

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: August 21st, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

08/19/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm joined by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan, good to have you both. To my far left, Superintendent of the State Police another name you know, Colonel Pat Callahan. We're also joined, by the way, he's in the room virtually every single day, but he's at the table for the first time, at least in a while, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness to my left, Jared Maples. Jared, great to have you. I also want to welcome the First Lady to the Great State of New Jersey, Tammy Murphy is seated with us in the audience.

So one of the key things we have discussed since this pandemic began is the need for us to ensure our long-term resiliency and preparedness for – please God, Judy, it doesn't come – but the next outbreak. And a key piece of this is ensuring the supply of personal protective equipment for our frontline healthcare workers, including in long-term care and law enforcement and public safety personnel. As I've noted before, we cannot again find ourselves in the situation we were all in a few months ago, relying only on the federal government or on corporate and philanthropic partners. And again, to this day, we thank all of the above for being there in our hour of need. But we were running around sourcing this frantically, literally around the world. We need to have PPE at the ready and capable of being deployed at a moment's notice.

Over the past several months, through the work of Pat and Judy and their teams, and Jared and his team along with my office, we have undertaken an aggressive program to source the PPE we will need to have strong three-month supply in our own State Strategic Stockpile. You all have asked me about this from time to time and I've been hesitant to hang our hat on numbers until we actually could show the numbers that

 Back to top

either we have or we expect to have, and we decided that today was that day we could do that. So as you can see, we've set a goal of 5 million N95 masks. We're already, I'm happy to say, 94% of the way toward meeting that goal, or 4.7 million masks, with more coming in every month. For surgical masks, we currently have 1 million in stock and another 12 million on order to be delivered, we hope, within the next month. And with face shields, we set a goal of having 2 million in our warehouse and we are already, I'm happy to say, at 1.7 million. We have 1 million hospital gowns currently on order with delivery expected in a matter of weeks, and these will be added to the 2.1 million currently in stock. When this next order is received, we will be 300,000 gowns, actually, above our goal. We set, I think, what we collectively think was a lofty goal of 110 million gloves. Our warehouse currently has 1.9 million, but an additional 75 million are on order and will be delivered within roughly six weeks.

As we recall, much of the spring was spent specifically sourcing ventilators, and we now have a state stockpile of 1,447 ventilators that we can deploy at literally a moment's notice to any facility that finds itself facing a shortage of these critical devices, and we have another 500 on order. We should note that there are currently about 600 ventilators in our hospitals. Building this stockpile is how we've been working to protect against the next wave, please God, or the next pandemic, even while we continue to fight this one. We will not, as we have been strong and committed to, we will not be caught unprepared.

I'm also happy to say Judy and I talked about this I think on Monday with Pat in the team. We are also donating through the Department of Health, and thank you for your leadership, 148 cases of the antiviral Remdesivir. That's a total of 6,000 doses to 10 states plus the Virgin Islands. And even with this donation, we will have the ready supply we need in state with more than 1,100 cases in our stockpile. So again, donating 148, still have 1,100 cases in our stockpile, so we're happy to assist our fellow states in meeting their needs. On all of the above, Jared is here today to give us a little bit more color on what I've just talked about.

At the same time, here's our weekly eye chart, Judy. We continue to build our community contact tracing corps. This week we added another 83 contact tracers to our team and the number of tracers statewide is currently 1,612. We're also reporting increases in the percentage of cases being followed up within the first 24 hours, and that's also good news.

However, more than half of the people our contact tracers are getting in touch with are refusing to cooperate. This is highly disturbing, to say the very least. Again, I reiterate, our contact tracers only care about protecting public health. They care about protecting you and your family and your friends. This is not about a witch hunt. We do not condone illegal behavior, especially we do not condone underage drinking, but this is not what this is about. Please, folks, take the damn call. Work with them. Consider it another piece of personal responsibility that we must take to defeat this virus.

And to another key point that we've stressed time and again, testing. Judy and her team have been working with our private sector partner Optum to set up mobile coronavirus testing units at senior housing facilities in cities across New Jersey. Testing has begun in Trenton and other sites will be opened in both Atlantic City and Camden for residents in those facilities through mid-September. The Department of Health is currently, under Judy's leadership, at work selecting senior housing locations in Newark, Elizabeth, and Paterson, which we know will be opening in the near future. And a reminder that testing statewide is available to anyone, and we encourage everyone to get tested. For the location of a site nearest you, please go to our COVID-19 information hub at covid19.nj.gov/testing.

Next, I want to acknowledge and thank IKEA Retail US for its recent donation of \$2.3 million to the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to support the Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program. As it turns out, \$2.3 million is the amount that IKEA's New Jersey workers received in unemployment benefits and other supports during the month in which they were furloughed this spring. We are grateful to IKEA for its pay it forward thinking and the EDA is proud to accept this donation so they can help more small businesses across the state weather this storm.

And before we get to the numbers, I want to announce that the state's public water, gas and electric companies have agreed to an extension of the moratorium against service shutoffs. This voluntary moratorium now runs through October 15th and applies to both residential and commercial customers. However, customers may receive a shutoff notice after September 15th to notify them in advance. In addition,

gas and electric companies, or utilities rather, are also offering deferred payment agreements of anywhere from 12 to 24 months with no down payment required. We encourage you to contact your provider for details and to sign up for this program.

I also want to thank PSE&G for its efforts to reimburse customers who experienced power outages of three days or longer because of Tropical Storm Isaias, both residential and commercial, for the cost of food or prescription medications that spoiled due to the loss of refrigeration.

Before we go to the overnight numbers, a bunch of other quick items I want to give you. First of all, the Democratic Party had a phenomenal convention. Hats off to all of them. I was honored to be a co-chair and next up to bat are the Republicans next week. We wish them the best of luck as well. Secondly, you may have seen Matt Arco was there. We announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding of 12 counties of populations less than 500,000 which did not get that direct federal first wave of assistance. We're going to put together \$37 million either in reimbursements or prospective investments into those 12 counties, everything from testing to other PPE and other matters, and we made that announcement in Mount Olive in Morris County. It was a beautiful, beautiful day and it was a good event.

Next I spoke yesterday with Kevin Kells who is the CEO of Google for Education, about Chromebooks, and the backlog in getting Chromebooks to our districts. And it is concerning, I have to say. The big one is Paterson. Lenovo is their manufacturer, so Google does not make these Chromebooks, but they are basically the evangelists for education using those devices, and there are six manufacturers. One of them is Lenovo, and for some specific reasons, that's been a particularly challenging situation. Paterson has 13,000 of those devices on backorder. We are now going to be also pounding away with the manufacturers. I know the districts are as well. We're incredibly proud. I think they're putting up today on the Department of Education dashboard, Mahen will correct me if I'm wrong, the update on exactly where things stand on the reality of closing that digital divide, but we need these manufacturers to step up and step up now.

Right after this press conference, I'm going to have the honor of signing, I'll be with Steve Sweeney, Andrew Zwicker, Valina Reynolds Jackson, Freeholders Rufus Johnson who is the longest-serving African American Freeholder in the state, Angela Garretson of Union County Freeholder who raised this issue with me a month or six weeks ago. I'm going to sign the bill. It'll be a photo op only, I believe. We're not doing anything with the press because it's right after this, but it will officially end the title of Freeholder in the State of New Jersey, effective January 1, 2021, the title will be county commissioner. Incredibly proud of that.

And I also with Tammy here want to give her a shout out and her colleagues who are leading the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, which continues to not only raise money but take that money and put it right where we need it the most, and I can't tell you the range of goodness that they're doing. It's njprf.org. Did I get that right? Njprf.org, a shameless pitch for you to consider giving them even more money, because they're putting it straight out on the street and it's really impressive.

Okay, with that, let's look at the overnight numbers. 313 additional positives, statewide cumulative total of 188,817. Positivity rate from Monday, Judy, was 1.42%. That's a good number, that's among the lowest in the country. Statewide rate of transmission is down a hair to 1.04, still over one but a little bit better. Our hospitals as of last night, 221 COVID-19 confirmed patients, 193 persons under investigation. That's a total of 414 patients, 61 in intensive care, 30 ventilators in use. Today, with the heaviest of hearts, we're reporting another 13 deaths that are now confirmed to be from COVID-19 related complications; 10 of these deaths occurred across the previous five days. That brings our statewide total of confirmed tragic losses of lives 14,112, and the count of probable deaths remains at 1,829.

Again, at the risk of apples and oranges, Judy, as you and I do every day, just to give you a sense of the spot reality, our hospitals yesterday reported that there were 11 deaths. Again, they're not yet lab confirmed so they're not part of those numbers, but we want to make sure you hear that. That's not an insignificant amount, 11 deaths yesterday. So if anyone thinks that we're out of the woods, they're not paying attention, or you're not one of the families who have suffered a loss. And with that, let's memorialize a few of those blessed souls we've lost.

We're going to begin today by remembering Dr. Jessie Ferreras, who was a family physician at Valley Health Medical Group in Waldwick in Bergen County, and Dr. Ferreras was only 62 years old. He was a proud native of the Philippines, but an equally proud New Jerseyan, having moved here after medical school to complete

his residency at JFK Hospital in Edison. Over a 25-year career in medicine, he became a figure loved and respected by both colleagues and patients, treating everyone as if they were his family.

Even after his own positive test for COVID-19, he kept working from home to check in on his patients. And after his passing, his colleagues and patients held a memorial drive past his house to pay their respects. He loved being a doctor, but even more he loved being a family man and he never forgot his Filipino roots, organizing a Christmas gift giving drive every year to support the families in his hometown back in the Philippines.

Dr. Ferreras leaves behind his wife Madonna, who by the way, Judy, lost her brother literally one week after losing her husband and their two sons, Ryan and Nico, and I had the great honor of speaking with Nico on Wednesday. We thank Dr. Ferreras for his years – and by the way, Nico is himself a physician – for his years of service tending to our New Jersey family. May he rest in peace and may God bless and watch over him and his family.

Next, we recall a larger-than-life figure, Egg Harbor Townships Harold Dixon, otherwise known as H-man, or simply H. A fixture in the South Jersey youth baseball scene as a longtime coach. Harold's days were spent running his general contracting business, Quality Exteriors, but outside of the office, he would most often be found on a ball field. He played competitive softball himself, but his true love was teaching the game of baseball, and he by the way himself was scouted by the Phillies in 1979. For nine years he was a youth coach in Egg Harbor Township, and a founder and head coach of the South Jersey Heat Travel Baseball Team. His athletes followed his mantra, stay on the PATH, and the PATH stood for passion, attitude, team and hunger. Baseball was a lifetime passion, one he shared with his son Jimmy, who he also coached. And in 2010, he and Jimmy spent a dream summer traveling across the country visiting Major League stadiums, as many as they could reach.

I had the honor of speaking with Jimmy and I asked him his favorites. I wouldn't have guessed this one, but it's a good one, Cincinnati and Yankee Stadium. Harold also found joy sitting in the stands watching his daughter, Olivia, play soccer and softball, and he beamed with pride when she graduated college as well. She wanted us to know that he was generous and kind. When he was at home, his humor and laugh would light up any room and make anyone know that they were welcome. So he leaves Jimmy, again with whom I had the great honor of speaking, and Olivia, as well as his brother George, his nieces Crystal, Brittany, Cocina. He's also survived by his dear friend and ex-wife, Diane, who I had the great honor of speaking with as well, among so many others.

And Diane made the point long after these kids that he coached had grown up and had gone to college and had careers, that stay on the PATH mantra stayed with them, and they use that throughout their entire lives and continue to use that as we sit here today. So H, that's your legacy, pal. May God bless you, and we thank you for your years of commitment to the youth of Egg Harbor Township, South Jersey. May God bless and watch over you.

Finally, today, we remember Robert Garrand. He was 89 years young and lived in Westwood in Bergen County, and what a life he led. He grew up, as he put it, within walking distance of Canada in upstate New York -- that's north of Trenton, Pat -- a star athlete -- I'm still hurting from the baseball thing the other day. A star athlete in multiple sports who put the chance to play Major League Baseball with the St. Louis Browns on hold to join the US Air Force and serve during the Korean War. Pop quiz, does anyone know what the St. Louis Browns franchise is called today? The Baltimore Orioles.

In the Air Force, Bob was a member of the Strategic Air Command at Yokota Air Base in Japan, tasked with protecting the nuclear arsenal station there. Once the war was over, he returned home. He considered a career in entertainment after a chance encounter, you can't make this up, with Billie Holiday, who complimented him on his singing voice, but his sister convinced them to take advantage of the GI Bill and go to college. That was probably the more prudent route to take. Bob would graduate from Oswego State Teachers College in just three years with a degree in graphic arts and would spend 35 years as a graphic arts educator at New Milford High School. He would also earn a master's degree in school administration from Seton Hall University. And that singing voice that caught the attention of Billie Holiday never left him, and he would join his colleagues at New Milford High for faculty musicals to raise money for scholarships.

Bob is survived by his wife of 50 years, Lorraine, with whom I had the great honor of speaking. She herself had tested positive for COVID, so keep her in your prayers. She seems well now, thank God. He's also survived by his daughter, Mary and son-in-law Jim, and two grandsons, six-year-old Gavin and 11 today, Happy Birthday to Liam. We thank Bob for his career educating generations of New Milford's children, for never letting his talents go to waste, for his service to our nation. May God bless you, and watch over you and your family, and may God bless everyone we've lost.

Now switching gears, a reminder that we only have until September 30th to get everyone in New Jersey to respond to the 2020 census, and our Get Out The Count push is on with community-based organizations across New Jersey. We have now exceeded a 66% statewide response rate, which means we continue to see residents taking their civic responsibilities seriously and being counted. But that also means that roughly one-third of New Jerseyans still need to be, and if you have not yet responded to the census, we urge you to do so. Having an accurate census count is critical for our being able to be properly represented in Washington and for our receiving tens of billions of dollars in federal funds from programs that impact every community across our state from healthcare, to education, transportation to food security, and frankly even as we're living it now, our statewide recovery from COVID-19. And again, we were undercounted dramatically in 2010. We cannot let that happen again. So if you have not yet done so, go to 2020census.gov and get yourself counted. Do it for yourself and your community and make sure they are counted too.

Finally today, I want to recognize the Princeton Legal Search Group, another of the many small businesses that have partnered with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to make it through this unprecedented time. Under the leadership of Mary Claire on the left and David on the right, the Garbers, Princeton Legal Search Group has spent 21 years helping global companies and institutions and nonprofits find the legal talent they need for their in-house legal departments. As Mary Claire reminded me, they are all legal, all the time. And that includes, by the way, New Jersey, they've helped out New Jersey-based giants like Bristol Myers Squibb, Dow Jones and Integra Life Sciences, as well as Princeton University and the Stevens Institute of Technology.

But the pandemic meant that Princeton Legal Search Group would need a hand protecting their own in-house staff, and an EDA small business loan has allowed them to continue operations and pay their employees. The EDA's assistance has been vital to keeping Mary Claire and David's company growing, and they even have a new employee starting on September 1st. So they pointed out to me, Judy, that they're now based in Middletown, but you know them because they used to be in Pennington and David served with your late husband Tony on Town Council in Pennington. So they asked me to give you a shout and say hi. So herewith, I'm doing it. So to them, to Mary Claire and David, and to everyone at Princeton Legal Search Group, thank you for keeping the faith and thank you as well for all you do to keep our business community and our legal community as strong as it is.

And with that, I want to thank each and every one of you for all that you are doing to keep the faith that we will together defeat this virus and for doing all the things that we need to do to see that, in fact, we will. We have another weekend upon us. It will be hot, it will be beautiful, whether you're at the shore or at one of our great lakes, or wherever you are, please do not let up one bit. We will be watching. I don't mean that in a big brother sense. But we have to stay vigilant, folks, and thank you for everything you have done. Just keep it up. We're getting there. We're not out of the woods yet, but we are slowly but surely getting through this.

So with that, it is my pleasure to turn things over to the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness to speak more about our efforts to build our resiliency and our PPE stockpile. Please help me welcome Jared Maples.

Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples: Thank you, Governor and I will not weigh into the great baseball debate in any form. We constantly evolve our preparedness posture in New Jersey across all manner of threats, including manmade and natural. In my role as the Governor's Homeland Security Advisor, I chair the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force, which is a group that's charged with coordinating the preparedness efforts of our state. As we continue our fight against COVID in the near term, we're also preparing for what the fall and winter may bring, and also having an eye on the new normal of medical procedures and preparedness into the foreseeable future.

To that end, multiple state agencies have worked together to develop stockpiling thresholds for personal protective equipment that integrate state, county, local governments, hospitals and long-term care facilities. The equipment stockpiles will be comprised of surgical masks, N95 masks, face shields, gloves and gowns. It is important to note that the stockpile is an emergency tranche. It is not intended for daily usage. The stockpile will only be used in the event that we experienced extreme PPE shortages, again similar to earlier, due to supply chain challenges.

Through an administrative order from the Department of Health, hospitals will be required to have a 90 day stockpile of this equipment. Long-term care facilities will be required to have 30 to 60 days depending on the size of their facility or the system in which they operate. The state will also maintain its own three-month stockpile of PPE, led by OEM in coordination with the county OEMs, and making sure that we're spreading this across the state.

The goal is to be further prepared for any potential fall or winter surge, both in the short term and strengthen our preparedness posture in the long term, again, for the foreseeable future. We will be prepared for the next time around. We have long stockpiled commodities and equipment, and the lessons we've learned from the past year will only help improve our policies and strategies moving forward. With that said, I'll turn it back over to the Governor. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Jared, thank you, and thank you for being with us at the table today. You're with us every day, but it's good to have you up here alongside. Please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. The first step in our journey to mitigate COVID-19 is testing. A positive test sets off a chain of events to treat, isolate or quarantine, and ultimately save lives. To date, we have performed in New Jersey 2.6 million tests, averaging almost 25,000 tests daily.

We have focused on vulnerable populations with long-term care as a priority. We have performed 587,000 tests of long-term care staff, returning a 1% positivity and 355,000 tests on residents with a 2% positivity. Approximately 23,000 tests have been performed in our developmentally disabled facilities and group homes, with a 2% positivity. Our psychiatric hospitals continue to test regularly and report over 6,000 total tests performed with an average 10% positivity in the patients. The veterans homes have a run a total of 21,000 tests, returning a 3% positivity.

Our correctional facilities are in the third phase of testing their entire populations, including their vendors, and to date have run 154,000 tests. This past week they completed 4,168 individual tests, 32 returned positive.

Our federally qualified health centers have performed over 90,000 tests of the uninsured and underinsured and homeless population, with a positivity rate of 9%. This includes nearly 5,000 seasonal workers. We are in the process of running a pilot at our homeless shelters. We have tested 324 individuals with point-of-care testing with no reported positive results.

As the Governor shared, testing in our senior housing in our urban centers, under Optum kicked off yesterday, and we will be testing in Trenton, Camden, Atlantic City, and then Paterson, Newark and Elizabeth. The turnaround time for test results have improved significantly, with most laboratories reporting results in less than three days.

Equally important to testing is contact tracing for individuals who have tested positive. As the Governor mentioned, New Jersey is making progress in expanding capacity of contact tracers in our states. In the past two weeks, we have seen the number of workers rise, as well as the percentage of individuals being reached through this critical initiative. Our goal for phase one of this program was 15 contact tracers per 100,000. The average number of contact tracers statewide right now is 18.1 per 100,000 population, with only two counties reporting slightly below the 15 mark.

We've seen a percentage of cases followed up climb from 61% to 73%, and 44% of those cases were reached within 24 hours. In cases where contacts were provided, the percentage of contacts notified has risen from 48% to 53%. What has not increased, as the Governor shared, is the number of individuals providing contacts

to the tracers. Unfortunately, we've seen the percentage of individuals refusing to provide contacts climb to 52%, and the number of people not picking up the call is 19%.

It is essential that residents join with the contact tracers to contain this disease and protect the health of their loved ones, their families and their friends. Contact tracers are calling because you've either tested positive, or you may have come in close contact with someone who has. Contact tracers are calling with lifesaving information that will keep you and your loved ones, and our communities, safe and healthy. A contact tracer will identify themselves as working with a local health department. If you are concerned that it's a scam, hang up and call your local health department. If a contact tracer cannot reach you, they will leave a voicemail. Please call them back. To ensure that you have the care you need and the support to keep you and your family safe, they may ask you to confirm your date of birth, your address and some other basic information. They'll discuss symptoms you may have and whether you should be hospitalized or seek medical care.

They'll ask if you have underlying conditions. They will ask about your close contacts. Anyone who was within six feet of you for more than 10 minutes, starting two days before you first had symptoms. If you don't have symptoms, they will ask about your activity for those two days before your diagnosis or your positive case. And they will have unity supports, such as job protection measures, and pandemic unemployment benefits.

The Department of Labor has information on their website about worker protections for those who test positive and told they need to quarantine. Contact tracers can also link you to child care resources and food assistance through NJ SNAP and WIC. Please remember that all information will be kept confidential. Contact tracers will never ask for your social security number, your financial information or your immigration status.

The theme of our statewide public awareness campaign is for each other, for us all, answer the call. We urge you to tell contact tracers who you've been in contact with, and where you've been, and share with them if you need any help whatsoever. Together, we will, because we need to, keep New Jersey safe and healthy.

Moving on to my daily report, the Governor shared 414 hospitalizations with only 61 individuals in critical care. No new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 55 cases in our state.

Today we're reporting 13 deaths that are now confirmed to be COVID-19, from COVID-19 related complications; 10 of those deaths occurred across the previous five days. The veterans homes, numbers remain the same, as do the psychiatric hospitals. The New Jersey daily percent positivity is 1.42%. The northern part of the state reports 1.18, Central part 1%, the Southern part 2.88%.

That concludes my report. Stay safe and remember for each other, for us all, answer the call.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, well said on everything, especially on contact tracing. You know, the numbers have been, other than rate of transmission a little bit higher than we've liked, the numbers have been good. But the past seven days, over 2,500 positive cases. That's an undeniable reality. Now, our spot positivity is among the lowest in the nation, so that tells us that a lot of people are getting tested which is a good thing, because we asked that. You can pretty much, given this plus or minus 2% spot positivity, we'll do a little bit of math here, you could pretty much take the number of positives and multiply it by 50 in terms of the approximate number of tests that were taken that day. It's not going to quite be that, but today we announced 313 positives. You've got something north of 15,000 tests that were taken on that day, spinning out that number. It's not exactly accurate, but it's about that. We want more than that, though, right? And we've got the ability to do a lot more than that.

So we had a few days last week where we were at 25,000 to 30,000, and a couple over 30,000. So thank you for that and for everything. Pat, over to you, all kidding aside, this is deadly serious. Mets and Yankees are postponed because of COVID cases among the Mets, so no one's immune to this thing. Anything you've got, Pat, on compliance or other matters?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. With regards to compliance, the Lakeside Diner in Lacey, steps are being taken to effectuate that court order to keep indoor dining closed. It is nothing that we really take pleasure in, but public safety and public health still remain of utmost concern for us all. And in Jefferson, Top Shelf Fitness owner was cited once again for remaining open

and having clients inside. The only other thing I'll add, Gov, which we've talked about the past few days is the monitoring of those two tropical depressions. One is about 100 miles east of Honduras right now, looks like more of an impact to Louisiana and Texas in the Gulf. The other one is about 400 miles east of Puerto Rico, that's probably going to hit the Florida Panhandle. But the combination of both of those, as we get into the latter part of next week, may become some heavy rain issues for us when they form up and head northeast. So OEM continues to monitor that with the National Weather Service, as always.

Governor Phil Murphy: And Pat, in the category of life goes on, I spoke to two of your troopers today who helped rescue, I think a total of six folks who were in a boat that capsized in Point Pleasant Channel, and one of those six persons was actually underwater when they got there and she came up for air. But just another example of extraordinary bravery and heroism, so God bless them and thank God nobody had any serious issues from that. Thank you, Pat.

So we'll start over with Matt. Before we do, just to say we'll be virtual as we've been for the past period of time over the weekend, unless there's a reason to get you out live, and we reserve that right if we think it's meaningful. Otherwise, we know at this point, there's no White House call on Monday so we'll be here at one o'clock in this room, unless we hear otherwise from Mahen. With that, assuming Tammy doesn't have any questions, we'll start with Matt Arco. Matt, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. On education, has the state come up with any solutions to make remote learning better or improve it for special education students who require significant support, or for students whose parents don't speak English and maybe can't help them with their schoolwork?

And then piggybacking on your remarks about tablets, are you able to expand, any details that you referred to in your remarks? I mean, will children who still don't have them receive them for visual learning, you know, within two weeks?

Real quick, any plans for another round of extensions for some MVC things like car inspections and license renewals, specifically ones that require you to go to an MVC office, considering the long lines there?

And just curious if there's any update on the extra unemployment benefit from the President that I asked about Wednesday.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the last one, Matt, nothing new. That's something our team is still looking at and I know Matt Platkin, who's joined us, Matt, good to see you, is one of those members. I'm very frustrated with -- folks are frustrated with Motor Vehicles, by the way, and so am I. And by the way, part of the reason why, we should say that there are long lines outside, is because they're doing an extraordinarily good job inside, which is where we have to do that extraordinarily good job, not just in hygiene but social distancing, face coverings, etc.

But the answer has got to be yes in terms of looking at extensions. No news today, but if this doesn't, you know, if we don't see a meaningful improvement, it's the least we could do and my guess is we'll have no other choice, but I'm not making news on that. But again, folks, if they're frustrated, I join you in your frustration.

I've got nothing, no more color on the tablets. We're now pounding away, we're about to pound away on the manufacturers and get a better handle on that. The one takeaway I took from the conversation with Kevin Kells which was positive, this is not a never-ending reality. By the way, the supply-demand imbalance I think is four to one in terms of the current production relative to the current demand, and I assume that's an American number, not global. But you know he was not going to hang his hat on this, nor will I, but you know, this is a reality that he believed would largely clear up in the next month or two. But having said that, that's a big difference between if you're clearing up September 15th versus October 15th, so no more color on it other than we're going to stay on it as best we can.

I've got no SP-ED or non-English speaking specifics, but getting these, clearly there was a huge cry from both communities, particularly special ed, that the lack of in person education was particularly damaging to that community and we understand that, and there's a big impetus to try to find responsible, safe ways to be in

person. But again, that's by definition a potentially higher vulnerable community that we've got to be very careful of. And non-English speaking, perhaps not the same level of vulnerability, but the same reality in terms of the remote experience. It's another reason why we've got to solve this.

You know, the good news is we've got the money. It's up on the Department of Ed's website, I think today, and Mahen will correct me if I'm wrong on the device side, but we've got to get, the actual devices have got to get here and there's too much of a gap right now. Nothing more on that that I've got, but if we have something out of Department of Ed, we'll come back to you. You good? Come all the way to the back and then we'll come over to you, sir. I can't see who that is.

Brian Foster, Channel 6: Brian Foster with Channel 6.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Brian, how are you?

Brian Foster, Channel 6: Just a question regarding the issue of air ventilation, as schools are looking to try to open up with in-person learning, they're looking at their HVAC systems. Many of the buildings are aging or older, specifically in Winslow Township. I guess they are delaying until the second semester, until January. They're doing an assessment of their business. Buildings. It's going to cost several hundred thousand dollars. Can you talk about, or maybe the Commissioner or Dr. Tan can talk about the specific guidelines regarding air quality for schools, for in person?

And also with money tight, is there any money from the CARES Act or other funding that can be tapped to help schools with this unexpected cost? And is this an issue that's prevalent for schools delaying their opening process?

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't have a complete answer on the last question, but it is on the list and it's a more complicated one as compared to Plexiglas or face coverings, or having the school properly designated in terms of where the six feet boundaries are. There is a significant amount of CARES Act money for education, Matt. I don't know for sure on ventilation, but I assume that that's got to be an acceptable use of that. I'll come back to you on that.

And again, you know, I think we've said this many times, just to repeat this, that ventilation is going to be on that list and I think there were 10 or 12 factors on the safety front that we had listed, that are listed on our websites and FAQs of legitimate reasons for why you may have to delay in-person instruction. I don't have the exact definition of what the acceptable air quality is, but perhaps Judy or Tina do. Do you know? Do you have it? Thank you. We'll go right to the experts all the way to the end of the table here.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: So we do hope that school districts are already familiar with the indoor air quality standard that has been in existence for many years. It's MJAC12:100-13. And, you know, that particular indoor air standard sets forth a lot of different guidance for school districts because it's a balance of what school districts can accomplish with regard to appropriate indoor air quality measures. Those include, for example, that for every school district that there should be a designated person who is responsible for indoor air quality, for example, as well as ensuring that there's a written plan. And that the written plan will follow a lot of the different guidance that is set forth in the rules. It's a little detailed, but it's certainly set forth in rule.

Governor Phil Murphy: And we can follow up and make sure you know how to find that. We've got no comment on a particular township's submitted plans, so on your point on Winslow Township, we wish them obviously the very best, but thank you. Sir. I just want to say, I love the shorts.

Reporter: Thank you very much appreciate it. Governor, colleagues of mine were in Lacey Township this morning and specifically at the Lakeside Diner and when they arrived at 5:00 in the morning, there was a significant law enforcement presence, as well as a locksmith. Is your administration sending a message, not only to this business owner in particular, but to other business owners around the state who might be contemplating defying your Executive Order?

Governor Phil Murphy: The answer's yes. I mean, I think you know, with all due respect that we want to be free and exercising our rights, I mean, indoor dining when we are not allowing it and when we have so much evidence, by the way, health experts coming out today in the press overwhelmingly. It's irresponsible, selfish

behavior and so the answer is you're damn right we're going to enforce it. Pat, I don't know if you have any specifics on that, on the locksmith or the law enforcement.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Well, I do believe that was true, but I think Lakeside also has a quite successful outdoor dining area and just continue to keep that indoor section close, so this order is to effectuate the closure of the indoor dining, where the owner could still continue to operate outdoors, which is somewhat puzzling to all of us up here.

Governor Phil Murphy: I mean, this is an interesting point. I had a good exchange this morning with Mary Lou Halverson, by the way, of the Restaurant Association. Our sympathies are with the entire industry, period. But the particular, I had a friend send me a note just before I came over here this morning who's Newark based, and she was with a lot of her friends who are in the restaurant business in Newark, and our particular sympathy is with the restaurants that don't have that option to have a significant outside footprint, and there are a lot of them in the state. So they're not like the restaurant I mentioned, Avenue. It's not like the Lakeside Diner where I've seen the pictures and you can dine outdoors.

And so folks, we're all in this together and we've got to take responsibility and do the right thing. And by the way, you haven't asked about it, I bet you're going to ask me, but we've had good interactions of late with the gyms, and I hope we get there sooner than later, both with individual operators as well as the association. You know, it's time for responsible behavior. Please, folks, continue as you have done overwhelmingly, continue to do the right thing and we'll get through this a lot faster, a lot safer with a lot more people alive than before. Matt, do you want to add something?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Just on Lakeside specifically, it's not an intimidation tactic. The Commissioner of Health has issued a closure order pursuant to her authority. It's standard practice when that happens to lock the doors. This happens in other places, and there's actually been a temporary restraining order issued against that diner, so they're in violation of a court order as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, this is not showing bluster for the sake of bluster. By the way, a point we haven't made in a while, Pat, that also puts needlessly law enforcement at the point of attack, at the point of contact with other folks and puts their health at risk. I just don't -- that doesn't add up. It doesn't. That does not mean we don't have sympathy. We have unending sympathy, we want to get there. Again, there's reports out literally today in the press, look it up, health experts nationally in this case, not New Jersey based, saying indoor stuff is really a lot more complicated. There's no other good reason. Why would we sit on this? There's no darn reason why we would sit on this. There's nothing to be gained other than we're desperately trying to get to a better public health reality and save as many lives as we can. So with that, thank you for asking. Sir.

Reporter: Hello, Governor. I just have one from David Cruz. Why hasn't New Jersey applied to FEMA for the enhanced \$300 a week unemployment benefits?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I've mentioned, Matt asked this question. There's nothing new in this, but that's something that we're looking at. Matt, do you want to add any more detail on it? And say hi to David for me, if you could.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, we're not an isolated state in that regard. There's conflicting and changing guidance coming from the feds. This is a new program that has changed. They've never run it through FEMA this way and there's some concerns that if they were to come back, if Congress were to come back and enact an extension of the \$600, that then the state would have to go back and recoup this money. So the feds really haven't answered a lot of questions, which is why we are one of the many states that haven't implemented it yet.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think there's only five or six that have, to the best of my knowledge, right? And the rest of us are trying to figure out exactly what this means. If we can do it and we're not on the hook for that back hundred dollars, and it doesn't come back in the future where we're going to have to repay any or all of that, we'll sign up, but we've got to get guidance on that first. Dustin.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. On the budget, revenues have not been as bad as projected and you have the blessing of the Supreme Court to bond for whatever shortfall the state has. So if you have that option now to balance the budget, can you just explain why you also need, as you said, direct

federal assistance?

Legislative committees today voted on a series of long-term care bills that are likely to make it to your desk. Do you intend to sign those bills, since many of them are direct recommendations from the Manatt Health Report? And have any long-term care facilities met the requirements to start allowing indoor visits?

Lastly, the Health Department said it would update its zip code map monthly, and look into publishing more detailed data on areas with smaller populations, but the map hasn't been updated since June 8th. When can we expect an update? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll defer to Judy on the map. Although we have spoken at this table before about the definition of a small versus a large community, which I think we are in violent agreement that the definition leaves out needlessly too many small communities, but I'll let Judy come back on that. As well as indoor visits, I think, I believe the answer is yes. Do you have a number off the top of your head in terms of how many?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No.

Governor Phil Murphy: Can we come back to you on that? But the answer is that we need them to attest that they've gone through the proper phases and I just don't have the number.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't know how many attestations. I do know that we have, I think 100 long-term care facilities that have not had an outbreak in the 28-day period, which is one of the first requirements. But I'll get back to you on that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Mahen, can you make sure we come back on the specifics? Anything on the map you want to address?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The general number that we use is less than 20,000. We don't disaggregate the data for privacy issues.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the long-term care bills, Dustin, I won't comment specifically but these are, if they're the bills I believe they are that we've been working quite closely with the folks who have been leading in the respective chambers, Senator Vitale in the Senate and Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle in the Assembly. But they are, I believe, the same package. These are bills that we are supportive of as a broad matter and come directly from the work that Manatt did after Judy had hired them to do a cold-blooded assessment of our long-term care facilities and what needed to be fixed.

And I'm glad you raised the budget. I meant to say that earlier, I'm going to deliver the budget address at noon on Tuesday at Rutgers in the SHI stadium. It will be warm, it will also be streamed so hopefully we'll be able to get it to as many people as possible. I won't speak to the specifics of it, because we're polishing off the last pieces of it as we speak. And again, whether revenues are better or not, we're still solving for an enormous hole. It's at a minimum of \$5 billion in the here and now, and when you aggregate what we already went through in the stub period that we're in and what we expect at least the first half of fiscal 2022 to look like, it's a much bigger number. So we want to use the borrowing authority judiciously but we also want to be able to pursue, and it's not just for direct state and county cash assistance, the federal government needs to step in here for that, for sure, because we need it.

But it's also a direct program for extending unemployment insurance, as opposed to something that we're having to try to interpret through an executive order. We desperately need small business help. Restaurants we've talked about time and again, transit systems, healthcare systems, higher education. The list goes on and on and on. You saw yesterday, we were able to creatively, I think, collectively with 12 counties, deploy \$37 million in federal money. It's not enough at the end of the day, so we need more. That's another good example, but boy, that was a good example of the good that we could do with federal money. So I'm glad you raised the budget. I appreciate it.

Sir, we're going to take you out here.

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: I'll do the best I can. Good afternoon, Phil Andrews, New Jersey News Network. I think Governor you said earlier there was 1,612 contact tracers right now in the state. What's the number you're trying to get to? How many does the state need? And since you were talking about gyms early,

I know that New York is going to open gyms next week. How are you going to monitor them and what do you need to see from New York to help make your decision here in New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Thank you for that. On contact tracing, it is 1,612 and the objective in the near term is to get to 15 tracers per 100,000 residents and ultimately by the end of the year to get to 30 per 100,000 so that's the objective, and then go beyond that. It's a work in progress, as we said it would be, but I'm personally I think, Judy, you're pleased with the fact we keep adding. We added 80-something last week and they're well trained, they're doing a great job.

I'm not sure we're going to -- I think, listen, I don't want to make news but I think we're getting very close on some steps we could take and gyms would be on that list. I'm not sure that we're going to be learning a lot from the New York experience, but we have an enormous regard for New York. So the fact that they're taking that step, and understanding the basis upon which they're making that decision, and taking that step is a helpful data point. But at the end of the day, we make our decisions based on the reality within the four walls of New Jersey. But that does not mean, again, that we don't learn from other states because we do. Particularly in that group of seven that we are still very much regularly in touch with, and Judy is with her colleagues and I am with mine, and our staffs are, so that's especially New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and ourselves. Rhode Island and Massachusetts a little bit more further afield. And of all of those, they're all important, but New York for lots of reasons. New York is probably the most important, and I'd probably put Pennsylvania behind that because in the North, you've got an enormous amount of folks who live here and go to work in New York. And in the south, you've got an enormous amount of folks who live here and go to work in Philadelphia.

I think that's it. Again, we're virtual for the weekend and we are at one o'clock on Monday, unless you hear otherwise, and we've got the budget on Tuesday so it'll be a busy week. I'm going to mask up here if that's okay with everybody. Judy, you're all right with that? Let me do that. Again, I want to thank Judy and Tina, as always, for being here and for your leadership. Pat, likewise, Jared, a treat to have you at the table with us. Colonel, thank you, as always. Matt Platkin, Mahen and the rest of the team. I guess the one word I'd love to leave with is the weekend. It should be a good one, knock on wood, please be safe. I don't mean just in COVID, but please watch your step out in the roads in the water.

My guess is the ocean will start to churn up a little bit here Pat, in the next few days, if these systems are indeed coming our way. So be safe and then as it relates to COVID, continue to be smart and responsible. Wear a face covering, stay six feet apart, wash your hands with soap and water. It's cool to gather, it's cool to let your hair down. That's not a problem. Please do it outside. I think the weather is gonna be conducive this weekend, and take advantage of that. We won't be able to say that in December, but we can say it in the middle of August, and so let's use that gift, whether you're on the shore, at the lake or wherever you are this weekend. Again, enjoy yourselves, be responsible. Thank you for everything you've done. And I want to conclude by thanking especially the First Lady of the Great State of New Jersey. We celebrated our 26th anniversary since we were last here in this room together, so Mazel Tov. Thank you all and God bless you all.

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](#)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](#)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](#)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](#)

Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency

(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

Boards, Commissions & Authorities (/governor/admin/bca/)

Internship Opportunities (/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket (<http://drumthwacket.org/>)

Key Initiatives

Economy & Jobs (/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

Education (/governor/initiatives/#Education)

Environment (/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

Health (/governor/initiatives/#Health)

Law & Justice (/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

Transportation (/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

Press Releases (/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

Photos (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy>)

Public Addresses (/governor/news/addresses)

Executive Orders (/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

Administrative Orders (/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

Direct Appointments (/governor/news/appointments)

Advice and Consent Appointments (/governor/news/acappointments)

Statements on Legislation

(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

Administration Reports (/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

Transition Reports (/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

Press Kits (/governor/news/press)

Social

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/>)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

TikTok (<https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?>)

Contact Us

Scheduling Requests (</governor/contact/scheduling/>)

Contact Us (</governor/contact/all/>)

Statewide

NJ Home (<//www.nj.gov>)

Services A to Z (<//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html>)

Departments/Agencies (<//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/>)

FAQs (<//www.nj.gov/faqs/>)

Contact Us (<//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html>)

Privacy Notice (<//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html>)

Legal Statement & Disclaimers (<//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html>)

Accessibility Statement (<//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html>)

(<//nj.gov/opra/>)

(<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>)

(<https://tech.nj.gov/>)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000