

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: July 31st, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon and happy Friday.

With me to my right is the woman who needs no introduction, the commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, the Department of Health Disease Service Medical Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz. Great to have you both. To my left, another guy who needs no introduction, the superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples, is with us. Good afternoon.

First, I want to wish everyone in our state's wonderful, extraordinary Muslim community – by the way, the second largest Muslim-American community of any American state – a blessed Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice, commemorating God's test of Abraham in marking the end of the Hajj, the pilgrim to Mecca. So to all, Eid Mubarak.

Next, I must acknowledge, sadly the announcement yesterday by the New Jersey Jewish news that it is ceasing print publication after an impressive 74-year run serving New Jersey. The news was an important link that connected New Jersey's diverse Jewish communities in which strengthened the bond between our state on the one hand and the state of Israel on the other. I want to give a shout out to our friend, Ambassador Danny Danon. His last day as Israel's Consulate General in New York, including service to New Jersey, is today. We wish him the very best and thank him for his extraordinary partnership over the past two-and-a-half years during our time here.

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The Jewish news predates the creation of Israel and has covered the news honestly and transparently across its nearly seven-and-a-half decade run. The news has fought against the increasing incidents of anti-Semitism and intolerance across our state. When I took my first international economic mission as governor, I made sure it included a stop in Israel, a key trading and business partner. As always, the Jewish news was there to cover it. To all the reporters and editors who over the years have put out a paper edition, *New Jersey Jewish News*, every Shabbat, thank you. I hope the news will continue in an online format. You are all a vital part of a vital voice and force for the good.

Next, I must note, I would be remiss if I did not, that Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell sent the Senate home for a long weekend without taking any action on a long list of items, but especially to renew federal unemployment benefits that have now expired for millions of families here in New Jersey and many more millions nationwide. With millions of families literally left hanging, to simply go home for a long weekend is the ultimate act of irresponsible and behavior and dereliction of duty. Senator McConnell, please get back to Washington and get this done. Families across our state and, indeed, across the nation are facing literally an economic meltdown on your watch. This is no time to take a weekend, never mind a long weekend off; despicable.

Before we turn to the overnight numbers, I am proud to announce that we're making a series of improvement to our online dashboard that will provide a deeper look into and provide greater context to – Judy is laughing as well – the data that we discuss here. Every day we receive a summary from Ed and his team at the Communicable Disease Service, which provides a detailed overview of cases and data pertaining to hospitalizations and deaths. That data will now be put in a more interactive and easy to navigate form. The dashboard available at COVID19.NJ.gov will provide statewide and county level trends in COVID-19 confirmed cases, deaths, and hospitalizations over time. We are posting the percent positivity by region and by date.

The number of cases can now be viewed by the date of illness onset. The breakdowns by race and ethnicity are given greater clarity. We are also posting the complete curve of confirmed cases by date of death as well as the dates of the deaths we currently have listed as probable. Throughout this pandemic we have occasionally made tweaks to the way we present data to provide greater context or clarity, and today's upgrades to the dashboard continue that work. I must thank Judy and Ed and their teams for their ongoing efforts.

If you go to the dashboard, you will see that we are today reporting an additional 699 positive test results, pushing the total number of cases of coronavirus in New Jersey since March 4<sup>th</sup> to 181,660. Before I move on, I'd like to note that even with the increases we have seen in the latest case numbers, New Jersey remains among the ten states nationwide with the lowest number of active cases per capita. I want to warn you in advance you're going to get on the one hand, on the other hand today because the other hand we're going to be pretty tough on as well.

The positivity rate for tests recorded for July 27<sup>th</sup>, which is the latest date for which we have that data, is 2.15%. That is also not quite as good as it's been, but that's pretty darn good. We have continued to increase our volume of testing over the past couple of weeks. As a result, we remain among the five states with the lowest daily percent positivity. Again, one of the top ten cases in lowest number of active cases per capita, and we remain among the five states with the lowest daily percent positivity.

I want to add that I had a good conversation with the executive chairman of Bio-Reference this morning, Jon Cohen, to talk through in particular how we can we all work together, as we mentioned several over the past few weeks, to shrink that turnaround time. It's too uneven, and for the most part it's too long. We had a good call with Jon.

Side by side with that, we also continue ramping up our contact tracing capabilities and working with local health departments to identify causes of outbreaks that have contributed to recent increases in our cases. Judy and I will have more on that next week, both I would bet technologically, but also an update here in person. However, the increases in new cases we have seen over the past week has pushed the statewide rate of transmission to 1.35. Given the recent data on cases, we anticipate, unfortunately, that it will go higher in the days ahead.

Here's on the other hand. The numbers are setting off alarms that we are taking and we take very seriously. We still may be among the leaders in having the lower case numbers and daily positivity rates. We don't take that for granted, but we are standing in a very dangerous place. As I said, the alarms are going off.

The only way to silence these alarms and get back to the process of moving forward is for everyone to take them seriously. Not just most of you, but all of you, all of us. We are not past this. Everyone who walks around refusing to wear a mask or who hosts an indoor house party or who overstuffs a boat is directly contributing to these increases. This has to stop, and it has to stop now.

As a reminder, the limit on indoor gatherings is the lesser of either 100 individuals or 25% of capacity, meaning if your capacity is 100, then you can have no more than 25 people inside. It's the lesser of 25% or 100 individuals. I want to reiterate that I and we reserve the right to lower this threshold, if necessary, to protect public health. I'm not anticipating or announcing any specific action today, but consider this as being put on notice. We will not tolerate these devil-may-care, nonchalant attitudes any longer.

Pat's going to have a couple of specific comments on compliance, and he's got one thing in particular that relates to indoors that he will hit hard, and I will be happy to come in behind you and hit hard as well. Back to the data and a look at yesterday's report from our hospitals; as of last night, there were 352 COVID-confirmed patients being treated, with an additional 343, Judy, persons under investigation. Pending the return of their test results, that's a total of 695 hospitalizations. Of those, 113 required intensive care and 45 ventilators were in use. Overall, the trends in our hospitals continue to move our healthcare system in the right direction. As these numbers keep moving down, so do we in the national rankings of the important healthcare metrics.

Sadly, however, we continue to lose members of our extraordinary family to COVID-19. Today we must report another ten confirmed deaths and losses of blessed lives. Of these, Judy, you and I talked about this earlier, seven occurred in the past five days. Three of those were on July 27<sup>th</sup>, the only day with more than 1 confirmed death of late. This is a big deal, and I know Judy's going to want to come in behind this as well.

As of the latest hospital data, there were no, and I repeat no zero in-hospital deaths reported over the past 24 hour period, ending at 10:30 p.m. last night. That is the first day that we can say that is the case since March 10<sup>th</sup>, 142 days ago, almost 5 months ago. You asked us will we get one of those days, and we said we would get it. We just didn't know when. It was the 24 hours that ended last night. I think we're all going to just take a moment and reflect on that; again, the 1<sup>st</sup> day we can say that since March 10<sup>th</sup>.

While this is an extraordinary milestone, let me just remind folks – and Judy and Ed, correct me if you think I'm wrong about this – I'm going to say about a month ago is about when you would have been plus or minus infected. I know there were some that were a lot longer and some that were shorter that would have led to a death around now. If you look at the number of positives that we were reporting at the end of June, as we are in the end of July, it was averaging about 350 a day. There were a couple of days higher and there were a couple of days lower in that last week of June.

This past week the average, and again a big number today, a somewhat lesser number yesterday, let's smooth that out, is averaging about 550. Let's just remember deaths or lack of deaths, thank God in this case, reflect positive cases. This is a lagging indicator of what we were seeing – again, I'm simplifying – about a month ago, about 350 a day of positive cases; this past week, 550 a day of positive cases. We've got to not only commemorate, reflect, and celebrate zero deaths in our hospitals over the past 24 hours, we have to also acknowledge the number of positive cases is meaningfully higher right now on average than it was a month ago.

The total number of lost lives that are confirmed, lab confirmed, 13,944, and the number of probable deaths remains 1,875. As we do every day, let's recall three more of the blessed members of our New Jersey family who we have lost. We begin by remembering Dominic, on the left, and Shirley, on the right, D'Stefan of Florham Park, which they called home for 65 years. D'Stefan family walked me through this. Dominic's ancestors came from Italy.

Their name was, in fact, Distefano. In the lost translation reality of Ellis Island, the I behind the D got flipped into an apostrophe, and the O at the end of Distefano got dropped. They are D'Stefan, but proudly Italian-Americans. Dominic was born in the Chambersburg section of Trenton in the house, by the way, that his

father, a mason, built by hand. I think it was his dad who was the one who came over and immigrated as first generation.

At the onset of World War II, Dominic enlisted in the US Navy and served as a radar technician aboard the light cruiser, the USS Worcester. From that posting, he developed a lifelong interest in electronics. After the war, he earned a degree in electrical engineering under the GI Bill from Temple University. His budding career in the field was short circuited when he was recalled to the Navy to serve during the Korean War.

After his second tour of duty, Dominic earned his master's in management sciences from the Stevens Institute of Technology and began a career with Bell Labs, where he would work on the Telstar Project, the first successful transmission of a radio wave to a target in space and back. More importantly, it was at Bell Labs that he met Shirley. Upon his retirement from AT&T, he began a career teaching mathematics and engineering and the County College of Morris, retiring in his 80s. Dominic had a lifelong love of music and was an accomplished trumpeter and trombonist, a member, by the way, of the musician's union. He played in orchestras as well as in major parades. His favorite song, as was my late father's favorite song, was Hoagy Carmichael's American classic "Stardust." I'm dating myself.

Just one week after Dominic passed, Shirley, too, lost her battle with COVID-19. Shirley was born in Kearny, attended Kearny high school and Upsala College and as we know now, she also started working at Bell Labs. After their marriage, Shirley and Dominic – by the way, she called him Dom. They settled in Florham Park to raise their daughter, Donna. Shirley would go back to work as a school bus driver for the Florham Park Board of Education and became a beloved fixture in the life of the community and in the lives of thousands of children she transported to and from school. She knew where each one lived, what their likes were, and recalling some something special about their personalities.

After hanging up her bus keys, Shirley took an active interest in gardening and bird-watching, making the weekly trip to Agway on Senior Citizens Tuesday for various birdseeds and treats for her feathered friends. She loved all animals and never minded when the neighborhood deer stopped by to snack on the seeds she put out. She loved to sew, and to bake pies, and to travel the world. Dominic and Shirley were both longtime and active parishioners at Grace Episcopal Church in Madison for over 65 years. When they passed, he was 92, and she was 90. They leave behind, as I mentioned, their daughter Donna and her husband Dennis. And I had the honor to speak with both of them. So as we send them off, I want to quote Hoagy Carmichael and say, "Though I dream in vain, in my heart it will remain my stardust melody, the memory of love's refrain." May God bless them both and we thank Dominic for his years of service to our nation.

Next, we remember John Kupcho on the left and look at his family on the right – my Lord – of West Caldwell. Jack, as he was known, was 83. Jack served in the US Air Force and earned a Bachelor of Science in Ornamental Horticulture from the University of Tennessee, then came to New Jersey to earn his Master of Science in Environmental Science and Urban Planning from Rutgers University. He would have a long career at Rutgers beginning in 1963 as the Essex County Agricultural Agent at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension helping commercial vegetable growers in Bergen, Essex, Morris, and Passaic Counties to maximize resources to increase crop yields. Jack would ultimately serve as Chairman of the Department of Agriculture and Resource Management Agents at Rutgers College. Jack developed the master gardeners program for northeastern New Jersey. He organized leaf composting and groundwater education programs and worked with the Newark Urban Gardening Program, a program which was chosen for the Take Pride in America Award in 1988 and Jack accepted that award from President Ronald Reagan at the White House.

For his more than half-century of teaching, advising, and improving agriculture, Jack received the 2015 New Jersey Board of Agriculture's Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award. He also held the title of Professor Emeritus at Rutgers Cook College. In 1982, Jack and his first wife, Maryanne, who by the way sadly passed away at the very young age of 48 – they took over the Pine Florist in Verona, and he was often in the greenhouses giving advice to novice gardeners and veteran horticulturists alike. Jack was involved in many local groups including the West Caldwell Environmental Commission, which honored him last August by renaming the West Caldwell Community Gardens in his honor.

Horticulture was his professional love, but Jack took special pleasure in his family, and you can see he had a big one, especially being part of his grandchildren's lives. He was also – don't hold this against him or me – a lifelong Red Sox fan, an affliction which paid off late in life with their World Championship runs. Jack is

survived by his wife Helen, and she's not well, either, so please pray for her, his daughters Terri – and I had the great honor of speaking with Terry – Mary Ellen, Kathy – who by the way is a councilwoman in West Caldwell – Colleen and their spouses and by his ten grandchildren. We thank him for his many years of service to New Jersey's farmers and gardeners. He's a big reason why we still proudly call us the great Garden State. May God bless him, his memory, and his extraordinary family.

Three more members of our New Jersey family who COVID-19 has taken away, three more reasons why we cannot let up one bit in doing all we can to stop the spread of this virus to save lives. I reiterate what we've been saying here all week and frankly for the past several weeks. Use your common sense. We all want to get back to things the way they were but right now, that is just not possible. Keep social distancing. Keep wearing a mask and please remember, indoor parties are just a bad idea, period.

Now switching gears, this morning the news broke that the Census Bureau will be ending its door-to-door efforts one month earlier than originally planned, on September 30<sup>th</sup>, meaning that we need you to make sure you are counted now. We cannot overstate the importance of an accurate count of all New Jerseyans in the census. It's about protecting \$45 billion every year in aid for our schools, our healthcare facilities, and our communities. That's \$450 billion over a decade, if you're counting at home. It's about making sure every family has healthy food to eat and that our roads and transit systems are funded. It's about making sure that we have what we need to rebound from this pandemic. It's about making sure we get back every dollar from Washington that we deserve.

So far, roughly two and a half million households, or 64.7% of all New Jersey households, have already responded to the census. That's a good number, but right now we're only good enough to rank 21<sup>st</sup> among all states in responding. We need everyone to be counted. Last weekend, faith leaders took to their pulpits and asked their worshippers to fill out the census and by Monday, we saw our numbers going up, so I want to thank those faith leaders, each and every one of them. And we ask you folks to continue engaging your congregations. Please take time to go to [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov) today to make sure you and your family are counted. Then reach out to your friends and neighbors and make sure they are, too. We know New Jersey was undercounted in 2010 and because of that, we have lost out on literally billions and billions of dollars of extra federal funds over the past decade. And the news that the Census Bureau will stop its direct outreach one month early means that unless you do your civic duty, we will be undercounted again. And an undercount will almost certainly mean especially that our communities of color will be left out.

There will be hundreds of activities across the state this weekend to push residents to get counted. You can find one near you, by the way, going to [census.nj.gov](https://census.nj.gov) and communities across the state have challenged each other to see who can outperform the other. Let's all be a part of this census. Let's show how strong New Jersey is by getting counted today. Again, go to [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov).

Couple of other items: The last dance of the Last Dance is tonight right here in Trenton at Arm & Hammer Park, Cranford against Jackson. Cranford won the north; Jackson won the south. It should be a barn-burner. Hats off to each and every member of those teams and their managers and coaches but also to every single team who participated in this. As hard as COVID-19 is to deal with only 2 teams out of 222 could not play out their entire string. To the organizers, to the inspiration – the folks who had the inspiration to this tournament and to each and every one of the participants, hats off to each and every one of you.

Now finally I want to continue to highlight the small businesses and business leaders who are not only such a strong part of our communities but who will be a vital part of our long-term economic recovery. We know this pandemic has been nothing short of an economic crisis as much as it has been a public health crisis. And that is why I'm proud of the work of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to pump \$100 million directly into our small business sector. One of those small businesses we're proud to have partnered with is Joy's Hallmark of Marlton, owned by Ron and Joy Monokian. They've been in business since 1987 helping their customers celebrate holidays, birthdays, weddings, graduations, and frankly everything else in between. But when the pandemic hit, their store took a hit, too.

Through the EDA, Ron was able to secure direct grant assistance, which when paired with the support he received through the federal government meant that Joy's Hallmark's employees could be kept on the payroll and that the bills could be paid to keep the store running. I had the great pleasure of speaking with Ron on Wednesday afternoon, and I know he shares our optimism in the days ahead, although he reminded me he's

still 25% off of where he was last year. So while he's optimistic, he's still making up for lost time. He's also, by the way, a member of both the Burlington and Ocean City Chambers of Commerce and I share his support of all the small business owners who have been working hard to keep their dreams alive throughout this pandemic. We're going to get through this together, and we're going to come out stronger together.

That goes, by the way, not just for our small business community. It goes for each and every one of our entire state. Let's keep working together to push this virus back down. So I want to wish everybody a safe weekend. Again, keep your social distances. Wear a mask and please, no house parties, no overstuffed boats. We cannot afford any more irresponsible outbreaks. We've also got some weather coming down the pike, which Pat's going to talk about in a few minutes. We can do this, folks. We're New Jersey. We have never backed down from a fight, and we've never lost. We always punch above our weight. We always get there unlike any American state. We cannot let our hair down. We're not out of the woods. This is not past us. We're seeing real evidence of that. So folks, stay together, keep doing the right things. Behave responsibly. Common sense for the common good, for yourself, your family, your neighbors, your friends, for all of us.

Now it is my pleasure to turn things over to the woman who needs to introduce, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of the Department of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon.

As we journey through this pandemic together, there is no group that is more important than our local health officials. Throughout this pandemic, local health departments have been working around the clock to prepare, respond to, and contain the spread of COVID-19. Earlier this year, the department allocated \$5 million of federal funding to support the local health departments to carry out critical local public health efforts such as investigating positive cases, contact tracing, providing guidance to long-term care facilities, standing up community testing sites, ensuring individuals have a safe place to quarantine, and a variety of other COVID-19-related activities.

Today, we are further investing in the public health infrastructure by making \$32.3 million in federal funding available to county and local health departments. Thirteen-point-seven million of this CDC funding will be allocated to health departments in each of the 21 counties and the city of Newark, which are responsible for preparedness coordination in their jurisdictions. These 22 health departments are known as LINCS agencies. LINCS stands for Local Information Network and Communications Systems. This funding will allow these agencies to hire additional employees to coordinate testing, contact tracing, and isolation and quarantine activities in their communities in collaboration with the 99 local health departments. These new positions will provide data management and epidemiological support to all local health departments and contact tracing teams within their areas. They'll help individuals exposed to COVID with needs such as housing, food, mental health, and medical services, and other social supports. And they will ensure testing, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine, and social support services are conducted in a timely and complete manner.

Eighteen-point-six million of federal funding will be distributed to the seventy-seven local health departments that do not receive LINCS funding to hire vulnerable population outreach coordinators to ensure that at-risk residents in their communities have access to testing and support services such as housing, insurance coverage, unemployment compensation to allow them to quarantine effectively. These funds will be disbursed over a two-year period and will provide health departments with more resources to identify, track, and respond to local outbreaks quickly.

There is still much that we don't know about this virus, but we continue to learn something very day. This week, the CDC released data on the clinical course and recovery for individuals with milder illness. Their findings indicate that even among symptomatic adults tested in outpatient settings, it might take weeks for resolution of symptoms and return to usual health. One-third of those individuals surveyed had not returned to usual health within two to three weeks of testing, and they found that one in five previously healthy young individuals 18 to 34 years of age weren't back to usual health in two to three weeks after testing positive. This lingering illness may lead to prolonged absences from work, studies, or other activities. So researchers are beginning to study the longer term effects of COVID-19, and some studies have indicated that the virus can damage the heart.

In addition, there are many anecdotal stories of individuals who had the illness who are still struggling with fatigue and difficulty breathing months later. This should be a sobering reminder to healthy residents, especially young individuals, that this disease is serious. You could be battling cough fatigue or shortness of breath for weeks or months. Again, there's still a lot we don't know about the disease and its health effects, so it is not worth taking unnecessary risks. We must continue to take precautions: staying a safe distance from others, wearing face coverings, and practicing good hand hygiene.

Moving onto my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 695 hospitalizations with 113 individuals in critical care, and only 39% of them are on conventional ventilators. Fortunately, no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. Our total remains at 54. The ages of the children affected range from 1 to 18. At this point, none of these children are currently hospitalized. The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. The race ethnicity breakdown is as follows: white, 54%; black, 18.3; Hispanic, 20.3; Asian, 5.5; and other, 1.8. All of the ten newly reported deaths occurred in July. As the Governor mentioned, seven of the ten occurred in the last five days. Our hospitals reported as of 10 PM last night for the prior 24 hour-period, no deaths for the first time since March. The state veterans' homes, the numbers remain the same as do those at the psychiatric hospitals. Our daily percent positivity as of July 27<sup>th</sup> in the state is 2.15%. The northern part of the state reports 1.82, the central part of the state, 2.00, and the southern part of the state, 3.01.

As the Governor announced, we are adding additional data to our dashboard. I want to thank Ed. He is the developer of the dashboard to provide more context about how COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in our state and our counties. Under the tab titled Case Summary, you can view the trends the Governor mentioned. You can also select individual dates and date ranges to see the data more granularly. We are adding data on age-adjusted case and mortality rates by race and ethnicity, which allows for a fairer comparison between the groups with different age distributions. And earlier this week, we posted a new tab with hospital discharge data broken down by age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

That concludes my daily report. As always, stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, get tested, mask up, and for each other and for us all, please take the call. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, great report and thank you for everything. I had begun to get read in more recently, more anecdotal than science-based, a friend Bill Laforet up in Mahwah first raised with me a number of weeks ago this whole notion of what they're now calling long haulers, as in long-haul truckers. But this reality of the lingering health challenges – I mentioned the Red Sox earlier. They've got a pitcher right now who's got an inflamed heart – muscle in his heart, but he's tested negative now after having tested positive weeks ago. There's fatigue you mentioned, a whole range of challenges, many of which we probably don't know yet. So it's just another – not only does that – to your very good point, that creates another health challenge that we're going to have to collectively deal with, obviously, because we're going to be there for those people. But it's another reminder that once you get sucked in by this, it could linger in your system, in your body, for a long time. So the consequences may or – God forbid are not life and death but as we've seen with thousands and thousands of folks who've lost their lives, it is in addition to that. You may get through this as most people do, but you may bring with you health realities that could go on for a long time. So thank you for highlighting that.

Pat, tropical storm is on our list, which is not COVID, but that's something that would potentially complicate our lives. Compliance, again, you and I are not happy with indoor behavior. Any update on that front and any other matters. Thank you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Sure. Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon.

In Kearny, subject arrested for shoplifting, while being arrested, did spit on the Kearny officers claiming to have COVID-19. From compliance, the Lakeside Diner in Forked River, I think they were cited four times, Gov, for executive order violations but today were served with a closure order from the Department of Health after, again, multiple violations of the Governor's EO.

With regard to the storm, at 1 o'clock this afternoon, our emergency support function, our ESF leads, whether that's masked care, public utilities, transportation – had a call with National Weather Service to make sure we're prepared and in good posture for this storm. At 2 o'clock, if we're done by 2, I will be on with the National Weather Service and if not, Emergency Management Command will be on and then at 3 o'clock this

afternoon, I will be on with Region 2 Administrator Tom Van Ness and his staff, again, pointing to our phenomenal partnership with FEMA, making sure that we're ready should this tropical storm evolve into a hurricane. At this juncture, we're thinking hopefully it's going to be mostly a rain event similar to Tropical Storm Faye, but in emergency management we always say you can never be over-prepared. So that's all I got, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat, could you repeat just for a second and make sure everyone hears this what the diner was cited for?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** They were – actually it comes under the authority of Commissioner Persichilli. It's a health order that orders them to close. Again, it was for violations over the past few months just disregard of the order, wanting to remain open so that the Lakeside –

**Governor Phil Murphy:** This is indoor.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** This is indoor, yeah, Lakeside Diner in Forked River. That owner was ultimately served that closure order I think around noon today, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. I mean, we couldn't be clearer. Every single darn day, it's quite clear what works and what doesn't work, and I will tell you, there's anecdotal evidence that we've heard of other behavior like that. As I said, I mentioned we're putting up the alarms and the flashing lights right now. Whether it's enforcement or changing our policy, you should assume we're not going to sit and take this much longer.

On the storm, plus or minus, when does that hit New Jersey based on what you know? And I know you've got your calls still ahead of you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** I think we're a few days out from that, Governor. It may be the Monday timeframe but my calls at 2 and 3 will certainly – with it so far off the coast, certainly a few unknowns with that, but we'll be watching it every hour.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I know I speak on behalf of Judy, Ed, Jared, the rest of us, if you have to go to take the call, we're better off for it. We won't be offended.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thanks, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So thank you. Thank you all.

I think we'll start over here. Where's Mahen? We're going to be virtual tomorrow and Sunday, and we're 1 o'clock on Monday. We just got word the White House is going to be at, I think, 4 o'clock or 3 o'clock, I think, on Monday. So we'll be able to hold our regular times. And we also reserve the right to revisit this three a week format. If things go south, you'll see more of us but hopefully that won't happen. Again, virtual tomorrow and Sunday unless you hear otherwise and we'll be together with you in person at 1 on Monday.

Aswan's got the mic. Dustin, good afternoon.

**Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record:** Good afternoon. Getting to the restrictions that you mentioned before, a federal report from earlier in the week which examined each state recommended that New Jersey specifically consider lowering the gathering size limit for outside. If cases continue to increase, where does that rank on your list of potential actions to take that you mentioned before? And is there anything else under consideration that people should know about? On finances, the deadlines recently passed for corporate business and sales tax collections, and we learned that the sales tax figures for June came in far lower than you had projected. Do you still stand by the \$10 billion figure for projected loss or do you plan to revise that figure? Given some of the fears and anxieties that teachers and faculty have about returning to school in the fall, would you be willing to allow teachers and school workers the option of working remotely as you gave that option to parents for their children?

And lastly on the eviction moratorium, obviously tenants are struggling to pay their rent, but then on the flipside, you have a lot of landlords who haven't collected rent in six months. Do you have any timeline for ending the moratorium or do you have any plans to address came in far lower than you had projected. Do you still stand by the \$10 billion figure for projected loss or do you plan to revise that figure? Given some of the fears and anxieties that teachers and faculty have about returning to school in the fall, would you be willing to

allow teachers and school workers the option of working remotely as you gave that option to parents for their children? And lastly on the eviction moratorium, obviously tenants are struggling to pay their rent, but then on the flipside, you have a lot of landlords who haven't collected rent in six months. Do you have any timeline for ending the moratorium or do you have any plans to address that issue?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Dustin. I have to say, based on what we know, the outside reality is not our problem at the moment. And Judy, unless you or Ed see it otherwise, we just haven't seen – we don't have evidence. And again, there's a mountain of data that we're plowing through all the time. We just have not seen the evidence that the outside reality is our problem. It is the inside reality, and that is something that we are – as I'm – it's no secret at this point. As I've said it several times, that is something we're looking hard at.

I don't have an update on the \$10 billion number, Dustin, but that's something that we're going to continue to look at. And boy, I wish we had resolution on the federal cash assistance for states. Not only did they walk away off the bridge of the ship in the Senate leaving individuals hanging on by a thread but you got states all over the country who are barely hanging on by a thread.

I think on the educators' side – by the way, we had a good meeting with some of the leadership on the educators – our team and their team yesterday. And we're in – the districts are in the last stages of putting their plans together. I think one of the side – I think we'll leave that to the district plans and see what they have and what they are actually planning. As we've said many times, no two districts are alike. But one of the benefits – one of the asks, and a rightful ask, of educators has been capacity in the classroom. And one of the ways we wanted to give relief not just to parents to give them flexibility and kids and districts but also explicitly to educators and that ask was to give that remote learning flexibility an option, particularly when we found the resources to close the digital divide. And so that is indirectly not just helping the family and kids where that makes sense but it's also helping the educators by lowering capacity.

Yeah, I was asked this on "Ask the Governor" last night. The moratorium, Matt – Matt Platkin is with us. I think we'll ask up to, as I recall, two months after I declare an end to the health emergency, number one, and number two, symmetry has been at the core of a lot of the rental and mortgage holidays and windows that we've created. In other words, if you're a landlord with a mortgage over here, we've asked the mortgage bankers to get off your back and give you a holiday. And likewise, that allows you to give the people who are renting from you, whether it's a house or an office or whatever it might be, a holiday on that side. And that symmetry is still at the center of our – all of the windows that we've created. What we don't want – I was asked this last night – people playing games and going circuitously through one legal avenue when they know that that has a higher chance of being able to circuit our executive order. Or secondly that on day one following the end of the window, whether you're a renter or you have a mortgage and you're a mortgage payer, we don't want and don't expect that you're going to have a lump sum payment to make on day one of that post-holiday period. We're working with the legislature. We need – Matt, unless I'm mistaken, we need statutory authority, so we need laws to be passed, and we're working with them so that there's a plan that more than asking or hoping that the mortgage lender or the landlord would behave that way. There is something like for every month that you've had a window that you haven't had to pay your mortgage, you have a six-month window to make that up, something like that.

Anything you want to add or you good? You're good? Okay, thanks, Dustin. Please.

**Reporter:** Are you considering any order to help college upperclassmen and grad students who are locked into one year off-campus leases that they no longer need for colleges that will be all or nearly all remote learning this fall? There are thousands who signed leases pre-COVID that do not offer any legal way out and with families still struggling, having to pay for an apartment that will not be used is not feasible.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Is that it? Yeah, I haven't personally spent a whole lot of time on this, but we know the issue and our team is working with – as I said, there's legislative fixes that would partially if not entirely address that. There's also behavior we expect out of folks, but we understand that this is a challenge. I've got it, by the way, in my own family. And so that's something that is a work in progress. I don't know, Matt, if you want to add anything or – so bear with us on that, but that's part of the legislative fix that we're trying to get to.

You got anything, sir? Alex, you good?

**Reporter:** Thank you, Governor. First, a question from my colleague, Keith Kaczynski. He wants to know when do you expect gyms to reopen and if you've considered reopening them with limited capacity or scheduled appointments? And for me for yourself and the commissioner, can you walk us through what would happen if the RT, if the hospitalization rates increased, if the alarms continue and they keep increasing? What could you envision changing or walking back first, whether it's outdoor dining or gathering capacity? And what are those red lines for you? Is the RT above a certain number? Is it anything along those particular lines, and finally, just for the Governor, if you had a chance to have a conversation with a parent who's concerned about sending his or her child back to in-person education in the fall because of COVID? What would you say to that parent, not as the Governor but as the father of four children?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That would be a conversation I could have with myself because I am a parent of a kid going back to school. Gyms, full bar opening, I don't – is just not – we're not there yet. Limited – and when we do get there, your question I think was could you see it being done with some limitations, capacity or otherwise. Yes, just as indoor dining – I think – I don't want to put words in your mouth, but we've talked for weeks now about having indoor dining, all the capacity restrictions, social distancing, hyper-hygiene and liquor – bar service only to the table as opposed to any gathering around the bar. So yes, the answer is when we do get there on gyms – and I say when, we'll get there; we'll get there on indoor dining – it will be with some restrictions. We do schedule – we allow schedule right now but only for either individuals or people in the same bubble, which is overwhelmingly people in the same family or who are living under the same roof. And I hope, believe me, that we get to a better place.

What are we looking at in terms of – Judy, I'm going to hit this and then see if you or Ed want to add anything. What's a red line that we might be at which would trigger potential policy or enforcement steps? I think you should assume we're there. So I don't think we have to – you won't have to wait a lot longer unless we see – we better have a big weekend. That would really help, but assuming that trends of late keep going where they're going, we're in that neighborhood right now. I can't tell you exactly what, but overwhelmingly, we're focused on indoor – really it's two things, indoor activity and Judy and all that she has done and all that we're trying to do to manage out-of-state travel coming in here in New Jersey and to have gone out of state coming back out of state. We frankly don't see a whole lot coming from that second reality. We're still getting our arms around that because we're asking a lot of individuals. It is overwhelmingly, though, indoor activity, high congregation, lack of ventilation.

What I would say as a parent or to a parent, and I am a parent, is a couple of things I've already said but I want to repeat because it's a very good question. Don't expect a normal school year. And I think if you've got that expectation, you're going to be disappointed. This is going to be unusual. Just look at the moment we're in not just as a state but as a nation and the world. It's not going to be normal. Secondly, we will try to get as much flexibility as humanly possible into the system, including reserving the right, based on the data that we've just discussed, to make decisions iteratively as we go forward.

Thirdly, remember that we have three big principles: number one, health; number two, best education possible; number three, equity. And that gets to a point – it depends on who the parent is. Is it a home with an extra room for the kid to easily remote learn, multiple devices, not both parents aren't working so they don't have to worry about putting their living at risk or the daycare challenges that would come from having a child at home. Remember that on the other hand, there are households, whether it's there are two working parents or a single mom or dad or the circumstances of the density of their living where the in-person option is the only option, that there's really – any Plan B is a poor – either doesn't exist or it's a poor substitute for the in-person piece.

And I would say lastly that we will do it working with the districts and they've done an extraordinary job. We'll do it as responsibly as possible so that if you're in the school, you're going to see social distancing enforced, face masks and coverings enforced, hyper-hygiene, limitations on capacity. However they get there in that district depends on the district because as I've said, there's no two districts alike. But know that normalcy is not within our grasp right now. Let's all accept that. Let's take our hats off to everybody, the districts, the supers, the boards, the educators, the parents, the kids themselves, the staff that are all trying to get this right. Know that we'll do it as responsibly as humanly possible and we're going to go through this together. Thank you.

Katherine, is that you? How are you?

**Katherine Landergan, Politico:** I'm good. How are you?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good. It's hard to see people these days. How are you?

**Katherine Landergan, Politico:** Good. So I wanted to ask you first just based on what you said, I mean, how soon could we start to see some of the rollbacks? Could it be next week? And then DOL has indicated that 96% of workers have received at least one unemployment check, but to me the backlog is unclear. I mean, how many of these workers are still waiting on checks? And will you release that information? Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I don't have a specific answer for the number on the second one, but we can get it for you. Mahen, will you follow up with Katherine? I assume it is 96% of 1.44 million, which is the number of people who have made a claim. So whatever the 4% of that number would be is around, sounds to me like 65,000. But that's – we'll come back to you. And by the way, I had asked the governor last night. You all have been very good about raising issues that are overwhelmingly specific to the individual. Early on, there were – there was a weekend when the system crashed, and that held us back a couple days. That's overwhelmingly not the case these days. It's very specific to the individual.

I think if we take any steps, we're not going to wait a whole lot longer. I can't give you an exact date. And again, if we have a really good weekend and start to the week, then we'll reconsider that. But we – whether it's the policies in place, the enforcement in the teeth with which – although we've got a fair amount of teeth; there's no question about that, but we're looking at it real-time. Thank you for that. Good to see you.

Matt?

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Commissioner, do you have a – excuse me. Is there anything new to report on Sunday's Jackson Township Airbnb house party? Have any of the participants been tested? And were any of those tests positive or contact tracers involved? And actually, do you have a date on the last time the RT has been at this level? Governor, school districts or some school districts are proposing a single day of in-person classes each week. Is this acceptable in your view? And the calls from teachers' unions for you to cancel in-person classes seem to be growing. Do you have anything to say to the dozens of teachers who protested in Summerville yesterday and who said they're afraid to go back to classes?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Is that it? I don't think we have any, that we know of, out of the Jackson house party yet. Is that correct, folks? Ed?

**Medical Director for the Department of Health Dr. Edward Lifshitz:** We have asked. We have not yet heard of any cases associated with Jackson so as of now, no.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And I think you mentioned this earlier; one of the two of us did, Judy, that that means we're almost certain – would be shocked if there weren't cases, sadly, that came out of that. So the numbers, if anything, are going up, but I don't believe that they're involved in that.

When was the last day we were at this number of positives? Rate of transmission, I don't know but we'll get that for you. Mahen, did you hear that? Last day we were at where we are today, which is 1.35.

I won't comment on a district plan, not that I'm afraid to comment on it, but I need to know a lot more about what the district looked like, their rationale, and I know the Department of Education would be – forget about me. the Department of Education who are the education experts, and Judy and her team as the health experts would want to look at that and understand. Our team had a very constructive meeting and I was back and forth with leadership myself with one of the big unions. And listen, I think everyone's trying to do the – get to the right place here, and I commend the fact that everyone is doing that. And whether or not we're exactly in the right place right now is a lot less of a – concerning or of interest to me than is there a spirit of cooperation and teamwork trying to get to the right place recognizing, as I said to Alex earlier, this is not a normal and it won't be a normal school year. So bear with us on that. Again, this is – the districts are polishing off their plans and both Department exactly in the right place right now is a lot less of a – concerning or of interest to me than is there a spirit of cooperation and teamwork trying to get to the right place recognizing, as I said to Alex earlier, this is not a normal and it won't be a normal school year. So bear with us on that. Again, this is – the districts are polishing off their plans and both Department of Ed, Department of Health, our team, and the front office will be going through that process.

Quick swig? Going to mask up, Judy, if that's alright with you. Again, Judy and Ed, thank you. Pat, likewise. Good luck on your calls. I think we got you in just a couple minutes before 2. Jared, Matt Platkin, Mahen, thank you all. Virtually or electronically tomorrow and Sunday, in-person at 1 o'clock on Monday unless we say otherwise. Folks, please, we've done an extraordinary job as a state but the game is not over. There is still time on the clock. I wish we could tell you how much time there is on the clock, but we're not out of the woods. And if you have any doubt, look at what's going through – going on in other states, never mind a resurgence of positive cases in our state.

It is – we have to repeat again, Judy, it is a big day, notwithstanding the increase in cases that for the first time in 142 days, we had no deaths in our hospitals and that cannot be understated or underestimated. Again, as important as that milestone is, it's a lagging indicator of people who are getting infected, plus or minus, many weeks ago. But folks, keep doing a great job. Please, please, please cut out the indoor gatherings where people are on top of each other, not socially distanced, not wearing face coverings. That's not going to work. That's going to get us in more and more trouble as a state and will risk people's health and lives.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you all.

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