

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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COVID-19 Oversight Hearings  
PPE Procurement, Storage and Distribution During  
COVID-19

\* \* \* \*

House State Government Committee

Irvis Office Building  
Room G-50  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Wednesday, March 31, 2021 - 9:02 a.m.

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Honorable Seth Grove, Majority Chairman  
Honorable Russ Diamond (virtual)  
Honorable Matt Dowling  
Honorable Dawn Keefer  
Honorable Andrew Lewis (virtual)  
Honorable Ryan Mackenzie (virtual)  
Honorable Brett Miller  
Honorable Eric Nelson (virtual)  
Honorable Jason Ortitay (virtual)  
Honorable Clint Owlett (virtual)  
Honorable Frank Ryan (virtual)  
Honorable Paul Schemel (virtual)  
Honorable Louis Schmitt (virtual)  
Honorable Craig Staats (virtual)  
Honorable Jeff Wheeland  
Honorable Margo Davidson, Minority Chairwoman  
Honorable Isabella Fitzgerald (virtual)  
Honorable Kristine Howard (virtual)  
Honorable Maureen Madden (virtual)  
Honorable Benjamin Sanchez (virtual)  
Honorable Jared Solomon (virtual)  
Honorable Joe Webster (virtual)

1300 Garrison Drive, York, PA 17404  
717.764.7801

**Key Reporters**

[keyreporters@comcast.net](mailto:keyreporters@comcast.net)

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STAFF PRESENT:

Michaele Totino  
Majority Executive Director

Sherry Eberly  
Majority Legislative Administrative Assistant

Matthew Rindfuss  
Majority Research Analyst

Nicholas Himebaugh  
Minority Executive Director

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Ken Hess, Deputy Secretary

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

D. Randy Padfield, Director  
Jeff Thomas, Executive Deputy Director

Bureau of Emergency Preparedness & Response  
Pennsylvania Department of Health

Andy Pickett, Director

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

(See other submitted testimony and handouts  
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1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Good morning.  
2 Welcome to this public hearing of Pennsylvania  
3 State House Government Committee on PPE  
4 procurement, storage, and distribution during  
5 COVID-19. I'm the committee's chairman, Seth  
6 Grove, from York County.

7 Today is the last hearing of four, which  
8 this committee has reviewed COVID-19 policies under  
9 the Wolf Administration. PPE has been a precious  
10 commodity over the past year. Today we hope to  
11 hear about how the Administration procures PPE, how  
12 it is stored, and how it is distributed.

13 After of a year of being under a  
14 multitude of COVID-19 orders, I really hope to hear  
15 about concrete written plans which deal with  
16 procurement, storage, and distribution of PPE for  
17 COVID-19 and beyond. I hope to hear dates on when  
18 the Farm Show will be reopened and back function  
19 for events. I really hope to hear a guarantee that  
20 the 2022 Farm Show will be happening, and I hope to  
21 hear about how our PPE stockpile has been  
22 supporting our frontline workers over the entire  
23 year, and particularly during this last spike in  
24 cases.

25 With that, Chairwoman Davidson, do you

1 have any opening remarks?

2 CHAIRWOMAN DAVIDSON: No, not really.

3 No, not really. But, good morning,  
4 everybody.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Awesome.

6 While the Capitol and our hearings are  
7 now open to the public, there is limited seating  
8 available in each hearing room due to COVID-19  
9 mitigated -- mitigation orders by the Governor. We  
10 have members and testifiers in attendance virtually  
11 as well as the public viewing via the live stream.  
12 Due to Sunshine law requirements, if either of  
13 these platforms experience technical difficulties,  
14 we will pause the meeting in order to correct the  
15 issues.

16 For members participating virtually,  
17 please mute your microphones. Please know when we  
18 -- when you speak we all hear you and we do all see  
19 you if your camera is on. If you want to be  
20 recognized for comments, please use the raise-hand  
21 function. After being recognized, but prior to  
22 speaking, please turn on your camera and un-mute  
23 your microphone. After you've completed your  
24 question, please mute your microphone again. We'll  
25 move on to member introductions.

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1           For members, we'll start with committee  
2 members in the room. For members attending  
3 virtually, I will call on you one by one. Start  
4 with Chairwoman Davidson.

5           CHAIRWOMAN DAVISON: Yes. I'm state  
6 Representative Margo Davidson, Democratic Chair for  
7 the State Government Committee. I'm also the  
8 representative -- duly-elected representative for  
9 the 164th Legislative District in Delaware County.

10           REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Representative  
11 Dawn Keefer, the 92nd Legislative District, York  
12 and Cumberland counties.

13           REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Brett Miller,  
14 41st District, Lancaster County.

15           REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Good morning,  
16 everyone. Representative Dan Moul, Chairman of the  
17 House Agriculture Committee, and I represent the  
18 91st District in Adams County.

19           REPRESENTATIVE DOWLING: Good morning.  
20 I'm Representative Matthew Dowling representing the  
21 51st Legislative District in Fayette and Somerset  
22 counties.

23           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
24 Staats.

25           REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Good morning,

1 everyone. Craig Staats representing the 145th  
2 District in Bucks County.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
4 Lewis.

5 REPRESENTATIVE LEWIS: Good morning, Mr.  
6 Chairman, members of the committee. Representative  
7 Lewis representing the 105th District in the  
8 beautiful county of Dauphin.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
10 Owlett.

11 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Representative  
12 Owlett, 68th District, all of Tioga County, parts  
13 of Bradford and parts of Potter County.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
15 Nelson.

16 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Good morning,  
17 everyone. Representative Nelson, Westmoreland  
18 County, 57th District.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
20 Fitzgerald.

21 REPRESENTATIVE FITZGERALD: Good  
22 morning. Isabella Fitzgerald representing the  
23 203rd District in Philadelphia, West Oak Lane, East  
24 Oak Lane, and the Lower Northeast.

25 REPRESENTATIVE RYAN: Representative

1 Frank Ryan in the 101st District in Lebanon County,  
2 Pennsylvania. We're always one number ahead of the  
3 102nd District in Lebanon County as well.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
5 Howard.

6 REPRESENTATIVE HOWARD: Hi. It's  
7 Kristine Howard from the 167th in Chester County.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Chairwoman  
9 Boback.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Representative  
11 Karen Boback. I represent House District 117,  
12 northeastern Pennsylvania area, and I'm the  
13 Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency  
14 Preparedness Committee.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
16 Schmitt.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCHMITT: Good morning,  
18 Mr. Chairman. Good morning, everyone. Lou  
19 Schmitt, 79th Legislative District. I represent  
20 the City of Altoona and other parts of Blair  
21 County.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
23 Madden.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MADDEN: Good morning.  
25 Representative Madden representing the 115th

1 Legislative District, Monroe County.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
3 Schemel.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SCHEMEL: Good morning.  
5 Representative Paul Schemel. I represent portions  
6 of Franklin County.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
8 Ortitay.

9 REPRESENTATIVE ORTITAY: Good morning.  
10 Representative Jason Ortitay representing the 46th  
11 District, Allegheny and Washington counties.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
13 Diamond.

14 REPRESENTATIVE DIAMOND: Good morning.  
15 Russ Diamond, 102nd District in Lebanon County. If  
16 all the districts were on a bell curve, the 203  
17 districts, the 102nd district would be right at the  
18 peak. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
20 Mackenzie.

21 REPRESENTATIVE MACKENZIE: Good morning.  
22 Ryan Mackenzie representing the 134th District in  
23 portions of Lehigh and Berks counties.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
25 Sanchez.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr.  
2 Chairman. Good morning, all. Ben Sanchez  
3 representing Montgomery County.

4                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
5 Solomon.

6                   REPRESENTATIVE SOLOMON: Good morning,  
7 everybody. Jared Solomon, 202nd, Northeast  
8 Philadelphia.

9                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
10 Webster.

11                  REPRESENTATIVE WEBSTER: Good morning,  
12 Mr. Chairman. And good morning to everyone  
13 attending today. It's Joe Webster. I'm  
14 representing the 150th District in Montgomery  
15 County.

16                  MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.  
17 I'm just scanning to make sure I got everyone.  
18 (Pause). All right. We're good.

19                  For today's hearing we'll basically have  
20 one panel consisting of Secretary Curt Topper,  
21 Department of General Services; Deputy Secretary  
22 Ken Hess, Department of General Services; Director  
23 Randy Padfield, PEMA; Executive Deputy Director  
24 Jeff Thomas of PEMA; Director Andy Pickett, Bureau  
25 of Emergency Preparedness for Department of Health.

1       Could all of you turn on your screens and your  
2       sound, and we will swear you in.

3                       (Video difficulty).

4                       A VOICE: I don't hear anyone else  
5       except you.

6                       A VOICE: We're still here, Secretary.

7                       MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Yeah. We're  
8       pinning you on the screen right now. Hold on.

9                       (Video difficulty).

10                      MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: We can only  
11       have four on the screen at one time. If the five  
12       of you can raise your right hand, I'll swear you  
13       in.

14                      (All testifiers sworn en masse).

15                      MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you,  
16       gentlemen. Thank you for your participation in  
17       this meeting this morning.

18                      Secretary Topper, I know you have  
19       opening comments, but I wasn't sure if any other  
20       agency had any other opening comments, or you're  
21       just going to cover for the three agencies.

22                      SECRETARY TOPPER: Mr. Chairman, I  
23       believe I can -- I can open us up, and I'll be  
24       happy to do so, although I'll certainly defer to my  
25       colleagues here on the panel. I have no need to

1 read my opening comments. They've been submitted  
2 for the record.

3 I would just like to thank you for  
4 giving me the opportunity to publicly acknowledge  
5 and to thank these individuals, Randy, Jeff, and in  
6 particular Andy Pickett, Ken Hess, my deputy, and  
7 all the remarkable men and women that work for  
8 these gentlemen, who worked tirelessly through  
9 extraordinary circumstances and undoubtedly saved  
10 countless lives in the process.

11 I really think we owe them a debt of  
12 gratitude for their extraordinary effort and their  
13 extraordinary public service as we -- as we  
14 contended with the truly unprecedented pandemic.  
15 They really did Pennsylvania proud. And I hope  
16 that we can all acknowledge their efforts because  
17 they really are heroes. They performed heroically  
18 during a tremendously difficult time, and they've  
19 continued to do so throughout the year.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you,  
21 Mr. Secretary.

22 Mr. Padfield or -- do you have any  
23 opening comments for PEMA?

24 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: No, not at this  
25 point in time. I think -- I think we're good with

1 going straight into questions.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Okay. Just  
3 checking.

4 Mr. Pickett, any opening comments for  
5 the Department of Health?

6 DIRECTOR PICKETT: No, sir, nothing at  
7 this time. Thank you.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Okay. Again,  
9 I would thank you all you for testifying today. We  
10 greatly appreciate it. And again, PPE has been a  
11 crucial entity over the past year. I think the  
12 pandemic has shown how critical that is.

13 With that, we'll go right into  
14 questions. Representative Dowling, you're first.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DOWLING: Good morning.  
16 And thank you, gentlemen, for being with us.  
17 Secretary Topper, thank you for taking time out of  
18 schedule.

19 My question is, related to procurement  
20 and directed towards you, if you could, can you  
21 explain if there is any difference, and if so, what  
22 is the difference between procurement in a normal  
23 PPE situation or process verse the emergency PPE  
24 procurement process? How do they differ?

25 SECRETARY TOPPER: Sure. Thank you.

1           I can start, and then I think I'll defer  
2 to Ken Hess, who is our deputy secretary, who  
3 oversees the procurement process.

4           I think under normal circumstances, the  
5 Commonwealth was buying PPE to the extent that we  
6 were buying the types of PPE that were necessary in  
7 order to respond to the pandemic. We were buying  
8 them through a previously-established set of  
9 contracts. Any items that we tend to buy in any  
10 kind of volume to support the operations of the  
11 state and state-owned facilities, we typically buy  
12 through an array of contracts at pre-established  
13 prices and terms.

14           It is clear that as the pandemic began  
15 to ramp up, that those contracts were unable to  
16 deliver what we needed in the amounts that were  
17 need, or at the pricing that had been previously  
18 established. In that sense, our experience was  
19 very similar to that of other states and other  
20 governments around the world as everyone scrambled  
21 to meet their needs.

22           So, we had to move very quickly to  
23 contracting on an emergency basis, which the  
24 procurement code gives us the authority to do.  
25 Once we're contracting on an emergency basis, we

1 had the ability to do such things as raise the  
2 P-Card limit allowing agencies to use our  
3 procurement card at, you know, for purchases up to  
4 a hundred thousand dollars as opposed to \$10,000.  
5 It also allows us to go right to manufacturers,  
6 right to brokers, wherever we can get the materials  
7 that we need, and it allows us to negotiate the  
8 pricing for those items in order to obtain them.

9 We need the ability to be able to do  
10 procurement on an emergency basis when these kinds  
11 of things happen, because the standard procurement  
12 process through which we register vendors hold an  
13 open and fair competition, you know, by soliciting  
14 quotes, receiving proposals, charging those  
15 proposals, and then producing a contract, that  
16 process can take weeks, and we did not have weeks  
17 to spare. So, it's a good thing that the code gave  
18 us the authority to do procurement on an emergency  
19 basis.

20 I'll stop there and ask if Ken has  
21 anything else to add.

22 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: Thank you,  
23 Secretary Topper, Representatives. I would add  
24 that centralizing tactical procurement within the  
25 Bureau of Procurement, pulling it in from the

1 agencies was a key to the success of our  
2 undertaking. All of the -- We have a variety of  
3 teams within the Bureau of Procurement. They were  
4 all assigned additional duties, working nights,  
5 weekends, and holidays to source PPE.

6 Other unusual things, we established a  
7 very agile spec writing and verification due to the  
8 unbelievably rapid changes with the FDA, the CDC,  
9 the Chinese Ministry of Health and Customs and  
10 Border Protection. We had to establish  
11 pre-production and first article sampling and  
12 retention procedures.

13 We had to, for the first time, establish  
14 foreign sourcing and importer security credentials  
15 with the Customs and Border Protection with  
16 forwarders, brokers. Wherever possible, we  
17 utilized GSA contract piggy-backs, federal surplus  
18 property. We established a bulk supplier vetting  
19 portal in consultation with PEMA and DCD. And we  
20 had to -- We had to come up with equally agile  
21 payment processes given the velocity with which  
22 these transactions were undertaken.

23 Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

25 Representative Schmitt.

1           REPRESENTATIVE SCHMITT: Thank you,  
2 Mr. Chairman.

3           This question is directed to Secretary  
4 Topper, but anybody else who needs to jump in  
5 certainly can feel free to do so.

6           Secretary Topper, as we move through the  
7 pandemic, has the amount of PPE that's been  
8 procured, is that a set amount or has that varied  
9 at any one time?

10          SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you for the  
11 question, Representative.

12          It is has varied greatly over time. And  
13 I would defer to our colleagues at PEMA and Health  
14 who were really at the front end of this process  
15 determining the amounts we need to buy and what we  
16 needed to buy.

17          DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Sure. Secretary  
18 Topper, thanks. This is Director Padfield. And,  
19 Representative Schmitt, that's a very good  
20 question.

21          The PPE landscape was very convoluted,  
22 to say the least. Obviously, we knew we needed to  
23 procure PPE. We also knew that there was PPE that  
24 was still being provided by six major distributors  
25 across the nation to endpoints within the counties.

1 We did not know what those endpoints happened to be  
2 or who was specifically receiving the PPE that was  
3 being shipped by the federal government, but we  
4 would actually get reports from the federal  
5 government regarding PPE that was distributed to  
6 counties within the state. Again, not knowing  
7 those endpoints, it made it difficult from our  
8 perspective.

9 We also, and it's more in the Department  
10 of Health's lane, received early on the strategic  
11 national stockpile and PPE from there. We had  
12 donations that were coming in both from FEMA, but  
13 also from industry and other folks that were  
14 willing to donate PPE that may have been sitting on  
15 the shelf for a while, but was still usable under  
16 an EUA, or extension of their expiration dates or  
17 used by dates.

18 So, a lot of that factored into what we  
19 were looking at and what we really needed to  
20 procure. So, you know, we looked at the original  
21 spring surge, and Department of Health, Director  
22 Pickett can talk to this. But early on we had a  
23 request for over 20 million N95 masks from counties  
24 and from places that did not even have positive  
25 cases as of yet. So, we were looking at the big

1 picture.

2 And then it changed and evolved as we  
3 continued throughout the pandemic to realize what  
4 truly the burn rates happened to be from a lot of  
5 the health care institutions, from the long-term  
6 care facilities, from a lot of the other end users  
7 of PPE. Early on we did not have enough PPE to  
8 cover everyone, and Director Pickett can talk about  
9 it. I'm sure we'll get into that.

10 But, also understanding the burn rate  
11 and understanding that there's a big difference  
12 between calculating, you know, PPE consumption when  
13 there's maximum conservation being used. And we  
14 knew that in the spring surge that was being  
15 employed, and there's a big difference between an  
16 N95 per employee per week, an N95 per employee per  
17 day, and an N95 per employee per patient contact,  
18 which is actually the golden standard that we try  
19 to live by for infection control.

20 So, trying to calculate the amount of  
21 PPE that we needed was difficult, but we were able  
22 to settle on what we thought made sense based on  
23 looking at what we -- what our historical burn rate  
24 and request rate happened to be, taking a look at  
25 where we were with the surge, comparing that with

1 some modeling, especially for the fall surge of  
2 what we thought the upper and lower limits happened  
3 to be, and then also taking a look at what's  
4 available on the market and from the different  
5 sources.

6 REPRESENTATIVE SCHMITT: Thank you. A  
7 little bit of a follow-up question.

8 Whenever PPE was acquired, in whatever  
9 amount and whenever it was as we moved through the  
10 pandemic, was there a hard-and-fast formula in  
11 terms of the percentage of the PPE that would go  
12 into a stockpile and it would be immediately  
13 distributed? Or, did that, if there was a formula,  
14 did that also evolve over time.

15 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: So, I'll defer to  
16 Director Pickett on that. There were a couple of  
17 different formulas. A lot of times we were  
18 receiving PPE and it was being turned around very  
19 quickly to go out, depending on what stage of the  
20 pandemic we happened to be in.

21 And then the goal was really to build up  
22 the stockpile, you know, commensurably as more  
23 supply came in. Working with DGS, you know, we  
24 knew when we had ship by dates and when we were  
25 going to receive additional PPE. So,

1 strategically, taking a look at when we thought we  
2 were going to receive additional PPE, understanding  
3 what the stores and inventory was that we had  
4 currently at that point in time and that snapshot  
5 and understanding what we needed to push out. But  
6 the goal was, eventually, to be able to continue to  
7 build the stockpile and realize, you know, the  
8 amounts that we probably need to be able to cover  
9 for any -- any situations, especially in the future  
10 as we came into the fall surge.

11 But, Andy, feel free.

12 DIRECTOR PICKETT: Thank you, Director.

13 And thank you, Representative.

14 As the director had said, we have had  
15 multiple iterations of our frame work for  
16 allocation of PPE. When this first came to  
17 Pennsylvania in March of last year, we were seeing  
18 very clearly the impacts that the health care  
19 sector was seeing, especially the acute care  
20 hospitals, the images coming out of New York City,  
21 and the request for the USNS Comfort to come.  
22 Because of the overwhelming surge to hospitals,  
23 made us understand that that was going to be the  
24 frontline at that point in time for this crisis.

25 At the beginning, we employed a push-

1 based strategy, so as soon as we received  
2 significant quantities of PPE, we immediately  
3 turned that around and began allocating that to  
4 acute care hospitals.

5 As that first surge waned, and we began  
6 to see cases in our long-term care facilities, that  
7 became our next push. So, again, as PPE came in  
8 and was of significant quantities to make an  
9 impact, we began pushing out to the long-term care  
10 facilities across the state.

11 Often, as we were doing this, we were  
12 looking at the size of the facility. A facility  
13 that has 50 beds doesn't need as much PPE as a  
14 facility that needs 500 beds, so we were able to  
15 stratify and look both at the acute care and the  
16 long-term care facilities to make sure we were  
17 pushing out adequate quantities. Certainly, not  
18 adequate enough to have that gold standard that  
19 Director Padfield was speaking to, because that  
20 quantity just didn't exist in the way that the  
21 facilities were using the products, but we were  
22 able to ensure that most facilities were able to  
23 have that, at least a standard of care that would  
24 allow them to use the PPE effectively and safely.

25 That strategy has now shifted. Now that

1 we do have -- the demand has gone down over the  
2 last several months. The supplies have increased  
3 and the supply chain has caught up, and so, we are  
4 able to do more stockpiling, as Director Padfield  
5 said, looking toward the future, but also certainly  
6 able to address any immediate requests that we have  
7 from facilities, whether they're acute care,  
8 long-term care, or other facilities that need PPE  
9 are able to request that and have those orders  
10 fulfilled.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SCHMITT: Okay. Thank  
12 you, gentlemen, for your testimony today. Thank  
13 you for the responsive answers to my questions. I  
14 appreciate it.

15 Mr. Chairman, that's all I have for the  
16 time being. Thank you.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.  
18 Representative Diamond.

19 REPRESENTATIVE DIAMOND: Thank you, Mr.  
20 Chairman.

21 Secretary Topper, in the submitted  
22 testimony, the pre-COVID-19 supply of PPE was  
23 mentioned. Can you be more specific as to the  
24 quantity of that PPE and where that was stored?

25 SECRETARY TOPPER: I would have to defer

1 to my colleague, Mr. Hess. Ken?

2 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: Yes. Thank you.

3 Representative Diamond, for the period  
4 March 2019 through February 2020, the Commonwealth  
5 purchased 2,116 N95s, about 4,000 gowns. We have  
6 no data on Procedures Masks. They were very  
7 inexpensive and were likely bought with P-Cards:  
8 44 million gloves, 792 face shields, 12,000,  
9 approximately, units of hand sanitizer.

10 And what's interesting is that, the unit  
11 prices that we paid in those relatively small  
12 quantities was dramatically higher, with some  
13 exception than what we were paying, going to the  
14 volume and leverage that we brought to bear.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DIAMOND: All right.

16 This one is for either Secretary Topper  
17 or Mr. Pickett. In the joint submitted written  
18 testimony it states that PPE that was stockpiled  
19 prior to COVID-19 was, quote, specific to Ebola  
20 and, quote, and not of the types of resources that  
21 were necessary for the current COVID-19 response,  
22 unquote.

23 Can you explain what the difference is  
24 between the required PPE for Ebola or influenza,  
25 and the PPE required for COVID-19?

1                   DIRECTOR PICKETT: Certainly, sir. I  
2 can take that question.

3                   The Ebola PPE that is recommended by the  
4 CDC and the World Health Organization is a much  
5 higher level of protection than what is required  
6 for COVID-19. Ebola requires a fully encapsulated  
7 suit, so sort of that HazMat-looking moon suit and  
8 then a powered-air purifying respirator. This  
9 provides a high level of protection against a very  
10 dangerous disease.

11                  Now, COVID certainly is dangerous, but  
12 certainly not to the level that Ebola is. It  
13 requires a slightly lower level of protection; a  
14 simple gown, gloves, and an N95 mask with some kind  
15 of eye protection are the current CDC  
16 recommendations for treating a patient or working  
17 with a patient who has COVID-19.

18                  Now, certainly, you could employ a  
19 higher level of protection, but there are risks  
20 with that as well. Moving around in a Ebola level  
21 of protection, it takes a lot of time to get into  
22 and out of that level of PPE. It's also more  
23 difficult for the health care workers to move. You  
24 get very warm very quickly because, again, you're  
25 in that fully encapsulated suit. So it's really --

1           When you're dealing with a large volume  
2 of patients like we were seeing in our health care  
3 facilities, it's not the most effective or best  
4 use, and there aren't as many health care providers  
5 that are trained in that higher level of protection  
6 for Ebola patients.

7           REPRESENTATIVE DIAMOND: And just one  
8 quick follow-up. I have noticed a couple reports  
9 about Ebola in the Pacific Northwest. Are we still  
10 maintaining that stockpile as well?

11          DIRECTOR PICKETT: Yes, sir. We have an  
12 Ebola plan and we have an Ebola PPE, and we  
13 continue to monitor. As you may know, in western  
14 Africa there's currently an outbreak of Ebola  
15 there. So, as a public health agency, we continue  
16 to keep track of that as well.

17          REPRESENTATIVE DIAMOND: All right.  
18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19          MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

20          Secretary -- Deputy Secretary Hess, I  
21 just want to follow up on Representative Diamond's  
22 first question on the pre-COVID supply of PPE. I'm  
23 not sure we got his kind of -- You went over  
24 quantity we had, but where was that supply stored?

25          DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: We do contract

1       warehousing on behalf of the Department of Health  
2       at various sites around the Harrisburg area. And I  
3       will say that what I --

4               The information that I shared is what  
5       the state purchased. I believe -- And, Andy, you  
6       can back me up on this. I believe that probably  
7       the bulk of the prior PPE stockpile was actually --  
8       came from the feds; is that correct?

9               DIRECTOR PICKETT: That is correct.  
10       There was a previous stockpile that stemmed from  
11       the 2009 H1N1 response where the federal government  
12       had pushed PPE to state agencies, similar to what  
13       happened in the beginning phases of COVID. And  
14       some of that PPE had been put into, you know, the  
15       custody of our DGS partners, and they were storing  
16       it on behalf of the department.

17              However, those quantities were  
18       significantly limited; you know, perhaps a few  
19       hundred thousand masks, gloves, gowns, et cetera.  
20       So it was not a significant stockpile. It was  
21       effectively just a starter for our COVID response.

22              MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.  
23       Representative Wheeland.

24              REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: Thank you,  
25       Mr. Chairman.

1           Secretary Topper, Director Padfield, it  
2 is our understanding that the state's current PPE  
3 stockpile is at the Farm Show Complex. But, is  
4 this the only storage location for the Commonwealth  
5 currently?

6           SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you,  
7 Representative.

8           The current stockpile at the Farm Show  
9 is the only place that we are currently storing  
10 these inventories. It's important that we have it  
11 at a central location, and that we have it at a  
12 single location, particularly. That was  
13 particularly important at a time when the demands  
14 for distribution of PPE were as high as they were.

15           REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: Okay. So  
16 when, in the past 12 months, approximately when was  
17 it determined that that would be the storage  
18 location for our stockpile? Any idea when -- when  
19 that was first determined? When did they receive  
20 the first shipments to the Farm Show Complex?

21           SECRETARY TOPPER: I will -- I'll ask  
22 Ken to answer the question about when first  
23 shipments were received.

24           However, I would just offer that the  
25 Farm Show Complex has, for many years, been

1 identified as part of our emergency response  
2 planning working with the Department of Health and  
3 with PEMA. It is a standard location, you know,  
4 that plays a significant role in all of our  
5 emergency planning here and has going back several  
6 administrations.

7 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: We first began  
8 to receive PPE in March of this year, and I know --  
9 Apologies.

10 REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: As in the last  
11 -- As in the last -- There was nothing in the Farm  
12 Show prior to the last four weeks --

13 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: March of 2020.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: -- last year?  
15 March of 2020. Within weeks of the  
16 onset of the pandemic is when the citizens started  
17 to receive the stockpile at the Farm Show Complex,  
18 correct?

19 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: We moved the  
20 initial supply that we had mentioned that we had  
21 from earlier operations to the Farm Show  
22 immediately, and then began to receive shipments  
23 through the federal government.

24 REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: So what was  
25 the benefit of -- of putting all of our proverbial

1 eggs in one basket? I don't quite understand that.  
2 I'm not -- I don't have a major in logistics, but  
3 that is quite concerning that you would put all  
4 your eggs in one basket? When was that determined?

5 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: Anybody -- I'm  
6 happy to take that one.

7 SECRETARY TOPPER: Sure, Ken.

8 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: So I do have  
9 about 20 to 30 years background in logistics and  
10 supply chain, and it's very common to have hub-and-  
11 spokes systems.

12 In this particular case, the federal  
13 strategic national stockpile serves as the hub, and  
14 the spokes are the various state RSS sites. For  
15 purposes of security and leveraging our human  
16 resources, it makes it much easier to operate out  
17 of one facility than it does out of multiple  
18 facilities.

19 We get economies of scale. We get the  
20 security that we need. We can focus material-  
21 handling equipment. We practiced out of that  
22 facility. So, there was a fair amount of planning  
23 that went into that operation over the years.

24 REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: Okay. Thank  
25 you. I mean, I felt good in the beginning when you

1 were saying that prior to the pandemic that we had  
2 PPEs scattered throughout warehousing, you know,  
3 around Harrisburg. Did I hear that correct? And  
4 then we eliminated that and we put everything  
5 together.

6 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: We did pull in  
7 the smaller inventories that we had, yes.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: Hmm. Okay.  
9 Thank you very much.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
12 Staats.

13 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Thank you,  
14 Chairman Grove.

15 And thank you, gentlemen, for your time  
16 this morning. Secretary Topper, I'd like to stay  
17 on the line of questioning that Representative  
18 Wheeland was on.

19 Last year the task force was formed to  
20 look into potential alternatives to the Farm Show  
21 location, or ways to, perhaps, enable the complex  
22 to continue to operate while still housing PPE.

23 Do we have any updates from this task  
24 force and have any alternatives been determined?

25 SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you,

1 Representative.

2 We have been working steadily with the  
3 Department of Agriculture, with the Governor's  
4 Office, with PEMA, and with the Department of  
5 Health. We have determined that the Commonwealth  
6 requires an ongoing permanent stockpile of these  
7 kinds of personal protective equipment, because,  
8 frankly, we don't know when the next pandemic is  
9 going to hit. And our experience over the last  
10 year has shown that we can't necessarily rely on  
11 the federal government to deliver everything that  
12 we need when we need it. So, as a result, we've  
13 concluded that it's necessary for us to maintain a  
14 permanent stockpile.

15 The good news is that, the inventory for  
16 that permanent stockpile has largely been acquired.  
17 We have been working on a plan to ensure that  
18 inventory over normal times gets appropriately  
19 circulated, or recirculated so that -- and  
20 replenished so that we don't have an expiration  
21 issue. We have been working out those plans.

22 We have as part of the DGS budget  
23 proposal this year an incremental expense for the  
24 purpose of leasing the new facility, and the  
25 operating costs associated with maintaining that

1 new facility so that we can provide an ongoing  
2 substantial PPE stockpile for the Commonwealth.

3 The plan currently is, you know, pending  
4 the budget, pending the approval of that budget  
5 proposal, once we have been that in hand, we intend  
6 to lease the facility, and we intend to commence  
7 moving all of the inventory out of the Farm Show  
8 throughout the coming summer.

9 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: But does it make  
10 sense to have all PPE in one location where it  
11 could be vulnerable to fire, flooding, vandalism,  
12 sabotage? Would it not make sense to have regional  
13 storage areas in an effort to protect supplies, and  
14 also, logistical benefits?

15 SECRETARY TOPPER: Well, I --

16 Representative, I think as Ken just  
17 outlined, I think there's significant logistical  
18 benefits to maintaining a single location as  
19 opposed to multiple regional locations.

20 I think it's important to understand  
21 that we are not the whole supply chain for the  
22 whole Commonwealth. We're a provider of last  
23 resort in the instance of a pandemic event. We're  
24 a participant in a much larger marketplace.

25 So, every one of those local health care

1 providers, local county governments, every -- every  
2 consumer of PPE already has their own standard  
3 supply chains and their own standard -- and to some  
4 degree, their own stockpiles.

5 So, it's not the case that we're the  
6 only game in town. What we're building is a system  
7 that can provide -- that can provide the last stop,  
8 or the last backstop, if you will, for all of those  
9 potential PPE consumers. So one location really  
10 does make sense.

11 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Okay. It  
12 doesn't make sense to me, but I appreciate your  
13 answers. Thank you.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Mr. Secretary,  
15 just a follow-up.

16 In Representative Diamond's first  
17 questions about the pre-COVID supply of PPE, you  
18 had private contracts for multiple warehouses  
19 throughout the Harrisburg area. What was the cost  
20 of those leases? And then, what is the cost of the  
21 lease of the new facility proposed in your current  
22 -- next fiscal year's budget?

23 SECRETARY TOPPER: Sure. So, I think --  
24 Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to  
25 clarify.

1           So, Ken was referring to the current  
2 three warehouse facilities that DGS currently runs,  
3 currently operates. One of those facilities is  
4 owned. It's at 22nd and Forester in Harrisburg.  
5 The other two are at small leases locations also in  
6 Harrisburg. I think that our -- And those  
7 locations are not exclusively for the purpose of  
8 PPE. Those locations store any number of goods  
9 that -- everything from, you know, paint to road  
10 salt, to -- I'll let Ken fill in the blanks.

11           But, basically, any number of goods that  
12 all the agencies that we serve might require in  
13 order to perform their normal course of business.  
14 It's a line of business for DGS where we  
15 effectively provide the logistical support to the  
16 Commonwealth agencies who need it. We're able to  
17 manage those inventories and store them more  
18 efficiently than the agencies could on their own.

19           I feel like I want to explain the  
20 process that we went through prior to the pandemic,  
21 going all the way back some 20 years. As the  
22 Commonwealth really looks much more strategically  
23 at warehouse capacity, and divested itself from  
24 what we're, something like 17 or 20 -- 17 to 20  
25 warehouse operations, each owned individually and

1 operated individually by Commonwealth agencies, and  
2 every one of which was more than half empty. And  
3 we would store things that could routinely have  
4 been delivered overnight, things like office  
5 supplies.

6 And so, we got out of that business. We  
7 reduced our warehouse capacity because it wasn't  
8 necessary, and it represented a fairly -- a very  
9 significant cost and a burden on the taxpayers.

10 So, it's just not the case we have a  
11 whole bunch of excess inventory or excess space  
12 here in the Commonwealth, which is one more reason  
13 why we ended up on an emergency basis having to go  
14 to the Farm Show.

15 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: I'll just add  
16 very quickly that there's a big difference between  
17 long-term storage and pick-pack operations. The  
18 Farm Show was set up to be our fast response --

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Right. I was  
20 just curious of what the cost of the operation of  
21 those current contracted warehouses versus the --

22 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: Sure.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: -- one for the  
24 new facility and maybe just the square footage of  
25 what you're looking at. That's all I want to know.

1                   SECRETARY TOPPER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.  
2 We will get you the details on the current leases  
3 and the current size of our warehousing operation.  
4 We'll be happy to give you that detail.

5                   The size of the incremental budget  
6 increase that we are looking for is in the  
7 neighborhood of \$6 million, and that is to lease  
8 and operate for the foreseeable future a warehouse  
9 facility that I believe is in the neighborhood of  
10 500,000 square feet.

11                  DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: The existing  
12 storage that you're referring to that we move the  
13 small -- small is not the right word -- miniscule  
14 amount of PPE is about \$8 a square foot. It's a  
15 multi-tenant shared facility with another  
16 Commonwealth agency. I would say our total lease  
17 outlay is about \$80,000. Probably had about  
18 10,000 square feet of that dedicated to PPE, so the  
19 comparison is just David and Goliath.

20                  MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Right. I just  
21 wanted to make sure we're -- get some background on  
22 that. Thank you.

23                  Representative Owlett.

24                  REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Thank you, Mr.  
25 Chairman.

1           And thank you, Secretaries, for joining  
2 us. Quick question. Is the Farm Show Complex in a  
3 flood zone?

4           SECRETARY TOPPER: I believe it is.

5           REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: So -- It is --  
6 Just so we're clear, it is. I looked at the map,  
7 the FEMA map. It is fully in a flood zone.

8           When was the last time that the flood  
9 zone was flooded? Or the Farm Show Complex was  
10 flooded?

11          SECRETARY TOPPER: I don't know,  
12 Representative.

13          REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: So you don't  
14 know when the last time it was flooded?

15          SECRETARY TOPPER: No. That might be a  
16 better question for the Department of Agriculture.

17          REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Okay.

18                So, why did we choose to store this very  
19 valuable resource in an area that we know is in a  
20 flood zone and susceptible to flooding at any given  
21 time?

22          SECRETARY TOPPER: Representative, I  
23 think that's a fair question. And you know, it  
24 might be a good question directed at the  
25 Administration that first decided to designate the

1 Farm Show. So --

2 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Okay. You are  
3 here representing the Administration today.

4 SECRETARY TOPPER: No, I'm not actually  
5 representing the Administration that first decided  
6 to make the Farm Show the central location for the  
7 RSS.

8 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: You work for the  
9 administration, but --

10 SECRETARY TOPPER: No, Representative.

11 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Was there any  
12 additional --

13 (Cross-talk).

14 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Was there any  
15 additional insurance provided for this valuable  
16 resource?

17 SECRETARY TOPPER: DGS is the agency  
18 that handles insurance for all state facilities.

19 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Did we have to  
20 increase our insurance coverage to hold this  
21 valuable resource?

22 SECRETARY TOPPER: We are looking at a  
23 small incremental increase in the Commonwealth's  
24 insurance rates. We have not seen those results  
25 yet. Our insurance provider just toured the

1 facility very recently.

2 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: And so, who  
3 decided? Maybe -- Director Padfield, maybe you can  
4 help with this.

5 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Representative,  
6 ultimately, it comes down to what our plans are.  
7 And the Farm Show Complex, and going back to  
8 multiple warehouses versus a single warehouse,  
9 those discussions, ultimately, there needs to be an  
10 assessment, especially when we're dealing with  
11 federal stock that is coming in. There needs to be  
12 an assessment that is done from a security  
13 perspective.

14 You know, it's not necessarily just PPE.  
15 There may be other commodities. If we were talking  
16 about a situation where we have to institute  
17 medical counter measures for a CBRN incident or a  
18 WMD incident, there are certain requirements from  
19 the federal government for locations that are going  
20 to be able to receive that. Security is one of  
21 them, and that's what's readily available.

22 When it comes to the Farm Show, we know  
23 that it's in a floodplain. We deal with flooding  
24 on a regular basis. We also know what level it  
25 takes to be able to impact the Farm Show and what

1 areas of the Farm Show are impacted. So, that is  
2 something that we were very well aware of.

3 We were monitoring, especially  
4 precipitation. And, you know, the riverine  
5 flooding that occurs, we have some pre-warning on,  
6 and we have plans in place to be able to relocate  
7 stock within the Farm Show to areas that are not  
8 prone to flooding or will not be touched by  
9 flooding if the water would come up. So we were  
10 very well aware of that, and that is a contingency  
11 plan to be able to take a look at.

12 It is just a central location that, you  
13 know, gives us the ability -- And, again, as  
14 Mr. Hess discussed, pick-and-pack operations are  
15 really key. It's close to, you know, centrally  
16 located to being in the state. We can move  
17 commodities out of there in a very short period of  
18 time as opposed to being diversified across a  
19 number of warehouses. And then --

20 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: So, I don't know  
21 that I quite buy that. I mean, how many pallets do  
22 we have in there? Do we really think we could  
23 get -- If we had a weather incident that came up  
24 within three days, do we really think that --

25 We've been loading that place with PPE

1 for a year. Do we really think that we could get  
2 it out in three days into a safe location? That  
3 seems a little bit of a stretch for me. But, I  
4 mean, I'm not a professional with the logistics.

5 You talked a little bit about the  
6 security aspect of it. I mean, have there been  
7 projects going on at the Farm Complex, work  
8 projects over the last year? Have there been  
9 people in and out of there on a regular basis doing  
10 construction?

11 SECRETARY TOPPER: Yes, there have.

12 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: So have -- I  
13 mean, I've driven by and I've seen the doors wide  
14 open. Literally, you could walk right in, and I  
15 know of people that have; that can walk right in,  
16 taking pictures of stuff throughout the summer.

17 I mean, if we're talking about security,  
18 and that's the great -- the best place for security  
19 -- I mean, we had construction project going --  
20 construction projects going on. We had doors wide  
21 open. We're in a flood zone. Have we -- Do we --

22 What are we doing for rodent or pest  
23 control? Do we contract for any rodent or pest  
24 control in the Farm Show Complex?

25 SECRETARY TOPPER: We do already have

1 plans in place for the Farm Show with regard to  
2 rodent and pest control. That was a problem --

3 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Has that  
4 increased since we started stockpiling N95 masks  
5 and other masks?

6 SECRETARY TOPPER: Not that I'm aware  
7 of, Representative, no.

8 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: I think, in my  
9 mind, that would be something that I would look at  
10 as well. We don't want to see these ruined. We  
11 have heard of that happening in the past. So, I'm  
12 just -- I'm just --

13 I'm a farm boy from Tioga County. I'm  
14 thinking we put it in a flood zone. We didn't  
15 increase protection from rodents. We had doors  
16 wide open, people can walk right in. It seems,  
17 like, problematic for me.

18 But, I appreciate all your work. I  
19 appreciate your time today.

20 Mr. Chairman, I think that's all I have  
21 for now.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.  
23 Representative Davidson.

24 CHAIRWOMAN DAVISON: Thank you, Mr.  
25 Chairman.

1 Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

2 I just want to ask a rapid-fire  
3 question, and then I have probably some comments.  
4 What is your experience -- tell me your years of  
5 experience and the relative field of experience,  
6 the expertise that you bring to the table? For  
7 instance, I've been 10 years in the legislature.

8 So, could you just -- Starting with  
9 Secretary Topper, just tell me your years of  
10 experience in the particular field and what the  
11 field is.

12 SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you, Madam  
13 Chairwoman.

14 I have approximately a 30-year carrier  
15 both in the public and in the private sector,  
16 primarily focused on supply chain and operations.

17 Ken?

18 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: I'm ashamed to  
19 say 43 years of experience in procurement and  
20 supply chain as well.

21 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: And, Madam  
22 Chairwoman, this is Director Padfield.  
23 Thirty-five years experience in public safety,  
24 emergency management, and also had the opportunity  
25 to be able to operate through FEMA and on an

1 incident support team for a number of large  
2 diasters, both in an urban search and rescue world,  
3 but also functioning as an incident support team  
4 for many hurricanes in other states that were  
5 impacted, as well as state and regional response  
6 here within Pennsylvania over those years.

7 DIRECTOR THOMAS: So my public safety  
8 career started back in 1978, municipal police  
9 corrections, moved into management. I've worked  
10 for the Commonwealth in a number of positions, most  
11 recently as the state coordinating officer for  
12 quite a few disasters. One of my responsibilities  
13 was really trying to get as much federal help as I  
14 can working with the federal government.

15 I've also managed the master cooperative  
16 agreement between the federal government and the  
17 Commonwealth for all of the Fort Indiantown Gap,  
18 aspects of DMVA. So my side is on, been a first  
19 responder for a long time. My side is more on  
20 knowing the FEMA programs, how we can leverage  
21 those programs to the best of my ability to help  
22 the citizens of the Commonwealth.

23 DIRECTOR PICKETT: And, Madam, I suppose  
24 I'm the new guy at the table, but 13 years in  
25 experience in public health, specifically public

1 health emergency preparedness response activities.

2 CHAIRWOMAN DAVISON: Thank you. Thank  
3 you so much.

4 I guess my comments today is, first of  
5 all, Secretary Topper, I want to thank you for your  
6 opening comments about the heroism of individuals  
7 that are being -- that are testifying here today.

8 I also want to commend 30, 43, 35, over  
9 50 and 13 years of experience in emergency  
10 services, procurement, safety, diaster plans, and  
11 planning over multiple administrations. I just  
12 think it's incredible to me, actually, that you're  
13 being questioned today by, quote unquote, farm boys  
14 and other people that admittedly don't have  
15 experience in these areas.

16 I think you talked a lot about the  
17 planning that went into determining why the Farm  
18 Show was, um -- was the best location and scaling  
19 down from multiple warehouses, why the -- the  
20 efficacy of that and the savings to taxpayers, and  
21 how you were managing our supply chain in the midst  
22 of multiple competitors for PPE in the marketplace;  
23 supply chain disruption from China because the  
24 COVID, ah, ah -- disease started there, and there  
25 was some concern about contamination. We didn't

1 know what that was going to be.

2 So, I just really want to thank you, and  
3 really apologize that your expertise is being  
4 questioned here by people who really don't have  
5 expertise in the field. I want to commend you  
6 again for your service and, hopefully, you won't  
7 have to endure this second-guessing from  
8 20,000 feet above the emergency that you were  
9 heroically managing.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
12 Schemel.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SCHEMEL: Thank you,  
14 Mr. Chair.

15 And thank you, gentlemen. I know from  
16 your many years of experience, sometimes having to  
17 respond to questions from legislators, we can seem  
18 like colossal jerks. But it is our job to provide  
19 oversight and represent the questions that our  
20 constituents have.

21 And my district in Franklin County--  
22 we're in central Pennsylvania--so the issues with  
23 regard to the Farm Show have been very much on the  
24 minds of a lot of my constituents, largely because  
25 it is a unique facility that -- because it is so

1 large, it's indoor. It has bathroom facilities,  
2 and so forth.

3 In a time when, you know, the virus  
4 necessitates social distancing, it's one of the few  
5 facilities that actually can host events even under  
6 the Governor's guidelines. And as those guidelines  
7 sort of loosen and allow more people per square  
8 foot, it becomes even more important as a potential  
9 site. So the use of it as a warehouse, as a  
10 warehousing facility is going to, obviously, make a  
11 lot of our constituents, a lot of Pennsylvanians  
12 wondering why the site was chosen.

13 As you explained, it's a central  
14 location, it's a single location, it's a secure  
15 location. I certainly understand all of those  
16 things. I understand that now you're looking to  
17 have a more permanent site, it sounds like the  
18 material that you're storing there, that you're  
19 warehousing in the Farm Show is a permanent  
20 storage. It's not -- Although you want to keep it  
21 fresh, it's not going in and out to be supplied to  
22 different places. That's a permanent location.

23 And I understand that you're seeking  
24 money in the budget of \$6 million to find that more  
25 permanent site, but that money can't come possibly

1 until the end of June, and most likely after that  
2 when the budget is completed.

3           So, I do question, just like my  
4 constituents, why the Farm Show continues a year  
5 later to be just a warehousing site, when we're  
6 sort of robbing central Pennsylvania the use of a  
7 really unique facility. So, in the calculation of  
8 what you've done, and you're supply chain experts,  
9 I assume you're not able to locate any other supply  
10 chain facility or facilities that can maintain  
11 these materials.

12           And so, have you also done an estimate  
13 as to what the Commonwealth is losing in terms of  
14 the events that are not being able to be held there  
15 at the Farm Show during this time, a year later?

16           And number 2, the loss of economic  
17 benefits that the Harrisburg area -- So I'm  
18 thinking of Representative Patti Kim and Senator  
19 DiSantos, this is their district. The loss of the  
20 hotels and restaurants and other facilities are  
21 experiencing because of that. So, in the calculus  
22 that you are doing, are those things included? And  
23 if so, do you have any sort of numerical values on  
24 those?

25           SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you,

1 Representative, for your question.

2 I am in touch with Secretary Redding  
3 quite frequently, and I can tell you that Secretary  
4 Redding is as anxious as anyone to have the Farm  
5 Show returned to its normal course of business and  
6 return to its normal purpose.

7 I would point out however, though, the  
8 pandemic is not over. This is not an event that  
9 occurred last year, and that we're still --

10 You know, we're not a year beyond the  
11 pandemic. We are still in the pandemic. And the  
12 operation at the Farm Show continues to distribute  
13 material at a lower rate than it did at the height  
14 of the need, but it does continue to distribute  
15 material. And it stands ready to distribute  
16 material in the event that it's needed here as we  
17 -- as we roll through what I read what they're  
18 calling the fourth potential surge. So, I don't  
19 think it's the case that we've gone a year now  
20 without the Farm Show, unnecessarily.

21 I do believe that we are working as  
22 quickly as we can to get the material removed from  
23 the Farm Show and to a better location, having made  
24 the determination that we need to maintain a  
25 permanent stockpile as opposed to operating an

1 emergency facility. And as I previously testified,  
2 you know, our current intention is to be out of the  
3 Farm Show, is to work throughout the summer to  
4 remove all of the inventory to a -- to a new  
5 location and to be out of the Farm Show completely  
6 by the fall.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SCHEMEL: But I heard you  
8 say earlier that you need the appropriation, which  
9 can't come until the budget is finalized, which  
10 won't be until the end of June to secure that  
11 initial -- Was that right or -- Have you secured  
12 another facility or --

13 SECRETARY TOPPER: We are in the -- Let  
14 me say this. We are doing everything that we can  
15 to identify that other facility, so we have  
16 recently put out a request for proposals looking to  
17 -- to look into the private sector for available  
18 warehouse locations where we can move it.

19 We have assembled a plan. We are doing  
20 our best to identify current year money that will  
21 enable us to get started sooner than when we have  
22 that appropriation. We are as anxious as anyone to  
23 move out of the facility as soon as we can.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SCHEMEL: So when -- when  
25 did you issue the -- the RFP on warehousing?

1                   SECRETARY TOPPER: Our Bureau of Real  
2 Estate issued the SFP (sic) I believe about a month  
3 ago.

4                   REPRESENTATIVE SCHEMEL: All right.  
5 Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank  
6 you, gentlemen.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN DAVISON: Mr. Chairman, for  
8 the record, I just wanted to state that I do have  
9 another meeting so I'll be leaving.

10                   Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony  
11 here today. Thank you for your service. I  
12 appreciate it. Thank you.

13                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
14 Miller.

15                   REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you,  
16 Mr. Chairman.

17                   And thank you to the members here who  
18 are testifying.

19                   Mr. Padfield and Secretary Topper, a  
20 question for you regarding the stockpile levels of  
21 PPE. What were the PPE procurement target level  
22 policies prior to COVID-19, and how were they  
23 established?

24                   DEPUTY SECRETARY THOMAS:  
25 Representative, this is Jeff Thomas. Director

1 Padfield had to leave.

2 I think Andy Pickett can talk about --  
3 Because prior to COVID, our stockpile was really  
4 part of the pile for the National Strategic  
5 Stockpile. I can talk about after. I think Andy  
6 can address before.

7 DIRECTOR PICKETT: Yes, sir.

8 And, Representative, the stockpile that  
9 was maintained before, as I stated earlier, was, if  
10 I can put it this way, a stockpile of convenience.  
11 It was items that had been received during the H1N1  
12 pandemic that were -- that were available to us.  
13 It was the items we had procured throughout the  
14 Ebola response in 2014 to 2016. But, it was -- it  
15 was not intended to be a long-term, you know -- It  
16 was going to save the Commonwealth during a  
17 pandemic, like we are seeing now in COVID-19. So  
18 it was -- it was, as I said, a really small  
19 quantity, and it was not based on any particular  
20 target level.

21 Now, we have done a lot more analysis of  
22 the data, analysis of what the health care system  
23 really needs during a pandemic; what our federal  
24 partners can supply, what the supply chain alone  
25 can bear. We have a lot of great lessons learned

1 throughout out the 12 to 14 months that have helped  
2 us to identify what those true target numbers are  
3 and define those numbers for this larger stockpile  
4 that we intend to maintain and move forward.

5 So Jeff, but -- Sorry.

6 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: So it would be  
7 fair to say -- or would it be fair to say that  
8 there really was no cohesive plan prior to what we  
9 have now, and that now because of the pandemic, you  
10 are looking at developing a cohesive plan?

11 DIRECTOR PICKETT: We knew we had  
12 product that was going to help us during a public  
13 health emergency. That's part of what our bureau  
14 does and what the department -- our mission to  
15 support the health care sector across the  
16 Commonwealth.

17 I don't think we knew what the demand  
18 was going to be during a global pandemic. And  
19 during that incipient phase in the global pandemic  
20 when we received 20 million requests for N95s, we  
21 knew that we had federal resources that were  
22 available for us, the federal Strategic National  
23 Stockpile, resources from FEMA and other federal  
24 partners that we have plans on how we will accept  
25 those assets from our federal colleagues and be

1 able to turn them around to identify -- or to fill  
2 local needs across the Commonwealth.

3 But, to say we had a stockpile that was  
4 going to help us through a global pandemic  
5 18 months ago, no, I wouldn't say we had a  
6 stockpile to help us through a global pandemic  
7 18 months ago.

8 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Is there  
9 currently a written plan? And if so, can you share  
10 that with the committee?

11 DIRECTOR PICKETT: So as to the  
12 stockpile moving forward, we have developed  
13 numbers. I know our PEMA colleagues have worked  
14 with DGS and the department to frame out the plan.  
15 I don't know if Deputy Secretary Hess or Executive  
16 Deputy Thomas can speak more to the plan itself.

17 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: I  
18 think -- So this is Jeff. And thank you for the  
19 question. It certainly is a good question.

20 As I talked about, part of our role is  
21 to try to leverage the federal help that is  
22 available for the Commonwealth, the citizens. Part  
23 of that is to find out what is allowable, what is  
24 not allowable under this current disaster  
25 declaration.

1           And FEMA has stated that, as long as the  
2           diaster is in place, I think they learned a lot of  
3           lessons here, too. They were caught short-handed.  
4           There wasn't enough in the national stockpile. We  
5           all know what happened after that. We all know  
6           what the Administration did to try to bring goods  
7           in from China and all the other countries through  
8           Operation Airbridge, which was fairly successful.

9           So we have landed on a FEMA role, ah,  
10          reimburse list for up to a 60-day supply based on  
11          burn rates that we have to go by. FEMA has a burn  
12          rate calculator and, quite frankly, if we looked at  
13          some of these burn rate calculators, we would have  
14          maybe more than what we're trying to have now.

15          So we have come up with a plan that  
16          looks at what we have given out, what we believe  
17          the reasonable expectation is based on performance  
18          that the supply chain will be able to provide, and  
19          then what we believe the Delta will be -- to be  
20          able to have way more than what we had before. And  
21          we're working towards those targets. That is what  
22          Ken Hess and his team have been actually phenomenal  
23          on this.

24          You have to realize, sometimes you have  
25          to step back that 18 months and take a look where

1 we were. We were at a place where there were calls  
2 day after day. And, quite frankly, a lot of help  
3 from the legislature. I know somebody that may  
4 know somebody that may be able to get you a mask.  
5 We tracked down all those leads, because what we  
6 had was request after request after request from  
7 frontline health care workers and first responders  
8 that had nothing. We've all heard the stories of  
9 the garage bags over their head because we had no  
10 gowns. They were real. They were real.

11 So what we -- And we also found in the  
12 beginning that, quite frankly, we weren't so smart  
13 in the beginning. The Commonwealth agencies were  
14 competing with each other. We all were trying to  
15 buy the same things from the same people. So,  
16 early on we realized, not the best idea, Ken and  
17 his team did a phenomenal job of doing central  
18 procurement, and we bought a lot of PPE.

19 We are not at those targets. I'll be  
20 honest. We are not quite at the targets that we  
21 set for a 60-day supply, which is, we can get  
22 reimbursed for that from the federal government.  
23 It's important we take advantage of that so that we  
24 don't find ourselves in Commonwealth citizens'  
25 dollars trying to build that stockpile when this

1 diaster is over, and we haven't quite done it yet.

2 So we really want to be cognizant of that fact.

3           So that is -- And the other thing is we  
4 realized, was even with the small amount that we  
5 had and with what we first got from the federal  
6 government, there were a lot of problems. There  
7 were masks that sat. There was elastic that didn't  
8 work. We all heard those stories, and we don't  
9 want to do that.

10           So, we do have a plan. I would say the  
11 plan is a, what I would call is a framework at this  
12 point in time, because the idea and very high-level  
13 idea, is that, there are certain Commonwealth  
14 agencies that use PPE all the time. Our veterans'  
15 homes, our correctional industries with their  
16 medical folks, everyone else that uses PPE all the  
17 time. All we want to do is, we want to have them  
18 get that PPE through the stockpile so we have a  
19 natural rotation. We can buy in bulk. We are able  
20 to save the Commonwealth agencies money.

21           We also want to pass that on to the  
22 COSTARS partners, and the COSTARS partners have the  
23 ability to do that. The trick to that is, not  
24 everybody likes the same kind of PPE. Like, not  
25 everyone drives a Ford, not everyone drives a

1 Chevy.

2 What we're working with now is trying to  
3 get the agencies to come to a consensus of, this is  
4 the type of mask we will use. Probably looking at  
5 3M 95s --

6 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Mr. Thomas.

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: --  
8 standard. And these are the kind of masks, the  
9 gowns we're gonna use, and we're --

10 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Mr. Thomas.

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR: -- gonna  
12 look at six or seven types of PPE that we will  
13 stock that we're gonna be able to --

14 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Mr. Thomas.

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: --  
16 turn that over using the Commonwealth agencies and  
17 COSTARS partners so that we don't do this again.  
18 So we don't do this again.

19 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Mr. Thomas, can  
20 you hear me?

21 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS:  
22 That's gonna take work.

23 In terms of moving the stuff out of the  
24 Farm Show as quickly as we can, we are able right  
25 now, again, to leverage the federal dollars --

1 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Mr. Thomas.

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: -- to  
3 be able to help with the cost of doing that --

4 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Mr. Thomas, can  
5 you hear us?

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: -- to  
7 establish the money through the budget.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Mr. Thomas,  
9 can you hear us?

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Yes.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Okay. All  
12 right. Sorry. Go ahead, Representative.

13 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Okay. Thank you  
14 for that. We understand the difficulties and the  
15 complexity and do appreciate the work that each of  
16 you put in over this time.

17 We would -- I think, the committee would  
18 be very much interested in the framework that you  
19 mentioned for the plan that you're being proposed  
20 -- you're proposing to develop for the  
21 Commonwealth.

22 I want to follow up with another  
23 question concerning actual -- the amount purchased  
24 between March of '20 and March of '21. Some of  
25 these numbers were referenced earlier. Without

1 going into the -- all of the voluminous amount,  
2 maybe a high-level view of the amount of PPE  
3 purchased between March of last year and March of  
4 this year, and how much has been distributed. So  
5 how much purchased and how much distributed during  
6 that same time frame?

7 SECRETARY TOPPER: I'm going to ask Ken,  
8 because I think he's got the numbers in front of  
9 him.

10 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: Yep. I can  
11 speak to the quantity purchase part. And I think I  
12 -- I'll defer to Andy on the -- he has the  
13 purchase. Purchased 14 million N95s, 3 million  
14 gowns, 5 million Procedures masks; 22 million  
15 gloves, 4.7 million face shields, 2 million hand  
16 sanitizer.

17 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: And how much --

18 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: This is just  
19 state purchased. This is not from the feds or  
20 donations.

21 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Understood.

22 And how much distributed over that same  
23 time frame?

24 DIRECTOR PICKETT: So, over that same  
25 time frame--And I apologize, the items aren't in

1 order--but 1.2 million gowns, 1.5 million face  
2 shields, 19 million gloves, 6.3 million N95s,  
3 270,000 coveralls, 6.3 million Procedure masks,  
4 1.3 million bottles of hand sanitizer.

5 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: And so, without  
6 being able to analyze it, it seems like some -- you  
7 still have some left in stockpile, and some are  
8 completely gone or near gone; is that accurate?

9 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: I think we're --  
10 we have at least as much as has been distributed in  
11 every category.

12 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: And is that what  
13 is representative in the Farm Show Complex that is  
14 stockpiled there?

15 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: At the RSS.

16 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Okay. Thank you  
17 very much.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

20 And just to, I know you're, quote,  
21 working toward the target. Do you have what that  
22 target amount is specifically? Do you have a  
23 number on that to date? Are you still crunching  
24 numbers together?

25 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: We do

1 have numbers on that. I can ramble those off if  
2 you'd like.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Yeah.

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: So,  
5 N95s is 16 million based on the research that we've  
6 done. Gowns is at 8 million, surgical masks 8  
7 million, gloves 30 million, and face shields  
8 4 million.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Awesome.  
10 Thank you so much.

11 Representative Keefer.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Thank you,  
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 The question I have is, it's my  
15 understanding -- So we've talked about all the PPE,  
16 the stockpiles, the storages. So what is the shelf  
17 life of the PPE that you currently have? And can  
18 you tell us what the shelf life is that the  
19 Commonwealth had in storage prior to March 16th of  
20 2020?

21 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: I can certainly  
22 handle the first part.

23 The shelf life on most of the textile-  
24 based products, N95 gowns, gloves is 5 years. The  
25 shelf life on wipes and hand sanitizers, two years.

1 I can't speak to the prior inventories.  
2 Andy, can you help out there?

3 DIRECTOR PICKETT: Yes, certainly.

4 I mean, knowing that the source of that  
5 product was from federal stockpiles in 2009, 2010,  
6 as well as products that were purchased as part of  
7 our Ebola strategy in 2015, 2016, you get sort of a  
8 sense of where we were at in terms of the shelf  
9 life of those products.

10 Unfortunately, the federal stockpiles  
11 were also built upon those same procurements, so  
12 those initial shipments we received from our  
13 federal partners in March of last year were  
14 products that had been purchased in 2009, 2010.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: So, 2009, you  
16 said they were -- clearly they were expired  
17 products. So, did you -- You didn't use those  
18 products or you did, or you just had to cycle those  
19 out, dispose of them?

20 DIRECTOR PICKETT: So, we did use those  
21 products. At the point in time that this was all  
22 happening, we knew that there was a crisis in  
23 health care facilities. We were able to prioritize  
24 different products, depending on targeted audience.  
25 And we also made sure that the recipients who were

1 receiving those products were acutely aware of the  
2 potential limitations and recommendations on how  
3 they use those products.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Okay.

5 So moving on to some of the economics of  
6 the issue at hand here that we had, last year PEMA  
7 was appropriated \$50 million under Act 24, the  
8 CARES Act of 2020, and we saw that 12.5 million of  
9 that 50 million was moved to a different account,  
10 and that none of that money originally appropriated  
11 was spent. So knowing that Act 17A of 2020  
12 requires any dollars appropriated that aren't spent  
13 to be reallocated to the Department of Corrections.  
14 So, the 50 million was spent on state correctional  
15 institutions?

16 So my question is to you is that, where  
17 did the 12.5 million go, and did any of that money  
18 get appropriated to PEMA? Was any of that spent on  
19 the procurement of PPE?

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS:

21 Representative, I can speak to some of that.

22 In terms of the Act that you're citing  
23 that required it to go to corrections, I'm not  
24 familiar with that so I cannot speak to that.

25 I can tell you we were appropriated

1 \$50 million. So, in the beginning, up until just  
2 recently, all of the PPE that we -- all the money  
3 we were able to leverage through the disaster deck  
4 is, there's a match. So 75 federal, 25 percent  
5 match for Commonwealth for nonfederal funds.

6 When we work with Ken, we are ordering  
7 things and we're buying things. You can't buy  
8 anything without money in the bank. It's just --  
9 It's just the way it works in government. So that  
10 is the purpose of that \$50 million. That's what it  
11 was used for.

12 We were buying two, \$3 million worth of  
13 this type of PPE, or, quite frankly, we also bought  
14 a number of respirators early on because we all had  
15 a prediction that we were not gonna have  
16 respirators. That \$50 million would have used to  
17 buy that. We would have gone through the  
18 reimbursement process with the federal government.  
19 We would have been to recoup 75 percent of that  
20 money. So that \$50 million is a leverage for a lot  
21 more money than PPE.

22 I'm very, very happy to tell you that we  
23 have been successful and been able to -- There are  
24 certain thresholds in the federal disaster act that  
25 allows you to move from 75 percent -- not less than

1 75 to not less than 90. We had met those  
2 thresholds -- Oh, my gosh, we met those thresholds  
3 back in the last year. We were unable at that  
4 point in time to get it moved to 90 percent or more  
5 reimbursement.

6 We have since been able to -- If you  
7 notice that this Administration has moved  
8 everything to 100 percent reimbursement retroactive  
9 to the beginning. So, from PEMA's perspective, we  
10 have released the entire \$50 million back to the  
11 budget office. After that, you will have to talk  
12 to folks in the budget office, Representative,  
13 about if PEMA has released all of that \$50 million  
14 back to the budget office.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: And the  
16 12.5 million that was shifted?

17 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: In  
18 all honesty, the 12.5 million is not something that  
19 showed up on anything that I have seen. It was  
20 \$50 million. We had that in the account. We  
21 released all of that back.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: So you believe  
23 --

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: I can  
25 certainly look at that, but that is not -- that is

1 different than what my understanding was.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Right. If you  
3 could, I would like, you know, if you could show us  
4 how that's allocated or how that's appropriated. I  
5 appreciate you have different funds that have  
6 different requirements on them. But to try to  
7 understand, it's just a little difficult whenever  
8 it does start getting parsed out into different  
9 funds to understand exactly what was spent on the  
10 intent of this, which was from CARES dollars for  
11 the emergency expenses. That would be very helpful  
12 you could provide those numbers.

13 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: I can  
14 certainly look for that.

15 I can tell you that, prior to the  
16 \$50 million, that we have a disaster fund, no matter  
17 what the disaster is, as you all know, the  
18 government has the ability to move certain amounts  
19 of money which covers the activation of the  
20 National Guard. It covers the 25 percent cost  
21 share of the federal disaster funds.

22 There was some of that money that was  
23 moved. I think that was around 18 million, not  
24 12.5, which again, used to leverage because we had  
25 other disasters in amongst this disaster. Remember

1 we had flooding. We have a number of disasters  
2 amongst this.

3 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Thank you.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

6 I know Representative -- or Chairman  
7 Moul has to leave soon. We'll go to Representative  
8 Webster and then Representative Moul.

9 REPRESENTATIVE WEBSTER: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Chairman. Excuse me. It shouldn't -- This  
11 shouldn't be a very long question to hold up  
12 Chairman Moul.

13 Maybe just for our testifiers across the  
14 board, I was impressed earlier when you talked  
15 about your experience in supply chain and those  
16 things. I harken back to a few days in my life in  
17 the world of acquiring things for the U.S. Air  
18 Force. I'll tell you, gentlemen, that this doesn't  
19 get any easier on the oversight if you're at a  
20 hearing in Washington D.C. So thanks for what  
21 you're going through here.

22 My question is, when you talked about a  
23 little bit of, you know, at the outset some of our  
24 departments were sort of competing with each other,  
25 as you might expect, as each -- each department

1 leader tried to do their job and go -- and go get  
2 access to equipment. I can also guess pretty  
3 easily that that occurred at a competitive level,  
4 you know, state to state and probably state to  
5 federal government procurement.

6 Can you take a minute and talk a little  
7 bit about maybe that competition, or, if you were  
8 able to actually work with other states, and any  
9 relationships in that regard?

10 SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you,  
11 Representative.

12 As I recall as we got into the later  
13 spring of last year, Governor Wolf did join a  
14 consortium with other northeastern governors and we  
15 did make an effort to try to coordinate our efforts  
16 with respect to how we were going into the market  
17 in order to source these materials.

18 However, I guess I would share that at  
19 an operational level, I don't think we ever really  
20 overcame the competition that was underway in the  
21 market. As every government entity at every level,  
22 as well as every private sector entity that is a  
23 consumer of PPE, had to go into a market in search  
24 of very scarce resources all at once.

25 So, you're quite right. We had

1       unprecedented competition for these goods, you  
2       know, across the board. And this is where I want  
3       to give tremendous credit to Ken Hess and to his  
4       team, because they managed to very, very quickly  
5       not only contend with having to figure out how to  
6       work remotely, but to figure out how to begin  
7       sourcing goods directly from China and Malaysia and  
8       other places where these -- where these goods are  
9       manufactured. They figured out how to compete and  
10      how to compete very, very effectively in order to  
11      ensure that we, you know, we were able to build the  
12      inventories that we built.

13                   And not every other state was as  
14      successful as Pennsylvania was with respect to  
15      ensuring that we would have materials on hand that  
16      ultimately we did. So I appreciate the opportunity  
17      to talk about that.

18                   We need a better system. I think it's  
19      really easy to sort of -- It's really easy to  
20      Monday morning quarterback this stuff, and I  
21      understand the impulse. But the truth of the  
22      matter is that, no one anticipated the magnitude of  
23      the global pandemic. And I think -- I think we  
24      were all caught a little bit flat footed at first  
25      at every level of the government.

1           I venture to say that if -- if prior to  
2 the pandemic we had brought up a 5- or 6-million-  
3 dollar incremental expense proposal to the General  
4 Assembly for the purpose of pandemic planning or  
5 preparing for a pandemic, I venture to say that we  
6 would have -- that would have been a tough sale.

7           REPRESENTATIVE WEBSTER: I appreciate  
8 that comment. I just have one other thought in my  
9 head and then I'll turn this over, and that is, I  
10 have always been concerned, since my time in  
11 Washington D.C., because I understand sort of the  
12 -- the political tenet that says government should,  
13 ah, be more like a business, and supply chain is  
14 one of those issues that comes off. So you need  
15 the system to do supply chains, or you need the  
16 accounting systems, et cetera.

17           But I do think there is a role for  
18 government that's not just about in time delivery,  
19 and that preparedness and other things are really  
20 our job in the government, and that's different  
21 than the way a business will stock their  
22 warehouses, and we need to be -- we need to be  
23 thinking about emergency preparedness and response;  
24 not just just-in-time supply chains.

25           So thanks for your time today.

1                   And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.  
3 Representative Moul.

4                   REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Chairman.

6                   Thank you, gentlemen, for your  
7 participation today and taking the abuse of us  
8 asking all of these tough questions of you. I'm  
9 hopefully going to ask you some softball questions  
10 here, but you'll be the judge of whether they are  
11 or not.

12                  Representative Owlett touched on  
13 something that is of concern to me, and I'll  
14 refresh your memory here. I'm the Chairman of the  
15 Agriculture Committee, so the Farm Show building is  
16 very precious to me. As a matter of fact, I've  
17 been working in and out of that building because of  
18 our industry and growing up on a farm since I was a  
19 little child. And yes, I do remember multiple  
20 times seeing that building with water flowing  
21 through it. So, within the last 50 years it has  
22 flooded a few separate times. Not that it's  
23 flooded lately.

24                  But, in any event, Representative Owlett  
25 mentioned that he's driven by and seen doors

1 hanging open, things like that.

2 My question is -- My first question of  
3 multiple monogamous questions here, what security  
4 measures do you have in place to protect this  
5 stockpile that you have inside the building?

6 SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you for your  
7 question, Mr. Chairman.

8 We now have a Capitol Police detail that  
9 is present at the Farm Show virtually full time.  
10 We have beefed up the patrol at the Farm Show.  
11 Honestly, we -- Up until the last few months when  
12 it became more publicly known that the stockpile  
13 was at the Farm Show, we didn't really feel like  
14 that we had a tremendous security problem.  
15 However, as word has gotten out that the PPE was  
16 there, we've taken steps to enhance the security,  
17 and that's been primarily using Capitol Police.

18 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Okay. Which leads  
19 me to another question kind of in the security  
20 measures. We mentioned and we talked about  
21 logistics. I mean, ever since I've been young, and  
22 especially since I have been in business for  
23 myself, people have always said, make sure you  
24 don't put all your eggs in one basket. And we  
25 talked about, this is the one spot that we have.

1           Did you ever give any consideration to  
2 what position we would be in if, God forbid, that  
3 building were to catch fire? I assume everything  
4 that -- that is in that building as far as PPE is  
5 packed in cardboard boxes, wouldn't that place go  
6 up like a Roman candle and then we would have none?

7           SECRETARY TOPPER: Yeah. Mr. Chairman,  
8 you're exactly right. The Farm Show is not an  
9 ideal place for us to store this PPE over the long  
10 term, and that's exactly why we're trying to move  
11 as quickly as we can to a more ideal spot that  
12 isn't in a floodplain; that has, you know, adequate  
13 security and fire and safety measures in place in  
14 order to ensure that the material is protected.  
15 The Farm Show leaves a lot to be desired.

16           You know, other among things, we've had  
17 to run material-handling equipment across dirt  
18 floors and store textile-based products on dirt  
19 floors. It's not ideal. But, this --

20           But we've operated in accordance with  
21 our preexisting emergency plans, and the facility  
22 has performed about as well as we could expected it  
23 to. I don't think anyone at the outset anticipated  
24 that we would be working through a global pandemic  
25 for more than a year.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: I hear you and I  
2                   respect your answer completely. Have you ever  
3                   considered moving this, or at least a large chunk  
4                   of it, out to the Fort Indiantown Gap? And one of  
5                   the reasons I go there is, they flash Chinook  
6                   helicopters in and out of there basically every  
7                   day. So, if somebody were to need something like  
8                   right now, you could have it right there, throw it  
9                   on a Chinook and deliver it to whatever part of the  
10                  state they need it right now. Has that ever been  
11                  considered?

12                 SECRETARY TOPPER: I'm going to defer to  
13                 Mr. Thomas, because I believe he has some DMBA  
14                 experience.

15                 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: I do  
16                 have some DMBA experience.

17                 And you're right, the Fort Indiantown  
18                 Gap has tremendous capabilities. We partner with  
19                 them and use them all of the time, flooding events  
20                 and other events. We also use the Civil Air Patrol  
21                 during some of our activities, if we have to move  
22                 things quickly, and there's fall (phonetic)  
23                 amounts.

24                 We talked to Fort Indiantown Gap. We  
25                 actually do have some things stored at Fort

1 Indiantown Gap. A little different PPE. We have a  
2 number of facility management cooling trailers  
3 stored at Fort Indiantown Gap.

4 But Fort Indiantown Gap is a very busy  
5 bustling training ground. The idea of them having  
6 a lot of open warehouse space just isn't there at  
7 this point in time.

8 But, I absolutely agree with you. The  
9 Farm Show -- There, again, I have been going there  
10 since I've been young too, so I could -- It has a  
11 special place in my heart. That is not the right  
12 place for it to stay. We all know that. But it  
13 was the designated place.

14 Ken talked to you about how much PPE we  
15 bought. We also bought a lot directly from the  
16 federal government. That is an automatic ship to  
17 you RSS site. That is what FEMA does. It just  
18 gets shipped there. That is the place it would  
19 have been shipped, because it's designed. In  
20 emergencies there's not a lot of thought. It is,  
21 you need it, this is where we ship it. That's  
22 already pre-established. They've looked at the  
23 site. It's the other thing I think when Andy  
24 talked that --

25 That site has been examined by Health

1 and Human Services. It's been examined by FEMA.  
2 We have an agreement with them that that's the  
3 site. So that is one of the reasons it started  
4 there. And you're right, it stayed there. It's  
5 time to move it. There's no two ways about it.

6 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: That brings me to  
7 my last question here. But I actually have two  
8 real quick things. I think it's important,  
9 especially coming from the ag side, we have dairy  
10 show, livestock show, All American Dairy Show,  
11 Livestock Exposition, those are September and  
12 October. Should we plan to have them?

13 SECRETARY TOPPER: That's a great  
14 question, Mr. Chairman. And the answer is, I don't  
15 know. We're doing everything we can to get out of  
16 the Farm Show as quickly as we can.

17 As I mentioned, I'm speaking pretty  
18 routinely with Secretary Redding. Until we have  
19 secured the funding and the facility, it's gonna be  
20 hard for us to nail down an exact timeline for when  
21 we're going to be able to be out.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Obviously, you  
23 guys understand how important this is to the  
24 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dauphin County, and  
25 to my committee personally.

1           One last thing, and then I'm gonna let  
2           you go because I honestly have to step out myself.  
3           I think it would be a really good idea from  
4           everything that I heard here this morning that, if  
5           we were to be able to, between the State Government  
6           Committee and the Agriculture Committee, which I  
7           chair, to come over and take a tour so we can  
8           literally see what we have been talking about all  
9           morning. We'd like to do it the week of April 4th,  
10          which is right around the corner here. If we could  
11          set that up with someone. Mr. Secretary, maybe you  
12          could set that up for us, or tell us who to get in  
13          contact with so that, just as legislators and maybe  
14          our executive directors, could come over and take a  
15          walk-through, a guided tour, so that we can see  
16          what we are talking about and wrap our brains  
17          around it.

18                    Something you could help us with there,  
19           sir.

20                    SECRETARY TOPPER: I will do my best and  
21           work with the Governor's Office to try to get  
22           something arranged.

23                    REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: I appreciate that  
24           so much. Thank you so much.

25                    Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Chairwoman  
2 Boback.

3 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,  
4 Chairman Grove.

5 I have a question that I need to ask,  
6 and it will be to Secretary Topper, but being the  
7 Chairman of Veterans Affairs and Emergency  
8 Preparedness, I have to follow up on Chairman Moul.

9 I assumed way back when that everything  
10 would have been stored at Fort Indiantown Gap, just  
11 logistically and just for safety standards. And  
12 again, I mean, it's a secured facility. It has an  
13 airfield, air track, and it has assets. It has the  
14 manpower, and it's right there along an interstate.

15 I'm also concerned with the cost  
16 variable. So, my understanding is, we are paying  
17 the Farm Show Complex, but wouldn't we be able to,  
18 if we store it eventually or had it been stored at  
19 fort Indiantown Gap, wouldn't there be a rent fee  
20 like state-to-state agency initiative?

21 So, I mean, not only security, which  
22 would be number 1. Logistics, number 2, but saving  
23 the Commonwealth money instead of paying what I  
24 hear is rent to the Farm Show Complex.

25 Can you explain that to me, please?

1                   SECRETARY TOPPER: Sure, Representative,  
2 I'll do my best, and then I'll hand it over to  
3 Jeff. He'll likely have some additional detail.

4                   I'll say this. I don't disagree that --  
5 Or I agree that it may make sense for us to take a  
6 look at whether the Farm Show is the right disaster  
7 RSS location for us going forward given everything  
8 that we've learned over the course of the last  
9 year.

10                   However, I would say that, you know, we  
11 have never had a disaster that has lasted like this  
12 long. I think the original plans for using the  
13 Farm Show in the manner that it's used contemplates  
14 multiple different kinds of disasters with all  
15 different sorts of durations. And our average  
16 disaster prior to last year, Jeff, I'm willing to  
17 bet, was a whole lot shorter than a year.

18                   So, I don't think -- I don't think those  
19 plans, as they were developed over the course of  
20 decades, necessarily contemplated an emergency  
21 anything like the one we've had to work our way  
22 through. So, now that we've learned what we've  
23 learned, I think it could certainly be reasonable  
24 for us to ask whether -- whether the Farm Show was  
25 the right location. And we certainly, as an

1 administration, be willing to engage in that  
2 conversation.

3 I don't know enough about what's out at  
4 Fort Indiantown Gap to be able to have an opinion  
5 one way or another whether that's the right  
6 alternative.

7 I think at the end of the day we  
8 executed on the plans that we had in place because  
9 that's how we respond to disasters, you know, and  
10 it's important to have the plans in place and to  
11 follow them.

12 So, I don't know, Jeff, if you have any  
13 other things you'd like to add, but I think  
14 certainly there's going to be time for us here to  
15 learn every lesson we can from this experience.

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Thank  
17 you. Madam Chairwoman, thank you. I understand  
18 and thank you for being the chairman of that  
19 committee. I am looking forward to working with  
20 you since I am a -- my first was in Dickson City as  
21 a municipal police officer, so we are kind of from  
22 the same area.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: True.

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: So,  
25 we have been great partners with National Guard. I

1 have not worked there full time since 2010, right,  
2 so it's a while ago. And we do have -- like I  
3 said, we do have things stored there. They are a  
4 growing facility, too. I do not believe --

5 They've gotten rid of a lot of the World  
6 War II warehouses that were there. They changed  
7 that facility.

8 Finally, I think it's important to  
9 understand is, we're working through all of this.  
10 We have people from the National Guard in here  
11 every day with us as part of the group that is  
12 helping manage this. They helped us store the  
13 trailers that I talked about up there. But, again,  
14 even that was more of a temporary source because we  
15 needed to move them because they needed the space.  
16 We had three in there at one point in time.

17 So, I don't think that warehouse exists,  
18 that 500,000-square foot warehouse that we could  
19 store at Fort Indiantown Gap. We'll certainly talk  
20 to them. And having the air craft there to move  
21 things is certainly important. I'm sure you  
22 understand, a lot of folks understand, you just  
23 don't just put things on a aircraft.

24 There's special ways they have to be  
25 packaged and palletized and ready for transport.

1 None of this PPE is packed that way now. None of  
2 it is ready to put on a airplane because that needs  
3 special packing and stuff. But it is certainly  
4 something that we can talk about. As Secretary  
5 Topper says, we know the Farm Show is not the  
6 permanent place for this PPE.

7 So thank you.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: I do appreciate  
9 that. And, of course, being on the interstate,  
10 that's another -- oh, what a plus that is for Fort  
11 Indiantown Gap. But I do look forward to the  
12 discussion; also saving money. I mean, first, as I  
13 support, first and foremost, protect -- protection,  
14 integrity of our PPE.

15 But then, also, the cost variable. Why  
16 pay one agency when we could have it, perhaps, at  
17 the other agency as a part of the state commitment?  
18 So, thank you.

19 I think someone else wanted to --

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Madam  
21 Chairman, I want to address the cost part, if I  
22 could, because I think that's important, and we  
23 need to talk about that.

24 So early on when we were storing things  
25 at the Farm Show, we had talked to Agriculture and

1 they talked about increased cost. And again, as I  
2 said, I'm the state coordinating officer for this  
3 disaster. The federal coordinating officer is in  
4 our building every day and we're talking all the  
5 time.

6 So we talked about the availability of  
7 federal funds to be able to offset any increased  
8 costs by having the PPE at the Farm Show. And we  
9 were able to then use the billing rates, the  
10 8-dollar-an-hour-square-foot, rate to be able to  
11 leverage federal funds to reimburse the Farm Show  
12 for their extra cost and actual -- the value that  
13 would be.

14 So you were right. To date we paid  
15 about \$2.4 million, we have been able to leverage  
16 from the federal funds to bring into the  
17 Commonwealth to offset the cost of state funds,  
18 quite frankly. That may have been used for extra  
19 costs at the Farm Show.

20 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Okay.

21 DEPUTY SECRETARY HESS: If I may add  
22 very quickly, Chairperson Boback, as I recall, way  
23 back under the Rendell Administration, when we  
24 first met with FEMA and did site selection for RSS,  
25 one of their chief concerns was bleed-over between

1 emergencies. And so, for example, if the National  
2 Guard were to be activated for some reason and the  
3 base got locked down, it would not be available.  
4 As I recall, that was a key consideration.

5 Thank you.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you.

7 All great items for discussion.

8 And one more follow-up, Chairman Grove,  
9 if I may. I was taking notes throughout a  
10 fascinating hearing, and I thank our Chairman for  
11 doing this.

12 Going back to the procurement, and I  
13 think this would be to Secretary Topper, what PPE  
14 manufacturer or manufacturers does Pennsylvania  
15 work with, and how do we determine who to contract  
16 with? That's number 1.

17 And number 2. We heard early on,  
18 pandemic stages, that the medical facilities, some  
19 of them, were receiving subpar PPE. How are we  
20 ensuring what we are getting, what we're  
21 purchasing, what we're obtaining? How do we  
22 guarantee that that's quality items, and where are  
23 we getting this from?

24 SECRETARY TOPPER: Yeah. Thank you,  
25 Madam Chairwoman. I think -- So the answer depends

1 on when we're talking about.

2 So, prior to the pandemic we would have  
3 had a rigorous process with a fair-and-open  
4 competition where, you know, I think our primary  
5 supplier was 3M on contract. But as the pandemic  
6 hit, it was clear that our -- that our current  
7 standing contracts, our contractors were going to  
8 be able unable to meet their commitments to us,  
9 right? They couldn't deliver in the quantities  
10 that we needed or the timing that we needed or at  
11 the price that we had previously negotiated, and  
12 that was true for all state governments because,  
13 you know, that's just the nature of what the market  
14 did.

15 Once the pandemic started and we had to  
16 seek alternate sources of supply, you know, at  
17 first, the answer to where did we get it was, was  
18 wherever we could. And the way that we -- And we  
19 did our best to try to maintain quality. The  
20 primary way we did that was by, as we were  
21 negotiating for these one-off emergency  
22 procurements for, say, N95 masks or KN95 masks, we  
23 would require that the supplier would submit a  
24 sample. We would have that sample. We would send  
25 that sample over to the Department of Health. The

1 Department of Health, I think working with the  
2 contractor, would evaluate that sample and then  
3 give us a green light to go ahead and purchase the  
4 items in quantity.

5 So, we were able -- we set up a way to  
6 expedite that kind of sample review, and I'm really  
7 proud of the work that Ken's team and Andy's team  
8 did here in order to make sure that -- Although  
9 certain we had some subpar -- we had some  
10 challenges with some subpar equipment early on, and  
11 honestly, some of that was some of the stuff that  
12 came through the federal government, as I  
13 understand it, for the most part, we did not have  
14 any of the major challenges that some of our other  
15 state government colleagues did where they would  
16 pay --

17 I'm aware of a couple instances where  
18 states paid in advance for shipments of product  
19 that ultimately turned out to be unusable. We did  
20 not have that challenge. And I think that's a  
21 credit to this team.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you.  
23 Thank you.

24 So what we have at the Farm Show, then,  
25 we can say, confidently, that it's good quality

1 merchandise, I hope, or before it's shipped  
2 anywhere it will be previewed, won't it?

3 SECRETARY TOPPER: Yes. I think we --  
4 we have a high level of confidence in the inventory  
5 that is there. I think that as we go forward,  
6 we're gonna want to continue to -- we're gonna do  
7 it -- we're gonna want to standardize around specs  
8 and skews going forward.

9 Sorry, I'm -- Just because it will make  
10 the stockpile easier to manage over the long term  
11 and easier for us to contract in advance for  
12 materials as we set up a process to replenish that  
13 inventory so that it never expires, but I'm  
14 confident in the quality of what we have.

15 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you.  
16 Thank you. Thank you.

17 Chairman Grove, thank you very much.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,  
20 Secretary Topper.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative  
22 Keefer.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Thank you, Mr.  
24 Chairman.

25 Just following up with some of the

1 questions that others have asked, excuse me if I  
2 repeat anything. I'm trying to consolidate some of  
3 the notes I was writing down.

4 But, we talked about the expiration of  
5 the PPE and the shelf life, knowing what we have to  
6 work with. So you're developing a PPE distribution  
7 plan, I believe that's what you said. You're  
8 developing that. It's not in writing yet, or is it  
9 in writing, a distribution plan?

10 SECRETARY TOPPER: So, I believe what we  
11 were talking about was a plan to replenish and  
12 cycle the inventory in the permanent stockpile. Is  
13 that what you're referring to?

14 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Yes. You're  
15 going to act as -- I mean, the end goal here with  
16 the PPEs, you are going to be a backstop, right?  
17 You're not going to be the supplier of this, of the  
18 PPE. So, with that understanding, what's the  
19 distribution plan to continuously cycle this out so  
20 that we're not dealing with expired product that's  
21 wasting money?

22 SECRETARY TOPPER: Yeah. So, thank you.  
23 I believe the team can share that analysis. It's a  
24 work in progress, but we believe --

25 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Okay. That's

1 more what I was asking for, because you've gone  
2 over some of this in -- some of it in some detail.  
3 I just wanted to know if there is something that  
4 you have formally in writing, if you could get that  
5 to us.

6 SECRETARY TOPPER: I'm sure we can -- we  
7 can share the analysis as it stands. We believe  
8 there's sufficient demand from Commonwealth  
9 agencies and from our COSTARS members to be able to  
10 sufficiently cycle the inventory so that it doesn't  
11 expire. I think it's a good plan.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: All right. If  
13 you could just submit that, I would just like to  
14 take a look at that if you could provide that to  
15 the committee then.

16 So, that leads into, I got a call during  
17 the pandemic from some of my health care providers.  
18 You were taking inventory of their supplies. At  
19 one point the fear was that their supplies were  
20 going to be commandeered, and they were concerned  
21 with how that would work.

22 So, with many of the health care  
23 providers required to put in what that PPE levels  
24 are, what is the data showing with what our current  
25 PPE needs are?

1                   SECRETARY TOPPER: I'm going to have to  
2 defer to PEMA or Health.

3                   DIRECTOR PICKETT: So I can certainly  
4 start this, and then perhaps, Jeff or Director  
5 Padfield can chime in.

6                   There was a survey that any, basically,  
7 Commonwealth entity, health care provider, or any  
8 other business that had PPE was requested to fill  
9 out an inventory of their stockpile. That was  
10 when --

11                   Again, this was early in the pandemic.  
12 We didn't know what the supply chain was going to  
13 be as our DGS colleagues looked to procure PPE far  
14 and wide to bring it in, and we weren't sure what  
15 the demand was going to be either. So we wanted  
16 just sort of a baseline understanding of the  
17 different entities across the Commonwealth that had  
18 PPE.

19                   Fortunately, we didn't have to request  
20 anyone move PPE around, and really, that was a  
21 snapshot in time. That was one survey that was  
22 conducted.

23                   Now, our Department of Health and our  
24 federal Health and Human and Services colleagues do  
25 collect data from the health care sector on a daily

1 or weekly basis that, you know, where those  
2 facilities indicate what their PPE supplies are.  
3 Do they have a three-day supply, a seven-day  
4 supply, a two-week supply, a month supply.

5 And generally, across the board, the  
6 supplies at health care facilities have been  
7 increasing as the supply chain opens up, as  
8 facilities are able to go back to their normal  
9 vendors, and just like we are at the Commonwealth  
10 level, procure and bring back some of those stocks  
11 that we had initially.

12 Director Padfield or Jeff, anything to  
13 add there?

14 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Andy, I can just hop  
15 in.

16 I think it goes back to some of the  
17 things we talked about in the beginning, is that,  
18 the PPE, depending on where we were at in the  
19 pandemic, our visibility of the PPE supply was very  
20 cloudy. As Andy indicated, you know, that survey  
21 was a snapshot in time to be able to find out who  
22 has PPE, where it's located, and if we would need  
23 to load balance the system to a certain degree, we  
24 had visibility across the spectrum of health care  
25 providers of where that PPE happened to be.

1           We knew that PPE continued to flow. Where  
2 the endpoints were, we did not know at that point  
3 in time, and that was an attempt to be able to  
4 identify those endpoints and who had PPE verses who  
5 did not.

6           We also spent a fair amount of time, and  
7 Director Pickett discussed this, as we would get  
8 reports from the federal government, and we still  
9 do to this day, of entities that were reporting  
10 less than a 3-day supply. We would ground troop  
11 all of that information and reach out.

12           In a lot of those cases what we found  
13 out is, they were using a hub and a spoke model in  
14 their health care system. And while that facility  
15 had less than a 3-day supply of, say, N95s, they  
16 were waiting on a restock from a central store  
17 somewhere in their health care chain, and their  
18 facility or their larger facilities.

19           So, we spent a fair amount of time  
20 trying to ground troop any PPE deficits that we saw  
21 or that were reported to us or through the federal  
22 government to be able to make sure that they  
23 weren't critical, especially as we had more stock  
24 in PPE that we were able to get out to these --

25           REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Right. You're

1 still collecting -- The Department of Health is  
2 still collecting that information, correct, what  
3 the -- they're entering that? I think the last  
4 time I spoke to one of my providers they said that  
5 they had to, you know, continuously provide that  
6 data.

7 DIRECTOR PICKETT: That is correct, yes.

8 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Okay. And  
9 according to the Department of Health website,  
10 there's no longer a request process for PPE. They  
11 said, instead, the Department of Health and PEMA  
12 will proactively distribute PPE to those in  
13 critical need.

14 However, in a recent article from the  
15 Department of Ag, they stated that we continue to  
16 push PPE to those who need and request it, and will  
17 work to ensure we keep our stockpile filled to  
18 prepare for a future surge.

19 So, which is it? Who's gonna determine  
20 what the critical PPE need is? What factors are  
21 taken into account in determining who's gonna get  
22 that PPE?

23 DIRECTOR PICKETT: As with many things,  
24 over the course of this response, we've had a  
25 couple of different operational frameworks that we

1 had used. Initially, when we had those  
2 20 million requests, we knew we couldn't work off  
3 of a request-based system. So at that point we  
4 turn into a pushed-based system, whereas, we got  
5 product in and we knew there was a need, we would  
6 push it out.

7 As of January of this year, we have  
8 transitioned back to a request-based system where a  
9 facility in need can submit a request to the  
10 Commonwealth where we would work with partners to  
11 evaluate that. We have a team that works  
12 specifically with our long-term care facilities  
13 that works to determine what those needs are at the  
14 long-term care facilities.

15 We also have regional health care  
16 coalitions that work to -- primarily with the acute  
17 care hospitals and other health care providers to  
18 work with the facilities to clearly articulate and  
19 define that need, and then submit that resource  
20 request up through the emergency management  
21 channels to the department so that we can fulfill  
22 those requests.

23 Fortunately, we have not received many  
24 requests recently, again, as the supply chain  
25 improves, but we are right now in a request-based

1 process.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Okay. So you're  
3 back and forth based upon the demand.

4 So, again, is there a plan, or like a  
5 formal process that you have in writing that you  
6 could provide this committee to show us how that  
7 ebb and flow goes; how you're cycling that  
8 stockpile out or meeting those needs; just  
9 prioritizing whether it's a request; what the  
10 criteria is that shifts you to a request versus a  
11 push-based system?

12 DIRECTOR PICKETT: Yes, we can certainly  
13 provide a copy of that allocation strategy  
14 document.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: And the last one  
16 I have is -- Sorry about that. I'm just trying to  
17 find my place again here, is --

18 Do you have guidance also that you  
19 provide -- You know, as we've evolved here and  
20 understand what we're working with and what we're  
21 dealing with, do you have guidance that you provide  
22 to users or consumers based upon the type of --  
23 their type of structure of their business per se of  
24 what they should have access to; the amount of PPE  
25 they should have access to, whether it's in storage

1 or contract for it, a baseline that helps you on  
2 the, you know, serve as a backstop, so they're  
3 prepared with whatever that modeling is? Is there  
4 something that PEMA or the Department of Health  
5 provides as guidance?

6 DIRECTOR PICKETT: So, speaking for the  
7 health care sector, which is primarily our audience  
8 in the Department of Health, there are a number of  
9 guidance documents and tools and resources that are  
10 made available from the federal government through  
11 the Department of Health and Human Services that we  
12 work to make sure that the health care facilities  
13 are aware of in utilizing those resources to make  
14 sure that they have adequate internal stockpiles of  
15 PPE, but plans -- adequate plans in place for  
16 additional procurement.

17 And then also, ensuring that they  
18 understand that we are a provider of last resort  
19 should they come into that crisis situations, and  
20 then the appropriate ways that they need to request  
21 that PPE from the Commonwealth.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: Okay. So you're  
23 relying -- You're pushing forward, basically,  
24 federal guidelines or federal standards for that  
25 already; that are already in place, correct?

1                   DIRECTOR PICKETT: Yes, ma'am.

2                   REPRESENTATIVE KEEFER: All right.

3 Thank you very much.

4                   I have no more questions, Mr. Chairman.

5                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

6                   We did have written remarks from the  
7 Pennsylvania Health Care Association, as well as  
8 the Hospital Association of Pennsylvania, and the  
9 Pennsylvania Home Care Association.

10                  I just wanted to read some excerpts.

11 This is from the Pennsylvania Home Care  
12 Association. Some agencies, they're referring to  
13 their entities. Despite their best efforts were  
14 unable to buy PPE in sufficient quantities in the  
15 spring. As we were instructed, we encouraged them  
16 to reach out to the regional health care  
17 consortiums and county emergency management  
18 agencies. Some found success at the regional or  
19 county level, but many did not.

20                  As we moved into summer, we were  
21 informed that requests should no longer be made  
22 this way, and there would be PPE, quote, pushes to  
23 certain facilities. Home care agencies were not  
24 included in those pushes. The Department of Human  
25 Services Appendix K Waiver provided for PPE, when

1 appropriate, in an individual personal --  
2 person-centered service plan, but that did not  
3 include PPE for caregivers.

4 In recent months we have been inquired  
5 generally about access to emergency supplies. We  
6 have been told that they are not available to home  
7 care.

8 Further, the Pennsylvania Health Care  
9 Association has said, quote, after just two cases  
10 of COVID-19 were confirmed in Pennsylvania,  
11 long-term care providers began a desperate search  
12 for PPE with manufacturing in China all but  
13 completely halted. Nursing homes, personal care  
14 homes, and assisted-living communities will be  
15 forced to rely on both state and federal government  
16 lenders -- leaders to send much needed supplies.  
17 Both Pennsylvania's sole focus and our hospital  
18 systems long-term care continuum looked elsewhere,  
19 local manufacturers, grocery stores, dentist  
20 offices, et cetera.

21 To compound the issue, long-term care  
22 providers are forced to defend their own  
23 diminishing supplies. On April 20, 2020, state  
24 order was issued requiring long-term care  
25 facilities to submit an inventory for their PPE,

1 although stipulated that PPE could be seen as part  
2 of a misguided effort to support hospitals and  
3 other health care providers.

4 Additionally, two months later, the  
5 legislature approved \$175 million in the CARES Act  
6 funding for the regional response health care  
7 collaborative program, which was originally pitched  
8 as a resource for PPE for long-care providers fell  
9 short of its intended goals.

10 So there have been some entities out  
11 there that have been a little displeased. I'll  
12 forward this along to you so you can kind of read  
13 through it. Obviously, the goal of today's hearing  
14 is to get long-term finalized plans of how we  
15 handle pandemics in the future.

16 I'm very happy to hear, this is the  
17 first COVID-19 hearing we've had where we've  
18 actually heard plans. We've heard target numbers  
19 being developed, so I want to thank you all for  
20 that. That is excellent news, and I think I  
21 started, let's hear some good news on that.

22 Obviously, we will have a look back of  
23 how we operated under this time. I think it's  
24 imperative we do have written formalized plans, and  
25 that process has already started, from at least

1 your agencies around PPE storage, restocking, et  
2 cetera.

3           It sounds hopeful that we have a  
4 potential of actually having a Farm Show in 2022.  
5 Hopefully, we can continue the agricultural  
6 excellence of what the Farm Show prevails.  
7 Hopefully, we can find a finalized storage place  
8 for our PPE stockpile in the future that is not at  
9 the Farm Show. I'm very happy to hear the  
10 Administration is moving as quickly as they can to  
11 remove that stockpile and get the Farm Show back to  
12 working order as quickly as possible. So we did  
13 hear some good things from this hearing, which is  
14 -- which is the entire point.

15           I know Representative Owlett did want to  
16 add that he was not trying to -- he was just trying  
17 to address the decisions; not your capability or  
18 your amount of service you've had to the  
19 Commonwealth. So we did want to pass on his  
20 regards. Appreciate your hard work.

21           With that, we are out of time.  
22 Chairwoman has not returned. So, again, we thank  
23 the gentlemen for your time today.

24           All the information around the PPE,  
25 obviously, procurement, distribution, and storage

1 here in the Commonwealth we look forward working  
2 with you to create finalized plans. Please send us  
3 all your formal documents we requested so we can  
4 review it. And, obviously, if we're looking to do  
5 an appropriation to make a permanent site, leased  
6 site, we will need that information to make the  
7 best judgment call we can.

8 So, again, gentlemen, thank you all.

9 SECRETARY TOPPER: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Chairman.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: If you can  
12 follow up with Representative Moul on the tour, it  
13 would be great, too. Thank you.

14 And this hearing of the State Government  
15 Committee is adjourned.

16 (At 11:06 a.m., the hearing concluded).

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## C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Karen J. Meister, Reporter, Notary Public, qualified in and for the County of York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, hereby certify that there the testimony of the testifiers were recorded by me in stenotype from a video recording, to the best of my ability, and subsequently reduced to computer printout under my supervision, and that this copy is a true and correct record of the same.

I further certify that I am not a relative or employee of counsel or the parties hereto. This certification does not apply to any reproduction of the same by any means unless under my direct control and/or supervision.

Dated this 14th day of April, 2021.

*Karen J. Meister*

*Karen J. Meister – Reporter*

*Notary Public*

