

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: June 18th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. I'm honored to be 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. The guy to my left, another person who needs no introduction, Superintendent of the State Police Colonel, Patrick Callahan. I'm concerned that Jared Maples is not with us, Pat, we may have to send out an APB to make sure he's okay.

I want to start by acknowledging the historic decision by the U.S. Supreme Court this morning, upholding the DACA program and allowing our Dreamers to continue to be part of our New Jersey family. I cannot put it any more clearly. Our Dreamers, as we've said many times, are every bit as American as our four kids. They grew up here, they were educated in our schools, they attended our colleges and universities, they are building their own careers and families. I am proud the court saw the administration's efforts to dismantle this program as the unlawful step that it was, and I am extremely grateful to our Attorney General Gurbir Grewal for his work in defending not just DACA, but the futures of thousands of New Jerseyans. With this case settled, I am hopeful that Congress will finally move to further support our Dreamers and provide a path to full citizenship, and New Jersey will be there to help.

Now, moving on, after weeks of discussions with mall operators statewide, I am pleased to announce that Colonel Callahan will be issuing an administrative order later today to allow the indoor portions of retail shopping malls to reopen on Monday, June 29th. In accordance with our social distancing practices, all



customers will be required to wear face coverings. Please abide by that at all times while indoors, with the exception solely for residents with medical conditions which make wearing a face mask impossible, and children under two years old. Judy, that's the same guidance we've had every step of the way.

So there's nothing, no new wrinkles in that businesses within the indoor portions of a mall will be treated just as they would if they were located outside of a shopping mall. This means limiting the number of customers to 50% capacity and requiring employees to wear face coverings, among other requirements. Common areas such as communal sitting and food courts must remain closed or otherwise cordoned off. Mall-based restaurants can offer takeout and may offer in-person outdoor service at areas outside of the mall, where feasible. Indoor entertainment businesses such as movie theaters or arcades will remain close at this time, as they remain so statewide.

And finally, we're asking mall operators to establish building-specific policies and customer flow plans to minimize congestion points. This includes creating entrance-only and exit-only points if feasible, and sanitation materials must be provided to both mall employees and customers, particularly at entrances. Certainly malls are part of New Jersey culture and lore, I think as much here if not more so than any other American state. We want these businesses to get back up and running responsibly and safely. And we ask everyone who wishes to head out to the mall to comply with the requirements in place, keep your distance, wear a face covering and follow pedestrian directions. Let's keep this restart going, and going safely.

Next from our Department of Labor, we are announcing that last week 26,392 initial unemployment claims were filed. This is a slight increase from two weeks ago but still far below where we were two months or even one month ago, but it's still a big number. And the department staff continues working diligently to see claims resolved in a timely manner, and that benefits flow as quickly as possible. Over the past three months, more than 1 million New Jerseyans have claimed benefits and \$7.2 billion has been put in the pockets of families who need help. That's apportioned, on the one hand, \$2.4 billion in state payments and \$4.8 billion in federal payments.

I must reiterate that the onslaught of claims over the past three months is unprecedented, and we know that there are specific issues which may be preventing certain residents from receiving their benefits. And the department continues to do all it can to work with these residents one on one to resolve these issues and get benefits flowing. If you're frustrated, I don't blame you. We don't blame you. Please hang in there. You will get every single penny that's coming to you.

However, the overwhelming number of claims have been cleared and the department will not rest until every claim is settled and every penny is properly dispersed. I also reiterate my thanks to everyone at the Department of Labor, from Commissioner Rob Asaro-Angelo on down to the folks working the phones and helping residents online who have answered the call of service to help their fellow New Jerseyans.

Next -- we're switching a lot of gears today -- from the Department of State, we continue to see our response rates to the 2020 Census continued to rise and continue to remain above the national average. To date, 63.4% of New Jersey households have already responded, and I thank you for that. But we need to focus on the 36.6% who have yet to do so. I cannot overstate the importance of the Census. This is not merely a count of how many people live here. It is quite literally the tool that determines whether or not billions of dollars of federal aid flows into New Jersey. It's our money and we need to put it to work for us. And an undercount now will hurt us for the next decade.

Think about this for a second: a child who is two years old today will be 12 by the time that next Census rolls around, and if that child is not counted, they will be put at a disadvantage because vital federal education aid won't come to New Jersey to support their education. Census data helps determine where our more than \$45 billion in annual federal funding comes to New Jersey, so having an accurate count directly impacts planning and funding for programs and services for students, schools and educators. And that's just one example of many that we could give. Judy could give a bunch in the health arena alone.

We know that we were undercounted in 2010, and we are, in very real terms, paying a price for that. We have left literally billions of dollars of federal money on the table; money that could have been invested back into our schools, hospitals, community food programs, business development and job training programs, senior housing, and on and on and on. Our communities deserve their fair share, but to get it, we all must be counted. The 2020 Census can be a tremendous tool for change. And to repeat what I've said before, and this

is important, the Census is secure. Your data won't get into the wrong hands. It's easy, literally, it's a five or 10-minute exercise, and it is incredibly important. So if you've not yet responded, take a moment and go to 2020census.gov and be counted.

Additionally, eight offices across the state will soon open from where census workers will begin heading out directly into communities to reach those who have not yet responded. Please make their jobs easier and quicker and fill out the census. It is quick. It is our civic duty, and it's for all of us. So with that, let us turn to the overnight numbers.

Yesterday, we received 442 new positive test results, pushing the statewide cumulative total since March 4th to 168,107. The daily positivity or spot positivity rate for test samples recorded on June 13th was 2.94%. Our rate of transmission is 0.75. And to repeat, spot positivity and the so-called RT, or rate of transmission, are two of the best measures for tracking COVID-19 spread. Where both of these numbers sit today that tells us about the great work that millions of you have done so far to crush the curves, and that all that you've been doing has been working and that we need you to keep at it.

Both of these metrics however, also rely on data, and we get data from testing. So I encourage everyone who has spent a day on the beach, an evening shopping at a reopened store, or dining at a reopened outdoor restaurant, I will be doing that tonight, or a day in the streets joining a protest, we want all of you to go out and get tested. Do it for you, do it for your community, do it for your family. Remember, common sense for the common good. It's bigger than any of us. Go to covid19.nj.gov/testing to find a testing site near you. We have the capacity, we just need you. And the more data we get, the better off we will be in determining our steps forward through stage two and when we can enter stage three.

Before we go to the hospitals, long-term care has a total number of positive in their communities of positive tests of 35,484, and we have lost 6,117 precious lives in our long-term care facilities since this began.

Turning to our hospitals, as of last night, the total number of patients being treated for COVID-19 decreased to 1,268. There are now just four patients reported in our field medical station. The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care decreased as well to 319. The number of ventilators in use, however, tipped up a little bit to 257, but that's still lower than we were even just four days ago.

Across the day yesterday, our hospitals admitted 73 COVID-19 positive patients, while 134 live patients left our hospitals. So across our healthcare systems, we continue to be far below where we were just two weeks ago, as you can see on the right-hand column, and we are significantly down from our peak. Now keep in mind there are states which are now just reaching their peaks. We stand in stark contrast to those states because we have put a premium on responsibly and methodically moving ourselves into our restart and recovery, and we will continue to be guided by this data and the prevailing medical science going forward.

However, I must reiterate that even with the dropping numbers of new cases here, and by the way, we're dropping like a rock and let's continue to do so until we get to number 50, we are still a top five state in terms of overall hospitalizations and deaths per day. That we continue to stay on this list speaks to the tremendous toll that this virus has had on our state. And even with the significant decreases over the past days and weeks, we are still one of the nation's most-impacted states. And this is why we all must keep up with the social distancing, the face coverings, the washing with soap and water, staying home and away from others if you don't feel well.

Now today, we are reporting, with the heaviest of hearts, the loss of another 38 New Jerseyans to COVID-19 related complications. Our statewide total is now 12,800 lost lives, and as we have been doing, let's remember a few more of those precious souls who we have lost.

First up, look at that, what a guy. Let's start with Julius "Jukie" Sabo of Hamilton Township. He was a familiar face to so many who worked here at our State Capitol as one of the great security guards who protected lawmakers and visitors alike. I want to give Sergeant Brian Murray in the back of the house a big shout out for bringing this one to our attention. Brian's been with us literally every single day and Jukie was a guy who was known to so many of us. Jukie was born in Trenton, right here, and called either Trenton or Hamilton home for his entire life. Before joining State Service, Jukie worked for the public affairs firm MBI Gluckshaw, where we

have lots of good friends for 20 years, and also for Trane Corporation. In his free time, this won't come as a surprise given that extraordinary personality that jumps out at you, he played the drums and guitar and help set the pace for the band Little Deuce Coupe.

Jukie leaves his loving wife Diana, who I had the honor of speaking yesterday, they would have been married 40 years this October, and his daughter Gabrielle, and his two grand-pets by the way, grand-dog Baby and grand-rabbit Simba. He also leaves his brother Michael and his sisters Julie and Dory, along with their spouses and many nieces and nephews, and Jukie was only 59 years old. He also leaves many friends and many more familiar faces among the thousands of visitors to our seat of government. Jukie, God bless you and thank you for your services and kindness, and may God bless you and your family.

Next we remember Josephine Beckler, and she's seen here in a number of great photos with her family. Josephine was 93 years old and lived in South Plainfield. She was the first in her family to be born in the United States after her parents and siblings came here from Italy. As an adult, she would work for the Township of Irvington and met and fell in love with a Newark police detective named Howard Downs. They were married and had a son, Michael, but only nine months after Michael's birth, Howard was killed in the line of duty, in a car accident.

Josephine was a strong and selfless woman and her family was her world. Whether it was raising Michael as a single mom, and Michael with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday reminded me that she played the role of both Mom and Dad as he grew up, whether it was that or caring for her aging parents in their final years. The family notes that one of their great memories will be the smell of Josephine's house on a Sunday morning with a pot of meatballs and gravy on the stove. And I know Persichillis can appreciate that smell, Judy.

She is survived by her beloved son, Michael, again with whom I had the great honor of speaking, and his wife Kathy, and I also had the honor of speaking with Kathy as well, her three grandchildren, Michael, Kelly and Brandon, and a great-granddaughter Delaney. She also leaves many nieces and nephews and great-nieces and great-nephews behind. The family wanted me to give a big shout out to Nurse Patty, who was there with her right up until the very end. A life worth remembering always, Josephine will always be part of our New Jersey family. God bless you and watch over you, Josephine.

And finally today, we remember William "Bill" Nauta. He was 72 years old and spent all but seven of those years in Chatham in Morris County. After graduating from high school, Bill enlisted in the United States Army and served with the 529th Military Police Company Honor Guard of General Polk's headquarters in Germany. He was awarded the Good Conduct Medal and earned an honorable discharge in February of 1969, yet continued to serve as a member of the US Army Reserves for another three years.

He met his wife Carol, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, one winter while out tobogganing, and they were married in the fall of 1971. The couple made their home in, where else? Chatham, and proudly raised their four children there. Bill served 33 years, Pat, as a member of the Chatham Borough Police Department as a Patrolman, Detective, Sergeant, Lieutenant and Captain before ultimately retiring in December of 2003. He was one of the founding members of the Chatham PBA Local 226 and was also the department's traffic safety and training coordinator, and firearms instructor, and started one of Morris County's first crime prevention programs in the mid-1970s. His community service continued knew when he was off duty as well, whether it be with the Boy Scout Troop 28, the Brownies and Girl Scouts, coaching any number of youth sports, or his work to have Chatham's playing fields outfitted with emergency life-saving equipment. He leaves behind his wife of 48 years as I mentioned, his beloved Carol, and two daughters, Amy and Janet, his two sons William and Robert and their families, which gave him his four grandchildren Samantha, Quintin, Kyler, and I was asked to give a special shout out to 10-year-old young William. He also leaves his brothers John and Patrick and their families. To you, Bill, God bless you. We thank you for your years of service to our nation, to the Borough of Chatham, may God bless and watch over you and your family.

Three more tremendous members of our New Jersey family taken from us because of COVID-19. Let's always remember them and the impact they had on their families, their communities, our state, and our nation.

Before I wrap I also wish to acknowledge the passing of a giant, Jean Kennedy Smith, the final surviving sibling of President John F. Kennedy and Senators Robert and Ted Kennedy. She was also the aunt of my dear friend, former Congressman Patrick Kennedy, with whom I had a great exchange a short while ago. She'll be remembered for a lot of things, but she certainly should be remembered not just for her family ties, but for her role as the United States Ambassador to Ireland under President Bill Clinton, and laying the groundwork for peace in Northern Ireland. She didn't suffer fools and she was driven and determined in her work, and for all of us of Irish descent, we feel this loss. May her memory remains strong. And let's keep it up here for a minute because she is the last of that generation, of that extraordinary family, to pass. She was the second-youngest, Patrick's dad Teddy was the youngest, but it was Joe Jr. President John Kennedy, Rosemary, Kathleen, Eunice, Pat, Bobby, Jean here, and Ted. What an extraordinary family and extraordinary generation that has passed from us.

And finally, I want to note the passing of a true leader from Bergen County, Pritam Grewal on the left, the father of another dear friend and leader Dr. Balpreet Grewal-Virk, , and by the way, uncle of Attorney General Gurbir Grewal. Following a car crash in the wake of Superstorm Sandy he was, by the way, driving from the gas station he had opened to supply the vehicles for first responders, Pritam was paralyzed from the neck down, but he never let that setback dampen his spirit or his love of life.

You can't make this up. Balpreet and her family lost Pritam on Monday, three days ago. Yesterday, she and her husband Yogi welcomed a new baby boy, and there he is, Fatabeer, and his name means victorious in Punjabi. The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, in one family, a loss, an unfathomable loss, and an extraordinary birth. Let it be as such for our state. We have lost so many to this pandemic and yet there have been many births during the same time. Signs of hope and resiliency in these challenging moments, and I know we will all come out of this in the name of Fatabeer, victorious, as one extraordinary New Jersey family, together like never before, stronger as never before.

And with that, 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. In late March, the state put a call out to volunteers to support the COVID-19 response. Talented individuals from across the state came forward, including healthcare professionals who served at our field medical stations and other alternate care sites. Today, I am pleased to announce that one of these valuable leaders, Dr. David Adinaro, will join the Department of Health team permanently as the new Deputy Commissioner of Public Health Services.

Dr. Adinaro heard the state's call and joined the fight during this unprecedented health emergency. He served as the Chief Medical Officer at the field medical station in Secaucus, which was established to care for recovering COVID positive patients that could be safely discharged from acute care hospitals. These sites helped increase capacity in our hospitals, as they were dealing with a surge of COVID-19 patients who needed critical care, and in many cases, ventilators. Working with the Army Corps, the National Guard, the State Office of Emergency Management, and the Department of Health, a field hospital was set up in the Meadowlands Exposition Center in a little over a week's time.

As part of the Department of Health's leadership team, Dr. Adinaro helped hire more than 100 doctors, nurses, social workers, and respiratory and physical therapists. These were people who had never worked together before, and he built a team and he acquired the essential equipment needed to care for recuperating patients. Through the collaborative teamwork, nearly 300 patients receive treatment at the Secaucus site. Thanks to the extensive staff and services set up, which included labs and radiology, very few patients had to be transferred to another facility for their care.

Dr. Adinaro served as the Chief Medical Officer but performed many other duties, coordinating admissions and supplies, and many day-to-day tasks to keep the site running smoothly. When the Secaucus site was closed in May, he moved on and built up the East Orange alternate care site. Dr. Adinaro has an extensive background in medicine. He served as an emergency physician and executive for 17 years at St. Joseph's University Medical Center in Paterson, holding a variety of positions including Chief of Emergency Medicine. He became an EMT as a teenager and volunteered on first aid squads for nearly 20 years. He graduated from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in 2000, and completed his residency in emergency medicine at

Morristown Medical Center. He's also a graduate of Lehigh University's Healthcare System's Engineering Professional Master's Program, and he earned a master of arts and education degree from Seton Hall University.

As a leader in the Public Health Services Branch, he will oversee the divisions of epidemiology, environmental and occupational health, family health services, HIV, STD and TB services, medicinal marijuana program, public health infrastructure, laboratories and emergency preparedness, and the offices of local public health and women's health. As an emergency physician, he is used to juggling many duties under pressure, adapting quickly to changing situations and carrying out efforts with limited time and resources; all key skills in a public health department. The experience he brings will be vital as the department continues to build on our COVID-19 response efforts and implements initiatives that address key public health challenges, such as reducing disparities and promoting harm reduction. We're excited to welcome him to the team and he will be starting on Monday.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, the hospitals are reporting 1,268 COVID-19 patients with 319 individuals in critical care, and 81% of those critical care patients are on ventilators. Thankfully, there are no new cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, so the total remains at 43 cases in our state. In New Jersey, there are no deaths reported at this time. The ages of the children affected range from 1 to 18, and five children are currently hospitalized.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of overall deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54%, Black 18.4%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.6%, and other 1.7%. At the state veterans homes, the numbers remain the same, as they also remain the same at our psychiatric hospitals.

The daily percent positivity for June 14th in New Jersey overall is 2.94%. The Northern part of the state is reporting 2.15%, Central 2.88%, and the Southern part of the state, 4.41%. That concludes my report. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy and get tested. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen, Judy. Thank you for all of that. I misspoke in my remarks. I had the same positivity rate but I said it was as of June 13th. It is in fact as of June 14th, thank you for that. I also had the great honor of meeting Dr. Adinaro, both when the three of us toured the East Orange General surge capacity, and then he and I had a very good phone conversation, and I think he's a great addition to the team, so congratulations to you, Judy. He'll be a great wingman as we go forward.

With that, Pat, please give us an update on compliance and other matters. Great to have you with us, as always.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. There was zero Executive Order violations last night issued. I think five protests scheduled for today, Governor, and I know you knock on wood daily, and we'll just hope to keep it that way. So we're just obviously monitoring things for tomorrow and over the weekend. That's all I got, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. Aswan's got it. We'll start with Matt. Before we do, I previewed this yesterday. We're going to be earlier, tomorrow, Mahen, I believe at 11:00 a.m., and that's because we're going to be having a couple of Juneteenth related activities in the afternoon tomorrow, and we'll give you more details on that at some point, I suspect later today. But we'll be gathered here tomorrow unless you hear otherwise at 11:00 a.m., assuming we get all the numbers fresh off the press, which I think we can by then, so thank you. Matt, please. Welcome.

Q&A Session

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. Governor, the Labor Commissioner said a new call center would be set up and running early this week. Do you know if and when this is going to be operational, and if there'll be a new number or will the calls just be transferred over from the old number?

Also, Woodbridge Police used federal funds to set up a barber shop in its station for officers, and apparently others, during your Executive Order barring residents from such services. Should they face EO violation, and are you aware of any other government agencies, police or otherwise, allowed for similar extensions to violate the EO?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? You were getting emotional at the end of that one, I wouldn't want to interrupt you. I'm not sure. I believe it's the same number. I'm not sure to the extent to which the call center is completely up and running. It is up and running, Mahen says it's up and running and it's the same number. Same number and it's up and running, Matt.

I was not aware, not only am I not aware of other instances, I was not aware of that one so if you can allow me to get back to you or one of us will get back to you, Mahen, on the Woodbridge question, if that's okay. Thank you. Sir? Please.

Reporter: News 12 has been getting a lot of calls about the \$600 payment, the unemployment extension. Lots of folks haven't gotten it yet. Any response to that?

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't, other than to say that inevitably, and I hate to give you the same answer as I have but it's a fact. It's usually a very specific issue related to the person, so if you could get us names and contact details, Mahen can follow up with you and we will literally go to those people directly, if that's okay. Thank you. Sir, good afternoon.

Reporter: Good afternoon, Governor. With K-12 school guidance coming out next week, can you give us a status report on the Education Commissioner job and Commissioner Repollet's successor? When is that going to be decided and announced, even on an interim basis? And what qualities are you looking for in the next Education Commissioner?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? No update on the status, and when we have, in terms of his successor, and when we do have an update, we will be sure to get it to you. You are accurate. We hoped early to mid-week to give some very specific guidance on K through 12. I know Judy and her team are deeply involved with that, not just the Department of Education. You know, Lamont's been a great leader, and I think both the professional life story and the personal life story matter a lot, and this is a guy, just looking to him as an example, I could say this about my colleagues up here in their own right. But just an extraordinary life story, someone who had classroom experience, which I think is always really important, strong preference at a minimum, if not, I think an absolute. Had increasing management responsibility, so not just classroom experience, but principal, ultimately superintendent in Asbury Park, where he and I met.

So I don't have a specific for you, but his life story, both professional and personal, I think is a model for us. And I could say something similar about my colleagues up here in terms of what we'll look to, and if we have news, I'll promise you, we'll get it to you. Thank you. Dave, we got to you very quickly today.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, so a couple of questions. First one is, you mentioned today how important the rate of transmission is. I believe we're at 0.75% today. I know we've been giving this data for several weeks now and you have consistently talked about how important it is. Why is it important? And really importantly, I understand there's an algorithm that's used to calculate it, but in as simple a term as possible, can you describe what this thing is? How do we get this information? Where's this data coming from? Who's calculating this rate? And I know Judy and Tina are really looking forward to this, I can tell, but it's just because people are wondering what's going on with this, so there's that. And then Governor, maybe your thoughts on why it's important, why you think it's important.

And then last one here, some lawmakers including your close friends and I believe drinking buddies, Jon Bramnick and Steve Sweeney. are clamoring for you to include them in the data that you're using to make decisions about what's going to open and when it's going to happen, and so on and so forth. Bramnick put something out talking about the fact that the Legislature should be taking over this whole process, and Sweeney has complained that he's been trying to get this data for seven weeks. Are you sharing this or are you not sharing it? What's your feeling about it? Should they be included in this whole process? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: So I have been to Jon Bramnick's tavern in his living room on multiple occasions, I will admit to that, and Steve and I have knocked a few back over the past several years, so I'll come back to that in a second. Judy and Tina can give you the whys and wherefores in terms of how it's calculated, but it's very simple for me, for folks trying to figure out why it's important and where the break points are. Anything north of 1.0 is bad. Anything south of 1.0 is good. We show a chart which we showed earlier, I believe at the peak it was 5.31 or 5.36, which is jaw dropping, and my guess is that was among the highest, if not the highest in the country at the time, along with New York City. Which means let's say it's 5 and not 5 point

something. For every and Tina will correct me here, if you've got it, you're infecting on average five other people based on your own infection. And that's been coming down thank God, and now when it gets below one, you are beginning the process of driving into the ground because you're infecting less than one person each time you're in that sort of contact, and there you can see it right there.

It looks like we got to one to one just after Easter, and I think Easter, Judy would remind us, right around there, maybe Easter Monday or Tuesday, upon reflection, was our peak. That's sort of where you saw the breakpoint. And it continues to be something that we watch. By the way, every day we have a warm up call and when it goes from 0.65 to 0.75, we're noticing, right? I want to repeat to folks, whether it's spot positivity, rate of transmission, new hospitalization, we're not hanging our hat on any single day's move either good or bad, by the way, good or bad. And again, the fatalities as awful as the losses are, those are lagging indicators. Those are folks who were infected some time ago.

The spot positivity we give you the date every time we say it, in this case today it's from the 14th, which is Sunday, the rate of transmission is literally as you can see, is as of the 16th, and new hospitalizations are literally over the past 24 hours, so those are literally in the here and now. And again, I'll yield my time after this.

Listen, I think we have had an open book. I mean, we sit here every day. I'm told this is the 81st day I've sat here and presented the data that we present every day and Sheila Oliver, to her credit, was doing it for about a week before I was here, because of my surgery. We share the data with everybody, not just with the Legislature, with the Congressional delegation, with the business community, with obviously the healthcare advocates and community, with the millions of folks who have watched us over time, we're an open book. We are an open book. And so whether it's to John or Steve and I missed what they had said so this is the first I'm hearing that, we couldn't be more transparent and we try to signal as best we can.

I'll use today's guidance on malls. Here it is, Thursday the 18th. We've now signaled that a week from Monday, the 29th, giving 11 days runway, which the mall operators had requested. I was back and forth with one of the big ones, David Simon this morning, giving him a heads up. My opinion, we're open about it, we're responsible. We're giving the data that we're basing it on and we're giving not only that, but folks a sense of the runway that they're now going to be able to adjust to in the new life going forward. Whenever it is we get to indoor dining, to casinos, and I hope it's sooner than later, we want to give a similar runway. Catering halls have been asking us for that guidance and we want to not just say hey, listen, it's going to be tomorrow, but this is the data that we're looking at and this is the runway we're giving you.

With that, Tina, Dr. Tan. We'll go to Dr. Tan and we'll come back.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: So, the RT is also known as the effective reproductive number. And it's basically an estimate to what the Governor was saying. It's an estimate of the number of individuals in a population that might become infected as a result of being infected by a case of COVID. And because the RT, it's an estimate and it's based on a lot of different assumptions that go into calculating the RT for a given time, it takes into account things like the susceptible population. So, the day-to-day RT isn't necessarily as critical as the overall trend in the RT over time.

From an epidemiologic perspective, the RT is useful in terms of just kind of adding confirmation to what we know from our routine surveillance and epidemiologic data, so on a day-to-day basis, our epidemiologists in our Communicable Disease Service, we look at the case counts over time, our epidemic curve, right? You know, which again, to what the Governor had mentioned, we saw the peak in the number of cases during the first week of April. And then we also look at things like the daily positivity rate, we look at syndromic surveillance data, that's data that we get from emergency departments for COVID-19-like illnesses, because that's also a nice surrogate to provide a fleshed out picture.

Because again, the RT alone just as one number is just a number, there are different assumptions. People can calculate RT in many different ways, because again, it's a model. But that epi data is also important in the context of what we practically see at the healthcare system. The reality is that we have to balance it with what the healthcare systems are seeing and able to accommodate in terms of their ability to treat patients as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, anything you want to add, or you're good?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I just encourage everyone to look at the website that the Communicable Disease Service puts up, because a lot of what Dr. Tan just shared with you is represented on the website with great explanations. The infographic gives you a nice picture of what they look at every day, and we meet weekly and it's shared. We look at things every day, every week, every month.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Dave, you had a quick, real quick.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Yeah, just a real quick follow. What about this notion that they're suggesting that they should be included in this process of making these decisions? Do you think that's fair or not?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll repeat what I said. I think we've been extremely transparent and open. We have regular calls with legislators, both as a group as well as individuals. I'm proud of the fact that we come up here every single day, we lay it on the line, completely transparent. We give folks a very precise sense as to how and why we make decisions. As I said earlier, we give folks a runway to let them prepare, so it's not a lurching process. Again, I'm not suggesting we're batting 1,000, that we're perfect by any means. But I think in terms of being an open book, I don't think we could be more open.

I want to thank Judy and Tina, as always. Thank you very much for everything, your leadership, and I love the new addition to the team, Judy. Pat, as always, Jared, we referred to you, we put an APB out for you earlier, but we were happy to see you with us. Matt Platkin is here, Mahen Gunaratna, unless Mahen tells us otherwise, we're going to be here tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. and very much look forward to seeing you then.

And again, I want to end where we do almost every day, huge thanks. When Colonel Pat Callahan says there were no overnight compliance matters in a state of 9 million people, when we have meaningfully opened up and continue to open up, that is all you, folks. That is extraordinary, whether you're rightfully protesting the stain of racism, dining outdoors, going to your favorite retail shop, dropping your kids off at daycare. By the way, don't forget Monday you'll be able to cut your hair and get your hair done, and that'll be another big step forward. Every single step of the way, you've been extraordinary. We just need to keep asking you to continue to do so. God bless you all and thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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