

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: September 14th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. I wasn't certain that the woman on my right who needs no introduction, Commissioner of Health Judy Persichilli, would be with us because she just literally walked out of a budget hearing, so great to have you, as always, with us. And that was a three-and-a-half hour session, so hats off to you. And to your right, another familiar face, the Department of Health Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz. Ed, great to have you. To my left, a guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. We have the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples with us.

Thank you for your patience, by the way, starting a little bit later today. I want to start with a couple of non-COVID-related items. First, tomorrow is the first day of Hispanic Heritage Month, the annual celebration that runs from September 15th through October 15th. Across New Jersey, Hispanic Heritage Month is one of our most colorful and meaningful celebrations and as with so many so much else this year, we will have to celebrate a little differently. I for one will especially miss not just going around the state, but our gathering every year of our state's Hispanic leaders at Drumthwacket. However we celebrate, the contributions of our Latino communities are unmistakable and provide so much of the color that makes up the wondrous and vivid tapestry that is New Jersey. I see some of the best of New Jersey and I see some of the best of America. This is who we are as New Jerseyans. We are diverse. We don't all speak the same language.

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came from different places. We have different stories. But here, notwithstanding all of that, we are one family and in a time like this, that's something worth celebrating. So happy Hispanic Heritage Month, que Dios te bendiga.

Next, on Friday, I announced and Pat was deeply involved in this, that 10 firefighters from the New Jersey Forest Fire Service would be deploying along with three fire engines and an additional support vehicle to California to help state and local firefighters battle the worst wildfires in recent memory. I'm proud to today announce that all members headed off on Saturday or have arrived safely in California, and their arrival is not a moment too late as numerous fires continue to burn out of control. We wish them nothing but the best as they tend to the task ahead of them and we pray for their safety and look forward to their safe return home to their families and friends. It's worth noting that the western wildfires have burned in total acreage, Pat, the size of our entire state, which is extraordinary. More than two dozen Americans have lost their lives. Thousands have lost their homes and in most cases, along with their homes, almost everything they owned. Let that sink in just for a moment. With everything else going on around us, these families are now confronted with the horror of these fires. This is why I am so proud that we can assist. As Americans, we are all in this together and we stand with our brothers and sisters in California and elsewhere across the West.

And it isn't just the West. Pat and I were just discussing earlier and I know he'll address this, we want to be the guys that are always there for our fellow sister and brother states but we've also got to make sure we've got the assets that we need in our own state given, in particular in our case, the potential for storms, less so thank God forest fires. So I know Pat you'll talk a little bit more about all of the above.

Judy with your blessing, let's look at the overnight numbers. Today we're announcing an additional 346 positives for a cumulative total of 196,968. Positivity rate for tests recorded on September 10th was 1.82%. That's a good number, down a little bit over the past couple of days. Statewide rate of transmission currently stands at 1.06. And Judy, you predicted this last week, it got as high as 1.1 and then it started slowly drifting a little bit, still over one but drifting generally in the right direction.

In our hospitals, there were 216 COVID-positive patients being treated as of last night and an additional 204 awaiting test results, for a total of 420. Of these, 91 were in intensive care, 41 ventilators were in use and today we are reporting, with a heavy heart, three additional fatalities bringing the total of confirmed deaths to 14,245. The number of probable deaths remains unchanged for today at 1,789. Of those three deaths, Judy, I've got one from September 10th and two from September 9th. And again, this is at the risk of apples to oranges, our hospitals reported 14 deaths yesterday, but again, those are not confirmed COVID causes so they are not included in those numbers. That's just to give you a spot sense of what it looks like in our hospitals.

Let's take a few minutes, if we could, to remember three more of the New Jerseyans this pandemic has taken from our statewide family. We'll start by remembering Richard Gould, a longtime resident of Woodbridge, who we lost at the age of 81. He was born and raised in Brooklyn and served in the United States Marines from 1956 to 1959. Pat, he looks like a marine, doesn't he? Richard moved to Woodbridge in 1961 after he and his wife, Marie Ann, were married, and it was there that they would raise their family. Richard worked in the alarm security industry and was the owner and operator of State Alarm Company in Edison for 20 years. Last year, he received the Pioneer Award from the New Jersey Electronic Security Association.

But it is Richard's community service that stands out. He was a member of Woodbridge Fire Company No. 1 for 48 years, served as Township Fire Commissioner for 15 years, and took special pride in his work with the Fire Prevention Bureau. He was active in St. James Catholic Church and a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 857, as well as to the Corporal Reinhardt Detachment of the Marine Corps League. He is survived by Marie Ann after 59 years of marriage and their sons, Rick, and I had the great honor of speaking with Rick at the end of the week, and Thomas, who I believe is in Colorado, and their wives Eileen and Amy and five grandchildren. He also leaves two brothers and countless family and friends. In all, Richard had 10 godchildren. And by the way, as his son Rick said to me, Judy, six members of their family were COVID positive, including his wife Marie Ann. Thank God, as far as I can tell based on our conversation, they're all okay other than their hearts are broken by Richard's loss. So we thank Richard for his years of service to his community and to our nation, and may God bless and watch over him.

Next we recall Marie Dykstra Lilore who passed away two weeks short of her 95th birthday. She was born in Jersey City and in the 1944 married a young soldier named Leonard Dykstra, and after his return from serving in Europe in World War II, where by the way he was injured during the Battle of the Bulge, they eventually settled in Hasbrouck Heights. Sadly, Leonard passed in 1984. Marie found a new love, a widower named Ralph Lilore, and they were married in 1988 and stayed together, making their home in Rutherford, and then in an assisted living facility in Woodcliff Lakes until sadly Ralph's passing in 2017.

In her Hasbrouck Heights days, Marie kept busy managing the active schedules of her children Susan, Paul and Peter, while volunteering at Hackensack Hospital and teaching afterschool religion classes at Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church. Her sense of community did not dim upon moving to Rutherford and she was both an active member and volunteer at the KIPP Senior Citizens Center. So Marie now leaves behind her son Paul and I had the honor of speaking with him at the end of the week. He's in Paramus, her son Peter, and their families, four surviving grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. This is not the first cross that Marie has had to bear. Her daughter Susan passed away in 2006 and her son Peter, who I mentioned is in Georgia, fell victim to an infection and is paralyzed since 2017. But they march on. Her family was her rock through thick and thin and to the end. May God bless you and watch over you, Marie, and may God bless and watch over your family.

Finally, today, we remember Lymas Robinson, known to many as Rob. He was born in Harlem and served with the army in Vietnam. In 1977. He and his wife Leora moved to Englewood and open what Leora called Englewood's first black-run bakery, A&R bake shop, with Rob working behind the scenes. In the 1980s, another move took them next door to Teaneck, where they raised their children Steven and Felicio. He was deeply involved with the community and Leora wanted me to make sure I said that he was president of the Vorhees Street Association.

Rob was a bus driver for several years before an opportunity arose to join the police force in the emergency department at University Hospital in Newark. He would earn the public safety department's Grand Cordon Metal when he stepped in to save the life of a fellow officer who had been jumped by a man while at the hospital. Rob now leaves behind Leora, and I had the great honor of speaking with her on Friday. He passed the night before their 57th wedding anniversary, sons Steven and Felicio, who I also had the great honor of speaking with on Friday. His daughter-in-law Natalie and his beloved grandchildren Jayla, Ryan, Kyle, and Dakota. He's also survived by his sister Thelma as well as a brother-in-law and sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews. Rob was 80 years old. And again, to you, Rob, may God bless you and watch over you.

And may every member of our New Jersey family who has been lost to COVID-19 be blessed, and their families find comfort in their memories. May we never forget those who we have lost. They are our friends, family members and neighbors. And may we always remain mindful of the steps we can take to slow the spread of the virus and to save lives.

Next, I want to acknowledge another of the small business leaders who is partnered with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to remain strong during these unprecedented times. On Friday, I had the great pleasure of checking in with Kyung Sung. Kyung goes by, she wanted me to call her KJ Sung, the founder of Cherry Hill-based Computer Connections, Inc. Kyung's flagship product WinCleaners has been the leading software management system for the dry cleaning industry for the past two decades. It's been continually updated and improved as technology has improved, and continues to set the standard and is in use not just across the United States but in businesses around the world. To keep her business open, KJ worked with the EDA to receive an EDA small business loan. This will ensure that Computer Connections stays ahead of the competition and WinCleaners remains the industry standard. So KJ, thank you, or I should also say, gamsahabnida, for making New Jersey the home for your business and we look forward to your continued success.

And finally, I want to close by recognizing a hometown hero who the First Lady had the pleasure of working with recently and I had the great honor of speaking with a few days ago, and that is Carlos Roldan, the head of Catholic Charities Food Pantries in Paterson, New Jersey. Prior to the pandemic, Carlos and his team of volunteers would provide food to between 5,000 to 7,000 residents in a typical month. By April of this year, the demand had doubled. In May, it tripled. In June, July and August they were serving nearly 25,000 children, women and men. Over these months Carlos has overseen the distribution of more than 100,000 pounds of food. Like everyone associated with Catholic Charities, Carlos is working tirelessly to end hunger, and his

efforts have never been needed more than now, when countless families are turning to him to put food on their tables. So to you, my friend Carlos, and everyone at the pantry in Paterson, thank you so much for your selflessness and kindness. You are truly an inspiration. Keep up the great work. I will send the same regards to each and every one of you're working every day to keep your community safe and to help us beat this virus, keep people fed, secure and strong. Thank you folks for all that you've been doing. Stay at it. Nobody does it better than New Jersey.

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. As we enter the fall season, we are also moving into the flu season. This year we are preparing for the possibility of a twindemic, a severe flu season and a resurgence of COVID-19, which could strain healthcare resources. Therefore, this year more than ever, it is important that everyone six months of age and older get vaccinated against the flu. The Healthy People target for flu vaccination is 70%. Nationally and in New Jersey, less than half of the eligible population receive the flu vaccine. This leaves many people vulnerable to the complications of the flu.

Getting a yearly flu vaccine helps to protect you and those around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies, young children and older people, and people with certain chronic health conditions. The flu vaccine will not protect you against COVID-19. However, the vaccine can reduce flu illnesses and hospitalizations. September and October are good times to be vaccinated. This year the CDC is encouraging residents to get vaccinated by the end of October. It takes two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. That's why it's best to get vaccinated before influenza viruses start to spread in your community. However, residents can be vaccinated anytime while the flu virus are circulating, even after January.

There are many locations to receive your flu vaccine, such as your healthcare providers' office, your local health department, the federally qualified health centers and your local pharmacies. Visit nj.gov/health and make plans for you and your family to get your flu vaccines today.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 420 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation. 91 individuals are in critical care and 45% of those patients are on ventilators. There are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 57 total cases in our state.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.1%, Black 18.3%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.5%, other 1.8%.

At the state veterans homes the numbers remain the same. The psych hospitals are reporting one new patient testing positive at Ancora. The daily present positivity of September 10th is New Jersey 1.82, the Northern part of the state reports 1.42, the Central part of the state 1.85, the southern part of the state 2.84. That concludes my daily report. Stay safe and remember for each other for us all, please take the call. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you and thank you for rushing straight from the three-and-a-half hour budget committee hearing to here. Thank you for that and for all. Thank you also for highlighting the racial inequities, as you do virtually every day and I'm happy to say that I was the last of the six Murphys, but as I promised to Dr. Tina Tan on Friday, I got my flu shot Saturday morning so we're all at 100% compliance, and I promised I would not show up today if I had not done so. Thank you.

Pat, there's a lot going on. Happily, I think less in compliance but a lot going on the meteorological front, wildfire front, any other front you've got, and thank you for everything.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Yes, to your point, the ROIC received no reports from police departments over the weekend with regards to any EO violations. Another governor also spoke with regards to the weather. Besides Tropical Storm Sally and Hurricane Paulette, we're monitoring five additional storms between the Atlantic and the Gulf which obviously gives us some concern. Right now we're not expecting an impact in New Jersey, but certainly monitoring those. We do, to the Governor's other point about always wanting to help those around the nation, in addition

to the forest fire crew that's out, they're working. Just so you know, they started this morning on 24-hour shifts. They've been paired up with teams from Montana, Utah and Texas. So to your point about everybody coming together from around the nation, that's who they're paired up with.

We also have a member of our New Jersey Task Force One Urban Search and Rescue who's been dispatched to Louisiana to be part of the incident support team, which is under the auspices of FEMA, to support the impacts of Tropical Storm Sally there. Oregon also has several requests in with regards to logistical support so we're trying to balance monitoring the storms that are coming our way and not leaving ourselves vulnerable, but at the same time trying to support regardless of where they are, those requests, whether that's in logistics, whether that's in planning, whether that's in any of those emergency support functions. We are closely monitoring those and where we can help, Governor, you know we certainly will. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, a question. Taskforce One, are they back home?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: They are back. They did basically a three to four day deployment down to the South and in relatively short order, returned home. It was a good exercise. They mobilized quickly but they're back and ready to support not only New Jersey but anybody else who may need them.

Governor Phil Murphy: So putting aside your very rightful point that we want to help as much as we can our sister states, but we can't also be exposed back here. To that question, I know firefighting apparatus and individuals are a scarce resource. Is there a way and I'm picking Taskforce One as an example, but are there other operational elements that we can support that are not necessarily firefighting but somehow back and fill other obligations that frees up assets that Oregon or California may have at their disposal?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Definitely. Even with regards to one of our Taskforce One members that's down there, to support the team and be in charge of whether it's planning, logistics, any of those other emergency support functions, emergency services, to serve in that role, it up somebody from that state to not have to do it. And you may say, it's only one or two people, but whether you're performing that function in the wake of them, whether you're out there assisting with preliminary damage assessments, which is a huge piece and seeing if it's going to be a federal declaration, there are so many ways. We have so many subject matter experts from New Jersey OEM and our partners that can support in more than just actually on the line with a fire hose or on a boat with a swift water rescue. We can help in so many ways. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: I was with Tom Von Essen on Friday at the September 11th Memorial in New York and he was singing our OEM praises and whatnot. One thing, I said this and I know we all echo this, please God they're safe, wherever they're deployed for whatever the reason. Thank you for that and for everything, Pat.

I think we'll start over here. I think we're gonna go back to a Monday Wednesday, Friday this week unless Dan Bryan corrects me. White House I don't think is going to have another VTC until a week from today. We will be almost certainly Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:00 p.m. here, and we'll be virtual Tuesday and Thursday unless we think there's cause to gather, in which case Dan or colleagues will pull it together. Mahen Gunaratna got married on Saturday, that's news. I was there myself, Tammy and I were there and saw it with our own eyes. It was a wonderful, blessed event, notwithstanding the fact that his wife Erin's family has had some tragedy in their family, but it was a very special occasion. So hats off to our colleague Mahen. With that, Matt Arco, we'll start with you. Good afternoon.

Q&A Session

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon, Governor. At least six school districts have already had to alter in-person learning plans after staff and students tested positive just days into their school years. Is this more than you expected so soon? How many districts have reported cases to the state so far? And how is the contact tracing going on these efforts? Similarly, what do you make of, Rohan and emergency management officials have an emergency meeting later this week to talk about its surge in cases there.

Real quick, I want to get your reaction on New Jersey federal lawmakers saying that they won't provide emergency reimbursement for school systems and local governments for cloth masks and other PPE and doing things like cleaning at schools and at state buildings.

And finally, from NJTV, Make the Road is calling on your administration to offer immediate pandemic relief to undocumented immigrants to eliminate rent payments and to provide more protections for frontline workers. How do you respond to their calls?

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt before Dante takes the mic, Dante thank you, who said they weren't going to reimburse? The federal lawmakers from New Jersey or federal lawmakers --

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: New Jersey's federal lawmakers, yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Meaning they would not pursue more federal support?

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Well, I guess that they're saying that FEMA is no longer going to provide the support.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. I'll go to the top. Is this more than we expected? I think it's about what we expected. And I think -- and again, Judy, tell me, you or Ed, if you disagree -- I still don't believe we're aware of any in-school transmission but if that's not the case, please correct the record.

And secondly, it feels to me, I'd say quite strongly, that the system is working, that steps are being taken as they should be. Ed?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Right, at this point, I would agree. No, we are not aware of any in-school transmission of cases. We can't absolutely guarantee that couldn't have happened, but we do not know of any. You know, if you start with, what do we have, 1.4 million students or something students in the state we certainly assume and know that some of them are going to test positive. It shows that people are being tested and doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Governor Phil Murphy: Contact tracing, I would assume for the K through 12 crowd is about consistent with the contact tracing experience we're having overall, I would think, right? There's not any evidence to say it's either more or less robust?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well actually, the schools are doing I think an excellent job in the contact tracing. Ed gets those reports as well, if you want to make a comment. They're really working it.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Yes, absolutely. I would agree. And, you know, not a K-12 school but as you mentioned, Rowan is working extremely well with the local health department and us as well as far as the increase of cases that they've seen there. Yes, absolutely throughout the system, schools K-12 as well as higher education are certainly doing the best they can.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I want to withdraw part of my comment. It seems to me, given the way the schools that have some form of in person, whether it's full or hybrid, again the evidence is they've done an extraordinary job preparing for what -- again, everybody remember, this is not a normal school year. And number two, there were going to be people who test positive for COVID. The question is, how quickly can we get our arms around it, figure out, etc. But I will correct my own record and say, at least in the K-12 piece, the ability to track things down, the system feels very robust. Ed, you mentioned Rowan and Matt had asked about. Any other color on Rowan?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have anything more.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: As has been reported, Rowan has seen an increase in cases, mostly in their localities, their off-campus housing and so forth. They haven't been able to trace it to any single event. There have been some parties and other things. Anytime you have large groups of young people gathering you expecting something like that to happen, although we certainly are very much encouraging that not to happen, there hasn't been any single 600-person gathering or anything along those lines that it can be traced back to. But they are working very closely, like I said, with local health department and through them with us to do their best to get out messaging and get this under control.

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt, I've got no color on the federal delegation other than we've got a great delegation, but I think there's a broad consensus, I think it's a unanimous consensus at least on the Democratic side of the aisle, that we are overwhelmingly in need of more federal support. I can say specifically there's a distinction in their perspective between PPE etc. versus direct aid that we can then deploy through OEM or wherever but there's an overwhelming view that we're short and we're meaningfully short, and that needs to get addressed and corrected sooner than later.

I'd probably have a similar reaction to the Make the Road. I haven't seen that but I have complete sympathy, but we're in an extraordinarily challenging budget within the state and we're doing everything we can to get that balanced over the next couple of weeks. And that's about what we've got to get that done. But separately getting federal cash again, we could spread into an enormous amount of needs across the state, across the spectrum of the state, including in our immigrant communities. So thank you for that. Alex. There was someone there, but I think they've left, is that right?

Alex Napoliello, NJ.com: Yeah, I don't know where they went. Good afternoon, Governor. First for Dr. Lifshitz, just a clarification of something you just said. You're not aware of any in-school transmission of COVID now, but isn't that a better question to ask you in about a week or two? Isn't it going to take some time to see if there is in-school transmission. The Governor said it'll happen eventually, right? I just want to clarify on that point.

For Commissioner Persichilli, I want to ask a little bit more about the idea of the twindemic. Do you have any numbers? Could we see about as many cases of the flu as we do of COVID? And are you worried about stress on the testing regime because people who have flu-like symptoms will obviously want to know, is it flu or is it COVID? And do you also worry that people sending workers home or students home could put stress on businesses, food and the schools when that occurs?

And lastly, for the Governor, I just wanted to ask you again about the Financial Services Tax, the bill by Assemblyman McKeon. I wanted to see if you'd heard or had any reaction to the report that the New York Stock Exchange might move its data servers out of New Jersey if that bill goes through. I believe you've expressed support for it. I just wanted to see that you're still supportive of that. And what would the money taken in by that be used for?

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, you should address the first one, but I would say we have said this is not going to be a normal school year and there will be COVID-positive cases. That's almost inevitable, I think. Is that too strong a statement?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: No, there definitely will be and having COVID-related cases as well as is likely at some point there will be some in-school transmission. You are absolutely correct, of course, that the longer that we wait and see the more likely that is to happen. This is the reason why we set up these surveillance systems. This is the reason why we put out all this information to the schools, and the schools work with the local health departments and so forth, is first off to do everything that is reasonable to prevent that from happening in the first place. But second off realizing that when it does happen, it can be spotted as quickly as possible and actions can be taken to keep it from spreading further.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, anything else on the twindemic? The southern hemisphere's experience with the flu feels like it was a better experience than a normal year. Does that give you any --

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: That's an excellent point, Governor. The southern hemisphere reported lower flu because of all the safeguarding for COVID-19. We can only hope that that's the same experience that we have. And you're absolutely correct, flu-like symptoms are very similar to COVID-like symptoms and our emergency rooms do, during December or January, get really flooded with individuals with flu-like symptoms. So, point-of-care testing, immediate testing is going to be very important primarily in physician offices and in emergency rooms. I think we have a quick flu test, don't we, that they can administer in our emergency rooms?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Yes, there is a rapid flu test, somewhat similar to the rapid COVID tests that are out there as far as antigen testing goes.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: For all the comments you made, I mean, that's why we're starting to warn people now. Get vaccinated. What we don't want to see is a really bad flu season with a resurgence of COVID. It would stress our systems terribly. But I do have to tell you that we're planning for it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nothing really new in the Financial Services Tax other than I continue conceptually to like it. I would hope that we can have a common ground discussion with the relevant stakeholders. As much as it's appealing and we're working on it, I know the spirit with our Legislative colleagues generally, and specifically to that, is a good one but we don't feel comfortable so-called scoring it because there's too much uncertainty around it. But as a conceptual matter, we like it and we'd like to think we could find some common ground with the respective stakeholders. Sir, are you good? You're good. I think we're going to Dustin, please. Dustin, good afternoon.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. When will we know what eligible people will have to do to claim the additional \$300 in benefits approved by FEMA? Did New Jersey apply for a second round of benefits for another six weeks or did we miss the cutoff, which would mean only allowing workers to earn three weeks of benefits?

This morning, you had more long lines at Motor Vehicles after you announced changes designed to keep the lines down. Any comment on that and any reasons for the backup?

And then for the health commissioner, you said this morning that the state is going to launch a pilot next week on college campuses for contact tracing, where if you test positive the people who have been around you for six feet will be pinged. Will this be tracking people's movements? Can you tell us more about that pilot on college campuses and how you'll ensure that people's location data is protected? How will it work? Does everyone need to have an app downloaded already? Things like that. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Dustin. I'll defer to Matt Platkin. We may come back to you on the on the \$300 question. If there's money there and we feel like we can get it for folks who are unemployed, whether it's through unemployment insurance, through the FEMA piece, which is far more complicated, the much easier, straightforward fix here is to extend that \$600 benefit through Congress, signed by the President. But if there's money available, we will do everything we can to get it, and that includes this tranche and any other prospective tranches. But what I don't have is a specific time on the \$300. I think we're going to need to come back to you that. Is that fair to say? Yeah, we're going to come back to you on that, if we could. Dan, will you help me out please? But if there's money available, we'll do everything we can to get it for our folks.

No specific reason that I'm aware of this morning at MVC that was unique to this morning, unless my colleagues have any other insights. Listen, I wish it were a light switch. I thought our discussion Friday was a really good one in terms of the laws that we signed as recently as last Thursday night. I continue to strongly not just ask for patience, and we understand your frustration and we don't blame you, but also go online and do -- just make sure you can't do online what you think you need to do in person. I didn't get the readout from Sue Fulton on her connection with Rosa but I know she followed up. That's the one thing I know that can relieve the burden right now is if you can do it online, do it online. And again, we're not going to dig up -- we didn't come into this overnight, and we're not going to leave this overnight, but God willing, we'll get there sooner than later. I know what the horizon looks like at MVC and it looks really attractive but if you're sitting in line right now, that's a little solace to you and I don't blame you.

Department of Health, the Commissioner herself is here, the college pilot on contact tracing.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We hope to kick that off next week. We'll be testing it on three or four college campuses. New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware are also bringing up the same digital notification app. We've been doing most of our planning with them. They may announce a statewide rollout. We've decided to test it first on college campuses, see how it works, take care of any bugs, we might find, any technical issues and check the privacy aspects of the app itself.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, sir, how are you? Welcome back. We haven't seen you in a while.

Andy Milone, Pine Barrens Tribune: Appreciate it, Governor. Good afternoon. Some rural Burlington County municipalities have sections without high speed internet access or internet access in general. There are students in these areas who, for the most part, are on remote or hybrid learning schedules. One town in a

recent BPU filing or petition filing said that children are being deprived of their right to a thorough and efficient education because of these circumstances. My questions are, what steps are you taking to bring internet access to these rural communities? Have you issued any mandates in this regard, and are you considering any? Is it acceptable to you that in the 21st Century there are still parts of the state without internet access? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: It should not be acceptable to anybody in this state or anywhere in America. You know, we designated \$54 million in federal money to address both device purchases as well as Internet connectivity in the state. I would love, Dan, can we follow up after? I would love to get a couple specific communities that you've got in mind afterward. I'd love to, because I don't have a specific answer for community X. But I would love to follow up with you.

I'm going to speak out of both sides of my mouth, if I may. I'm not happy at all with the existence of any digital divide rural, urban or suburban, period. On the other hand and having said that, I think if you look at what we are doing right now, not necessarily the state we inherited, so we inherited something that was not acceptable and has been obviously overwhelmingly exacerbated by homeschool remote learning, a pandemic. But I don't think in that context any state is doing as much as we are doing right now to close that, and it ain't going to be overnight. Thank you. We're good. Thank you. Nikita.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Did you want to get to that?

Governor Phil Murphy: We're good, Nikita. Sorry, do you want to come up here do the questions, or?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: No, that's fine.

Governor Phil Murphy: Just checking.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: At a 9/11 ceremony on Friday morning, Senator Mike Doherty said that systemic racism is not real. He called Black Lives Matter a Marxist organization and called the Defund the Police movement a bid to destabilize the country. I'm wondering if you have a reaction to that?

And then further, some ballots will begin to be mailed this week, mainly those for military members and those living overseas, and some will start voting. Now the reason I ask about this or bring this up is because Perth Amboy still does not have rules for its December 8th runoff. I'm wondering if you plan to issue an Executive Order to address their needs and whether or not you believe that voters there should have all the rules to an election before they vote?

And then I also have a question from Dan Munoz over at NJBiz.

Governor Phil Murphy: Will you tell him we miss him?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Well, I'm sure he's watching. He asks, a CDC report over the weekend showed that COVID-positive patients were twice as likely to say they did sitdown dining, regardless of indoors or outdoors –

Governor Phil Murphy: They were twice as likely to do what?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: To say that they did sitdown dining, whether indoors or outdoors. Do you have any thoughts on the data? And has any data from the state for outdoor dining reflected that increase since June? And what about indoor dining? Has that been linked to any increases in transmission, positivity or hospitalizations?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure I 100% understand Daniel's but I'll give it a shot. I didn't see Senator Doherty's comments in total, but I did see enough to say, on any day to deny systemic racism, am I right in saying that that's what he was essentially saying? There was no systemic racism? On any day that is not on. It is completely in the face of the overwhelming facts that are centuries old, never mind saying that on 9/11 which just takes your breath away. I don't know what country or what state he's looking at, but it's not the reality that exists. And again, Year 1, Fifth Century since slavery came to our shores, sadly and with the heaviest of hearts, notwithstanding that we are the greatest nation on Earth, which we are, we are far from perfect and we continue to dig out every single day from the stain of racism that exists very much in our country and in our state.

Was the question related to the ballots going out this week connected to the Perth Amboy question?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: It was just that ballots are going out.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Do you know the –

Governor Phil Murphy: And you're saying, should you have rules in place before they –

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Yeah, so the runway is running out, essentially is the reason I bring that up.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't have any specific, a conceptual yes, but Matt, anything you'd add to that? I want to come back to you and reflect on that.

So Daniel is saying that, if I got this right, we're going to channel Daniel here, that the CDC has said that among COVID-positive patients there's been a higher incidence of dining, either inside or outside. Did I get that right?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Yeah, based on what he sent me, he said that patients who were COVID-positive were twice as likely to have either outdoors or indoors at a restaurant.

Governor Phil Murphy: So I've got two experts to my right and I will just say that I want to repeat what I've been saying, I think we've been saying, for six months. Which is out outdoors, this is a lot less lethal than it is indoors and I don't think we've got any evidence of any outbreaks coming out of outdoor dining.

Secondly, and Ed will correct the record here. Secondly, we took the step on indoor dining now 10 days ago, so Friday, the 4th of September. We would not have taken that step with 25% capacity restrictions etc. We knew we'd be taking on some amount of risk, but we would not have taken that step if we did not feel the risk was manageable. And on that one, I would guess it is too early to conclude one way or the other on the indoor piece, but I think it's overwhelmingly the case on outdoors that we've not seen anything. But with that, Ed.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Absolutely. I did read the CDC report. I don't have all the numbers in front of me and of course, every state does it differently when they talk about opening up dining so you're not always comparing apples to apples. We have always known, we've always been careful about closed congregation without masks. We know that's an increased risk. As the Governor said, we have not seen any increases in cases specifically associated with outdoor dining as far as that goes.

And yes, it is too early to say anything related to indoor dining as far as New Jersey goes. We have not yet heard of anything but yes, it would be early to say and certainly something we keep an eye on.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I'll bet you without having seen the CDC report if the indoor dining experience included bars that were not controlled as we are now controlling them, that may be the reason. But without seeing it, I can't say that for sure.

It's a good question to end on because we're 10 days since indoor. We are now 12 –

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: ...from their perspective at the local municipality level, what they're seeing, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: So this is partly born out of just the back and forth that we've had as a team. We feel like anecdotally the compliance on the steps we've taken lately, gyms, schools, indoor dining and indoor amusement has been overwhelmingly good. But we also, I think, Pat, I don't want to put words in your mouth, you don't want to take that for granted. You want to make sure that we're drilling into this. The police chiefs and the folks in the counties who have been responsible and have had to bear the burden of that compliance enforcement over the past six months have been terrific.

Jared Maples, thank you. Dan, Matt, the whole team. They've been terrific but the MVPs are the millions of you out there who have just consistently done the right thing. When this started, when the weather got warm, when we're back to school and back to some of these other habits that we all want to get back to, you folks have been extraordinary. That includes individuals as well as operators, owners of establishments, superintendents of schools, educators. It takes a village and we don't get to the shape that we're in right now, which we can't take for granted, without an all hands on deck, extraordinary effort. So, to each every one of you, God bless you and thank you. If not before, we'll see you Wednesday at 1:00 pm. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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