

## Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: July 7th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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### Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone.

Sorry, to be a couple minutes behind. I'm joined by the woman in my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan, great to have you both. The guy to my left needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan, we have Chief Counsel Parimal Garg as cast of thousands, and a particular treat to have the First Lady of the great state of New Jersey, Tammy Murphy with us.

Don't forget, New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund continues to do extraordinary work, and [jprf.org](http://jprf.org), please check that out. I hope everybody had a safe and enjoyable 4th of July weekend. I especially hope that the 137,611 of you, who received your New Jersey State Parks Vax pass for the Department of Environmental Protection as a thank you for getting vaccinated, we're able to enjoy a day at Island Beach State Park, or any of our other natural treasures. And we've got a lot of them.

Before we move on to the numbers, two comments that are unrelated to our gathering today; number one, recognition with a heavy heart of the assassination of the President of Haiti earlier today, and the injuries to the First Lady, an awful tragedy. We have a very significant Haitian and Haitian-American population in New Jersey, and our hearts in particular grow out to them. And then, secondly, I suspect Pat will talk about this. We're in some really tough weather, hot as heck, incredibly tough thunderstorms, power outages related to it. Lots of moving parts here, so, I know Pat will address that in a couple minutes.

But before we get to that, let's take a look at the latest numbers. Today, we're reporting a total of 5,066,929 fully vaccinated individuals who live, work or study in the great state of New Jersey. Over the past week since we were last year together, roughly about 126,000 people have joined the ranks of the fully vaccinated. And we continue to be as a

state in the top handful of states in the country. And that's something that we should all take great pride in, beginning with Judy's great work in both the percentage of our overall population now fully vaccinated, as well as the percentage of all vaccine eligible residents, those ages 12 or older.

And we know, by the way, that there are still many hundreds of thousands of you who have begun your vaccination courses, and received your first doses. So, be sure to get back out and get your second. And Judy, we continue to punch, I think, as good as any American state on that reup on the booster shot. We continue to run in a very, very good pace there, and you need that booster. If you're Johnson and Johnson, you're good on one. But if you're either Moderna or Pfizer, you got to get that second shot. Looking to our hospital metrics, the number of COVID-positive patients currently admitted is 237 with an additional 73 persons under investigation.

Judy, you may address this, but the PUI number has been the one that's been bouncing around more than confirmed, and it probably, as I say, this isn't a nonprofessional here. Probably, I would think that with all of us not largely wearing masks these days, there may be other respiratory illnesses that are in the mix that at one point may be viewed as COVID. And in fact, turned out not to be. There are 50, as you can see, 51 patients in the ICU, 23 ventilators in use, 28 were discharged yesterday, 32 were admitted. That's the first day in a little bit, where we've had more going in than coming out. Those are days we don't like to see. There was one yet to be confirmed in hospital death yesterday.

Today, we're also reporting 240 positive PCR tests, 130 presumed positive antigen tests, the total over the past seven days since we were last together, just under 1,500 for PCR tests, and just over 500 for antigen test. The rate of transmission is holding steady at 0.95. So, it's under one where we want it to be. Positivity rate, this is as of last Saturday. And again, historically, we've seen a slightly higher positivity rate, or if not meaningfully, higher positivity rate on weekends, and this is no exception, at 1.45%. If you look at all of the tests in the week preceded that, so this is Sunday to Saturday, the positivity rate was 1.27.

We're reporting with the heaviest of hearts, eight newly confirmed COVID-related deaths. Over the past week, we've added a total of 29 confirmed deaths to our total, and the number of probable deaths has been updated and is currently 2709. The good news obviously is that we are now recording many fewer new cases and deaths in one week than we previously had been seeing in one day. Hospitalizations are far below where they've been at any point since the earliest days of the pandemic last spring, and our positivity rate is staying consistently low.

The steady increase in the number of fully-vaccinated residents is a significant driver of these numbers. We could say with near certainty that these new cases are almost exclusively, people who for whatever reason, have not been vaccinated. So, again, the simple reality is that we do not have a pandemic among the vaccinated. This is only right now, a pandemic among the unvaccinated. Let's please God, end this once and for all folks, please go out and get vaccinated. Now, as we usually do, let's honor the lives of three more of our blessed brothers and sisters from New Jersey who COVID has taken away.

We're going to begin today by remembering this woman, Kathleen Schindler of East Brunswick, who was 97 years old when she passed on November 30th. She called Middlesex County home since her youth growing up in Highland Park. Though she worked for NBC and the Federal Department of the Treasury, she returned to the banks of the Raritan River, and worked for many years at Rutgers University. And after her retirement from RU, she was an active member of the Silver Knights, Rutgers' retiree's association.

Kath, as she was known, lost her husband Francis in 1994, pardon me. After 48 years of marriage, they had one daughter Kay, who was married to this man, Bruce Schechter. Sadly, in New Year's Eve, Bruce lost his own battle with COVID, and he was just 61 years old. Bruce was an East Brunswick native and Rutgers University graduate. In fact, he and Kay met while students at East Brunswick High, and then reconnected, and fell in love while they were both attending Rutgers. In fact, they even got married at the Kirkpatrick Chapel on the campus of RU.

He was a professional in film and video editing, having started his career with Major League Baseball productions following his college graduation. Bruce and Kay enjoyed 38 years of marriage and they had three children. And these were clearly Kath's grandchildren, Kristen, Matthew and Kaitlin. And with his passing, he also left his grandson, Everett, and Kath's great grandson. Bruce is further survived by his mother Irene, his brother Andrew, and his niece and nephew Michael and Katarina.

We ask that you keep Kay, with whom I had the great honor of speaking with a week ago, and her family in your prayers as they continue to recover from both the loss of two beloved family members, but in Kay's case, she was also COVID positive, did not go to the hospital, but she is herself suffering as so many are from long-haul fatigue and syndrome. And we know that they aren't the only family by a longshot experiencing such pain, either of loss, or of illness or both. May God bless and watch over both Kath, and Bruce, and Kay and the family they leave behind.

And today, we also honor this guy, Burlington's William Player who was taken from us on January 8th at the age of 78. He was an army veteran who rose to the rank of captain and settled in Burlington with his wife Rose, and their children Kenneth, Elizabeth and Russell, following his honorable discharge after 13 years of active-duty service to our nation. He would remain a proud army reservist, and continue to serve, ultimately rising to the rank of major before all was said and done. Following his army days, he worked into transportation and logistics for the Dennis trucking company and Woodhaven Foods, compiling more than 20 years in the private sector, and he also earned his degree in accounting from Rutgers University.

During his army days in Japan, William played the keyboard in a band called The People's Power. From that experience, he found a way to fuse Korean songs with American R&B, and he would be invited to perform at Korean festivals and other gatherings across South Jersey. William has been reunited with his son, Kenneth, who tragically passed at a young age of 1976. He leaves behind his blessed wife, Rose, and please keep her in your prayers. His children, Elizabeth and Russell, I had the great honor of speaking with, both of them last Wednesday, and their families, including his granddaughter, Kaitlin.

He's also survived by a sister, Sandra and nephew, Brandon, and a large extended family. We thank William for his service to our nation, and for choosing to make New Jersey his home for all these many, many years. May God bless and watch over his memory and family. Let's close for today by recognizing the tremendous work of Newark Working Kitchens, which was created just a year ago with the expressed mission of fighting food insecurity in the Brick City caused by the pandemic.

Newark Working Kitchens is spearheaded by that guy, a very dear friend of Tammy's and mine, Don Katz, the founder and executive chairman of Audible, which not only proudly calls Newark home, but is also actively engaged in the city's civic life and economic resurgence. When the pandemic forced Audible to close its doors and go virtual at its workplace, he knew that the pain of the pandemic would radiate throughout the city. Working in partnership with city officials, community, and tenant organizations, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Newark Working Kitchens stepped up to help pinpoint families and individuals most in need of support.

And then, they brought together a network of 30 restaurants to help meet the demand. Since last April, Newark Working Kitchens is further supported by more than \$11 million in donations and a grant from the EDA has provided more than one million meals to over 10,000 Newarkers and their families. I've had many, many conversations with Don over the past number of years. But the call to thank him last Wednesday for everything he's doing in Newark through Newark Working Kitchens was especially gratifying. I thank him, and his team, and everyone who's been a part of this mission for their hard work. Check them out, by the way, [newarkworkingkitchens.com](http://newarkworkingkitchens.com), [newarkworkingkitchens.com](http://newarkworkingkitchens.com).

And I simply thank all of you for your hard work to get us where we are, among the nation's leaders in vaccinations, and preparing for the post-COVID future that's about to break our way. With that, Please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. Reports of the Delta variant continue to rise in the nation and our state. The Delta variant is now the most common variant in the United States surpassing the Alpha variant. In our state, the latest variant surveillance report shows the proportion of the Delta variants sequenced in the last four weeks has risen to 26.8%, up from 15.6% the previous week. There has been a steady rise in this variant. Two weeks ago, the percentage of reports doubled. In this week, it nearly doubled again.

However, the predominant variant in the state still remains the Alpha variant. In states that have relatively low vaccination rates, we are seeing the impact of this highly transmissible variant with increasing hospitalizations, and large outbreaks. Healthcare systems in these areas are experiencing the strain of these surges due to the number of unvaccinated individuals in their states. What we are seeing in these western states is further evidence that COVID-19 vaccines are making a difference. In our state, the dramatic decline in outbreaks and long-term care facilities demonstrates the power of vaccination.

Today, we are reporting 16 active outbreaks in long-term care facilities down from approximately 450 outbreaks in January. Vaccines are really saving lives. COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths are preventable. Thankfully, we have safe and effective vaccines that can protect us from this deadly virus. Our state has made great strides in getting residents vaccinated, but there is still more work to be done. In the face of this highly transmissible variant, it is more important than ever to have high vaccination rates so our state does not slide backwards.

The department's county ambassadors are working with local officials and community leaders. And together, they are making a difference in areas where we are focused on raising vaccination rates. For example, in the past four weeks, we've seen vaccination rates rise 19% in Ewing, New Jersey, and 15% in Perth Amboy, and 11% in Passaic. We need more residents to get vaccinated to protect our communities, especially individuals who are not yet eligible to get vaccinated, we need to protect our children, those under the age of 12, who are not eligible to get vaccinated.

There's plenty of availability and locations to get vaccinations. There are over 1,500 community-based sites and pop-up vaccination sites in the state where individuals can receive the vaccine. It's also important that residents return for their second dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine to ensure the best protection against COVID-19. Individuals do get some protection from their first shot. But the second shot provides up to 94% coverage, including the strongest possible protection against the Delta variant. Residents can go to any location in the state to get their second dose.

So, if you are unvaccinated, make a plan to get vaccinated. Continue to wear a mask, keep a physical distance from others, stay home if you are sick and get tested. But most importantly, get vaccinated, if you've been vaccinated and know neighbors, colleagues or loved ones who aren't, encouraged them to get vaccinated to help protect themselves, their families, their friends and their community. Moving on to my daily report is the governor's shared or hospitals report at 310 hospitalizations of positive patients and PUIs, patients under investigation. Hospitalizations have remained relatively flat.

Unfortunately, there are no new cases of multi system inflammatory syndrome in children. There are currently cumulatively 128 cases in our state and none of these children are currently hospitalized. As further evidence of the impact and the value of vaccination at the state's veteran's homes, there are no new cases among residents. And at the state psychiatric hospitals, there are no new cases among their patients. As of July 3rd, the percent positivity in the state is 1.45%. The northern part of the state report is 1.15%, the central part of the state 2.08%, and the southern part of the state 1.2%. So, that concludes my daily report. Please continue to stay safe. Let's get vaccinated to protect ourselves, our family and friends, and enjoy a safe healthy summer. Thank you,

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you for everything. If I may ask, what's the magic in a community like Ewing where you've seen such a nice positive uptick? Is it the door-to-door activity? Is it a combination of items?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I think it's a combination of door-to-door pop ups, active health department, elected officials who are actively engaged, it's really -

**Governor Phil Murphy:** A combination.

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

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's what I think. It's fair to say, probably statewide when we're seeing success, it's a combination of things like the State Park Vax pass, or some other campaign we've run, faith leaders, hugely important, great local and county health, leadership and the door-to-door grind that just really won to the next. Great to see you, great to be back with you. Pat, I mentioned, first of all, I was proud. It's an awful, awful, awful tragedy. But I was so proud of our deployment and you're overseeing the Task Force 1 team down in Florida, trying to dig through that awful tragedy. As usual, parking any political stuff at the door and just doing the right thing. So, God bless you for that. I mentioned nasty weather hot, but storms and outages that relate to that, any comments on any of the above and other matters? Great to have you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor, good afternoon. With regard to outages, those storms last night primarily in Sussex and Warren. At one point, we're up to over 85,000 households without power. As of noon, before coming in here, we were down at 27,500 with the majority of those just over 23,000 being from the JCP&L service area. With regard to the weather, we do have a heat advisory in place for pretty much most of the state with that heat index up 100 to 105. Into this afternoon, I think that heat advisory ends at 8:00 tonight. We are expecting again, thunderstorms, hail, gusty winds again for the northern part of the state, and some to the central counties.

I do know that a cold front is supposed to come in Thursday and Friday, and have some rain with it. And I think some of the moisture from tropical storm Elsa is going to be in there. So, our rainfall totals may get up to over three inches in the next few days. I do have a call this afternoon with all the county OEM coordinators and the National Weather Service from both Upton and Mount Holly to make sure that we're following and tracking the impacts of Elsa as she comes up the coast. And to your point governor about New Jersey Task Force 1, that's a team of 80 women and men, they went down there with 19 vehicles when I saw them off last week.

I knew when they watched those towers come down that they wanted to be down there. And it's a phenomenal group. That is not an easy mission. They have been split into two teams, one works from midnight to noon, the other one goes out from noon to midnight, and they have been actively engaged in that entire recovery mission. And we're proud that they're down there. They could be down there for at least a few weeks. But we also have a team ready to go here. Obviously, not want to leave ourselves vulnerable here in the State of New Jersey. So, a full-blown type one response team still stands poised and at the ready here in New Jersey. That's all I got, Phil.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat, thank you. On the hurricane, fair to say as of this gathering, we'll get some collateral, wind and rain, but not a direct shot.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Right before I came in, there was some indication that that storm is tracking a little bit westward. But we do think that the primary impacts from Elsa are going to be really elevated surf and rip currents Thursday into Friday, and that little bit of extra rainfall. So, as we always knock-on wood, we're not expecting too much of a tremendous impact.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And back to the buildings, I've been asked this a fair amount. I suspect we all may have been asked how do we feel about our own buildings. I saw Mayor Fulop is taking some steps in Jersey City, and as usual, he's doing an extraordinary job there. We have among the strongest building codes of any American state. A great team, largely a DCA, which is rich is really good. And having said that, you can imagine folks, we are revisiting code, regularity of inspection, et cetera, as we should. This is a horrible, horrible wake up call. And lastly, by the way, it's a tragedy that has touched New Jersey. I know there's at least one couple missing. I spoke to a friend, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro yesterday, who had his dad's first cousin and his wife were lost, and he just come from the funeral. So, this is not abstract. Florida and New Jersey have a lot of connective tissue for a lot of reasons. And obviously, important one are retirees, who have moved down there over the years. So, keep them all in your prayers. And again, thanks, especially to the women and men of Task Force 1. We'll start over here, Tammy, do you have anything for us? You're good. Okay. Sir, do you have any? You're good. We'll come across in the back, Sarah. Sarah, is that you? Nice to see you. We've got this gentleman right here. Hold on one sec.

**Reporter:** Afternoon, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Hey, good afternoon.

**Reporter:** Some towns in the state still have low vaccination rates, like Lakewood, we're just 38% of adults are fully vaccinated. What's the state's strategy to improve the rates in Lakewood and in other towns? And do you think that strategy is working? What explanation is there for the big increase in initial unemployment claims last week, at a time when so many jobs are going unfilled in New Jersey? And are you sure that the \$300 extra benefit is not hurting the state's recovery? As concern over the Delta variant spreading in children increases, are you considering reinstating mask guidelines in schools for the fall? And how concerned are you about the Lambda variant and the potential for its emergence here in New Jersey?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** The what, sorry?

**Reporter:** The Lambda variant.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'm not hearing the word.

**Reporter:** Lambda.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Landa?

**Reporter:** Lambda, the variant.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Variant, I apologize. Thank you, Dave.

**Reporter:** And one more non-COVID, what measures has your campaign put in place to protect staffers against sexual harassment and assault given that the office to handle these complaints won't be ready for this upcoming election?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. I think we've addressed the vaccination rate by towns. I don't have any color specifically on Lakewood. But is what we're doing working? It is working but we have to stay at it. You just heard when I asked Judy, what was her sense of the magic in Ewing, which is right down the street from us as we speak, and it's a combination of things. So, that's one thing that I think has been a hallmark of our approach to vaccinations. We've not hung our hat just on one thing. Some states said, listen, we're going to give you a million, you can have in a lottery, you can win a million dollars, which by the way, God bless them and hope that works. But we've done a bunch of different things, and I think that's going to continue to be the case. Anything you want to add to that, or while you're at it, maybe we get Tina to get her money's worth on the Lambda variant as well, but Judy.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Sure. The county ambassadors have been in Lakewood for the last two weeks, and we're scheduling a meeting with all of the community leaders to show them the data. We're breaking it down by age, location, working with the religious leaders, and the elected community leaders to develop more pop ups, pop-up sites so that we can increase the vaccination rates. We're getting great cooperation. There's a lot of education and awareness that goes along with the work that we're doing to get over the vaccine hesitancy that we're seeing, not only in Lakewood, but other areas as well.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah. This is a point we probably don't make enough of, they're still not withstanding all of the communication, there are still a lot of folks who need some basic questions answered. Anything from myth breaking, will this impact if you're a childbearing age woman, will it impact your ability to have a child? All the way to what does it cost?

It's free. I want to repeat that, it's free. We do this in multiple languages, depending on the community. You asked about mask, revisiting masks, there's no reason for us to do that on July 7th. First of all, the numbers are really good shape. Judy explained the variants that are in our state, and we've had them, we're the densest state in America. So, that's not news. But at the moment, we're comfortable with where we are. But like we did last summer, the good thing about a mask, it's not like putting a new HVAC system. And you can make that call Sunday night for Monday morning. And we also remind folks that we've given recommendations, and we've allowed districts at the district level to make decisions that they felt were relevant for their local reality, which we think is a sensible thing to do. Tina, any thoughts on variants generally or Lambda in particular?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** At this point, we don't have that much information about Lambda. It doesn't appear to be an issue from a national or New Jersey perspective at this time. We do know, for example, in New Jersey, as the commissioner had stated, our highest proportion variant that's circulating right now is the Alpha variant, followed by the Delta variant, and international numbers based on the forecasting data up until this past week, we do know that Delta is a concern. That said, we consistently and constantly are vigilant about monitoring variant data, just in general here, not only New Jersey, but nationwide. Because as we could see from the trends in the variant data, and what the commissioner had pointed out, is that you can see how, as we see an increase in Delta, we see an inverse decrease in Alpha variant. So, this type of information is important for us to better characterize what is circulating throughout New Jersey, as well as the country. But that said, again, vaccination, that is going to be the most critical intervention and getting those vaccination coverage rates high to try to prevent any sort of variant emergence and variant spread in general.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Tina, thank you. You had to other quickies, and we'll pick up the pace here. Unemployment claims, Rob Asaro-Angelo weighs in and says initial claims increased last week from school-related claims as the school year ended, which makes sense. And my answer on the \$300 continues to be where it's been. I think there are a number of factors. The economy is taking off at a much faster rate than the labor market can catch up. Is the \$300 added amount, which will sunset, by the way, this is not a permanent reality, is that a potential contributing factor? Yes, it certainly could be one of those. I continue to think fear of going back in, lack of access to childcare, at least during the school year, up until a couple of weeks ago, and now you've got kids on summer holiday, you've got who's taking care of the kids, particularly with districts that weren't all in person. You've got folks who have developed completely different habits on how to work. And you've got, which the economists would want me to remind folks, that when the economy is going up, particularly at a steep rate, as it is now in New Jersey, as it is in the country and many places, folks, believe it or not, when they leave the workforce, unlike when the economy is going down, they leave the workforce because they're discouraged. When it's going up at the rate it's going up, they leave the workforce with an element of confidence that they think they can upscale themselves to a better higher paying job. And you're seeing a lot of that, I think as well. So, it's a combination.

And in terms of sexual harassment, workplace conditions, et cetera, I'm proud of the fact that Tammy led those. Tammy is the chair of our reelection, by the way, and the finance chair of our reelection. For those of you not watching on television, that's not true. She does not have a tin cup out over there. First decision she made, I think, before we hired our campaign manager was to hire a firm that does nothing, but this, and they onboard everybody. They do training programs regularly as we ramp the team up and we are ramping it up pretty substantially. And it's a firm that is quite renowned in this space. And I'm very, very happy and glad that you made that decision and we've got them onboard. Thank you. Sophie, is that you? We'll go to you first, and then we'll round.

**Sophie Nieto-Munoz, NJ.COM:** Just one question, out of the COVID deaths in June, how many of those people were vaccinated versus unvaccinated?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** COVID deaths?

**Sophie Nieto-Munoz, NJ.COM:** Yes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I don't know that we have that number. Do you have COVID deaths in June? How many vaccinated versus unvaccinated? We could get that. Can we come back to you on that? It is our overwhelming sense, or it is our sense that the overwhelming amount of the folks who are passing of late, and who are certainly being hospitalized of late are unvaccinated. It is possible, and Judy and Tina would be far more qualified to answer this. It is possible someone passed in June, who was infected months ago, and has been battling, and I can't tell you how many families have spoken with where the lost loved one had been in the hospital battling it, had been battling at home for a month, and then the hospital for a couple months. So, I can't say for sure. But what I can almost virtually, certainly, say for sure is folks who are going into the hospital today are overwhelmingly if not completely unvaccinated, but we'll come back to you if we can. [Mahan], will you help me with Sophie's question? Nikita, good afternoon.

**Nikita Biryukov, NJ Globe:** Good afternoon, governor. So, the entire balance of the rainy-day fund was distributed on, I believe July 1st. What is that money funding? And why did you and legislative leaders tout the investment in the fund if you plan to drain it on the first day of the fiscal year? On your Supreme Court nominee Rachel Wainer Apter, both the Senate Judiciary Chairman and the Senate President are signaling that there's not going to be any movement in her confirmation process until after the election. If she doesn't get confirmed by the end of the legislative session, and you do get reelected, are you committed to nominating her again next year? This one is actually for the commissioner, on a similar note. So, when you came in as acting commissioner in August of 2019, and then when you were confirmed in January of the following year, I am assuming, and I believe we've even had part of this conversation, had a very different set of expectations than what the pandemic brought. I'm wondering if you plan to stay on if the governor wins another term. And then, finally, Governor, I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts on late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's pending induction to the New Jersey Hall of Fame?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Parimal, do you mind addressing the rainy-day fund? And otherwise, I don't want to want to give you half answer here.

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** Yeah, Nikita, we'll come back to you on that. Treasury has an explanation for why that maneuver was undertaken.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** It's more technical in nature. But I'm also happy on the same day, you didn't ask me about this, we made the entire pension payment, \$6.9 billion. That's never been done before. That will save literally, I don't want to put an exact number on it. But it will save billions of dollars over the next 30 years. I have been, I continue to be, and I will be a huge supporter of Rachel Weiner Apter, and I want to thank the senate with both the president, as well as the chair of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Sweeney and Scutari for working with us so effectively in a lot of different avenues including this one, and I continue to be not only a huge fan and supporter, but quite optimistic we'll get to a good result. Judy has agreed to stay on as Commissioner for the next 20 years, which we're making news here today. And I applaud Judy's willingness to stay the course. To say I looked at you and you looked at me, the first part on Nikita's question was, did you have any sense of what was coming? And we both looked at each other, we've been clobbered sideways. But Judy's done an extraordinary, extraordinary job. I'll let her address that. Listen, I had the great, and needless to say that there were political differences, as you can imagine. But Tammy and I had the great treat in I think, 2009 or '10, to have dinner with Justice Scalia and his wife, Maureen. And it was an incredibly enjoyable evening. And needless to say, we didn't talk about politics. But he was quite a guy. And listen, you serve on the US Supreme Court, you deserve recognitions like this. And so, I would say to the whole class, it's an extraordinary group of folks. And it's another reminder that New Jersey punches way above its weight. So, God rest his soul. And again, we salute the hall and all the 2021 inductees. Judy, any color you want to add to that?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** The farthest thing from my mind in August, when a governor gave me the privilege of serving as Commissioner of Health was that we would be facing a pandemic; once in a century pandemic. I could not have imagined that that would have occurred. So, no, I had much different expectations of the particular job that I'm in.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And by the way, the other interesting thing about Judy, and me, and Judy, generally, is we had already met. I want to thank Senator Vitale, who introduced us right after I got elected. We then needed desperate help to stabilize the ship at University Hospital and Judy, who is a former CEO of a hospital, as we also know, the only nurse in the history of the state to serve as commissioner, Judy immediately answered the call to go in, and assess for what, about six months, at University Hospital, right that ship. And then, she and Shereef Elnahal, a short time later flipped Shereef went in as the permanent CEO, Judy was gracious enough to volunteer to come in as Commissioner, and she's done an extraordinary job. Thank you. We'll come back to you on the Treasury question, Parimal will help there. Dave, last but not least.

**Dave:** Thanks, governor. On the Delta variant, I'm sure you're well aware of the report out of Israel. I think it was yesterday that the Pfizer vaccine, they found was only 64% effective in blocking infection. What do you think of that? I know that several health experts have raised questions about how this study was done. Is this concerning when we see this - because that's a very big difference from 88% or 94%. Some are also criticizing those who are unvaccinated for basically, allowing different variants, including the Delta variant to continue to circulate and morph into perhaps even more dangerous variants. What is your reaction to that? Is criticizing these individuals that are unvaccinated, and don't want to get vaccinated fair? And is it accurate, do you think? And finally, maybe, Judy, you could talk about this, as well as the governor, and maybe even Tina as well. When the COVID ambassadors and the door knockers go into different neighborhoods, is there any specific one factor that seems to change people's minds when these discussions are taking place to encourage them to get vaccinated? Is it just plain ignorance? Do people not understand the situation the fact that the vaccines have an extremely high safety rate? Is it something else specific? What is changing people's minds? Thank you,

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Dave, I'll start and turn it to Judy and Tina if that's okay. I did see the data out of Israel. I paid particular attention because we got the Pfizer vaccination. But I still think Tina and Judy will correct the record if they see this differently. That was 64% effective against getting COVID from the variant as opposed to you're going to the hospital or God forbid, ICU or dying. And we have every reason and confidence to believe that these vaccines work against, especially against severe illness and death. Criticizing, at a certain point, come on. David Leonhardt wrote about this in the New York Times. Today, we're turning into two different countries at the moment in terms of less New Jersey because A, our vaccination rates are really high, and the density of variants is real, the density of unvaccinated people is real. But the density of vaccinated people is also real. It's a little bit like when we included smoking, on a list of conditions that would allow you at one point early on in the vaccine rollout process to get to become eligible people, some people, not a lot of people, but some people criticize that. And again, I think I said, we're not here to judge or jury, we know this is a respiratory illness. And if you smoke, you are more susceptible, and we're trying to save as many lives as we can. And I just hope it doesn't come to an us versus them. We've had enough of that in this country of late. This needs to be about all of us finding common ground, getting there together. And I am pleased, God, through dogged efforts led by Judy and the community core on the team will get there. And then, again, I'll turn it to these folks. I don't think there's any one factor in the conversations at the door, unless you see that differently. Judy, I think it's a combination of someone might just not know the facts. They might be homebound, they might have two or three jobs, they might not know legitimately, where the local location is, they may think their immigration status is going to be held against them, they may think it costs money. At least the feedback I've gotten, it's a whole range of reasons.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** And the report show exactly what the governor just said. And a lot of it is social service reasons, can't get off from work. Is there other appointments later at night, or on a Sunday afternoon? And then, a lot of it is transportation. We're finding out an awful lot about people when we knock on their doors, and we get weekly reports on every single door that's been knocked on, and what the findings are, but I'm seeing a lot of social service issues.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen. Tina, how do you react to that, both the question and the answer regarding Pfizer and the effectiveness rate in the Israeli study?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah. There're several different analyses out there right now looking at vaccine effectiveness of the various the various specific vaccines, whether it's Pfizer, or Moderna, Johnson. And there are some other analyses of the Pfizer vaccine that show better effectiveness. So, it really depends on the population that you're looking at and the analysis. That said, the protection that you get from vaccine against disease is way - even if it's slightly diminished, is still way better than not getting vaccine at all, where you have zero protection against the vaccine. So, that's why splitting hairs between whether or not there's effectiveness against serious illness versus illness at all. That is important, because we want to try to minimize that type of poor outcome. But at the end of the day, getting the vaccine does give you protection.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen. Thank you. Judy, Tina, thank you. Pat, Thank you. Parimal, Mahen, Tammy, as always, njprf.org. New Jersey Pandemic Relief Funds continues to do extraordinary work. We'll mask up. And again, we're masking up. People ask us do we change our mask policies. We have not. But this is a state building, which is why we wear them when we're not speaking. And I want to thank the members of the press, and other staff members, who you can't see on television, who are also wearing their masks. Again, we're going to go to the schedule we previewed last week. So, the rest of this week will be as usual, we'll be together next Monday. Assuming the numbers stay low, and we don't see a reason public health or otherwise to change this, we will then be going to every Monday only for at least month of July, and we'll see how it goes over the course of summer. I would bet that as we come back to school in the fall, we're going to probably go back to a little bit more frequent engagement just to make sure folks are getting as up-to-date information as possible. We have two questions, Sophie, you will get one for you to follow up on the deaths in June and Nikita, the technical question on the Treasury front. To each every one of you, God bless and keep up the great work. Take care.

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