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Amid Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Cuomo Announces State is Bringing in International Experts to Help Advise the State's Reopening Plan

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Dr. Michael T. Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota and Dr. Samir Bhatt, Senior Lecturer at Imperial College London Will Help Analyze Data and Metrics Throughout New York's Reopening Process

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the state is bringing in international experts to help advise the state's reopening plan. Dr. Michael T. Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota and Dr. Samir Bhatt, Senior Lecturer at Imperial College London will work with the state to provide technical advice and analyze data/metrics throughout the state's reopening process and help track the state's progress.

"As we begin to reopen businesses and regions across the state, we have to make sure we are paying attention to the numbers and the data to make sure that infection rate doesn't go back up again," Governor Cuomo said. "This virus is not just an issue in New York State - it is a global issue - and we need to make sure we have the best informed approach to reopening. We are bringing in international experts in this field to help advise our reopening strategy and analyze the numbers and the data as we move forward."

VIDEO of the today's remarks is available on YouTube [here](#) and in TV quality (h.264, mp4) format [here](#).

AUDIO of today's remarks is available [here](#).

A rush transcript of today's remarks is available below:

Governor Cuomo: What will reopening mean? That's a big topic of discussion now. What does reopening mean? This is not a subject that is a political subject or where political opinions really matter. I don't care if you're Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Independent, I don't care. I don't care. This is not a political exercise that we are going through. People say, well I have a personal opinion. I don't even care about your personal opinion. I don't think you should care about my personal opinion because it's not about a personal opinion. It's not about an ideological opinion. It's not about a geographic opinion. It's not even an opinion that's relevant. This is about facts and science and data these decisions are being made as a matter of math. It's numbers. It's math. That's all it is at the end of the day. You start to increase economic activity, you have more people coming out of their homes, more people contacting other people and then you measure the impact of that increase with numbers - not with opinions, not with politics, not with partisanship. With numbers, and then you just measure the impact.

Make sure that you don't go above 70 percent of your hospital beds so that if a large number of people get infected you have the hospital beds to take care of them. You make sure you don't go over 70 percent of your ICU bed capacity because when these people are infected with COVID they do need ICU beds. We learned that the hard way. You have testing up and running, 30 tests per 1,000 residents. Where did that come from? That's the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Dr. Birx.

You have 30 tracers ready for every 100,000 residents. That comes from the experts, and then you watch the infection rate and you make sure that you don't get near 1.1 on the infection rate. It's math and there's a liberation in that. At a time of such division in politics and elections and all this garbage this is an exercise in science and math and it's data that we can all share and we can all participate in. I encourage people to go look at the data and look at what's happening in your region because that's how we're going to get through this - on the numbers on the math, on the facts.

We're going to bring in advisers to the State, advisors who are international experts, global experts who have dealt with these kinds of diseases. This is not just a State of New York issue. It's not even an American issue. It's a global issue and I want to make sure we have people reviewing and then reviewing the reviewers and then as many opinions of experts that we can get are the best path forward. Dr. Osterholm is a nationwide expert in this field and he has agreed to review our data, what we're doing, what's happening, and to advise us as to how our progress looks on the numbers. I want to thank him very much. We to have Dr. Samir Bhatt, Senior Lecturer at Imperial College, who has agreed to serve as an advisor to the State of New York. Dr. Bhatt is the senior lecturer in geostatistics at the Imperial College in London. Geostatistics is not my field of endeavor. I never heard of geostatistics before, doctor. That's why we need you to advise us, Dr. Bhatt, because I know nothing about geostatistics. But Dr. Bhatt is joining us, I want to thank him very much. The Imperial College in London, we have had a number of projection models that were done early on by a number of very prestigious universities.


And we've been watching all these projection models since this started. As you know, many of the models were not 100 percent accurate because they couldn't calculate the effect of the social participation and what people actually did to change the curve. And in a State like New York, what the people did dramatically changed that curve so it affected the projections. But, the Imperial College model, as we've been following this for weeks, was the best, most accurate model. And therefore, I think Dr. Bhatt deserves all our thanks because they really helped us all through this to date, and I want to thank him very much for taking the time to advise us, not just on how we constructed our model to date but what happens going forward as we increase the economic activity and we start to see numbers change. So, Doctor, thank you very much for being with us, and it's a pleasure to welcome you today.

Dr. Samir Bhatt: Thank you, Governor. It's a professional honor to work with New York. I think your state has already shown what can be achieved when policies are driven by science. And I think the sacrifices people have made and will continue to make deserves an applause. The leadership shown in New York during this crisis should be commended and I think yours is an approach for others to follow. At Imperial College


commenced and I think yours is an approach for others to follow. At Imperial College London, we have a huge COVID-19 response team collaborating with scientists and government agencies globally. You in New York have successfully contained the virus for now, but New York is not out of the woods yet. No state, no country is. As you reopen, New York must continue to watch the data and follow the science. We are really eager to work with New York, as they're approaching this crisis from a scientific perspective driven by data. New York is leading the way with data collection, and this will help tie together as many sources of evidence as possible to reach a scientific consensus which can then be used for decision-making. Our team is focused on rigorous modeling to track R, or RT, as you have put it, as well. The reproduction number of the virus going forward. If R goes above 1, this means the virus is no longer contained, and we need to track the spread of this virus and the disease using the best data possible and as much of it as possible. We're committed to open science, so policymakers and citizens understand our conclusions, limitations, and of course, the uncertainties. To date, my team at Imperial has released reports for Europe, Brazil, Italy, relying on data from Google, as well as open source statistical tools developed at Columbia University. Thanks to these tools and our research network, the code is available to everyone to see, test, and to improve. As countries around the world and states around the U.S. start reopening their economies, we will see cases rise once again. And so, New York must continue to be vigilant and to follow the data. So, I think, I say, you know, Governor, thank you for this opportunity, and truly, thank you for the work you've been doing and you are doing.

Governor Cuomo: Thank you. Thank you very much, Doctor, thank you for being with us. Thank you, I look forward to speaking to you in the days ahead. I want to thank the doctor very much and the whole college. Look, I'm a parochial New Yorker. I was not all that eager to seek the advice of a college in London, but I can tell you this. This is a global pandemic, and what we're now doing, other countries have done before. We tend to think we are always the first. We're not the first. We're not the first to deal with this virus. Other countries have dealt with it, other countries have gone through reopening, they've learned all sorts of lessons on reopening. I want to make sure that what we're doing is the best-informed approach. So, I want to thank the doctor very much, and they'll be looking exactly at what happens at our data, our metrics, going forward.

Contact the Governor's Press Office

 **Contact us by phone:**

Albany: (518) 474 - 8418
New York City: (212) 681 - 4640

 **Contact us by email:**

Press.Office@exec.ny.gov

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

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