



FROM:	Bose Public Affairs Group
DATE:	June 26, 2020
RE:	Weekly COVID-19 Update

BIG PICTURE

The number of confirmed coronavirus infections continued to increase worldwide to now more than 9.6 million. The United States now accounts for nearly 2.5 million of these cases as they soared to record daily highs, prompting states like Texas and Florida to re-implement restrictions on bars, restaurants, and public gatherings.

[Here is where all 50 states stand on reopening](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Forecasts](#)

[List of federal agency resources in response to COVID-19](#)

[Institutional and Agency Guidance Specific to Federal Award Impact on COVID-19](#)

[COVID-19 School Closure Map](#)

ADMINISTRATION

President Continues Suspension on Immigration Visas During Pandemic

President Trump on Monday [signed an Executive Order](#) to continue the temporary suspensions of new visas for foreign workers seeking employment in the United States. The order, which will be in place at least until the end of the year, blocks visas for a wide variety of jobs: those for computer programmers and other skilled workers who enter the country under the H-1B visa; those for seasonal workers in the hospitality industry; as well as students on work-study summer programs and au pairs. The order also restricts the ability of American companies with global operations and international companies with U.S. branches to transfer foreign executives and other employees to the United States for extended stints. The order even blocks the spouses of



foreigners who are employed at companies in the United States. Officials said the ban on worker visas combined with extending restrictions on the issuance of new green cards would keep as many as 525,000 foreign workers out of the country for the rest of the year. The move was met with opposition from major companies and industry groups, as well as higher education advocates. "Putting up a 'not welcome' sign for engineers, executives, IT experts, doctors, nurses and other workers won't help our country, it will hold us back," said Thomas J. Donohue, the chief executive of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Restrictive changes to our nation's immigration system will push investment and economic activity abroad, slow growth and reduce job creation."

President Issues Executive Order Expanding HHS Efforts Around Child Welfare Services

President Trump signed [an executive order](#) Wednesday directing the Health and Human Services (HHS) Department to further assist foster children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The order refocuses HHS' attention on bolstering partnerships among state and local organizations, as well as providing greater oversight of how those grant recipients spend federal funds. The order also requires a federal review of reasonable effort determinations and timeliness requirements to improve processes to prevent unnecessary removal and secure permanency for children, including how such efforts are reviewed by family courts.

DeVos Rule Makes Some Changes on Emergency Relief Eligibility for Private School Students

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos [published a revised rule](#) on Thursday tweaking a previous iteration of a rule directing federal relief funds towards private schools for equitable services. The new rule will allow school districts two broad options to allocate funding: "Calculate the funds for equitable services based on the total number of low-income students in Title I and participating private schools;" or "Calculate the funds using the LEA's Title I, Part A share from the 2019-2020 school year." In a press release announcing the interim final rule, DeVos states that "there is nothing in the law Congress passed that would allow districts to discriminate against children and teachers based on private school attendance and employment. In this new rule, we recognized that CARES Act programs are not Title I programs. There is no reasonable explanation for debating the use of federal funding to serve both public and private K-12 students when federal funding, including CARES Act funding, flows to both public and private higher education institutions." But education groups remained highly critical of the rule, saying it still goes beyond Congressional intent in the CARES Act by diverting public relief resources to private schools. The interim final rule will take effect immediately once it is published in the Federal Register in the coming days, and will be open for public comment for 30 days.



GAO Report Outlines Issues and Delay in US Government Response to Coronavirus

On Thursday, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report detailing the federal government's level of preparedness for COVID-19 and the ensuing economic crisis. The report shows how the U.S. failed to provide adequate testing, supplies, data, and guidance and found that bad data "has made it more difficult to track and know the infection rate, mitigate the effect of infections, and inform decisions on reopening communities." Furthermore, the lack of guidance has increased the likelihood that people and businesses borrowing money may "misuse loan proceeds or be surprised they do not qualify for full loan forgiveness." In terms of performance from federal agencies the report notes, "Given the sweeping and unfolding public health and economic crisis, agencies from across the federal government were called on for immediate assistance, requiring an unprecedented level of dedication and agility among the federal workforce, including those serving on the front lines to quickly establish services for those infected with the virus. Consistent with the urgency of responding to serious and widespread health issues and economic disruptions, agencies have given priority to moving swiftly where possible to distribute funds and implement new programs. As tradeoffs were made, however, agencies have made only limited progress so far in achieving transparency and accountability goals." A summary of the report is available [here](#).

CONGRESS

Phase 4 Package

With both chambers about to recess for the Independence Day holiday, the vision for a phase 4 federal relief package continues to take shape. On Tuesday, reports emerged that Republicans on the Hill and within the administration are split on the scale of relief to individuals and whether relief should be provided through stimulus checks, unemployment benefits, or other means. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) have expressed interest in a benefit akin to the Economic Impact Payments featured in the CARES Act. However, Director of the White House National Economic Council Larry Kudlow and Senators Mitt Romney (R-UT) and Mike Rounds (R-SD) have called for more hawkish fiscal stimulus package going forward, underscoring significant intra-party issues that still need to be resolved before negotiations with their Democratic counterparts and between the chambers can move forward. From the administration's perspective, Secretary Mnuchin did voice this week that the White House is "very seriously considering" another stimulus bill and thinks legislation could pass both chambers of Congress in July. "We are beginning to discuss the different aspects of what another bill would look like — we want to take our time," said the Treasury Secretary.

House Education and Labor Committee Examines Racial Inequities of COVID-19



On Monday, the House and Education Labor Committee held a hearing titled, "Inequities Exposed: How COVID-19 Widened Racial Inequities in Education, Health, and the Workforce." The 4-hour hearing focused on the disparate impact of COVID-19 on education, health and the workforce. Democrats focused on existing disparities in these sectors before the pandemic and urged the federal government to actively implement policies and appropriate funding to help communities of color who have been devastated by the disease. On the other side of the aisle, Republicans on the Committee expressed their strong view that continuing to reopen the economy will help the nation go back to "pre-pandemic" historic low unemployment rates which will help all citizens. Many of them argued this can be successfully accomplished while protecting citizens' overall health. However, the only witness advocating for swifter reopening was Avik Roy. All of the witnesses acknowledged the differential impact of COVID-19 on Black people and other persons of color. More Bose analysis on the hearing can be found [here](#).

House Hearing Examines Federal Response to COVID-19

On Tuesday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held an oversight hearing examining the federal government's response to COVID-19. Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, addressed case spikes in some areas of the country, describing the increases as "a disturbing surge of infections." He said overall, it "really is a mixed bag," with some states doing well while others are now a problem. During the hearing, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield told lawmakers that the United States has about 28,000 contact tracers, falling short of the 100,000 that are needed to track the spread of coronavirus. More information [here](#).

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Weekly unemployment claims remained over one million for the 14th straight week as coronavirus hot spots emerged across the country and once lifted restrictions on certain businesses were put back in place to limit the spread. On Wall Street, the markets reflected similar concerns over the spike in cases, with the Dow Jones dropping 3%, the S&P 500 2.8%, and the NASDAQ 2%.

14% of Businesses Expect Layoffs after Using Their PPP Loan Funds According to Survey

Despite the decreased rate in unemployment claims in May, which is largely attributed to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a [survey](#) of small business owners indicates that the economic future and wellbeing of small business remains in a precarious position. The survey found that about 14% of business owners expect to lay off workers after they use up their funds from the forgivable loan program. Furthermore, about 30% of business owners reported sales at half of what they were making pre-pandemic and 27% of respondents said they expect to need more than \$100,000 of additional aid in the next year. Additional relief for small



businesses is expected to be among the discussions surrounding the phase 4 relief package Congress is likely to consider over the next couple months.

HEALTH CARE

NIH Recommends Dexamethasone for Severe COVID-19 Patients

An expert health panel on Thursday recommended that coronavirus patients on oxygen or a ventilator received the steroid dexamethasone. The panel convened by the National Institutes of Health pointed to recent preliminary results from a clinical trial in the U.K. that suggested dexamethasone can [cut risk of death by a third](#) in ventilated patients and by a fifth in those on oxygen. British researchers involved in the dexamethasone study said a week earlier the drug could become a new standard of care for Covid-19 patients. Dexamethasone targets inflammation in the lungs caused by the body's immune response. Another medicine with promising results for severely ill patients, Gilead's remdesivir, is an antiviral aimed at blocking the virus from replicating. Anthony Fauci, director of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told POLITICO earlier this week that the expert panel's decision was imminent because "Now we have a treatment that is proven in the late stages of disease to have a positive effect on mortality."

CONCLUSION

The Bose Public Affairs Group team will continue to monitor all relevant developments over the coming week and will be providing ongoing updates as they develop.

