

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: June 14th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone. I'm joined by the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, another familiar face, Dr. Ed Lifshitz. Great to have you back, Ed. Judy, as always. Pat's not with us today, but I can say because I saw it with my own eyes, he and wife Linda married their daughter Cassidy off on Saturday in a beautiful ceremony to her new husband Zach, so we wish the newlyweds and their families nothing but the very best.

One announcement today before we get to today's numbers. I am signing an executive order today ending the formal moratorium on utility shutoffs as of July 1st. Then at the same time creating a grace period that will run through the end of this calendar year during which time customers facing utility arrearages will be protected from shutoffs. This grace period is for customers to enroll in payment assistance plans, and this is something that we're taking very seriously. Please allow me to be very – perfectly clear on something. No one will face disconnection of their gas, electric, or water services before the end of the grace period on December 31st, 2021. Households with residential internet service accounts currently being used by school age children for educational purposes will also be protected from disconnection.

This policy is consistent with the legislation I signed earlier this month allowing for the termination of the public health emergency. That law allowed several executive orders, including the one instituting the utility shutoff moratorium, to remain in effect until January 31, 2022, in recognition of the fact that hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans are facing utility arrearages and need some time to get back on their feet. Everyone deserves the opportunity to work with their utility provider on payment options that will ensure these vital and in some cases life-preserving services – and that they be maintained. We fully expect every utility provider to work with their customers in good faith.

Additionally, utility assistance is an eligible use of the billions of dollars of federal funding under the American Rescue Plan. During this grace period, we will continue to evaluate how best to deploy these funds to help New Jersey's families. Many of our impacted families are just now getting their financial feet back under them after a very, very tough year plus. They deserve empathy, support, and forbearance, and we expect nothing less. The conclusion of this grace period will fall during the annual winter moratorium on gas and electric shutoffs for certain households including some seniors and low-income families. Those impacted families will be further protected through the middle of March of next year. Now that the public health emergency declaration has been lifted, it is proper for us to begin to restore our utility marketplace, but again, we are going to maintain strong consumer protections as families get back on their feet. I thank our utility providers in advance for their cooperation, and I thank the Board of Public Utilities and the Department of Community Affairs for their efforts over the past year.

Now let's turn to some numbers. First, the Department of Health's count of individuals who have completed their vaccination courses, whether it be the two-shot regimen of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or the one shot from J&J, is now up, as you can see, to 4,564,662. You can also see the breakdown among those who have been fully vaccinated at one of our in-state sites as well as those who've been vaccinated out of state. We are also reporting today an additional 138 confirmed positive PCR tests and 122 presumed positive antigen rapid tests. As a reminder, last week we released the data which showed that of all positive tests we received from December 15th through April 23rd, only 0.06% were among vaccinated individuals, so-called breakthrough cases.

Dan, can you go back to the vaccine slide for a second? There we go. I want to say – and Judy and her team deserve so much of the credit here – we stand right now depending on how you count it as the number five state in America or the number four state in America depending on which metric you look at in terms of vaccinations of our population, and we are significantly – by a significant amount the largest state in America, so in other words, the states ahead of us are Connecticut, Vermont, Hawaii, Massachusetts. Only Massachusetts comes close in terms of population. It's about two-thirds the size of New Jersey, but Judy, to you and your team and everybody who has helped get us to where we are, it is literally second to none in the United States, so thank you. We go flip again. I apologize to take you back there.

Suffice it to say, these – the 260 cases that we're reporting today should be considered to be almost entirely if not exclusively from unvaccinated individuals. As we've been discussing, this has been becoming increasingly, by the day a pandemic of unvaccinated individuals. We are working through Judy and her team at the Department of Health and our lab partners, our healthcare system partners, to collect regular data on any new breakthrough cases just as we do data on all of the other key health and hospital metrics. When we have that reporting system in place, we will add those numbers to our dashboards in these briefings, and I promise you they're going to be stark. They're going to tell the tale that we've been alluding to that this is now, sadly, a pandemic overwhelmingly among unvaccinated individuals.

The statewide rate of transmission as you can see is 0.9, and again, the population among which this applies is being narrowed overwhelmingly to just unvaccinated. I cannot put it any more succinctly. We have a pandemic again among unvaccinated residents, not among the vaccinated. By the way, Judy, that's not to say we don't still have cases and we don't have variants because we do, but the vaccines – and you and Ed may want to get into this in more detail – the vaccines are proving to be effective against all forms – at least as of now against all forms of this virus including the so-called Delta variant, which is the one from India, which is both more easily transmissible and has more dire health consequences if you get it. The vaccines work even against that.

Okay, positivity rate – I'm not sure I hit that yet. I don't think I did. Among the 23,106 tests recorded last Thursday was 1.01%. As of last night, our hospitals had 361 patients. You can see the breakdown between confirmed and PUIs. Number of folks in the ICU was 86. There were 54 ventilators in use, and here are yesterday's discharge and admission numbers. Again, I don't want to sound like a broken record, but you can virtually assume that all of those who entered our hospitals yesterday are unvaccinated. If you've been waiting to be vaccinated for whatever reason, the time to wait is over. The time to get vaccinated is now. Please go that website, [covid19.nj.gov/finder](https://covid19.nj.gov/finder) today to find the place nearest where you live or work where you can get vaccinated. Judy, I'm going to consult my notes to make sure I give an accurate number. There are as of today 1,508 locations in the state where you can get vaccinated.

As the numbers show conclusively, these vaccines are effective, 99.94% effective against infection and – ready for this – 99.999986% effective against illness requiring hospitalizations. The vaccines work. They are safe. Even with the progress that we are making in our vaccination effort, we are today reporting with the heaviest of hearts an additional five confirmed COVID-related losses of life. As we do every day, let's remember for a couple of minutes a few more of the New Jerseyans we have lost to this virus.

We begin by honoring this woman, Fair Lawn's Joan Barrows. Joan was just 62 years old. A graduate of both Fair Lawn High School and Montclair State University, she spent the majority of her professional career with one of our iconic New Jersey companies, ADP, as an account services representative working with automotive dealers. In 2007, the advancement of pulmonary fibrosis forced her to retire after 23 years at ADP. Three years later, her condition required her

to undergo a single lung transplant. That procedure coupled with her determination to overcome the odds helped her return to a relatively normal and active life. She got back to tending her garden, partaking in any number of arts and crafts, and spending time with her family and friends. Even though Joan was fully vaccinated, her medical history of pulmonary illness and transplant meant she remained especially vulnerable to COVID, and she fell ill. She is among the rare breakthrough cases, and that was the only odd ever not in her favor.

Joan leaves behind her husband Thomas, and he said his challenges. Please keep him in your prayers. She also leaves her twin sister Jean and brothers Jim and Alfonso, and I had the great honor of speaking with Jean and Jim last Wednesday and their families, including three nephews, Steven, Thomas, and James. Jim and Jean asked me to remind everybody through Joan's example the vulnerability that some residents retain even through vaccination because of their longstanding medical conditions. Judy, especially those – they went through the math – especially those who have had a transplanted organ. Jim and Jean and the entire family wish for everyone to remain vigilant and to not mistake vaccination for complacency. Those are wise words indeed. We are honored to remember Joan today. May God bless and watch over her memory and her family, her fighting spirit personified, the spirit of our state.

Next let's remember Deacon James "Jim" Casapulla of Pompton Plains. He was born in Paterson and lived in Hawthorne before relocating to Florida, but the pull of his home state brought him back to New Jersey. Jim was 84 years old. Prior to his move to Florida, Jim was the owner and operator of the Boro Pharmacy in Hawthorne. A devout Catholic, Jim was ordained a permanent deacon and was the first to serve at St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in Hawthorne. In Florida, he continued his service as the permanent deacon and pastoral assistant at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Palm Coast while also working as a grief counselor for families at Craigs Funeral Home in nearby Flagler Beach. After his passing in January, his funeral mass was held at his beloved St. Anthony's. Jim leaves his wife Dee, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last Wednesday, and their five children, James, jr., Michael, Lorraine, Tony, and Steven and their spouses along with 14 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. We thank Jim for his service to his church and his community, both here in New Jersey and in Florida, and I'm certain that God has blessed him for a life of service.

Finally for today, let's take a minute to remember Conrad Van Derveer. He was 86 years old. Conrad was a native of Middlesex County, New Brunswick born and raised. After his graduation from the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical School, he made his career as a master plumber, eventually retiring as the plant manager for East Brunswick based Sanders & Hart. Everything else aside, however, he was a family man. He spent 44 years married to the love of his life, Edith, prior to her passing in 1998. Together, they purchased their weekend dream home in Toms River, which they nicknamed the Shack where Conrad permanently retired to in 2004. Conrad was also an aficionado of antique clocks and loved to collect and restore vintage timepieces as a member of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors. He also fostered an interest in clocks in others, including his son David. He was also an expert in working with gemstones and as a silversmith.

Along with David and his wife Marion – and I had the great honor of speaking with both of them last Wednesday as well – he also leaves his daughter Kathy and son-in-law Vince, plus eight grandchildren to whom he was a devoted pop-pop and six great-granddaughters. Conrad is further survived by his brother Thomas and other extended family. Despite its ups and downs, Conrad's was a well-lived life indeed, and may God bless him, his memory, and his family that he leaves behind. With these three, I've mentioned this already a few times, we've memorialized well over 500 of our fellow New Jerseyans who have died because of COVID-related complications. While we are duty bound to remember them, I would like nothing more than to not have to read more names or call more families. We don't just want to get the number of deaths we report every day to zero. We need to get this number to zero. Please get vaccinated.

Now, let's move forward on a more positive note by giving a huge shoutout to the Foundation for University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey. Over the past six years, since its founding, the Foundation for University Hospital has built a culture of community-based philanthropy to promote health, wellness, and education among all Newark residents and throughout the pandemic, that has met a keen focus on fighting food insecurity across the entire University Hospital community including frontline workers, caregivers, and of course, patients. Since April, the foundation has provided more than 3,000 meals to patients and caregivers and has ensured that even those set for discharge from the hospital do not leave hungry or without access to a hot meal.

Working with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the Foundation is now a beneficiary for the Sustain and Serve NJ program, meaning it is partnering with local restaurants to provide meals, maintaining their mission while supporting Newark's small businesses. I had the opportunity to catch up with executive Director Jess Backofen and her colleague Anne Egan and to thank them for all the Foundation for University Hospital is doing for the city of Newark and for the patients who are turning the – turning to the University Hospital. I thank them again. By the way, check them out online, [uhnjfoundation.org](http://uhnjfoundation.org), [uhnjfoundation.org](http://uhnjfoundation.org). They made the point to me, which is a key one, you're constantly grasping is there any silver lining to this awful pandemic. When you're talking about losses of life, there's no silver lining per se, but

they did say this, that through this program, through the Sustain and Serve NJ Program, they've deepened their relationship with their community, with the – especially with the surrounding restaurants that have participated in the program, so hats off to everybody there.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the recent passing of two real leaders. First, this weekend, our statewide family lost Candy Straight, who served in multiple state administrations in numerous formal capacities and who was an informal advisor to an advocate for women candidates, not just here in New Jersey, but certainly here, but also across the country. Candy and her late mom was especially good to Tammy personally and to both of us when we planted our flag in New Jersey to raise our family. Early on, she became an instant friend. She and I both enjoyed Broadway musical theater, and it was a common thread between us. Her friend and our friend Gale Gordon mentioned in the press over the weekend that *A Chorus Line* was her favorite, and I would just say in many, many ways and in the spirit of that show, Candy was one singular sensation. She will be missed by many, and may God bless her.

On Friday morning, we lost the gal on the left, another giant, Emily Sonnessa died at the age of 91. Emily was an icon in our LGBTQIA+ community. Emily and her wife Jan Moore on the right – and I left a message for Jan. I've still not connected with her, but they're both dear friends. By the way, they shared 52 years together. They were the focus on the award-winning 2017 documentary *Love Wins*, which chronicled their relationship from its early days when they had to live in the proverbial closet through their efforts to get married and be treated on an equal footing with any other loving couple. Emily's life focus wasn't just on marriage equality. She campaigned across the country on matters of healthcare access and equity for the LGBTQIA+ community. Thanks to Emily, we are a better state, and may God bless her and watch over her and – as well as blessed wife Jan and may her legacy live strong in the many, many thousands of people who are carrying on her work. That is my report for this Monday. Please help me welcome the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. The CDC continues to study the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccine to reduce illness, hospitalization, and death. In their morbidity and mortality weekly reports, CDC examine the impact of vaccination coverage among different age groups. Comparing the data in December prior to vaccination commencing to data in April, declines in COVID-19 rates were significantly greater among older adults who had higher vaccination coverage than among younger adults who had lower coverage. Among older adults who were vaccinated, COVID-19 incident rates declined 40% compared to adults in the ages of 18-49. Rates of emergency department visits declined 59%, hospital admission rates declined 65%, and death rates decreased 66% compared to adults 18 to 49.

The greater decline in COVID-19 morbidity and mortality in older adults, the age group with the highest vaccination rates, demonstrates the potential benefit of increasing population-level vaccination coverage. The data is consistent with other preliminary reports showing a reduction in COVID-19 cases and severe illness in populations with high vaccination coverage. We still have more work to do to increase coverage in the younger populations in our state. Those 65 and older have the best coverage with 89% receiving at least one dose of vaccine. Among those ages 50 to 64, 76% have received at least one dose. 63% of those 30 to 49 years of age have received at least one dose, and 53% of those ages 18 to 29 have received at least one dose. I'm glad to report that 33% of those ages 12 to 17, who just became eligible a mere four weeks ago, have received at least one dose. To help further reduce the spread of COVID-19 in this state, we would like to increase the vaccine coverage in our younger populations.

With the numbers of residents vaccinated increasing, hospitalizations on the decline, and decreasing COVID-19 activity in the state, the Department is lifting closure orders on adult medical day healthcare centers. Today the Department will be sending out guidance to these facilities on reopening. These facilities will need to attest to satisfying the requirements of the guidance such as screening staff and participants to ensure the centers can be opened safely. This guidance will be available on the Department's website this afternoon.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 361 hospitalizations. The sustained decline is a positive trend for our state. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. Currently, there's 127 cumulative cases in the state. At the state veterans' homes, no new cases among residents and no new cases among patients at the psychiatric hospitals. The daily percent positivity as of June 10th for the state is 1.01%. The northern part of the state reports 1.11%, the central part of the state .97%, and the southern part of the state .80%. Continue to stay safe, and let's get vaccinated. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, the progress of the 12 to 15-year-olds given how short the clock has been is pretty impressive. I know the number's lower than we want, right? The 80 – again, it's 89% of 65 and up?

**Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli:** Yes. Amazing.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amazing. That's exactly it. By the way, as we all know, that's where we were the most vulnerable, right?

**Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli:** Eighty percent.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Of our fatalities.

**Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli:** Of our 65 and older fatalities.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. Good to see you, Ed. Great to have you. Hopefully, we'll be able to pull you in from the bullpen. We'll start over in this side. Again, Pat's not with us today, but we'll be I think on our regular – unless Dan tells me otherwise, we'll be in our regular rhythm, so we'll be virtually tomorrow, and then we'll be back here all hands on deck 1 o'clock on Wednesday.

#### Q&A Section

With that, Alex, seated, please. Good afternoon.

**Alex Roubian, NJ2AS:** Good afternoon, Governor. Good to see you again.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Nice to see you.

**Alex Roubian, NJ2AS:** Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery and the official recognition that black people have the same rights as every other American citizen. However, in New Jersey, the black community and black legislators are not even aware they can lawfully own firearms. I recently spoke to many blacks in Newark that wanted to purchase firearms so they can protect themselves, but they were not aware they could do so lawfully. To make matters worse, when I interviewed a black New Jersey assemblyman about this, he stated, and I quote, "I'm not of the belief that having a gun is a constitutional right. It's not in the constitution," end quote. These videos will all be revealed when I release my articles. On this Juneteenth, will you tell the black community that they can lawfully own firearms and how they can start the process? That concludes my question.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Alex. I've got nothing new to add on this theme, again, which is one that is not the first time you and I have discussed it. I am thrilled that this will be the first year I can say we can celebrate Juneteenth as a state holiday this Friday, which is a big deal that a lot of us worked toward. Again, I particularly give a shoutout to the Legislative Black Caucus who have been spearheading this effort and thrilled that we'll finally be able to partake in that. Good to see you and thank you. Matt, good afternoon.

**Matt Arco, NJ.COM** Good afternoon, Governor. Given the state's extraordinary surplus, are you considering cutting taxes or beefing up the proposed tax rebates? If not, why? Rep Gottheimer this morning proposed using some of the state's six billion plus in coronavirus stimulus funds to offer 500-dollar bonuses to those who are on unemployment if they return to work by August 1. What's your thought of that idea?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Just back up and say very good deliberations with legislative leadership, and I want to thank the Senate president and the Speaker. We've had some – both directly as well as our teams. No news to report yet on the budget, but the discussions have been extremely constructive, productive, and in very good spirit. I will do – no news to report here, but if we can find a way, for instance, to plus up the homestead rebate, count me all in for things like that. Again, to be determined exactly where we come out.

Josh Gottheimer and I went back and forth on this yesterday. It's a good idea, but it's too early to really – the American Rescue Plan money is something, again, we want to make sure we get this right, that we do – we spend that money responsibly, we have the ability to spend it over a period of years. Just want to make sure we get a good budget and that we then get the federal money in a really good place. No question there's dislocation in the labor market. You hear it. We were at a restaurant – actually a couple restaurants this weekend, but heard from a friend who's got a restaurant – without question, you see it all over the state, and I think it's a product of a number of different reasons.

Some folks point to the 300-dollar temporary unemployment benefit. That feels like that may be part of it. Others would point to – and I have some sympathy with lack of consistent ability to get childcare or the fact that we're still in the schoolyear in a lot of public schools in our state, most of the public schools in our state, and I lot of them are hybrid mode. Very few, I'm happy to say, are in remote. In fact, only one district left in the state is on remote. You've also got people – I think, increasingly you've got people who are – when people leave the workforce, sometimes in a recovery, that's an early sign that folks are trying to step up to another level of pay or required skill, and so people use this as an opportunity to upsell themselves into a different career lane. I think there's some of that going on.

I think you've also got some element of folks having gotten used to working in some form or fashion in a remote mode, so I think it's a combination of a whole lot of things, and I told Josh that I'm openminded to considering anything we can to allow the labor force to catch up to what is clearly a recovery right now. I also think as I said to him yesterday, I believe this is temporary. I think this is a matter of time. I bet you measure it in months, but it's real. Having said that, there's no question it's real. Thank you for that. Alex, good afternoon.

**Alex Zdan, News 12:** Good afternoon. On the utility shutoff moratorium that you announced today, why did you choose December 31st as the end of the grace period? Like you said, there are programs that prevent seniors or others from being evicted during cold weather, but the fact of the matter is, there will be people who have shutoffs during the winter months if the grace period is extended until then. Why not make the grace period shorter or longer to have it in a warm month, or did you simply want the grace period to go past election day? a question on Edna Mahan. Is it possible for you to close Edna Mahan while the corrections department is negotiating a consent decree with the US Department of Justice? How would that work? Can you make good on that promise while these negotiations are ongoing? Lastly, just a general question about the end of the pandemic. You've ended the public health emergency, but obviously we have these briefings. We talk about precautions. For you, what is the metric where you will be able to declare the pandemic over? If it's zero deaths, we're getting close. If it's zero cases, we may never reach that particular mark. For you, when is the pandemic over?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you for all those. Parimal, you'll correct the record on the first two. First of all, the legislation that I signed last week is tied to January 1, 2022, so that's the principle reason. The notion of a grace period is for all of us consistent with your third question, realizing that we're going slowly but surely equitably, responsibly back to some sense of normalcy, and that allows us that. I think thirdly, the most vulnerable folks, seniors, low-income families – and again, it's a good question – are protected for that normal, annual moratorium that runs through March 15<sup>th</sup>, so it's a combination of those reasons.

I don't believe – and Parimal will correct the record here. I don't think the negotiation of the consent decree and the closure of the facility are connected. We can't close the facility like a light switch tomorrow in any event. I would hope I'm not party to this, but I would hope that the consent decree, sooner than later, comes to a head. I would expect that it would, but I don't believe there's any bearing on closing or not as it relates to that.

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** That's correct, Governor, and we're in the final stages of finalizing the consent decree with the Department of Justice but as the Governor mentioned, the long-term closure of Edna Mahan is on a much longer timeline.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah. I'll give you my answer, Alex, but I'd be – let's bring Ed Lifshitz in from the bullpen here. I don't think we measure it just because we have days where we have zero fatalities, although we should celebrate those days. Among other things, I remember we've already had days with zero fatalities between waves one and two. We saw that this was – we anticipated it and in fact, it did rear its head again. I would measure it as a non-medical matter in the level of normalcy in our lives. That would include things like probably at some point not needing to do these or at least not as frequently. I'm not suggesting it has to wait until then but back to school, Monday through Friday, God willing, without masks would be a sign that you're back in business – you're back to normalcy, rather, that we have our state offices and other government and private sector offices populated with folks, that we're able to take steps in our – especially in our indoor lives where we – assuming you can prove that you've been vaccinated, you're not wearing a mask, etc. I measure it not necessarily in the health metrics because I'm of the opinion that this stays – assuming we beat it, and please God we do, it stays in our midst at some low level like the flu does. That's my operating assumption, so that you're never completely out of the woods but you are back to normal.

Judy, Ed, thoughts?

**Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Sure, throw the tough one over here. I absolutely agree. I mean, I think he said it very well. This is not going to be like a VE day or VJ day being the war memorial where you can declare today the war is over. I think it's going to be a continual winding down. You've seen that in the relaxation of restrictions all over the place. The public health emergency has ended. I do believe, as the Governor has said, that this is something that'll be around for a long period of time and hopefully at very low levels so we don't have to continue to talk about it and it can be managed as other diseases I do think you need continued vigilance to make sure it doesn't pop back up. I do think that people need to be reminded to go out and get vaccinated, and we will need to continue to monitor for things like variants and other things to make sure this never gets back to where it had been in the past. I agree that we are certainly on a very good path. I would not want to declare victory and say mission accomplished at this point, but we're certainly heading in the right direction.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Ed, let me put you on the spot for one more. Alex didn't ask it but it's kind of related here. Again, good questions. Any new prognostication, to use a fancy word, on the question of is the vaccine good for your lifetime? Is it an annual? Is it somewhere in between? Is it fair to say the jury is still out on that?

**Department of Health Medical Advisor Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Definitely the jury is still out. We do know that the makers of the mRNA vaccines are looking to update the vaccine against the new variants and it may get included together with the flu vaccine, and it may be an annual dose, but the jury is definitely still out as to what will be happening come the fall.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, you good with that? Okay, thank you. Sir?

**Reporter:** Thank you for your time. From Brenda Flanagan, Spruce Run Reservoir has been closed for the rest of the summer swim season due to harmful algal blooms. Do you plan any remediation to counteract the harmful algal blooms across the state this summer? A question from the live stream, are students who take a bus to school required to wear a mask? If so, is there any plan to lift that requirement? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** The answer on the second one is I believe yes, and the answer is absolutely. We want to get – listen, this just in: we don't want masks more than anyone else does out there, so we're hoping even maybe when we're open for business the day after Labor Day or maybe the districts that start a few days before, but at the moment, unless Parimal says otherwise, I believe the answer is yes, they still are. Thank God we're only a few days away from the end of the school year.

These harmful algae blooms have been with us each summer since I've been governor and for many summers before. They are an outcropping of a lot of different reasons including climate change, sewer runoff, whole storm-related realities. The Department of Environmental Protection working with our Intergovernmental Affairs team actively work year-round, frankly, not just in the summer months, to try to get as out ahead of this as we can. It's crushing when you've got closures such as the one Brenda asked about, and we do everything we can to balance keeping lakes and swimming places and boating places open but doing it responsibly. I think we've migrated successfully to a little bit more of a color-coded not just the black-and-white closed/open system but more of a gradation. I think that's been a significant step in the right direction. We put a fair amount of money into this from the state, and we'll continue to do everything we can to stay on top of it and get out ahead of it and safely and responsibly keep as many of these places as open as possible. Thank you.

Hey, Nikita, good afternoon.

**Nikita Biryukov:** Good afternoon, Governor. You mentioned or obviously you announced the utility shutoff moratorium today would be ending but I'm wondering if you're planning any action on the eviction moratorium. There seems to be some disagreements within the Democratic caucus of the legislature over whether it should continue. Next, I'm wondering if the Administration is planning to issue guidance for the Alzheimer day programs that have I believe been shuttered for much of the pandemic. Next, what is your view on continual campaign finance reporting? Senator Joe Cryan has a new bill out that would require year-round reporting contributions within 48 hours. I'm asking for your opinion generally.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Sorry, year-round – in other words not just on the certain dates but –

**Nikita Biryukov:** Yeah, so if you receive a contribution on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, that would have to be reported by December 4<sup>th</sup> or what have you. Then finally, Senate President Steve Sweeney has said he wants the budget negotiations done by the 21<sup>st</sup>. That's a week away. I'm thinking if you believe that's realistic.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let me go through these one at a time, although Judy, I'm going to ask you to come in on the Alzheimer if you could. I would hope – no news to make on the eviction moratorium, but I hope we could come to a resolution that has elements that are similar to the utility arrearages announcement I made today. In other words, it gives people a date in the future, a transition period, and as many have pointed out, it's folks who rent but it's also small landlords, so there's a symmetry to the pain here. I would also hope that as I mentioned in my remarks as it relates to the utility moratorium sunset that we'd be able to use federal money, American Rescue Plan money, for folks in those buckets as well, not just in the arrearages on utilities but also on the arrearages on rent or mortgage payments or in the case of small landlords, the flip-side of that.

Yeah, I'm open-minded on the year-round campaign. I haven't spent a whole lot of time thinking about it. I believe tomorrow is an elec day. They do sort of come up every once in a while in terms of matching funds. I haven't seen Senator Cryan's specific proposal, but the notion of having some regular rhythm to it, cadence to it strikes me as reasonable.

Yeah, I don't know that I'd marry myself necessarily to the 21<sup>st</sup>, but I think the Senate President, the Speaker, and I, and our teams are committed to not just doing a responsible budget but also doing it well short of the one minute of midnight that too often we do in New Jersey. I would say sooner than later. I don't recoil at that date but again, we want to make sure we get it right.

Senate President also, by the way – and you didn't ask this but he said something which I have whole-hearted agreement with, and that is we need to spend whatever money we're spending in things that are game-changers but that are not programs that we start that in the out-years, we're left holding the bag. That would be the same view that I would have on the American Rescue Plan money as well. You don't want to either – just because we have some money in this year's budget to start a program that we can't sustain and I feel strongly about that and apparently, he does as well. That was good to see, but I think we also share the view that the federal money that we are required to spend over the next three years also don't start programs that we're left holding the bag with state money.

Judy, last one, I'm going to – I skipped it but over to you, the Alzheimer's adult services program. Is that included in the announcement you made today?

**Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli:** Excuse me, we're looking at all the day programs. Adult medical daycare guidance will go out today. Some dementia patients fit into that category. You can expect PACE programs guidance to come out for PACE, Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly where some dementia patients fit in very comfortably in that setting. Then we'll move on to the pediatric medical daycare, which is a little bit more complicated to make sure that we can reopen shortly. All of the day programs are our highest priority right now.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And the pain – we've said this many times but it's worth reiterating. The pain of not just the – trying to prevent physical harm to people but also the mental health strain of their families and to them themselves have been extraordinary. I know Judy will do it as soon as we feel responsibly we can.

That is it. I want to thank Judy and Ed, Pat in absentia. We had Parimal Garg; I should've mentioned it formally, Dan Bryant, cast of thousands. We miss Pat, but he'll be back, God willing, with us on Wednesday. I had the great honor this afternoon to swear Shawn LaTourette in as the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, which is a real treat. Thanks to everybody. Please keep up the great work. We'll be back together here unless you hear otherwise at 1 p.m. on Wednesday. Each day is better than the one that came before. Please, please get vaccinated. It's for your own good. I will say, Judy, in closing, I am no longer in doubt, but I believe with great conviction we will reach our goal of 4.7 adult New Jerseyans vaccinated by the end of this month, and I will say with the same conviction – I know you join me and Ed joins me – that we'll keep at it. That was our goal, but that's not the endpoint. We will stay at this. Thanks, everybody. God bless.

## Governor Phil Murphy

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