

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: May 16th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone. I am honored to be joined by the woman to my right, who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Thank you both for being here. To my left, another guy who needs no introduction, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan, Pat. Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples is with us. Good afternoon.

On Thursday, we announced the plan by which the Jersey Shore could reopen for the summer season, and today I am proud that we're able to announce that in addition to enjoying our beaches, our shore goers will also be able to enjoy some time on the water as well. Today I am signing an Executive Order that will allow fishing charters and other chartered boat services and watercraft rentals to resume effective at 6:00 a.m. tomorrow, May 17. In both instances, we will require specific social distancing and sanitation measures to be followed, including the implementation of online or telephone payment systems to further lessen direct person-to-person contact, among other procedures spelled out in my Order. One of those will also require that all passenger and customer logs be properly maintained for the purposes of contact tracing, should that be required. We are confident that in taking these steps for getting our state on the road back, for the same reason that we've been able to take the other steps that we've announced over the past few days to restart our economy and begin our recovery, because the data says that it is possible.

As was said from the get-go, public health creates economic health, data determines dates. I had a very good conversation yesterday with one of the Restart and Recovery Commission Members, Dr. Ben Bernanke, formerly of Princeton, former chair of the Federal Reserve, and we covered a number of topics, but I said, I want to make sure, Mr. Chairman, that we've got this right and he was overwhelmingly of the same opinion. That you've got to deal with the virus first, create the confidence around public health, and only with that are you able to take the steps that we need to take as it relates to economic recovery and reopening.

We're in a position, by the way, back to both of these principles of being able to put some of this, as you've seen, into practice. On the public health side, we know that the trends we needed to see have emerged, especially in our hospitals, which are where we have the best opportunity to track the impact of COVID-19. And across the board, as you can see here, every metric we have followed is showing us that we can move forward. You've got new hospitalizations, patients in the hospital, patients in ICU beds, patients on ventilators are not just down dramatically from the peaks, but they're down meaningfully even over the past couple of weeks.

If you flip over, a green ball means we're having a good day. Meaning that whatever that determinant is, it was going down and not up. And over the past two weeks, we've had many more good than bad, and many of those good days have come with significant decreases and as you can see, the only three red balls we're showing right now over the past couple of weeks, Judy, is in new hospitalizations. We see this across, by the way, every region of the state with the trend lines all continually moving in the right directions. And as you can see, just as Judy predicted, the South has got the most amount of red balls. But even there, we've had a good stretch here of late. And while we know that right now we are not entirely out of the woods yet, as you can see here, New Jersey is beginning to fall a little bit more in line with some of the big states and neighbors that we compare ourselves to. As we're taking a broadly regional approach to our restart and recovery, this is a good sign in particular, as we look at where we are relative to Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. It's a little bit of a stretch to call California and Texas neighbors, but we take our hats off to each of them.

But for the purposes of today, our charter boat captains and watercraft rental businesses can begin preparing their vessels for folks starting tomorrow morning. Even with social distancing, we are confident that everyone can have a safe and memorable summer.

Next up, I want to again thank President Trump with whom I again spoke with yesterday in the federal administration for their approval of \$1.4 billion in CARES Act funding for NJ Transit. I cannot overstate how vital this funding is to ensure the safe operations of our mass transit systems, the bus rail and light rail and paratransit. Throughout this emergency, many of our frontline workers across essential industries have relied upon NJ Transit to safely get them to and from their jobs. And as we begin our restart, having NJ Transit working as it should will be absolutely vital to our recovery as more residents will be getting back to work.

Now certainly we know that NJ Transit will need more assistance to make up for the significant loss in fares it has seen over the past couple of months, and I will continue to work with the White House and other federal officials, and with our Congressional delegation, and with leaders in Congress to bring that assistance to our state. But make no doubt about it, this \$1.4 billion is absolutely necessary and it is certainly welcomed.

Finally, before I get to the overnight numbers, I want to acknowledge the House of Representatives passage last night of the latest COVID-19 relief package. Certainly we are all realists here. We recognize that any final bill that reaches the President's desk will not look exactly like the one that the House passed last night, but the House Bill contains absolutely necessary measures for our statewide recovery and our national recovery. And I speak directly to the inclusion of \$1 trillion for state and local government assistance so we can continue to support our frontline public health workforce, our first responders, our educators, and so many more in local and state government who have been behind the scenes, keeping our communities together and strong.

I have made it clear time and again that absent direct state assistance, our ability to pull ourselves up off the mat will be made that much harder, if not, frankly, near impossible, without draconian cuts to the very programs and the very jobs that we will be relying upon to pull us off that mat. And without this assistance, the progress we have made to pull New Jersey's finances back to respectability, record surpluses, decreasing healthcare spending, putting aside hundreds of millions of dollars for a rainy day will be undone. We need this

relief, and we need it now. I urge Senator McConnell to listen to the growing bipartisan chorus in the Senate who understand what this means for their states and to sit down with Speaker Pelosi and negotiate a final bill to send to the President for his signature.

We have an extraordinary Congressional delegation in both the Senate and House and I don't know where we would be without them, but we're not the only ones with stars. I had very good conversations this morning separately with both Delaware Senators, Senator Coons and Senator Carper. Senator Coons about a whole range of topics and he's an outstanding leader; Senator Carper very specifically about getting us to the point where we've got the bipartisan support we need to get direct state cash assistance, and I can't thank them both, and especially Senator Carper on this topic, enough for their leadership and their help. By the way, there's no time left to waste. We're up against this. This is not theoretical or abstract. Municipalities are laying people off as I sit here. There's no time to waste period, full stop.

With that, let's turn to the overnight numbers. Yesterday we received an additional 1,239 positive test results for a current statewide total of 145,089, and the trend line on new cases continues to show how far we have come down from the peak. May it continue to do that. The daily positivity or spot positivity rate for the tests from May 12 – and by the way, Judy, almost every time I talk about spot positivity, I'm happy to say the number of days has been shrinking, or at most, only a handful. So this is at 22%, which is great. And again, this is from samples taken just four days ago.

Here's how the positivity rate is reflected across each region of the state, and as you can see, each region is trending very close to the others. That continues to be a good sign that the spread has slowed not just in certain regions, but statewide. The map that we've been regularly turning to puts this fact into a different perspective and nearly every county can now count the rate of doubling in terms of months and not weeks, and that is a really good improvement.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated for COVID-19 dropped again to 3,564. Our field medical stations reported 45 patients, and this is a breakdown of hospitalizations across regions. Again, all are now trending in a good direction. Here are total hospitalizations per 100,000 residents, again across regions, to give a more balanced picture.

Looking at our long-term care facilities, we have not, cannot, and will not ignore this devastation. So you've got 27,825 positive cases. The bars on this chart are not going up as sharply as they were. Please God, they start to come down and we are continually taking steps to further slow and eventually stop them. And as you can see, we continue to see an outsized proportion of the blessed lives lost of our statewide COVID-19 deaths, more than half as you can see, related to our long-term care facilities.

I want to repeat something that I mentioned yesterday. We can both mourn the loss of 5,322 lives associated with our long-term care facilities. We have, we do, we must and we will. And at the same time, through all the efforts by Judy, the National Guard, the VA, the State Police, the Attorney General, the operators themselves, and most importantly, the heroic frontline healthcare workers who go in and out of these facilities every day, we can at the same time, do everything we can and we are to save as many of the other several hundred thousand folks whose lives are associated with long-term care facilities, between residents and patients. That is an every minute, of every hour, of every day, all-in effort.

The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care fell again to 1,061. Ventilator use continues its decline to 846. There were 182 new hospitalizations yesterday. The good news is there was more than twice the number of live discharges with 380 patients leaving our hospitals. Here are the admittance and discharge numbers from yesterday, broken down by region. Just pause on that for a moment. And again, while we have said, and we all know this, that the northern counties were blown away by this first and this has migrated, the fact of the matter is, we're not out of the woods, and there's no other way to put it. You've got over 100 new hospitalizations in the North yesterday alone. This is something that I know Judy and her team and the rest of us watch very carefully.

Today, we must also report, with great sadness, another 115 fatalities from COVID-19 related complications. With this, our statewide total now stands at 10,249 precious lives lost. That is a big number, but we cannot ever let those lost ever just become a statistic. They were real people, with real families, with incredible

stories. Now they, their lives, and their stories are part of our collective memory; not just the memory of their loved ones, but of all of ours, and we must cherish this memory and never forget even one person. Let's remember a few of them right now.

Let's begin with a guy who, I've heard from all corners of this state, an incredible, true American hero, Glen Ridge Police Officer Charles "Rob" Roberts. There he is with his wife and three children. Born and raised in Livingston, Rob joined the Glen Ridge Police Department, Pat, in the year 2000 and spent his entire uniformed career serving the people of the borough. He was the department's most senior patrol officer, a respected and honored colleague, and a beloved, literally beloved presence in the community. He was a DARE lead officer, a participation in the Special Olympics Torch Run, and could often be seen on patrol on his bike. He was the officer most likely to be seen working with and reading with kids, or raising money for one worthy cause or another.

One of the families he served was his own as the Roberts family called Glen Ridge home, and that just strengthened the bond that he felt with residents. Because of his love of community and his presence in the community, he earned the title of the unofficial mayor of Glen Ridge. I actually spoke with Glen Ridge's actual Mayor, Stewart Patrick, earlier today and he, like everybody else in that town and in that county, and frankly in the state, continue to mourn Rob's loss. He was laid to rest on Thursday as Sergeant Roberts, having been posthumously awarded the promotion for his two decades of service to Glen Ridge, and he was just 45 years old.

To his wife, Alice, who is an extraordinary educator with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, a public school educator through and through and a Glen Ridge gal from the get-go, and what a rock she was and remains; their children Gavin, and if you happen to see the photographs of the extraordinary funeral procession they did for Rob, Gavin was carrying an extraordinary flag laced with the Irish colors. Gavin is 10, their daughter Shea, 15. There was no secret that Rob was a Mets fan, so a lot of folks at this procession and drive thru were wearing orange and blue. I hope they return Rob's memory and Shea's name with a decent year as soon as we play baseball again, Pat, and their daughter Natalie who was 12. So Shae 15, Natalie 12, and Gavin 10. To each of them, words cannot express our sympathy. All of Glen Ridge and indeed, our entire state, shares in your loss. And to you, Sergeant, we thank you. Bless you for your selfless service and for your love of your community, and most importantly, those blessed members of your family. God bless you, Rob.

Next, we remember William "Bill" Frink Jr. There he is, a lifelong resident of South Plainfield in Middlesex County, who we lost at the age of 77. In fact, the only time Bill left South Plainfield was for the four years following his enlistment in the United States Air Force and his service during the Vietnam War. Once back in his hometown, Bill joined the South Plainfield Police and served his community for 30 years before his retirement in the year 2000. And even then he wasn't ready to stop, and he kept working as a security guard for Hauls Warehouse in, you guessed it, South Plainfield. He loved spending his free time outside and making his yard the one that everyone was envious of, especially by the way at Halloween, when he'd go overboard and turning it into a graveyard scene. He also had a deep love for animals and besides his own dogs and cats, he always found time to pick up donations for the Humane Society.

Bill leaves his wife Melissa, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, son Troy and daughter Carrie and her husband, as well as a sister and an extended family. He also leaves behind many friends, including my very good friend Pat Collagen, president of the PBA, and the entire borough of South Plainfield, to which he gave so much of his time and energy. Bill, we thank you for your service to our nation and to your community. God bless your soul and God bless your wife and kids and friends.

Finally today, let's meet Wanda Wojcik of Deptford in Gloucester County. Service to the community also ran deep with Wanda, and she was an administrative secretary for many years with Gloucester County. For her, there was nothing like helping people nearest her home. Wanda was 86 years old when we lost her. Her family, in fact, is saying goodbye to her as we sit here today and I promised her son that we would get a live stream, so Mahen please make an honest man out of me. Her funeral began at 11:45 this morning and I think they're still together.

She is being reunited with her late husband Peter, her brother Jack and her parents, and I'm sure she's already making up for the time lost. Wanda is survived by her children, Susan, Linda, Daniel, Denise and Bob, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, along with a bunch of grandchildren and great

grandchildren. We send them our condolences, as well as our thanks to Wanda for her years of service to the people of God Gloucester County. God bless you, Wanda.

Three more members of our New Jersey family, three more names we will honor as we begin our restart, and three more reasons for us to continue practicing our social distancing, even as we take the first steps toward our recovery. Let's keep at it for Rob, for Bill, for Wanda, and for everyone we've lost. When you all see the flags flying at half-staff, take a moment to remember why they're there, and to remember that only you and your fellow New Jerseyans, including yours truly, have the power to stop the spread.

Let's switch gears for one other announcement. As you may know, May is Mental Health Awareness Month. We know that the past two months have not just been a challenging time for all of us in protecting our physical health but as Judy and I and others have spoken to, they've also been hard on the mental health of many residents as well. I'm proud to announce that the New Jersey Department of Human Services has been awarded more than \$2.8 million in federal funding for vital behavioral health services. This much needed funding will help expand access to counseling and other support services for our residents of every age. The department has also launched the NJ MentalHealthCares helpline at 1-866-202-HELP. You can see it up there. If you need to connect with someone to discuss issues of anxiety or other challenges, don't hesitate. We urge you to call. And again, we thank our federal partners for supporting our state.

Now let's, if we can, close on our usual note of optimism for the days to come. Over the past two months we have been amazed at the ways New Jerseyans have been stepping up to support their communities, from the frontline public health and safety heroes to ensuring that their friends and neighbors have what they need. I have to give a shout out today to Casey Repetti, there's Casey on the left, from Hoboken, a chef and a mother who isn't letting this pandemic stop her from doing what she does best. She's been cooking up a storm as part of the Frontline Appreciation Group to help feed Hoboken bravest and finest, delivering meals to the Hoboken Police Department every Tuesday, and the Hoboken Fire Department every Thursday. Great job to you, Casey, and to everyone who has found amazing ways to raise the spirits of our state.

Now, I was going to say it's going to be -- it already is a beautiful weekend. It's warmer today than it is tomorrow, but we had a nice day yesterday. Today is beautiful and tomorrow I think will be okay. So please, if you're going out to our parks, or elsewhere, please practice social distancing. Please wear something covering your face, folks. Let's keep with this together, because it's the only way we're going to see this through for the long term. And by the way, the face coverings, the more you read, the more you realize how vitally important these are. And again, we take these off only to speak with you. We put them back on when we leave here, we have them on when we come in.

Finally, today is Armed Forces Day, so to every New Jerseyan who has worn our nation's uniforms and serve to further the cause of our nation, we thank you. Bless you for your service. And 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. Labor Commissioner Rob Asaro-Angelo, the Agricultural Secretary Doug Fisher and I and our teams have been working collaboratively for several weeks to assist the New Jersey's farming community as they open the fruit and vegetable growing season that has made New Jersey renowned as the Garden State. New Jersey is especially famous for its variety of crops, blueberries, tomatoes, corn and cranberries, and for the creativity of our farmers. Yesterday we hosted a call with 85 farm owners, growers, county health and agriculture officials, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service, the Farm Bureau, State Board of Agriculture and healthcare officials, including our federally qualified healthcare centers, to discuss guidance we are providing to the farmers and growers on how to keep their seasonal farm workers and the whole farming community safe during this growing season.

As I said earlier this week, testing of our seasonal farm workers in South Jersey is already underway. So far, we have tested 507 individuals at 11 farms; 58 have returned as positive and are currently in isolation. This guidance will provide a framework for issues such as social distancing while working, or in transportation to the worksite, or in shared housing. Educating workers on the need to wear masks at all times on the worksite,

hand washing and personal hygiene practices, and cleaning and disinfecting. And also, screening workers prior to coming onto the worksite, testing and separating those workers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to avoid the potential spread of infection.

Many in the farming community already recognize the challenges such as social distancing, for example, while providing transportation for the workers to the work site or in housing. The administration is working to identify the availability of federal funding and alternative housing solutions for farms that need to supplement housing for social distancing purposes. The stakeholders on the call raised good and thoughtful issues, and I want them to know that we hear you. We are working through the weekend to finalize our guidance and get it to the agricultural community as soon as possible.

The role of the agricultural economy is vital in the state and depends on a strong workforce. As the growing season ramps up in New Jersey, this collaborative effort is imperative to help protect the thousands of seasonal farmworkers and the farming community who are critical to sustaining that economy.

Now for the daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals were at the lowest, our hospitalizations at 3,564, of which a little over 1,000, 1,061 are in critical care. However, of that number, 80% of those critical care individuals are on ventilators. The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is basically the same. White 53.5%, Black 18.6%, Hispanic 19.1%, Asian 5.5%, and other 3.4%. There are now 528 long-term care facilities in the state reporting cases of COVID-19. There are 27,825 total COVID-19 cases in these facilities.

At the state's veterans homes, among a census of 660, there have been 378 residents that tested positive and a total of 140 deaths of residents. At out state psychiatric hospitals, statistics have remained the same. When you look at the spot positivity rate for May 12, New Jersey overall has a rate of 22%. In the North, it is 21%, Central is 21%, and we see a slight tick up in the south of 27%. That concludes my statistical report. Stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you, and your comments on the agricultural economy and safety in that sector are quite timely. Thank you for everything. The big counties continue to be the ones, you all know what they are. Every county has positive tests, every county has fatalities, sadly, but the big six continue to be the big six. With that, turning to you, Pat, for any update on compliance, PPE, infrastructure or other matters. Thank you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. This morning, just because of the weather and how nice it is, our ROIC personnel canvassed 135 different law enforcement agencies in the shore region and those responsible for parks and are glad to report pretty low volume at this point, included even some pictures of Sea Girt and Belmar, and those where there are folks gathering, they are keeping social distancing in mind. I'm glad to report that.

With regards to the overnight, in Elmwood Park, a subject arrested for domestic violence, was charged with aggravated assault and terroristic threats for coughing on the arresting officer claiming to have COVID-19. In Hoboken, a subject was charged with bias, intimidation and criminal mischief for spray painting disparaging racial comments on the sidewalk in front of his apartment complex. In Jersey City, the subject arrested as a suspect in three armed robberies spit in the arresting officer's face claiming to have COVID-19. And just one last piece, Governor, on the way here and I know every day in and day out that you have to sit here and report those deaths each day, up to 10,249, I thought I would offer just a small piece of hope.

On my way here today, I was advised that a cross-country husband and wife team from Memphis, Tennessee, she was giving birth, and she pulled over on the turnpike at Interchange 8A and called for help. Troopers Murray and Noel from Cranberry Station arrived and delivered a healthy baby girl with the help of Monroe Township EMS. I offer that up just for the folks that we hear about those tragic deaths, which they are every day, but I was just glad to report something good.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That is a great story. And they're from, where'd you say?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** They're from Memphis, Tennessee. Her fifth child, a baby girl.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** God bless them all. Talk about a welcome to New Jersey, huh? Matt, we'll start over here if that's okay and just to say, Mahen, correct me if I'm wrong, tomorrow will be electronic only, and then Monday are we at the usual time? One o'clock. We will be with you at one o'clock. There is a White House VTC, I believe it is scheduled for late afternoon on Monday. If things change tomorrow, we'll come back to you. Brent, good afternoon.

### Q&A Session

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Good afternoon. You say beaches will be open by Memorial Day, but the stay-at-home order remains in effect. How do you reconcile those? Some readers have said it's been confusing. Also, non-essential businesses are now open for curbside, but daycare remains closed. What's the latest on daycare? Can workers for those businesses use daycare? The Legislature has passed bills to furlough public workers and for renters to get emergency aid. Will you sign them? Are tennis courts allowed to be open?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Are what? Sorry?

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Are tennis courts allowed to be open? And in general, I mean, is there any sense of how much longer this stay-at-home order will remain in effect or is that we still don't know, based on the numbers?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Bear with me. Yeah, I don't see any, as I've said here over the past number of days, I think we all have, we're taking deliberately incremental steps. We are trying to avoid, particularly connected large steps taken together. And by the way, the data is driving us on this, so that's why you wouldn't have seen, for instance, state parks and beaches opening on the same weekend. We want to be able to assess the impact of our steps, be able to get our enforcement right, tweak it where we have to so we learn one lesson that you know what? They're not all open, by the way, but we do need to get, sooner than later, restrooms in parks open, because we had some unintended consequences.

Brent, this is nothing personal, but I believe your wallet may have fallen out of your back pocket there and I want to make sure you don't leave here, because Matt or someone else I'm sure will be happy to see that.

We're going to, through actions we take essentially, chip away at the blanket stay-at-home reality. I think that sort of speaks for itself. Nothing new on daycare, something we constantly monitor so it is where it is and will continue to be until further notice. We're looking, as I say, conceptually on the furlough bill. We have been conceptually open to the notion. The devil's in the details and we're reviewing that, as we do anything that comes across our desk. Again, I want to repeat something. I don't know that Judy's people, Pat's people, people in the Department of Labor could literally be working any harder. You know, this is a moment when you could argue we need government unlike any other time ever before. That's an important point I want to keep making.

Nothing new on tennis, but we're looking at that. That's something that we are monitoring, along with a few other steps. And how much longer? I think either Monday or Tuesday, I think I'm going to give you a little bit more detail in terms of how we're seeing this. Not with the dates associated with it, but you all have asked, I think rightfully, exactly what marker should we be expecting you to look at to trigger some actions? I think we want to give folks a little bit more detail on that, but that is in place. The stay-at-home continues to be in place and you should assume that Executive Orders that go toward opening are sort of, if you will, removing bricks from that. I hope this doesn't happen, by the way and this will bring us no joy, but we reserve the right to put the brakes on and reverse the car if we think we've got unintended, particularly bad health consequences from steps we've taken. Thank you. Sir, have you got any? Please.

**Reporter:** I started the day in Asbury Park on the boardwalk, they opened the boardwalk now and they have the two lanes. I got a little bit of everything. I got people who were, whose right do they have to tell me I should wear a mask? I got people who were glad that there were lots of police there, to make sure people were wearing masks. The police are kind of in a tough spot right there. How do you – are we ready for people dealing with all these tensions and things that are going on? As you well know, people are getting anxious?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, no, I understand that. Believe me, that includes me. We're all sort of going through something similar together. I think we said this the other day and Pat, you should weigh in here. You know, when I speak to the shore mayors, and John Moore was on that call and he's doing a great job in

Asbury Park. But when we speak to them, they have raised the fact that because it's going to be an unusual appetite to get to the beach, to get outside. They recognize that and we recognize that, so we had conversations about, how do you do this in a way where we're enforcing? That we're not putting our law enforcement or other folks in harm's way.

I read an article today about an essential retail worker who's not armed, who's working for some retailer, who's checking people to make sure they're masked coming in, and that person was taking some grief, unacceptable grief. But again, it's similar. You've got people in an unusual circumstance, both their physical locations over the past couple of months, tied to home unlike ever before, in most cases. And now you've got on top of that, as we've just been discussing for weeks, mental health challenges and just natural human nature, I'm dying to get out.

And we have just got to be very careful. I want to say to folks out there, just if you're trying to get your unemployment insurance, if you're trying to get to the beach, if you're trying to be in a park, go into essential retail, we got to all be mindful of each other right now. This is something that we've never gone through before, and we've got to make sure we get the best behavior possible. So far, so good, but we've got to make sure it stays that way. Pat, any comments from you, please?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Yeah, I would just add that our training consists of a lot of de-escalation techniques, whether that's with a group of people directed towards law enforcement, or law enforcement trying to break up either a verbal or physical altercation, and can only just ask for people to try and have patience with one another, and certainly with law enforcement as we try and work through this. You know, some obviously unprecedented challenges that are facing each and every one of us in law enforcement, certainly, as they go out there and try and make sure that people remain safe. Thanks, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** It's quote-unquote, not their fault. They're doing what we're asking them to do, right? To help us enforce. Are you good, sir? We'll go to the back and then we'll come down Charlie, to you. Please.

**Reporter:** Thank you, Governor. I have three questions if that's okay.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah. It depends on what the questions are.

**Reporter:** The first one is based on questions that President Trump is asked on a daily basis multiple times. If somebody needs a test, can they get a test? But this is also based on me visiting multiple test sites over the last three days. He's also been asked a few times because the staff can get a test every day, when will everybody be able to get a test on a daily basis before getting back to work? Is that part of the plan here in New Jersey?

My second question is for Dr. Tan. Just on the science of coronavirus –

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I could have sworn that was your second question, but maybe I'm missing... go ahead.

**Reporter:** The science of coronavirus, can you update us on what you've learned? There's this interesting debate about whether it's actually alive or not and how it works. And also, have you been dealing with forensic pathologists as part of the equation in learning about this? And if so, what have you learned from their work?

My third question is for Colonel Callahan. Are there any crime statistics you can offer year over year, any significant changes due to inactivity and people not working and driving because of coronavirus? Thank you?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I'm not sure you meant our staff. Our staff does not get tested. You mean the White House staff?

**Reporter:** That's what they were asking, because the White House staff gets tests every day, why shouldn't Americans get tested on a daily basis before heading back to work?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I can't speak for the President or the White House. We've rolled out what is a pretty clear 20,000 tests per day by the end of this month, which is, by the way, basically two weeks from now. That's where we're going to be. We've said 25,000 tests a day by the end of June. We believe that is enough to

address the tiers of our major concerns. Number one, vulnerable communities, most importantly, long-term care, but others. Secondly, frontline workers, healthcare workers, first responders, etc. And then thirdly, the general public.

People have said to me, hey, by the way, your testing has gone down over the past couple of weeks. Testing capacity has gone up almost every day. Don't confuse demand with supply. I have this conversation with my family almost daily. There's a Rite Aid in Neptune which is about 15 minutes from my house, which has capacity right now. If you want to go get a test, I don't want to send the whole state there, but that's a reality. The demand is down, and we've discussed this a lot. I mean, you've got infected people numbers down, hospitalizations are down. It's an impact, not just in the reality of the virus, but also on human nature as well.

So we have a testing plan in place that we are confident is sufficient, most importantly, to allow folks the confidence that they can come back and get engaged in society as we open it up. You want to know out there, folks, and I don't blame you. I want to know this, too, that if there is a flare up, we've got sufficient testing to spot it. That the return on that testing is rapid; that we then have contact tracing in place to figure out who you came in touch with, and we've got a plan to isolate you. So folks need to know that so that they could say you know what? It's okay for us to get back and do the things that you're allowing us to do by reopening

Dr. Tan, that was a fairly broad question. What have we learned about the virus? We could be here probably all week answering that question, but any top line thoughts you have, and then Pat, we'll turn it over to you.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, we definitely have been learning a lot about the virus over these last several months. Every day we add to the body of knowledge about novel coronavirus in general. What we have learned, for example, is that the scope of illness really has taken a variety of forms. We've learned about new symptoms that might be associated with a novel coronavirus disease, aside from the typical flu type of presentation we've heard about, you know, people with unusual symptoms, including loss of smell and taste, for example. We've also been learning about syndromes that might be associated with pediatric populations such as the multi-system inflammatory system that we're just starting to learn about.

We've also learned about how severe illness can impact individuals of any age group, in general. We've also learned a lot about disease transmission, how disease transmission works. You know, there have been a lot of literature recently published by the CDC better describing that, you know, just only confirming our knowledge that close congregate settings, close family gatherings, close social gatherings really help promote the spread and transmission of COVID-19 illness among populations, on top of what we're characterizing occupational exposures, for example, in meat processing plants.

So again, every single day, we're learning much more about COVID-19, whether it's the characterization of the illness, the scope of the illness, as well as what are some of the transmission aspects? On top of, we're fortunate that we've got a lot of researchers out there who are looking at the various therapeutics. There are a lot of efforts related to vaccine development and other therapeutic development as well.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Christina, thank you. I tell you, the more I read, I'm practicing without a license. The more I read, the smarter it is to wear a face covering. That's better for all of us. That's one thing I think collectively we've all learned. I say this as a layperson over the past two or three months. Pat, year-over-year crime?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Since our ROIC personnel have been monitoring this, overall crime is down across the board throughout the entire state. Arrests are down 65%. Domestic violence is down 16%. But as I know, Commissioner Beyer would want me to say, we do worry about the underreporting of domestics as well as child abuse or neglect. Shootings across New Jersey are down by 19% and the one category that is a concern and it's just as of today, our shooting murders are up 9% compared to last year at this same time. So generally all trending down with the exception of homicides from firearms.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I know I'm putting you on the spot, but any quick sense as to why that may be the case, that murders are up? These are shooting murders, right?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** They are shooting murders. You know, Governor, sometimes it is just a victim versus where that where that bullet lands. Our victims are down 19% but murder is up. If the amount of shootings are down and the victims are up, it just points to where they're being struck and the fact that they end up being fatal.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. Charlie, good afternoon.

**Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today:** Good afternoon, Governor. Good to be with you. I hope you're well. I know you've gotten to know the President pretty well recently. He's said that you're a good Governor. Do you think he is a good President? What would you say are the biggest differences between your administration, his administration, in relation to this crisis?

On the July 7 election, if you're trying to make it as easy as possible for folks to vote by mail, why wouldn't you send mail-in ballots to unaffiliated voters as well as the party members? Who is going to make the decision of where polling places will be? You know, how and when do you see that being decided?

Do you see in-person classes happening at our universities this fall, places like Rutgers University? Finally, is it true your Education Commissioner is going to remain in that office until July 1?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Charlie, I appreciate the fact the President said that. I don't know enough to analyze the operations from within their administration, and I suspect he'd say the same thing about getting inside of our administration. I will say this, that we have found a very significant amount of common ground in this crisis. Obviously, we're from different parties, different perspectives. I think it's fairly obvious to say that we're going to have some disagreements on other stuff, but we've found an unusual amount of common ground. Most recently, the \$1.4 billion for NJ Transit.

Even the conversation that I had with him a couple of weeks ago in the White House about state aid and the reasons for it, and the rationale, and Judy was on my side, debunking the notion that this was a blue state thing or a legacy notion, and I reminded him that we were a Triple-A bond rated state 30 years ago, and it's been a whole series of steps. But I got elected, in part, in large part to address that and that we had a plan and we were making progress even there, where there's not a natural agreement at a starting point.

Again, that doesn't mean that the list of things that we disagree on has gotten any shorter, but during this crisis, to him and his team and the Vice President, we have continually found common ground on ventilators, beds, testing, Army Corps, not just testing in the FEMA sites, but the testing swabs and kits. We've got a good relationship with a lot of members of that team, including Dr. Birx, Judy was on with the other day, etc. I'll leave it there.

July 7, I think the reason, and Matt Platkin is with us, Matt, good to have you. I'll give you my two answers. Number one, the reason is for unaffiliated, they need to make a conscious decision as to which party they're going to participate in. Are they going to vote and which party they're going to participate with in a primary. I think they have to take a volitional step. If you're a Democrat, you're a Democrat. That's where you're going to vote. If you're Republican, you're Republican, and that's where you're going to vote. For an unaffiliated, you've got to make a conscious decision, which avenue am I going to go down?

Polling places will be up to the clerks within the county. We've said really two things. Number one, each municipality needs at least one polling place, and there needs to be at least 50% of the polling place capacity relative to normal.

In person, it's a great question. I've got three kids in college so this is a hot topic, including at home. I don't have an answer for you yet. This is something that I think we're all trying to get our arms around. You've started to see certain universities around the country throw the towel in and say we're going to be virtual for the fall. I think the University of California system, I believe Stanford as well has said this. So in some cases, this will be up to the university, so a private university, pick Princeton, that's their call. Obviously, Rutgers and the other state universities is going to be a decision that we probably make collectively, so nothing on that yet.

And Lamont, I want to again congratulate him, salute his extraordinary work as Commissioner of the Department of Education. I know I speak for Pat and Judy and fellow members of the Cabinet, we're gonna miss him enormously. He's done great work, including in this very crisis. Matt was on with him literally last

night talking about some other decision points that we have to make. He's completely locked in and I give him enormous amount of credit for that. But also, we tip our cap. It's a richly deserved acknowledgement that he's a terrific leader. I don't know that I have a date. I don't think we've got one yet. We'll come back to you on that when we have one. There may be a date that I'm not aware of, let's put it that way. Thank you for that. Please, you'll take us out, ma'am.

**Crystal Knapp, Planet Princeton:** Thank you, Crystal Knapp from Planet Princeton. A clarification on long-term care numbers. Something was said yesterday that made it sound like data on confirmed cases and deaths include staff at the facilities. Does it? Or is it just residents/patients, which is what I thought it was?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** They do include staff.

**Crystal Knapp, Planet Princeton:** Does that include the individual Excel and PDF spreadsheets as well on each?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I can't speak to that, but the number we speak to, we can come back to you on that. Mahen, make sure we follow up. The numbers do include both residents and staff.

**Crystal Knapp, Planet Princeton:** And then on Trenton Psychiatric Hospital, so many staff members testing positive there. How is staffing being managed there? Is there any color on that? And lastly, the two plasma donation centers, any figures on how many people have donated or how that's going?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, you've been unusually quiet in terms of the questions that are directed at you today, which I know you're really upset about. Any color at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital? I don't have plasma donation numbers. Perhaps you all do. And if we don't, we can come back to you on that. Please, Judy.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Trenton Psychiatric Hospital, do you want to know the number of employees that tested positive? How they backfill? My understanding is they have not had staffing issues. It's not been brought to my attention. I make the assumption that they've been able to backfill for those that are out either not feeling well, or on isolation or quarantine. I have no other report on that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** If we get more color on that, we can come back. And on plasma, do you have any on plasma?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I don't have any statistics on plasma. It's going on.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Mahen, can we find out either through University Hospital or Red Cross or both? It's happening, we know that.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** And it's happening. Major hospitals are doing it now.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** It's not just them. You good? So with that, I'm going to mask up. Again, everybody. First of all, thank you. I want to thank Judy and Christina to my right, Pat to my left, Jared, Matt the rest of the team. I told Pat I found my State Police mask. Don't mean to cover my eyes. Again, I'm of the opinion, and I don't hear anyone disagreeing, that face coverings are a game changer. So that's not in lieu of social distancing. Judy would be mad if I didn't say that, but it's in addition to it. And really, the more research you read, the more evidence you see that it's a game changer. To Judy, Christina, Pat, Jared, Matt, the rest of the team, thank you to each and every one of you. Thank you. Again, we'll be electronic tomorrow, unless you hear otherwise. Mahen, we'll be together at one o'clock on Monday.

And to everybody, keep it up. Again, we're taking now a number of steps and some of these are big ones. Please be patient with each other. Be patient with those who are trying their best to enforce some of the steps we're taking, especially at beaches and parks. Know that as the data continues to get better, we are under consideration now and we'll take more steps. I just want to thank everybody for extraordinary behavior over the past couple of months. We need you to keep at it. If we stay at it together, we will break the back of this, we'll reopen responsibly and we'll put this chapter, God willing, we'll learn lessons that we'll never forget for the rest of our lives, but we'll put this chapter behind us. God bless you all and thank you.

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