

Governor Phil Murphy

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Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon and Happy St. Patrick's Day. For those of you watching at home, you may or may not be able to tell, a lot of green in here today. Pat and I will be celebrating tonight in a very unusual way, in a very special way, which he'll tell you about in a little bit.

I am honored to be joined by the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy O'Persichilli. To her right, the COVID-19 Medical Response Advisor and former state epidemiologist, Dr. Eddy Bresnitz. And to my far left, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. And today we are also joined to my left, and a treat to have her back, Acting Commissioner of Education Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan. Great to have you.

Before I start we're going to change colors from green to red. I've got to send congratulations on behalf of all of us to the several, several Rutgers teams that are playing in postseason tournaments. We'll start with the men's and women's Rutgers University basketball team, led by head coaches Steve Pikiell and C. Vivian Stringer respectively. Both of our Scarlet Knights basketball teams are dancing in March Madness, and I know the selection for the Scarlet Knights men's team is especially sweet, signifying their first trip to the NCAA Tournament in 30 years. The 10th-seeded men will tip off Friday night against seventh-seeded Clemson, red on orange, and the sixth-seeded women will play Brigham Young on Monday.

And if that weren't enough, Pat would want me to remind everybody the Rutgers University wrestling team is also in the NCAA Tournament under the stewardship of one of America's great wrestling coaches, Scott Goodale. New Jersey, we were having this conversation earlier. Not only is Rutgers one of the best -- better wrestling university sites in the country and has been consistently, but New Jersey is a wrestling capital. So good luck to all of our Scarlet Knights, the coaches, the teammates, the staff, and know that all of New Jersey is behind you.

We have to my left, by the way, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. Jared Maples, Deputy Chief of Staff Deb Cornavaca is in the house, and Chief Counsel Parimal Garg, I meant to say up front.

Now on to some official business, I have signed an Executive Order extending for another 30 days the current public health emergency initially declared on March 9th, 2020. As we have noted many times before, unless extended these emergency orders expire after 30 days. Today's action means that we could continue our ongoing COVID-19 mitigation efforts while also vaccinating New Jersey residents as quickly and safely as possible.

I want to emphasize that the Department of Health's ability to regulate the distribution of the vaccine especially is linked to the declaration of a public health emergency. Failing to extend the public health emergency would threaten our vaccination effort, just as we expect our vaccine supply to exponentially increase over the next few weeks. And of course, the faster we can get more New Jersey residents vaccinated, the faster we can end this pandemic and get back to normal.

Second, at 6:00 a.m. this Friday, please remember that indoor and outdoor gathering limits will increase to 25 and 50 individuals respectively. Additionally, indoor capacity limits for restaurants, gyms and health clubs, recreational facilities and arcades and personal care businesses will move to 50% of their listed capacities. As you head into these businesses or to other indoor settings, work capacities are expanding, we remind you that our mask mandate remains in effect. We require everyone, patron and business owner alike, to adhere to our public health guidelines.

Just because we are able to take these steps to deliberately and responsibly reopen more of our economy and business community does not mean that this pandemic is over. Not by a longshot. I just extended, in fact, the public health emergency because it is not over because of this basic reality. We must remain vigilant and we must remain smart. There is no excuse. For any -- I'll use a word we haven't used in a while here, for any knucklehead behavior -- and as we have in the past, we will not hesitate to shut down anyone crossing the line and putting the health and safety of their patrons and communities at risk. Again, the overwhelming amount of folks out there by the millions have done and continue to do the right thing.

Finally, I'm signing an Executive Order ending the current prohibition on outdoor intrastate youth sports competitions, effective at 6:00 a.m. this Friday. The current prohibition on indoor interstate sports competitions will remain in effect for now. While outdoor interstate sports competitions may resume, attendees will be limited to players, coaches and officials and up to two parents or guardians per participating athlete. No additional spectators or attendees will be allowed. Additionally, all persons must follow all health and safety protocols for sports activities which require attendees to wear masks and social distance, and athletes to wear masks when not engaged in activity. And we continue to highly discourage any long-distance travel. But as the weather begins to warm up and the outdoor sports season looks to start, I am pleased we could take this first step.

Now moving on, tomorrow marks one year since all of our schools closed and transitioned to all remote learning. Throughout the past year, the Department of Education has stood side by side with our districts and schools, with students and parents, with educators and with all stakeholders as they have navigated the unprecedented waters we

have found ourselves in. We extended flexibility and understanding to our school communities as they prepared for this current year. We ensured that students who relied upon their schools for healthy meals were not left out. We worked diligently to close the digital divide to ensure that every student had the tools they needed not just for remote learning, but for a 21st Century education.

But now is the time for all of our schools to meaningfully move forward with a return to in-person instruction, whether it be full time or through a hybrid schedule. The American Rescue Plan passed by Congress, signed by President Biden, is providing nearly \$2.8 billion for our schools. Much of this funding is meant to help our schools reopen and to combat the learning loss we know has occurred.

I was really honored to be with First Lady Dr. Jill Biden the other day, on Monday in Burlington County, Burlington City at the Samuel Smith Elementary School, a really special visit and I want to shout out everybody in Burlington County and Burlington City for a great job hosting the First Lady and thank her for again coming.

This help is right on time, as it is time for more students to be active presences in our school and not on black boxes on a Zoom screen. More on the mark, as of today of the 811 public school districts, charter schools, Renaissance schools and schools for students with disabilities across our state. 142 are currently open for all in-person instruction, and that includes 108,000 students back in their classrooms full time. Another 534 are open for hybrid instruction. That accounts for more than 843,000 students, and the shift from hybrid to full time, in person over the past week is the biggest shift we have seen. Some 37 of our local education agencies are using some combination of in person, hybrid, or all-remote learning across Their buildings. This impacts about 85,000 students, and many of them, by the way, we know are back in their classrooms in some fashion. And this leaves 317,000-plus in 98 schools who are still – or districts – who are still on full-time remote learning. But again, the overwhelming majority of these students have now been out of their classrooms for a full year.

A bright light in Hudson County has been Hoboken, whose public schools have remained open for in-person instruction throughout nearly the entirety of the school year. That's a tremendous accomplishment. I had the honor this morning of calling Superintendent Dr. Christine Johnson and her team and I thanked her and all the school leaders. I also had a great call with Roseanne Versace who's the Educational Association President and thanked her and her fellow educators and support staff and families who helped make that happen. And I also spoke by phone with Mayor Ravi Bhalla and thanked him for his commitment to working with the city school leaders and families.

Throughout the school year, we've had in place strong health, safety and reporting protocols to mitigate instances of in-school transmission. And those efforts have paid off, as we have had roughly 800 total instances of in-school transmission since August. That's 800 cases, by the way, out of more than 565,000 confirmed PCR positives since August 1. That's less than two-tenths of 1% of our cases over that time; actually about 3 out of every 2,000 cases. And over this time as well, the majority of our schools have been open in some capacity for in-person instruction, whether they be fully in person or through a hybrid learning model.

Now as you all know, we are working meaningfully with our educators to prioritize their vaccinations, and ensure that vaccinations are available outside regular school hours. I had a good call this morning with Steve Swetsky, who's the NJEA Executive Director, and we touched on this very topic. And we know, by the way, that thousands of educators were previously vaccinated under our prior eligibility standards, the biggest category of which are folks with chronic, ongoing chronic health conditions.

We know there are students across our state who have fallen behind due to the burden and stress of remote learning and it is time to stem this tide before more students fall away. A full year out of their classrooms is not how students move forward, or how our world-class extraordinary educators move forward in their professions, for that matter. And let me be clear, we are less than six months from the beginning of the next academic year. Come September, it is our complete expectation that every school will be open, and every student and educator will be safely in their classrooms for full time, in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 academic year.

I will ask if it's okay, Acting Commissioner Allen-McMillan to speak more to our efforts to get all of our students and educators back in their classrooms in a few minutes. Thank you again for being with us, Angelica.

Let's get to our, Judy, our numbers if we can. On Monday, we crossed the threshold of 3 million vaccinations. We're now up as of this morning 3,143,096 total shots in the arms. That breaks down to 2,040,000 people who have received their first dose of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccines and 1.1 million people who are now fully vaccinated, either because they receive their second dose of these vaccines, or because they have received their single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Let's put these numbers in another context. Our initial goal is to get to 70% of our adult population vaccinated. That's 4.7 million people. If you count the numbers of the initial doses of Pfizer and Moderna, along with the number of J&J doses administered, we're at roughly 45% of our target, having at least received a first shot. So we are well on our way to reaching our goal. And, as I mentioned earlier, we are fully still expecting that our federal allotments will begin to take off as we get to the last week of this month, and then leading into April.

And as a reminder, vaccinations are available to all eligible residents who live, work or study in New Jersey. And importantly, your immigration status will not be a barrier to your being vaccinated. Defeating this virus means reaching deep into every community and ensuring both equitable access and equitable distribution, and we are fully committed to this.

Additionally, CVS, Walgreens and Rite Aid are each reserving appointments for and prioritizing educators and childcare workers. We have also set aside a minimum of 10,000 doses each week for seniors aged 65 and older with Walmart, and our call center has been reaching out to seniors on the waiting list to help them make an appointment. I know Judy is going to give some context to the 75 and up group of seniors in our state over the past few weeks.

Next up, today we're reporting 4,607 either positive PCR or presumed positive antigen rapid test results. The positivity rate for the 20,626 tests recorded on Saturday was 11.87%. Again, fewer tests, folks are typically, Eddy and Judy I think would agree with me, are going out on a weekend day or a holiday to get tested for a reason. They feel like they've got a symptom, they're exposed. And guess what? As we've seen, look at the right half of that sawtooth graph, and that what you see every week is weekdays, you're getting 6%, 7%, 8% positivity, and you're getting into the low double-digits almost like a metronome every Saturday, Sunday and holiday.

Statewide rate of transmission is 1.05. That's up a little bit. And, Judy, I think you and Eddy think that's going to go up a little bit from there in the next few days.

In our hospitals, total number of confirmed patients and PUIs remains under 2,000. That stood at 1,895 as of 10:00 last night, 1,782 of whom were confirmed. ICU population, 407; 231 ventilators in use. Throughout the day yesterday, 246 patients, live patients left; 265 – I've got 285. 265, my bad – new positive admissions were reported. Our hospitals reported 21 in-patient deaths yesterday. Again, none of those are confirmed, so we're comparing apples to oranges.

I would just call timeout here and say, Judy, total hospitalizations, ICU, ventilators, flow in, flow out, sadly losses of life. Down meaningfully from January but sort of stuck in a range over the past couple of weeks. We've seen that nationally. We expected it in New Jersey, and we're living it. And so the hope is with the variety of variants, and Judy will go through the variants in the state, that those numbers don't break up out of that range. We will take staying in the range of that's still far too many people being admitted and God knows far too many people passing. But we've got to watch this like a hawk to make sure this does not break out and up from that range.

Today, with the heaviest of hearts, we are confirming another 38 confirmed COVID-related deaths. That brings our confirmed total of 21,530. The number of probable deaths has been revised to 2,515. And as we do every time we sit down together, let's honor the lives of a few more of our New Jerseyans who we have recently lost.

We want to begin today with a couple of remembering Joseph and Rose Haggerty – only appropriate as we remember the Haggertys on St. Patrick's Day. They were from Skillman, they were married for 62 years. They were both 96 years old, and they passed away just five days apart from one another. That is their wedding photo, as you can see from the late 1950s, really special. Rose was a native of Throop, Pennsylvania and was a registered nurse who found herself in New Jersey and on the staff of the Veteran's Administration Hospital in East Orange. Joe was a Newark native and a World War II veteran as a US Army radio operator in the Pacific Theater who benefited from the GI Bill to earn an undergraduate degree from Seton Hall University and a law degree from Georgetown University. After law school, he returned home to New Jersey to join a law firm in Jersey City then went to work as an in-house counsel for Liberty Mutual Insurance, before ultimately opening his own practice. He was an authority on Workers Compensation Law.

Rose and Joe met after being set up on a blind date. They settled in Maplewood in South Orange as Joe's law career took off, including services as the municipal prosecutor for the City of Orange, and Rose took on a new career too, managing Joe's law office and serving as his legal secretary, a professional partnership that lasted more than 20 years. They moved to Skillman 12 years ago to be closer to their three grandchildren, Joseph II, Caroline and Charlotte and they leave them, as well as their two daughters., Mary who's in Boston, Rose is in New Jersey, and Rose's husband Daniel.

So I spoke to Rose last week, and this family was crushed. She lost her mom and dad. She herself got it bad and is suffering is one of those long haulers, still suffering with a lot of complications many, many months later. Her husband Daniel, hospitalized, required a blood transfusion at one point; he's doing better, thank God. And their daughter Caroline, who I mentioned a minute ago, was also clobbered. Unbelievable. Joe and Rose helped each other through their thick and thin for more than 60 years and we know they are together still doing just that. May God bless and watch over each of their souls and their family that they leave behind.

And today we also remember longtime Newarker Reyna Amparo Garcia. She was born and raised in Guatemala City, Guatemala and came to New Jersey in 1969 at the age of 22 in search of a better life for her family. Reyna found plenty of work as a machine operator at several factories which called Newark home, and she was proud to become a United States citizen in 1996 and to exercise her right to vote.

Life had given her a tremendous strength and toughness of spirit, but that gave way to tenderness she showered upon her family and friends and the many animals she gave a home to throughout her life. She battled, by the way, debilitating medical and health conditions – literally for decades – and was tough, tough, tough, according to her daughters. She is survived by her daughters, Marisol and Sonia. I had the honor of speaking with each of them last week, and her son Jorge, and their spouses, as well as by her nephews, Jorge and Edwin, and she leaves behind nine grandchildren, Daniel, Joseph, Sarah, Nalani, Layla, Marco, Isabella, Gabriella and Alexandra.

Reyna left New Jersey in 2008 to be closer to her children and grandchildren but as we all know, once you are a part of our New Jersey family, you are always a part of our New Jersey family and we are grateful that she was. May God bless and watch over her.

Three more uniquely Jersey stories. Three more lives worth remembering not just today, but always.

I want to shift gears if I can. Moving on, I want to give a huge shout out to this guy, Cliff Baker, the president of A Need We Feed in Toms River in Ocean County. A Need We Feed was a nonprofit formed in the days immediately following Superstorm Sandy to help families rebuild first and foremost, but ensuring that they had enough to eat as well. Over the past several years, A Need We Feed has focused its mission on helping serve our military veterans, Ocean County senior citizens and the children and families of Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

When the pandemic hit, Cliff and his team saw demand for their services skyrocket, for providing 1,500 meals four times a year to more than 27,000 meals a year. They are now part of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority Sustain and Serve NJ Program and recently received a nearly \$200,000 grant that is going to allow them to purchase 1,000 meals a week from local restaurants for the next four months. A true win-win for their clients and the Jersey Shore small business community, especially its restaurants.

Even with the EDA's support, A Need We Feed is actively looking for corporate and other private sponsor partnerships to help them feed everyone who needs a helping hand. You can find Cliff and his team at aneedwefeed.org, you can see it at the bottom there. So to you, Cliff and everyone at A Need We Feed, thank you for putting our Jersey values on display.

And before I close a couple of other acknowledgments. First, two notable passings. This guy, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Ashby, spent part of his youth in Jersey City, graduated from high school there before going on to become one of the famed Tuskegee Airmen. The all-white squadrons in Japan where he was deployed refuse to accept him, and he never flew a mission in World War II, but he got his chance to fly bombers during both the Korean War and during his time in England during the Cold War. He remained a member of the United States military until retiring from service in 1965, and then he embarked on a more than 20-year career in private aviation. He died in his home in Arizona last Friday at the age of 95. We thank Lieutenant Colonel Robert Ashby for his service and may God bless him watch over him.

And a little bit closer to home. Dr. Orlando Edreira was a Cuban refugee who came to the United States in the early 1960s. He earned a PhD from Columbia University, becoming a professor, but his impact in New Jersey was in Union County. He established the first bilingual education program at Kean University, opening the doors to a higher education for countless Hispanic and Latino students. Dr. Edreira would later serve on the Elizabeth Board of Education as a two-term member of the Elizabeth City Council and as a member of the New Jersey State Board of Education. He held many titles, but mentor and friend are his legacy, including mentoring our friend, Assemblywoman Annette Quijano who brought Dr. Edreira's passing to our attention. We have lost him, but we have not lost his legacy and may God bless and watch over him.

Next I want to give a shout out to the crew at – and I will put on my best radio voice here – WMSC FM, the voice of Montclair State University, which took away the honor as the best college radio station in the entire United States at the 81st Annual Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Media Conference and Awards. So to general manager and faculty advisor Annabella Poland and station manager Josh Tirado, a member by the way, Josh in the class of 2021, and the entire team at WMSC, congratulations.

And finally, I have to say again with a heavier heart, the State of New Jersey stands in firm solidarity with the city and people of the Atlanta area as they grapple with the senseless murder of eight people yesterday, six of whom were Asian women. We stand with law enforcement as they continue to investigate this heinous crime and to establish a motive. We congratulate them on so swiftly apprehending the suspected gunman. And we also stand with our tremendous Asian communities here in New Jersey and around the nation, which have all experienced increases in violence aimed directly at them over the past year.

There is no room for hate in our American family. Our goal is to leave for the next generation a New Jersey which knows neither the pain of senseless gun violence nor the senselessness and pain of hate. We know we still have much work to do on both, but we will not give up. With that, we will leave it there today.

Please help me welcome the woman on my left and welcome her back, the Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education, Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan.

Acting Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan: Thank you, Governor Murphy for the opportunity to participate in today's press conference, and discuss the importance of getting back to in-person learning as soon as possible. I am also proud to join you in announcing that later this week, we will be submitting our request for a waiver of United States Department of Education requirements concerning the administration of statewide

assessments. The consensus among educators, parents and caregivers, policymakers and researchers is growing every day. The more time that a student spends away from in-person instructional time, the greater the risk of learning, loss, and of social, emotional, and mental health impacts for students.

And like all trends in our country's education system, these setbacks in educational development will not be spread evenly amongst all students. Those who historically have faced the biggest hurdles of unlocking their full potential will likely bear the brunt of these impacts. Students with disabilities, English learners, low-income students, Black and Hispanic students, and students experiencing homelessness or in foster care are often the hardest hit by the disruptions of school closures.

Our schools provide more than academics. They provide crucial mental health and emotional and behavioral supports for our students. Our educators have done awe-inspiring work; however, to sustain those services throughout the course of this pandemic, in-person interaction between students and their peers, teachers and counselors is important for our students social and emotional development.

For all these reasons and more, the safe return to in-person instruction is among our foremost priorities. Two days ago, we released the application for \$1.2 billion in federal elementary and secondary school emergency relief funds. I am confident these funds will provide districts with the resources they need to further plan and implement safe reopening of school buildings.

These actions, alongside the other roll-forward initiatives we announced last month, exemplify the administration's urgent commitment to paving the road forward to safe in-person schooling for all students. If our request for a waiver of federal standardized assessment administration requirements for the 2020-2021 school year is granted, we will not administer statewide assessments for this school year.

We must prepare, however, for all contingencies. Therefore, we will also issue a memorandum to all districts directing them to begin preparations for a spring administration of the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments, also known as NJSLA, the Dynamic Learning Maps, referred to as DLM, and the access for ELLs assessments, as well as advising districts of the spring assessment schedule.

Finally, while we are still in uncertain times, and there are more questions than answers, we know we cannot get to where we need to go if we are not working together through open lines of communication. To that end, we will be engaging in stakeholder discussions over the next six weeks, resulting in clear and concise guidance to support ongoing school reopenings and looking ahead to the 2021-2022 school year.

Thank you to our educators, parents and caregivers, and advocates for your commitment to the academic and social and emotional wellbeing of New Jersey students. The progress we have made in addressing challenges thus far, would not be possible without you and our progress to safely returning students to their classrooms will not be possible without your partnership. I also want to thank you, our students, for your inspiring resiliency in the face of unprecedented challenges. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Angelica. And thank you for laying that out so clearly, and deep appreciation for your leadership, as I've said here before. You walked into your position in a very calm and otherwise peaceful moment in our state's and country's history. So bless you and thank you for everything you're doing. With that, please help me welcome a woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Well, vaccine eligibility expanded on Monday to include new categories and expanded medical conditions. As of March 15, those newly eligible include public and local transportation workers including bus, taxi, rideshare, and airport employees, New Jersey Transit workers and Motor Vehicle Commission staff. Public Safety workers who are not sworn law enforcement or fire professionals, including probation officers and fire safety inspectors are included. Migrant farm workers or seasonal workers are included, members of tribal communities and individuals experiencing homelessness and those living in shelters, including domestic violence shelters.

Additionally, those with the following conditions which might increase risk for severe illness are also included: asthma, cerebrovascular disease, cystic fibrosis, hypertension, immunocompromised states, liver disease, overweight, pulmonary fibrosis, thalassemia, and type one diabetes mellitus.

The department started a special two-week focus on vaccinating individuals 75 years and older. We did that because our main goal through our vaccination program will always be first and foremost to prevent morbidity and mortality. And those individuals that are 65 and older are accounted for 80% of our mortalities. Those 75 and older are clearly close to 50%. So since the last week of February, the percentage of individual 75-plus who have received at least one dose of vaccine increased from 33% to 58%. We will continue this program until we reach 70%. Also, we recently expanded this effort to include a special focus and push to vaccinate those 65 and older. That age group accounts for about 33% of our mortalities.

Our call center, I'm happy to report, is fully operational and they have helped 36,000 Individuals register for vaccinations, and they have made 14,000 appointments. So we're all excited about more individuals getting vaccinated. But we must also continue to practice important public health efforts that help us reduce the spread of COVID-19. Wearing a mask, physically distancing, washing our hands, avoiding large gatherings are important steps we can take to slow the spread of the virus.

We need to be especially vigilant given the variants of the virus we are seeing here in our state. Right now there are total – and this is a sampling – of 209 CDC. variants of concern cases reported in New Jersey. 206 reports are of the B.1.1.7. UK variant. We have two reports of the B.1.1.281 Brazilian variant, and we have one report of the B.1.351. South African variant. The UK variant is the most common variant that we're staying in New Jersey, and we are closely monitoring the trajectory of COVID-19 in the UK, because it is now the dominant strain in that country.

An important component to containing the spread of COVID-19 is robust test testing. Testing helps us determine levels of community spread in the state which is vital to informing reopenings. Testing is available to everyone in the state and it's especially important to get tested if you're experiencing any symptoms at all: fever cough, shortness of breath, chills or sore throat, muscle pain, shivering, headache, or new loss of taste or smell. Or, if you've been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or if you were recently in a large crowd, where social distancing was difficult or not maintained. There are now over 400 testing sites across the state. So please visit covid19.nj.gov to find a testing location close to you.

Getting tested and following public health precautions is vital as we are seeing some increased COVID-19 activity in our state. The central west region has joined the northwest and sliding back to orange on our CALI score. Our CALI score as you know measures COVID 19 activity levels. Every region besides the southeast and southwest have shown some backsliding in the last few weeks, primarily driven by increasing case counts.

We continue to make updates to the data presented on our COVID-19 dashboard, which is also available at covid19.nj.gov. Later this week, we expect to post a new dashboard that will provide case, death and hospital discharge data broken down by municipality race, ethnicity, age and gender. Currently, the dashboard only provides cases and deaths by zip code with no demographic information. This new dashboard will offer more perspective on who is being impacted in our state.

The department is also monitoring the Ebola virus disease outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea. The risk of Ebola in the United States is extremely low. The outbreaks in the DRC and Guinea are centered in remote areas of those countries. As you remember, I shared this with you out of an abundance of caution, the CDC

has issued guidance to our local health officials to monitor travelers based on their risk levels. Local health departments right now are currently monitoring 21 very low-risk travelers.

The department has also sent guidance to healthcare providers and hospitals to remind them to review their CDC Infection Prevention and Control guidances, continue to ask about international travel as a routine part of patient triage assessment and review, and to review Ebola preparedness plans and PPE recommendations and inventory, and also to notify their local health departments immediately by telephone if they suspect a patient is at risk for Ebola.

Moving to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 1,895 hospitalizations with 407 individuals in critical care. That has remained steady over the last two weeks. There are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. Cumulatively, we have 106 cases in our state.

At the state veteran homes, there are no new cases among residents. And at the state psychiatric hospitals, there's one new positive case at the Anne Klein hospital.

As of March 13th in New Jersey, the positivity was 11.87. The northern part of the state reports 12.46, central part of the state 12.45, and the southern part of the state 8.97. So that concludes my daily report. Stay safe, continue to mask up, socially distance, stay home when you're sick, get tested, and remember, for each other and for us all, please take the call and download the COVID Alert. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you, as always. Just to underscore something that you mentioned, a whole group of populations became eligible on Monday. And again, we continue to have a supply-demand imbalance, there's no question about that. But that will get fixed and begin to get meaningfully fixed probably in a couple of weeks. So getting folks eligible to allow them to A, have peace of mind and B, to get them registered and know that that's happening in advance of that supply is something that we've always thought is a sensible way to do this, in the context of the supply-demand imbalance.

We know there are groups who are eligible a week from Monday, March 29th, who would have liked to have been eligible this past Monday. We get that, we understand that, these are very tough decisions. But remember, folks, it is a week from Monday. And because the supply, it's not a coincidence because it's our best guess that in that week, the week of the 29th, we'll begin to see the supply dynamic change meaningfully. And so to the group of folks who are eligible in that week, I would just say it is quite possible you'll get your appointments a lot faster from the 29th to your appointment date because of a big increase in supply than folks who were eligible as of this past Monday, who are still dealing with an incremental increase in supply.

So I would just say to everybody, these are tough calls we get that your anxious, we understand it but bear with us. We think at the end of the day, and the end of the day is now, a matter of a number of weeks or a couple of months, anybody who wants to get vaccinated in the state is going to be able to get vaccinated. So thank you for all the above.

Pat with that, compliance, other matters and you and I are going to have a pretty special way to celebrate. Tammy Murphy will be with me tonight, especially to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Over to you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon. We have no EO compliance violations reported to the ROIC since we last met, Governor. And to your point about tonight, we will be at the Prudential Center in Newark for the graduation of the 161st State Police Class, 144 men and women that unlike any other class in our 100 years, Governor, they reported in the beginning of November and they have never gone home. And their motto is "We never leave."

And I also thank you, Governor, for this class and the one prior. During an unprecedented pandemic when academies around the nation and world were not training law enforcement, the State Police is proud to announce that we've graduated 309 troopers during this pandemic, a very special and tremendous source of personal and professional pride for all of us in the State Police. Governor, I just wanted to thank you, and tonight will be a special celebration as 144 new troopers join our ranks. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for the good words. And that begins with your leadership, Pat, and I hope you'll be okay that I'm going to wear my green tie tonight. And by the way, Judy, and her team had a hugely meaningful input into the protocols around the ability for them to train not one but two classes that stand out relative to any other state in the nation. And it's another reason why it's the number one State Police Force in the entire United States of America.

We'll start over here. I think we're going to be on the road again on Friday, details to be determined. Hopefully, we'll have COVID numbers for you and we'll be back, unless you hear otherwise, virtual tomorrow, virtual over the weekend, back in person on Monday, at one o'clock, Monday, March 22. And if that changes, we'll get back to you. There's a big crowd here today. I'm going to ask you and I may cut you off, please be economical with the amount of questions you ask. Thank you. Elise, good to see you and you're up to bat.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: My first question is from Carly Sitrin. Assemblyman Jay Webber has introduced legislation that would send a portion of the ESER to federal relief funding to reward school districts that have reopened with in-person instruction and incentivize remote districts to do the same. Would you support sending extra federal funds to in-person and hybrid districts?

Then my question is regarding people who have developmental disabilities. Sheltered workshops overseen by the Labor Department reopen in September, day programs will do so at the end of the month, with limited capacity. What was the reason for the day programs delay, and when do you expect they will be running fully? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Elise. On the second, I think I'm going to probably defer to Judy, and we may want to get back to you on that. On the first, as is my habit, I'm not going to comment on specific legislation. But I will tell you on behalf of Angelica, on the education side, Judy, on the health protocol side, we're doing everything in our power to get as many kids back safely and responsibly into a classroom. And we've been doing that from day one. And I promise you we're going to continue to do it. And that includes deploying CARES Act that we already have in our midst. Angelica was here a couple of weeks ago to talk about the \$1.1 billion. And I don't think any other state in America hived off that piece for mental health, or the piece for learning loss, and we will remain hyper-committed to that.

So I think your second, your question, Elise, was for the developmentally disabled. We opened the sheltered workshops in September. The day programs are opening up at the end of the month, and you asked, was there any rationale splitting between those two decisions and when are the day programs back up full on? Judy, anything you want to add to that? Otherwise, I think we're going to want to come back to you.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think the important thing, and these are statistics that we will share with you at a future press conference, is how many of our developmentally disabled individuals have been vaccinated and have finished their regimen, which leads into how safely they can return.

Governor Phil Murphy: And how quickly. So, we'd like to come back to that. Daniel, let's go to you next. And again, let's be economical, and thank you for that.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Governor, hope you're doing well. So it seems the Biden's American Rescue Plan could limit the ability of states until 2024 to use tax breaks to win over businesses if they receive federal funds. How do you think this could implement the rollout of your tax break package? And if states have don't have to use tax breaks to compete against each other, would that be easier on the state? And I guess how would you – what would happen if any of the state laws run afoul of anything in the America Rescue Plan?

Why isn't the indoor dining expansion going in effect today, given that it is St. Patty's Day and the number of restaurants do typically expect a lot of patrons? Is this done deliberately to deter larger crowds that have might otherwise gather in restaurants? With the COVID variants, when do we expect the surges to peak and what would those numbers look like with the variants?

Governor Phil Murphy: All good. I don't anticipate any impairment of our ability to execute on the Economic Recovery Act or the incentives package that I signed in January relative to the federal funds, although we still are awaiting, as you could imagine, federal guidance on the American Rescue Plan which was just signed into law at the end of last week. It's a game changer. It is exactly what we need. But I don't anticipate any impact on our ability and latitude with our own Economic Recovery Act, which has a lot of really exciting pieces to it, including small business, Main Street, venture capital, minority, women's, veterans firms, etc.

No particular specific answer to the timing on indoor capacity. We don't always coordinate with other places. In this case, I think it is notable that we are going at the same pace as New York City, which is this Friday at six in the morning. It just felt to us like that was the right move. We hope everybody who's celebrating St. Patrick's Day, this allows me the opportunity to say please do it responsibly, including if you're a proprietor or you're a patron. Maybe if I could ask Eddy to weigh in. Daniel asks on the variants, when would you guess? Do we have any handle on when you see this gets into its surge or peak mode? And good to have you with us Eddy, as we always are on Wednesday.

Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: Thank you, Governor. The federal folks have predicted that by the end of March, that would be the predominant strain. You're asking when it would peak. I don't think that we have a crystal ball to be able to say when it would peak. It depends on how many people in the state who do get infected actually are infected with the variants. But it's also impacted by the increasing number of people who are getting vaccinated, either with one dose or those who complete a series. And so that has an impact too. The fewer people who get sick, certainly the lower the peak, but I can't predict when that would occur.

And of course, as we always say, to the extent that people adhere to the non-pharmaceutical interventions like wearing your mask, social distancing, trying to avoid crowds if they can, those will also impact the transmission of the virus and also impact when there might be a peak. So many factors, but it's not really predictable when we would reach that high point.

Governor Phil Murphy: It's a good reminder that the basic stuff is still the stuff that we know works. And secondly, the vaccine rollout layered on top of that, those are two sort of huge weapons we have against these variants. Brent, let's hit you next. Please.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Will the state open unemployment offices again now that you're lifting some restrictions? There have been an increasing number of vaccine clinics exclusively for subgroups like teachers, but residents 65 and older say they're still having trouble. How do you justify saying those residents are not being deprioritized by these exclusive clinics?

You said in August schools need to provide documentation explaining they aren't ready to offer in-person instruction. Has any district this school year had a reason for not reopening get rejected by the state?

Is there any update on talks with the NAACP regarding the Cannabis Regulatory Commission –

Governor Phil Murphy: Last question, please.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: And how long will it be before the UK variant becomes the dominant source of infection in New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think Eddy just answered that. I think the general sense is it could be the dominant variant sooner than later. Nothing new on the Cannabis Commission. I'll come back to you on unemployment offices. Dan Bryan, will you help me on that?

In-person instruction, your question if you could return, Matt. Councilman, I should say -- did any district put forward a reason that was deemed to be not valid? Was that the question?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Yeah. You said in August that they had to provide documentation explaining, has any district the school year had a reason for not reopening get rejected?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think we want to come back to you on that if that is okay with Angelica. I think we've got to come back to you on that because there are 811 of these that we had so I don't want to make a statement and overstate the case. And the question again, on vaccine clinics. Sorry, is that – just if you could repeat that? How can you have clinics and at the same time say you're not prioritizing people?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: There have been an increasing number of vaccine clinics exclusively for groups like teachers, but residents 65 and older complain they're still struggling to get appointments that have been pushed to the side. How do you justify saying the 65 and older are not being deprioritized when you have teacher clinics and airport worker clinics?

Governor Phil Murphy: I mean, I think, Judy, you may want to weigh in here. I've just said a few minutes ago that we know we've still got a supply-demand imbalance. Remember, this is overlapping waves, or I think the analogy we used in December, as I recall was the 1 A, 1 B, 1 C, 1 D, 1 E groups that board a plane. We can't afford to wait until the very last person is there. And we know that the supply-demand imbalance exists, but it's about to get better, so we want to give peace of mind that folks can call up or go online, get a vaccination appointment.

We also know that we have an obsession with getting our schools back in person in some form, as soon as possible, as soon as we can do that responsibly. But Judy, you've talked today in your remarks about both the 75 and up. We reached out, your team reached out, and then doing that now with the 65 and up. So we're trying to redress any imbalance or notion of deprioritization, because we know they're the most vulnerable folks in our population. Is that fair to say? Okay, thank you. Alex, good afternoon.

Alex Zdan, News 12: Good afternoon. For Dr. Bresnitz, if you were in your former job as state epidemiologist, would you have signed off on the March 31st directive that mandated that nursing home residents could not be barred from returning to their homes after being discharged from hospital for COVID-19 treatment? And do you believe that directive was in any way a factor of the spread of COVID in nursing homes?

For the Commissioner, on that March 31st directive, did your team have any consultation with Governor Cuomo's team in crafting it?

For the Governor, you've told us many times that your directives to the healthcare or the nursing home executives were explicit and that if they needed help they should contact you in terms of cohorting patients. Did you make a mistake in trusting them?

And finally, you've governed by Executive Order for over a year now. When does the Legislature get to come in and have a say? And do you believe it's time to revisit the Emergency Health Powers Act, which gives you and the Commissioner broad authority?

Reporter Phil Murphy: I will answer all these questions and let me be crystal clear. The directives that Judy put out instructed each of these long-term care facilities to separate both patients and staff and acknowledged that these were their homes. These are residents. So it is crystal clear. It is black and white.

We secondly, to your third question I believe, made clear that if you could not do that, if you could not find a different floor, a different wing, or a different building, to let Judy and her team know and they would, in fact, assist you. And, in fact, they did.

Thirdly, we were clobbered. Every state in America was clobbered. We mourn every loss of life. But in the middle of this, Judy had the courage to hire a completely independent firm to come in and hold up a mirror to us and tell us where our shortcomings were, what Executive Orders needed to be put in place, what laws needed to be both passed and signed and we've made enormous progress in that respect.

Were there operators who attested in one way and acted in another way, contrary to our orders and the directives that Judy put out? I'm afraid there may have been, I can't tell you, as I sit here today, who they are. But that's not to say that there were not operators who did not do the right thing here. Thank you. You're good. Next.

Reporter: The state is facing historic delays in court cases as a result of the pandemic, but also because of a large number of judicial vacancies. What has led to this large hole? Do you plan on nominating more candidates? And if so, what is your timeline given the urgency of the situation?

From Raven Santana, do you support the Reproductive Freedom Act which would codify the right to abortion in state law and expand access to reproductive health care and abortion services?

This is a question for both the Governor and Colonel Callahan. In the aftermath of the shootings near Atlanta that left six Asian women dead, some cities are increasing security in predominantly Asian communities. What is New Jersey doing to protect its Asian American and Pacific Islander communities? And is there concern among law enforcement that an attack like this could happen in New Jersey?

From Lilo Stanton --

Governor Phil Murphy: This is the last question. Thank you.

Reporter: Thank you. A Jersey Journal editorial from Tuesday raised concerns about the small number of COVID vaccine doses allocated to Hudson County and said County Commissioners are planning to raise these concerns with your office. What is your response?

Governor Phil Murphy: So on the Judiciary, there's two answers to this. Number one is the state appointments that are within our purview, and there are certain counties in the state where there are too many vacancies for any normal operations, and Parimal and team, in working with our legislative colleagues, are working actively to address those vacancies.

I believe the question may have, however, come from a front page New York Times story today as it relates to the federal judiciary. And that is due to the action or lack of action by the Trump administration for federal judges being appointed and seated in New Jersey. I'm confident, I don't have any inside knowledge here, but I'm confident that the Biden team will address that expeditiously. Would you support both of those observations?

I've been on record, without getting into the specific piece of legislation, I have been on record on unequivocally supporting, particularly given the current makeup of the US Supreme Court, the Reproductive Freedom Act.

I'll skip to Hudson County. We work with the county leadership in all 21 counties actively. We're on constantly with the teams whether it's Tom DeGise, the County Executive, the commissioners, the mayors who are quite notably in Hudson County, significant in any governmental matters. I guess you could say that about every mayor, but it's particularly the case in Hudson County. And we're working with them. We want to get Hudson County to be as strong as possible and they deserve it and we're working with them.

Pat, I would say that on the one hand, we don't talk about security matters, which is true. But on the other hand, sort of echoing the comments I made in my remarks earlier, we are concerned. And we're concerned about certain communities being -- and this is not just in the Asian or AAPI communities in our state, but we've seen other examples of it. And we saw some nasty behavior that would be sadly in the anti-Semitic variety. And so I would just plead that we all please not try to take the easy divisive, us versus them route. But let's remember, we're all in this together. We may be the most diverse state in America, but we have overwhelmingly more things in common than that which separates us. Any other you want to add?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Gov. I would just add that myself and Director Maples, we're on at least twice a week with law enforcement executives around New Jersey, tomorrow morning at 9:15 that'll happen again, where we will stress although no credible threat with Passover and Easter or to our Asian community, no credible threat, that that heightened awareness and heightened vigilance just become a part of law enforcement day-to-day operations. It is active shooters and homegrown violent extremists are what keep most of us up at night. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Part of my comments tonight for the graduation are about this notion of not just the hard science of law enforcement, but finding common ground and deepening law enforcement community relations, which I think New Jersey wears overwhelmingly as a badge of honor. We just got to make sure within the community that there is also that deepening of relationships. So thanks for that. Dave, over to you real quick if you could, please.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Thanks, Governor. With regard to the request for a waiver for the assessment tests, the Biden administration a couple of weeks ago said no waivers would be given. So can you please explain what the deal is with requesting one?

And Governor and Commissioner, why do you think a waiver is a good idea? Please explain why it's important.

State Senator Kristin Corrado is urging you to release guidance that would allow school districts to begin planning for graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2021. We couldn't do that last year because we didn't know what was happening with this pandemic, and so that was an issue. What's your feeling about this, Governor? Do you think that's coming sooner than later? Can you do this, you know, in the next couple of weeks?

Final question, we've given out more than 3 million shots. April 1st, New York will no longer require quarantining people when they come back into the state. Are we thinking about doing the same kind of thing here, the same policy change? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: So I'll start, Angelica and/or Judy or Eddie come in here. Let me go to Senator Corrado's point, that's on the list of things that we know are in the intermediate term horizon and God knows we would like to have something that comes close. Angelica, I would assume is in and Judy would be in violent agreement, something that comes close to a normal graduation. But we're not there yet. But that's something I think you can expect that we'll be looking at and working on as expeditiously as we can.

I think it's a question, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but sooner than later the quarantining reality is going to change. I can't tell you when and I don't think we know yet. But whether it's April 1st with New York, I can't say, but when you look at positivity rates around the country, please don't go to Brazil or South Africa right now. Nothing against that, but I would think that's just a matter of time.

And listen, as it relates to the waiver. I think the rationale, I guess it's in one respect why again if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. And we want to make sure because Angelica and her colleagues and I think educators and many out there agree that it is worth another shot, whether we get it or not, we can't say. But I think the reason is similar to the reason last year is that you want to have some ability to have consistency in the context in which these assessments are taken. And, you know, it's pretty clear that because whether it's remote, hybrid, in person or a combination, it's hard to sort of get that context set to then make conclusions based on those assessments that can take into account those different variances. That's where I would be but Angelica, please.

Acting Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan: Yes, thank you, Governor. So our process to request the waiver was initiated before the Biden administration released their stance on the waiver process and there is language that allows for the opportunity to request a waiver of the administration, so we are pursuing that narrow window. We believe that our plan is a strong plan that does address the tenets of the guidance that was provided. So that is the sequence that helps to bolster our case.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Let's do Stacey and then we will go back to Nikita.

Stacey Barchenger, Bergen Record: Governor, you said today again about the vaccine windfall later this month or early next month. When can New Jersey expect its next J&J shipment? And can you be more specific about how many doses are coming?

Why do you guys think Monmouth and Ocean Counties are leading the state in confirmed cases of the B-117 variant? Does that indicate in any way that there are larger outbreaks of that variant at the Shore compared to other parts of the state?

And last one, Governor, you just mentioned the review of nursing homes that had already been – I'm sorry, COVID in nursing homes that had already been completed. I think there were some concerns with that, that that left out like veterans homes. So when will these other post mortems that you've talked about regarding unemployment or the veterans homes, when will those take place?

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, do you have the next J&J shipments?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're hoping next week. We did get a small shipment this week of 10,200 doses, which we didn't expect; the week prior to that we got none. And then our first shipment was 73,000. So we got 73,000, then we got none. This week we got 10,000. And we won't know until probably tomorrow if we're getting any next week.

Governor Phil Murphy: But the guidance, the qualitative guidance for next week is modest and they are pointing toward bigger numbers beginning of the week of the 29th. But I don't think we have that, so it remains qualitative. I think I'll go to your last question, Stacey. I think we're, as I've said for quite some time, we're going to do a complete – the country needs to and we will do a complete, thorough, independent post mortem of this entire pandemic, and that includes long-term care, and it certainly includes our blessed veterans.

But I do want to say that at the same time, we're still in the fight right now. And, you know, the fact that Judy hired Manatt which is the name of the firm to come in in the teeth of this gave you some sense of how seriously we took this at that time. And I promised the same level of seriousness and vigilance. Eddy, do you mind addressing that very good question? It looks like Monmouth and Ocean, Judy, if Stacey's premise is right and I think it is right, have a disproportionate amount of the B-117 variants. I guess your question rightfully, any reason for that? Any sense?

Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: I don't have a good reason for that. I think, you know, there's a limited number of samples that are done in any given week. It could just be by chance that we have it from those communities. It's just really hard to say without a systematic sampling from around the state. And it just turns out that that's where it is. Maybe some of them have had more contact with one another in those communities. We've had outbreaks clearly in those communities as well. But there's no really one reason that I can point to this point.

Governor Phil Murphy: Clearly something that Eddy and Judy and team are highly focused.

Dr. Eddy Bresnitz: But we can assume that, you know, whatever the numbers are that the Commissioner reported on that there are more people who've been infected, you know, with the numbers that we have reporting every day, I think today was 3,000 or over 4,000 was confirmed and probable, that if we were able to sequence all of those, we'd find many more B-117s from around the state, not just for those communities on the Eastern Shore.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Thank you, Stacey. Nikita, we'll close it out with you. Thank you.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Sounds good. So we asked this question to the Attorney General's office yesterday and today. And I'm just wondering if your Supreme Court Nominee Rachel Wainer Apter plans to recuse from any cases that come before the Civil Rights Division which she heads? Because those cases might appear once she's on the Supreme Court, assuming she is confirmed.

Next, Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks is set to testify before the Assembly Judiciary Committee. Should we take that as an indication that the Boxer Report is coming out soon? And if not, do you have any update on a timeline?

And then there was, I know Chris Smith or Congressman Chris Smith, rather, has raised some concerns about new guidance from the Department of Labor limiting the amount of referrals state and federal lawmakers can make to the Department of Labor for assistance on unemployment. I'm wondering what the rationale behind that policy is and if there's any concern that limiting the amount of referrals could open the system up to abuse by those who have political connections.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. I think on the first two my answers will be very straightforward. In terms of recusing, that's a matter for the Attorney General and I'll defer to him on that, and Parimal is shaking his head and agrees. And as it relates to Commissioner Hicks testifying, no indication of timeline or otherwise. I do, I've used the word expedited. It is a little bit tied up with the fact that the Attorney General is also in the process of an investigation. So that is a reality but I've got no update for you there.

Listen, I saw what Congressman Smith had said, he sent a letter to Rob Angelo and I think at the same time it got into the press. I'm not sure how that happened. But I know that the Commissioner has taken that very seriously. And as I've said many times here, a lot of these cases of late, in fact, of late being like as far back as last May or June, with exceptions when there are windows where the entire system requires a fix, that these are very particular, specific cases to the individual's circumstance. And so I would repeat that. I know we take that very seriously. I know the Commissioner is taking it seriously. I've got no more color on that.

But I do want to say this, because you asked it. At the same time, I want to remind everybody that – and I've found over the years, my years in this office – I've found a decent amount of common ground with Congressman Smith. He voted against the American Rescue Plan. And so what does that mean? That votes against the \$1,400 checks that families receive, many of those families with folks who have been unemployed over the past year. That's a vote against extending unemployment insurance and benefits to folks who have lost their jobs, and all the other realities that go with that American Rescue Plan, educational funding, money to keep frontline workers in their jobs, delivering services, folks who are behind on rent, mortgage, utilities, payments, he voted against all of that.

So I would just say both of those statements are true. We take his letter very seriously. The Commissioner, I know, is following up. But when the bell was rung in terms of standing up for working families in the state, he voted against that.

With that, I'm going to mask up. Top of the morning to everybody. Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody's I can say this - I don't think I needed Executive Order, Callahan, but everybody's an honorary Irishman today, beginning with the likes of Persichilli and Bresnitz to my right, thank you, Judy and Eddy for everything. Angelica, likewise. Great to have you with us. I love your mask and thank you for being here and everything you and your team do. Pat, I'll see you tonight. Jared, Parimal, Dan, a cast of thousands.

Again, so we're in, I think, a couple of more weeks of sort of an interregnum; vaccine supplies going up, but modestly. The variants, Eddy, are with us, we've got to be very vigilant. We're taking steps to open up some things responsibly, whether it's indoor dining and indoor activities or outdoor interstate sports, trying, you know, acknowledging not just the physical health challenges, but the mental health challenges, especially for our kids on the one hand, and our seniors and residents in long-term care on the other.

I think, again, if you're looking for sort of plus or minus guidance, Easter is -- what's Easter? The fourth, I believe of April, I think, it's the week before which is Holy Week for those who observe or the week after, right in Passover season, we're going to see a quantum increase in vaccines. And again, the folks who have been added as a Monday are still in that supply-demand imbalance. So they're still going to have, and we understand there's going to be frustration here getting that appointment. And it's probably not going to be tomorrow, it's going to be at some point, but the combination of adding more communities on the 29th of March with that increase in supply, you may well have the phenomenon that that group is getting into an appointment mode a lot faster from their go date than the group that have come on, on the 15th. And as Judy said, we're going to continue to do everything we can to reach out to the seniors and the other most vulnerable of our residents where we know based on fact, not speculation, where the virus has taken its heaviest toll. So with all that, Éire go Brách, God bless.

Governor Phil Murphy

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