

[Something to Sink Your Teeth Into: FANG's bail fund keeps people out of dangerously overcrowded prisons](#)

In the past six weeks, bail funds have taken social media by storm. They've been around for a long time — bail's pretty expensive and there aren't a lot of people who can afford to fork over a large amounts of money, even if they get it back later. Cash bail sheds light on the intersections of poverty, immigration, public health and human rights. As the old saying goes, it's expensive (and unhealthy) to be poor.

"Jails, prisons and detention centers are horrific places to be," said an organizer (who wishes to remain anonymous) in an interview with *Motif*. "But in a pandemic, they're even more dangerous and deadly." FANG's bail fund had its start in March when one of their members was on trial and later incarcerated in neighboring Bristol County, Massachusetts. During that time, FANG made a concerted effort to pay the fines and bails of whomever was in the courthouse on a particular day. As the pandemic worsened, the bail fund became official, and they worked toward the release of people in incarceration or ICE detention.

FANG's #ShutDownICE campaign is almost two years old. The bail fund is deeply linked with that campaign, as a way to get people out of detention. "One of our core beliefs is [prison] abolition," said the organizer. "We think that nobody should be in a cage for any reason."

The fund has been successful in bailing out people who have bails at or below \$1,000, and FANG has expanded the fund to include anyone incarcerated as part of the Providence street uprisings, putting out a phone number loved ones can call. As a result, they've managed to post the bail of several inmates at the ACI.

The aftermath of the Providence looting shows the need for bail funds. More than 65 people were arrested in conjunction with the events of that night. The charges range from disorderly conduct to more serious crimes like breaking and entering or receiving stolen goods. Bails range from the hundreds to many thousands of dollars. In a country where pre-COVID, 49% of Americans said they live paycheck to paycheck, and with unemployment now nearing catastrophic levels, people's ability to make bail isn't getting better.

FANG isn't the only one running with the ball on cash bail. They're part of the AMOR Network, an alliance of state social justice groups. They were working, along with the RI ACLU, on securing bail

hearings for inmates at the Wyatt Detention center, an issue that has become more pressing as COVID runs rampant in prisons nationwide. The tools to fight COVID — social spacing, aggressive cleaning, mask-wearing — aren't always possible or done in prisons.

Rep. Anastasia Williams (District 9, Providence) introduced a bill in January into the judiciary committee to address this problem. H-7243 amends conditions of bail and recognizance to permit the release of a person charged with a misdemeanor without financial commissions. The bill is to prohibit financial conditions for bail and release, with three exceptions: cases of domestic violence, the person charged requests such financial conditions and obstruction of justice or witness tampering. The bill was held for further study at the end of January.

FANG's goal of prison abolition is a long ways off, but bail funds are part of the first step toward getting there.

They're Running!: Your guide to local elections

COVID has pushed almost all other news out of the limelight, but 2020 is still an election year, and even though the national parties' presidential primaries wrapped up months ago, the American experiment is still crackling on our local level. With most of the major candidates announced and wrapping up their nomination papers, we've put together an election guide to help you keep track.

Cranston, Rhode Island's own second city, has a number of important or notable races this year. Mayor Allan Fung is term-limited out of the mayoral office, and both parties have contested primaries. Fung has endorsed city council member Ken Hopkins, but City Council President Michael Farina has racked up the local party's endorsements and has a rather "extravagant" campaign strategy. On the Democrats' side, longtime council member Steven Stycos is squaring off against former councilwoman Maria Bucci. Republicans have controlled both the mayor's office and city council since 2016. With six ward seats and three citywide seats, it's up in the air who will control the council.

Speaker Nick Mattiello is running for re-election for his seat in House District 15. This year's challenger is Cranston First Lady Barbara Ann Fenton-Fung, wife of outgoing mayor Allan Fung. Mattiello is possibly having the worst year of anyone in RI politics, being the target of at least *two* grand jury investigations. Right to Life has publicly supported Fenton-Fung, as pro-life organizations feel stung after the Speaker let abortion rights get codified into state law. Also taking on a member of the GA leadership is Lenny Cioe. Cioe, a graduate of RIC's nursing program, is taking on Senate Majority

Leader Dominick Ruggerio.

Alex Kithes, the upstart crow of last year's Woonsocket snap election, is running for re-elect. He's joined the Rhode Island Political Cooperative and is running on a slate with three other candidates for Woonsocket City Council. Kithes has frequently clashed with the conservative majority of the council on issues of social and economic justice. Others running on this slate for city council are Charmaine Webster, Marlene Guay and Vaughan Miller. Fifteen people total have declared their intent to run for city council, including an informalish slate of four incumbent councillors: James Cournoyer, Roger Jalette, Daniel Gendron, John Ward and Denise Sierra. Woonsocket's elections are a little strange for Rhody; they have non-partisan primaries. Essentially, every seat on their council is city. A primary election will whittle down the candidates to 14 in September, who will square off in November on the general election. High vote getters become counselors.

Woonsocket also has a mayoral election happening this year. Incumbent Lisa Baldelli-Hunt will face City Council Vice President Jon Brien.

The Rhode Island Political Co-operative is the latest progressive organization in RI, and they've put out a lineup of 24 candidates for city council or General Assembly offices. The group is chaired by Jeanine Calkin (running to reclaim her seat in SD 5 Warwick), Jennifer Rourke (running in SD 29, Warwick), and Matt Brown (not running for anything — just vibin', we guess). Their candidates include incumbents like Rep. Moira Walsh and new candidates running for office, such as Jessica Vega running for Central Falls City Council.

There's been a series of high-profile retirements this year, as candidates decline to run for their seats again. Erin Lynch Prata, instead of running for office in state Senate, has decided to apply for an upcoming Supreme Court vacancy. James Sheean is retiring from his North Kingstown senate seat, with former rep Doreen Costa and progressive Alana DiMario both running to replace him.

Donna Nesselbrush in Pawtucket has declined to run for office again, with the race in the Democrat primary coming down to city councillor Meghan Kallman, longtime city employee and city hall fixture Herb Weiss and Robert Morris Jr. Also retiring from elected office is Senate District 9's Adam Satchell. The Democratic primary for that office alone has four people running, with only one Republican declared: Michael Morin in Woonsocket's House District 49. Former candidate for mayor Stephen Lima faces Vincent Bono, an independent.

In East Greenwich, Anthony Giarrusso is running to reclaim his seat (House District 30) from Justine Caldwell, who narrowly defeated him in 2018 with 51.1% of the vote. Patricia Morgan is also aiming to reclaim her former seat in West Warwick's House District 36. Morgan did not run in 2018, opting to run

for governor instead, and will face Democrat James Jackson in the fall.

State Senator Sam Bell (District 5, Providence) is running for re-election this fall. His opponent in the primary is Jo Ann Ryan, who has represented Ward 5 on the Providence City Council since 2014.

And on the statewide scene, Dylan Conley is primarying 10-term Congressman James Langevin. Conley is chairman of the Providence Board of Licenses, assistant solicitor for the city of East Providence. His father is state Senator William Conley, chairman of the Senate finance committee. It's the first challenge from within his own party that Langevin has faced in almost 20 years. The Democratic nominee for Rhode Island's 2nd Congressional district will face Republican Bob Lancia in the fall.

There are literally hundreds of elected offices up for grabs this election cycle. Got one you think you we should cover? Email robsmithwrites@gmail.com with any tips. Signal available upon request.

Governor Raimondo Asks for Caution on the Holiday Weekend: A summary of the governor's July 1 press conference



Governor Gina Raimondo, DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott and DoA director Brett Smiley gave the COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm.

The data released today is as follows: There are 27 new cases of the coronavirus since yesterday. There are 69 people are in the hospital for causes related to COVID-19; 11 people are in the ICU and 11 people are on ventilators. DOH has reported six new deaths since yesterday. One person was in their 40s, and Dr. Scott noted they had multiple underlying health conditions. Two people were in their 60s, one in their 70s, one in their 80s and one person was in their 90s.

Phase 3 began yesterday morning, and the governor said she is worried about July 4th. She spoke again about the COVID rates surging nationwide, saying, "Texas attributes a good portion of its case increases to large gatherings on Memorial Day. Arizona attributes it to large protests and to people not wearing masks." Social gathering limits are still capped at 25 going into the holiday weekend.

"People are dying every single day in Rhode Island because of coronavirus," said the governor. DBR was out in full force last weekend surprise-inspecting businesses for COVID regulation compliance. The state says they are still seeing issues with people congregating at parks and beaches, particularly at concession stands where people wait in lines without wearing masks.

Bars are especially a problem area. Yesterday Dr. Fauci testified before Congress singling out congregations at bars as prime areas for COVID spread. Raimondo agrees, out of the bars and bar settings inspected this weekend, 18% of them did not have adequate social distancing. The governor reminded viewers that bars have to operate more like restaurants with table service, and must make provisions for social distancing, mask wearing, hand-washing, etc.

For the holiday weekend, the state is making 1,000 masks available to each city and town in RI to hand out at large gatherings such as fireworks displays. DEM will also be handing out masks at parks and beaches. DOH has found handing them out at protests in June helped a great deal with people wearing masks. When asked by *Motif* if there was any plans to distribute them to, for example, RIPTA busses, Dr. Alexander-Scott agreed it is a good idea, and they were having discussion on regular distribution this week.

Governor Raimondo also made announcements regarding nursing homes and childcare. The state will continue the wage bonuses given to nursing home and congregate care setting workers. These same industries can expect added financial support for additional cleaning, PPE costs and raising infection control standards. Nursing homes are expected to start enacting their limited visitation plans next week. Massachusetts and Connecticut have already started allowing visits to nursing homes and congregate care settings.

Seventy percent of childcare centers have reopened statewide and Raimondo is aiming to get to 100%. She announced today \$5 million in CARES Act funding to go toward childcare providers, supporting

upgrades to safely serve more children. The fund will be administered by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation in partnership with DHS.

Lastly, the governor announced today this would be the last press briefing for a week. She was giving her team the holiday weekend off. Dr. Alexander-Scott also announced that there would not be a data update on Monday, to give the data team a day off the following weekend. COVID data will be updated tomorrow, Friday and then not until the following Tuesday. Dr. Alexander-Scott stressed they would still be monitoring the data as it came in daily.

The next press briefing is next Wednesday at 1pm. You can watch it on Capitol TV, Facebook Live, and following our live tweets on twitter at @MotifMagRI. Our summary of the governor's comments will be up later that day.

[Phase 3 to Begin Tomorrow: A summary of the governor's June 29 press conference](#)



Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Providence Pedestrian Bridge.

Governor Gina Raimondo, DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott and commerce director Stefan Pryor gave the COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm from The Vets.

“Rhode Island is continuing to trend in the right direction,” the governor announced today. DOH is reporting 107 new positive cases of COVID-19 since Friday. There were 60 and 31 new cases reported on Saturday and Sunday respectively, leaving only 16 from today. Seventy-three people are hospitalized for reasons associated with the coronavirus; 15 are in the ICU and 14 are on ventilators. DOH also reports a total of 19 new fatalities since Friday. Three people were in their 70s, nine in their 80s, six in their 90s and one person was over 100. Rhode Island stands in contrast to other states seeing surges. The governor took pains today to note that the country on June 22 reached a new single day high for new COVID cases, over 44,000.

Phase 3 starts tomorrow, the governor announced today. However, Raimondo has been in talks with governors in other states, like Governor Abbot in Texas. His state has had to take steps to close down the economy and close hospitals to non-critical procedures to free up room for COVID patients. Florida, Los Angeles, Florida and Texas have also closed bars, something that concerns Raimondo going into Phase 3. “I want us to continue to lead the nation, I don’t want setbacks,” said the governor. “We are where we are, because people of RI have been following the rules. If you stop following the rules, we’ll have to shut down the economy again.”

The new phase of Rhode Island’s reopening will come with more limitations than the governor announced last week. Raimondo is responding to surging case numbers across the country and therefore, limiting large social gatherings to 25 inside and 50 outside. Weddings have an exception called out if they have a caterer and can be treated more like a restaurant setting. Weddings (and other catered events) can have a max inside capacity of 50 people and a max outside capacity of 100.

Public events and other venues are limited indoors to 125 people, or 66% capacity with appropriate social spacing. Their outside limits are 250, as long as they follow DOH guidelines. Any July 4 celebrations are subject to the same rules as beaches/parks. Anyone who plans to host more than 250 people must submit a plan to the state for review. Masks must also be worn and social distance must be maintained. Seated venues can open to 66% capacity (like movie theaters) and ‘free-flowing venues’ like museums, arcades and cultural institutions can have one person per 100 square feet. This is all providing that 6-foot spacing can be maintained.

Raimondo said today she was worried about the July 4th weekend, and brought up the example of Texas

again. According to Governor Abbot, Texas had a test positive rate of under 4% before the Memorial Day weekend. Due to large social gatherings and people not following CDC guidance (mask wearing, distancing, etc), the Lone Star State now has a daily positive test rate of over 14%.

Today the governor also announced new travel restrictions. Anyone coming to Rhode Island from a state with a COVID positive test rate of 5% or higher would be asked to quarantine for 14 days. Anyone who has gotten back a negative COVID test in the past three days would be exempt from following this rule. The rule will apply to 23 different states in America, and DOH will provide a list of states every week available for viewing on the website. If a Rhode Islander travels to one of these states and comes back, they must also get a negative COVID test or quarantine for 14 days.

Governor Raimondo acknowledged today her goal of 10,000 tests a day by July was a little aggressive. Rhode Island's testing capacity is over 5,000, but daily tests tend to peak around 4,000, leaving the state with plenty of room. She set a revised goal of seeing a big uptick in testing around the back to school season later this summer.

Motif today asked about the process to fine a business for noncompliance with the new reopening regulations. Director Pryor said most businesses received at least one or two inspections and/or a phone call ensuring they were following regulations. A handful of businesses received two warnings and a further action item. Pryor declined to specify the exact number of businesses fined so far, saying he would get back to *Motif* with that information.

The state's next press conference is Wednesday at 1pm. You can watch it live on Capitol TV, social media streams, or read our live-tweeting of it on Twitter. We'll have our summary up later that day.

[RI Confirms its First Case of Multi-system Inflammatory Syndrome: A summary of the governor's June 26 press conference](#)



Governor Gina Raimondo, DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, and DOA director Brett Smiley gave the COVID press briefing today at 1pm, from The Vets.

Rhode Island COVID cases continue their decline; DOH is reporting only 25 new cases since yesterday. There are 91 people who remain hospitalized for reasons associated with the coronavirus. Sixteen people are in the intensive care unit, and 15 of those people are on ventilators.

Governor Raimondo announced today that Phase 3 guidance would be forthcoming from state leaders starting on Monday. Her executive order for Phase 2 is set to expire Monday night, and if data trends continue to be favorable, Phase 3 will tentatively start Tuesday. Raimondo said today she would be implementing some kind of travel restriction/advisory as Rhode Island reopens and heads into the summer season. She is not considering setting checkpoints up on the highway at the border. Instead she is considering working with airports, businesses that require travel, the train station and realtors for a more subtle approach.

If there was a theme to these press conferences, today's would have been child health. Childhood immunizations are down by 50%, and the governor spent much of her announcements today advising parents to get out of the house and get their children's vaccinations up to date. DOH is looking especially at ages younger than 2, ages around 5 just before entering public school, and ages between 11 and 16. The state is not planning to make vaccinations conditional on attending public school, but is working with schools and school nurses to make sure everyone is up to date.

Rhode Island confirmed its first case of multi-system inflammatory syndrome yesterday. It's a rare condition in children where different body parts, including the skin, the heart, lungs, kidney, brain, eyes or gastrointestinal organs become inflamed. The case is a girl of school age who has tested positive for COVID-19. According to DOH officials, she is not in the ICU and is recovering well in the hospital.

The state is still falling short in its Housing Works program, where landlords who pledge to rent apartments to residents with vouchers are eligible for signing bonuses. Raimondo stated today that they are up to 60 pledged units, 40 short of the goal she wanted to be at by July 1. The governor said income discrimination was wrong, and she hoped the legislature passed the bill. The bill banning income discrimination passed the senate and remains still in the house. When asked if the governor would consider an executive order if the income discrimination bill dies in the house, the governor answered she thought it was beyond the scope of her powers.

One hundred homeless Rhode Islanders have been housed in two separate facilities. Director Smiley said today it was to decrease the density of the homeless population for public health reasons. The program is ending next week, and the state has been working toward a solution at both ends, providing rental assistance to homeless folks and financial incentives to landlords.

Next press conference is Monday at 1pm. You can watch it on Capitol TV, Facebook Live and watch our live tweets during the broadcast. Motif will have its summary up later that day.

Raimondo Cautions Residents to View Other States' Surges as a Warning: A summary of the governor's June 24 press conference



Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Providence Pedestrian Bridge.

Governor Gina Raimondo and DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott gave the COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm.

Today's data is as follows. DOH reports 73 new COVID cases today; 104 people are still in the hospital. Twenty people are in the ICU and 16 are on ventilators. Six deaths were reported this afternoon. One person was in their 70s, two in their 80s, one in their 90s and two people were over 100 years of age.

Twin River was announced today as winding down its testing operations in conjunction with CVS Health starting testing this Saturday, June 27. Governor Raimondo reminded folks today it was always meant to be temporary. Without the Twin River site, the state has a daily testing capacity of 5,000 tests, and most days they only hit 4,000. DOH officials are still working on increasing the turnaround time for test results at private labs.

The governor gave a glimmer of announcements today regarding the weekend and next phase. Beaches were crowded this weekend, so Raimondo stated today they would increase beach parking lot capacity to 75% of total capacity, opening up 2,200 spots at state beaches. The governor hopes it will decrease lines and people illegally parking on neighborhood streets in the areas surrounding the beaches.

Starting in Phase 3, no contact and low contact adult/youth sports will be coming back. The governor will have complete guidance posted online by Monday. She asked games be between stable groups within state and out of state if that area has no travel restrictions. Spectators can attend and should wear masks. Close contact sports, like soccer or football, will not come back during Phase 3. The state expects to make further announcements regarding school sports later this year.

The governor sternly spoke to state residents and the press corp today. Much of her opening remarks were warnings to follow the rules and she also discussed the surges in Texas, Florida and California. Raimondo reminded Rhode Islanders to wear masks, avoid congregating and social distance, and reminded businesses to follow new COVID regulations, lest the Ocean State become the nation's new hotspot.

The next COVID press briefing is Friday at 1pm. You can watch it on Capitol TV, Facebook Live or read our livetweets at twitter.com/motifmagri. Our summary of the governor's comments will be up later that day.

Turnaround Action Plan Released: TAP sets goals for improving the Providence Public School Department



Before COVID, the biggest story in Rhode Island from the last 12 months was the state takeover of the Providence Public School Department (PPSD). Now 12 months out from the initial John Hopkins report that set it all off, the Turnaround Action Plan (TAP) has been released. It's a 68-page PDF, available online at 4PVDkids.com.

The document refreshes and outlines the historical problems of the PPSD. The original report blamed antiquated governance, a broken school culture and a lack of safety, with teachers being set up to fail at their jobs and parents feeling hopeless and locked out of their child's education. TAP addresses many of these problems and breaks them down into achievable metrics.

The plan breaks down these into four groups of metrics: **Engaged Communities**, which is about parental and community engagement in a child's education. **Excellence in Learning**, which is about learning outcomes and is based primarily around student performance on RICAS, the state's standardized test program. **World-Class Talent**, which is about teaching staff and the hiring process, and ensuring that educators reflect the diverse and heavily POC presence in the PPSD student bodies. **Efficient District Systems**, which is about overhauling the central office the district operates on, increasing funding and dealing with vendors and teacher contracts.

Quoting from the John Hopkins report, TAP details in its rationale for Engaged Communities how families feel locked out of the educational process. On the transformation scorecard, which lists all the metrics and goals on which TAP is judged, its metrics range from students feeling like they belong at school, to schools having a school improvement team that meets state requirements, to implementing a rapid response system where the district contacts parents within a 24 hour window. In this section, the plan is scant on details. It leaves out what a school culture is in this context or what steps will be taken

to fix it. Similarly, in the plan there are seven mentions of a school improvement team, but the plan does not define the team, detail their function in the system or describe who will comprise the teams.

Excellence in Learning is the second set of metrics TAP outlines. These are primarily about Providence students' performance in the state's standardized tests. TAP does not lay out how many students did not meet proficiency in RICAS, but it does list the percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations for the 2018-19 school year. For grades 3, 8 and 11, in math and English language arts, less than 25% of Providence students met or exceeded expectations according to TAP. The plan sets a goal for the 2024-25 school year to meet at least 50% for all of them. In the body of the text there is acknowledgement that Providence students have done poorly, but there's no plan to raise these scores. The most it offers is planning to create a plan to deal with this problem.

World-Class Talent is the section that deals with PPSD staffing issues. Providence has come under fire in the past because its educator workforce is far whiter than its student body. Providence has some of the most diverse student populations in Rhode Island. Out of 24,000 students, 65% come from Hispanic backgrounds, and more than half the students come from a household where English is not the primary language. The goals of the section prioritize hiring educators of color, expanding professional development for teachers and support for principals, updating teacher evaluation systems and giving mentorship to new teachers.

The last section deals with Efficient District Systems, primarily retooling the central district office to become streamlined and more efficient. Its first goal is to renegotiate the collective bargaining agreement with the Providence Teachers Union (still ongoing) to make hiring more flexible and streamlined. The district is to create a spending plan and a plan to upgrade Providence school facilities, which are among the worst building and learning environments in the state.

The plan does outline that for various metrics at schools, various initiatives will have a lead from the PPSD acting as point person, with a support person from RIDE providing assistance. Leads will have a monthly progress meeting and an annual internal review. There is also a plan to regularly provide information on the progress of TAP to various public bodies and agencies. RIDE will update the council of elementary and secondary education. PPSD will provide updates to the Providence school board and districtwide community council. All new information will be posted on the 4PVDkids.com website for the community to view. The commissioner of education will report to the mayor, the school board, city council and the general public.

There's nothing in TAP on COVID or distance learning. Time will tell how much money Providence will get to fund themselves to reach their goals or how COVID outbreaks might impact the timeline.

RI Reaches a Milestone as 200,000 Residents Tested for COVID-19: A summary of the governor's June 22 press conference



Governor Gina Raimondo and DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott gave the COVID press briefing today at 1pm.

“These numbers are a good news story,” said Dr. Alexander-Scott today. DOH reports 25 new cases of the coronavirus. Sixty new cases were reported on Saturday, and 36 were reported Sunday. Hospitalizations are down to 106 from 111 on Friday. Eighteen people are in the ICU and 15 are on ventilators. There have been five new deaths since yesterday. The weekend saw four additional deaths, bringing up the cumulative total since Friday to nine. Two people were in their 50s, one in their 70s, two in their 80s, three in their 90s and one person was over 100.

The governor announced today that over the weekend, a few state parks and all state beaches hit their capacity at some point. Lincoln Woods, Goddard State Park and Colt State Park all had to be closed due to capacity. Saturday turned out to be the most popular beach day of the season with the state estimating 25,000 visitors to state beaches. Sunday was less crowded, with an estimated 15,000 visitors. DEM rangers had to break up big congregations, with many folks not understanding being told

to break up. Wednesday will see new changes to ensure a smoother beach-going operation as the Ocean State slides into summer.

DBR inspectors focused on hitting gyms and restaurants this past weekend. The governor was pleased with some of the results. Mask wearing by employees was roughly 94%, customer compliance with face masks was 90%. One area Rhode Islanders could do better was the COVID control plan, only 80% of businesses inspected over the weekend had theirs at the ready to show state inspectors.

Last week, the governor announced the weR1 fund to help provide direct cash assistance to the poorest Rhode Islanders, those who can't qualify for social programs due to immigration status. Over the weekend, \$41,000 has been raised toward an overall goal of \$3 million. People looking to donate can get text WeR1 to 27126 to donate, courtesy of the Dorcas Institute.

Raimondo also provided a Housing Now RI update, the initiative that provides cash signing bonuses to landlords pledging units toward housing families with housing vouchers. Forty units have been pledged so far, the governor set an overall goal of 100 units pledged by July 1. Landlords are eligible for a \$2,000 signing bonus upon first family with vouchers they house, and \$500 additional per family. Steve Ahlquist of Uprise RI asked, since eviction court are scheduled to start again July 1, would the governor support rent/evictions moratoriums? The governor said she hadn't ruled it out, but wanted to work on a sustainable process like mediation to work out those problems. She is also supportive of efforts in the state legislature to outlaw income discrimination and asked the legislature to pass it.

The governor said the state also took steps to ensure houses of worship were complying with state regulations. There have been a few outbreaks (defined as two people or more being COVID positive), but by and large, houses of worship have been compliant. The governor noted that a lot of houses of worship declined to reopen yet, and the ones that have, got creative.

This past weekend the state hit a milestone, Rhode Island has tested more than 200,000 people since the COVID crisis began in March. While the governor today noted the president expressed a desire to see testing wind down, Raimondo said they would ramp it up, no matter what the president said. Rhode Island will be gathering supplies and preparing a long-term testing strategy, as a vaccine for COVID-19 is not expected until next year at the earliest.

The governor's next press briefing is Wednesday at 1pm. You can watch it on Capitol TV, Facebook Live or local news. Motif as always will live tweet it, with our written summary of the governor's comments available later that day.

[More Reopenings in Phase 3: Summary of the governor's June 19 press conference](#)



Governor Gina Raimondo, DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, education commissioner Angelica Infante-Green and commerce director Stefan Pryor gave the COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm.

DOH is reporting 68 new cases today. There are 123 hospitalized for reasons related to the coronavirus;

23 of those are in the ICU, and 12 people are on ventilators. Dr. Alexander-Scott said today case numbers and hospitalizations remain steady and relatively low, as Rhode Island enters its third week in Phase 2. The governor stated that even with the good data, there's no reason to believe the virus has abated. Nine new deaths were reported today: one person was in their 60s, one in their 70s, three were in their 80s, and four were in their 90s.

The big announcement today was Governor Raimondo introducing guidance on what Phase 3 would like in Rhode Island. "Essentially everything will reopen in some form or fashion," she said. Raimondo noted that it would only work if Rhode Islanders continue to follow the rules (limiting social circles, social distancing, hand washing, mask wearing, etc). Indoor gatherings in Phase 3 will have their limits upped to 50 to 75 people. Outside gatherings will have their limits raised to 75 to 150 people. Weddings can have guests of 100 people inside and 250 people outside, with masks encouraged but not mandated.

Retail stores can have an additional person per 100 square feet as long as they follow all other rules. Restaurants, places of worship, anything else limited by total capacity will have the limit raised to two-thirds capacity. Movie theaters, arcades, museums, performance venues, bowling alleys and other similar places can also reopen to 66% capacity if they can maintain 6 feet of distance. Larger venues like the Dunk, theaters and auditoriums that can hold assemblies of 250+ will need to submit a plan to Commerce and DOH for approval.

Governor Raimondo also announced there was no real capacity cap in outdoor settings. "You can go to an outdoor venue with more than 250 people outside," she said. "But we don't think it's a good idea, we don't think it's safe [to do it inside]." She announced an organization or town planning a large event of more than 250 people should get in touch with her office, DOH or Commerce for a specific COVID control plan. Anyone who needs help can call Commerce at 401-521-HELP.

The guidance on kids' summer camps does not change with Phase 3 guidelines, camps can reopen as early as June 29th after submitting a COVID control plan to the state. The governor asked more camps to submit plans, saying she wants to get as many kids active in camps this summer as possible. Childcare guidance will double the limits on stable groups for 10 children to 20. Guidance on youth and adult summer sports will be out next week. Visitation plans (with limits) for nursing homes and congregate care settings are currently in the pipeline to happen by Phase 3.

The executive order putting Rhode Island in Phase 2 is set to expire on June 29, and the governor is aiming to sign a new one signaling the start of Phase 3 on that day. All this is based on current trends in COVID data declining. With protests and Rhode Islanders going out more, a lot could happen in the next few weeks to cause a spike. According to Dr. Alexander-Scott, infections from the protests remain under 1%. DOH is encouraged by the number of protesters complying with mask-wearing.

Nationwide data shows surges and spikes in other states like Arizona, Florida and Texas. Apple, as of today, is closing stores in specific states with COVID outbreaks. The governor said she was keeping an eye on other states, saying it was scary. "I understand hospitals to be full in Arizona," she said. Raimondo said it was reminder for Rhode Island not to get complacent. "Once this thing starts compounding, you go up the curve really fast," she said. Raimondo said a lot of case surges in these other states were in specific counties with specific problems, like high population density or congregate care issues in prisons or meat packing facilities.

Raimondo and Commissioner Infante-Green outlined today what plans for school districts should look like. Any COVID plan includes at least three scenarios: full in-person learning, partial in-person learning and limited in-person learning. Younger students will need to be kept in groups of 30 or fewer. Mask wearing is encouraged but not mandated, with the governor reasoning it's difficult to get 25 6-year-olds to do anything, let alone wear a mask all day. High schools will need stable groups of kids whenever possible, but Raimondo did acknowledge that that was more difficult.

Partial in-person learning will look similar to full, in-person learning. High schools will have to scale back to distance learning. ESLs, children with special needs and the youngest learners should be prioritized for in-person learning. The governor noted after finishing the year with distance learning, many high schoolers flourished with distance learning. Districts should have their plans for these scenarios and their budgets submitted to RIDE by July 17.

Commissioner Greene stressed the need for equity in education. Each district's plans will look different; the guidelines are meant to act as guard rails. Bussing is a chief concern for districts, and that varies from district to district based on need.

During questions, Commerce Director Stefan Pryor was asked about guidance for music venues. He said there would be specific guidelines for performers, venues and people in the audience to follow. Commerce will have a dialogue of how that works. Any indoor venue must have a plan submitted to the state if they have more than 250 seats.

Pryor also laid out that most bars could open in Phase 2, following the guidance already laid out for restaurants. Night clubs, however, cannot be open and operated as night clubs. More guidance on night clubs and music venues is forthcoming in the coming weeks.

Today is Juneteenth, something the governor, Dr. Alexander-Scott and Commissioner Infante-Green each acknowledged in their remarks. Juneteenth marks the ending of slavery in the United States, when a Union general freed slaves in Texas not already freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. Commissioner Green said the ignorance of the holiday today was a reminder that Rhode Island should

re-examine how history is taught, that the state has had slavery, has communities that benefitted historically from slavery and its effects are present today. “Why is history important? Because it dispels myths we tell about ourselves to make ourselves feel better.”

This morning Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza signed an executive order removing the word “Plantations” from city documents and oath ceremonies. When asked about it today, the governor said she would have more news about that on Monday. She was pleased to see the state senate pass a bill on it, and hopes to stump for it as a ballot question this year.

COVID Positive Rate in High Density Areas on the Decline: A summary of the governor’s June 17 press conference

Governor Gina Raimondo and DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott gave the COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm.

The data is as follows: DOH reports 49 new cases since yesterday. There are 126 people in the hospital, of those 17 are in the ICU, and 13 people are intubated. Overall the governor noted hospitalizations are on a slow decline, calling it good news. DOH also reported 11 new deaths today: six people were in their 70s, two in their 80s and three were in their 90s. Nursing home deaths continue to make up the bulk of coronavirus fatalities. Nine out of today’s 11 deaths were nursing home or congregate care residents. DOH estimates 75% of overall fatalities came from those same settings.

Dr. Scott explained today nursing home cases are overall on the decline. They are well into their fourth round of cyclical testing. Such testing is open to staff and residents of congregate settings who want to volunteer. The testing schedule is as such so all staff at congregate settings are tested every 7 to 10 days. Dr. Scott also noted while there were specific nursing homes who had infection control issues prior to COVID, COVID’s high transmission rate is its own issue.

Today the governor announced the positivity rate in high-density areas is on the decline, outlining the most impacted towns. Central Falls positivity rate has fallen into the low teens, hovering around 13%. Two weeks prior, the positive test rate was 22%. Providence has tested positive at a rate below 10% for a few days, a big comedown from the end of May when it was as high as 19%. Woonsocket is on the

decline, with a positive rate of 6% today. “These numbers are a point in time, they will fluctuate,” said Raimondo. “But it is good news.”

Getting the test positive rate below 10% statewide has been a keystone of Raimondo’s COVID control plan. The information will be one piece among many pieces of data, showing how prevalent the virus is in the Ocean State. The governor credited the drop in data to the asymptomatic testing being performed statewide. She announced new test sites would be added today at four Stop and Shops, one in Cranston, one in Pawtucket, and two in Providence on Manton Ave and West River Ave. This is in addition to the 900 tests able to be performed at RIC and CCRI. All close contact workers and anyone who’s been in a large congregate setting (like the protests or the Block Island Ferry) are invited to get themselves tested. Raimondo said she could not imagine turning anyone away who wanted to get tested. Dr. Alexander-Scott said she envisions close contact industry workers getting tested once every week or two weeks. Broader asymptomatic testing would be rolling out soon.

Friday is the day the governor is expected to announce more guidance on Phase 3. Today she was asked about R1 Indoor Karting in Lincoln, which reopened last week reasoning they would be able to if Twin River was able. The governor said she was not familiar with their business model, but that DBR would go and inspect them and if they were compliant they could stay open. Raimondo reiterated any business owner confused about whether to reopen should consult reopeningri.com for regulations and guidance. If still confused, business owners should call 521-HELP or the Department of Business Regulation directly.

The final questions put to the governor today were for comment about Juneteenth, the day commemorating the day when Union General Gordon Granger read federal orders in Texas that freed all the slaves. The governor said it was something for the state to think about, saying she hadn’t heard of it until this morning. When asked by Bill Bartholomew if the state should swap VJ Day for Juneteenth, the governor was reluctant to agree. Raimondo said it was “worthy of discussion” and compared it to the discussion about removing “Providence Plantations” from the state name. “It matters,” she said.

The next COVID press briefing is Friday at 1pm. You can watch it on Capitol TV or social media, and Motif will live tweet the governor’s comments. Our written summary will be up later that afternoon.