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**Gov. Sisolak updates Nevadans on COVID-19 testing capabilities,
future plans**

Las Vegas, NV — Today, Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak updated Nevadans on the status of the State's testing capabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. He was joined by Dr. Mark Pandori, Director of Nevada State Public Health Laboratory.

"The ability to increase or develop capacity to perform widescale testing has been a national issue since the start of the COVID-19 public health crisis, but I'm proud of the advances Nevada has made" Gov. Sisolak said. "Dr. Pandori and leaders across the state have developed innovative solutions and continue to aggressively lead this effort."

Despite a nationwide shortage of collection kits, Dr. Pandori and his team have found innovative, groundbreaking solutions to help make sure Nevadans who are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms can get tested.

Dr. Pandori provided an overview of how this innovative work throughout the rest of the pandemic.

"Testing provides us the vital intelligence we need in this war," said Dr. Pandori.

The following is a copy of Governor Sisolak's prepared remarks:

Good evening. Thank you for being here.

I again want to direct you to the Nevada Health Response website, nvhealthresponse.nv.gov. There, you can find a copy of the Daily Situation Report. I will be referencing some of the numbers on the slides during this presentation, but the Daily Situation Report has a lot more details.

I know that this is an anxious time for everybody in Nevada We have been dealt a bad hand here, the whole country has. I understand how difficult it is to comply with these measures, I don't like it anymore than you all do, believe me.

But, guided by medical experts, these were necessary steps to take to protect lives. And here's the good news: the numbers I have been sharing with you show that Nevada has been doing a great job.

This slide is Nevada's COVID-19 Community Mobility Report from Google, produced earlier this week. This data compares a normal week before the COVID-19 crisis began and compared to now.

What this tells me and the experts who are advising me is that Nevada is doing a really great job at staying home.

There are other examples out there to reinforce this, but I wanted to show you this one. Nevadans, you are doing it and it's helping.

By so many metrics, we're on the map for being one of the best states at taking social distancing seriously. And no one should be surprised, because when you stay home for Nevada, you do it for your neighbors, your family and your community.

But because you all have done such a good job, I know many are asking when Nevada can open back up for business.

No one wants to get back to business more than I do. We are a proud state. We are a hardworking state.

Nevadans take pride in bringing home a paycheck, paying for their kids to be the first in their family to go to college, having a job that provides healthcare to their loved ones. We're a state that works hard to earn the dollars we make. We like showing up to work every day.

I mentioned the other day that my dad lost his job when I was younger. I said our lives were never the same. When I say that, I mean that I get your anxieties, your sleepless nights, the pressures that are weighing down on you.

I take this seriously, and I know you do too, and it shows in these numbers.

As your Governor, I can assure you that we're working on the strongest plan possible to re-open our businesses and our communities, one that will focus on putting the health and safety of Nevadans first and sets us up for a strong economic recovery.

Never in our history has Nevada and other states faced complete closures of this magnitude – so our re-opening plan has to be thoughtfully constructed and well vetted. This plan is being developed based on modeling and projections, health risk assessments, review of testing capacity, and more. It's not as easy as flipping a switch. But I'm confident in the Nevadans working with me on this and their commitment to getting this right.

If we re-open and we're not ready with the best plan possible, all the incredible work you've done will have been wasted, and will run the risk of hurting our economy even more. As soon as we finalize our state-specific plan to re-open, I will be right here, telling you exactly how we are going to do it. I have been honest with the public all along and that's not going to change.

Next week, I'll be here again giving you an update on some of the modeling and projections we've been reviewing and what they mean for our State, in addition to some criteria and measures that will have to be in place before our phase-in approach begins.

Now, I am going to have Dr. Mark Pandori from the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory give an update on our testing situation. Dr. Pandori has served as a chief or director of public health laboratories since 2005, including serving as the Director of the Public Health Laboratory for San Francisco, and also in Alameda County, CA.

He holds a PhD in Biomedical Science with an emphasis in virology, and he is Board Certified as a High Complexity Laboratory Director through the American Association of Bioanalysis. He joined the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory about six months ago and has already shown himself to be a tremendous asset to our state.

And that's great news, because we know that increasing our COVID-19 testing volume is one of our immediate and longterm goals, and doing so is challenging, as has been demonstrated across the country.

There's a number of reasons why – including a scarcity of available resources due to a competing demand domestically and worldwide.

We've had issues gaining access to collection and testing kits. Those are the swabs that medical professionals use to collect a sample from patients who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

As you can imagine, those swabs have become very hard to find.

But, Dr. Pandori's lab has come up with some groundbreaking solutions when it comes to the collection kits, so I'll let him go into detail on that soon. And I have to add, that just yesterday, I was on an all- Governors call, and Nevada is ahead of the game when it

comes to innovation because of all the work Dr. Pandori and leaders across the state are doing.

Before I introduce Dr. Pandori, I want to quickly address a topic that has come up recently. And that's the issue of racial equity when it comes to COVID-19, another issue faced by states across the nation.

From the limited data we have so far at the state level on the demographics of those tested for COVID-19, we know Nevada's populations facing socioeconomic disadvantages, including Hispanics, Black/African Americans and tribal communities are not being tested for COVID-19 at the same rate as other populations. For me, this is a big problem.

So when the federal government sent rapid tests, called Abbott testing machines, to Governors across the nation, I immediately made the decision to send these to local health authorities in Clark County, Washoe County, Carson City, Winnemucca and Elko.

These rapid tests can go to populations who previously may not have had access. These tests will be administered in partnership with the federally qualified health centers in these areas, who can also provide other healthcare services for the individuals tested, if necessary.

This doesn't solve the inequality we have in our healthcare system. We have a lot of work to do there. This is priority for my department of health and human services, this is a priority for my administration, this is a priority for me, because this virus doesn't care about your socio-economic status. It's going to spread, so when we make sure there is access for everyone, we are going to do better.

This isn't going to fix everything, but this is a start to make sure these tests to people who need it.

I am pleased now to turn the presentation over to Dr. Mark Pandori.

I want to let you know that Dr. Pandori has been nominated more than once as a Nevada Hero of the Day. And while he may not want the recognition, the State of Nevada owes him and his team a debt of gratitude for his work.

I am glad to have Dr. Pandori here as an expert to help further explain what we have done with testing, what challenges we are facing as a State and how we are going to solve those problems.

Thank you, Dr. Pandori.

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