Thank you all for joining me today. I want to share my framework for restarting public life and business in our state: How we’re going to approach Reopening Oregon.

This is only a framework, and its timing is dependent upon several factors. As Dr. Anthony Fauci says: we don’t control the timing, the disease controls the timing.

But I want to be transparent with how we will approach this incredible challenge of reopening segments of our society while living with the virus, and how we will maintain healthy Oregon communities.

In the early days of this pandemic, I had to take swift action to protect the health and safety of Oregonians from this deadly disease. Now, as we see that these efforts are successfully flattening the curve, we are analyzing how and when to reopen each part of our society and economy. And I want to work collaboratively to do that.

But, we must be careful. As this diagram from our recent COVID-19 modelling shows: We have to be cautious or it could backfire.

We know that a vaccine or effective treatment may yet be months away. And if we move too quickly we will see a spike in cases that could still lead to an overwhelmed hospital system and unnecessary deaths.
We all want to get back to work and return to normal life as quickly as possible. But the truth is: the best path forward is a cautious one — a path that proceeds gradually, carefully, and incrementally. A path that relies on science and facts to determine each step forward.

My framework for Reopening Oregon recognizes a science-driven process that accounts for the needs of Oregon’s communities and economy:

The science dictates that we need to complete specific prerequisites:

First, we need to slow the growth: We need to see fewer and fewer cases of COVID-19. The exact metrics must be informed by experts and data to avoid a resurgence of the virus. Epidemiologists and my Medical Advisory Panel are working on this right now.

Second, we need adequate Personal Protective Equipment, like masks, gloves and gowns: when we have enough PPE, then we know that our healthcare workers and first responders will be protected.

Third, we must establish a robust public health framework to support the reopening effort. The major components of this include:

1. We need to ramp up testing capacity in every region of our state. Increased testing helps us make sure we can identify where the virus is in our communities and stop it from spreading again. This will take strong
partnerships between the private sector and public health.

2. We need to develop a robust system for contact tracing to identify those who may have been exposed to the virus, and stop further transmission. OHA is working to develop a plan that works for every region in partnership with county public health departments and local health systems.

3. We need an effective quarantine and isolation program for people who test positive. It will need to include strategies for nursing home residents, and address the needs of people experiencing homelessness as well. And we need this in every region of the state.

These are the prerequisites necessary for “when” we can reopen. Then there’s the “how” we reopen Oregon, and keep it open. These are the key elements of the framework: Slow the growth; more PPE; testing capacity; contact tracing; and a quarantine and isolation program.

It will not be easy. It will take longer than we want.

Like the rest of the world, we will be actively monitoring the availability of both treatments and vaccines that might affect this structure and timeline. But for now, this is what we have and what we can do.

Now, I want to talk about how we are going to approach finalizing the details of this public health framework.

Moving forward, we will hold discussions with leaders across the state to discuss this plan further. We will gather input
from health care professionals, public health experts and from industries substantially affected by the stay at home order.

We will take a look at specific sectors of the economy: restaurants and food service, retailers, childcare, and personal services, like hair and nail salons.

We want to bring together business owners and practitioners with health professionals to discuss how reopening gradually in these sectors might be accomplished. For example, this might include additional guidelines for reconfiguring the delivery of services with added physical barriers like plexiglass dividers, or requirements for wearing PPE.

I also want to add that California Governor Newsom, Washington Governor Inslee, and I will be working to coordinate our efforts. This virus doesn’t recognize state boundaries. We have to work together on a plan for reopening, and we will be talking regularly and sharing best practices and processes with our neighbors to the North and the South.

In closing, I want to say that while we have to be careful, we also cannot stand still. We know this is a global problem, and leaders across the world are wrestling with how to approach it.

The shuttering of an economy at this scale has never happened before. Likewise, the reopening of a shuttered economy of this scale has never happened before.
I will continue to make decisions based on science and facts, in consultation with public health experts.

So far — through the sacrifices of thousands of Oregonians — our collective actions have had a major impact. Thank you. And I know that, together, we can and will get through this.

I also want to add the following: after the last great recession, the recovery was uneven. Certain people and industries benefited, and many — including folks in rural Oregon and communities of color — did not.

Today, many of our heroes are low-income workers: at grocery stores, nursing aides, truck drivers. But many more, from cooks and dishwashers and waiters to hotel housekeepers and salon stylists, have lost their jobs. In many of these sectors, these jobs are held predominantly by women and people of color. Our efforts at reopening Oregon and addressing the suffering this virus has caused must reflect this reality.

As we prepare in the months ahead to get Oregon back to work, we must remember the importance of doing so in a smart and deliberate fashion that keeps us moving forward instead of sending us backward.

This is going to move much slower than any of us want, but that is the only way to protect the health and safety of Oregonians.

With that, I’m happy to take questions.