

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: August 10th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone.

With me today, we've got a full house. The woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli, to my far left, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan, another man who needs no introduction. We're joined today yet again – she's been with us many times, another extraordinary leader, the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, Carole Johnson. Welcome back, Carole. And to our far right, another familiar face, the state's epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan.

Over the past nearly five months, one of the most impacted communities in our state has been the residents and staff of our long-term care facilities. They've borne an outsized burden of this pandemic. We cannot understate the enormity of either the spread or the loss of life within these facilities. Listen to these numbers: nearly 25,000 cases of coronavirus among residents, and nearly 13,000 among staff, and nearly 7,000 lab-confirmed deaths. This has not been a New Jersey-specific tragedy, either. Across the nation and indeed around the world, long-term care facilities have been crushed by COVID-19. And while we take no solace, zero solace, in the fact that we were not alone, we determined that we would be a leader in showing a better way forward.

In the late Spring, both the Departments of Health and Human Services fighting this pandemic directly, we engaged nationally recognized experts from Manatt Health to help us hone on what we – on what needed to be done and where it needed to be done and how it needed to be done. Manatt provided us with short, 

medium, and long-range solutions, and many of those recommendations are already in motion. For instance, more than 30 million pieces of personal protective equipment have been distributed to our long-term care facilities. Working in partnership with our facilities, we have conducted more than 310,000 tests of residents along with 495,000 tests for staff. Nearly 470 infection control surveys have been completed with their results posted for the public to see, and more than 3600 complaints that had been sitting in a backlog have now been cleared.

Implementation of other key immediate recommendations from the report include the hiring of David Adinaro to fill the critical role of Deputy Commissioner of Public Health at the Department of Health, and the creation of a long-term care emergency operations center led by, I might add, Dr. Adinaro, that is intended to serve as a central state resource for COVID-19 response efforts in long-term care. And so today, we add to that list. Today, the Department of Health will release a directive that will set mandatory benchmarks based on departmental, CDC, and CMS guidelines for New Jersey's long-term care facilities as they look to reopen to visitors and resume normal operations. It will establish phases for reopening based on the time since a last outbreak and further timed to the broader reopening stages of our statewide road back. In this directive, we'll establish strong baseline infection control measures as well as requirements for PPE stockpiling and resident and staff testing, including, by the way, weekly coronavirus tests for all staff among other items that will apply to all facilities regardless of phase.

To ensure that we get this right, we are preparing to commit a total of \$155 million in state and federal funds. Of this, we will direct \$25 million in CDC, epidemiology, and laboratory capacity funding, or ELC funding, through the Department of Health to support our new staff testing program. And I am proud to add that Commissioner Johnson is working directly with our legislative partners on a \$130 million plan to stabilize and support our nursing facility workforce and critical infection control practices in the facilities. The plan would include tens of millions of dollars in federal matching funds.

With this funding, we would be able to increase wages, specifically for certified nursing aids, while also ensuring that our facilities can continue to fully support their current staffs and meet the more stringent criteria for reopening that are being put in place. So specifically, 60% of this funding must flow directly to our nursing home workforce. And the remainder will only go to facilities when they attest that they have met critical benchmark requirements outlined in the directive. The Department of Human Services will be prepared to recoup funds from facilities that do not comply with these requirements. I will ask both Judy and Carole to speak to this plan in greater detail, but here is our goal: to not only meet the current challenges but to ensure both high-quality care and the safety of residents and staff going forward. We will continue to work alongside the good actors in the long-term care industry of which there are many who want to do the right thing by their residents, their staffs, and their families who trust them while at the same time making sure we have strong measures in place that are needed to deal with the bad actors who put profit before people.

As I alluded to before and as I had stated in the past, New Jersey will learn from this pandemic and emerge as a national model for solving immediate problems and building future resilience. The Manatt report showed us how we can grab this mantle while still combating this pandemic. And today with both Judy and Carole by my side, I am proud that we are taking this step. I also want to acknowledge Director Jared Maples is with us, the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness and apparently, your very presence just led to some feedback.

Now let's move on to take a look at the overnight numbers. Today we are reporting the receipt of 258 new positive test results, bringing our total cumulatively since March 4th to 185,031. The positivity rate for test recorded on August 6th was 1.62%. That's a good number, Judy, and Tina, let's hope it stays down there. And the statewide rate of transmission has continued to decrease from its high a week and a half ago and today, tests – and today, rather, rests at 0.98. Just go back over the past week, you had 1.41, 1.32, and 1.23, 1.15, 1.03, now 0.98, and obviously these are seven-day rolling averages. We are, thankfully, down below 1. That does not happen by accident. It's policy, it's enforcement, and most importantly, it's responsible behavior by the overwhelming amount of New Jerseyans. So again, when you're below one, that means we are only a little bit, only by a hair beginning to slow the spread. And again, this is because so many of you have re-doubled your efforts as it relates to social distancing, wearing your masks, and from what, as I said a minute ago, what we've done from a policy point as well as enforcement to crack down on crowded, indoor gatherings.

So the decrease in RT, the low spot, positivity, those are clearly positive signs, but no one should look at that and think it means that coronavirus is no longer with us or that you can go ahead and leave your mask at home or join a big crowd waiting to get into a bar with your friends. Both of these, however, are exactly what hundreds of young bar-goers did this weekend at numerous shore bars. Once again, we are seeing documented news reports of numerous examples of bars that may have been trying to do the right thing once patrons got in but whose lines were filled with people, again particularly young people, who were neither being kept socially distant or wearing masks. I don't think there's any masks in that picture, Judy. If you can find one, let me know.

The bars, by the way – apologies in advance for naming you. They include Jenkinson's in Point Pleasant, D'Jais's and 10th Avenue Burrito in Belmar, and Donovan's Reef in Sea Bright. By the time these patrons would've even gotten in, this virus could've already easily spread just through the line. So folks, this is not a game. Standing around maskless in a crowd outside a bar is just as big a knucklehead move as standing around maskless inside one. The patrons and these bars need to get on the same page and quickly. Your responsibility to help stop the spread of coronavirus doesn't go on pause when you're standing in line. I and Pat and others here are going to give everyone a chance to do the right thing, but if we have to shut places down to protect public health, then we will. Consider this your warning before you go out drinking this weekend. And by the way, it isn't just bars. We were on the phone earlier, folks, and there was a huge house party apparently in Howell, which took, Pat, six, seven, eight – you'll refer to this later, but including the state police to break up –

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Eight agencies.

Governor Phil Murphy: Eight agencies to break up. Come on, man! And I'm told not that large a footprint, either, in terms of the yard or the house. This can't go on. Listen, we're going to do something we haven't done here. While we're at it, let's also illustrate one of the reasons why we've been so concerned about reopening restaurants for indoor dining. And by the way, I hope we'll get there, and I hope we get there sooner than later, but there's a video clip we want to show you that illustrates a case study of coronavirus spread in January that occurred in a restaurant in southern China, in this case was published in the journal Emerging Infectious Diseases. So do you want to hit this or do I want to introduce it? Fire away.

In this instance, one infected and contagious diner at this middle table was able to spread coronavirus to nine other diners at the tables to their left and right, including some seated as far as 14 feet away. The common thread was that all of these patrons were seated in a straight line from an air conditioner. I think any of us can name any number of restaurants that we go to which have a seating arrangement and air conditioning situation not unlike the one in this restaurant halfway around the globe. Airflow is a constant concern. This is why we have been much more forthright in reopening outdoor activities, including outdoor dining, while limiting indoor ones and requiring masks to be worn at all times while indoors. Allowing diners to sit maskless for an extended period of time in a restaurant where the air conditioning unit can silently spread coronavirus is a risk we cannot take. So you all get that? And the red, by the way, are the folks who got infected. You can see the two tables below. Just because they're not in the line of sight of the ventilating air conditioner there, no one got infected. Fairly sobering.

Okay, back to the numbers. In our hospitals, there are 285 COVID-19-confirmed patients being treated and another 261 listed as persons under investigating pending the return of their tests. The number is 545, 83 of whom were in intensive care; 29 ventilators were in use. I think, Judy, for both intensive care beds and ventilators, we are now at lows we haven't seen since the early days of March. Again, please don't get complacent having said that. The virus is out there. I was told by someone earlier today that new hospitals net are up over the past two weeks. Let's not forget that.

Today, we report four more deaths that have now been confirmed to have been related to complications from COVID-19. The dates of the newly confirmed deaths, by the way – and again, these are confirmed – are – I'm going back in time – July 30th, July 23rd, May 19th, and April 21st. None of them occurred in August, but – and this is the but again – apples and oranges, but we want to make sure we give you as much color as we can. There were six in-hospital deaths reported yesterday but again, they are still pending lab confirmation and are not included in these totals. The total of confirmed COVID-19 deaths currently stands at 14,025, and the total amount of probable deaths remains at 1,853.

As we do every day, let's recall some of the lives of the blessed souls we have lost. We begin today by remembering Dominic Vivona. He was 88 when he passed away last Tuesday. For the past few years, Dominic had been living in South Carolina, but he always considered himself a proud New Jerseyan. He lived an incredible life. He was born in Newark and raised in Irvington. He graduated as a member of the Duke University class of 1954. After college, he returned to his roots and joined his brothers in opening their own traveling carnival business, the Vivona Brothers, a venture that grew out of the purchase of a single Ferris wheel left over from the 1939 World's Fair in New York. But with big dreams, Dominic and his brother soon changed the name to Amusements of America and grew it into one of the largest carnival businesses in the eastern United States and Canada. A recognized industry leader, Dominic served as chairman of the Outdoor Amusement Business Association in 1994.

Dominic's life was also an example of triumph over adversity. He lost an eye to an accident as a teenager and lost his first wife, Madalina, in a tragic automobile accident in 1999, and he was seriously injured himself while they were on the way to an awards ceremony in Atlantic City where Dominic was to be honored for his contributions to the amusement industry. Dominic leaves behind his wife, Helena, who helped restore love and happiness to his life. He also leaves his four children with Madalina, Dominic, Junior, Pia, Marco, and Dario – and I had the great honor of speaking to both Dominic, Junior and Dario – as well as his step-children, Frederick and Beth. He will also be fondly remembered by his grandchildren, Dominic, III, Thomas, Madalina, Anthony, Sophia, Zachary, Mark, Matthew, and Marco, and his step-grandchildren, Carson, Erin, Madison, and Elizabeth. And he leaves behind one of the Vivona Brothers, his younger brother, Phil. I want to thank our dear friend, Assemblyman Roy Freiman, for bringing Dominic's life and passing to our attention. Dominic spent his life bringing joy to countless people. Our hope is that his memory brings joy to all who knew him. May God bless and watch over him and his family.

Next, we recall Dr. Niaz Ali. Dr. Ali was born in Lahore in Pakistan but made his home in Holmdel in Monmouth County. He came to the United States with \$72 in his pockets and a dream of becoming a doctor. A career in the US Army gave him the chance to make that dream a reality and he rose to the rank of major before leaving the service to pursue his medical degree. He did his residency at Jersey Shore Medical Center and eventually became the chief of the pediatrics department in Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, in our neighborhood. Throughout his medical career, he was renowned for two traits: compassion and good humor. He and his wife Malia, who I had the great honor of speaking with on Friday, were married for 31 years and together they raised their son, Raza, who is 27, and Ecra, their daughter who is 25. By the way, his wife, Malia, said that not only did he approach his profession with compassion and good humor but with a tireless commission – commitment, rather, and he worked right through coronavirus and the challenges associated with it knowing that he could be exposed, and unfortunately indeed he was.

So how is this? Dr. Ali passed away at Jersey Shore Medical Center where he began his medical career and where he and Malia welcomed their own children into this world. Dr. Ali was just 71 years old. We thank him for his service to our nation and for his quiet commitment to the patients in his care, one of many who came to this nation and helped make us a better people and a greater and better nation.

Finally today, we honor Dr. Kenneth Conte of Garfield. He was 75 years old and besides serving his patient had spent the past 48 years serving his community. He holds the record for the longest continual public service in Garfield's history. Dr. Conte was born in Passaic and raised in Garfield. He was a graduate of Villanova University – Pat, did you hear that? – and the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences. His medical career would see him rise to hold the positions of medical director and chief of staff of Kennedy Memorial Hospital at Saddlebrook, lodge physician of the Fraternal Order of Police, New Jersey Lodge 46, and the correctional health physician for Bergen County among many other postings. And Dr. Conte was founder and medical advisor of the county's first high school EMT program at Garfield High School.

From 1972 through 1976, Dr. Conte served as Garfield's Deputy Mayor. From 1976 to 1980, he was a member of city council and for 38 years, he served as a member of the Garfield Board of Education as well as 12 as president. That string of 48 years of elected service is a Garfield record and near [inaudible 0:19:27] like or Ripken-like proportions. Dr. Conte was a member of numerous medical boards and societies and was recognized with just as many awards and other recognitions for his years of professional excellence and community service. But all those accolades came second to the love he had for his family and friends. He leaves behind his brother, Dr. Daniel Conte, Junior and I had the great honor of speaking to Daniel on Friday.

And needless to say, he's busted up. He lost his brother, his roommate, and a guy who was so close to him. He also leaves behind his nephew, Dr. Daniel Conte, III, and his nieces, Stacy and Jamie, and their spouses along with his great-nephews Carl, Junior, and Cole, and grand-niece Nicolette. And of course, he leaves behind a grateful Garfield and a state of New Jersey. We thank you, Dr. Conte, for your lifetime of commitment and may God bless and watch over you.

And as always, we remember all whom we have lost throughout this pandemic, and we will remember the families, friends, and communities they left behind. A couple of non-COVID-specific passings I want to reiterate our deepest sympathies for our dear friend, Senator Ron Rice, who lost his Shirley last week and who is being buried today. Tammy and I were with Ron yesterday at the viewing, and she was a giant in her own right, as is he, and so our hearts and prayers and thoughts are with them. And also a guy who was not a New Jersey guy but a guy in his later life and in my prior life as an ambassador was important to me, a great American, Brett Scowcroft, passed last week, a great American. He was a very good advisor on a couple of important occasions to me when I was US Ambassador to Germany and many people, deservedly, should take credit for the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. President John Kennedy and his team, President Ronald Reagan and his team, especially Secretary of State George Schultz, the many members of our military and diplomatic communities but when it actually happened, President George HW Bush, Secretary of State Jim Baker, and National Security Advisor Brett Scowcroft managed it extraordinarily skillfully and did a job that is hard to even describe. And so as a National Security Advisor to both President Ford and President George HW Bush, a great American, a retired Air Force general, we mourn his loss and thank him for his service to our grateful nation.

Switching gears again, I want to recognize another of the small business owners for whom COVID-19 has dealt a bad hand but who, through the partnership of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, are still sitting at the table ready for our recovery. Today, I want to go to Monroe Township in Middlesex County where Kinjal Patel on the left – in addition, by the way, to her career in nursing at CentraState, opened Persis Monroe, a family-owned Indian restaurant. What started as a small venture just three years ago had quickly grown into include a banquet and catering business. This was to be Persis breakout year, but COVID-19 had other plans. With the main part of the restaurant closed and money running short, Kinjal – and again, that's her on the left with her husband, Deepesh, on the right – we able to receive a loan from the EDA that has kept their dreams for Persis alive and well, ensuring that the rent and utilities got paid, that suppliers were taken care of, and that the salaries of their staff were covered.

I had the great pleasure of speaking with Deepesh on Friday, and I am incredibly proud not just for his and Kinjal's persistence but that they found the partnership they needed for their business with the EDA. And I told them next time – I'm a huge Indian food supporter and fan. I said next time I'm in Monroe, Judy, I'm swinging by and getting at least some takeout if not sitting down. So I cannot wait to see them. And by the way, what Deepesh told me – I mentioned Kinjal is a nurse – Judy. I want to make sure you heard that – at CentraState. At the height of the crisis, what they did do with their restaurant when we had no dining, they generated over a thousand meals to first responders at CentraState as well as to local police and fire. So they were just extraordinary and continue to be throughout this entire pandemic and all this crazy economic strain.

Our small businesses aren't just the heart and soul of their communities. They also embody the great diversity that is found in every corner of our state. This has been an excruciatingly time for so many of our small businesses and businessmen and businesses women, and the Economic Development Authority has been working hard to make sure their needs are being met.

Now before we close, I would be remiss if I did not comment on the executive action taken by the President over the weekend to go around Congress with his own pandemic relief. Unfortunately, a payroll tax holiday will not save workers anything in the long run as they will still be on the hook for the taxes owed come next April 15th. In addition, a payroll tax holiday diverts billions of dollars we need for Social Security and Medicare. The former is the lifeline for millions of American seniors and the latter is the sole means of healthcare for countless many others who are wary of becoming COVID-19's next victims. A payroll tax holiday means nothing to the unemployed when there is no paycheck coming in, a fact made worse since the \$600 enhanced weekly unemployment benefit expired at the end of July. In its place, the President has proposed a \$400 benefit but offered no clear guidance as to how states will pay for or even administer this program. Millions of unemployed workers and their families deserve better.

Numerous experts have already spoken out that this plan would have little if any stimulus effect on our national economy. Folks, let's be clear about something. States are going broke and millions of Americans are unemployed, yet the solution calls for states to create a new program we can't afford to begin with and don't know how to administer because of this uncertainty. I cannot sit here right now and say New Jersey could afford to participate in this program. And the President's actions do not provide one dime for state and local governments who are the frontline responders to this pandemic, not one dime for our first responders who put their lives on the line every day fighting COVID-19, not one dime for our educators preparing for the new school year, not one dime to secure healthcare for families who have seen their incomes plummet and in many cases, their health coverage evaporate.

We need Congressional action. The House of Representatives has already sent to the Senate a workable plan to extend direct benefits to the unemployed as well as hundreds of billions of desperately needed dollars to state and local governments to ensure that our COVID-19 responses don't go dark. And Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer have more than shown a willingness to sit with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell to hammer out a deal and get true stimulus and response bill to the President's death. The time for political games ended months ago. COVID-19 hasn't cared a whit about which side of the partisan divide it has taken its victims from. And now Senator McConnell needs to stop trying to play to a partisan audience as well. And please just get this done.

Millions of Americans – New Jerseyans, by the way, among them – need Mitch McConnell to step up and step it up now. There could be no more excuses. We are proving as a state what is possible when we react to this pandemic not according to politics but according to science and the direct needs of the people we serve. That's one reason I'm proud of the support we announced today for our long-term facilities. Let's see some of that selflessness in Washington, please, for once.

With that, please help me welcome the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

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

All across the nation, nursing homes and assisted living facilities have been at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department curtailed visitation at long-term care facilities in March due to COVID-19. Outdoor visits have been allowed by appointment since June 21st. The Department of Health issued another directive July 15th that allowed parents, the family member, legal guardians, and support persons of pediatric, developmentally disabled, and intellectually disabled residents of long-term care facilities to arrange by appointment indoor visits with their loved ones.

But restrictions have remained on other indoor visits along with group activities, outings, and congregate dining. And we recognize and appreciate that contact with family, friends, and fellow residents is essential for the emotional well-being of nursing home residents. As the Governor said, I signed a directive today that will establish baseline infection control criteria, requirements for stockpiling PPE, and resident and staff testing that will apply to all long-term care facilities which will allow them to enter into a phased reopening. Recognizing that some residents need additional support regardless of the situation at their facility or their COVID status, we are also adding a new category of essential caregiver for all residents. Proper precautions such as screening and the use of PPE will apply. Essential caregiver visits are only for COVID-19 negative and asymptomatic or recovered residents. If a resident is in isolation precautions, they may not be visited. Essential caregiver visits in Phase 0 will be limited to once per week for a maximum total of two weeks. In Phases 1 and 2, the visits will be allowed twice a week for a total of four hours a week. We recognize the importance of care for residents from their families and loved ones, but we must also consider the safety of the visitors, staff, and residents as we slowly expand indoor visitation.

Please bear in mind that facilities may need time to provide attestations to the Department of Health that they have met these requirements that I have outlined in the directive including having updated outbreak plans and enough staff and PPE before they can begin scheduling visits. Therefore, we have built protections in the directive to allow for phased in reopening if long-term care facilities meet a series of mandatory benchmarks that will apply to all facilities regardless of what phase they are in. These benchmarks including weekly testing of staff are based on guidelines from the CDC, CMS, and the Department.

This directive has four phases for facilities to reopen. Phase 0, any facility with an active outbreak of COVID-19. Phase 1, facilities that never had an outbreak or concluded an outbreak, have submitted all the attestations required in the directive, and 14 days have passed since New Jersey moved to Stage 1 on the road back to recovery. And that was May 2, 2020. Phase 2, facilities that never had an outbreak or concluded an outbreak. The facility has submitted all attestations required and 14 days have passed since New Jersey moved to Stage 2. Stage 2 in New Jersey was announced on June 15th. Phase 3, facilities that have never had an outbreak or concluded an outbreak. The facility has submitted all the attestations required and 14 days have passed since New Jersey moved into Stage 3. That date is yet to be determined, as you know.

In order to reopen, facilities must submit to the Department attestations that they have met various benchmarks. Facilities must not have an active outbreak. An outbreak is considered concluded when a facility has 28 days – that is two incubation periods – with no new positive staff or residents. They must be fully staffed and have a plan to bring on additional staff in case of an outbreak or an emergency. It is essential that they have enough PPE and they must have a stockpile for emergencies not to be used for daily use. They must have an update outbreak plan with lessons learned from COVID-19. They must also include a communication strategy outlining regular communication with residents and families about cases and outbreaks in the facility or any other emergency. The plan must also include methods for video communications in the event of visitation restrictions, and that must be posted on their website.

Facilities must – on contract with Infectious Control Service and within two months have full-time – have a full-time employee in the infection prevention role if they have more than 100 beds or if they perform hemodialysis. Facilities with ventilator beds are required to hire an infection control employee in accordance with current statutes. Staff testing must be conducted weekly to control the spread from the community. To assist long-term care facilities with the cost of weekly testing for all staff, the Department will provide 25 million in funding to support the staff testing program. Additionally, the facilities will have priority access to the Rutgers University saliva test. That is one-third of the state's allotment of tests. When a facility is in Phase 2 and has submitted all the required attestations, indoor visitation by appointment will be allowed only for residents who are either COVID negative or have recovered from the disease. Once visitation begins, there will be rigorous infection prevention and control protocols the facility must follow. Visitors must be screened including temperature checks when entering facilities. Facilities must require that visitors practice routine infection prevention and control precautions including wearing a mask and social distancing.

Facilities must have a plan to limit the hours of visitation and the number of visitors that will be allowed in the facility at any one time. Residents are allowed only two visitors at a time. Facilities may provide visitation in the residents' room if they are in a single room. If a resident is in a shared room, the facility needs to identify a visitation area that allows for social distancing and deep cleaning.

The facility must receive informed consent from the visitor and if appropriate, from the resident acknowledging they are aware of the risks of exposure to COVID-19 for both the resident and the visitor and that they must follow the rules set by the facility. Visitors should be instructed to monitor for fever and other COVID-19 symptoms for at least 14 days after their visit and if they experience symptoms, they must immediately notify the facility and provide details on their visit. For residents residing in facilities that meet requirements for Phase 2, we are also allowing additional activities for more social interaction. Limited communal dining will be allowed for individuals who are COVID-negative, asymptomatic, or recovered. Residents who are COVID-negative and asymptomatic or COVID-recovered will also be able to enjoy haircuts, small group activities, and participate in limited outings.

Recognizing that some residents need additional support regardless of the situation at their facility or their COVID status, we are also adding, as I said, a new category of essential caregivers for all residents. Proper precautions such as screening and the use of PPE will apply.

Please bear in mind the facilities may need time to provide the attestations, so things will not open up immediately. We must proceed with caution as we reopen these facilities. There are still more than 260 active COVID-19 outbreaks at long-term care facilities in our state. And we know that the virus is still circulating in our communities. It is essential that there are safeguards in place to keep this virus from entering a nursing home. This reopening directive addresses several more of the Manatt recommendations including a testing strategy, plans for resident and family communications, centralizing data collection and processing, and improving the safety and quality infrastructure in nursing homes.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, the hospitals reported 545 hospitalizations with only 83 individuals in critical care and only 34% of them are on ventilators. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. There are a total of 55 cases in our state. In New Jersey, there are no deaths reported at this time.

As the Governor noted, today we are reporting four new deaths confirmed to have been related to complications from COVID-19. These deaths occurred in April, May, and July. None of them have occurred in August. The state veterans' homes' numbers remain the same as do our psych hospitals.

The daily percent positivity in New Jersey statewide is 1.62%. The northern part of the state reports 1.37; the central part of the state, 1.39; and the southern part of the state, 2.37. So that concludes my daily update. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, get tested, and mask up. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen, Judy, to all. I'll be brief just because we've got a thick presentation and we've got a number of folks here asking questions, and we'll ask you to be economical if you can on your questions today. But great step forward on the long-term care front. I think Carole can fill in some of the complementary details, so thank you for everything including that presentation. And please help me welcome another great leader on our team, the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, Carole Johnson.

Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson: Thank you, Governor.

As the Governor announced, today we and the Department of Human Services are proposing new Medicaid funding to nursing facilities to support the frontline workforce and infection control actions. This Medicaid funding would be tied to accountability mechanisms to ensure that the dollars are spent as intended. Under the proposal, new Medicaid funding of \$130 million, 62 million of which is state funding, the remaining federal match, would be available to nursing facilities for the next fiscal year, meaning the abbreviated fiscal year from October 1st to June 30th. These dollars would represent about a 10% increase in funding.

Of the proposed 130 million, 78 million, or 60% of the dollars, would be required to be used to increase wages for certified nurse aids. Certified nurse aids are the frontline of the nursing facility workforce and spend their days and nights helping our loved ones with what we call activities of daily living. These are the essential tasks that include things like bathing, dressing, transferring someone in and out of bed, toileting, and eating. This is challenging work, and we have seen the dedication and commitment of this workforce to our older residents throughout the pandemic. The value of the increase will depend on the current CNA wages at each facility, but we anticipate it to be an average hourly wage increase of about 20%. Today, statewide average CNA wage is estimated to be about \$15 an hour.

The proposal would give us and the Department of Human Services the authority to require facilities to report the relevant wage data to us meaning baseline wages for CNAs and then wages post the increase, allowing us to ensure compliance with the requirements of this funding. Further, the proposal would ensure that facilities would be subject to recoupment of these funds for noncompliance, meaning if we don't get good evidence that the wages were passed through, we would take the dollars back from the facility.

The other 52 million in the funding, or 40% of the increase, would assist facilities in supporting COVID-19-related infection control actions and compliance with the specifics in the Department of Health directives announced today. Funding can be used for preparing [inaudible 0:42:35] response call such as enhancing infection control procedures, procuring PPE, enhancing cleaning, configuration of facilities to support proper cohorting, other staffing needs, and things of that nature. Facilities would be required to meet the Department of Health's specified requirements including provisions in the reopening directive announced today such as certifying the use of CDC's PPE calculator and having an appropriate PPE stockpile on hand, having a plan that clearly identifies how families, residents, and staff will be notified of outbreaks in the facility, registering and entering their data in the Department of Health-required forms, and other infection control processes.

Facilities that fail to pass through the funding to wages or fail to certify compliance with the Department of Health infection control requirements and/or those facilities that are found to have repeat infection control violations would be subject to recoupment of these new funds. Medicaid has robust tools for recouping funds including clawing back funding and decreasing future payments until a penalty is settled.

The Department of Human Services' proposal requires legislative approval and approval from the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. So we thank the chairs of the committees of jurisdiction, Chairman Vitalie and Chairwoman Hudl and their expert staffs for their work on these important issues and for talking with us about this proposal. We know that they've been developing a range of proposals to address long-term care reforms. This proposal that we're talking about today offers an interim step as the legislature considers the broader package that is under development.

As the state Medicaid agency, the Department of Human Services is not the only payer of nursing facility care, but we are a significant payer, and we recognize that the directive outlined by the Health Commissioner today will entail certain new expenditures for facilities. We also recognize the important need for facilities to have a stable workforce as we approach the fall and any potential second wave of the virus. Finally, we're acutely aware of the need to ensure that any new resources directed for nursing facilities are spent as intended to protect the health and safety of residents. Our proposal aims to address each of these objectives, and we look forward to its enactment. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Carole, thank you. I've said this before and I'll repeat it. In addition to the jurisdiction that the Department of Human Services has in this arena, which is obviously critically important in its own right, I thank you for not just your leadership in that respect but also for your knowing your way around Washington and how the federal money pots work as well as anyone I know. So for all the above reasons, thank you for your leadership and for your not just being here today but what you do every day, to you and your team.

Pat, good to have you. Anything you got on compliance or other matters? Again, fire away. Thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Three executive order compliance issues over the weekend. Hanover Township Police responded to a Quik Check where a customer had thrown his hot coffee and food at an employee who simply just asked him to use his mask. He was charged with simple assault and an EO violation. In Montclair, police responded to Cuban Pete's restaurant for a report of indoor dining, and that was found to be the case. The owner was charged with the violation of the EO and as the Governor mentioned in his opening remarks, the 400-plus attendees at a house party in Howell, eight different agencies responded to that. Executive order charges against the homeowner have been authorized but I believe as of right now are still pending but would imagine that they be served in short order.

And we continue – I think we're about at 4,000 power outages, too, Gov, right now. So I know frustrating as all get-out for those that still don't have power, but we're nearing the tail-end of that from the result from the tropical storm. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. That's a very fair point to raise, which I wanted to raise. We're under 5,000 and if you're one of those households that are on that list, down from a million-four, you're not happy and I don't blame you. We don't blame you, but we had been pressing the electric service providers morning, noon, and night including extensively over the weekend. And that number has come down obviously meaningfully, but as we always say, sooner is better than later. And safer is better than unsafe because we don't want to put the women and men who do this at risk and certainly don't want to put any residents at risk.

And secondly, on face coverings, to each of my colleagues here, there's no question anecdotal evidence is pointing in the right direction. Hearing reports from Long Beach Island from my own observations on boardwalks, there's just no question that more folks are wearing face coverings and face masks than were wearing them even two weeks ago or a month ago. But there is still – we are still a long way from the end zone on that front. And there's an enormous amount of – I mean, Christina knows more about this than the rest. She's forgot more about this, rather, than the rest of us have ever known. But it's an enormous amount of science and passion around the fact if all of Americans could just wear a face covering where they were with other people inside always, outside where they couldn't social distance, for inside, too, maybe as much as three weeks, this thing would go away. It would go to the ground, and we're not – we're a long way from that. And so folks, we know it's a pain in the neck. We know it's not fun. You can't get around wearing it in any close circumstances indoors, and you really got to wear it outdoors. Again, if you're walking your dog by yourself, frankly that's not our interest. It's being in that line at that bar on top of each other where you just can't take that risk.

So with that, we have to go fairly quickly. We're going to start with Elise over here. We've got a White House – some of us have to be on with the White House after this, which has proven to be valuable over the past number of months. Dan Bryan will tell us tomorrow we're virtual unless you hear otherwise, and we'll be back with you, again unless you hear otherwise, at 1 o'clock here on Wednesday. So with that, Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, good afternoon. Have you had any contact with the White House regarding the gathering of unmasked non-social distancing Donald Trump supporters at his club on Friday? And do you have any comment on his claim that this was a political protest and therefore not in violation of your EO? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I hadn't heard the latter. I've not personally been in touch, but I saw the picture and a lot of pictures. I think, Brian, you've got some pictures of – that you've sent our way. You see people inside on top of each other wearing masks. We all ought to be really concerned because that's where the flare-ups are coming from. I had missed the political protest but I believe, unless Matt Platkin corrects me, the First Amendment protests relate to outdoor activities, principally, and not indoor. But I know the President was here. I saw the pictures. They concern me. And any pictures of people inside on top of each other without wearing face coverings should concern us all.

Let's go back and we'll come back down in a minute, so Dustin, good afternoon.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. To follow up on that, do you know why no arrests or citations were issued? There was two instances of the President supporters being unmasked in large gatherings. People are getting arrested for doing similar things. More school districts and colleges are planning to start the school year remotely and New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association shares the NJA's view that the upcoming school year should start virtually. Are you going to budge on schools or should parents and educators expect the current plans to stick? And finally, Congressman Pascrell and Gottheimer today demanded the resignation of the CEO of the Paramus Veterans' Home. Do you agree with them or will you seek his resignation?

Governor Phil Murphy: The CEO of what, Dustin?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: The CEO of the Paramus Veterans' Home.

Governor Phil Murphy: Of the – I'm sorry?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Paramus Veterans' Home.

Governor Phil Murphy: Oh, okay. Pardon me. I don't have any insight as to why there were no arrests. So I've got nothing new other than what I said to Elise. Any pictures of people inside without wearing face coverings on top of each other should concern us all.

No news to report on schools today. This is something that again, it's health, keeping everybody healthy and safe, high-quality education, equity, giving parents in particular flexibility. Nothing new to report today. We take all the inputs from all the stakeholders very seriously, and there's, as I said before, enormous passion on all sides of this.

I've got no insights on – I had not seen the Congressman's request. Obviously as we've said many times, 62, 81, 3 are the first three numbers I look at. That happens to be Menlo Park, Paramus, Vineland deaths in our veterans' homes. God bless our veterans. By the way, the directives today apply to veterans' homes as well. While the funding may be a different source, the directives also apply to veterans' homes, and there will be a full accounting of all of this. And we have committed to that and that's what will happen. Thank you.

Michael, is that you?

Michael Symons, NJ 101.5: Yep.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nice to see you.

Michael Symons, NJ 101.5: You, too, Governor, thank you. On that President's executive orders, which you addressed, do you know what it would cost New Jersey to pick up that 25% tab on the unemployment insurance benefits? I think Ned Lamont in Connecticut, the governor there, said it would cost \$500 million. I

was wondering if you had an estimate on that. And then also, if there's no agreement with Congress and the President, could New Jersey – have you looked at whether it could use, as the White House has suggested, some of its CARES Act funding to cover that 25% cost in order to give people more unemployment insurance? Is that something you've looked at and would you do that? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't know the number off the top of my head, but Matt Platkin and I were going over this number earlier. It's a 75/25% share. You get 150 – if it's a – I guess \$400 add-on, in this case, it's \$100 per week per people who are getting unemployment insurance. That's in the hundreds of millions of dollars. I think it would easily surpass Connecticut's number. It's just not workable in addition to the fact that most of what was signed doesn't address the issue at hand. And if that weren't enough, these are new programs that would have to be set up at enormous cost just to set them up and a lot of bureaucracy as well.

There's only so much CARES Act funding. People speak about the CARES Act as though it's a \$500 billion bucket of money that just isn't – there just isn't – not only is it limited but there isn't enough money to go around to deal with the variety of tsunamis that we're facing, in this case unemployed or small business or hospital systems or keeping the state solvent to be able to employ frontline workers. It's a limited amount of money, so more flexibility on how we can spend that money, we would appreciate and we'll take it. But this is a – we're talking about finite amounts of money here. We need another big slug, and big is – when I say big, I mean big. In New Jersey's case, 20 billion with a B is what we need, and that dwarfs the amount of CARES Act money that's out there in total and what is left to be spent. Thank you.

Dave, how are you?

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. Today, we reported that the RT is 0.98, down every day over the last week. Positivity rate is extremely low. Hospitalizations, ventilators, ICU down. In fact, I believe everything is lower except the RT from July. Last Wednesday, you said if the low numbers hold for seven days, you would look at the possibility of indoor dining and gyms reopening. Today, you showed the video of the people getting COVID in the restaurant in China with the air conditioning. If A/C makes indoor dining too dangerous, what about schools? Some have said – some schools have said they will not force kids to wear the masks because they don't have air conditioning. Others that have air conditioning are questioning it. Does this mean that indoor dining – limited indoor dining will not come back until the pandemic is over? Or are there new specific benchmarks for indoor dining and/or gyms to possibly be allowed? And this is – as you know, Governor, it's a huge issue for these folks that run these businesses.

Governor Phil Murphy: Understood.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: And they feel like every time we hit the benchmark, it changes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, that's not true, with all due respect. And I have enormous sympathy for the industries both restaurant and hospitality as well as the gyms. We had a conversation this morning, literally today, about trying to piece together what indoor dining could look like, what gyms could look like. And I don't accept that we're not able to get there in the absence of the end of the – in the absence of a vaccine or the end of the pandemic. I don't accept the fact that – and I know this is not how you've put it, but this notion of moving the goalpost I don't accept. We've just been up at – on rate of transmission and Judy will remind me, rate of transmission, we hang our hat on a lot, but it's a suite of numbers. It's new hospitalizations, it's rate of transmission, it's spot positivity. We were up literally five, six days ago at 141, which means it was going in the wrong direction meaningfully. Due to policy shifts, I think in particular pulling the indoor dining, the indoor gathering capacity down to 25, more aggressive enforcement, people doing the right thing, that combination has allowed us – also, by the way, I think having some success, particularly via the bully pulpit and through Judy's technology weapon on folks who've been traveling out of state, which was a little bit of the Wild West, no pun intended, has now become a crisper reality. So no, the answer is I hope we get there. We're not there yet. We need to see these numbers consistently and sustained down.

And you mentioned schools in there. I'm not going to support anyone on back-to-school – you don't need to wear a face covering. That's just not consistent with what the facts and the science present. So if people, including educators and kids alike, have to wear – if they're inside in a school setting, they're going to have to wear a face covering. But ventilation, as a general matter, which I think is where you started on a restaurant,

that is a factor. Clearly, that's something that we hear about all the time from educators, parents, kids, superintendents, and that's one of the factors that we take very seriously as we deliberate the educational question. Thank you.

Sir?

Reporter: What steps are you taking or can you take to prevent another widespread power outage like the one caused by last week's tropical storm? A report put out by New Jersey Policy Perspective showed that education funding gaps in high-poverty districts are reminiscent of the mid-'90s. How will the state ensure equitable education, especially for students in high-poverty districts with the budget restraints facing the state now? And a recent committee heard testimony from lawmakers and gym owners from around the state on protocols needed to reopen fitness centers safely. What factors are you looking for to make this decision? Will you take these testimonies into consideration? And when do you plan on setting the reopening date?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think I've addressed the third. We're taking the gyms very seriously. The head of the association was back and forth with me yesterday and again, it's something we want to get to. We also want to get to it and not kill anybody, so with all due respect. Yeah, funding education, I hadn't read the whole report on NJPP, and I want to give them a huge shout-out. Brendon and the whole team do a great job. But we're – I think it's well-documented in these sessions. We're out of money. We're out of money. We need the federal – we need the ability to bond and we need the federal government to come in with a big slug of money. And if we get both – and probably also need to look at revenues. If we get all of that, we'll be able to get back to the stronger and fairer state which we pursue literally morning, noon, and night every minute we've been here.

Advice on a wide scale power outage, can we work together to work on ending global warming and addressing climate change would be at the top of my list. We do an after-action more tactically. If something were to come next week, we'd do an after-action report on all of these storms including things like vegetation, how prepared were the electric service providers. Remember, there's another element here, and Judy, you were right in the middle of this. With this particular pandemic or this particular power outage, pardon me, is we're in the middle of a pandemic. And we had out-of-state workers coming in as essential workers, and I'm happy to say I know at least the JCP&L team – and I'm sure all of them, Pat – had been testing before any of these folks now leave New Jersey to make sure we know if there were any flare-ups. That's a wrinkle here we don't normally talk about. Strengthening the resiliency of our power grid is on that list, making sure we get to that 2050 goal of clean energy, 100% clean economy in all of what that means including resiliency, ability to store. As I mentioned already, vegetation management is a big piece here. When we make the investments, when they come before the BPU to request their investments, let's make sure that they're not just a way to make more money but that they add to their resiliency and that they can be more consistent in their ability to serve their consumers. So there's a whole range of things; some of them are immediate and some of them are long-term. Thank you.

Bruce Beck: Good afternoon, I'm Bruce Beck. I'm way back here if you can see me. Governor, real quick, I know you were looking forward to attending some Rutgers games this year but with the Big 10 canceling their season today, there's no major fall sports of any sort collegiately in the Garden State this coming fall. Do you still believe that high school sports will happen? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I hadn't heard that the Big 10 decision was final. I knew there was a news report of – what's that?

Bruce Beck: It was a 12 to 2 vote.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, it's final, so that's come since I've been here. I'm not surprised, I have to say, given what we're dealing with. The big – so the reason why I hold out some optimism – and by the way, this is Yeah, it's final, so that's come since I've been here. I'm not surprised, I have to say, given what we're dealing with. The big – so the reason why I hold out some optimism – and by the way, this is Yeah, it's final, so that's come since I've been here. I'm not surprised, I have to say, given what we're dealing with. The big – so the reason why I hold out some optimism – and by the way, this is an NJSIAA decision ultimately. The reason I hold out some optimism is I look at the differences, number one, and there's a big one. And then number two, the environmental question. On the former, we're talking about inside the four walls of New Jersey. You don't

have teams that would travel outside of the state. I would not support that, by the way; perhaps to a state that would be on Judy's green list, but I think when you start adding travel into this dimension, I think it gets very challenging. So that's a big difference between any of the intercollegiate sports schedules.

Secondly, what's the environment? This is a little bit like school. What's the environment outside the classroom, outside the building? I'd have the same observation about outside the field. Where does our societal in New Jersey rate of transmission stand, our positivity stand, our new hospitalizations? In other words, to what extent can we, by doing the work we're doing now, have the state in as strong a health posture as possible by the time schools come around, by the time the sports season would start? So that's not specific to sport but if the environment is conducive and strong and resilient, that should give us a lot more optimism than if it's not. In other words, if the virus is raging, even though you're not traveling outside the state, I just don't see how it happens. At the moment it's isn't. We're going to leave it there. We're good. Thank you.

Sir, you got anything? Okay, Alex, thank you.

Reporter: Thank you, Governor. For the Health Commissioner, I wanted to ask you about the attestations for the long-term care facilities. I know you've talked about this before earlier in the pandemic about how a lot of this is being done by attestation. Do you feel that that's a strong enough accountability measure? Because forgive me, there have been times where it seems that you've just said yeah, they have to attest it, and we believe them when we see it. I just wanted to know if that was a strong enough accountability measure for the Governor. Do you feel that your administration made mistakes in the early part of the pandemic including diverting more PPE to hospitals rather than nursing homes and not acting as quickly to make nursing homes COVID-only and separate those patients? Do you believe that you bear some responsibility for that nursing home total death since there was so much warning of nursing homes in Washington state and other places? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, do you want to hit the first one?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Sure. The attestations will be coupled with enforcement activities and if someone attests and they do not adhere to the requirements of the attestation, survey goes in. They will be fined.

Governor Phil Murphy: As it relates to the second question, let me say as a general matter, as we've said even earlier in this conversation, there is going to be a nonpartisan, apolitical full accounting of this entire process. With a rate of transmission that was at 141 six days ago, with people still reporting as having COVID-confirmed deaths, with lines of kids outside of nightclubs, with the LTC pronouncements that are being made today, with the house parties we're trying to crack down on, we're still flying the plane. As it relates to PPE, what was the number I said earlier?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Thirty million.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm sorry?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: You said 30 million.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, over 30 million pieces have been distributed. Let me repeat what we've said many times as well. We didn't have enough PPE. We started in a hole as a nation and that includes where we were as a result. As we sit here today, we still don't have enough PPE, so we are – and by the way, as a state, that was a line of business we were not even in in early March. We had never dealt with PPE, and now we've delivered over 30 million pieces to LTC alone. Pat, what's the total number? Would you happen to know off the top of your head, or Judy?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Dollar amount? Probably 150 to 200 million.

Governor Phil Murphy: No, in terms of number of pieces, it's probably three times that.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Oh, yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: There's a talking point which sounds really good. Governor Christie hit this the other day. I would just suggest to him – I know he's doing really well lobbying on behalf of coronavirus clients. It's really important to know what the facts are. Don't let the facts get in the way, God forbid. Judy was crystal clear, explicit, about any reintroduction of COVID-positive residents into long-term care facilities. It could not have been clearer, and that is cohort separate into different floors including staff, different buildings, different wings. And by the way, if you do it against our directives, against Judy's directives, you will pay a price. And by the way, if you can't do it – and many came to us and said listen, we can't do that. Can you help us find a place for these COVID positive patients? We did exactly that. So that talking point is myth. It may've happened, but it was completely against our and Judy's directives. So I would just say to everybody with all due respect to the Monday morning quarterbacking, color commentary, checking in now again on a pandemic, this is war morning, noon, and night. And it is crystal clear what our directives were as it relates to long-term care in COVID-19 positives and whether it's Governor Christie or any other smart-aleck who says it was one thing when it was another, give us a break. There will be a full review of every step we have taken but the directives about COVID positive patients or residents being reintroduced to facilities was black and white, crystal clear. And if folks violated it, they will pay a price.

Brent, good afternoon.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. We talked about the federal unemployment bonus I believe and you addressed this but last week, 685,000 people in the state received unemployment benefits. If the state has to pay 25%, that's 68.5 million a week. How would you even pay for that? Trump said states would be able to apply for the federal government to pay the entire amount. As Republicans have said, they don't want to give a bailout to blue states. Do you think New Jersey would even be approved? And the voter turnout for the primary was at 26%, which is the same as 2016. What do you make of that? You mentioned high school sports. Given the nature of kids and sports as demonstrated by the raucous celebration by Cranford after it won the title recently, are you confident that you can play high contact sports like football safely or even start practice September 14th?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think I've answered the last one. I did not see – I was at the beginning of that game. I threw out the first pitch, and I threw a cutter and should've thrown a slider. But I did not see the raucous celebration. By the way, Brent, they had a good weekend. If you would've asked me this at the end of last week, I might even have thrown in the Cranford could give the Mets or the Red Sox a run for their money. I did not see the celebration, but I will say this, that we don't know of any, and that's not to say that it doesn't exist, of contact-related – again, this could be the case, but we just don't know of any. It certainly is a concern. It's why we've phased this in but again, I think the bigger issue, particularly with the colleges and the infections we've been seeing are – were the nonathletic parts of their life where they were going to a party in somebody's basement.

We'll come back on the election, but we think largely it was a very good result, particularly balancing the sacred right to vote at the center of democracy along with public health and respecting people's health and the combination of vote-by-mail and in-person. We're going to have more guidance on this, my guess is within a week or so, on not just the lessons learned but also what the fall may look like.

And then lastly, I think I began to – Micah asked me this question, 68 ½ million a week sounds not – it sounds not unreasonable and where do we get the money? Good question. We're able to apply for it? I don't even know what that means. I'm glad we can apply for it, but these cost shares – we're already under an enormous burden through the FEMA channel, and FEMA's been fabulous, Pat, but the 72/25 – that 25 adds up and is now a very big number in terms of the percentages that we're paying. So I'm not – I'm happy to apply, believe me, but again we need a big slug. Folks who are unemployed need that extension direct to them. States need a big slug of federal cash. And again, it's way – it's so tired, this myth of it's a blue state thing or a legacy state thing. It's an American thing. It's states of all colors, all locations, all stripes. We're all up against this, and we desperately need Congress to act and the President to sign. Thank you.

Brian, it's a nice treat to have you here.

Brian Thompson, NBC 4: Thank you, Governor, very much. Governor, apparently –

Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry to make you wait.

Brian Thompson, NBC 4: Pardon?

Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry to make you wait.

Brian Thompson, NBC 4: Governor, you're worth waiting for. It's like I was waiting for EZPass to answer the phone today. Governor, you apparently have seen the pictures.

Governor Phil Murphy: I saw one.

Brian Thompson, NBC 4: One picture.

Governor Phil Murphy: But we're looking at them.

Brian Thompson, NBC 4: Alright, the pictures that were shared with me were the two-week deployment of the 253rd transportation unit based out of Cape May both at its Cape May facility and at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. They show soldiers eating inside, indoor dining, if you will. The show soldiers in classrooms often times with masks in a chin guard position. Yes, there are outside pictures that you apparently don't have that much of a problem with, and I understand, but they also had four soldiers to a tent. The pictures that were shared with me by the soldier that did so who of course remains anonymous also showed two female soldiers who bought their own pup tent because they didn't want to share a four-person tent. They were afraid of that many people in the tent overnight. There was another posting. He showed me a picture of an Airbnb where ten soldiers, the ones from up north who couldn't go home each night, shared a Airbnb I guess on Barnegat Bay for much of the deployment. Good for the tourism industry, not sure that's good for social distancing.

Governor Phil Murphy: Public health.

Brian Thompson, NBC 4: A, are you distributed by these – hearing about these pictures? B, did the National Guard somehow fall between the cracks on this? And C, this soldier tells me there is no testing. They've all gone home now to their various parts of New Jersey, virtually every county represented in this deployment. And he has not been informed of any kind of testing that they will go through. Is that something that can rise to your radar screen?

Governor Phil Murphy: The answer is probably yes to all these, but let me just – am I disturbed by it? Yes, I mean, I just saw these as I was coming in here. Any picture – I mentioned this earlier in another context; I guess it was President Trump's press conference. Any picture of folks closely congregated, Judy, inside without wearing a face mask that are not in a bubble – in other words, it's not a family or it's not people who are living together – is concerning. I don't have any – forgive me. I've got to come back to you in terms of the details. And by the way, the National Guard has done an extraordinary job in this pandemic, so I want to make sure I say that because they've been there, everything from nursing homes to our veterans' homes to helping us surge staff our elections on July 7th. So I take my hat off to them and thank them for their service. But am I concerned? Yes. Did they fall through the cracks? No, nobody can fall through the cracks. I don't know where you'd be in the state if you didn't know already that you shouldn't be gathering inside; you shouldn't be on top of each other without face coverings; you shouldn't be social distancing. Everybody knows that. The National Guard certainly knows that. Again, details, we'll come back to you.

And yeah, on the testing, that concerns me as well. Again, I don't want to – without knowing the details, I don't want to throw everybody and everything under the bus, but those general data points are not good ones, Judy, I would think, right? I mean, you want to – I mentioned we had utility workers from out-of-state that are being tested. I don't – I can't say that all of them are, but I know at least in some cases, there are. There's no reason whatsoever that our folks in the Guard, particularly if they've been in that close proximity, shouldn't be tested.

I want to come back as we close to one other thing on long-term care facilities in terms of where the spark ignited. We've talked about our veterans' home in Paramus, which paid an enormous price. Paramus was at or near ground zero. The overwhelming amount of evidence of how this spread like wildfire, by the way, not just in New Jersey; around the country and around the world but particularly in our case in the metro New York reality, it was the asymptomatic loved one or staff person, heroically by the way or unwittingly at that point, even before we knew the virus existed, going in and out every day. That is the overwhelming amount of evidence as to where the virus ignited in long-term care facilities. So again, it really pays to understand what

the facts are. And again, we'll do a full accounting of this. We'll do a full soup-to-nuts postmortem on this and we will participate not just fully but with great passion. Because we want to make sure we get this – we understand what happened and get it right. But the Manatt report was crystal clear as to what happened and the steps we need to take, many of which we're taking today. Judy, Tina, and their team were crystal clear about how this was spreading. So I want to make sure everyone understands, God forbid, what the facts are. That does not take away from any mournful reality of the overwhelming loss of life here. I mean, the price we've paid as a state is just breathtaking, including in long-term care facilities. And these can never be numbers. We have to remember each and every one of these lives that've been lived, which is why we spend the time we do every day taking a few moments. We could – my only wish is that we could do that with literally everybody we've lost.

So with that, I'm going to cover up, do as we say, Judy. Judy and Tina, thank you, as always. Carole, a great treat to have you here and thank you for everything as well. Pat, thank you, Jared, Matt, Dan. Again, we're virtual tomorrow. We'll be back with you at 1 o'clock on Wednesday. And clearly, we'll be – on things like elections, we're going to be giving not just the lessons learned but the guidance on November sooner than later. I can't give you an exact date, but hold that thought. Everybody, please, the rate of transmission doesn't come down just because of what we're doing. It's come down because of what you're doing. Overwhelming by the millions have been doing the right things. Please, keep it up. For the folks who have not been doing the right thing, please see the light and especially wearing face coverings if you're in close proximity. But again, we would not have lassoed these – what were beginning to be soft if not bad numbers back to where they are today without the great help of millions of New Jerseyans. So to each and every one of you, we say stay safe and thank you and God bless.

Governor Phil Murphy

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[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](#)

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[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

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[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

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[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

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