

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: April 11th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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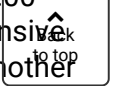
Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everybody. Not exactly the Easter weekend that Irving Berlin, Fred Astaire, and Judy Garland envisioned in Easter Parade in 1948, but here we are on Easter Saturday. 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. Judy. To her right, State Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Dr. Tan, again, thank you for being with us. And another guy who does not need any introduction, the guy to my left, Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. I also want to acknowledge Jared Maples, the Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Deputy Counsel Parimal Garg who's with us, as well as other colleagues. Thank you all for joining us.

I got Pat's permission and blessings on flying NJ Transit Police colors today, so I want to give Chief Chris Trucillo and his men and women a big shout out for all the great work they do, and I promise you I'm still loyal, as you know, Pat, to the State Police and I'll find my State Police garb I'm sure sooner than later again.

Let's get to the numbers as we have been doing up front of late. Since we met yesterday, we have been notified that 3,599 more residents have tested, have received positive test results and the statewide total now rests at 58,151. Again 3,599 positive tests since yesterday, and a total so far of 58,151. Judy will correct me here if I get this wrong, according to our online dashboard accessible through [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov), as of 10:00 p.m. last night 7,618 residents were reported hospitalized, of whom 1,746 were listed in critical or intensive care, and 1,650 ventilators were in use. Again, for the 24-hour period ending at 10:00 p.m. last night, another 682 residents were discharged.



As we noted yesterday, the dashboard, again covid19.nj.gov, the dashboard pulls data as it is reported each night by hospitals to the New Jersey Hospital Association. There may be overnight changes or late reports that are not yet reflective in that data. It is just a snapshot in time. And as we know, this is a very, very fluid situation. I'd like to note however, as we did yesterday, that while the numbers of our fellow residents in the hospital in critical or intensive care and on respirators is daunting, there are hundreds of people, literally, each day leaving the hospital. People who have beaten, to one degree or another, including those who are going to so-called step-down facilities, or some who are going straight home. We've got a lot of those as well. Those are folks who have gotten to a much better place and we have to keep remembering that. This should give us hope, especially in the season when our spiritual lives are filled with a sense of renewal.

Sadly, however, we continue to lose members of our tremendous New Jersey family to COVID-19 related complications. Over the past 24 hours, that number was 251 blessed souls and lives lost. We have now lost a total of 2,183 members, extraordinary members of our extraordinary New Jersey family. For every single one of them, we stand in solidarity and prayer in mourning their loss. Our flags remain at half-staff in their honor and in their memory. Here are just a few, and I wish we could say something about each of the 251 lives we lost overnight and the 2,183 lives we have lost from the beginning of this crisis. But here are a few of their stories.

Viola Richardson. There she is. She served the people of Jersey City for 12 years as a member of city council, first as Council Member of Ward F and then as Council Member at large. But before that, she was a Jersey City police officer. Tough and outspoken, a fighter for her community and her city, her life defined the meaning of the words public service. Jersey City has paid a big price in this. I was back and forth on text this morning with Mayor Fulop. Our hearts and prayers go out to him, other Members of the Council and the extraordinary residents of our great Jersey City.

Another guy, John McCarthy of my town, Middletown, was an army veteran and a small business owner and leader along our Bayshore. He was a longtime member of the Hazlet Business Owners Association, the Northern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce, and the Bayshore Senior Center in Keansburg. He also coached youth baseball. We lost him yesterday. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Donna and their family, God rest his soul. That's a great shot with a grandchild there of John.

And one more today. Here's Martin, known as Marty Fox, from Millburn. He was two months shy of his 96th birthday, but what a life he packed into his years. Amherst College, Harvard Law and a US Army Lieutenant in the Second World War, a passionate crusader for social justice. During the long hot summer of 1963, he went to Florida to represent, pro bono, members of the St. Augustine Civil Rights Movement. He was appointed to the New Jersey State Board of Education by both Governor's Richard Dick Hughes and William Cahill. In 1978, he accompanied his friend, Governor Brendan Byrne, on a trip to Israel. He never slowed down. To his wife Muriel and his daughter Sarah, with whom I had the honor of speaking earlier, and Rachel and their families, we thank Marty for his lifetime of service. God rest his soul, he will not be forgotten.

Now, this is not new today. I mentioned this yesterday, but we owe you to see a picture, to put a name with a face. Here is a picture of Nelson Perdomo. God rest his soul. I mentioned, as I said, him yesterday, I wanted us to pay a proper tribute to Nelson. He was a 19-year veteran corrections officer. Our prayers are with his wife Fanny, whom I spoke yesterday, and their kids, Emma, Maya and Tito. God bless them all and God bless his memory.

Tremendous lives, tremendous people, tremendous families, tremendous holes in our broad and diverse New Jersey family. This is a toll in real lives that the virus is taking on our state. It is for them and for every family that we are committed to defeating this invisible enemy. We must do it together. It's not just up to some of us to continue our social distancing. It's up to all of us. I know hearing the daily numbers can be scary. I know there's continued anxiety as we take every step forward, but we cannot let up.

Look at where our work is leading us. We've shown you this map before. Boy, that's really tough on our monitor. It looks much better up there. This is a map that not that many days ago, this is the 21 counties in New Jersey and it measures the virus in terms of each county in terms of how many days it's taking to double. It wasn't that many days ago that we had red, which was it was doubling within a couple of days, and orange. Now, as you can see, we have no red. We have not had red for a while. We've got three, as I can see

that with my weak eyes, I believe three southern counties are in orange, a whole bunch are in yellow and increasingly, including my own county, you've got counties that are doubling in, at least if not more, than seven days or more. That is a very good early sign that we are beginning to beat this virus back.

We're slowing the rate by which new cases are doubling, which is an important metric. Judy and Christina will I think back me up on this. Again, the lighter each county gets on this map, the more we're flattening that curve. We remain confident that the course we are on is the right one, and that if we all continue with what we need to do, keeping our social distances, wearing a face covering when we're out, which we all do, we only take off for the purposes of this press conference and otherwise staying home, we will win this war.

Remember that wars are not won overnight or by set dates. They're won through perseverance and hard work. And together, we are doing that hard work. Again, remember I keep coming back to Churchill, in many respects, never have so few done so much for so many. Well, it turns out it's both fronts, both ways right now in this war. We have two fronts. One for the many, and one for the few. The one for the many is all 9 million of us staying home, keeping our distances, wearing masks and basically, keeping that social distance mantra as we pound this curve into the ground. Remember the positive tests I mentioned earlier, they're up. The curve is flattening, but they're still going up. We're not in the end zone, folks. We cannot spike any footballs. We're not even first and goal. But if we keep all 9 million of us pounding on that curve downward, you'll have fewer infections, fewer hospitalizations, fewer intensive care unit hospitalizations, fewer needs for ventilators and please God, fewer fatalities. That's what the many of us over here could do.

The few, our heroic health care workers, first responders, the folks who are at the frontline of this war, working on behalf of all of us, they are showing that heroism every day. We have to let them continue to build out the capacity in our healthcare system, such that we've got enough beds, ventilators, medicine, healthcare workers, by the way, we'll come back to that in a minute. Intensive Care beds, personal protective equipment, all that contributes to that healthcare capacity over here, such that as we pound the curve down over here, the 9 million of us, the heroes over here, that we can get lines that cross in a reasonable level, at a reasonable time. Such that the folks who do get infected and require hospitalization and require intensive healthcare oversight, that we've got a system that has the capacity to manage those persons. We are literally at the edge on all of what I've just described. Our job must continue to be, and I know it's hard, the weather's warmer. Tomorrow's Easter.

Please God, stay the course. Stay with us. Keep pounding the curve down. Let's get that map to be all whatever that color is, is a grey? I think it looks grey. I'll say it's light gray. Let's get a light gray state and even then some. Then we can to ourselves, you know what? We are on the road to victory. And by the way, unequivocally, if we all do our part and I know we will, because we're New Jersey and nobody can touch us, we will beat this virus. We'll come through this stronger as one New Jersey family, stronger than ever before.

Okay, so as it pertains to our continued efforts, today I'm announcing another step building upon the step we took on Thursday to help slow the further transmission of coronavirus. Today I am signing an Executive Order directing NJ Transit and all private carriers to cut the capacity on all trains, buses, light rail vehicles and paratransit vehicles to 50% of their maximum. The Order further requires NJ Transit and the private carriers to supply their workers with gloves and face coverings. The order also requires all riders to wear a face covering when traveling either on NJ Transit or with a private carrier, whether it be by bus, train, light rail or paratransit vehicle unless they cannot, by the way, for medical reasons.

Right now, for many of our essential workers, public transit is how they get to work and we need to protect them during that trip. NJ Transit will put out guidance specifically on this Executive Order, so that we have a rational execution of this order. There's going to be a fair amount of discretion left up, Parimal, to our drivers.

Additionally, part of the same Executive Order, I'm expanding the requirement to wear a face covering to all customers heading into one of the restaurants and bars that remain in operation as they get their takeout orders. If you are not walking into an establishment, if you're doing it say curbside or if your order is being delivered to you, a face covering will not be required. We will require that restaurants and bars give face coverings and gloves to all their food service personnel. All of this is effective, I believe, Monday evening at 8:00 p.m. Thank you for that.

It bears repeating and Judy would get mad at me and I do not want her mad at me, and Christina would do the same, I believe. A face covering does not mean a medical grade mask. We need to keep those for our frontline public health and safety responders. They remain, I might add, in short supply. There are any number of ways you could cover your mouth and nose with a bandana or a homemade fabric covering. I know for some of you, you may view this as just another inconvenience, remembering to bring your face covering to the supermarket, or now to pick up your takeout order may be a hassle. But you know what would be really inconvenient? Is if you ended up in the hospital with COVID-19 or you inadvertently infected a family member, maybe of an older generation, with the virus unwittingly. If you did that, just because you didn't take to heart the need for us to take every precaution and for all of us to keep working together.

We accept this is inconvenient. We accept the level of anxiety. We accept we all want to be outside doing as we would normally do at this time of the year. Here's the problem. If we do any or all of the above, we blow our chances of flattening this curve. You probably put yourself or your family members personally at risk and I can promise you we put our health system at risk. We just can't do that. So folks, again, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, this will have been worth it. I know we're going through hell and back, but we will get through this and we'll get through this together.

And speaking of working together, we continue to benefit from the generosity of countless businesses and individuals who are donating much-needed personal protective equipment and other supplies for our frontline workers. I must give a huge shout out to the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation, which has stepped forward and delivered 150,000 surgical masks and nearly 198,095 masks. These are sorely needed for our healthcare professionals and first responders, so Joe and Clara Tsai and their team at the Tsai Foundation, we cannot thank you enough. I had the honor of speaking with them, I think it was a week ago today.

I was back and forth on a text with Joe this morning. They are each extraordinary individuals. They've got Jersey roots in their lives. They are, and I can say this because it's public knowledge, a couple years ago, they gave the largest gift ever to the Lawrenceville School, which is not too far from where we're sitting right now. Joe is a co-founder of Alibaba. He is the owner of the Brooklyn Nets. And by the way, Pat, before you ask, as part of the deal, there was no discussion of returning the Nets to New Jersey, in case you're wondering.

Clara herself is a leader of the Reform Alliance. She is a graduate of Stanford, as is Joe I believe, and they have given mightily to Stanford and worked with Stanford on a whole range of initiatives, University of Washington, etc. To Joe and Clara if you're watching from La Jolla, from the bottom of our hearts, we say thank you.

I also want to give a big thank you to Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals, which is sending a shipment of 100 gallons of hand sanitizer our way. This, too, is greatly appreciated. To our friends at Mallinckrodt, we say thank you. In the same vein, we are grateful to Precious Cosmetics for their donation of 100 bottles of hand sanitizer as well. Thank you for Precious Cosmetics. And if anyone out there has more PPE or other supplies to donate, let us know. Please reach us at [covid19.nj.gov/PPEdonations](https://covid19.nj.gov/PPEdonations).

Also this is a big one, yesterday a total of 78 ambulances and EMS squads from states across the country, and with them carrying 139 EMTs and 56 paramedics came to assist our local teams, and not a moment too soon. 53 teams were basic life support and 25 were advanced life support. These folks and these ambulances came from places including California, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland, among other states. Last night, they were already on the streets across our state, including in Newark, New Jersey City, Paterson, East Orange, Irvington and New Brunswick. They know how hard our EMS squads are working and how overloaded many are, and they came in mutual aid and support. This is a true brotherhood and sisterhood and we've already lost, as you know, four precious and tremendous EMTs to COVID-19.

Yesterday showed, among other things, that we all have each other's backs. To those who have come from afar to help us, we will return the favor in your time of need. We always have and I will say again, we always will. We planned for this. This was not a coincidence or an accident. We planned for this weeks ago and I give a lot of credit to the folks on either side of me here. We knew we would have EMS capacity, EMT and ambulance capacity challenges, so we planned for this. We worked with FEMA and the National Ambulance Contracts. I want to give a particular shout out here to the New Jersey EMS Taskforce headed by Mike

Bascom. To that, to the squad in Jersey, to my colleagues, to our friends at FEMA and the administration, and most importantly to the folks who have come from afar to help us in our hour of need, we thank you from the bottom of my hearts and we will never forget.

From across the country and truly around the world, we are moved by the generosity of so many. We also continue to be overwhelmed by thousands of people who have contacted us, willing to step up and volunteer in our fight in any way. I believe Judy said over 18,000 folks have raised their hands. Judy is going to go through exactly, some of you have asked what are we doing with those folks who raised their hands? Judy's going to give you a little bit of color on exactly what's going on.

We continue to have direct and essential needs for healthcare volunteers to assist, in particular at our field medical stations. Specifically, we continue to need individuals with experience, Judy, am I right? Is either a chief nursing officer or a chief medical officer, to help run these sites, as well as for physicians and respiratory therapists. Judy is also going to go through an update on status, I think, on the USNS Comfort, which by the way is captained by a Jersey guy, graduate of Red Bank Catholic, more on him in one of our future gatherings. I urge you, if you had these skill sets that I just mentioned, in particular Chief Nursing Officer or Chief Medical Officer, please reach out to us at this website, [covid19.nj.gov/volunteer](https://covid19.nj.gov/volunteer).

Switching gears just for a minute, I'm happy to say that the National Governors Association is going to make an explicit ask on behalf of all states for \$500 billion in direct state aid that would come directly to states that we in turn can then use to back and fill the extraordinary efforts that at which we're on the front line of attack. Everything from helping unemployed folks to small businesses to clearly caring for those in our healthcare system. I've said this now on many occasions, we are desperately in need of direct cash federal assistance directly to states. I'm very happy that the NGA is going to make that explicit at a number which we think is, at a minimum, what is required around the country, and New Jersey needs its share of that.

I also want to repeat, I think we were the first state to raise our hand. I know I'm joined in this by Governor Cuomo and others, Speaker Pelosi. Please God, folks in Washington if you're watching, can you lift the cap on the SALT deduction? I hope permanently, but can you at least lift it for some period of time? This was a crushing blow to our homeowners and property taxpayers in New Jersey, and we need that lifted. Please, help us in that regard.

Let me switch gears to testing. Tomorrow, Easter Sunday, our FEMA partner testing sites at Bergen Community College and the PNC Bank Art Center will both be closed. Next week's schedule for each site will be posted on our information hub at [covid19.nj.gov/testing](https://covid19.nj.gov/testing). On that page, you can also find information on the 18 other public testing sites being run in counties across the state. But there are quite literally, as I've said, dozens more testing sites that are available to you if your primary care practitioner determines you meet the requirements for testing. I think I said this as of yesterday or Thursday, that number is at least at 57 around the state.

Before I hand the briefing over to Judy, I'd like to keep highlighting some of the good things happening in our state. I want to give a shout out to all the essential workers out there, especially those who remain on call this holiday weekend. A special shout out to the childcare workers who are making sure the kids of our essential workers are being properly looked after. It does indeed take a village; in this case, an entire village.

As my late dad used to remind me of that famous quotation, I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, as we sadly commemorate the loss of life in this state, it is important for us to remember that in other respects, the natural course of human history goes on. For the deaths that we mourn together, we also acknowledge and celebrate the births among us. I want to give a shout out to our good friends David and Laura Pascrell, who announced the birth yesterday of their new daughter Ayla. I believe Ayla Marie, and she joins their son, John. Bless those who are being born into our state at this time, when we mourn the loss of life.

To each and every one of you, to all of you, you keep sending us great stories on social media, by using the hashtag #NJThanksYou and I urge you to keep on doing it. Let me give you a couple before we turn over to Judy. Here's a picture of Mount Claire's David Placek. David is a landlord with a dozen tenants and he stepped forward to give every one of them a rent holiday through June. Three months rent free. Now certainly not

every landlord is in a position to do the same. We get that. But David exemplifies the spirit we need to see right now, of people stepping up to make sure others can come out of this emergency stronger, and so we all come out of this stronger. Hats off, David.

Just this morning, the man to my left, Colonel Pat Callahan, went over to Warren Hills High School near his home, I might add, and where his own kids went, were students and faculty members from there and nearby I believe Mount Olive High as well, assembled 15,000 face shields that will be donated to our healthcare workers. These two schools are often rivals on the playing field and in the gym. But today, they showed how we're all coming together to help others.

I knew the tip of the iceberg on that all coming together was when I saw Jets fans on the streets of New York applauding a New England Patriots truck bringing face masks, I knew that we had gone to a different place as a country and as a region.

This is the spirit of community that is evident all across our state. Even in the face of anxiety and uncertainty, we're coming together because we know that when we do, we will get ourselves through this as one. I think that's a good way to think of this Easter weekend too. It's the way I will be celebrating Easter tomorrow with my own family.

Yesterday was Good Friday. But the first Good Friday, by the way, wasn't very good. It was filled with pain, doubt, and fear. But from that day came our faith in rebirth, for those who celebrate Easter. Our faith in rebirth, in the resurrection of life, of healing, of resilience, and of hope and happiness, because our anxiety and fear and sadness may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning. We're going to get to that better morning. We're going to get there together.

But to get to it, we have to keep doing everything we can over here to flatten the curve and get out ahead of this virus and stay ahead of it, so the heroes over here can treat the sick and get as many of them as possible back on their feet.

Tomorrow is especially a day and I plead with you in particular, just as the first night of Passover was, tomorrow, Easter Sunday, is a day when we cannot let up our social distancing, as much as we would love to. We can't. Live stream an online service, or read the Scripture at home with your family via FaceTime, or Zoom, or maybe just over the phone. Take a moment to speak with your kids as to the importance of our having to be apart for the days ahead, so we can get back together, not just for next year's Easter and Passover, but for the many years and decades to come.

Stay safe, stay healthy, keep your faith, we are going to win this together. With that, please help me welcome the Commissioner of the Department of Health, a woman who needs no introduction, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. As predicted, we expect the next two to three weeks to be especially stressful and difficult for our hospitals and our long-term care facilities. As the Governor shared, there's 7,618 hospitalizations right now, or as of 10:30 last evening, in our hospitals with COVID-19 positive patients and those persons under investigation. Additionally, 1,746 of those individuals are in critical care beds, and 1,650 of those individuals are on ventilators.

Today, I'd like to provide you with an update of our tiered system of expanding that capacity that allows our hospitals to care for the most critically ill patients, while care is provided for others in alternative settings, based on their level of need. First and foremost, all of these initiatives are dependent on a reliable workforce. 18,300 volunteers have registered on the NJ COVID-19 information hub as of April 7. Contact information for 1,400 nurses has been sent to facilities for staffing as of April 10th. 330 RNs and LPNs, their information has been sent to facilities run by the Division of Military and Veterans Affairs. 500 RNs have been sent to hospitals in the central region, and 383 nurses, their information has been sent to the alternate care sites for follow up.

We're taking a tiered approach to bed capacity. Tier 1 and 2 are units and hospitals for the most critically ill and those graduating out of critical care, but still requiring an intensive level of care. Tier 3 is for patients who require medical surgical interventions and are appropriate for a hospital stay. These patients will go to the alternative care sites. We're calling them the bricks-and-mortar care sites of closed hospitals that we're standing up to receive these patients. That will be in Woodbury, East Orange and Barnard Hospital.

Tier 4 is for patients who need vigilance for one to five days, or what we call lower acuity medical care. They will receive care in the three field medical sites set up by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Jersey State Police. Currently, there's 20 patients at the Meadowlands Convention Center field medical site in Secaucus, which has a capacity for 250. We expect by evening to be caring for 50 patients in that site. The Edison Exposition Center has been set up as a field medical site, and they will have a soft opening today. It has a capacity of 500 and we expect about 20 individuals in that site by evening. The Atlantic City Convention Center will be set up and will have a capacity of 250 beds.

Tier 5 is actually convalescent care. That's care that can be rendered safely in hotels for healthcare workers to maybe crash and get some rest, or it will be healthcare workers who have tested positive but are asymptomatic and need to isolate and cannot do safely at their own homes.

Finally, Tier 6 are dormitories, like at Rutgers University, and will accommodate asymptomatic individuals who may not have a place to go, perhaps the homeless, or other vulnerable populations, or need to quarantine for up to 14 days. Additionally, as the Governor shared, we've just gotten word that the USNS Comfort will be accepting admissions from our hospitals in New Jersey, for mid-acuity medical surgical patients. We thank them and this is really excellent news, particularly for those hospitals in the northern part of the state.

As I've shared in the past, our nursing homes continue to be a significant focus. Today, the department will be sending the following guidance out. COVID capable facilities, they are those that can care for residents while implementing all of the infection control protocols including, but not limited to, cohorting and sufficient staff to do so. These facilities can admit new patients or readmit residents back.

COVID struggling facilities, these are facilities that are not able to cohort due to, but not limited to, the inability to implement infection control protocols or physical plant constraints. These facilities will not be allowed to admit any residents or readmissions.

And COVID negative facilities, those few facilities that have no negative patients at this point in time, they can admit patients unless they cannot implement infection control protocols. Any facility that cannot implement infection control protocols cannot admit or readmit into their facilities. These facilities should admit residents or readmissions, again, only if they can meet all of the infection control protocols.

As I said the other day, we are working with long-term care facilities that will allocate 100 to 200 beds in the northern and central part of the state so that hospitals can safely transfer their nursing home facility patients into those facilities, when they cannot be admitted to COVID facilities that are struggling to maintain infection control protocols and need a place to convalesce.

Changing gears, as the Governor says, at our four state psychiatric hospitals, there have been a total of 160 staff and a total of 80 patients that have tested positive for COVID-19. There have been five deaths among residents that have tested positive. We are working with those hospitals to conduct surveillance and implement infection control protocols to reduce exposure.

Today we are reporting 3,599 new cases for a total of 58,151 cases in the state. Sadly, 251 new deaths have been reported to the department; 148 are male, 103 are female. They range in age from 23 to 100 years of age. Underlying medical conditions are evident in 97 of these individuals, 15 of these new deaths were residents of long-term care facilities. There are 305 long-term care facilities right now in the state that are reporting at least one COVID-19 case.

There are now 2,183 fatalities in our state. The underlying conditions that we know for 1,083 of them are 29% cardiovascular disease, 17% diabetes mellitus, 15% other chronic diseases, 10% chronic lung disease, asthma, emphysema, COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, 7% chronic renal disease, 7% neurologic or neurodevelopmental disabilities, 6% cancer, 6% other, 3% none. The racial breakdown is known for approximately 1,350 of these cases, and they are 704 or 52% White, 298 or 22% are African American, 237 or 17% are Hispanic, 79 or 6% are Asian, 38 or 3% are classified as other. Families of all these individuals are in our thoughts and prayers.

Thank you again for staying home and following social distancing guidelines. We know this is especially tough during religious holidays like tomorrow when we normally are coming together. While difficult, it is vital that we continue this effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. As we observe Passover this week and celebrate

Easter tomorrow, we joined together to wish everyone happy holidays, stay home, stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Judy for that and for all. A couple of things, if I may. Top five counties, a little bit of a shift in terms of total number of positive cases. Bergen continues to be one, Essex two, Hudson three, Union four, but now as I mentioned yesterday, Middlesex and Passaic were sort of in the same neighborhood. Middlesex is now slightly ahead with more positive cases than Passaic. Those are the top six counties.

I meant to mention schedule, and Dan Bryan will correct me if I'm wrong. Tomorrow we will give you any overnight developments as it relates to the blessed lives we may lose, as well as positive test cases. We'll do that by paper or electronically and we will not be together tomorrow unless, and I say, Judy, Pat, and I will reserve the right if there's something meaningful or material that comes in overnight, to come back and maybe shift that. But at the moment, assume it's going to be on paper. And then on Monday, we have been notified of a video call with the White House. We would normally be at 1:00, we're going to be at 2:00 p.m. on Monday. Thank you for that.

Just looking at the positive tests, Judy, seven days in a row of 10% or less growth in those from day to day, so that's seven days in a row. The good news is, that means the curve is flattening and that's what we need to see. The challenging news is it's still going up. I was going to ask you, positivity. Did you mention positivity?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I can right now. 111,410 tests have been performed in the state; 49,368 are positive, for a percent positivity of 44.3%.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Got it. And that's been about that neighborhood for now a week or so, right? Racial breakdown, again, it's imperfect because we have a window into, I think, just over half of the – I have this, actually. Yeah, over half, 1,356 as far as I can tell, out of the 2,183 lives that are lost and obviously we will endeavor to get you, and that includes underlying conditions, etc. But as we have been previewing this week, the African American numbers are running about 50% higher than the representation in the general population. That is clearly a concern. It's not unique to New Jersey. In fact, we've seen some places around the country with multiples in terms of the percentage of lives lost, relative to the representation in the overall society. The Latino number looks about at what the representation is in the broader statewide community. I say that, again, we want to get more color on that. Again, if you've ever looked at census data, the Latino number, you need to sort of do a cross-racial view, and the number at about 17.5% is approximately in line with the representation in the state.

I only say that again, other than to remind folks we care about all this data and all this information, including that piece of information. But that is not like we're seeing elsewhere, and we have to get to the bottom of that. For instance, in New York City, the number relative to the representation of the Hispanic community in New York, the number of fatalities, perhaps cases I assume as well, is a margin above the representation of the overall community. More on that as we get to it.

By the way, you may have said this, long-term care, I know you said this, Judy, continues to be a particular area of focus and concern, and may be one of the hardest nuts we have to break in this crisis. We discussed earlier on the phone, those ambulances, for a whole lot of reasons, including for the movement of long-term care patients around couldn't have come a moment too soon. That's another reason why we are all very gratified that we planned for this weeks ago and we got it right, in this case, in terms of those ambulances. If I could turn to you, Pat, with any overnight compliance updates and any other matters of note and again, it's great to have you with us.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Yes, sir. Thank you Governor. As far as the overnight there was a subject arrested on a motor vehicle stop for possession of a controlled dangerous substance and paraphernalia in Stanhope. The Sussex County prosecutor added the additional charge for the violation of the Executive Order. In Raritan, a business owner was cited for having an open vape shop. She was cited for having a non-essential business open. Newark Police Department issued 25 Executive Order summonses and closed to businesses. In Pennsauken, an individual was cited for maintaining an open non-essential business, which was a barber shop. In Egg Harbor, a subject was being processed on weapons, threats and

narcotics charges. He stated he was COVID positive, refused to submit his fingerprints and spat on the floor and in the direction of the police officers. In Elizabeth, a subject refused to leave a closed park and was cited for the EO violation. Another subject in Elizabeth was cited for loitering.

And just to echo your remarks, Governor on the ambulance services that came, not only to assist with the backlog of 911 calls across our state, our overburdened EMS systems, they couldn't have come at a better time and certainly for the emergency hospital decompression that we've been talking about so often.

Just lastly, I just want to highlight the first call I had with Commissioner Persichilli was on January 23 with regard to this outbreak. Probably not a day has gone by that we have not been on the phone, text or in a meeting. But up to and including yesterday, I just wanted to assure not only the 9 million residents in the state of New Jersey, but that every patient under any type of care, that there is no greater advocate for you than Commissioner Persichilli. Her passion and compassion is second to none. She didn't pay me to say this. It is just a complete honor to work shoulder to shoulder with her and she is nothing short of the best. Thanks, Commissioner.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen. I did not, I'm a witness, I did not see any exchange of dollars going one way or the other. But I would echo that, Judy, you're an extraordinary leader. Again, I want to remind everybody, a nurse in her own right and the former Chief Executive of a hospital in her own right. To you and Dr. Tan and your extraordinary team, and by the way, I'd said the same thing about you, Pat. We aren't where we are today, remotely where we are today without your leadership as well. Again, we're not in the end zone yet. We still have a lot a lot of miles ahead of us, a lot of road to travel, and a lot of decisions to make, but I could couldn't be more proud of the leadership that you all have shown. To each of you and to the others out there fighting every day, thank you.

We're going to start over here. We have, for those of you watching at home, we have a lighter crowd so the length of our session today may be less than the normal three-act opera, but we'll see. I say that with Brett about to ask a litany of questions, so we'll have an early sense as to how long we're here together. Brett, Good afternoon.

**Reporter:** Good afternoon. Pennsylvania and New York City announced they're closing schools. I think Cuomo said something about how this would be a regional decision, so are we expecting anything coming on that? Newark is asking essential businesses to close once a week. Would you do that statewide? Are you looking at a rental freeze at all? A lot of people keep asking us that. Are you looking to ban leaf blowers, because people are saying that could hurt respiratory illnesses, people with respiratory problems.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Leaf blowers?

**Reporter:** Leaf blowers, yes. Sorry. There are also a number of bills up Monday. One includes high school coaches getting paid, which is a big concern. Do you support that bill and other bills? That's it.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. I'll take a couple of these and then pass it around. We've made no decisions on schools. I think, like a lot of other steps we've taken, to be able to have some harmony in the region would be a good thing. I'd share that sentiment that Governor Cuomo, I believe, referenced. But we've made no decisions on that fact. I've been lobbied hard today to reopen schools by parents, particularly with kids who are in sports, and I can understand their frustration. But we can't. We have to make our decisions based on data and facts and science, and we will do that. I believe we had promised you an update by this coming Friday the 17th. That's a decision that obviously Judy and her team will have a significant amount of input with Dr. Repollet and obviously the rest of us, so nothing on that.

Newark once a week, again, that's a recommendation by them. The Executive Orders issued by the state are the Executive Orders that are binding and we have not considered, at least I haven't considered or been part of any consideration on closing once a week. But I would say this. This week, and you've now heard us sort of, again, ratchet up or ratchet down I guess is a better way to put it, any holes in that Swiss cheese that we've got. We expect essential retail, warehouses, now buses and trains, bars and restaurants where folks are walking in to get their takeout, there is a very clear mandate and a very clear set of principles we expect folks to operate under.

We have not a rental freeze, just because there are thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, if not millions of contracts between landlords and renters. Actually, at least in New Jersey, Parimal, unless I'm wrong, putting a freeze in place is I believe impractical is a legal matter. But we have taken a number of steps and we continue to consider a number of steps. I want to give a shout out to Sheila Oliver and her colleagues at the Department of Community Affairs. Obviously, she's extraordinary as are they, working through a whole range of steps. We have said you can't be thrown out of your house or evicted if it's foreclosed. You can't be foreclosed on. If the landlord's got a mortgage, and they've got a holiday from their mortgage bank, we expect them to pass that holiday on to people who are renting from them.

I've not heard the question, nor have I considered any action on leaf blowers. But if there's anything on that to report, I will definitely come back to you. On the bills again, as is usual, by the way, we had very good, and continue to have very good cooperation and communication with the Legislature. We can't do what we're doing, it does take a village and that includes them. I was on the phone with the Senate President yesterday as I've been almost every day, texting back and forth with the Speaker, both sides of the aisle regularly. But I've got no comments on any of the bills on Monday. Again, until we consider them and they're on our desk and we've made a decision, that's the way it will continue to be. Do you have something you wanted to add?

**Reporter:** One, any protections for renters who are screwing with residents, and saying you have to pay me now? Two, in terms of hospital space, it seems that, it looks like about 14,400 could be the peak. We're still only at 7,000. Are we expecting that to jump up in the next couple of days? Do you still think you'll be able to handle capacity?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** On renters, they should raise their hand if they're getting screwed by a landlord, to use a diplomatic verb, and it's out of line behavior. They should go onto our website. We have a page on here. I forget what it's called. I think it's complaints. But punch that in on covid19.nj.gov. This is no time to be throwing your weight around as a landlord or as anybody else, for that matter. Judy, do you want to address the hospital capacity?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Sure. As you know, these numbers change every day, depending on the data that is input. By the our latest report, our latest report suggests that hospitalizations will peak at 15,922 and ICU admissions will be 3,821. The reason I shared the tiered approach that we're taking was to assure you that this is something we have planned for. I always remind you that under normal circumstances, we have 18,000 licensed beds and 2,000 intensive care beds, and we've been planning over the last month to increase intensive care beds by 100% which would bring that to 4,000. At the peak, right now we're looking at 3,821.

Yes, I think we will have, and I call them now bed spaces, for everyone. Again, it is going to be the PPE, and more importantly the ventilators that we're keeping a close eye on.

**Reporter:** Has the peak changed? It sounds like it might have.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** The peak has changed. It's actually gotten better. If we look at it over time, and it'll change again tomorrow. But the latest report we got, which was last evening, is the peak looks somewhat better. Remember, at the worst, we were looking at 39,000 hospitalizations.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'm going to anticipate your question, Brent. We also look at a number of models, right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Absolutely.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** We've got best case, we had the runaway freight train reality, which was millions of people infected. And then thanks to the folks, everybody out there, all the great work you've been doing staying home and staying away from each other, that came down meaningfully and that's a good thing. But there's a best case, if everyone should think of it sort of like this. Judy makes a point which I think is one that we can't forget. What we say today and what we said 24 hours ago, or what we'll say tomorrow on paper or 48 hours from now, may be very different. Right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Exactly. Remember, at one point it was 500,000 total positives. Then you step that down to what percentage would end up in the hospital? What percentage in ICU?

**Reporter:** So it's not like we can expect this Tuesday or Wednesday? We don't know for sure when that number may hit?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I think it depends on the model, right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, it depends on the model. And again, the inputs come in every day at the end of the day. Right now, knowing what our hospitals are doing, the North is packed. But last evening, we had eight hospitals that went on and then off divert. We still have two remaining on divert. That's the lowest number we've had in a bit.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** We're going to move on. But Judy, I want to make sure that I say two things. One is for everybody watching, all bets are off if folks take their foot off the gas.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Absolutely.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And you want me to say that. Folks, you've got to stay home and stay away from each other. That's the only way, literally, we're going to have a healthcare system that has the capacity to deal with the folks who need hospitalization and intensive care.

Secondly, I apologize because someone had pinged me, ventilators in particular, we've got a few dozen, I guess, four or five dozen left. We have very few ventilators left right now, so we're at the edge of our – we talk about ventilators, the medicines we need to run them, PPE, healthcare workers, beds. Am I right to say this? On ventilators at least, we're literally at the edge.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We have 61 ventilators available in our warehouse.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's for the entire state, right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** That's right.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So, thank you. Sir, you had one.

**Reporter:** Where is the Meadowlands Field Hospital at, at this point? Are they accepting patients yet? What's going on there?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, in fact, Judy referred to this and she can repeat, there are about 20 or 25 patients at the Meadowlands Exposition Center?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yes. We expect this to be 50 by the end of today.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay, thank you for that. Dan, do you have any questions? Okay, Jared, are you good? Okay, Charlie.

**Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today:** Good afternoon, Governor. I appreciate the Health Commissioner and your communications team getting me the breakdown of the cases in the psych hospitals, but the numbers are a little alarming because there's 81 staff infected at the Trenton psych hospital alone, and 23 patients as well. How much staff does that leave to hold it down there? Are you moving staff around between the four state-run hospitals because of that outbreak?

You may have been asked this before but I don't know the answer. I wanted to ask your take on the curfew here in Trenton. I know that the mayor has implemented a curfew for residents and businesses, 8:00 p.m. and how you feel that comports with your Executive Orders. I know that the BPU said there's two cable internet providers that have not suspended shut offs. I think internet is really important at this time. Can you name those two? What's your message to them?

Finally, on some of the election changes, you've made some very serious changes to the elections without enabling legislation, like moving the dates of elections, extending terms of Board of Ed members, and that was just done by Executive Order solely. But, first of all, do you think that it would be better if there was enabling legislation? Do you think that is required? Would you consider making other changes that you've said you couldn't make because of the legislation? For instance, making it easier to vote, registration, having online registration, or waiving that 21-day requirement for folks to register before the date of an election?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. I'll take a few and then either you all can chime in, particularly Pat on Trenton. Judy, I'll leave the psychiatric hospital question to you, but I know moving people around is a mantra, including patients as well as staff. Pat can comment about whether or not there's been any evidential effect in Trenton in terms of law enforcement, but again, to repeat, the Executive Orders that are binding are the ones that we sign and promulgate. That's not to say a mayor, in this case, Reed Gusciora who does a great job, can't make a recommendation to folks. But in terms of an Executive Order, they come from us in terms of the ones that are binding.

I'm actually not aware of the two cable providers, Dan, Brian, can you help me follow up with Charlie on that, and I'll come back to you. It sounds like they're not abiding by the no shut off, then my message for them is get with the program.

And elections, we consulted the legislative leaders on both sides of the aisle, the Chairs of each of the parties. In this particular case, we take the step that we think is the most beneficial to get the action that we need, so there was broad support of that. Would I, in a theoretical world, would enabling legislation make it stronger? I'm not sure as a legal matter, it would have. Parimal, what's your view on that?

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** There are some bills up on Monday that would ratify some of the changes that you've instituted via Executive Order.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's, I guess, a belt and suspenders. I would just say this. When you can do legislation, it's going to be a stronger, sturdier and more lasting reality. When you're in an emergency as we're in, it just isn't feasible, every step out. I would prefer, to your last question, Charlie, in terms of other things that we'd like to see in opening up democracy, which I'm frustrated by that we haven't seen sooner, even if Parimal and squad gave me the legal authority, I think those are things that we would have, if they were lasting, as opposed to the March and April elections of 2020, which is a one-off going into May 12th. I'd much prefer to do it by legislation. That's the right way to deal with it.

We're not there yet, but thank you. You've looked left and right. You can't believe how few reporters are here, so you just went down to a second or third well of questions. Judy, how about the psychiatric hospitals?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** As with all of our hospitals, we're concerned about the staffing, the manpower specifically at Trenton Psych is something we're keeping, I should say that the whole workforce is something that we're keeping an eye on, but Trenton Psych is a little bit more concerning, as you know, compared to the others. We're waiting for the testing to come back on about 153 of the staff members. Right now we see a positivity rate that is not causing as much concern as we originally thought, but we just have to keep an eye on it. As with all of our hospitals, we're putting in crisis staffing. You start with conventional staffing, and then you go for contingency staffing when things get tight under normal circumstances or high flu season. Then you go to crisis staffing, where you promote safe care, if not the best care.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen. We'll get back to you on the internet providers. I actually don't know the answer to that. Brent, one more.

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** The ventilators being down to 61, is that a major concern? You said you'll be able to handle bed capacity, but is only having 61 ventilators a concern?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, we have a big concern for ventilators. We do inventories of all alternative ventilators, anesthesia machines, bi-pap machines, home ventilators. We're having the most efficient and effective result with anesthesia machines, of which we have a lot of, but they do have to be modified.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I also want to say that I think Pat, you were part of it. We were on with the White House this morning at the senior staff level, and among other high priority topics were ventilators. Pat, anything -- I've skipped you and I apologize -- on Trenton or any other topics?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** I would never speak on behalf of the Mayor of Trenton, but I think as a combination of both social distancing as well as I think the eight shooting victims and three homicides over the weekend may have led the Mayor to that decision. Our crime suppression detectives and troopers are in lockstep with the Trenton Police Department. After that happened, I know they executed a

search warrant the other night and recovered an AR-15, three handguns and narcotics so it is a constant partnership with Trenton. Again, not to speak on behalf of the Mayor, but I think it's a combination of response to COVID 19 as well as trying to mitigate the violent crime in our capital.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I would say the relationship between the State Police and Trenton is on the one hand, unique and the deepest of relations that you all have, would that be fair to say?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Yes, sir.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** With any community. I got this mask to fit a little bit better today with the New Jersey flag state colors. I want to thank Judy Persichilli and Dr. Christina Tan for your extraordinary leadership. Thank you both. Pat Callahan, Colonel, same to you. Jared to you and your team at Homeland Security.

Again to everybody else, we will be with you by virtual communication, Dan, tomorrow so-called on paper release. We'll be together, unless you hear otherwise in this room, at 2:00 p.m. on Monday due to the White House video conference. With that, please everybody stay the course. Please stay the course, cover up. Use a face covering, stay home, stay away from each other. I know this will be probably the most unique Easter in your entire lives, but know that if we keep doing our jobs, next year's Easter and the many decades to come, we'll be able to get back to just what we always used to do and what we love to do. But to each and every one of you as well who celebrate Easter, God bless you all. We wish you all, in our own new way, a Happy Easter, and we'll be back with you on Monday. Thank you.

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