

An Interview with Chair Alexis Hill

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Principal Researchers:

Magdalena Martinez, Ph.D. and Kelliann Beavers, Ph.D.

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Chair Alexis Hill, Washoe County Board of County Commissioners, and was conducted on 9/1/22 by Magdalena Martinez. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Interview with Alexis Hill

Date: 9-1-2022

SPEAKERS: Magdalena Martinez, Alexis Hill

Magdalena Martinez [00:02]

All right. So today is September 1st, 2022. I am here with Commissioner Hill, excuse me, from Washoe County. And I just wanted to review that you will consent to be a part of this study.

Alexis Hill [00:16]

Yes.

Magdalena Martinez [00:20]

And you consent to me recording the conversation.

Alexis Hill [00:20]

Yes.

Magdalena Martinez [00:24]

And you consent to any writing that I do; I attribute it to your name, once I clear it by you.

Alexis Hill [00:29]

Yes. Thank you.

Magdalena Martinez [00:30]

All right. Thank you so much. Well, I'll jump right into it. If you could talk a little bit about how you saw your role. I know that you've been serving as a commissioner since 2021. But I see that you've also been very involved in a variety of different types of nonprofit organizations and municipalities. Tell me about how you saw your role during the pandemic, and the role of the various organizations that you've been a part of.

Alexis Hill [00:57]

Absolutely. Well, as a commissioner, our role was to approve the local plan, as part of the pandemic, and also approve grants and funding to the health district, which is a separate organization, but under the county for financial, HR, emails, website, and all of that. So we worked very closely with the health district, and the health district officer as well, as well as our local partners, to approve the local plan that the governor asked all the counties in Nevada to approve.

And then I saw myself on a more of a leadership level of showing that I believed in COVID, that I believed in vaccination. I answered a lot of concerned citizen questions, when the vaccine first came out, about "When can I get it?" and kind of calming people down. I was pregnant at the time, and I was very open to the fact that I was getting the vaccine while pregnant. I took two

doses, while I was pregnant, with the vaccine. And I talked about that a lot, and I felt that that was one of my roles as a leader.

Magdalena Martinez [02:16]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [02:18]

And also, speaking outwardly during public meetings to talk about my belief in the science behind COVID, best practices, and really, trying to be a leader in wearing my mask during meetings, and all – in the community. So I think there's just the more strict interpretation of what a commissioner does, and then there's that component of what it means to be a leader in the community, and I try to do both.

Magdalena Martinez [02:51]

Okay. Wow, that's really helpful. Thank you. Now, in reflecting on the timeline, based on your recollection, can you walk me through what you remember of that timeline during the early stages of COVID?

Alexis Hill [03:03]

Oh, my gosh. It's so funny. Someone was asking me about something that had happened, or a meeting I had had, and I'm like – it could have been two months ago, or five months ago. I don't even know what time is anymore. (laughs)

Magdalena Martinez [03:16]

Yeah.

Alexis Hill [03:18]

But when I was first elected, COVID was very – there was a lot of spread in the community of COVID. And we were still wearing masks during our meetings, and the vaccines had just come out in December, I think, but were not being yet allocated to the general public.

And so, like I said, a lot of my role was talking to mainly seniors who really wanted to get vaccinated and figuring out how to get in the queue. And I think at that time – folks may not remember it – but we were also vaccinating first responders, and we were vaccinating the service workers first. And there was some conflict happening with that, where we were giving out codes to service workers. The codes were then getting out to the general public on registering for the vaccine. And it's wild now because now, we're like "Please, get vaccinated." But at the time, it was like everyone was clamoring to get vaccinated, and we had different tiers of people who could and couldn't, and that was a tough time, for sure, in the community. And it felt like a lot of strife and competition, plus we had many COVID deniers coming to public comment. Very aggressive – it felt like anti-science and anti-government folks, trying to intimidate us as elected officials. I know they were doing that as well to the health district. I do not serve on that board, but that's another regional board that we have in the community.

And then just trying to follow the best science, and guide folks on the best science at the time, and really pushing masks. We were making masks; my family was making masks. The county

had made a branded mask and was giving out masks. And so that was a lot of that early time, and then we started that reopening plan, and working with the state on the reopening plan as a region.

So there were some conflicts with that because different jurisdictions – we're the county, but there's two cities: the City of Sparks and the City of Reno within that, and we had to work through how we wanted to reopen. And then some political flavor with that; because the county is a partisan-elected office, whereas the cities are non-partisan. And so, you could tell a difference in the way that our county was making decisions on the reopening plan because of that partisanship of three Republicans on our board and two Democrats. I'm one of the Democrats. So that was another large learning curve for me, you know, just hitting elected office.

Magdalena Martinez [06:30]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [06:31]

So, a lot of challenges, for sure.

Magdalena Martinez [06:35]

And was this your first elected office?

Alexis Hill [06:36]

Yes.

Magdalena Martinez [06:37]

Okay. And what motivated you to run? You talked about you were pregnant, so I don't know if it was your first child.

Alexis Hill [06:43]

Yes, first child.

Magdalena Martinez [06:46]

Okay. So that adds another layer of complexity – or opportunity.

Alexis Hill [06:50]

For sure.

Magdalena Martinez [06:51]

Can you talk to me, a little bit, about your motivation to run, in that particular time, when you were observing what was happening?

Alexis Hill [07:00]

Yes, absolutely. I had, about four years previously, been looking at that office. It was – I'm one of those "goal people" – and so that was a goal for me. The reason I wanted to run for office originally is that I grew up in the City of Sparks, which is in Washoe County, and right next to the City of Reno. And I used to walk to school, and we didn't have proper sidewalks. And I remember really getting fired up about that as a kid and going to the city council. And that really

kind of led me on my path of wanting to get involved in government. I went to school for political science, and then thought "Oh, I'm going to come back to local government." I worked at the City of Sparks [for] my first job, and worked to fix those sidewalks – and actually, there *are* sidewalks there now, which is great, and I really enjoyed that work as a planner.

And then the recession came. I needed to change careers because [in] the government jobs, everyone was getting laid off left and right. And I was not laid off, but I probably would have been if I would have stayed any longer. And I changed – got into the arts and culture. Moved to Tahoe. I ran the Shakespeare Festival up there. Ran a nonprofit for special needs children.

And then the government was hiring again in 2012. We were slowly climbing out of the recession. And so I had an opportunity to work at the City of Reno and run their Arts, Culture, and Events Department. And all the while, I was watching the county commission, and the county commission has a lot of power to – and we're seen from the state, as you heard, we approve the local plan as a county commission. We are actually given a lot of jurisdiction that the cities don't even have.

Magdalena Martinez [08:54]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [08:55]

And the county had an opportunity to pass a tax to improve our schools. The state had given us approval to do that, and the county chose not to – voted against taking that initiative on. So the voters had to vote on that, four years later, and it was passed, which is great. Our schools were being rehabbed from 2016 on, but that was a four-year gap where we could have then – getting construction jobs online and rehabbing our schools. And kids were in rooms that were, in some cases, in some of our schools, not safe. So that really drove me to think "I think I want to get involved at the county level."

So I had been thinking about getting involved and running for office for a while. And then the timing worked out that it was during a pandemic. But I was still, almost, more driven to run for office because of the strife in our community and our country. And I felt like I needed to help be a leader during that time, and so that's why I ran when I did. It wasn't really because of the pandemic, but certainly, it created more passion for me.

And then the county does all sorts of incredible work in the region, for our parks, our libraries, and our social services. I'm a big proponent of the "Housing First" model. And so, we're doing some really great things for homelessness, and that was something I wanted to tackle, and then public transportation. I represent Lake Tahoe, so I do a lot of conservation sustainability measures in my role as well.

Magdalena Martinez [10:36]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [10:37]

So, a lot of fun – we do a lot of fun things at the county.

Magdalena Martinez [10:42]

So, as a first-time elected official – it sounds like you've obviously been involved. You've been in the community for a long time. What were some of the major challenges that you faced as a commissioner, and/or any other hats that you wore, coming into the position, and then during the pandemic?

Alexis Hill [11:01]

I think what's interesting is that many of my coworkers – I had unseated an incumbent. It would have been her third term. And so my commission is a commission that has been in their seats for quite a long time. Most of my commissioners were in their second term or in their last term. And so I came onto a board where folks were very experienced, which is amazing, but they also had experienced a different level of community engagement, let's just say, than I experienced coming in.

So I have known hours of public comments since the moment I started in office, whereas my coworkers, that was a new experience for them, and it was really tough. I feel like, in a lot of ways, I'm very lucky in that I came in during a difficult time because I don't know any different, as far as engaging with the public. And I think that it's tough if you have been a county commissioner, where no one would go to your meetings for close to a decade, and then you've got a lot of community strife and engagement.

Magdalena Martinez [12:15]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [12:17]

So I think in some ways, [I was] fortunate to come in during this time. And I think, in a lot of ways, when I worked at the City of Reno, the pandemic had just started. It just had hit, and I was running Arts, Culture, & Events – well, you can't do those when there's a pandemic.

Magdalena Martinez [12:33]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [12:35]

So I felt like in a lot of ways, my job, as I was running for office, but also still working at the city was being a therapist or counselor to folks. Because they were – we were all told to go home in March, and we'd be back in two weeks. I'm sure you remember – and then it turned into a month and two months, and people were getting really sick and dying. And then, what is going to happen to all these industries; these small nonprofit theaters and events, that their whole income and revenue is off of a one-time event.

And so, really working through that. Trying to find funding. There were a lot of incredible opportunities for funding that we were able to get when I was at the City of Reno – federal funds for our arts and culture organizations, to keep them afloat through the NEA.

Magdalena Martinez [13:29]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [13:32]

I'm very proud of the work we were able to do with that. And then the mayor was – is – I think she may still be the president of the TAPES Committee through the U.S. Conference of Mayors. And "TAPES" is Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment, and Sports. And that committee was trying to pull together and create some hope for their cities. And so they were doing a city song program, and we were able to pull together some funding from the Reno Philharmonic and pull in a bunch of artists to create a Reno song, and that created a lot of joy in the community. So we were able to do a lot of those kinds of programs that I'm very proud of, and we were able to give people a little bit of hope during a really dark time. Where if you weren't staying at home and working from home, you were working and exposing yourself to a possible – disease that could create death or long-term health ramifications for you.

Magdalena Martinez [14:44]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [14:47]

So it was a very intense time, but that's cool.

Magdalena Martinez [14:50]

It sounds like a lot of your previous experiences really prepared you to be an elected official, and the example you used was engaging with multiple constituents. Would you agree with that?

Alexis Hill [15:05]

I – yes. I definitely feel like, when I started as a commissioner, I hit the ground running.

Magdalena Martinez [15:09]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [15:11]

And a lot of that is the government background. I have a master's in public administration. But also, I'm connected to the community, so I knew many of the players. It wasn't like I was meeting people for the first time. And so in that way, I was very fortunate. And then I have great relationships with both the City of F- [??15:30] and the City of Reno because I worked with both of those municipalities previously. So, yes, I think that that experience did help.

Magdalena Martinez [15:43]

Mm-hmm. In thinking about externally, what were some of the biggest challenges as a commissioner during the beginning of the pandemic, or throughout the pandemic?

Alexis Hill [15:55]

Oh – I feel like we all wanted to do more.

Magdalena Martinez [15:59]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [16:01]

And you're just limited on – everyone has their little piece. And I feel like I wish I would have had more control over – I don't know – the vaccine rollout, for example. Well, that's not my role as a commissioner. I certainly was able to funnel funding through that, through the grants that we have to accept as a commission. But you really – it's a difficult situation, where all you feel like you can do is try to give people words of comfort and hope, and you can't get in there and you know, actually *give* a vaccine, or actually, you know, talk to the governor directly and ask why this is being done versus that.

So I think that that's the frustrating part is people see you in these elected positions, and they think you could do it, and you're the "Queen." And I'd love to be the Queen, but I'm certainly not. And then you have to work with a lot of people who have different opinions and may not say the things that you wish they would say as an elected official because of political situations. And so that's frustrating for sure, but we got through it.

Magdalena Martinez [17:19]

And so there were multiple levels of intervention; everything from the federal, as you mentioned, to the state, to the county, to the municipality. Is there anything you wish that any level of government, perhaps, could have done differently?

Alexis Hill [17:40]

I think this came up – I forgot if it was one of the morning shows. And a similar question came up, and it was more on the CDC, and it was someone from the White House who said, "We're doing the best we can with the information we've got. And this is just new science, and protecting people from a disease that's airborne is just – there's so many challenges." So it's hard for me to throw stones from this – I mean it would be easy, I guess, for me to throw stones at this point of view. But I think people were working incredible hours, trying to collaborate, and trying to make the best decisions with the information that they had.

So I can't – I'm sure there's going to be many papers that will discuss how we could have all done it better. But I think there was – the one criticism, I would say, and I think that this is overreaching, as just within our local region, there's just – and I'm sure that this happened on the federal level and on the state level: just a lot of egos in play. And I think that mainly, it's because we all wanted to save the day, and there was no way to save anything. There was no one person who could come in and make things better.

So I think that that happens with disasters all the time. I just went to Emmetsburg to do disaster training on what if there was an earthquake that then created incredible floods in our region. And what are the roles of the county, the cities, and elected officials versus the people on the ground? And it's really trying to understand your role and stick to what your role is. And in a lot of ways, our role is to be a leader and to get the right information out, and not try to mess with the people on the ground. And I think that was happening a little bit, but it was mainly because there wasn't any control. We couldn't – you can't flip that switch and make everything okay.

Magdalena Martinez [19:52]

Mm-hmm. And so, you said this was a training you recently went to? Was that spearheaded by a county organization?

Alexis Hill [20:01]

Yes, the county. We have an emergency management services department, and we help coordinate all of the region in an emergency. And they were, just recently, they essentially did their after-action COVID report. So this is a very – they have been in an emergency since, what, 2020. So that's a difficult job as well. But FEMA sponsors county use [video stops 20:39 - 21:00]

Magdalena Martinez [21:01]

Okay. Sorry about that.

Alexis Hill [21:02]

That's okay.

Magdalena Martinez [21:03]

You left off on "FEMA sponsors."

Alexis Hill [21:05]

Oh. Maybe it's my internet. Let me stop my video. FEMA sponsors counties to go to these trainings. And it's to prepare us for the inevitable, which for us probably was COVID, but will definitely be an earthquake. We're going to get one any – we're kind of past our decade mark, and so it could be any day. So we need to prepare for that. And it feels very real-

Magdalena Martinez [21:38]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [21:40]

-those trainings. So it was great experience.

Magdalena Martinez [21:44]

Where could I get more information on that?

Alexis Hill [21:47]

The *RGJ* did a really great article on it. I'm wondering if I could find the link for you – let's see.

Magdalena Martinez[21:59]

And that's a Reno newspaper, right?

Alexis Hill [22:02]

Yeah. *RGJ* – FEMA region training. Let's see. Aha, found it. I'll send you this link.

Magdalena Martinez [22:12]

Thank you.

Alexis Hill [22:13]

Yes. [Internet breaks up again]

Magdalena Martinez [22:24]

I think it's actually my end too. It tells me "Your internet connection's..."

Alexis Hill [22:31]

Yeah. And then mine just said that too. I'm like, oh-

Magdalena Martinez [22:33]

Okay. I gotcha.

Alexis Hill [22:34]

So we've got a really great situation where we both have unstable connections.

Magdalena Martinez [22:38]

Yes. In thinking about the pandemic, how did you work with groups that were the hardest hit by the pandemic, and who were these groups?

Alexis Hill [22:53]

Well, we have identified the zip codes that were hardest hit, and they were already the zip codes that were not receiving – that was hardest – they're already hardest hit economically; they're not receiving the best healthcare. They have issues with access to food. And so we already knew that group, and it was working on the ground, the health district mainly, of doing vaccine clinics at – going to the people. Going to the churches. Ensuring staff could speak Spanish.

But what's so cool – what's coming out of this whole effort is that we are going to have community engagement staff, that I think the health district will hire or is about to hire, of people on the ground working every day with our at-risk populations; instead of cramming it in when a disaster happens.

Magdalena Martinez [23:58]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [23:59]

And so I think that was a great lesson that we took away. Additionally, vaccinating our folks in the jails, because we oversee the jails, the county, and then also, vaccinating our homeless population, those are our very at-risk folks as well.

Magdalena Martinez [24:17]

Mm-hmm. And so, you said that was a lesson learned, and perhaps an innovative approach?

Alexis Hill [24:24]

Absolutely.

Magdalena Martinez [24:25]

Can you tell me more about that initiative? Is it being housed under a certain department? Is there – what language is being used around that? Is it a specific division, or a specific group? Is it a collaboration between different organizations?

Alexis Hill [24:44]

I think they hired two community engagement staff, and it's under the health district. And I don't have all the details because I don't serve on the health district board. I know just enough to be dangerous. But I can send you that information if you're interested in what we're doing from that. I think that it is a very innovative approach of, you know, these folks will go out to events. These folks will make community connections and build trust, and really be the "boots on the ground" for everyday health and well-being, quality of life issues that are happening in Washoe County.

Magdalena Martinez [25:29]

Mm-hmm, okay. Yeah, I would love to learn more about that, and whether that's something that's being implemented across more counties, municipalities, or health districts as something local, or is it broader?

Alexis Hill [25:48]

I received this great presentation from the director of programs and projects at the health district. Do you want me to send you Julia Ratti's information – who did this presentation for me on this?

Magdalena Martinez [26:01]

Absolutely, yes.

Alexis Hill [26:04]

Let me put that in the chat.

Magdalena Martinez [26:09]

And Ratti is now with the city?

Alexis Hill [26:14]

She's with the health district.

Magdalena Martinez [26:14]

Okay.

Alexis Hill [26:17]

She resigned, as you know, probably, that she resigned from the state senate, and now is working full-time at the health district.

Magdalena Martinez [26:23]

Okay. Great. Thank you.

Alexis Hill [26:27]

And she could best – I mean she's brilliant, and really spearheading all of these innovative projects within the region. So I think she could best address them. She sent me a PowerPoint, but I'm like, I shouldn't send that to you until you guys have a chance to discuss it.

Magdalena Martinez [26:48]

Absolutely, yes. I'm happy to reach out to her. I did have an opportunity to talk to her several years ago when I was collecting interviews on the first female majority legislature.

Alexis Hill [26:57]

Oh, cool.

Magdalena Martinez [27:02]

So can you think of any other innovative ways that the county or other organizations responded, that can help inform future types of crises? These can be anything like collaborations, programs, or anything that comes to mind.

Alexis Hill [27:26]

Yes. And I think that there were a lot of relationships built by our emergency response group. I found that when we went to Emmetsburg, there was a lot of collaboration between the regions. And apparently, the last time our region went to Emmetsburg, there was like straight-up fighting between elected officials on a tabletop exercise, if you can believe it. So I think that yes, really great relationships were forged because of having to work together and having to find resources. Having to support each other, support staff, and going through it together. So I think that has been really great.

We have – our Emergency Services Manager, Kelly – if you want, I can also give you her information – Echevarria. She would probably be able to get you specifics on what she thinks she's going to take away from that. Would you like me to put that in the chat as well?

Magdalena Martinez [28:42]

That would be wonderful. Thank you.

Alexis Hill [28:43]

Okay. So let me think of other – I probably really should have sat down and thought about other innovative things that-

Magdalena Martinez [28:57]

No, no. This is perfect. This is fine.

Alexis Hill [28:59]

Okay. I know there are so many, and in some ways, that whole experience was so traumatic that it's like you almost want to put it to bed. Which is not a good thing to do after an emergency – you should remember everything that happened.

Magdalena Martinez [29:17]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [29:23]

Let's see. Oh, you know? One of the things that happened, at least when I was at the City of Reno. We designated farmer's markets as outdoor grocery stores essentially and allowed for those events to happen.

Magdalena Martinez [29:42]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [29:44]

That was a very important thing that we were able to do, to ensure that people had – farmers were being supported, A, and then that people had access to that food, especially because those farmer's markets take SNAP benefits, and seniors go to farmer's markets. So that was a really innovative approach. And I think what the city is now looking at is, how can we support our farmer's markets as almost like a city initiative, moving forward, instead of requiring all these permits and fees. Because of kind of changing the way we see farmer's markets, as less of an entertainment, and more of a necessary service to the community.

Magdalena Martinez [30:33]

Yeah. So that's really interesting. Changing ordinances, I imagine, [overtalking 30:38] laws to just address bigger issues like food insecurity.

Alexis Hill [30:45]

Yes.

Magdalena Martinez [30:47]

And so, along those lines, perhaps there were other types of ordinances that needed to be tweaked and changed. Was that difficult to do or was that something that you found people were pretty receptive to do and went – that process was smooth and timely. Or did it take-

Alexis Hill [31:08]

I think, at first, because the health district oversees inspections of farmer's markets, they were like "We can't deal with this right now, one more thing. We are vaccinating thousands of people in our community. We're dealing with quarantine community members.

Magdalena Martinez [31:26]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [31:29]

This is not something that we have bandwidth for." But then, as there was additional discussion and some Zoom meetings that happened, attitudes did change. So that was a positive, for sure.

Magdalena Martinez [31:45]

Mm-hmm. Do you think that's something that will be taken into consideration, as emergency planners and emergency plans are put into place, in terms of responsiveness and timeliness?

Alexis Hill [32:06]

I hope so. I think that we, as a state, still – and I'm sure; you're part of NSHE. You're a part of the state service. We need to really look at how we staff our government. And I think this is going to be an ongoing discussion. Essentially, we don't fund government, at the level that it should be funded, on any level. But certainly, on the state level, I know it's way worse than even at the county level. And I think we're looking at that; so for example, when we took over the homeless services, that was last September. And I think you can't – all those decisions that were happening, even "post-COVID," even though we're still in COVID. But those decisions all have a COVID lens: because you're looking at the world differently, and it's so hard to say, "Okay. I did this because of COVID," or "We made this approach because of COVID."

But we are doing historical staffing – caseworker staffing – on our homeless services. And it's mainly because our homeless services group significantly [?] during the pandemic. And we were also able to receive federal funds to house people, and we had to look at, creatively during the pandemic, how we're going to house – we were at, I think, oh, my gosh, maybe 600 homeless people in Reno, and now, we're looking at 1,200 homeless people in Reno. We had a shelter of 150 people, and during the pandemic, we were able to purchase land and create a shelter for 600 and some-odd people. And now we're really investing in that shelter, investing in those people, and finding them housing. And it's a total change of perspective for homelessness, that we've never had, as a region.

I think that people see human life differently even post-COVID. And there are some silver linings: we came together as a region because there were federal funds. And in some ways, the region has fought in the past because there's just fewer resources, so we're all trying to grab at resources. Well, when there's federal funds, you work together. And so I think that has been something. Like I said, I work with the City of Reno and the City of Sparks really well, and I think we're continuing that on – now we're looking at regional dispatch, where we've had a dysfunctional dispatch, where we all do our own dispatching, where it can create delays in getting emergency services. And now we're looking at, how can we work together to have one dispatch under one house. And we're not fighting over who gets to be the boss of it. Whoever is the best agency needs to run it. And so, I think that I'm optimistic to see the way that we can work together to ensure that we're getting the best services to our community. And I'm sure that the pandemic helped with all of that.

Magdalena Martinez [35:32]

Are there any specific policies, at the state or federal level that were implemented, that you noticed an impact on people? And obviously, the big ones, of course – the CARES Act; just the different funding strains. Is there anyone in particular that you thought this was a game-changer?

Alexis Hill [35:57]

Well, so much. So CARES, a total game-changer. Because we, as a city, I helped put together, before I moved over to the county, our business grant program. And we were getting grants to

our small businesses, which were either fully shuttered because of the laws or were at half capacity, or a quarter of capacity. And so we gave direct grants to our small businesses, and I think that helped – there's still always going to be a little bit of tension between a small business and the government because we regulate them.

Magdalena Martinez [36:33]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [36:36]

I swear, my daughter's not being tortured in there. There is someone caring for her. I'm sure you're hearing her in the background. Anyway-

Magdalena Martinez [36:42]

No. (smiles)

Alexis Hill [36:43]

Oh, you can't? Okay. Well, that's good. Anyway. So that was a game-changer. I think the federal government giving people checks to stay home honestly was a great thing. I know that there's pushback that it created some incentives for people not to work, or – oh, my God – I have a 12 o'clock – let me just text her. When do you think we're going to be done?

Magdalena Martinez [37:15]

Actually, that was my last question.

Alexis Hill [37:17]

Okay.

Magdalena Martinez [37:18]

If you could finish your thought, we're done.

Alexis Hill [37:18]

Okay. Just a moment. I think it helped people see their value and ask for money. And because of that, we're paying people more.

Magdalena Martinez [37:35]

Mm-hmm.

Alexis Hill [37:36]

And I think we value work a bit more. And so I think that has been a major shift. And then ARPA has been incredible; what we're going to be able to do for mental healthcare now. We're leveraging ARPA for – we're buying one of our mental healthcare facilities that couldn't make it through the pandemic, and we, as a county, are going to provide mental healthcare. That is going to be an incredible shift.

So there's going to be reverberations of COVID in, I'm hoping, new investments in our community for decades to come. And I hope that we'll see that we're offering that to our community.

Magdalena Martinez [38:21]

Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time.

Alexis Hill [38:23]

Absolutely.

Magdalena Martinez [38:27]

I look forward to a continued conversation, and one day, meeting face-to-face.

Alexis Hill [38:28]

Yes. Yeah, I can't wait to see your work and what you come out with.

Magdalena Martinez [38:35]

Thank you. Have a great day.

Alexis Hill [38:37]

You too. Bye-bye.

End of audio: 38:39