

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: May 5th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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## Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone.

So, with me today, to my right, a very familiar face from the Department of Health, the state's epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Tina, great to have you with us. To my left, a guy who needs no introduction, the superintendent of the State Police, Col. Pat Callahan. By the way, Pat, given you're in charge of weather, this just in, it's raining quite heavily out there. I'm still drying off. We also have Jared Maples, the director of the office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Chief Counsel Parimal Garg of cast of thousands. I think you were there as well.

I know Judy is not with us today because she was at Terry Mulcahy's funeral. The wife of Bob Mulcahy, a guy known to many in the state was Brendan Byrne's Chief of Staff, Chair of the CRDA, was Athletic Director at Rutgers, Mayor of Mendham, and Terry was right beside Bob every step of the way, whether it was in Mendham, in Morris County, or in any number of activities in the state. Terry passed, I guess, Friday or Saturday, and keep her, and Bob, and their family in your prayers. I spoke to Bob on Saturday, and she was quite a woman.

We covered a lot on Monday. So, to everyone's relief today, this will be a much briefer briefing. A couple of points before we jump into the meat of the matter, I had a very good conversation this morning with the Secretary of Energy, Jennifer Granholm, former governor of Michigan, and talk to a model a lot of the common ground we have with the federal initiatives. And spend a considerable amount of time on offshore wind in particular, where I reiterate our aspiration, and she's extremely happy to hear this to be a leader, not just to this country, but to be a global leader in offshore wind, including the making of some of the supply chain, if not a lot of the supply chain right here in New Jersey. That was a really good conversation.

And on a lighter note, Tammy and I with friends, including Mayor Reed Gusciora, right here from Trenton. We're at the opening Trenton Thunder game last night, which is a big deal. First, it was the first game ever in the history of the Worcester Red Sox. They moved from Pawtucket where they've been for decades, and this was their first game. More immediately and more importantly, the Trenton Thunder are now the AAA affiliate for the Toronto Blue Jays. So, this is the first AAA baseball game in Trenton's history. It's the first AAA game Pat, we asked, we believe in 70 years in New Jersey.

I think that the connection with Jersey City had a New York Giants connection at the time and its funny how life works. The Yankees made the decision to move from Trenton to Somerset with their AA team. And of course, we lost Steve Kalafra a week-and-a-half ago who owns the Somerset team. And Trenton Thunder were going to be part of a non-affiliated undrafted league which was still a high-quality alternative. But guess what, the Canadian government is not allowing teams to travel back and forth over the border due to COVID.

So, their AAA franchise in Buffalo is where the Blue Jays are going to move up from Florida to play their major league games, and the Buffalo Bisons were looking for a home, and Trenton rolled out the red carpet, and it was a magical night. Trenton won, and it was really special to get baseball back in Trenton, and get AAA baseball back in New Jersey. Okay. With that, several updates.

First of all, the current ban on interstate indoor youth sports competitions, which is still on, actually, it's going to be lifted on the same day, May 19th, when we take a bunch of steps forward that we enumerated on Monday. Next up, one of our continual focuses over the past months has been to get our school students, and educators, and staff back into their buildings for in-person instruction. Over the past eight weeks, we've seen these efforts kick into high gear across the state. Just think about this for a second.

At the beginning of March, this is only two months ago, the number of districts holding to an all-remote schedule was 142. Or that was nearly one in five of all public-school districts, charter renaissance schools, special service schools. Today, that number is not 142. It's now down to 16. And that 16 breaks down to this following, seven are charter schools, so single charter schools. Five are regular operating public school districts. I'll come back to that in a minute. And four are special services schools. So, again, of the 16 fiver districts, which are multiple buildings and schools in each of those categories, and then you've got 11 single schools, either charter or special services.

Our goal is to get these 16 down to zero, and for these roughly 53,000 students and their educators to be back in their classrooms for in-person instruction. Of the five regular operating districts still on all remote learning, and I want to make sure we say who they are, Hillside, Irvington, Passaic, Patterson, and Pleasantville. Hillside and Irvington have set a target date for returning to either all in-person or hybrid instruction, which would begin on May 24th for both. That would bring roughly 10,000 students back into school, and we applaud Hillside and Irvington for making those plans.

I spoke with the President of the Board of Ed, I guess yesterday in Hillside, I gave a shout out to Senator Joe Cryan, he's been very helpful. We know that there are a myriad reasons why the remaining districts have not taken this step. But the simple fact remains that we cannot leave 43,000 of our students, as well as thousands of educators and

staff out of their classrooms for an entire year. That's not fair to them, their families, their communities, or their futures. We will continue to work with these schools through the Department of Education and alongside local leaders and stakeholders to move this along.

And we continue to work with the districts currently in a hybrid stance, or in-person for certain grades or buildings to increase opportunities for in person instruction across the board, including being able to get to a full school day. Next up, for homebound New Jerseyans, county areas on aging, and those are the offices tasked by the Department of Human Services to support seniors in their communities. Those areas of aging offices have been coordinating with county health departments to identify those in need of vaccination and support these efforts.

Through this collaboration, among by the way, other collaborations, at least 7,000 homebound New Jerseyans have received in home vaccination, and this number by the way, does not count those vaccinated at pop-up clinics held throughout the state in senior housing buildings. To supplement these efforts, the Department of Health, and Tina, I want to thank you and your colleagues, is allocating doses directly to home health agencies like the visiting nurse associations to vaccinate the homebound.

Many of our hospitals have also been working with our affiliated homecare agencies to vaccinate folks in their homes. Individuals who have yet to be connected with their local health department, or a home health agency, and who need an in-home vaccination should visit that website, which is [covid19.nj.gov/homeboundvax](https://covid19.nj.gov/homeboundvax) or call that number, 855-568-0545, 855-568-0545, which of course, is our call center. The Department of Health will follow up to assist in connecting you with a vaccine provider.

Another resource for people who are homebound and any person with a disability for that matter is Register Ready, which is a free secure voluntary database for people with disabilities and functional needs, who may need assistance. Local offices of emergency management have been using this registry to conduct wellness checks on homebound residents throughout this pandemic. And Pat, you know that well, and many health departments are using this list to help them with vaccination planning. To join register ready, text, you could see it there on the screen, READYNJ to 899-211 that's READYNJ 898-211. Start that again, READYNJ to 898-211. Or you could just call 211 directly for assistance.

Finally, since Monday's announcement, many more craft brewers up and down the state have asked to be a part of our Shot and a Beer vaccination incentive program. For the updated list of participating craft brewers visit [covid19.nj.gov/shotandabeer](https://covid19.nj.gov/shotandabeer). But these are the new ones, and I want to read them out because they deserve to get a shout out. I've got 13th Child Brewery, 13th Child Brewery, Elementary Brewery, Angry Erik Brewing, Chimney Rustic Ales, Czjg Meister Brewing, Death of the Fox Brewing Company, Departed Soles Brewing Company, Double Nickel Brewing Company, Dr. Brewlitt's Beer Company, Eclipse Brewing, Eight & Sand Beer Co., Forgotten Boardwalk Brewing Company, Four City Brewing Company, Man Skirt Brewing, Montclair Brewery, Neck of the Woods Brewing Co., New Jersey Beer Co., Tuckahoe Brewing Co., United Brewing Co., Westville Brewery, and Zed's Beer.

And don't forget to claim your beer, you need to receive your first shot during the month of May. While we are thrilled by the positive reception we've gotten for the Shot and a Beer program, we are going full steam ahead on the entire outreach program we outlined on Monday, Operation Jersey Summer. We are not going to rest on any laurels. And by the way, this importantly, in the Shot and the Beer list that's growing as an example of this, what we discussed on Monday is really just the floor of our efforts. We're going to be adding more components and more partnerships over the coming days and weeks.

And everything we do, every component we add, and every partnership we build as part of Operation Jersey Summer will be on this strong foundation that we have set. This is all being done under a common theme. And that is for us to defeat this virus, and get ourselves set for our future. We need a strong and healthy state. Public health creates economic health. And this push to ensure everyone has the ability to be vaccinated is our surest way to turn those words into reality. And with those updates, Tina, I'm going to jump into today's numbers with your blessing.

We'll start as we have of late with the latest on our statewide vaccination program. As of this morning, the Department of Health has tallied a total of 3,210,158 New Jerseyans fully vaccinated through our program representing a total of nearly 7.3 million administered doses. As I mentioned on Monday, the department has further identified now what is we set 155,000 on Monday, the number has grown somewhat to 157,000 New Jersey residents who have been fully vaccinated through sites in other states.

This brings the total of fully vaccinated residents to roughly 3.37 million, which means we're 72% of the way to our initial goal of 4.7 fully vaccinated New Jerseyans by the end of June. So, let's keep our eye on the finish line. This is a marathon, and we have now passed by my mind's eye, the 20-mile mark. But it's always that last 6.2 having run one marathon in my life that the last 6.2 that is the biggest test and the hardest. So, let's keep to it, and let's get vaccinated.

Today, and I know Tina, you're going to get into this in more detail, reporting an additional 1,309 PCR and an additional 1,700 presumed positive antigen tests. Before anyone jumps in reaction to this, this number is high as the Communicable Disease Service, which collects and reports this data was informed yesterday of a processing error, in which more than 2,650, Tina, I've got by my count, antigen test results, some dating back as far as October were never previously reported or cross checked. And again, Tina will get into this in a little bit more detail.

The most important thing for us is that we're accurately reporting numbers and we are. The statewide rate of transmission is at 0.34. I'm going to repeat what Judy and I said on Monday, which is we think this is still lower than it in fact is because of the adjustment of the 10,000 cases we referred to just over a week ago. In any case, it is under one, it's meaningfully under one. And that's the most important part. Positivity rate for 60,908 PCR tests recorded last Saturday is 6.87%. Higher than we would like, but not any longer in the double digits that we were seeing consistently on every weekend test a day.

Last night, our hospitals reported a total of 1,382 patients, 1,267 of them were confirmed COVID positive. ICU count is down to 314. And the number of ventilators in use is also down to 196. We saw 186 live patients leave our 71 hospitals yesterday. 149 were admitted, that's still too high, but a lot lower than it's been. And our hospitals reported again, not confirmed 13 in-hospital deaths. However, today, we are adding another 34 blessed souls to the list of those whose deaths are now confirmed to have been from COVID-related complications. And the list of probable deaths has been adjusted into today. It is 2,640.

This means we've now lost a total, if you add those numbers of 25,707 residents over the past just 14 months. I mentioned World War II on Monday, we lost in World War II in four years, 12,565 blessed brothers and sisters from our New Jersey community, the scale of that war was overwhelming. The scale of this war remains so as well. Let's remember all those lives, those 12,565 and the 25,707 from this extraordinarily challenging period in our state's history. Let's remember in particular, three more of the blessed souls we have lost.

First up today, we're going to begin by honoring the life of the woman on the right there. AnnMarie Iavicola. AnnMarie lived in the Williamstown section of Monroe Township in Gloucester County. And AnnMarie was just 56 years old when she passed away two weeks ago. To know AnnMarie was to know one thing for certain, more than anything else should want to spend her day in a beach chair at the Jersey Shore, a book in hand, and family, and friends by her side. And if she couldn't make it to the beach, she'd gladly sub in her dog, Marley.

She and her husband, Richard, on the left, spent many a day like that. And she spent many an evening at a dinner table surrounded by our kids, and brought her family, where her infectious sense of humor laugh would make any one's troubles disappear. She now leaves Richard, and she leaves him behind after 30 years, along with her twins, Kelly and Richie Jr. So, that's Richard's dad, and Kelly, and I had the great honor of speaking with each of them on Monday. I did not speak with Richie, but Richie also had suffered from COVID.

And I asked after him, and how he was doing, and they said he is still "dealing with it." This thing depending on who you are, and how it impacts you, it can be really crippling and can stay with you. So, we wish Ritchie Jr. a speedy and complete recovery. AnnMarie is also survived by her mom and dad, Thomas and Barbara, and her brother Kevin, along with numerous nieces and nephews. May God bless AnnMarie. People wonder what makes New Jersey such a special place. Well, I will tell you one answer at the top of the list. It's caring, humorous, giving people like that woman, may God bless and watch over her and her family.

Next, we're going to move over to Kenilworth in Union County, which was the home for the past 30 years of that guy sitting in the middle Stefan Kaszycki, an immigrant from Poland, born on a historic Lakeside resort town on the border with Slovakia. Stefan was a machinist at the Linden Mold and Tool Company of Rahway for 28 years. The true measure of the man and his was his family, his wife of 40 years, Janina, you could see her on the left, his three children, Renee, you could see her just to Stefan's left, and Steven and Joseph and their spouses, Adam, Lindsey, and Dona respectively, and his four grandkids Grace, Gwen, Charlotte and Olivia.

For each of them he would and could do anything, and he leaves them all behind. I had the great honor of speaking on Monday with Janina, his wife and Renee, his daughter, and learned a lot about a great guy. He also leaves behind family back in his native Poland, including his brothers Jan and Franek, among numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Stefan, by the way, had just turned 65 years old when he passed. May God bless and watch over his memory and his family.

Finally, we're going to stay in Union County, among its strong Polish community to remember this guy, Janusz Mascidlo of Union Township. He too, was born in Poland and came to this country to find better opportunities. Janusz was a foreman at a machine shop, the perfect match for a man who was detail oriented, love to tinker, and could fix and create just about anything, whether it required his carpentry, electrical, or mechanical skills, or his intuition in the garden and in the kitchen. The patients he had with his work also poured out to family and friends.

Janusz is survived by his wife Teresa, who you could see with him, his children Margaret, Robert, Dorothy, Dorothy's husband, Kevin, and his grandchildren, Savannah, Sonia and Kyle. I have the great honor on Monday to speak with at least, it was a roomful of people, at least in the room with Teresa, his wife and children Margaret, Robert, Dorothy and his granddaughter, Savannah. One of the life lessons he instilled in his children was and I quote Janusz, "Listen to those who want to speak to you, you will learn a lot about them. And at the same time, learn so much about yourself. Just listen, and make sure you hear the words that are spoken to you."

Good advice, and these words inspired each to find their calling in service. These are his three children. Margaret is a nurse, Robert is a member of the Union Fire Department, and Dorothy is a sergeant in the Union Police Department. Janusz also leaves two brothers back in Poland, Marian and Czeslaw. He was 68 years old when he passed in May 20th, would have been his 69th birthday. We are honored that Janusz chose to make his home in New Jersey, may God bless and watch over his memory and his family.

So, let's not forget that even as we make real and significant strides toward the end of this pandemic, there are those who will not be with us when this war ends. And the best way we can honor their memories is by seeing this through. Now, switch gears for a moment. Let's acknowledge another of the small business leaders who's making a difference in their community. This is Doris Baules, who owns and operates D'Vazquez Tax Solutions in the City of Garfield. But she does so much more than just help small businesses across Garfield and Passaic County file their taxes.

Doris's mission is to help the entire small business community grow and prosper. With numerous clients hailing from low-income families, and many with limited proficiency in English, Doris offers both a helping hand, and an open ear. For the past year, she's helped her clients apply for PPE loans and grants, and she's helped many stay optimistic even in the darkest days. The City of Garfield, as we mentioned this year before, partnered with the Department of Community Affairs under Sheila Oliver's great leadership through their neighborhood preservation COVID-19 relief grant program.

And Doris was able to get a grant that allowed her not only to keep up with her rent, and utilities when her doors were closed, but to upgrade the office, and make it a safe, and more comfortable place for her staff and clients when she reopened. Doris also became a sort of local ambassador to the neighborhood preservation program, going door-to-door business-to-business to help her neighbors apply for the grants they needed to make it through. We know that community spirit isn't unique in our state, but Doris exemplifies the best of our small business owners.

I had the opportunity to reach out and thank Doris on Monday for her commitment to Garfield and her clients. I said, "Doris, what's the best way, if somebody wants to throw some business your way, what's the best way to get ahold of you? What's your website?" She said, "You know what, I've never had to rely on a website. It's all word of mouth." But I asked her if I could, with her permission, give the office number out, and she said she would. So, D'Vazquez Tax Solutions in Garfield. Their phone numbers 973-779-6665, 973-779-6665. Thank you, Doris.

And finally, for today I want to talk about this guy. I must thank, and acknowledge our friend, and colleague, and the director of the Office of Homeland Security, Jared Maples. And sadly, with a heavy heart, but also with great optimism for his future, that he will be leaving us to join the National Hockey League as not as coach of the Devils, by the way, as Executive Vice President and Chief Security Officer. For the past nearly four years, including for almost a year before I got here, Jared has committed himself to the safety and security of the people of New Jersey.

He has led our ongoing counterterrorism, and cybersecurity efforts, and has been with us for all manner of emergency preparations. Throughout the pandemic, he and his office have been a critical link in our COVID response. I know that he will take the same professionalism and knowledge that has helped us protect the 9.3 million residents of New Jersey to protect players, officials, staff, and millions of hockey fans in NHL arenas across North America. So, to you, Jared, we thank you. We congratulate you, and I look forward to seeing you next year when the New Jersey Devils raise the Stanley Cup. Otherwise, we're going to ask you to drop your gloves.

Good luck, man. With that, let's turn things over to the state's epidemiologist. Please help me welcome Dr. Christina Tan.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. As the vaccination program continues, we are seeing coverage increase across age groups. 85% of those aged 65 and older have received at least one dose of the vaccine, 68% of those 50 to 64 years old have received at least one dose of vaccine, 53% of those 30 to 49 have received at least one dose of vaccine, and 35% of those 16 to 29 years have received at least one dose. So, vaccinations among that younger age group have been steadily rising since eligibility opened on April 19th.

Partnering with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, the department held a call last week with the state's colleges and universities enlisting their assistance in helping to inform and activate their students. As schools determine vaccine plans for their campuses, the department will work with schools to determine if they would like to host a vaccination site on campus, or will help them identify specific times, and opportunities at the mega sites, or other community sites for their campuses to be vaccinated.

If students get vaccinated here, and need to return to their home state before receiving their second dose, they can talk to their health care provider, or check in with the pharmacy chains that are providing vaccinations. So, with the easing of some of the COVID-19 restrictions in place for this month, and with the weather turning warmer, probably tomorrow, hopefully, we expect that more New Jerseyans will be out enjoying the outdoors. And with the warm weather, we will also see the emergence of ticks, which spread illness.

May is Tick Borne Disease Awareness Month. So, while spending time outside, it is important to take steps to protect yourself. Lyme disease accounts for 82% of all tick-borne diseases, and there were more than 3,600 Lyme cases reported in our state in 2019. As a reminder, you can reduce your risk by taking these actions to avoid tick

bites. Avoid wooded areas and leaf litter, where ticks would like to hide. Make your yard less attractive to ticks by mowing lawns and trimming trees. Use EPA registered repellent with DEET. Wear solid light-colored clothing because this will make it easier to find a tick on your clothes. Tuck your pants into your socks and wear a long-sleeve shirt. This will help prevent a tick from attaching to your skin. Keep your pet safe by checking for ticks daily, and using tick control products as recommended by your veterinarian, and check yourself for ticks frequently after being outside in areas where ticks may live.

So, moving on to the department's daily report, today, we are reporting a high number of antigen positives as the governor had mentioned earlier, due to a reporting issue with a provider. The majority of today's antigen results are delayed reports because of that delay in reporting. Of the 1,700 probable cases we are reporting today, 1,402 specimens were collected more than two weeks ago, and the reporting issue mainly affects Bergen County antigen cases. And about half the reports were collected in 2020, and the remainder were collected this year.

There are 3,253 reports of CDC variants of concern New Jersey, of which 2,998 of these reports are B.1.1.7, also known as the variant that emerged out of the UK. Additionally, there are 104 reports of P.1, the variant emerging out of Brazil, seven reports of B.1.3.5.1, the variant emerging out of South Africa, and 144 reports of B.1.4.2.7 and B.1.4.2.9, the variants that had emerged out of California. We do not have new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, there are 116 cumulative cases in the state. At the state veteran's homes, there are no new cases among residents. And at the state psychiatric hospitals, there are no new cases among patients.

As of May 1, 2021, the daily percent positivity for the entire state is 6.87, as mentioned earlier. In the northern region, 7.05%, central region 6.03%, and southern region 7.62%. That concludes the department's daily report. Please continue to practice public health precautions, mask up, physically distance, stay home when you're sick, get tested and get vaccinated. And if you're spending time outdoors, take step to protect you and your family from tick bites.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Tina, thank you. And the tick awareness point is another good example of notwithstanding an overwhelming pandemic with an overwhelming loss of life, again, akin to a war and then some, life goes on. Other public health challenges remain. There are other pieces of government remain in motion, and we've had to, from day one, balance the fact that we're all in all the time at a pandemic, but other stuff matters. So, thank you for that reminder, great to be with you. Pat, I could use a little bit better weather, and also, by the way, the next few days, as we roll into Mother's Day. It's not exactly look like it's balmy, but it gets better, right? How are we doing there? Anything on compliance? Any other words of wisdom?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. There were no executive order compliance violations reported to the Rock since we last met. Yeah, rain, certainly today, Gov. I think it's going to be beautiful tomorrow. So, easing into Mother's Day weekend. And if I can too, just add to your remarks, Governor, the NHL has made a phenomenal pick. What a lot of people may not know is Director Maples plays on the state police hockey team. And I think that fact, coupled with the fact that he could quote any line from slapshot probably sealed the deal.

But moreover, he's been a phenomenal teammate in our collective efforts to keep those in New Jersey safe from Homeland Security standpoint, from a preparedness standpoint, and I'm honored and humbled for our partnership. But more so, for our friendship, so best of luck to you, Director, and I'm sure we'll be in touch. God bless. Thanks, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Well said, amen to all. Paul Newman in heaven is looking down, giving you a wink, having lost I think, as I recall most of his teeth in that movie. So, well done. We'll start over here. Before we do just to say that I think we're going to stay on the rhythm that we've been on of late, which is we'll be, I think I'm on the road tomorrow, somewhere up north. And hopefully, we'll do it at a time where we've got some COVID updates for you. And we will likely be on the road. I know I've got at least one vaccination visit on Friday. And we'll keep you posted. But we'll probably stay in the same mode, and then be back here again, on Monday, same time, same place. So, with that, Matt, we got Brent. It's up to Ben.

**Reporter:** Hello all. You may have mentioned this the other day, but I might have missed it. What do you think about keeping the smoking ban at casinos? Governor Cuomo just announced New York will allow vaccinated people to sit in non-socially distant sections at sports stadiums, would New Jersey consider the same? People are again, having issues claiming unemployment benefits this time because programming didn't capture claimants when the state triggered off high extended benefits to transition them to another program. Will these issues keep happening every time benefit programs change? And why isn't the DOL communicating how long it will take to resolve? You have a bill on your desk that would form the government efficiency and Regulatory Review Commission, will you sign it, and if not why? And last one from Karen Yi of WNYC. How many primary care doctors will receive vaccines from the mega sites as part of the Hub and Spoke program and when? Why did it take so long for primary care doctors to play a role in the vaccination program?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I don't think I was asked about the smoking ban on Monday, and I don't think I answered it, right? Did you ask it? Yeah, someone else did, I forgot to answer. I've not developed a view on that. So, I don't have an answer for you. No comment on New York. Listen, we will get to the point, I hope sooner than later, where we're going to continue to take steps here assuming we can achieve our objectives. And so, I think folks should assume, basically everything is on the table. And between today and complete normalcy, the question is really what and when.

Unemployment insurance benefits, I've got no collar on that. But I know my friend Rob Asaro-Angelo, and I suspect he's watching. So, if I get an answer, I'll come back to you personally from this microphone. Otherwise, Mahen, will you follow up with Brent, and come up to you? I've no comment on the bill. Obviously, we make a decision on signing, we will let you know. I don't know how many primary care doctors have been vaccinated, and we can come back to with that if that exists. But if the question was, why didn't we do some of this stuff before? I'm going to go back to the war analogy. Forgive me to those who don't like this.

When you're in a war, things evolve, you beach land, whatever the heck it might be. And that's what we're doing. And this is a question we always knew, as I've mentioned now, for a couple of weeks, that we would get to the place where the supply demand imbalance would swing the other way. And that would require us to shift strategy and to be very offensive, getting into communities. Any variety, homebound, I mentioned today, young people who were going to go to a brewery to pick two examples. And so, these are steps that at the right time and the right place, we always knew we would take. And so, that explains the timing. I don't have the numbers, but if that number exists, Mahen and Tina will help me figure out when to get back to. I've got nothing on employment insurance yet, but if I do get it, I'll come back to you. Otherwise, we will follow up offline. Thank you, Alex, good afternoon.

**Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey:** Good afternoon. Governor, have you spoken recently to Governor Wolf in Pennsylvania? He made a major reopening announcement, I believe it was yesterday, including that if 70% of the 18 and overpopulation in Pennsylvania is vaccinated, he will lift the mask requirement. What do you think of that? Is that something...

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I missed that, the what percent of what?

**Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey:** 70% of the adult population of Pennsylvania, if they're vaccinated, Governor Wolf has said he will lift the mask mandate. Is that something you might consider? And additionally, on Pennsylvania, they've been at indoor dining at 75% since Easter, and even though they're larger than us, they had about triple the new cases of COVID on May 3rd, and they have more people in the hospital and on ventilators. Is Governor Wolf being irresponsible in moving this quickly, or is he simply moving more quickly than you would? I also want to ask about large venues. I think you mentioned this on Monday. But is there more clear guidance on when conventions could begin in places like Atlantic City? I'd like to ask the Colonel, when was the last time that someone received a

citation for violating the outdoor mask mandate? And if that number is low, or zero, why is there a mandate that's not being enforced? And I had one question for Dr. Tan, just in general. I just want to be clear about the antigen numbers that you announced today. How exactly did that happen? Was it an error in Bergen County? And if you said there's 2,650 and 1,400 today are out of that 2650, when should we expect to see the other antigens reflected in the data?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. First of all, Brent, this is what Rob has come to me with. He's not 100% sure what the topic is that you're referring to. There was an issue with a population for two to three days early last week. It was all fixed, and they were able to certify later in the week. But beyond that, I still think, Mahen, it makes sense to connect. If that's okay, Brent, with you, we'll follow up offline.

Alex, apologies, we'll get to yours here. Give me one sec. I can't remember the last time I spoke to Governor Wolf. We speak generally regularly. It has not been lately, but our teams, and chiefs in particular speak literally all the time. And that chief, even when I'm not speaking principal to principal, the chiefs in particular and commissioners of health speak regularly. I'm not going to say daily, but they speak a lot with our neighboring counterparts.

Listen, the indoor mask mandate continues to be, for me, a big step. So, we're not there yet. Will we be able to take that step at some point? Yes. Whether it will be because we achieve 70%, I can't give you a crisp answer on that. I don't have insight as to why his cases are up, honestly. We decided not to go to that 50% to up to 75% step because it was quite clear that both bar seating, which we are now allowing as a Friday, that lack of that was shrinking the denominator. And secondly, the six-foot CDC rule. Those are the two that bite the most. So, I got no collar on their situation. Obviously, we hope that they – I think he's a terrific leader. And I hope they get through their challenges as I hope we do as well.

So, Parimal will help me out here. We're not saying anything, but yes, to conventions, but there are capacity limits. So, it's going to go up to 250 persons per room. Is that this Friday, or the 19th?

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** That's on May 19th.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** May 19th. So, that's two weeks from today. But I did mention the other day that the concept that that's 250 per room, and Atlantic City has got some very large rooms, and it also has fixed seating theaters. I know, at least two, Hard Rock, Ocean, which have a very large footprint. And we're allowing 30% of those seats to be filled, effective the same day. So, you could – the answer is it's not a binary yes, no, it's, it's really the scale of the convention. I hope that we can get, again, we're on a journey. We keep getting people vaccinated, our health numbers keep going the right direction, we're going to keep being able to open things up.

And then, the last two questions are for my colleagues, I have no idea the last day we did outdoor mask mandate, but that doesn't mean just because Pat isn't doing it, that local authorities are not doing it. It's much more likely that a local police department would be making that move, I would assume Pat, or in your case, where you all do the – you step in and do the shoes of the local policing, and then Tina, any more color on the test? Pat.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** I could go back and check that, Alex. There's been about 4,000 EO non-compliance reports since we started with the executive orders. Over 400 of them have been indictables. So, that would exclude the outdoor mask, and about 3,600 fall into that. But I could circle back with you, and get you that number. But to give you a ballpark, we're looking at about 4,000 violations since this began.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And that could be for any number of things...

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Capacity is I think were probably the most.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And again, on outdoor masking, I just want to make sure we reiterate if somebody is watching for the first time. From the moment we put these in place on the outdoor side of this, you need to wear a mask outside. If you cannot, socially distance. If you can, you do not need to wear. That has been the case from day one. And that does not have any caveat as to whether you're vaccinated or not. That's the rule of the road in New Jersey. That has been from day one. Tina.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** So, these new files that we got, they all came from a health care provider group up in Bergen County. And so, when we actually started shaking out all these different files, some of those files, some of those positive antigen tests, created new cases, new probable cases, while the remainder of those antigen tests were attached to existing probable cases, or some confirmed cases that already existed in our system. We're still shaking out the numbers right now. But we anticipate that from the antigen results that were reported today, probably about 300 of those are not from that file, that lump of files that came to us from this one particular provider.

Oh, no, when the result comes in, we get – we're not the ones that are necessarily the first receipt of these results. These are reports – these are lab results that are ordered from health care providers who actually are the ones who are doing the follow up, the clinical care of these particular patients. We're counting these individuals for our surveillance purposes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay, you're good. Sir, you got any?

**Reporter:** Yes, I do.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Get yourself focused.

**Reporter:** Afternoon, governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon.

**Reporter:** I have a few on vaccines. What is the state plan for closing vaccine sites like Essex County is doing? How is your distribution plan impacted by closures and declining demand? And can it respond to these changes quickly enough? And can we get numbers on vaccine loss, or waste, and what steps are you taking to reduce this loss? And on schools, what plans if any does the state have for encouraging additional summer programs in public schools to help kids catch up who are suffering from learning loss?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah. I would say the first two questions impact of – sorry, any observations on closed sites, and then the impact that that will have similar answer to the question that Brent asked on behalf of someone else. I forget who was on behalf of, but what primary care doctors, why now, this is all, I think you saw President Biden frankly, talking yesterday in a similar mode to what we were talking about Monday with the Hub and Spoke approach. So, this is basically going to get very localized is the best way to put it.

I assume that we'll continue to have some big sites, where folks can go because they're so well run and so efficient. But this is going to be increasingly localized community specific, get into all the crevices and corners of the state. And that was our intention all along, and we knew it would come upon us. I don't have any update on vaccine loss or waste other than it's very low, but we can follow up with you unless you've got something off the top of your head, we'll come back to you. But our folks have – remember, we're in the top handful of American States on the efficiency of getting doses into people's arms. And that does not happen.

You're not at that level, particularly among big states, where we're invariably by ourselves on that top 10 list. That doesn't happen if you've got a lot of waste. So, Mahen, if you can help me follow-up, and I don't think there's one answer on schools. You'll recall that we put a lot of CRF, Corona Relief Funds to work, which we announced a couple of months ago, that we distributed a lot of money, a lot of it per capita, but with specific-to-specific programs on mental health, recovery, and remediation, as well as learning loss. And there's a lot of flexibility in that money. And as I believe there will be in prospective money.

We still don't have the guidance from the feds and the American Rescue Plan money. But I my gut tells me that's coming soon here. And so, that'll be – those are decisions that department of education will likely have guidance, but those are going to be district specific in many respects. Probably, Mahen, makes sense to get Angelica back here at some point in the next couple of weeks, just to give maybe a sense of what how she sees the balance of the school year, and also what summer programs might look like.

But take for instance, one of the communities where I said that they still do not – there are three communities left, three districts that don't have yet a reopening plan that the summer plan for a district like that is probably dramatically different than a district that's been hybrid from day one or all in-person from day one. So, it's going to be I think, a localized, not one size fits all answer. Thank you, Dave. Good afternoon.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Hi, Governor. You're no doubt aware that many businesses in New Jersey are having a lot of problems, a lot of difficulty finding workers, it's become clear that some people, not all, but some are collecting unemployment. They're making more than they would if they were working, especially menial jobs. So, they're not really trying to find work, if we can be honest here. With the expanded state reopening fast approaching, what's your sense about how this is going to play out? How will it affect, especially the smaller mom and pop businesses, where the profit margin is razor thin? What's your feeling about reinstating the actively searching for work requirement of listing businesses specifically, in order to collect UI? The governor of New Hampshire, as you might be aware, just reinstated this requirement because they're having the same worker shortage situation that we're facing here in New Jersey. And would you consider ending the 300 extra dollar a week federal unemployment bonus coverage, like the governor of Nevada just did to encourage people to look for employment more assiduously? If at the end of the summer, Governor, we're doing great. And then, all of a sudden in the fall, COVID starts to come back, and Pfizer and Moderna start to roll out their booster shots, will we still be using the mega site idea to accomplish this? I know this is looking off several months in the future, but I'm sure you guys have brainstormed about what may happen because you've been right on top of this stuff from the get go. Do you envision the same kind of situation where it would be mega sites and county sites doing this and how easily or more difficult would it – how difficult would it be to reestablish these sites? And finally, with regard to the Shot and a Beer program, would you consider allowing reporters previously vaccinated to qualify for this program? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I think that's a brilliant idea. Only if we can include everybody in this hallway, including Matt, who's holding the microphone, Jared, may be on your way out the door, Parimal, Pat, Tina and me. I love the way you're thinking, Dave. On workers, listen, this is not the first time this has come up. This comes up pretty regularly. And we hear it from friends of ours who are largely in the restaurant business, but you hear at restaurant bar, small businesses, as you point out.

A couple of reactions, the overwhelming number of folks who have been unemployed, and had been impacted by this pandemic have suffered greatly. So, that's the fact. I'm not denying the anecdotal or even more than anecdotal evidence that folks are having a hard time hiring people because we hear it regularly ourselves, but the overwhelming amount of folks who have been hit economically and particularly with job loss in this pandemic have suffered enormously. And so, the benefits overwhelmingly are needed for them and for their families.

Secondly, it's a passing reality, this is not going to be the case forever. These benefits are not forever and always. And so, it is a temporary, I'm not suggesting it is not real, but it is, I believe, temporary. I saw my friend, I have not spoken to him, but I saw my friend Tim McLoone, who owns 10 New Jersey restaurants. And I think if I read the article writers, he has plans to open three more this summer, which is good for him, in the face of all this. He is going to pay all non-tip, according to this article, all non-tipped employees \$15 an hour.

So, my sense is that that's probably one way that folks will get around this. And my guess is in fairness, they'll probably pass that on. So, the burger is going to be an extra 50 cents or 75 cents, whatever it might be. And that's probably a reality right now, some amount of inflation feels inevitable. We've had no plans to institute either the proof to us you're looking for work, or do we have any plans? And I know that we won't pulling the 300, I didn't see that Nevada had done that, that that – no plans to do either of those.

But again, I'll defer to Rob Asaro-Angelo and his team on particularly, that question about requiring you to prove that you're looking for work. But I think our evidence is overwhelmingly, people are doing the right thing, and they've suffered dramatically. And again, small businesses, let's reiterate and stipulate have been crushed. And when we get the American rescue plan guidance, a lot of that money is going to go into restaurants, bars, hospitality, small businesses. And that's one other answer to this challenge right now.

On schools, I don't have a crisp answer for you. Not on schools, probably, but on mega sites, when we get back to school in the fall, if this thing rears its head again. First of all, Tina, I'm hoping against hope that it doesn't rear its head again, at least in a meaningful way, particularly given the vaccine levels that I'm sure that we're going to get to. But I think I've said this a number of times, we will leave either literally, or with short notice a lot of our distribution infrastructure in place.

And that's going to be a broader, and more complicated reality than when I said it a couple of months ago, because that infrastructure now will include a much more, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, a much more localized element to it. I would bet, and again, please God, we don't have to go through this. But we could be, as we've said many times, it could be the flu shot. It could be that every October as I get my flu shot, you're getting a COVID booster. If it is, my guess is it will be at least in the near term, and both. Meaning, it will be mega sites because they can do such scale so efficiently and so quickly.

But when I get my COVID – my flu shot rather, I go to a Walgreens, I call up, make an appointment, I show up and get that. So, my guess is it's going to be, and both, it's going to be the big hubs, as well as a lot of the localized places that we are now getting to in much more of a scale. With that, I'm going to put this bracelet on, given to me by retired trooper, is it Billy Trump? Billy Trump, no relation to the President, a really cool bracelet. This is another reminder, and we were together, Jared was with us, with Pat, myself, and others at the Survivors of the Triangle, very solemn annual event on Monday.

And I might add – and by the way, we're at the Blue Mass yesterday, back-to-back remembering in a different way, in this case, at the cathedral in Paterson with Bishop Sweeney, remembering those lost in the line of duty, as well as their family. So, Billy Trump, if you're watching, I'm wearing this with pride here. Tina, thank you, as always, and we'll look forward to seeing you back here as we always do. I'm going to mask up. Pat, thank you. Jared, best of luck. Make sure you ensure the Devils win the cup. Sooner is better than later. Parimal, Mahen, Matt, the rest of the team.

Keep at it, folks. Keep doing what you're doing slowly but surely. We're getting there. Mahen, if my math is right, yesterday, we had a big vaccination day. So, the past few days had been modest. Yesterday, I think we had 38,000 first doses, which is huge. And I suspect it's not unrelated to the fact that we've dropped the hammer. So, let's keep that up folks, get vaccinated. Keep doing the right things. We're going to continue to open the state up. We got a lot of stuff happening on Friday, including dance floors for proms, and bar seating, and restaurants, among other steps. So, stay strong and God bless.

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