

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 26th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. Joining me to my right is the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the Department of Health's COVID-19 Medical Advisor and former State Epidemiologist, Dr. Eddy Bresnitz. To my far left, another guy who needs no introduction, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan, and I'm thrilled to welcome back to my immediate left, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan.

A special note today with a heavy heart that this will be Eddy's last time with us at this table, assuming this damn thing doesn't come back and rear its head again. As he prepares to move back to private life at the end of the week. Who could blame him? Eddy, I would be remiss if I did not on behalf of all of us thank you publicly for your tremendous guidance over the past year plus as we have tackled this unprecedented public health challenge. We are in the place we are today and prepared to take the steps we'll take on this Friday and next Friday in no small part because of your hard work, and on behalf of all of us, I saw thank you. By the way, don't change your cellphone number just in case. I know Judy joins me in that as well. Eddy, thank you for everything.

I've also asked Angelica to join us because on Monday, the Department released its plan for the investment of more than 2.75 billion dollars in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, otherwise known by many as ESSER funds made available to us through the American Rescue Plan. This includes the department's district by district funding of nearly 2.5 billion dollars of these latest federal relief funds, two thirds of which was released in Monday's allocations.

There's no doubt that over the past year – or that the past year has taken a tremendous toll on our educational communities, not just on students, educators, and school leaders but also on their families. Through this partnership with the federal government, we're going to work to ensure that every district has the resources it needs to fully get back to where it should be. This includes making sure that every school reopens for all in-person instruction for the 2021/2022 academic year. We know our students learn best and that our educators and support staff are at their best when they are in their familiar classroom settings. We know that there are students whose learning over the past year has been directly impacted, and part of our investment will be to ensure that they get back to where they belong in their educational journeys.

There is so much that was lost during this past year of largely remote learning, but that personal connection, the connections between educators and students, students and their peers, and among educators is what was missed the most because it is the most impactful to the success of our schools. As we sit here today, districts serving more than 95% of our students are now open for in-person instruction for at least part-time. 400 districts are back for full in-person instruction while 363 are open on a hybrid schedule. Just eight remain all remote. The progress we've made in getting our kids back to school has been enormous, and by the way, that eight includes single schools, not just a multi-school district. Now is our time to build upon this momentum to ensure the 2021/'22 school year sees all of our students succeed and through the work of Angelica and her team at the Department of Education and alongside educators, families, and stakeholders, I know they'll do just that. Again, in a few minutes, if it's okay with you, Angelica, I'll ask the acting commissioner to lead us through those efforts again in just a few minutes.

Next up today I will be issuing an executive order giving additional guidance and flexibility to employers and especially those in office settings as they look to their own continued return to normal operating practices. This order will be effective next Friday June 4th. As we have done, we want to give our businesses ample time to make the right decisions for their employees and workplaces. First, while all workplace health and safety protocols apply to indoor worksites closed to the public, employers will be able to allow employees who can verify that they are vaccinated the ability to forego wearing a mask and social distancing. We've heard this from a number of different businesses including and especially those that operate in multiple state and multiple jurisdictions. By the way, there should never be any stigma against any coworker who may

be fully vaccinated just to be safe to wear a mask. That's still okay anywhere, anytime. As a patron or as a coworker. At this time, we're going to continue requiring state employees to mask up and to keep social distancing at state offices and worksites while we continue to transition back to normal.

Second, I am rescinding the portion of executive order #107 that requires businesses or non-profits to accommodate remote working arrangements and to reduce their on-site staffs to the minimal number necessary. We're doing this to allow employers greater flexibility to bring employees back into in-person working environments. We encourage all employers to do the right things for their specific workplaces. While we are rescinding some requirements, that doesn't mean that we don't expect you to be flexible and to work with employees, particularly those who are juggling family obligations such as childcare. On the topic of childcare, through the Departments of Health under Judy's leadership and Children and Families under Christine Norburt Beyer's leadership, the group limits in childcare classes, which are currently capped at 15, will be returned to their normal regulated limits effective immediately. We know how critical access to childcare is for many working families, especially for working moms and restoring these limits to their pre-pandemic standard is an important piece of getting our economy back working for more parents as well as for peace of mind.

Before we get to the numbers, switching gears, a reminder from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority that Friday is the last day for small businesses to apply for discounts of up to 70, 7-0% on any PPE they need for their businesses. Even with the broad lifting of our indoor mask mandate occurring on Friday, as we noted there are businesses where the requirement that workers continue to mask up will continue such as in childcare, medical offices, and warehouse and manufacturing, so this is at last – this is a last opportunity for those employers to stock up on masks or other PPE for their employees. Since it's inception, the EDA's small and micro-business PPE access program has helped nearly 13,000 small employers save a total of more than \$11 million. For more information or to apply today to take advantage of these last three days of the program, go to that website, ppe.covid19.nj.gov and join in. I extend, again, my appreciation to the Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Authority Tim Sullivan and his team and board for all they have done over the past months to make this program a success.

While we're talking about the EDA, one of the runaway successes they've had is their Sustain and Serve NJ program, which has partnered organizations fighting food insecurity in their communities with local restaurants. Sustain and Serve has been the ultimate win-win. Key organizations have received millions of dollars in vital supports for their missions at a time when demand for their services has been overwhelming and at the same time, local restaurants have been kept strong by the orders for fresh cooked meals.

Let's head up to Morris County. The Morristown Rotary Club received a 240,000-dollar grant through Sustain and Serve. With this funding, the Rotary acted as a catalyst for the area bringing together the non-profits Homeless Solutions, Nourish NJ, and Table of Hope along with the Morristown and Morris Township Housing Authorities as well as the Morristown and Morris Township police and fire departments to provide nearly 24,000 meals to families across their area. Rotary board member and past president Nick Walsh was the man behind this effort, and I had the chance to thank him and current president Ray Wenzel – and those are the two gentlemen right there, Nick and Ray – for the Rotary's great work and history of community service. The Morristown Rotary will be celebrating its centennial next spring, and they are already setting the bar high for the next 100 years. We thank Ray and Nick and everyone for their support. Check them out by the way, morristownrotary.org, morristownrotary.org. It's an outstanding organization

Next up let's take a look at today's numbers. First we are reporting a total of 4,134,624 fully vaccinated individuals. Of these roughly, as you can see, 3.967 million have been vaccinated at one of our in-state sites while an additional 167,000 were vaccinated out of state. The total number of individuals who have now received a first dose at one of our in-state vaccination sites is now at 4,831,346. If we broaden out to look at the numbers compiled by the CDC, their count has more than 5.2 million New Jerseyans ages 12 and over having now received at least one dose. That's 68.5% of all residents in this case 12 and up, and that ranks us number seven in the nation and number one or two consistently among the big American states.

Just to reaffirm a few points for those who are not yet vaccinated, we know there are many reasons why some folks have yet to start on their journey to vaccination, including some potential misunderstandings. Judy, I want to address a couple of those if it's okay. First, there are lots of places you can go. There are more than 1700 places across our state where you can be vaccinated ranging from our six megasites to more than 700 pharmacies. There is a vaccination site near you. You can use our vaccine finder at that website covid19.nj.gov/finder to find the closest one, and many no longer require appointments. I think, frankly, most no longer require appointments. That website's a great place to go. covid19.nj.gov/finder. Through our Grateful for the Shot program, we're also bringing the vaccine directly into communities through the efforts of our faith leaders. I specifically thank not just them – and bless them all – but I want to thank our partners at CVS and Walgreens for their help.

Additionally, there's another myth. Please listen to this. Getting vaccinated is free. Period. Even for those without health insurance coverage. Cost should not be on your list of considerations. No one will ask you for money upon being vaccinated nor will an insurer ask for a payment. It is all covered. It is free of charge. Period. Finally, anyone who lives, works, or studies in New Jersey is eligible to be vaccinated, and by the way, that's regardless of immigration status. No one will ask your status when you go to get vaccinated. This is about ensuring public health, and the personal health of everyone in our state.

Getting these points across is a big part of the door-to-door outreach program we are undertaking through operation Jersey Summer to provide accurate information to help dispel myths and to build vaccine confidence. I mentioned that on Monday our doorknockers were in Trenton, Camden, Bayonne, Jersey City, Passaic City. As of today, Dan Bryan, Paterson is on that list. Our teams will continue to knock in those six communities, and as of this Friday, they will add Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Vineland, and Atlantic City. That'll be a total of 10 communities as of this Friday. Again, the new one is Paterson today, and as of Friday, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Vineland, and Atlantic City.

Anecdotal, Judy, this is what I'm hearing. Three to four thousand interactions a day in those five communities. That number will go up because we're adding a lot of communities, and by the way, it'll go up because they're going to deepen their reach into the communities where they have already been knocking. For those folks who have not yet been vaccinated, the anecdotal evidence I'm hearing is about half of those conversations are constructive. Great. I didn't know it was free. Didn't know this location was near. Didn't know my status had nothing to do with it. To me, that's a good sign, and the numbers, again, continue to go up, so it'll be more communities and more doors in the communities in which we are knocking. We know, by the way, the impact trusted community voices make. We want to make sure everyone has correct information and that no one misses their opportunity to be vaccinated. We are all in this fight together. As we continue to push our vaccination program, we are seeing the results in the decreasing daily caseloads, in the falling patient numbers in our hospitals because we know of the effectiveness of the vaccines in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and preventing illnesses.

With that, let's look at some more numbers. Overnight, we're reporting 451 additional cases. The rate of transmission is .75. The positivity rate for Saturday – Judy, this is the first time we've been below 3% for a weekend in a long time – was 2.79%. As of last night, statewide hospital census, 641 including 560 confirmed, 81 awaiting test results. 137 of whom in ICU and 94 ventilators were in use. Throughout the day yesterday, 97 live patients walked out, 67 – 55, I think. I've got 97. Hold on a second. Those numbers are not accurate. 97 were discharged. Judy, I've got 67 walked in, and I'm showing 12 hospital deaths, so we've got to correct that slide. Again, those deaths are not confirmed. Those are as reported to us by the hospitals. Having said that, we are with the heaviest of hearts reporting an additional 25 confirmed losses of life, blessed souls from our New Jersey community. The number of probable deaths has now also been revised upward by ten. It's now 2,670. The total death toll since last March, 26,000 – when you add confirmed and probable – 26,159. Literally unfathomable.

Let's, if we may, honor three more of those who we have lost. We'll begin today by remembering this guy, David Bohan. David was 74 years old, and you won't be surprised from that setting, that hat, the sunglasses, he called Beach Haven home. He was born and raised on LBI. His father was a Long Beach Township police officer, while his mother founded LBI's first all-women's fishing club, ladies. How cool is that? Following his service in the air force as a mechanic, he returned to New Jersey to pursue a bachelor's degree in education at the College of New Jersey, known today – known then, rather, as Trenton State College. Then he got a master's in education, Angelica, from Jersey State – Jersey City State College. For 30 years, Dave was a beloved shop teacher at Ocean Township Middle School, a youth soccer coach, and he also ran his own construction company. As one would expect, growing up on LBI instilled in Dave a love of the water. He was a member of the Beach Haven Marlin and Tuna Club and the Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club, but he also enjoyed his travels in land, whether it was a cross-country RV trip or visiting his grandsons in London.

Dave now leaves behind his two daughters, Ashley, who also lives on LBI and with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Monday, and his daughter Rikki who lives in London and Rikki's husband Nicholas and their two grandsons Oscar and Bohan. He's also survived by his sister's Kathy and Judy among many other family members and dear friends. We thank Dave for his service to our nation and his years in the classroom, and I trust that Dave is somewhere where the waters are calm and fish are biting. May God bless and watching over him, his memory, and his family.

Next we'll stay along the shore to remember Brick Township's Thomas Kelty, standing alongside his wife Eileen there. Tom was a long-time iron worker, a member of Iron worker's Local #580 in New York City and #11 out of Bloomfield. He retired in 1990 but he never slowed down. He just found new ways to stay active in the communities in which he lived. He was a member of St. Dominic's Roman Catholic Church in Brick, a fourth-degree knight with the Knights of Columbus. He served in leadership positions in that organization including as a district deputy and grand knight in Brooklyn – by the way, that's where he was born and raised – and in West Milford where he lived until moving to Brick in his retirement. He was also a member of the Point Pleasant Elk's Lodge #1698, and Tom leaves behind that gal, his wife Eileen, after 73 years of marriage.

He is also survived by his three children, son Tom, Jr., his wife Doreen, and his daughters June and her husband John, his daughter Patricia and her husband Rick. He also leaves behind his two grandchildren Kelli and Rick and great granddaughter Mackenzie, and he is survived by his remaining brother and sister James and Ann. I had an extraordinary call with many Keltys on Monday. His wife and widow Eileen, his son Tom, daughter Patty, granddaughter Kelli. We thank Tom for his years helping to literally build our region and for his many years of community service. Eileen said to me on Monday that he loved a show and that my saluting him today would be for him one more show. Tom was 93 years old and earned every single blessing that he received. May God bless over him and watch over him and his incredible family.

Finally today, we remember Steven Soto of Freehold Township, and Steve was just 48 years old. Born and raised in Patterson, at a young age he showed great promise as a pianist and attended the Rosa L. Parks Arts High School. He then went on to earn a degree in psychology at Montclair State University where he was also a founding brother of that school's chapter of Lambda Theta Phi, Latin for Trinity, Inc. Steve was in the midst of a successful career in business and finance and was most recently a financial advisor in Monmouth County. It is his community service that will contribute mightily to what will be a lasting legacy, coaching his daughter's youth softball team and participating in beach clean-ups at the shore.

Steven leaves behind his wife of 20 years, Jessica, along with his two daughters, Kendall and Lauren. Kendall is 19; Lauren is 14. You can see them all right there. I had the great honor of speaking with Jessica and Kendall on Monday. He's also survived by his parents, Philippe and Norma, along with his sister Denise, and his cats, Bubbles and Pharaoh. He also leaves numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and other extended family, and of course he leaves behind countless friends. May God bless Steven and his family. We thank him for his years working to make the communities in which he lived better. God bless his wife and daughters and his mom and dad. As we head into Memorial Day weekend, let's keep Dave, Tom, and Steve and their families and all we have lost in our thoughts and prayers.

Finally, let's end up on a high note. Let's pull up this guy. This is Hellah Sidibe from Rochelle Park. On Sunday, he ran his way into New York City capping a run that started in Huntington Beach, California, 84 days, 15 states, and more than 3200 miles prior. Hellah is a native of Mali in West Africa, I believe either a current or former professional soccer player. As I mentioned, he now calls New Jersey home. Joining him for his trek were his girlfriend, Alexa Torres, and his best friend, Garred Jones, who drove the support vehicles. That's where I would've been, by the way, in the support vehicle. Along the route, in which he averaged roughly – you ready for this – 40 miles a day – Dave, you can do that. Hellah would sometimes be joined by runners who would hop into pace alongside him for a few miles. That he would do this shouldn't have been a surprise as Hellah already had been working on a running streak that stretched back every single day to May 15, 2017, a tremendous accomplishment that shows the enormous spirit and stick-to-it-ness of our state. Hellah, to you and your team, congratulations on an extraordinary run. What an inspiration. You have hereby earned a day off.

With that, thank you for being with us today. Let me turn to the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan.

Department of Education Acting Commissioner Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan: Thank you, Governor Murphy, for the opportunity to join you today. I am excited to highlight this week's significant milestone in the Administration's implementation of the federal American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or ARP ESSER. Earlier this week, the New Jersey Department of Education published several updates related to ARP ESSER. Under the American Rescue Plan Act that President Biden signed in March, New Jersey is slated to receive an allocation of \$2.76 billion. ARP ESSER marks the third installment of ESSER funds with the first two authorized by the CARES Act and the CRRISAA Act. ESSER funds are designed to support school districts in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on students, educators, and schools. The first installment of ESSER funds was released in May, 2020. School district applications for the second installment were made available in March and are due on June 1, 2021.

Regarding this third installment, on Monday the New Jersey Department of Education published each district's total ARP ESSER fund allocation, which must be calculated based on the district's share of funds received under Title I, Part A in the 2020/2021 school year. Under ARP, as was the case under the CARES Act and the CRRISAA Act, at least 90% of the state's total ARP ESSER allocation must be sub-granted directly to school districts in this manner. In New Jersey, this amounts to approximately \$2.49 billion in funds to school districts. The New Jersey Department of Education also released the ARP ESSER fund application for districts on Monday.

Due to how the United States Department of Education structured the release of ARP ESSER funds to states, at this time application will provide school districts to access to two-thirds of the total amount of their ESSER fund allocation amount. In order for New Jersey to receive the remaining one-third of its ARP ESSER allocation and to provide districts to the access to the remaining one-third of their allocations, the New Jersey Department of Education must submit an ARP ESSER state plan to the United States Department of Education. The state plan details, among other provisions, the New Jersey Department of Education's draft proposal for additional projects or sub-grants funded by the over \$276 million in state set aside funds under ARP ESSER.

On Monday, the New Jersey Department of Education released a draft of its ARP ESSER state plan for public comment. The draft and supporting resources may be found on the New Jersey Department of Education's ARP ESSER website. You will see that our proposal would leverage these federal funds to meaningfully boost school district capacity to develop and implement high-quality interventions that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and educators. We address federal requirements to invest in the academic impact of lost instructional time, summer activities, and activities taking place beyond the traditional school day with grants for comprehensive professional learning, for academic, and school climate interventions, and grants to build on the framework established under ESSER 2 to accelerate learning.

We also proposed funding several activities to provide districts with the staff and external supports needed to build expertise and capacity to implement learning acceleration and small group and targeted interventions for students. We will be accepting comment until Thursday, June 3, 2021. The Department of Education must submit our state plan to the US Department of Education by June 7, 2021.

Finally, the New Jersey Department of Education released a template for school districts to use to satisfy federal ARP requirements that each school district develop a plan for the safe return for in-person instruction and continuity of services. That plan must be submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education and posted on each school district's website by June 24, 2021. In accordance with deadlines set forth by ARP, the template plan and additional information will also be available on our website. I am thrilled to share these updates with my fellow educators. ARP ESSER funds will be available to school districts through September 30, 2024. These funds represent a significant investment in the capacity of our state and our school districts to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 over the next three years.

I continue to ask myself and my staff what supports and resources must the New Jersey Department of Education put in place now with this significant funding to be able to look back in October, 2024 and be proud of the work we did to meaningfully empower students, educators, and schools to address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health impacts of COVID-19. The ARP ESSER state plan released this week represents our current best thinking on this important question. I encourage educators, parents, caregivers, and members of the public to visit the New Jersey Department of Education's website for additional information. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Angelica, thank you and deep appreciation for your leadership, and these are not normal times, so thank you for all and thank you for being here today. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. We continue our work to bring vaccinations into communities making it easier for residents to receive a vaccine dose. Part of that effort is the state's Grateful for the Shot program in partnership with the Governor's office, the First Lady's office, the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, the Department of Health and Faith Leaders. Grateful for the Shot brings vaccinations to the congregations in targeted communities. Each event has a block party type of feel and a trusted community atmosphere with a mix of food, music, and prizes in order to break down barriers to accessing the vaccine for individuals and families. This program is part of Operation Jersey Summer, the statewide effort aimed at vaccinating all eligible individuals who live, work, or study in New Jersey.

Over the last weekend, these events were held in East Orange, Passiac, Bayonne, Newark, Bloomfield, Elizabeth, Hillside, Bound Brook, Westville, Lakewood, Anglewood, Camden, Vineland, and Willingboro. More than 760 residents were vaccinated at these events. This effort will continue during the Memorial Day weekend with events held at houses of worship in Orange, Glen Rock, Newark, Pleasantville, Atlantic City, and Hightstown. Also, upcoming this weekend, the New York Red Bulls, in collaboration with the state and Hackensack Meridian Health will hold a vaccination clinic at their stadium in Harrison before the match on Saturday. This event will be open to both ticket-holders and the public. Our COVID-19 Community Corps will be canvassing the neighborhood and will be onsite to answer any questions.

As we celebrate Memorial Day weekend, we know many individuals are planning to travel to the Jersey Shore, and this is another place vaccine will be available. The Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey Community Health Center is partnering with Monmouth County, our department, Department of Health, and Walmart to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to those visiting the shore this weekend at the Grand Arcade in Ashbury Park, the Sandy Hook Gateway National Recreation Area, and the Long Branch Boardwalk Gazebo. The Governor and I will join Congressman Frank Pallone and the VNA at the Ashbury Park Boardwalk this Friday to highlight this vaccination partnership. These pop-up clinics are making progress in vaccinating residents where they live, work, and play. The state's larger vaccination sites also continue providing vaccines to the hub-and-spoke model. The six megasites, the FEMA site in Newark, and the satellite vaccination pop-ups in Hudson, Passiac, Union, Bergen, and Atlantic Counties have administered more than 2.2 million doses.

Onto my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals are reporting 641 hospitalizations. Thankfully this number continues to decline. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 126 cumulative cases in the state. None of these children are hospitalized at this point. At the state veterans' homes, no new cases among the residents. At the state psychiatric hospitals, no new cases among their patients.

The percent positivity as of May 22nd in New Jersey was 2.49; the northern part of the state, 2.41%; central, 3.37%; and the southern part of the state, 2.88%. That concludes my daily report. Please continue to stay safe and let's get vaccinated.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, two things: I love the variety of programs that you've got going that are bringing the vaccines to the people. If it's Memorial Day weekend on the Jersey Shore, in this case in Monmouth County, my home county, we know where the people are going to be. Secondly, just to hit again, you and I both made this point. Positivity rate to be under 3% for a weekend given the past basically, I guess at this point, nine months plus or minus that we've gone through, it was never under 3%. It's a nice number to see. Thank you, as always.

Pat, great to have you. You need to work on the weather for the weekend. That's one favor to ask you. On a far more serious note, another loss of life since we were here on Monday in the Fairfield tragedy and shootings on Saturday night, a young woman of the age of 19 to the best of my knowledge. God rest her soul and if that weren't enough, it's almost a daily drumbeat. There's now a big mass shooting that has taken place this morning in California. In that respect, with a heavy heart, also would love to get a sense of – this is a particular special weekend month, and I know you were going to address that, as well. Great to have you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. With regard to this week as far as it is National Boating Safety Week, and we know that with the warmer weather and certainly with Memorial Day week and we know with the number of recreational boaters, kayakers, paddle-boarders, canoers, 1700 lakes in our state, 130 miles of coast, our bays and rivers – we just want people to remember to be safe out there so we can prevent anybody from getting injured or harmed. Our Marine Services Bureau this summer was focusing on personal flotation devices, but they have a phenomenal comprehensive one-page checklist on njsp.org/marineservices. I would recommend those going out onto our waterways to check that out. It's just a quick reminder, everything from fire extinguishers to air horns to life jackets and just remind any child under 12 must wear a life jacket while out there and certainly about not consuming alcohol while boating so we can avoid those tragedies.

Yes, we did lose a third victim to the Fairfield Township Cumberland County shooting, and that investigation remains ongoing, Governor, and will continue to unfold. The partners and troopers in that investigation are working 24/7 not only from the evidence front but certainly to bring those responsible to justice. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: No EO violations?

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Oh, there was no EO violations, correct, as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. There are about to be no EOs so that part of our program will have to fill in with something else. I just want to confirm, we rarely – I don't know that this has happened even once before, but we rarely have different numbers up here than the slides show. I want to reiterate that the numbers I spoke to are the accurate ones, so again, our hospitals reporting yesterday 67 people came in with COVID, 97 live patients were discharged and the hospitals reported 12 unconfirmed passing of 12 lives tragically.

We'll start over here with – before we do, we will be virtual tomorrow. Judy's already alluded to this. We're going to be on the road on Friday, maybe more than one place, but we'll be out there on Friday. All kidding aside, the weather looks like a little bit cooler and a little bit wetter than we would like. Today and tomorrow look like they're beautiful, but that won't hold us back. I'm going to have the honor of participating over the weekend at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Burlington County. We got a couple of parades on tap, extraordinary food, extravaganza coming up to Hudson County. Judy mentioned Grateful for the Shot in Harrison on Saturday. We may be passing through there on Sunday. A lot of activity even if the weather isn't hospitable. We will not have a presser on Monday, not surprising because it is Memorial Day weekend. Let's keep all our veterans and members of active service in our prayers, particularly those that've been impacted, suffered, or lost lives due to this pandemic but unless you hear otherwise, we'll be back at it next Wednesday, so a week from today, and we'll give you more details on what that looks like as we get closer. Thank you for that.

Q&A Section

With that, Alex, good to have you back here.

Alejandro Roubian, NJ 2AS News: Yeah, thank you, Governor. Alejandro Roubian, NJ 2AS News. Governor Murphy, right now in the state of Mississippi, a black person can carry a gun for self-defense without asking permission or showing justifiable need as long as they are not a prohibited person. That same black person has no hope for qualifying for a permit in New Jersey, laws you stated you are very proud of. Why do black people have more rights in Mississippi than they do in New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it?

Alejandro Rubian, NJ HOS News: Yes, sir.

Governor Phil Murphy: Alex, you and I have had this conversation before. This is not the first time. I'm not sure you referenced Mississippi in the first time, but you asked this question. We fundamentally believe that fewer guns in our state means a safer state. It has nothing to do with what color your skin, who you are as an individual, what ethnicity. Fewer guns is a safer state, and we believe that you – we're not a state that supports the lowest common denominator of anybody can carry. Texas is moving toward this, if I understood this, not requiring licenses, concealed carry, open carry. We just think that leads to a more dangerous state. It has nothing whatsoever to do with anyone's race. I apologize that's where we are and that's where we're going to stay. Thank you.

Hey, Matt.

Matt Arco, NJ.com: Good afternoon, Governor. Is the state considering winding down the use of the megasites, and given the lower number of daily numbers, are health officials better able to try to track down how and where those folks are getting infected to see if some behavior is more dangerous than others or any trends? What do you say to the people, including the Superintendent and the Board of Education of Ocean County, who put out some strong statements and pushback after you said that children will possibly have to wear masks in September?

Governor Phil Murphy: Superintendent from where, sorry?

Matt Arco, NJ.com: Ocean.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ocean, okay.

Matt Arco, NJ.com: Also there's been a lot of pushback against parents – I'm getting incoming of folks saying why does my child need to wear a mask at a summer camp? These folks are at especially low risk, so how do you respond to them? Nikita would like to know whether you have any additional thoughts on last night's GOP debate beyond what you said in your statement last night.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nothing on the debate. I can take that off the table. Honestly, if you follow me around, you'd note that I'm not paying any attention to politics and certainly not what they're going through. We're still focused on what we're doing here today but nothing more to add there.

I'll go back to the top. The megasites, my guess is the megasites, at some point, will wind down. I just – we're not there yet. They are the hub of the hub-and-spoke strategy. Even if you were to walk into a megasite today and not see a lot of people – and I suspect that's probably true at all six of our megasites – what you would not see is the support they're providing into community efforts. They continue to be – unless Judy corrects the record here, they continue to be that hub. At some point, they will wind down. I did ask – I mentioned I was going to say this to you privately, Judy and Eddy. I asked a senior person I'll leave nameless but someone I respect in the healthcare community – I said, what's your guess on frequency of needing the shot? He leans toward – the evidence is still to be determined. He's leaning toward, and he thinks others are, too, that this is going to be more like an annual flu shot event. We're not making news here because this was one guy's opinion. The reason I say that is – we've said this before. We want to keep either literally or figuratively the infrastructure that we have so painstakingly built to get us to where we are today. Whether that'll be megasites or not, too early to tell. It's also too early to tell whether or not that observation by that gentleman is on or not.

I'm going to have Eddy and Judy answer the question of where we think folks are getting infected. I do want to pose the question. I know it's a softball to try to get more people vaccinated. I'd be surprised – and I don't know if we've got data – that people who are getting hospitalized or, God forbid in ICU or sadly dying – have been vaccinated. My strong suspicion is that they have not, and I don't know that we have that data to share with you.

Matt Arco, NJ.com: [inaudible 45:22] looking at data?

Governor Phil Murphy: That's a question I'll let them – I was going to ask the same question. I'd like to address masks, if I could, and then ask Judy and Eddy to address all of the above. I didn't see the letter yet from the superintendent in Ocean County. This is – it's May 26th. We're trying to predict what school looks like on September 5th. That's basically three and a half months from now. I've been asked at this moment in time what's my guess. My guess is we're likely to be masked for the simple reason that we only, a couple weeks ago, have been able to get 12 to 15 year olds vaccinated. That's early stages, really good, but it's early stages. We've been at 16 and up since December, which is six months into it. There's no vaccine yet that's approved for under the age of 12. Again, a good discussion last night with the same gentleman, and he has the same sense that we have, that the trials out there look like they're going well, but we don't have visibility into them. Do we expect – I think we do expect that there'll be vaccines for younger folks, but they're not there yet.

Do I anticipate that we will get to a day at some point where we're not wearing masks? Yes. Do I want that to happen? Absolutely, safely and responsibly. I can't say when. Someone asked me this morning another good question inside of that. Do you think you could lift them in high schools before younger ages because the high school kids, by definition, will have been vaccinated or will have had more time on the clock? I'll bet you whenever it is, my guess is the answer to that is probably yes, I would guess. I think the summer camp answer is the same, Matt, that we're not there yet on being able to – we know, thank God, that we've lost very few precious young lives, but we also know that doesn't mean the young folks haven't been able to transmit this, either get it or transmit it. This is all – these are not forever and always. We will get to the place that parents want to get to, that I want to – that we all want to get to. We're just not there yet.

Judy, Eddy, any sense of where folks are getting infected? Any sense as to whether or not we'll have data at some point? Eddy, you'll be gone, but when will we have data on somebody goes into a hospital. Yay or nay, were they vaccinated? Any other color you want to add on masking, etc., particularly in school?

Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: Well, let me deal with the issue of those who were vaccinated. The CDC published this week in the *MMWR* – it came out – today's the 26th, right? So yesterday date on what we call breakthrough disease. We've talked about this at previous press conferences, and they're reporting between first of January and end of April, a little over 10,000 cases of individuals who were documented to be reinfected. This is across most of the country. Only 10% of those were hospitalized. There were a number who were asymptomatic. They were discovered because they were tested and found to be infected but had been previously vaccinated.

During that time period, there were over 100 million people who were vaccinated. It gives you some sense that despite tens – well, over 100 million people being vaccinated, only about 10,000 of them were actually documented to be infected after full vaccination, and these were fully vaccinated people, and only 10% of those were hospitalized; 2% died, but the average age was about 80, so they were high-risk people. I think that gives you a sense that not many people get sick. Not many people get sick enough to be hospitalized, and very few die.

As far as the outdoor masking is concerned – well, I'm going to talk about the outdoor, the camp masking. That's a difficult issue, and I think it's more difficult in those camps where most of them are teenagers or above the age of 12 because they can get vaccinated. I do know that the CDC is working on revising some of its camp guidance based on the fact that two weeks ago or two or three weeks ago now, they issued the new mask guidance. They admitted at that time they had a lot of policies that needed to be revised based on that basic revision of policy. We may see some new guidance for camps from the federal level I would say that might impact what we say for camps in New Jersey.

Governor Phil Murphy: That to me is the one outlier that I think. Again, we're following the CDC on this stuff but that to me, the outdoor piece of this, is the outlier. Thank you, Eddy. We're going to miss you.

Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: You said I'm going to be gone, but I hope not forgotten.

Governor Phil Murphy: You won't be forgotten, and I have your phone number, so thank you. Angelica, I've said this in your absence, and you're here and you're the Commissioner, but I've said we put guidance out last June, a thick piece of guidance, on what we expected school to look like in September. I wasn't promising or committing you to a June timing but that we also updated that over the course of the summer because this is a pandemic and we – it dictates the terms. Are you generally comfortable with that as a time frame? We're – want to make sure I'm not putting words in your mouth, so than you for that. Thank you.

Alex?

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: Good afternoon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: Just a follow-up with Dr. Bresnitz: can you talk a little bit more about the data and science that support masking kids outdoors at summer camps? It almost sounds like you don't agree with the position of keeping kids masked at summer camps. Can you talk about that a little bit more?

For the Commissioner, should adults who have had COVID-19 and have the antibodies still get vaccinated? If so, why? If not, why not? For Dr. McMillan, we talk about the possibility or the likelihood that students will be vaccinated in classrooms – I mean, students will be masked in classrooms in September. How long do you think that will continue? Could it be June of 2022 and we're still talking about kids, students still being masked inside schools? For Colonel Callahan, will you be enforcing EO violations at summer camps? Is Trooper Johnson going to tell little Timmy to put his mask back on by the pool or not? Lastly, for you Governor, these mandates that –

Governor Phil Murphy: I thought you were going to skip me today.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: Never. Save the best for last. These mandates for outdoors at camps, indoors at schools, for you is this a carrot-and-stick approach to try and convince more parents to get their 12 to 15 year old vaccinated?

Governor Phil Murphy: All good questions. I'll start and let others – Eddy, you speak for yourself I didn't hear you saying – questioning the science as much as we know outdoors, this virus is a lot less lethal. Summer camp, by definition, it's warmer weather so you can be outdoors. We have to take into account the fact that kids have not been able to get vaccinated, so you've got that reality as well. Judy or Eddy, you should address – I won't even try to answer this, but I'm pretty sure the answer's yes. If you've had COVID, you should still get vaccinated. We had a family member; that family member is – had COVID, is vaccinated, and came through with flying colors. Angelica, you should weigh in. We don't know the answer to that question. We just don't know except that we know it's not a forever and always, and you're welcome to add any more color on that.

Pat, I assume you'll go gently on these little Johnny or Sally at the summer camp EO violations but all kidding aside, it's the operator, not the kid. It's the operator of long-term care, whatever it might be. It's the operator that – and I can't remember your – help me out, Matt. Denise has got the mic. The last one for me, outdoor at camps or indoor at school.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: In general.

Governor Phil Murphy: As an incentive to get vaccinated I think it might be, but that's not the reason for me. Alex, in fairness, I think it might be. It might have that salutary effect and if it does, that's a good thing. It's basically following the guidance from the health professionals, from the CDC. What's the safest, most responsible way we can get back full on in school in the fall in particular? It's far more about safety and responsibility. Any observations about any other – we'll go quickly here just as a buzzer round. Outdoor CDC guidance, should you still get vaccinated, Judy, if you've got COVID, the answer's yes, right?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: That hasn't changed. If you've had COVID-19, you should still get vaccinated, they say, 90 days after your symptoms.

Governor Phil Murphy: Eddy, anything you want to add to any of the above?

Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: The issue of outdoors activity for children in camp setting is not an easy one to ask, and I think that's why the CDC's looking carefully at its policy. For younger kids, they're not vaccinated, and there's mixing of those kids and they're coming from different areas. There may be some exposure. They can bring it home, as well. Hopefully the counselors and the staff will all be vaccinated, so the risk of transmission from the older to the younger will be minimized, if not zero, because the vaccines are so effective. I think we'll see what the CDC has to say and then we'll think about it ourselves and make our own policy based on that.

Governor Phil Murphy: We had a good exchange earlier, several of us. Masking is not like Plexiglas, ventilation systems, even six-foot social distancing. You can turn – if the science suggests, you can turn your mask guidance on a dime because it's easy. You just don't wear this that next day. Stay tuned. Anything to add in terms of when we [inaudible 0:55:22]? We don't know this, right? We don't know. Pat, are you going to lighten up the summer camps?

Superintendent of State Police Col. Pat Callahan: To your point, the operator.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, thank you for that. Do you have any? You do? Give me one sec here.

Reporter: As the state drops more indoor restrictions this week and next, we're still seeing low vaccination rates in some communities, particularly in cities. Are you concerned with towns with just 30 or 40% of people vaccinated will see spikes in COVID, and would you consider regional restrictions to prevent that? Also, are you still confident you will reach your goal of 4.7 million vaccinated adults on schedule and will that number change as you account for children getting vaccinated? From Lei in Michigan, following up on what Matt had asked regarding the masks in school, what is your response to the GOP bill to allow masks in school and give that decision to the parents? The Department of Labor did not report new unemployment claims last week. Do we know why? Are their numbers accurate and if so, is that evidence that the 300 federal benefit enhancement is keeping people out of the workforce? I might've just gotten – okay, that's –

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Okay? I'm going to take a shot at this, and you all should come in behind me. Number one, the reason why we're not going to endorse added Vineland, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, and I forget the fourth we added; plus we added Patterson today is for that very reason. We are focused on – and this is not vilifying these communities. It's not trying to embarrass anybody. The fact of the matter is we have got to punch up at a higher weight in terms of our vaccine penetration, and that's why the Grateful for the Shot program that Judy talked about, the door-to-door, all the various programs – gratifying by the way to hear that over 13,000 people have signed up, Dan, for dinner with Tammy and me. It's going to be a crowded dinner.

The regional stuff, we've talked about this a lot. It does work. Obviously schools are in district as Angelica knows more than any of us. Judy looks at the CALI scores by region and sub-regions in the state. You get into very dangerous, unintended consequences if you try to localize that into restaurants, bars. You just get people going from one part of the state to another. We had that concern, frankly, between the state and our neighboring states. We certainly don't want to have that concern inside the state.

Will we get to 4.7 million on schedule? I believe we will, but it will not be without a lot of effort. We need folks to stay at it. We had 20-odd thousand first shots yesterday; that's a good thing. That included some amount of the kids, so we have to factor that in as well. The CDC, which has access to more streams of data than we do in terms of other federal programs and folks who have a Jersey affiliation suggest we'll get there, but we will not get there without a lot of trying.

I'm not familiar with the bill. With all due respect, we're following science health experts on things like masking and frankly everything else in this pandemic. Any bill that is counter to that is not something as a conceptual matter that I'm going to support. Again, I want to repeat this. We don't want to have kids or everybody in a school setting with masks on any longer than we have to, but if we think we have to safely and responsibly have them back to school, we will do it. again, it is not forever and for always.

I have no insight on your question of Labor. Dan, will you help me follow up on that if that's okay with you? Thank you very much. Dave, good afternoon.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. Can you explain why you're letting employers lift the mask mandates for vaccinated workers? Is this a clarification or is this an actual real change? There was some speculation that this was just a cloudy issue that kind of got lost in the shuffle. Also, why are employers being told that they should check the vaccination status of workers but not retail employers in stores, restaurant owners or managers, gym managers, guys who run concert venues, etc.? Let's see here. There has been – oh, no, has there been discussion – any more discussion at all about possibly offering some sort of a cash prize to entice people to get a vaccine? I know we talked about this last week. Maryland is now giving people who've been vaccinated a chance to win \$40,000 in prize money every day for a month. In New York, Cuomo's giving, we just learned, vaccinated kids ages 12 to 17 a chance to win New York University – sorry, New York public universities and colleges scholarships. Apparently they're going OT raffle off 50 complete scholarships to cover four years' tuition, room, and board, etc. This would obviously be an incentive to try to get more younger people vaccinated. Finally, even with vaccine numbers rising in New Jersey, now that we're about to lift the masking and social distancing mandates, are we expecting any bump up in infections and hospitalizations? We have a lot of people vaccinated but we actually have a lot of people that are still not vaccinated. Especially with the big holiday weekend fast approaching, would we expect to see an increase in infections and hospitalizations in the next couple of weeks? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Dave. I want to go back to – I didn't understand the entirety or didn't hear the entirety of the Department of Labor question, but I think one of the questions – Rob Asaro-Angelo is listening – is whether or not the \$300 – did you also ask whether the \$300 premium was disincenting people from the workforce? I'll quote Rob: "There is zero evidence, study after study, report after report, that the enhanced benefits are keeping people out of the workforce." I'm not sure I'd be that categorical, but I have said that I believe even if it's possible, it is somewhat of a contributor. By the way, Rob's a professional in this and I'm not. There are a whole host of other factors: lack of childcare or access to childcare; schools not being fully back in-person; people being flat-out concerned, afraid to get back into the mix. I think what you would have seen in the study that's most compelling for me is the \$300 is more significant in a lower earning on average earning state. If you look at those states and the employment trends in those states – in other words, the \$300 is a higher percentage of what they otherwise would have earned. There's no evidence to suggest that's the case in those states. I'll leave it at that.

Dave, we just heard – I think it's a – I call it a significant tweak, but it's an understandable one that in the – remember, OSHA still has not put out workplace guidance. In the absence of that step last year, we put out our own guidance. We felt that we needed to. We heard this quite constructively from a lot of businesses that said listen, you've got this very strict mandate. Is there a – do we have the ability to have a different standard for somebody who's not vaccinated? I think it's a very reasonable ask, and that's where we've gone. It's a week from Friday.

The other point, which you did not ask about but to reiterate, we had one of our executive orders – I'm summarizing. If you can work from home, figure it out and have your people work from home. We're lifting that and saying listen, it's okay based on the evidence we've got.

Parimal, how would you distinguish between an employer who – I'm making this up for a second, a law firm or a factory versus Rite-Aid.

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Yeah, so our point is that employers who have employees coming into the office, that's a known population, so they can verify whether those employees are vaccinated or unvaccinated fairly easily. If you're a supermarket, for instance, you don't know which members of the public are coming into your store, so it's much harder to verify vaccination status. In addition, retailers operate across multiple jurisdictions across multiple states, so we wanted to give them more flexibility regarding mask-wearing and social distancing policies because we know a lot of them operate nationally.

Governor Phil Murphy: We continue to be not opposed, Dave, to other incentives. We've put a lot of these programs out ourselves and we'll continue to look at whether to not we think there are others out there that make sense. Forty thousand dollars a day, it sounds like you were considering relocating to Maryland within the month. Those are all valuable programs. We're seeing a lot of take-up on – I was kidding but not only half-kidding on the dinner with us. The Grateful for the Shot, the pop-up sites, the Shot in the Beer, the Uncork the Vaccination, the faith stuff, a lot of this – the door-knocking is the least sexy but it's a grind-out execution part of this and I think we're doing that as well as any state in America. Listen, we've said this when we have opened up over the past nine, ten months at this point. We owe it to say it again to your question. I think you both asked a similar, good question. Could we be exposing ourselves to an increase in cases? I think the answer is we go into this anticipating that we're taking manageable risk, that the risk is there but it's manageable. It's within our ability to safely and responsibly take those steps, including especially to never go near overrunning our hospitals. Would you all agree with that assessment, Eddy?

Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: Yeah, two comments. First just on the OSHA, I know that OSHA is working on revising some guidance for employers. It came up on a call that I was on last week with the CDC, and they mentioned that. This was based on the CDC's changed recommendations. Anything's possible with COVID-19 at this point; we know that. If you look at the graphs that the Governor showed earlier with the decline and you compare it to the left side of the graph, you see our numbers are approaching where we were last September. I think that's as far left as we went at the low of the summer. I think that's where we're heading. Again, we have more outdoor activities now. We've only really been outdoor for about a month, maybe, and there's going to be more outdoors, less transmission outdoors. CDC published in the *MMWR* some modeling which showed that nationally not focused on New Jersey where people can – more vaccination, people adhering to MPI, wear appropriate non-pharmaceutical interventions, and I think all the signs are pointing that we're not going to expect to see those increases in hospitalizations like we saw last April or even just as recently as three or four months ago just because of outdoors, vaccinations, and so on.

Those vaccines – everything has shown that those vaccines in post-authorization studies are incredibly effective, the Pfizer vaccine, the mRNA vaccine, and soon we'll see some post-authorization data on the J&J vaccine as well. Plus, the 12 to 17 year olds are going to be vaccinated more as well. Lots of reasons not to expect it.

Governor Phil Murphy: That vaccine's efficacious including against variants, and that's an element as well. Thank you for that. Dustin, last but not least, good afternoon.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Thank you. On that shooting in Cumberland County, are there any measures that you've proposed or are pending in the legislature that you think might've prevented that from happening? Has there been any agreement with legislative leaders since that shooting to send you the package of gun bills that you want passed? The current eviction and foreclosure moratorium ends in mid-August. Do you want to extend it further and how are discussions with the legislature going in regards to

those protections and expanding rental relief? Then on unemployment, the Labor Department has explained to us that when claims are escalated, some are fixed in days, others in weeks, and the vast majority in eight weeks. We've heard from plenty of people and only for the sake of transparency, I can attest to this, that claims still have not been processed in six months to a year even though they've been escalated multiple times. Can you explain the reason for these delays how much longer people will have to wait? When will you open Labor Department offices so claimants can get in front of a person for their issues? Thank you?

Governor Phil Murphy: I missed one thing in the middle before Matt moves away. The moratorium on what was it, sorry?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: On eviction and foreclosure that ends in mid-August. Do you plan to extend it further? How are discussions with the legislature going in regards to those protections and expanding rental relief?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, let me, if I may – I may want to come back. Parimal, of the legislation that we've suggested in 3.0, any items you'd highlight that would have – I mean, we've got a lot of money into – and I don't have – this is not specific to Fairfield, Dustin, because I don't know that this, per se, would've made a difference but part of the proposals we've put forward is a significant amount of money of preemptive intervention, the Newark Street Gang model to promote that and to get it proliferated into more parts of the state. I can't say, per se, that that would've factored here, but that's one that would come to mind. Parimal, anything else on your list?

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: I would just say that the investigation's ongoing and we're still trying to figure out what guns were used in the shooting and how the individuals who used those guns obtained them. Until we have that information, it's really hard to say whether the measures we're proposing could've prevented something like this.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to keep my answer at a non-Fairfield level as well. Pat, am I right? One of the bills would basically stamp ammunition. You'd have a much better ability to keep track of that. You digitize that whole purchase and sale process. There are age restrictions on when you could buy – purchase a gun. Again, I have no – I think Parimal makes a good point. None of these are specific to Fairfield, and we're not going to talk about that, but those to me at least are all smart steps to make, particularly if you find – which invariably is the case that there are guns that came in illegally from out of state. We need federal legislation.

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: I would just add beyond the legislation, Governor, is just look at what we just did in Trenton with the Real-Time Crime Center and that funding that your office facilitated. That's already solved multiple homicides in the last few weeks with the intention of getting not only crime guns but violent recidivist offenders off the streets. We're already seeing the effectiveness of that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nothing new on the package. I've spoken to the Fairfield tragedy – or about it with the Senate President and with a number of other legislators. No new updated news on where it stands but it's something obviously we care deeply about. No update on the moratorium. Unless Parimal corrects the record, my guess is as we get closer to these dates, we will. Remember that we also have the parallel basis. I think this addresses your rental relief question as well. We have the exercise that we're going through with the legislature, not just with our own teams but with the legislature and that process I think is going quite well on how do we deploy the American Relief plan monies.

I'm going to ask if I can – again, Dustin, you've heard the answer before. I don't have a crisper answer for you in terms of the claims that take the longest tend to have the most amount of uniqueness associated, the most of, as they used to say, hair on them. I would love it if I could ask our Commissioner and the team if you guys could help me connect to get back – it sounds like Dustin's got a specific sense of this. I don't want to overstate or understate this question of uniqueness. I know our folks are doing everything they can to get this processed as fast as they can and as soon as they can.

Your last question, which is clearly related, when do – do I have a date yet for when the Department of Labor offices are open. I do not, but those are conversations, as you can imagine, that are picking up steam as we've taken the steps that we've taken and as the – most importantly, as the viral spread and case numbers have continued to drop. Again, could you guys help me out, follow up on the specifics?

With that, I'm going to mask up, single mask, Judy. I want to thank Angelica for coming and for your leadership particularly under extraordinary challenging circumstances. Pat, as always. Dan, Parimal, I didn't give you a shout-out earlier. Jared is watching us virtually. Judy, as always, and Eddy, we will miss you. On behalf of all of us, we thank you. You've come out of the bullpen on almost no notice and you've made an enormous difference in our efforts to fight this pandemic and this virus. I dare say you have saved lives without question, and we will be forever indebted to you. Bless you and thank you.

Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: Well, thank you, Governor. Thank you to both you and Judy for inviting me back to be part of the response team. It's been a really good experience for me. It's been a very difficult time, and appreciate the leadership from everybody here at this table. You've made some difficult decisions. You've used what I call the precautionary principle, which is making tough decisions with uncertainty and the science of COVID-19 is evolving. Every day, it evolves, and leadership has to make decisions without all the information available. It's all been informed by the principle of protecting the public as best as you can with lots of uncertainty. I think we've – all the metrics have gone in the right direction is the reason I'm moving on, so thank you again.

Governor Phil Murphy: Onto other challenges. Thank you for that and thank you for everything. Folks, we wish you a fantastic Memorial Day weekend. Please be safe. We are virtually wide open as of – either between this Friday or a week from Friday. Please take those openings responsibly as best you can. Enjoy yourself, be safe, and thank you for everything by the millions that you have done. God bless.

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