speed cashflow into small businesses.
- Testing is the area generating the most questions. More resources are becoming available, but it is taking longer than we wanted. Tests will become more accessible over the next two weeks. If you feel sick or have been exposed to the virus, take precautions.
- The response so far has been good. Employers are shifting to teleworking, schools have closed.
- The private sector has really stepped up in supplying tests and working on vaccines and treatment. The FDA, CDC, NIH and administration and private companies are working hard together.

- Event cancellations are hard. They represent ways for us to come together as a community; but right now, coming together as a community means not coming together. People that are not symptomatic can be carriers and can unknowingly pass the virus on to others who are susceptible. We also want to reduce the potential for over crowded hospitals or shortages of treatment and medicines.
- The travel industry is doing its best to serve its customers. Delta and others are doing all they can to keep flights clean.
- There has been shortage of food, drugs and equipment. People should not panic or hoard. We continue to see demands on certain parts of the supply chain. If people will only take what they need, it will give the supply chain time to recover and stores will be restocked.
- Capital cash is the life blood of business. We are looking at ways to address this unprecedented situation. Examples include cutting through red tape at the Small Business Administration, encouraging loans and minimizing delays. Many small businesses only have a few weeks of cash flow on hand. We are fortunate that the economy was starting from a strong place. The measures we take in the next week or two are critical to stem further losses.
- The stock market volatility is a result of the market operating without certainty. The faster Congress acts to address some of the economic concerns, the more certainty will be provided.
- I commend Governor Kemp and Georgia's COVID-19 Taskforce. Georgia has activated the National Guard and is moving quickly to make sure testing, supplies, economic aid are flowing – as well as strong public communication.
- I am in touch with the CEOs of hospitals, from Grady to Phoebe Putney to monitor and understand the situation. Keeping medical professionals safe is a primary concern.
- Congress has already passed one measure to provide \$8.3 billion in funding for the public health response, including \$15 million for Georgia.
- The Senate is expected to vote on a second measure this afternoon already passed by the House. This measure will provide more money centered around small businesses, tax credits, and the Veterans' Administration. It is critical that these economic solutions get rolled out in real time.

#### **Comments from Dr. Jay Butler, Head of Infectious Diseases at Centers for Disease Control**

- Georgia is our home. We are a federal agency with a global scope, but we are in your backyard.
- COVID-19 is a reminder that we live in a global world and are all inter-connected. Anywhere in the world is a 36-hour plane ride away.
- Testing is the area where we are making progress. We are focused on making more tests available. Initial testing was distributed just two weeks after the first cases were identified. However, there were quality assurance issues with original test, and it was determined not to be dependable, so we took a step back to address this issue. The problem was addressed, and the new tests were sent out initially to public health labs because of the limited supply. Now the CDC is engaged with private labs to get more tests produced and out into the system.
- There are still ongoing challenges. There are global issues with the supply chain and the reagents required for testing. The CDC is working with the industry to try to address this situation to maximize the availability of testing. The tests employ good technology, but it is not the fastest. The virus was isolated in January and provided to private sector industry and institutions to get them to

help develop testing more quickly. The current test is not like flu test. It requires the collection of a specimen to be sent to a specialized lab. We are working on the next generation of diagnostic tests because of the global issues associated with COVID-19.

- We do expect to see the number of cases grow in the next few days. The incubation period is believed to be about 14 days. Most people will become ill in 4 – 7 days. Any action we take will run about a week behind to see the impact. We may need to extend our actions longer than a week in order to really make a difference. While we can take precautions, we really have to see how the recommendations impact health and the economy.
- Transmission is primarily spread by respiratory droplets in the form of a cough or sneeze spray that spreads to other people. The virus may also live on surfaces for various periods of time based on the type of surface, temperature, humidity, etc.
- We need to spread the space out between people, as well as the amount of time we spend in close contact. If someone is sick, it is critically important to not “tough it out” – they need to stay home, self-isolate. We are seeing some national downward trends in flu. This may be because people are self-isolating. What we don’t know is how long people may be infected with COVID-19 before they develop symptoms. Most people with the virus are symptomatic. However, some may be infected without ever getting sick at all and could play some role in transmission. Limit contact with one another as much as possible.

**Comments from Lamar County (Georgia) Commissioner Nancy Thrash who serves on ACCG’s Board of Managers and is a Georgia representative on the National Association of Counties Board**

- Senator Loeffler serves on the federal Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) Committee as well as the Senate Agriculture Committee and Veterans Affairs Committee.
- She is focused on efforts to mitigate the effects of the virus and is using her expertise in financial services to take action to help preserve our economy.

**Contact Information for Senator Kelly Loeffler’s Office**

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