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SCRIPT BELOW:

MORE THAN 400 NEW CONFIRMED CASES OF THE NEW CORONAVIRUS IN NORTH CAROLINA RESIDENTS PUSHED THE STATEWIDE COUNT TO OVER EIGHT-THOUSAND CASES FRIDAY MORNING, ACCORDING TO THE N.C. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.

DEATHS ALSO INCREASED WITH 16 REPORTED SINCE THURSDAY, BRINGING THE STATE'S TOTAL OF KNOWN DEATHS FROM CORONAVIRUS-RELATED ILLNESS TO 269.

ONE-HUNDRED THOUSAND STATE RESIDENTS HAVE NOW HAD COMPLETED TESTS FOR THE VIRUS. NEARLY 500 HUNDRED ARE CURRENTLY HOSPITALIZED WITH COVID-19 INFECTIONS.

NEARLY HALF OF THE STATE'S DEATHS AND ABOUT A QUARTER OF ITS CASES ARE IN CONGREGATE LIVING SETTINGS, INCLUDING NURSING HOMES AND OTHER LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES, COUNTY JAILS AND STATE AND FEDERAL PRISONS.

THE ACTUAL NUMBERS OF DEATHS AND CASES WITH TIES TO CONGREGATE LIVING MAY BE MUCH GREATER, SINCE DATA ON

WHETHER THE PATIENT RESIDED IN SUCH A SETTING WAS NOT GATHERED ON ABOUT 2,400 OF THE PEOPLE WHO TESTED POSITIVE.

GOVERNOR ROY COOPER ANNOUNCED FRIDAY THAT NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS WILL NOW BE CLOSED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

AS OF FRIDAY, DHHS REPORTED OUTBREAKS AT 57 LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES IN 27 COUNTIES, BUT HAS NOT IDENTIFIED THE FACILITIES OR SAID HOW LARGE EACH OUTBREAK IS. A COLLABORATIVE GROUP OF INVESTIGATE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS, RELEASED A REPORT LATE THURSDAY ON ATTEMPTS TO SURVEY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS AND NURSING HOMES TO DETERMINE MORE ABOUT THE **SIZE AND SPECIFIC LOCATIONS OF OUTBREAKS**. WHILE MANY FACILITIES AND COUNTY OFFICIALS PROVIDED HELPFUL INFORMATION, OTHERS REFUSED.

THE STATE MAY SOON FACE A LEGAL CHALLENGE OVER ITS REFUSAL TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION, WHICH LEGAL EXPERTS HAVE SAID IS A PUBLIC RECORD AND PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND ELSEWHERE HAVE SAID IS ESSENTIAL TO TRACKING THE SPREAD OF THE PANDEMIC.

CPP REPORTED FRIDAY THAT GOV. ROY COOPER HAS UNVEILED A **PLAN FOR A PHASED REOPENING** OF THE STATE'S ECONOMY BASED ON MEETING SPECIFIC BENCHMARKS. BUT SEVERAL PRECONDITIONS REQUIRED TO REACH THE FIRST BENCHMARK ARE STILL OUT OF REACH, ESPECIALLY WITH AN ACCELERATING NUMBER OF NEW CONFIRMED CASES EACH DAY.

CPP ALSO REPORTED FRIDAY ON A FUND TO PROVIDE BENEFITS TO THE FAMILIES OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS WHO DIE IN THE LINE OF DUTY DURING THE PANDEMIC.

YOU CAN FIND THIS STORY AND MORE INFORMATION RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS IN NORTH CAROLINA BY GOING TO CAROLINA-PUBLIC-PRESS-DOT-ORG.*

THIS IS STEPHANIE CARSON REPORTING.