

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: July 1st, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for bearing with us on a different time and running a couple of minutes behind. Today I'm joined by the woman who needs no introduction on my right, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli; Judy. The State's Epidemiologist and another familiar face to her right, Dr. Christina Tan, great to have you both. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan. Jared Maples is with us, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.

Again, good afternoon. This is – we're in the midst of what has been a busy day. I was honored to be in Montclair this morning to swear in its new mayor and a dear friend, Sean Spiller. I take my hat off to Sean and the new members of Council, three incumbents who were elected and three new members there. And just prior to this, I joined Legislative leaders and legislators, educators and other folks to enact into law much needed reforms to the way that healthcare is provided to our educators and education support staff. And these reforms, it's sort of one of these win-win-wins. These reforms will save both them and our property taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars without sacrificing at all the quality of the healthcare. So all in all, so far, it's been a good day for our state and our future.

And tomorrow, as well, we will continue down the road to restart and recovery as we allow for our casinos to reopen, for outdoor amusement parks and recreational businesses to reopen, as well as certain indoor recreational and cultural facilities, where activities can be enjoyed while both social distancing and wearing a

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face covering. As we head into the Independence Day weekend, we are still moving forward as quickly as we can, but as safely as we must. We are being deliberate in our decisions, and we continue to be guided by medical science and on-the-ground data, both here and nationally.

Allow me, if I can, to reassert something that has been said here many times before. There is still a whole lot we don't know about this virus, any of us, from Tony Fauci and Debbie Birx and all the other experts, Judy, right on down. But we know two things with absolute certainty. First, we know that outdoor environments are safer than indoor environments. We've said that time and time again. And that is why as of tomorrow, nearly every type of outdoor activity will have been green-lighted to resume.

And secondly, we know that wearing a face covering is safer than not wearing a face covering. The simple reason is why, as we have gradually allowed for the restart of indoor activities, we require face coverings whether it's in a retail shop, a house of worship, a recreational facility, say like a bowling alley, or a cultural center like a library or a museum. Indoor environments where it is impossible to wear masks or where customers are sedentary for long periods of time without face coverings, such as gyms and bars and restaurants, remain the most dangerous in terms of transmission.

We will get there. As I've said many times before, this is not a life sentence. We'll get there but we will get there based on the data and the health metrics. And we will get there in part when we know we have absolute compliance by dining and drinking establishments that have been allowed to reopen for outdoor service.

Yesterday, officials in Jersey City, this is the sort of picture we don't want to see, began legal actions against The Factory Restaurant and Lounge for what it is saying had been regular violations by allowing hundreds of patrons inside without regard for social distancing or face coverings. This past weekend, photos and videos showed large crowds packed inside. So I applaud Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop and City Prosecutor Jake Hudnut for taking a zero tolerance approach to The Factory. And I urge other municipal officials to take a similar stance with the outlier establishment in their communities. No one should get a pass for putting public health at risk.

As I said yesterday, we know that the majority of bars and restaurants have been doing the right things and enforcing social distancing among their patrons, but even one knucklehead bar can ruin it for everyone. It only takes one match to start a wildfire, and it only takes one infected bargoer to ignite a COVID-19 flare up that then shuts everything else all back down. And again, the risk of such a flare up is much higher in indoor settings than outdoor settings.

By the way, we're not alone in recognizing this either. You may have noticed, looking at our neighbors, you may have noticed early this morning, New York City indefinitely postponed the reopening of restaurants for indoor dining yesterday; Philadelphia indefinitely postponed its resumption of indoor dining; Delaware indefinitely halted bar service at its beaches. And as Dr. Anthony Fauci said clearly yesterday, "Congregation at a bar inside is bad news." And I quote Tony with that.

We have done collectively, you all most importantly, we've done tremendous work of putting New Jersey at the top of the nation in terms of our response. Last night, CNN reported on the latest data from Johns Hopkins University, which showed us as one of only two states in America, alongside Rhode Island, to record a week-over-week reduction in new cases of 50% or more. And the trackers, similarly, at COVID Act Now, we've shown you this before, a national consortium of researchers and healthcare experts, rank us as one of only four American states currently on track to contain COVID-19. You can see the states in green, it's just us, along with New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

We want to stay in the green. We must stay in the green. We know all too well what it's like to be in the red. We were there and that was as painful as it gets. I don't want to go back. You don't want to go back and I know millions and millions of you out there don't want to go back either. The only way we stay in the zone is when you keep up, as you have done so brilliantly, with the social distancing and wearing a face covering. We stay in the green zone when you get tested to make sure you're not unknowingly carrying this virus and are capable of spreading it to others. Don't be the match that starts a COVID wildfire. Use your common sense for the common good.

And let's now keep tracking our progress with a look at the overnight numbers. Yesterday we received another 423 positive test results, for a cumulative total of 171,928. The daily positivity or spot positivity rate was 2.29%. That was for tests recorded on June 27th. The rate of transmission moved down a little bit to 0.82, and this is a positive one-day sign that we need to turn into a trend. Today, Judy, I noted that only three counties have an RT over one, meaning an increased rate of spread, where last week there were eight. And since last week, eight counties have cut their RT by at least one-third, and four counties, a big shout out to Atlantic, Cumberland, Morris and Salem, they have each cut their rate of transmission by at least half.

Again, we have to get the rate of transmission, or the so-called RT, below one in every county, and this means we have to keep up with social distancing and wearing our face coverings. And by the way, when we get it below one in every county, we've got to keep it below one. We've said this before, RT and the daily spot positivity rate give us our best picture of how COVID-19 continues to spread, and they're the most important non-hospital metrics we look at when making decisions for when we can enter the next stages along our road back.

So moving to our hospitals, the total number of residents hospitalized for COVID-19 increased to 1,080. The number of patients requiring intensive care went up slightly to 217, and the number of ventilators in use also went up slightly to 178. There were 54 patients who are known COVID positive admitted to our hospitals, while 87 live patients were discharged.

So here are how these daily numbers feed into the overall trends. We show you this almost every day. As we've noted, we know we are going to keep having days where the numbers go up. The task for all of us is to make sure that those one-day increases don't turn into trends. We have absolutely crushed our curves since the peak and by and large, we have continued to pull them down over the past two weeks. We must keep this going in the right direction. COVID Act Now and Johns Hopkins may give us green ratings because of the work we've all done but no one, absolutely no one, should be patting ourselves on the back yet. We cannot spike any footballs. Overnight, we slipped five spots nationally in terms of the numbers of new cases being identified. While being 42 out of 50 is a not a bad place and a lot better than we used to be, there's no reason for us not to be 50 out of 50. And in both the number of patients in our hospitals and the numbers of residents we continue to lose to COVID-19, we continue to rank way too high.

And with the heaviest of hearts, we are reporting an additional 45 blessed souls from our New Jersey family have been lost to COVID-19. The total of lab-confirmed COVID-19 fatalities is 13,224 and as you know, as we said the other day, total probable deaths are 1,854 on top of that. Let's remember three more, if we can, of those lives who we have lost.

We start in Morris County What a great looking couple there, huh? By remembering Lewis Guerin who passed away at the age of 92. If you may remember, last month we memorialized his beloved wife Flora on the right, who was also lost due to COVID-19. They died six weeks apart. Lewis was born and raised on the family farm in Ironia in the Ironias section of Randolph Township. After his marriage to Flora, and with a young family to support, he stepped off the farm to start his own company Dover Trucking. Later, he and two friends would open Dover Diesel Service, a sales and repair company. An innovator, Lew led the installation of the first electrically run diagnostic dynamo meter for diesel engines in New Jersey. After nearly 30 years in business, Lew semi-retired by moving into real estate, and he and Flora moved to Virginia, but the pull of home brought them back years later and it was here where they stayed.

Lew's love of taking on challenges was a lifelong trait. As a child he was one of the first volunteers for a new 4-H program looking for fosters for a puppy to be trained as a seeing-eye dog. That program was the start of the Seeing-Eye Organization's puppy program. Lew and Flora enjoyed 72 years together and as we did with Flora, we extend our condolences to their children, Kathleen from East Brunswick with whom I had the honor of speaking yesterday, and her brothers Glen, Scott and Lewis III and their families, including Lou and Flora's 12 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. May God bless and watch over each of them and their families.

Next we recall a giant. Montclair's Laretta Freeman, who COVID-19 took away from us at the age of 97. An educator, Laretta founded the Montclair Cooperative School, a progressive pre-K through grade 8 school in 1963, and she would serve as both director and a teacher for 23 years, and was involved in a collaboration with the Montclair State University early childhood education program. She was a tireless and lifelong

advocate for social justice, and led the Montclair chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and in the late 1960s, she led the fight for fair housing on the street, where she and her husband Larry were raising their two sons, Stevens Street by the way, by going door to door to persuade neighbors not to sell their homes to real estate prospectors who were threatening its diversity. What courage, huh? Unbelievable. She remained active well into her retirement hosting a local television show for Montclair seniors, sharing their ideas on early childhood education with leaders and educators in Paterson and Jersey City, and registering high school students to vote, among so much more.

Lauretta is now back with her husband Larry, who passed away four years ago. She leaves behind her sons Jim, and I had the great honor of speaking with Jim, he is now in Brooklyn, and her other son Scott, and their families and her business partner and best friend Sylvia, with whom I also had the great honor of speaking. A tremendous life of service, thank you for all you did Lauretta, and God bless you.

And finally, we remember Lucy Sarappo of Glenrock. Born in Paterson, she called Glenrock home for nearly a half a century. She was a homemaker and a devoted parishioner of Hawthorn St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church. Lucy was 98 years old. An independent spirit, Lucy lived on her own in her Glenrock home until last year, and was still driving herself to morning mass at St. Anthony's followed by a trip to check in on her son, Lew, Lewis Jr., at the offices of the family business in Paterson, Electrical Equipment Solutions, by the way is the name of it, which was founded by her late husband, Lewis.

Lucy's secret, Pat, pay close attention, to a long and successful life and I'm not making this up, drinking one beer every day. She leaves behind Lew, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday and his wife Arlene and her grandson Alex, and they live right next door to where she did there in Ridgewood. Lucy is now reunited with Lewis who passed nearly 20 years ago, as well as with one of her sons, Gerald, and I am sure she is hoisting a beer glass with them. By the way, her son Lew said to me, as they were growing up, she used to preach two things to them and he said, I never thought in my life it would come full circle, and this is what we all would be hearing and being preached to us now. She always said to them, remember, always have an open window and wash your hands with soap. And boy, are we not saying the same thing today? There's nothing new under the sun, folks. The more things change, the more they stay the same, as they say. So we hoist our beer glass to you, Lucy. May God bless and watch over you, your husband, your son, and your family back here at home.

Lew and Loretta and Lucy are our daily reminders of the toll of COVID-19. They were leaders in their communities and within their families. They personified the spirit and essence of New Jersey, innovative, compassionate and guided by faith. And they are all gone because of COVID 19. I know everyone is anxious to get back out and try to return to life as it once was, believe me, so do I. Tomorrow our restart takes another big step, but for us to continue down this road back, everyone needs to be an example of personal responsibility. It isn't up to some of us to beat COVID-19, it's up to every single one of the 9 million of us. We have to keep up with social distancing. We have to continue wearing our face coverings. No one, absolutely no one, especially our younger residents, can be lulled into complacency and think it's okay to crowd around bars without any regard for those around us. That is how we backslide. That's how we get pushed off our road back.

We have worked too hard over the past three plus months to get on this rode back. Don't be one of the folks who jerks the steering wheel and sends us back off that road. You've been extraordinary, folks. Keep it up, we must keep it up. Look at what's happening and burning in other states right now. We have them in our prayers, we hope for a speedy resolution. We know their pain because we lived that once. We cannot live that hell again.

So before I turn it back over to you, Judy, I want to remind folks to go out and get tested one more time. Go to covid19.nj.gov/testing to find a testing location near you, and then go out and get it done. Know for yourself, for your family, your friends and your community if you're carrying the virus. The more you know, the more we can all pull together to win this war.

One final word on testing, although I just got a great update from Pastor Wilson at St. Matthews AME with another sort of summary of the amount of tests they've done, which is really extraordinary. I want to give a special shout out also to another dear friend, Assemblyman Joe Danielson, who organized testing in Franklin Township in Somerset County this past weekend, and they recorded more than 700 tests.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that today is the last day in office for a colleague of ours, Commissioner of the Department of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet, who will be taking over the Presidency of Kean University. He has been a tremendous educational leader, especially throughout these past months in helping us to lead our schools and our education communities through this pandemic. I know Judy and Pat and Tina and the rest of us, Jared, joins me in wishing him nothing but the very best in his new role. He will be sorely missed by so many of us for the knowledge and warmth he brought to our administration. Good luck to you, buddy. God bless you. Stay close.

On that note, 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. Well, this week national health leaders have shared some sobering news about the spread of COVID-19 in our country. So, amplifying what the Governor has shared. Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, testified yesterday that the rate of new coronavirus infections could more than double to 100,000 a day if current outbreaks were not contained. He cautioned that even parts of our country that are doing well are vulnerable. Dr. Anne Schuchat, Principal Deputy Director of CDC said earlier this week that coronavirus is spreading rapidly and broadly.

The message from these leaders is that we are at risk of endangering all the progress we've made in the past two-and-a-half months to flatten the curve. I feel strongly that it's better to be cautious now than sorry later. The rapidly increasing cases in other states are concerning, and forming our decision to pause things like the opening of indoor dining. Indoor dining is riskier to residents, more riskier than walking in another indoor space such as a mall. The typical shopping mall has very high ceilings, promoting and assisting air circulation and ventilation. In a mall, social distancing is easier to achieve and maintain, and it is easier to require customers to wear face coverings while shopping. In a restaurant, the customer is sitting in the same location for a period of time, in some cases with lower ceilings, reduced ventilation, and most of the time, would not be wearing a face covering. Additionally, people tend to linger longer in restaurants, so the duration of exposure is increased.

In April, the CDC shared a study of an outbreak linked to indoor dining in China. An asymptomatic individual dining at a restaurant led to four people at the person's table later testing positive for COVID-19, as well as five additional people at neighboring tables, which were about three feet apart. The time the families overlapped in the restaurant was 50 minutes to 70 minutes. The study found that the air conditioning contributed to the transmission of respiratory droplets to other diners that spread the disease.

We are seeing outbreaks in other states connected to restaurants and bars. For example, one restaurant in Michigan was linked to more than 100 cases. Increasing studies show that COVID-19 virus thrives in enclosed spaces, where people are close together for prolonged periods of time. Dr. Fauci noted that drinking inside bars is the most dangerous action individuals could take at this time. The more an individual interacts with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

In a restaurant or bar setting, the lowest risk option is getting your food via drive-thru, delivery, takeout or curbside pickup. Dining outdoors with reduced capacity and at tables spaced at least six feet apart is slightly riskier, but if managed, should be fine. And of course, the greatest risk is indoor dining with no restrictions.

We need to be cautious as we move forward with reopening our state. Although you may not be in a high risk population, you can easily transmit the virus to someone who is more vulnerable. Young people have been spared from severe COVID-19 illness, but although you might not feel sick, you could be igniting an outbreak in your community by not adhering to social distancing, wearing a mask or other precautions.

Earlier this summer, we saw how a house party during Memorial Weekend in Cape May County led to 14 cases of COVID-19 in college-aged Pennsylvania residents. If we ignore the vital measures that have saved lives throughout the pandemic, the entire state is at risk of backsliding. We've all worked together to reduce the spread. We need to continue this effort to protect our families, our loved ones and our neighbors.

Onto the daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 1,080 hospitalizations with 217 individuals in critical care; 82% of those in critical care are on ventilators. Fortunately, there are no new cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. The total remains at 48 cases in our state.

The Governor review the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54%, Black 18.2%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.6%, other 1.8%. The numbers in our veterans homes remains the same, as do the numbers in our psychiatric hospitals. Overall in New Jersey as of Saturday, June 27th, the percent positivity rate was 2.29%, the North 1.94%, Central New Jersey 2.41%, Southern New Jersey 2.71%. That concludes my daily report. Please continue to be vigilant against the spread of COVID-19. Practice social distancing, wear a face covering, wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds and if you're sick, stay home. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, and get tested. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you, and I appreciate particularly your words of caution and the way you laid out the dining reality. Just to repeat something, and just to ask you or Tina's opinion on something. To repeat for everybody, we haven't said this in a while, we've had two blessed fatalities in total of anyone under 18, and only 54 under the age of 30, and that's out of a total of 13,224 lost lives. And again, 65 and older continues to be the enormous bulk of the lives lost, 79.6% of the lives lost are 65 and older. Reports from around the country, and so you make the point very well that we've made pretty regularly but needs to be repeated. Even if you're asymptomatic, even if you're in great health and the virus doesn't take hold with you, you may well be passing this, right? So that's something we've been hitting hard from day one. But if you look at other states right now, you're also seeing an alarming increase in hospitalizations of young people.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Any observation as to any sense of that? Is that because that's a more likely demographic, for instance, in a crowded bar or crowded restaurant indoors?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Well, the risk for developing severe illness, as Governor, you mentioned, still relates to underlying medical conditions and with every decade of age over 65, there's a much higher risk of severe complications. But again, you know, we do know that those severe complications and deaths have been ascribed to younger individuals. We don't know the circumstances around the younger hospitalizations, but certainly if you're seeing more younger individuals becoming ill, for a variety of reasons, it's just a reminder that anybody is susceptible to, A, getting ill with COVID-19 because there's still community transmission out there. But B, you know, more importantly about the risk for serious illness and death is just a stark reminder that we're not necessarily immune to that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Well said. Thank you for that, Judy, thank you for yours. Pat, good to have you as always. What news do we have from the front?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor, good afternoon. With regards to compliance overnight, in Livingston, a homeowner was cited for having a very large party and gathering and in Bayside, a diner owner was cited for allowing indoor dining. And I know the Governor mentioned early in his remarks about Independence Day weekend and the Fourth of July, and I just want to stress it sometimes can be a tragic weekend across the country and whether that's on our highways or our waterways, we will have enhanced patrols on both our waterways and our highways, so as far as DWI checkpoints, and just with all the Ubers and other means of transportation, it just makes absolutely no sense in this day and age to get behind the wheel while you're impaired. So I just, as my public service announcement, I'll probably stress it again today. Let's get through this Fourth of July weekend without any tragedies. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, amen to that. There's no reason to drive impaired or no reason to be a passenger with someone who is impaired driving. There are so many different ways now that you can avoid that. We'll start over here, Matt. A couple of things. Pat, I don't want to rat out the individual, but you and Judy were on a call a short while ago and that diner operator claimed to be unaware of the executive orders that we had put forward to date, is that accurate?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Yeah, I think, I don't know how that could be the case in this day and age, but he is well aware of it now.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, he now knows. And, secondly, we will be, I've lost Mahen here. Mahen, we'll be together at one o'clock tomorrow, I believe, so we'll go back to our regular schedule. And again, appreciate everyone's forbearance and allowing us to do this at a later hour today so with that, we'll start with you, Nikita.

[Q&A Session](#)

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Good afternoon, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: I have a couple more questions for you on voting. What should voters who haven't received their ballots yet do? If those voters are told that their ballots are in the mail, but they don't arrive by Tuesday, what should they do? Are you concerned that computer glitches may cause some New Jersey voters to be disenfranchised? And considering how late some ballots have been mailed out, is there any chance that you will extend the deadline for a ballot being postmarked beyond 8:00 p.m. on July 7th?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Matt Platkin is with us and I'll turn this over to Matt. I would say on the computer glitches, and again, Nikita, assuming you're not ratting out any protection of privacy, we'd love to know the specific situations, so that's something Mahen or Matt can follow up with you afterward.

I just want to say this unequivocally. We take the sacred right of voting at the center of democracy as seriously as we probably take our public health, about as seriously as we take anything. And the notion of everyone having the confidence that their vote counts is a big, big deal for us. I want to make sure folks out there know that we don't take any of this lightly. Matt's been back and forth extensively with the US Postal Service. We've been going to them with very specific cases when we hear them. So the more specifics, the better. I'll turn it to Matt but as I do this, know there's no consideration at this point, at least, of extending the deadline beyond the Election Day, which again, everybody is July 7th. That's Tuesday. Make sure you vote. We'd love you to vote by mail, but your county, regardless of where you are, has committed to having at least 50% in-person capacity and at least one polling location per community. Matt, please.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Nikita, I think you've already reported today on the -- I assume you're talking about the user interface issue at Motor Vehicles on party registration. The Division of Elections is obviously aware of it. We've addressed that with you and it's something that we are looking to address going forward. It was obviously an unintended consequence of the automatic voter registration law. People were just swiping through too quickly. It's not clear that any of those people would have actually registered for a particular party. They may have just been trying to get to the next screen, so we're working on that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Where do you go if you haven't received your ballot?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: You can go to your clerk, the same way you normally could. And if there are specific counties that you're referencing, just let us know and we'll run it down. Working extensively with the Secretary of State's office and will get more details to make sure the final wave of these ballots that are going out are getting into voters hands and get returned promptly. So we're paying extremely close attention as the Governor said. It's a vital right for people to vote and we want to address any issues as they come up.

Governor Phil Murphy: So again, the specific advice, per your question and per Matt's answer is the best place to go is your county clerk office, and they're responsible for the process. And by the way, a great group of leaders in that respect, up and down the state, across political stripes. Among the best we have, I think, in the country. Thank you. You saw I switched the desk, right? Okay. Brent, how are you?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Hi, why are we seeing hospitalizations rise even a little bit if the rate of transmission dropped? Is there anything, any explanation for that? Two more.

If indoor dining is still an issue, what do you say to parents who are concerned about kids starting summer school or camp on Monday? And is there evidence that shows there's been no community spread at all from people going to the beach? Are people protesting? And if not, is it time? I mean, why are there still outdoor gathering limits if we have that evidence?

Governor Phil Murphy: May I say a couple things and turn it over to you all. Let me, we actually had this very conversation, I was in the back of a car 45 minutes or so ago, and Judy has had extensive conversations with the Hospital Association on this very question. I think what I believe, Judy, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but there's a better be safe than sorry, particularly given how overwhelmed the systems were early in this crisis. But Judy can add to that.

You know, we deliberately said something in my remarks today about indoor dining, which while we've said it, we have not said it perhaps strongly enough. And remember everybody, this is not a life sentence. We fully expect to get there and get there, God willing, as soon as we can. But there's a big difference with indoor dining in restaurant or bar, put aside the congregation concerns we have. You can't eat or drink with a face mask or a face covering, so it's a very different reality. So it's the combination of indoors, sedentary, too often than not close proximity, and lack of ventilation and the one that we don't hit hard enough is, you don't have your mask on. And so in a camp, for instance, you're hopefully if the weather's good, you're outside. But even if you're inside, you've got a face covering on and you're probably moving around, and we just don't see it. I don't want to speak for the health experts, we just don't see it at the same level of concern as indoor dining.

I would just say this: we will continue to raise the outdoor limits. We've already raised them meaningfully. I think we raised them again on this coming Monday to 500, Matt, am I correct with that? So outdoor graduations. I don't think we're going to infinity yet, but assuming that the data continues to lead the experts to conclude that indeed, outdoor activities, beaches, parks, protests have not led to any meaningful community spread, we'll continue to raise that, I'm sure, but Judy will be the one that has to put Holy Water on that decision.

Hospitalizations, Judy, indoor dining versus camp, for instance, or community spread? Any comments.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Let me talk about hospitalizations. There's been a slight tick up and I spoke with the head of the Hospital Association yesterday, and she shared that they're seeing an increase in allergy-induced asthma, but it presents with respiratory insufficiency, difficulty breathing, and because of the experience that the physicians have had with people, what we call desaturating very quickly, deteriorating very quickly, they are being more safe in admitting those patients and taking care of the presenting problem and waiting for the test results. So it's COVID positive and persons under investigation that have led to the uptick. Maybe you could talk about community spread?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: From the epidemiology perspective, we monitor epidemic curves, the disease onset over time. And what we've been monitoring for, since the beginning of this outbreak is just what the curve looks like, and we've been also monitoring how things look at the county level as well. And we have not seen any sort of upticks. Usually you would expect, for example, since Memorial Day weekend when folks started really going out in full force that you wait about 14 days to try to look for upward trends, and we have not seen that, either in our statewide EPI curve or in our county level epidemic curves. But that said, again, just to reiterate the message that we don't want to have any sort of false sense of security that because we're doing so well in terms of our case counts, in terms of a lot of other factors that we can't continue to be mindful. We have the tools right now to be able to contain this caseload that we're seeing right now, just to reinforce it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah. I think that was really well said, Tina. We're not going to start patting ourselves on the back and just literally drop it all. We just can't do that responsibly, particularly given what we see going on elsewhere in the country. So thank you. Sir.

Ian Elliott NJTV News: Governor, just a couple questions from NJTV News viewers. They're looking for some for July 4th holiday guidance. Should people just stay home or limit gatherings at their homes to a few people over the weekend?

Has specific guidance been issued for bowling alleys and pool halls? And finally, who's going to be monitoring the casinos for compliance? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Bear with me. Personal advice on July 4th, but I'll take the experts on the other side of me here. Use your head. Better outside than inside. You know, getting a whole lot of people indoors concerns me, I suspect it concerns the experts, so avoid that. So if you don't have the option of being outside, I think you've got a limit. And remember, we haven't talked about bubbles in a while, we all got into our own bubbles with our own loved ones and families, and then we've started now to cross into other people's bubbles. So the other thing I would say, particularly if you're inside, think through, you know, is this a somebody you've seen and gradually gotten reintroduced to, or is it a first time in a while? But celebrate our nation's independence. For all of our challenges, we remain the greatest nation on Earth, and God knows we've got a lot of challenges at the moment. But do it responsibly.

Bowling alleys are, I think you've got them or they're coming tomorrow, so -- can we come back to you on that? I thought it was out there. And nothing personal to pool, I focus more on bowling than pool, but we'll come back to you on that.

Casinos, the good thing about casinos, first of all the entities themselves will self-monitor. There's an enormous amount of protocols being put in place, including social distancing, sanitization, hygienic barriers, etc., so there's a significant amount of that. But the great thing about casinos, they're already the most closely monitored entities in our state, if not our country. So the operators have been working really well with the unions, and that's a good thing. But there's an enormous amount of surveillance. And again, we have got to say this unequivocally, people have to have face coverings indoors. You just have to have them. You won't be let in and if you don't have it on when you're in, you're going to be asked to leave. Anything you want to add to July 4th rules of the road, Judy? You're going to be outside or inside.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're outside.

Governor Phil Murphy: Outside, Judy is going to be outside. That's a more important answer than any answer I could give you. Thank you. Sir, you're good? Anything for you? You're good? Okay, no problem. Dustin. How are you? Good afternoon.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Afternoon. Does the Health Department have anyone station at Newark or Teterboro airports to advise incoming passengers about quarantine rules, which states are subject to quarantine, and any other relevant information?

On the state park language in the budget that you signed yesterday, doesn't that open the door to privatization and development at the dozens of state parks? And why did you decide to approve that language despite the protests of lawmakers and environmental activists, where you've taken executive action to ensure that projects can monetize open spaces, such as the golf course expansion at Liberty State Park, don't go forward?

How prepared do you think hospitals are in terms of PPE, testing, medication and staffing if there's a resurgence before the fall, brought on by the experience of other states?

And then a question from the press of Atlantic City, there are reports that protesters are planning to shut down the Expressway on Saturday, and there's a counter-protest by the pagans. How is the state preparing for this on the first weekend casinos are open?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Dustin, before Matt, you leave, I missed -- the question is, if you land at Newark, Liberty or Teterboro, what was the question?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: If there's any personnel who are staffed there or stationed there to advise incoming passengers about quarantine rules and which states are --

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't know, Judy, that you've got people there but the Port Authority obviously is read into this and is cooperating.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, we have alerts and we're looking at having forms filled out by individuals that are traveling. That's all in the works right now.

Governor Phil Murphy: But by the way, folks are for the most part taking this seriously, so we don't have a whole lot of evidence that there's a lot of people getting on the plane from hotspots right now. It's something obviously, Dustin, we're looking at. And we did it, as you know, we did it very -- we made the decision and we went live with it to make sure people heard it from us, but a little of this is still catching up in terms of signage, etc.

Listen, I want to say this unequivocally, Liberty State Park, like any other state park, is a treasure in our state and it belongs to every family, period. That language was inserted into the budget by the Legislature and was part of the overall budget agreement. And by the way, these things, even in a normal, peaceful time, get done very quickly and this was even more so, given the extraordinary moment in our history that we're in. It doesn't specify any particular location and it is permissive, it does not bind the administration to any action, period. And I will just say, unequivocally, my administration did not and does not intend to use this language to pursue a solicitation for Liberty State Park. That is that. I want to make sure I was clear on that.

Hospital preparedness, we've spent a lot of time on this lately. I know Judy and Pat, George Helmi and others are coming up with the protocols of what we expect their preparedness to be, both hospitals as well as long-term care facilities. I'll leave it to them to talk about that, and I will leave it to Pat to talk about Atlantic City. This is something that we are aware of on both sides of that potential demonstration. So do you want to start with preparedness, Judy, and then Pat, you could add anything to the resiliency and if you wouldn't mind, talking about Atlantic City, Fourth of July?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Right now, every day at 10:00 a.m. we review our hospital preparedness. We look at bed capacity, both ICU, what's available in ICU, what's available for med surge, that's reported every 24 hours from 10:00 p.m. the night before. We look at their testing, capacity and turnaround time of tests. We look at their inventory of drugs, particularly Remdesivir, what we not only have at the hospitals but what we have in the state stockpile. We look at their PPE, and we know both at the hospital and at the long-term care facility, their stockpile of PPE, not only what they're using now, but what we will need in the future.

Governor Phil Murphy: Including the discussion I know you all are having, how many months' worth of supplies, PPE supplies, for instance, is a sufficient amount of resiliency?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're working on that now.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, and that's something that there's a team on that as we speak. Pat, anything you want to add to that? And/or to Dustin's question about Atlantic City on Saturday?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Sure, the only thing I'll add with regard to the hospitals and PPE is that we discussed it at yesterday morning's meeting, is our very first resource requests for PPE for hospitals from FEMA still has not been completely met, so our logistics folks at OEM continue to receive, until that's ultimately filled. So we're confident from both that resource request from FEMA and HHS, coupled with our efforts on our own procurement chains and processes that we will be prepared, I should say, for the fall should it come back.

With regard to Atlantic City, I met with our Operations Intelligence Commander and Investigations Branch Commander this week. We are very much aware of that. We will be prepared. We've worked with county and local, you know, the municipalities with regard to what the magnitude of that's going to be, and we will be certainly prepared to assist to make sure that it is a peaceful protest and that the Atlantic City Expressway does not get shut down. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thanks, Pat. I want to say, I'm not saying this to take a gratuitous shot at the long-term care operators but I do want to repeat something. When you're having a conversation, Judy, with the Hospital Association, and it's on PPE, ventilators, testing, surge, medical, healthcare workers, medicines, even in the most desperate moments, that was a very constructive, open lines of communication and a high degree of cooperation across the board, and hats off to you for putting Shereef Elnahal from University Hospital in the Northern part of the state, and Central, Amy Mansue in Central, and Kevin O'Dowd in the south. They were sort of the proxies for the regions. And listen, how could you say you batted 1,000, any of us, when this was raging?

And this is to the point on resiliency. The long-term care operators did not perform at that level. The performance was extremely uneven. I got this question yesterday, again, did you all actually put COVID-positive residents back in the general community? And the answer is unequivocally, Judy put out black and white directives and sadly, we're not sure that they were always followed by all these operators. So I will now look to the future and say as it relates to resiliency and PPE and having the supplies and the preparedness, we'd better see a heck of a lot better performance out of that community. The report that was done by the outside folks is going to help us in that respect, and I applaud your leadership for that. I wanted to get that off my chest. The next chapter had better be, with long-term care, a far better and constructive and productive chapter than the ones we've gone through.

I'm going to mask up here as I say this. Again, thank you, Judy and Tina, Pat, Jared, Matt, Mahen and the team. We'll be back unless you hear otherwise at one o'clock tomorrow, Mahen. Again, I want to say what I say every day and that is thank you, folks. Overwhelmingly, whether you're an individual, a small business, a restaurant, a bar, a mayor who's monitoring your beach traffic, folks going to state parks, folks who are

protesting, you've been peaceful, you've been responsible. We'd like to see more of these, Judy, is that fair to say? We want to see more face coverings. But overwhelmingly, you've been fabulous. We just need to keep it up. We cannot let our guard down. If you look at other places in the country, in Arizona, California, particularly in that Imperial County in the south rural California that abuts Arizona, Texas, Florida, we pray for them. We wish them nothing but a speedy resolution but we can't let that happen to us. We can't go through hell again.

We'll get a chance to talk tomorrow about the Fourth of July and to wish everyone a fabulous, and to Pat's point, safe Independence Day weekend. But just allow me to underscore what Pat has already said. Whether it's a protest in Atlantic City, whether it's having fun with your friends, whether it's that backyard cookout, whatever it is, do it not just peacefully but safely, as we celebrate our nation's independence and birthday. With that, God bless you all and thank you.

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