

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: June 3rd, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. With me to my right is the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health. Judy Persichilli. To her right, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan, thank you both for being here, another familiar face I might add, Tina. And to my far left, Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan, another guy who needs no introduction. Jared Maples is with us, Director of the Office of Homeland Security and preparedness. We will be joined in a couple of minutes, I would normally have waited but we've got a White House VTC, which is immediately after this, so we're going to try to keep things fairly tight today, but we will be joined in a few moments by a very good friend, 1199 SEIU Executive Vice President Milly Silva, who is a fierce advocate for working families and for the staffs at our long-term care facilities.

I know Pat will speak about this in a number of minutes, but I just want to reiterate my personal pride in the extraordinary behavior up and down our state over these past number of very trying days, in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd; a man, by any measure, who should be alive and well today. I think just yesterday there were 21 as far as I know, Pat, different peaceful protests. And by the way, some of these had very significant crowds. I was back and forth with Parsippany Mayor Mike Soriano last, I think they had 3,000 or 4,000 people. And in the overwhelming amount of cases, it has been side-by-side, peaceful protests. People who are fed up with the early days of the fifth century of systemic racism in this country, marching side by side with elected officials, with members of law enforcement. It's been really incredibly impressive. Please God, let's keep that up. Please wear masks. Please try to stay away from each other. We don't want this to reignite another wave of viral infection. That's the last thing we need right now.



I think, Pat, you mentioned and you're going to get into this in more detail, there are at least another six scheduled for today. And again, God bless you all. Thank you for being so extraordinary at this extraordinary hour of need in our country. Please keep it up. Please not only continue to protest peacefully, side by side, finding common ground, but please wear something over your face and try to keep as much distance as you can.

As we have noted time and again at these briefings, one of the greatest challenges we have faced throughout this pandemic has been the spread of COVID-19 in our long-term care facilities. This virus has had a tremendous impact and taken a significant toll on both residents and staff members, and New Jersey is far from alone in this grim reality. We have never shied from the reality that we needed to take a deep look into our long-term care facilities, and to work directly with the industry to ensure best practices across the board.

With all the emergency past, we needed to be proactive, not just to protect residents for the months and years to come, but for the immediate days ahead, and we have kept true to that with this effort. Leading this review has been a nationally recognized team of experts from Manatt Health, led by Cindy Mann and Carol Raphael. As we have noted before, Cindy is a 30-year expert in health policy, and the former Deputy Commissioner at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under President Barack Obama. Carol brought to our review her experience as former Chief Executive Officer and President of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, as well as the former board chair of AARP.

Today we have their report and recommendations to improve quality, safety and resiliency within our long-term care system. Their recommendations outline how long-term care facilities can move forward with confidence to reopen for new residents and visitors, and how they can best address mitigation, protection and resiliency against future outbreaks. It is a call for all of us to do better. Better communication, better support for staff and residents, better monitoring, better coordination between the state on the one hand, and facilities on the other. And we are ready to do better. And the department, as Judy will address, is prepared to implement key recommendations in the near term by accessing at least \$10 million of Coronavirus Relief Funds to do so.

It is a call for dramatic reforms so the long-term care industry itself can do better, including greater transparency and stronger staffing requirements. Reforms which, once enacted, will be critical for achieving our goal of protecting our most vulnerable residents. As the report states outright, and I quote it, "COVID-19 didn't create the problem. It exacerbated the longstanding, underlying, systemic issues affecting nursing home care in New Jersey." End of quote. I want to say, by the way, before I go through the recommendations from Cindy and Carol and their teams, this was an exhaustive, intense effort. I think they conducted over 50 interviews. I want to give a shout out to Judy and her team, who were a complete open book on this, and Carol Johnson in Human Services, another great leader, again, deep and full cooperation. This was not easy, and it was done at the same time, by the way, as we are still in the midst of this pandemic. So it had to be done without taking folks away from the point of attack, trying to put the fire out in the house which is still with us, sadly.

So among Cindy's and Carol's main recommendations are calls for one, strengthening the emergency response capacity of our long-term care centers to plan, coordinate and execute effective responses. The report calls for a new and central long-term care emergency operations center. Just as we have utilized, which is under Pat's leadership, our Office of Emergency Management as a central point of command for much of our public health response, this center would do the exact same thing for our long-term care centers. A single point of entry, coordinated across all of government. It's a good idea, and we will do it.

Number two, stabilizing our facilities and bolstering workforces by enhancing support for not just our nursing homes, but also for their workers. This includes stronger protections for paid sick leave for all long-term care workers, as well as better career training and development opportunities. But also, the creation of a medical loss ratio to ensure payments to nursing homes, including any increases, are used for patient care and not for lining owners' pockets.

Three, increasing transparency and accountability within the industry by requiring more data be shared by facility owners and managers, with new procedures to better regulate and monitor facility ownership, and centralizing how that data is managed for greater oversight. And for those who fail to keep up, stronger penalties.

And number four, finally, building a more resilient and higher quality long-term care system by improving safety and quality infrastructure, and strengthening state agency organization and alignment around long-term care operations.

One of these specific recommendations calls for facilities to maintain infection control preventionists, which can better support our own current surveillance efforts. That's a common sense call, given that approximately one-third of the nursing homes surveyed by New Jersey in 2017 were cited for an infection prevention and control deficiency. What Cindy and Carol and their team have presented is the foundation for building -- this is an eye chart, I recognize -- a high functioning and resilient long-term care system which puts an emphasis on quality of care, patient safety, robust data infrastructure, and strong supports. Hello, Milly, how are you? I gave you a huge shout out in absentia, and I had wanted to hold off but we're under the gun here. We're honored to have you.

It restores transparency and accountability where there currently is too little, and recommends providing resources to help our facilities meet their obligations. It could not possibly come at a more vital time, with recommendations we can put in place now to enhance our current mitigation efforts, and others that will help us ensure a stronger, more robust and more centralized response. When, please God it doesn't happen, but when the next pandemic comes.

The sad fact is that this is a national problem, and too often a national failure. During this crisis, we have seen that in state after state, seniors and those who work with them in long-term care facilities made up a disproportionate number of the positive cases and tragically, the losses. We are all humbled by that. But as deep-seated and longstanding as this situation is, we will directly and aggressively confront this challenge alongside the many good actors in the long-term care industry. The majority of owners and managers are good people who want to do the right things by their residents, their staffs and the families who trust them. Together, we will make New Jersey a national leader and a national model.

I look forward to working alongside Judy and her team, and Carol and her team and with Milly and hers in the long-term care industry to implement these recommendations. And while there are bad actors across this industry, the recommendation will allow us to deal with them head on as well. I cannot thank Cindy and Carol, in absentia, and their team enough for the tremendous work they've been able to do in such a limited time, and that time was of the essence.

I also wish to acknowledge two of the leaders in the Legislature who have been extraordinarily supportive of this review. Senate Health Committee Chairman Joe Vitale and Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, who herself is chair of the Assembly Aging and Senior Services Committee. I thank both Joe and Valerie for their leadership, and I look forward to working with both of them and their colleagues in the effort to implement the long-term safeguards our long-term care facilities, residents and staff and their families deserve.

Before we go to the overnight, I have to say, it took a lot of courage to do this in the midst of this pandemic fight, and Judy gets an enormous amount of credit for that. To the best of our knowledge, no other state in the nation has done what we have done and hired a renowned firm to help us not just figure out the here and now in a better way, and save as many lives as we can as we sit here, but also to advise us on the systemic long-term changes that this industry needs, and we embrace that fully. And on behalf of Judy and Carol and their teams, and Milly and her colleagues and others who work in this industry, we are committed to getting this as right as we can.

We will show in a few minutes the overwhelming loss of life from long-term care facilities, but I want to remind everybody that there are still literally, between staff and residents, 200,000 or 300,000 people whose lives we are trying to save as we sit here every single day.

So let's switch gears and look at the overnight numbers. Yesterday we received an additional 652 positive test results for an updated statewide total of 162,068. Here are the trend lines of new cases. But as we discussed yesterday, the growth of numbers is greatly attributable to the number of tests we are recording. We have significantly slowed the rate of spread of the virus. The daily positivity or spot positivity is 4.28%. We've rounded it up to 4.3%, that's of specimens collected on May 30, and that's from roughly 31,000 recorded samples.

Looking, as I mentioned, at our long-term care facilities, new cases continue to be a challenge. And while the numbers of lab-confirmed fatalities, the blessed souls, 5,232 lives lost associated with our long-term care facilities remains far below where we saw it at the peak, there remains a disproportionate share of the strain on these facilities. And with the report and recommendations from Cindy and Carol and team, we are better prepared to take this on.

Our hospitals reported 2,250 patients being treated for COVID-19; field medical stations 21 patients. This is a breakdown of hospitalizations across regions. The number of patients in either critical or intensive care is 612. The number of ventilators is steady at 459. That's the fifth consecutive day under 500. There were 107 new hospitalizations yesterday, while 193 live residents left our hospitals. Here's the admittance and discharge numbers charted across regions. Look at that, Judy, one hospitalization in the North. May that only go to zero and stay there.

So let's put all of these numbers in a broader context and deviate from the one-day numbers and graphs to see the overall impact that social distancing and all the other practices that we've made part of our routines, like wearing face coverings is having. As we see from our hospital data, we continue to trend in the right direction on all the vital indicators. The past two weeks have been filled with many more green lights than red ones. The green lights outnumber the red ones in every region in our state, I might add, North, Central and South. And this is why in the aggregate that we think we're ready for stage two.

However, let's also remind ourselves of this one. We cannot lose sight of what's also important and that's remaining vigilant, folks, and keeping up with the extraordinary work you've done. Social distancing, wearing face covers, staying at home, washing hands with soap and water. We're still at or near the top of the list in terms of patients in our hospitals and number of residents we are losing to this virus. Yes, we have made and we continue to make tremendous progress, but we cannot let our guard down again.

We changed this, I think as of yesterday, we are the 16th of 50 states right now on new cases per day. That's dropped a lot. Let's hope it continues to. Patients in hospital we remain number one in America. Deaths per day, these are new fatalities per day, we are still ranked at number three. So let's continue to keep vigilance, folks. And let's keep all of this in mind is today with the heaviest of hearts we announced that another 112 of our fellow New Jerseyans have passed away due to COVID-19 related complications. This puts our statewide total at a staggering 11,880 lost lives.

Let's take a minute to remember several of these precious souls we have lost. First up, Joseph Gurney. He was born and raised in Massachusetts, please don't hold that against him, a proud member of the United States Air Force, where he would eventually rise to the rank of Captain. He made New Jersey his permanent home the year I was born, in 1957. He had a quick rise in corporate sales and management, but his mind was soon drawn to other pursuits. And when the Wooden Nickel restaurant in North Brunswick opened in 1971, he jumped at the chance to be a co-owner. Restaurants became his new passion and career, and he would be part of the ownership team at Let's Talk Turkey and Mercer House Restaurant in East Windsor. And then Mr. G's Deli Nosh in New Brunswick, Route 1 Flea Market.

Life wasn't all business. He was deeply involved in his community. Joe served as President of Iselin's Congregation Beth Shalom. He was active in the Kiwanis Club and he was a Freemason, as well. Joe leaves his son Darryl and his daughter Beth, and I had the great honor to speak with each of them yesterday, and their families. And he took special delight in his eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren who watch us, Judy, every day. And so I want to give a shout out to Ryan, who's two-and-a-half, and Hayden, who's one-and-a-half, and numerous nieces and nephews. Joe was 87 years old. Joe, we thank you for your service to our nation and for your commitment to your adopted home state. God bless you and your memory, and all who you leave behind.

Next up is Saveria on the left, Saveria Marie DeAngelis Riso, known as Sarah. She lived to be 101. She was born during, in fact, the flu pandemic of 1918. Sara graduated from Lyndhurst High School in 1936 and took to working at her father's coat factory in East Newark. She and her late husband Philip, who's with her there, handsome guy, had two children, Philip and Eloise, who Sarah raised at home before she went on to get her degree from Newark State College, now as we all know as Kean University, while in her 50s, by the way.

For the next 30-odd years, she was a substitute teacher. Never one to sit still, Sarah kept an active life, buying herself – get a hold of this everybody – an elliptical machine when she was in her 90s to keep fit, and learning how to use an iPad to keep up with her children and her three granddaughters Michelle, Carolyn and Lindsey, and I had the great honor to speak to Lindsey who's down in Mount Laurel yesterday, and her three great-grandchildren to whom she was known simply as Gigi. She was strong right up, literally, until her final moment with her granddaughter Lindsey and her daughter Eloise able to have a window visit with her just two days before her passing. Sarah had a rough last year or so to her life. She lost her brother six weeks ago and her sister last August, and she was a strong, tough fighter. A tremendous life, a tremendous legacy. May the memories of all Sarah did throughout her century plus, bring peace and happiness to her family.

And finally, today, we remember Theresa Natosi. Born to Italian immigrant parents in Brooklyn, Theresa would spend much of her early adulthood in Hoboken, where she would meet a young man named Angelo Murphy Natosi. They married and after Angelo's untimely death in 1952, she never remarried. How could she ever do better than the man she would describe for the rest of her days, and I quote her, "The love of my life." As a single mother of two, Theresa embraced the challenge with a strength that would forever define her. She was a longtime hairdresser at House of Charm in Union City, but then had an equally lengthy career with Chemical Bank in New York City until her retirement. She was a woman of strong faith devoted to her church and volunteering at St. Joseph's Home of the Blind in Jersey City, giving her time and companionship and providing more than a few good haircuts.

Teresa also took comfort in some of her life's simple pleasures, baking bread and crocheting and knitting sweaters and hats for her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and frankly anyone else who could benefit from her warmth. She leaves behind her son Philip and daughter-in-law Jolene, and her daughter Geraldine, as well as 11 grandchildren, one of whom is Greg, with whom I had the honor of speaking yesterday, and 21 great-grandchildren, one of whom is Ava age 12, who was with Greg, and I had the honor of meeting her. All the great-grandchildren affectionately called her Fudgy. Teresa was 104 years old and they wanted me to say that she fought this thing hard over 12 days, literally face to face, toe to toe, and ultimately succumbed. God bless her memory and God bless her spirit.

Three more wonderful and long-standing members of our New Jersey family who have been lost to COVID-19, they take with them nearly three centuries of stories. That in and of itself is an unparalleled loss. Joe, Sarah and Theresa will remain in our thoughts, as well everyone we have lost. We honor all of their lives. We mourn with all of their families.

Switching gears, I had a fascinating and very productive call yesterday with Stéphane Bancel, the CEO of Moderna Therapeutics. Moderna is based in Massachusetts and Judy, you and I heard in our White House call a couple weeks ago, they got a big shout out because they made some very good early progress on vaccines. And it was a call with Stéphane, their CEO who hails from Marseille, I might add, in France. It was not just about what Moderna is doing on vaccines, it was also about the broad developments of therapeutics on the one hand, and vaccines generally on the other hand. Moderna on the latter is sort of lumped in with a couple of other big players, AstraZeneca and Pfizer, and then not too far behind our own Johnson & Johnson.

And this is, listen, it was a bullish, I have to say, conversation, including about therapeutics being developed by others, nothing to do with Moderna, like Eli Lilly and Regeneron, to pick two companies. So listen, I walked away with a sense of optimism, as I think you and I heard from Tony Fauci a couple of weeks ago. I know there's a lot of folks who are on a breakneck pace right now on both therapeutics and vaccinations, and we will see where that hits. God knows we could use either or both.

Switching gears again, today I'm going to sign an Executive Order that will allow restaurants and bars to begin offering in-person outdoor dining on Monday, June 15, as part of our move into stage two. This is the guidance that Judy developed that we promised a couple of days ago. Restaurants and bars will have to ensure the table seating, individual groups are six feet apart, and they'll have to abide by a number of safety and sanitization protocols that the Department of Health will be issuing today. We expect that many municipalities, and we've addressed this a little bit, I want to reiterate it though, will seek to allow restaurants and bars to expand their service footprint, both on their own property and maybe onto shared property such as sidewalks, streets, parks. We recognize that municipal officials closest to the ground are in the best position to make these decisions that are both equitable and practicable and safe within their communities, and we welcome their efforts and partnerships.

For establishments wishing to expand their footprint to serve alcohol, I'm pleased to announce that the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control will be issuing a special ruling to allow liquor license holders to apply for a one-time permit to expand their premises for service. Liquor license holders must, however, comply with local ordinances and municipal approval will be a requirement for the special permit, which will last, I think at least until mid-November. Let me say on this, that I'm proud that we're able to take this step to get to restarting and recovering, moving to the next stage.

That is a lot for today and as I mentioned, we're on a tight timeframe. So I will end on that forward-looking note. Our future is bright, and we will get there. But first, we have to see our way through this emergency. We have the roadmap for getting us there, through the thoughtful and strong recommendations of Cindy and Carol and their team at Manatt, and through the hard work of every one of you, through your practices of social distancing, responsible behavior, common sense for the common good. You've been extraordinary. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. I also want to thank Manatt Consulting for conducting such a thorough and in-depth review. Cindy Mann and Carol Raphael and their team provided recommendations that will help strengthen our long-term care system here in New Jersey. Nursing homes care for our most vulnerable residents, our mothers, fathers, our grandparents, our loved ones. As a nurse, I started my career as a caregiver right here in Trenton, and I have spent the whole of my career supporting the quality of care for vulnerable populations in Trenton, in Newark, in New Brunswick, and in Camden. I know there is no more important role than a direct caregiver.

These caregivers at our nursing homes are healthcare heroes for what they do every day. These workers and the residents who call these facilities their homes need a system that supports a culture of quality care and of course, infection prevention. I'm going to provide a very brief overview of the report recommendations. There's a lot to unpack in the report. It's very well done, very in depth, and the core recommendations, some of them are as follows.

The first is to strengthen emergency response capacity, specifically the ability to plan, coordinate and execute effective responses to emergency situations and potential surges. This includes consolidating and strengthening responses through a central long-term care emergency operation center. Implementing a reopening plan with forward-looking testing, strategies that include clear protocols and directions. Implementing strategies for resident and family communications, and developing a backup plan for patient placement in the event of a regional outbreak or surge. And lastly, developing supplemental staffing plans in the event of wide scale staff shortages.

The second recommendation is to stabilize facilities and bolster the workforce, increasing the responsibilities of, and support for, nursing homes and their workers in the short and long term. Specifically, instituting COVID-19 relief payments for facilities and reviewing rates, and creating a workforce development package that may include temporary provider rate increases, or temporary increases in rates overall.

The report also recommends increasing transparency and accountability, which includes implementing stronger mechanisms to ensure a greater degree of accountability, and increasing transparency through data and reporting, including instituting new procedures to regulate and monitor facility ownership, improving oversight of, and increasing penalties for, nursing homes and centralizing long-term data collection and processing.

The last overarching recommendation category is to build a more resilient and higher quality system. The state should implement structures for stronger collaboration and advanced delivery reforms, and increased reliance on home and community-based services. Specifically, maintaining infection prevention oversight and infection control and assessment education and training, improving safety and quality infrastructure in our nursing homes. They are committed to safeguarding all of our residents in New Jersey. That concludes my daily statistical report. Stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. I realize I was supposed to mention what the RT was today, and I blew it. So it's 0.84 is the RT, and it's been bouncing in a range of, as we showed yesterday, of late between 0.81 and 0.88. The key thing that Tina will remind me to say is it's got to stay under one. And that's the indicator that the virus is ultimately going to die, and we've got to keep it that way. I've got friends in another

community outside of New Jersey, and they were upset yesterday that the RT had gone from 1.33 to 1.61. And I thought to myself, my Lord help us, that's not a place we want to be. And as we said yesterday, it was well over 5 at the height of this, I think it was March 21. That was my bad. Thank you for not just your daily report, your comments on the Manatt report and your leadership overall, it means a lot.

Very happy, Milly I gave you – I want the record to show, you can look up the tape, I gave you a huge shout out in absentia. But we're under the gun on timewise, and I apologize in advance that we had to start without you. Milly is somebody who I met now many years ago when it was cold, dark and lonely for me. She was kind enough to sit for lunch and we talked about a lot of things, most importantly healthcare in this state. She's the Executive director of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. It takes, when we say it takes a village, you look at this Manatt report and you look at the reality of long-term care, it can't just be about the residents. It can't just be about the operators. And it has to be about both, but it must be about the heroic workers who go in and out of these facilities every day.

And in that respect and in so many respects, we are all incredibly honored to have Milly with us today. Please help me welcome Milly Silva.

SEIU Executive Director Milly Silva: Thank you, Governor and I have to appreciate your generosity. I'm someone who has a difficult time tolerating lateness, and so actually being late today, and with you, who I know as someone who's actually also quite punctual, I am humbled. So for my team who, next time you have an opportunity to remind me about my own punctuality.

Good afternoon, Governor and Commissioner Persichilli. On behalf of the nursing home workers we represent in New Jersey, and the 450,000 healthcare workers of 1199 SEIU nationwide, I'm glad to be here to share our perspective about the situation in our nursing homes, and the report that's being released today, which is a very thorough jumping off point for the road ahead. In appreciation of the Governor, the Commissioner, and all of your efforts to do everything possible in this most difficult of time to safeguard our residents, and with this most recent effort in appreciation to Cindy and Carol and their teams, for being able to interview stakeholders in a careful and thoughtful process, to offer recommendations for our state.

We know this effort is about forming an effective response, going forward to look at underlying conditions and a systemic approach. And to acknowledge, there are short-term issues, and this requires communication, coordination, and collaboration. The past three months have been tremendously trying for our members who have sacrificed their safety, their health, their ability to be with their families, and in some cases, have given their lives to protect their vulnerable patients. Every day they tell us that while the situation is improving, conditions in their facilities often remain unacceptably difficult. The Governor has announced that we are in phase two this month, and we are hopeful that statistics will continue to show a downward trend, and we must remain vigilant.

This is about protecting people. Here it means not only reopening our state, but doing it in a conscientious way. And in our nursing homes, it has to be done with a focus on safeguarding our nursing home residents and their caregivers, and to continue identifying the lingering gaps in infection control, PPE, testing and staffing at nursing facilities. We need a long-term vision that truly learns the lessons of the past two years. The tragedy at Wanaque that should have been the wake-up call, and the current crisis that we are now in. The vision outlined in the report is a step towards respecting these lives lost, young and old, by acknowledging the need to reorganize and integrate nursing homes within a spectrum of long-term care. It's time to build a new system that better values the lives, agency and personhood of those who depend on round-the-clock nursing care, while supporting the critical direct care workforce.

Nursing home residents are not second-class citizens and nor should their caregivers be. We need this vision to become reality and ensure that it is centered on high quality patient care for residents and to protect those who deliver it. The recommendations laid out in this report include regulatory and legislative action, and we must have both. We need long-term, thoughtful legislation to stabilize direct care staffing, to bring greater transparency and reform to the industry, and to fund nursing home care appropriately.

But I've been in New Jersey for a long time, and legislation can take a long time, even if it comes to fruition. The conditions that are described by our members and other nursing home workers across the state are ones that we would never want to be in ourselves. Their stories are heart wrenching. I have been in conversations with them. And as I've listened, I've also cried with them, as they worry about their residents.

They worry about how to do their job safely, given the incredible demands, and sometimes and unfortunately too often, not enough support. And then, have to think about what happens when they leave that facility to go back home to be with their families, to be in their neighborhoods and to wonder, have I also now brought the virus to my family?

We have to do everything we can to help them. There's also immediate short-term actions that need to be put in place in interest of residents' health and the safety of all staff. We hope that in addition to legislative means, the Executive and Administration will consider ways to move deliberately and swiftly, because nursing home residents and their caregivers need your help. You have stepped forward to help us and we need you to continue and help us all the way through. They need it now, whether it's about personal protective equipment, enhanced testing, addressing the mental wellbeing of residents who haven't seen their families for months, and ensuring adequate paid sick leave and hazard pay for workers who are struggling. We are still in a moment that is about saving lives. This pandemic is not over.

We remain committed to having the hard conversations with all who serve this patient population and to collaborate with all as we go forward from today. I hope the broad debate moved forward in New Jersey about the future of care is guided not by politics, but by epidemiologists, clinicians, and public health experts, and with the voices of nursing home residents, their family members, and the caregivers being front and center. If we don't include them, we will not get New Jersey's long-term care system to the place that we all deserve for it to be. Thank you, Governor, so much for the opportunity to be here, and Commissioner, and I look forward to the continued collaboration.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Milly. So well said and you alluded to this, this is not just about long-term fixes which we must put in place immediately. And again, I want to give a shout out to our Legislative colleagues who have so quickly embraced this, and Senator Vitale and Assemblywoman Huttie, but it's also about the here and now, as Milly highlights. You know, we've had an enormous loss of life in our long-term care facilities, but there are literally hundreds of thousands of lives still at stake that we're trying to save, all of us collectively, every day, residents as well as staff. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for being here.

Pat, if it weren't enough to ask you to give us any update on compliance as it relates to COVID-19, any more color on the protests and also just if you're in this room, you may not be able to tell if you're watching it on television, but it's gotten a lot darker in here. We've got some nasty weather, if all of that weren't enough, coming our way. Anything you've got on any of the above, please?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. To the weather, severe thunderstorms expected throughout the afternoon, as you can tell by the rumblings and the lights kind of flickering here. With regards to EO compliance, Governor, for the second day in a row, I'm happy to report there were no EO violations issued last night. And to your point in your opening remarks, the gatherings that we monitored yesterday, I get a report in the morning and I'm happy to read and report that each one ended with the gathering ended peacefully, the gathering ended peacefully, the march ended peacefully. And that's, you know, to your point, I think the rest of the country is looking at New Jersey, and I hope to continue to report that.

I just take a second to thank all of law enforcement throughout New Jersey, particularly our troopers who are not only working their 12-hour shifts on the road, but then serve as that reserve group in the event that we need to support a municipality or a county. So a special thank you to them and their families for their continued service to the communities throughout our state. Thanks, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. And this is now measured in dozens of protests that we've had in New Jersey, with I think only three exceptions where there were some challenges. Folks, we've just got to please keep it that way. Please keep doing this peacefully. Please keep doing it with face coverings and distancing. The weather's getting hotter, we're opening up but I know we're not completely open yet. And I just would ask everyone, I know Pat and the whole team here joins me in asking for folks to continue to be as responsible as you've been.

I thought yesterday we would be here at an earlier time, Mahen, I'm looking at you now. I assume tomorrow we're going to be here at one o'clock. Does that sound right to you? Unless you hear otherwise, which is always the caveat. Ashley, is that you? I can barely make out there. We're going to start with Ashley here.

We're going to quickly spin from my right to left and again, thanks to, everyone for keeping it fairly crisp if you could.

Q&A Session

Reporter: We have quite a few questions on the Manatt report. The Manatt review –

Governor Phil Murphy: You may have quite a few but I'm asking you to please be economical. Thank you.

Reporter: The Manatt review confirmed reporting that the state put more emphasis on hospitals early on in the pandemic than on long-term care facilities. Given that nearly half the deaths have come from nursing homes, do you think that the Department of Health made a mistake in how it prioritized PPE and other resources?

The report also noted that the state's paid sick leave did not extend to all nursing home workers. Do you know why that is, and what will you do to address that?

The Manatt report doesn't mention the three nursing homes your administration administers. Will there be a report on how things were handled at the Paramus and Menlo veterans' homes, considering they have among the highest death tolls in New Jersey?

How feasible are the recommendations to try avoiding a similar catastrophe and an anticipated second wave?

To both the Governor and Commissioner, what new thing did you learn from the report that your administration did not already observe as you were managing this crisis?

Governor Phil Murphy: One more, please.

Reporter: Okay. The report said that they did not conduct any in-person visits to nursing homes but conducted more than 50 video or phone interviews with stakeholders. Did the consultants interview any actual residents or families of residents? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Judy, you'll need to come in on a fair number of these. How feasible is it? These are very feasible, which is why we want to get at this immediately, including with legislation, which is why I mentioned Senator Vitale and Assemblywoman Huttle's support here means a lot, given they're respective Chairs. We will absolutely do a post-mortem on the veterans' homes, period.

And what new things did I learn? Listen, some of this we had a decent sense of. For instance, Milly and I, I think in our very first meeting six years ago at this point, maybe even seven, talked about staffing ratios. So I wasn't surprised by that. I love the notion of the single point of contact, in the same model as the Office of Emergency Management that Pat oversees at the ROIC, where we're headed in a few minutes. And then beyond that, maybe Judy, I'd ask you to weigh in on some of the other questions that Ashley raised here.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think you asked a question whether we prioritized hospitals over long-term care. We actually prioritized all of our institutions and identified the scarce PPE that we had. And I don't have it in front of me, but I do know that long-term care did get an allocated part, when we were having nurses throughout systems wearing garbage bags. I think we're forgetting how the supply chain had contracted. There was no PPE nationally, and we were sourcing as best we could. But long-term care was in the allocation methodology nationally, and we were sourcing as best we could, but long-term care was in the allocation methodology.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't know, you asked the question, did they conduct in-person visits with residents? I don't know the answer to that. We can come back to you, unless you know.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't believe there were in-person visits.

Reporter: Any interviews with residents at all?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I would have to find out.

Governor Phil Murphy: We don't know the answer, so we'll come back to you. May I say something else about PPE, which we haven't said in a while? Judy just alluded to. Could everyone please remember two things? We don't have enough PPE today. Today, on June 3, 2020 in this state. As a nation, we started out in an awful place with a peashooter at best in terms of PPE, ventilators, other supplies, not just for long-term care, certainly for long-term care and other vulnerable communities, but for hospital systems, for essential workers, for NJ Transit bus riders or train operators. As we sit here today as a nation and as a state, we have come -- I don't think per capita any state has put more PPE, sourced it and put it to work than New Jersey. I'm pretty confident we're number one in the nation, but we're still not at the level that we need to be. Judy makes that point and I think she wants to make another one related.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, in March when PPE was the scarcest, long-term care received 66 pieces of PPE, and since the end of March, over 14 million pieces in total. That's gowns and masks and gloves and face shields, 14 million in total.

Governor Phil Murphy: We have to keep rolling, but you asked one question about staffing. Please Aswan, I should have introduced Aswan here.

Reporter: I think you didn't mention the paid sick leave issue. Do you know why some nursing home workers were not getting paid sick leave, and what will you do to address that?

Governor Phil Murphy: Maybe Milly may know this better than I do, but as you know, it's a recommendation in the report and so I'm not sure which operators but believe me, that's a recommendation we take very seriously. Is that fair to say? Okay, thank you. Sir, do you have anything today? You do? Yep.

Reporter: This is from News 12 New Jersey's Jim Murdock. He has been contacted by the three remaining auto racing tracks in New Jersey. They have not received any guidance on how or when to reopen, but horse tracks have. Speedways in Pennsylvania and New York are reopening now. On behalf of Bridgeport Speedway in Gloucester County, Wall Stadium in Monmouth County and New Egypt Speedway in Ocean County, when can these outdoor venues return with fans at a reduced capacity, properly spaced out in their expansive grandstands?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yes, so I would tell Jim we owe guidance on the race tracks, the auto race tracks. I don't know is the answer as to when they're going to be able to have fans. We're not allowing fans for horse racing, but we do know we owe guidance on the auto racing tracks. Matt Platkin is with me. I don't know when that guidance will come, but we'll take that under advisement. Thank you for that.

Again, at some point down the road, I hope all of these, whether it's sports, professional, college, high school, whether it's horse racing, auto racing, I hope we have fans again sooner than later, but I can't promise that today, as to when that will be. Thank you. Come on down here, Aswan.

Reporter: Governor, is our dataset complete? Do you think there are more deaths due to COVID or related to COVID that are not included in the official count? If so, how many? The state is reporting only lab-confirmed deaths? Is there a reason to try to go back and include other probable COVID deaths as well? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm the least qualified person to answer this, but that's never held me back so far. I'll give you one thought and we'll turn it to Tina. I think the death toll is almost certainly higher than we think it is. But one of the things we want to do with you all every day, and we owe it to the folks who watch us every day, to be -- and we've adjusted some things as you know, over the past three months -- to be as buttoned down as we possibly can be, so we know guaranteed this is a lab-confirmed fatality. We don't want to speculate. But my personal opinion is that this number, when we look back in the fullness of time, I mentioned a case I think maybe yesterday or the day before, the gentleman died of a coronary, cardiac arrest, pardon me. But his sister-in-law was of the opinion he almost certainly had contracted COVID-19. It was at the height, at the peak, in that plateau in mid-April. But my guess is almost certainly the number is higher than any state or any country right now is reporting. I'll now turn things over, however, to the record. Tina, anything you want to add to that?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Yeah, I would agree with the Governor that the death reporting is definitely something that is going to be underestimated, on top of probably our overarching case count as well. We are looking at a variety of different data sources to help flesh out what our death data look like. We

are also looking at the concept of the cases of probable deaths as well. But, you know, again, it takes a bit for us to look at the data and we want to get it right before we actually share.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Are you okay? I can't even see you. You're good, right? Okay. Let's go to Elise, right in front of you, Aswan. Thank you. Hi, Elise.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, good afternoon. With regard to the New Jersey National Guard troops in the capital, how many were sent? How long do you expect them to stay? And do you have any control over their assignments? What are their exact duties and exactly where are they posted? New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia reportedly declined to send their troops. Why did New Jersey commit?

And I have a question from Carly Sitrin. With the Secretary of Higher Education moving to your team as a policy advisor, you soon will have the top two education positions in your cabinet empty during an economic and public health crisis. What are your plans to fill these positions? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think these are both mine. Elise, to the best of my knowledge and if I'm wrong about this, it's 85 persons. It is a limited, I don't have a term for you, but it's a limited term. So this is not an open-ended commitment. And it is explicitly to guard federal, not just property generally what I said yesterday, but actually it's more defined than I thought, federal monuments. And if there is any diversion from that, we reserve the right to reassess that presence. I have no comment on the other states' deliberations.

Yes, we do. Listen, we've got two extraordinary leaders, Dr. Lamont Repollet and Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis, who are both on the move. Lamont to become President of Kean University, which is one of the most important schools we have got in this state, especially in the teaching profession, but a big healthcare generator of talent as well. We're sorry to lose them, but I'm thrilled that he is staying in the state and in a position as important as that. Zakiya is another rock star, as Secretary of Higher Education is now going to be our Policy Director. Again, a loss on the one hand, clearly, but on the other hand, someone who's going to be able to be very broad gauged in what she'll touch, not just the great work she did in higher education, but by definition, the Head of Policy in our administration touches across the waterfront.

We will endeavor, as soon as we can, but we want to do it right as opposed to just quickly. We'll begin, and we really have begun the quiet process of thinking through potential names. Nothing to report. Clearly, it'll take us a while. The great news is in each of their cases, they've got a very strong team and that on an interim basis that they will be there to step into the void. Lamont is very much still in the seat helping us think through the very complicated question, particularly about what's the summer look like? And more importantly even, what's back to school look like? He's not gone anywhere. He's still very much driving that process. And Zakiya, this is a fresh announcement, she as well is still firmly in the higher education seat. I don't have a specific date on either, but there's at least some number of weeks, minimal to go in both of their cases, in their current positions. Thank you. Brent, we'll come to you if that's all right. Hold on.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Families say their loved ones in nursing homes have not left their rooms in months out of fear of contracting COVID. The mental health of these residents is suffering. When will visits be allowed again? What kind of rules will you put in place to permit them?

What does the Manatt report tell you about what the state should have done differently as the crisis unfolded inside nursing homes?

Do you think these thousands of protesters should get tested for COVID? And are there enough tests for them?

And the last one is a reader question. When do you expect to allow something like an indoor wedding with more than 100 people? Is that anywhere close?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll do the ones that are in the last couple, at least. I think, by the way, the report does speak to the fact that we've got to be able to get safeguards in place sooner than later to allow loved ones and staff to safely come in and out of these facilities, including allowing the residents to be able to get out of their room, but I'll defer to Judy on both that. And in terms of what we've done differently, listen, I want to again thank Judy for the courage to put a mirror up to what we've done here and what the current situation

looks like and what we hope it looks like in a very different way going forward. And I think if all of us knew in February what we know today, there's no question we would have, I'm sure, done things in a different manner of some sort.

Testing all the protesters, I'm not sure about all of them. But I mentioned yesterday, Mayor Baraka said that he felt like the folks who had gathered in close proximity on Saturday night in Newark should get tested and I endorse what he said. I think if you're in close proximity, it is a wise thing to do. I would say please continue to do what Milly has been doing more diligently than I have in the past hour, wear face coverings, stay away from folks. The process, by the way, I have a personal window in this, the process for testing, not only are there a ton more places to get tested, but the process is increasingly very straightforward. I had a family member yesterday morning, 10:15 appointment in Toms River, it took her a total of 10 minutes. The entire experience she had – sorry, that was two days ago, pardon me, it was on Monday. She had an email at 6:00 p.m. yesterday, so whatever that is, 32 hours after having gotten tested. It was very straightforward. It was that easy, self-administered front lobe of the nose.

Indoor weddings and the like, I think we still, Matt, I'm not sure how I would put this, because it's still subject to the capacity limitations on indoors. That's something we're still, we're hearing that increasingly we respect the rights that folks need to be able to plan ahead, particularly with a big event like that, so bear with us on that. I think we owe guidance. Do you want to add anything to that? Are you good? Okay.

And we also, I want to say this, you didn't ask about pools. We know we still owe guidance on pools. We're hearing that increasingly and we understand that, particularly as the temperatures go up, that we owe guidance. Judy, anything you want to add on loved ones leaving the room and/or anything in the report that jumps out at you in terms of what we would have done differently?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. Relaxing restrictions on nursing homes will be dependent on the testing strategies. I think CDC is giving some guidance in that regard and our epidemiologists are watching it every day. We have to be super vigilant, I don't think I need to elaborate why that's important.

As far as what we would have done differently, I think when we get an opportunity to sit down with some calmness and do the after action, I think we would find that what I would have done differently is really focused on the resiliency of our nursing home industry. And from day one, probably should have looked at that a little bit more critically. We did not have a full picture of their backup plans.

Governor Phil Murphy: I would just add, may I repeat the mantra that you started a few minutes ago on PPE, what do I wish we had differently? I wish the nation had a stockpile of PPE that was sufficient to be able for us to meet our needs. And I love, I want to repeat one of the recommendations other than the staffing ratios and staffing protections, which I love. I want to repeat, I love the single point of contact that is part of their recommendations. Because this is, you know, it takes a village in terms of long-term care and I love that, and that's something I know Judy and team and others will implement. Thank you. Dave, you're going to bring us home.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Thank you. And thank you, Governor and Colonel for announcing that there was a thunderstorm going through and the lights were blinking, because it confirmed I was not going blind. Thank you for that.

Governor Phil Murphy: That is correct.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Could you, Governor, just expand a little bit your comments on the outdoor dining? I know you've mentioned, talked a little bit about it yesterday, the efforts to get creative how restaurants may try to play out expanding their outdoor space. Remind us, what's the guidance for these restaurants as they try to do this? And you know, what would your recommendation be to residents in terms of supporting these restaurants in their neighborhoods?

And the other question is regarding what's going on in Pennsylvania. They're apparently opening summer school on July 1, and motor vehicle agency offices are also opening very soon. Do we have any sense about when that may start to happen in New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think, Dave, on outdoor dining, I think I mentioned in my remarks if I didn't, I am remiss, that I think Department of Health under Judy's leadership will be putting out guidance by the end of the day today, I think. But the specific question about guidance for municipalities, we like the idea as long as it's done safely. We like the idea of trying to claim a little bit more real estate. And again, you've got to be careful. Again, these are for restaurants that don't have, right now, the ability to have outdoor dining. And so whether it's a sidewalk, a parking lot or some other shared space between buildings, as long as it can be done safely and responsibly, we like that.

But having said that, it's got to be really monitored locally, because we're not going to have the visibility into all of that. What recommendation do I have to residents? We've already, I won't say where, but we've already got a reservation for Monday night, June 15th, outdoors at a restaurant. I hope folks, with some confidence, feel they can get out there and partake and help out our restaurants and our small businesses. We'll be giving guidance out shortly from Judy and her team on essential retail. My guess is it'll look a lot -- or non-essential retail, my guess is it will look a lot like the guidance on essential retail because it's basic stuff. But you know, we put the investment into testing. We'll be talking to you about contact tracing sometime within the next week about what that looks like, the isolation if need be. That's to give folks the confidence that they can actually you know what? I can get out there and take my family to an outdoor dining experience beginning on June 15, or to a non-essential retail shop.

Now, I don't have any window into Pennsylvania, but we're working through a lot of the issues you mentioned, summer school and other steps. You know, we're working that through. I don't know, Matt, do you want to add anything to that? But not all states, even though we're largely harmonized, we're not doing things in lockstep.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, on summer schools, the Department of Education is working on guidance with school districts on that front. And then on outdoor dining, the order which will come out today will speak to this directly. But municipalities have the ability already, and will under the order, to expand the footprint. There's also, as the Governor mentioned, an abbreviated process by which restaurants that have liquor licenses can apply to the ABC to use the same licenses in their expanded footprint. They have to have had a license before, but that will be stood up today as well. As well as, they have to follow, just one point, they have to follow the Department of Health's guidance that will come out today in that expanded footprint.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I should have mentioned that. I mentioned in my remarks the ABC has cooperated nicely here to give folks an ability to offer some more services. With that, I'm going to mask up, if that's alright. Again, I want to thank, as I do every day, Judy, for your leadership, including the courage to initiate this report, which is going to have huge, as Milly said, a huge jumping off point. It's up to us now to execute collectively on how we take it from here to the future. But to you and Tina, thank you as always for being here. Milly, it's a real treat to have you. And I really can't thank you enough. This is not the first time, or maybe even the first handful of times we've communicated since this crisis started but your heroic colleagues going in and out of hospitals, of long-term care facilities, just being there in our hour of need, we'll never forget. Thank you for that and your leadership in that respect. Yvette, thank you for being here as well. I just realized that was you behind the mask over there. Pat, thank you again, folks, Jared, likewise Matt, Mahen.

Folks, we're setting an extraordinary example right now in terms of our ability to rightfully protest and do it peacefully, and stand up for what's right in this nation and to address the systemic racism in an unvarnished way, but also in an extraordinarily peaceful way, in many cases alongside elected officials, faith leaders in every case I think, members of law enforcement. Please keep that up. Please wear something on your face. Please try to stay from each other. Brent, the more I think about your question, the more I would say, yeah, if you're in close proximity, I think you should get tested. The notion of a super spreader is very much the case. Tina would want me to say very much the case in a very close congregation of people, and we want to make sure that folks are being responsible in that respect. Be careful the weather, and we will be with you tomorrow at 1:00 p.m. God bless you all.

Governor Phil Murphy

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