

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 4th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. We have a lot of ground to cover so we're going to spin through this, so we may have to cut it a little bit short. If you keep your questions short and to the point, we will keep our answers short and to the point, but please bear with us. We have a video call with the White House right after this. Thank you also, folks, for doing this at noon instead of 1:00. I'm honored to be joined by the woman to my right, who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, another guy you all know well, Dr. Ed Lifshitz. Thank you, Ed, for being here. To the far left, another person who's here who needs no introduction, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan. To my immediate left, a guy who's been with us before and from day one, the Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Lamont Repollet. To Jared Maples, who runs Homeland Security and Preparedness, thank you, sir, for being here and I'm sure Matt Platkin, Chief Counsel will be here in a bit.

Before we get to the numbers today, we are announcing that all New Jersey school buildings will remain closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and that all students and faculty will continue with remote learning. Private schools with longer academic years will remain closed until at least June 30. We reached this decision after much consideration with Commissioner Repollet and the Department of Education, district officials across the state and multiple stakeholders, including both educators and parents.

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We reached this conclusion based on the guidance from our public health experts, and with a single goal in mind, the safety and wellbeing of our children and of our educators, administrators and staff. This has been an inclusive and rigorous process involving people with a wide range of experiences and perspectives and because of this process, we've been able to reach this conclusion 11 days in advance of the deadline I had previously set. We wanted you to know when we did and to provide certainty. I had hoped that we could get back to a sense of normal by allowing our children to return to the schools they love, and to be with their friends and classmates. But the reality is that we cannot safely reopen our schools to provide students and families, or faculty and staff, the confidence needed to allow for a return to in-person instruction. As such, the Executive Order I signed on March 16, which closed our schools indefinitely, remains in effect.

As I have noted before, we are working with the principle that public health creates economic health; or in this case, public health creates educational health. If the standards to reopen our workplaces are high, they are even higher when it comes to schools filled with our most precious assets, our children. We simply could not find a way to reconcile that core principle and open our school buildings at this time. The hurdles, logistical, educational and most of all practical that would have allowed students and faculty to return, even for a short while, could not be overcome. We could not guarantee an environment that would not only be safe but fully capable of meeting the educational needs of students in a setting built for social distancing.

So we are directing all districts, charter, renaissance, county, voc-tech, private and other school leaders to update their preparedness plans to ensure the continuation of remote learning. As the father of a high schooler who has been attending classes remotely for nearly two months with his siblings, by the way, three of them in college doing the same, I understand the concerns of both parents and school leaders. I understand those concerns, even if I always don't understand the assignments. I think a lot of us are in that boat. And I also fully appreciate the disappointment that our kids won't be closing the school year among their friends.

But for us to ensure that we can undertake a responsible restart and recovery, this step was necessary. I must note that this decision only applies to the remainder of the 2019-2020 regular academic year. The department will be leading stakeholder meetings alongside district leaders, educators, local officials, and parent organizations to determine whether summer educational or enrichment or other programs offered at our schools may proceed. When we make a final determination on those programs, we will certainly announce it.

Additionally, the department will be conducting the same rigorous work and stakeholder engagement regarding the opening of our buildings for the 2020-2021 school year in September. There was a lot to consider about how the school day may differ once our students and faculty return. Throughout all of these issues, we are keenly focused on issues of equity.

Where sports are concerned, we are leaning on the guidance from the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association against the resumption of spring sports for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year as well. The NJSIAA medical board has concluded that due to a lack of testing, viable treatments, and a vaccine, that spring sports were not a viable option. I know the NJSIAA took no pleasure in reaching that conclusion and frankly, neither do I in stating it. This decision, I know, goes beyond just considerations of safety given COVID-19 but also to the overall physical health and safety of our student athletes.

I also know that our graduating seniors were looking forward to their proms and walking across the stage to receive their diplomas in front of their families and friends. I still want to see them have those opportunities, and we will also work with districts on safe and creative ways to give the Class of 2020 a proper send-off to their bright futures. I want to thank every parent, grandparent or guardian who has been juggling everything else in their life, on top of being their child's at-home educator. I know it hasn't been easy, but I also know that you have been extraordinary. I thank our educators, staff and administrators, the best in the United States of America, who have performed heroically with little time to prepare for this uncharted path. You continually prove why New Jersey has the best public schools in the United States of America.

We can also announce that the department has already applied for \$310 million in federal assistance for our schools, which we are entitled to, and of which at least roughly \$280 million would flow to our schools to help them cover the costs of purchasing educational technology, cleaning and sanitizing their buildings, and ensuring support services for students who require them, among other costs. I know Commissioner Repollet

will have more to say on this. But to every student, we want you to be safe. We want you to be healthy. We want you to continue your educational journey, wherever it takes you. And to ensure all of these things, we have to take this step.

Additionally, today I am signing an Executive Order that lays bare the severity of the financial crisis we face because of COVID-19 from both plummeting state revenues due to the near total shutdown of our economy, and the skyrocketing costs of fighting this pandemic. I am rescinding the Executive Order I signed on June 30, 2019, which directed State Treasurer Liz Maher Muoio to achieve a \$1.276 billion surplus by the end of this current fiscal year. Absent significant outside assistance, this is no longer feasible. No administration, and I mean no one, has been as committed to restoring our state's fiscal foundation than ours. We have spent the past two-plus years working nonstop to build surpluses and put money aside for a rainy day. We've reduced reliance on one-shots to historic lows, and have made unprecedented pension contributions while working in partnership with our public workers to reduce healthcare costs for two consecutive years.

At the same time, we've made significant new investments in our schools in direct property tax relief, in mass transit, and in any number of vital programs that serve millions of New Jerseyans, each and every day. But right now, it's pouring. We are on the brink of having to make very tough and quite frankly very unpalatable decisions regarding each of these areas and more, and we need to have these funds as a safeguard should direct federal assistance to our state fail to surface.

Today, I will also be vetoing numerous bills the legislature sent to my desk to appropriate money to any number of causes and programs. I don't want to veto them. But given our current fiscal situation, I have no other choice. These discussions aren't just happening here in New Jersey either. They're happening across the nation. We need the federal government to step forward with significant investment in our states, both red and blue, to prevent our recovery from being held back because we cannot fund it. Every Governor shut his or her state's economy to combat COVID-19. We all will feel the devastating impact of this necessary but costly action. Across the country, cuts to critical services are inevitable and bankruptcy is not an option.

This is not about legacy fiscal issues either. We will continue our efforts to right our financial house, as we have been doing. Nor is this a bailout. This is about keeping our police and firefighters, our EMTs and paramedics, and our public health workers, our educators and the hardworking folks processing a mountain of unemployment claims, among so many others, on the job and working to get us through this. A fiscal disaster is not months away. These decisions will be on our doorstep in literally just a few weeks. Congress needs to act and act now. I will continue to work as I have with anyone from either side of the aisle, and at every level to get this done for the people of New Jersey.

But even if Congress delivers, it won't be enough. We will still need to borrow on a short-term basis to bridge our immediate cash flow needs. For weeks I have been working collaboratively with the Legislature to provide our administration this authority, and I asked them today and I asked you to ask them today to pass this legislation swiftly so our frontline responders can breathe a little easier. Even Warren Buffett said this weekend, this is a good time to borrow money. Let's get this done.

Now let's look at the overnight numbers. By the way, I believe right up front, these numbers are suspect, and I wish I could say they weren't, Judy, but I believe they are. We're announcing an additional 1,621 positive test results for a statewide total of 128,269. Again, the number of new cases may be low as a result of a network outage that we had yesterday, that may have prevented all cases from being processed. I hope history will prove me wrong on this, but I believe that is the case. This may also be true, sadly, for the reporting of new deaths, as we will see in a minute.

Here is the graph which shows new case numbers, and even with today's likely incomplete count, we see where we still need to push down the curve. The map, which we show you regularly of New Jersey, we have turned to, as they say, most days continues to get lighter and lighter as the rate of doubling of new cases continues to slow. Again, we've only got one county left in the orange. And again, those numbers in the South are a lot smaller than the ones in the North, but the progress of both North, Central and South is unmistakable.

We will be carefully reviewing these charts and maps over the coming days to see if the reopening of our parks was successful, but I want to thank the overwhelming number of you who did the right thing and took all of our asks and precautions to heart. I know many of our parks filled up early in the day and I don't blame

you one bit for wanting to get out. My wife and I went for a run yesterday. I want to give Monmouth County a shout out in Thompson Park in Middletown, they had the place set up exactly as the doctor ordered. Folks did not congregate. It was generally a very, very positive experience. The only exception, and I want to hit this point again hard, not enough masks. I'd say probably 80% or 90% of the folks were not wearing masks. That's something that we have to continue to pound upon. But again, the county had set it up and we heard stories like this up and down the state. Pat will give you the compliance report. More importantly, we heard very few incidents of knucklehead behavior that would require me to reverse course and close them again. So to all of you, thank you for helping us pass this important test. And again, Pat will give a better sense of compliance in a few minutes.

As of last night's reporting, 5,287 patients with COVID-19 were being treated in our hospitals. This is a drop, by the way, of about 1,000 in just five days. Let's look at the regions. Across every region of the state, we continue to see the overall stresses lessening in our healthcare system. Again, even in the south, which is seeing some flattening, the numbers on the chart will show you that the overall numbers are lower than they are in the Central and Northern part, but even now that curve is beginning to flatten.

Our field medical stations reported 41 patients. There were 1,610 patients in either critical or intensive care, and this number too has decreased every day for the past six days. Ventilator use currently stands at 1,189 the lowest that's been, Judy, I think in over a month. There were 362 new hospitalizations yesterday, and on discharges, 335 live patients were released from our hospitals yesterday.

Our hospitals continue to show the positive trends we want and need to see if we are to get ourselves in a steady position to get on the road back and toward the responsible restart of our economy. These numbers are beginning to become the underpinnings of our overarching ideals, that public health creates economic health and that data determines dates.

Unfortunately, even with these positive trends we are seeing, we continue to lose too many residents to COVID-19. And with the heaviest of hearts we report 45 additional deaths from among our New Jersey family. Again, however, this number is likely lower as a result of the network outage we had yesterday, but either way there are 45 precious lives, our statewide total is 7,910. COVID-19 doesn't care who it takes. Our losses mirror our diversity and today we remember three more who had been taken from our New Jersey family.

This is Michael Connors Sr. He had three loves: family, cars, and work. At first his love of cars led to a career as an auto mechanic in Newark. But while there he made numerous friends with the Newark Police Department, and with their encouragement, he ultimately joined their ranks in 1993. He proudly served the people of Newark as a police officer for 26 years. COVID-19 claimed him just this past Thursday, and Michael was only 58. His family says he'll be forever remembered for his work ethic, dedication, wit, and fun-loving presence. Michael leaves his daughter Dorothy, with whom I had the honor of speaking yesterday afternoon, two sons, Michael Jr. and Damien, his adopted daughter Samia, as well as seven grandchildren and a committed companion, Tiffany Parham, and many other relatives and friends. On behalf of our state, we thank him for his selfless service and we keep the whole Connors family and his memory in our prayers.

Luis Fernando Marulanda, there he is. He came to the United States from Colombia when he was 22 years old. He lived in Secaucus and was a long-time employee of NJ Transit and New York Waterway before that, taking pride in his work and helping get people to where they needed to go. And he was one of those who helped pilot the ferries that shuttled residents back home across the Hudson River on 911. Throughout this current emergency, he continued serving his passengers as a bus operator for NJ Transit right until COVID-19 took him too. He was planning to retire literally next year, and he turned 63 just two weeks ago. He will be remembered by his family, friends and coworkers for his smile, his laugh, and his willingness to always lend a hand or help others. He is survived by two children, one of whom is his daughter who is serving in the United States military as we speak, two brothers, three sisters, nieces and nephews. I had the great honor to speak to one of his nieces, Kathleen Bedoya from Montclair yesterday and we reviewed Luis' extraordinary life, and he leaves behind a transit family that will not ever forget his dedication to service.

And finally, we remembered George Anthony Calles of Richfield in Bergen County. He was known affectionately as Georgie, and was only 27 years old when he passed on Friday. Georgie had Down's Syndrome, and while he could not communicate verbally, he would always show his love by showering the people he knew with hugs and kisses. He loved music, and took special joy in watching his sister's dance

recitals where he would get lost in the music. He also loved to eat and his mom said the best Christmas present she could give him would be a rump roast. My kind of guy. He loved Sesame Street's Elmo, and Disney's Mickey Mouse too, as you can see, and he even had the chance to meet the Mick. He brought joy to his family and everyone he touched. Georgie is survived by his parents Anna, I spoke with his mom yesterday and that was as tough as it gets, as you can imagine. His dad Bernardo, his sister Alexandra, both of his grandmothers and many more aunts, uncles and cousins. And by the way, beyond the tragedy of Georgie's passing, which is unspeakable, there's been a lot of challenges in that household, including one of his grandmother's having a stroke on Valentine's Day. So they've been dealing not only with the awfulness of COVID-19 and losing Georgie, but also other healthcare challenges. He was a special, by every measure, and bright spirit, and he was taken from us all too soon. May God bless the memory of that guy, and may his memory bless all of us.

These are the faces, some of the faces, that COVID-19 has taken. They are among the thousands of names that we will remember and they are the people for whom we will continue our work to defeat this virus. It's why we will keep up with our social distancing, even when we begin the process of restart and recovery. This weekend, we saw that so many of you understand how this works and we thank you for keeping your distances, and please your face coverings, we need to see more of them by the way, even when you didn't want to do either of those.

But there are others who went to our parks or headed into downtown streets who need to be reminded why we should be wearing face coverings and staying away from each other, and for whom we need to be role models. Social distancing right now is the only proven COVID-19 prevention. I would add face masks to that. There are no recognized treatments yet and there is no cure. There's no vaccine yet. There is only social distancing. And a face covering is about you, if you are asymptomatic, lowering your chances of spreading the virus to others. That covering blocks you from potentially sending infected droplets into the air to impact others, including potentially your loved ones. So again, thank you for what was overall a very positive weekend. Now let's step it up, let's keep it up, and together we will win this.

This morning, I want to say that we had the first meeting of our Reopening and Recovery Commission. Judy and I, along with others of our team, I thought it was an excellent discussion. It's an extraordinary group of people. And on that call, chaired by, by the way, President Emeritus of Princeton University Shirley Tilghman, and CEO of Merck and Co. Ken Frazier, on that call we announced and we'll give more color on this as we go forward, that we will be forming other councils to advise us much closer to the ground, much more in state. We've heard from a lot of you that they respect enormously the talent that we have collected from all perspectives on both sides of the aisle in this Recovery and Reopening Commission, but we also need tactical, very close to the ground help, and we'll be forming councils in that respect as well.

Finally, I want to give a couple of well-deserved shout outs to some folks around the state who have similarly stepped up during this emergency. First, I want to give a huge thanks to the Palestinian American Community Center in Clifton, which has been working throughout this emergency to support its entire community. The PACC, as it's known, has always been an active organization and they've kicked into overdrive, delivering 400 meals Monday to Friday to families in their area and distributing 400 food baskets to hospitals and senior citizen centers, and to police, firefighters and EMTs. The PACC has distributed as well 15,000 masks, 50,000 pairs of gloves, 1,200 cans of disinfectant spray, and 1,000 bottles of hand sanitizer, and it's been holding regular webinars to keep the community informed about COVID-19 and how we can defeat it. Our state's greatest strength is our tremendous diversity. We are truly one big family pulling together, so to everyone in the PACC, New Jersey thanks you.

And finally, we want to give a shout out to Collingswood's Patrick Rodio, who yesterday ran 20.20 miles to raise money to pay for high school yearbooks for students who cannot afford them on their own. From his run through Knight Park yesterday he raised more than \$3,000. Given today's announcement about schools and this school year, this act takes on greater meaning. For some students in Collingswood, the yearbook will be their bank of memories of a school year that was unlike any other. Because of Patrick, they'll now be able to hold those memories. So to you Pat, Collingswood and New Jersey, we thank you.

And with that, I will turn things over to the woman who needs no introduction, please help me welcome the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. I'm really pleased today to remind everyone that this week is National Nurses Week. It's time to pay tribute and thank New Jersey's 170,000 nurses for the work that they do every day to protect and save lives. They are caring for COVID-19 patients in our hospitals, our critical care units, our field medical stations and our alternative care sites. They are assisting the residents of our state psychiatric hospitals or nursing homes and assisted living facilities. They are working at our testing sites and they are helping our local health departments. The work they've been performing has been challenging, to say the least.

As a nurse, I do know that it's one of the hardest jobs and their bravery and services during this time has demonstrated that there is nothing that will hold them back from saving lives in New Jersey. They run into the fire, not away from it. This year's theme of National Nurses Week is compassion, expertise and trust. People just trust nurses. They are a part of the heart and soul of our healthcare system. So when you see a nurse, do me a favor, do them a favor, and say thank you. Thank you to them for all the work that they do.

Last evening, our hospitals reported 5,287 hospitalizations of COVID-19 individuals. This number, as the Governor has reported, is on a steady decline. There are 1,610 individuals in critical care, 74% of those patients are on ventilators, significantly down from that high of 97% two weeks ago. Two hospitals in the Central region were on divert status last evening, no hospitals in the South or the North. 395 individuals have been treated in our field medical stations, and our hotel in Secaucus is currently reporting 64 guests; 19 healthcare workers and 45 patients have been discharged from those centers, and they've served a total of 100 individuals at the Secaucus Hotel.

Today we're reporting 1,621 new cases for a total of 128,269 total cases. We are reporting 45 additional deaths as the Governor reported, we did have a network outage yesterday so we are certain that these numbers are underreported. But for the information we have right now, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 52.5%, Black 19.5%, Hispanic 17.3%, Asian 5.3% and other 5.5%.

There are now 508 long-term care facilities in the state reporting COVID-19 cases. At the state veterans homes, among a census of 682 veterans, there have been 360 residents testing positive for COVID-19 and a total of 123 deaths. At our state psychiatric hospitals with a census of 1,250, 163 patients have tested positive and there have been 10 deaths. That is similar to what I reported last week.

According to the lab data that we have, we have tested 248,319 individuals; 99,368 tested positive for a current positivity rate of 40.02%. That concludes my daily report. Again, please continue to follow social distancing guidelines, it definitely is making a difference. Stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you, and here's again to the nurses in our state. How many did you say, 175,000?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: 170,000.

Governor Phil Murphy: 170,000, of which you are among its ranks. Bless you. Thank you for your leadership. Obviously, reporting a lot today. By the way, the top six counties remain, in terms of positives, as they had been, I don't think the overnight, we're not as confident in the overnight data so I won't spend any time on that. Positivity again, continues to drift down and as Ed reminds us, that's a cumulative number. The spot number is invariably going to be lower. And again, remind everybody we have a disproportion amount of symptomatic folks in that. That won't always be the case. In fact, I bet not that long from now, that will decidedly not be the case, but it is still for the moment and so that number going down is a positive measure by any light.

Obviously a big announcement on education today, please help me welcome a great leader in that respect and in so many, the Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Lamont Repollet.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: Thank you. I am also proud to announce that this week is designated Teacher Appreciation Week, so happy Teacher Appreciation Week to all the educators out there.

Thank you, Governor Murphy and Commissioner Persichilli. To say that this is not an easy decision is an understatement. But as Governor Murphy reminds us, we must be guided by science and the facts on the ground. I thank you, Governor, for prioritizing the health and safety of our students, educators and families here in New Jersey. To all of our parents whose homes have turned into classrooms, to all of our teachers who've pivoted to remote instruction overnight, to all of our school district leaders working around the clock to ensure that students of diverse needs are being met, I am in awe of your ability to adapt, and tremendously proud and impressed at how you continue to address complex challenges.

We do not take your work and sacrifice for granted. Today the announcement that New Jersey schools will be closed to students for the remainder of the year will undoubtedly raise questions and concerns. I am dedicating every resource at my disposal to answer those questions as quickly as we can, and to ensure that we give our educators the information and flexibility needed to uplift our students during these unprecedented times.

In the weeks leading up to Governor Murphy's order to close elementary schools and secondary schools, the Department of Education required school districts to develop emergency preparedness plans that address critical areas such as delivery of remote instruction, special education services, and food security. Given the speed at which schools have transitioned to remote learning and the rapidly changing public health landscape in our state, districts have continuously revised plans in response to these changing conditions. This announcement will undoubtedly require the districts to revise those plans once again, and to ensure continuity of these key services through the end of the school year.

My team will continue to take a boots on the ground approach to support local school districts as they rise to that challenge and take obstacles none of us could have envisioned when we set out to be educators. The department is also looking forward to the future, to explore what summer instruction and the next school year school year may look like for New Jersey schools and students. To that end, we are creating a steering committee of diverse stakeholders to help us navigate these issues. Our guiding policy principle to this work is that each local community knows their students best, and our job is to provide every flexibility we can to unlock district innovation and to provide for their students during these extraordinary times, while also putting guardrails in place to uphold our high quality and equitable educational system.

I know, however, that this work goes beyond plans and resources. As the father of a daughter who is graduating from high school this spring, the personal impact of this decision hits home for me. To parents of graduating seniors, please know that I stand with you and commit to finding ways to honor our graduates and celebrate the incredible resilience of the Class of 2020. Districts are working on a wide variety of innovative plans for alternative graduation ceremonies, proms and other traditional end of the year celebrations.

My team at the Department of Education is committed to helping each district find solutions uniquely tailored to the needs and priorities of their local communities. We recognize that in our work to honor students, it is critical that we elevate their voices and let their passion and innovative thinking inform decisions that impact them the most. When we get through this and as Governor always remind us, we will get through this, our young people are poised to inherit our post-COVID world and we must empower them to carve the pathways that get us there.

We have been working to tap the federal funding that can help provide schools with the resources they need to deliver remote instruction, deep cleaning school buildings, and address the emotional needs of students. To that end, the department recently applied for \$310 million in federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, which is part of the CARES Act. This funding can be provided for important initiatives such as purchasing technology, purchasing supplies to clean and sanitize schools, mental health supports, activities related to summer learning and supplemental after-school programs which can include online learning during the summer to address the needs of subgroups of students, providing school leaders with resource to address the needs of their schools and activities to address the unique needs of subgroups of students and coordinate the distribution of meals to eligible students. It is important to know that school districts will have a great deal of local discretion in how they use these funds to best benefit their students.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Governor Murphy, as always, for his leadership. Unprecedented times calls for unprecedented acts of leadership and humanity. We are in totally uncharted waters, facing the kinds of decisions and challenges we never imagined, and you continue, Governor, to make those tough choices to protect New Jersey students and educators. Thank you, as always, for your resolute leadership, boss.

Governor Phil Murphy: Lamont, thank you for yours as well and I know this was not an easy call for you, for Judy, for me for any of us, including at a very personal level, as you pointed out, you've got a high school senior in your house. I've taken an enormous amount of, and I know you have as well, we all have, input and incomings from parents and educators and kids themselves. Particular sympathy, deep sympathy, for the seniors. I'd say yet again, the seniors who participate in something after school, particularly sports, it's not what any of us signed up for. It's with, in some respects a heavy heart but we have no choice in this. This is not a decision that's been made based on emotions. This is based on the hard science. Thank you for your leadership at every step of the way, Lamont. Deep appreciation.

Before we throw it to questions, I'm going to ask you each to keep it to one or two each, because we're up against it a little bit and I apologize for that. We're normally more expansive, but we're on the clock today. Pat Callahan, thank you for your leadership. Anything you've got on compliance, in particular compliance today, I think is on everyone's mind, compliance, PPE, infrastructure, other matters.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. I'll start with the weekend with regards to the parks, certainly overwhelming compliance there. We had Chief Amanda Smith, who's the Chief of Police for the Park Police under DEP was in direct contact with The Rock over the weekend. Although they hit capacity early, as the Governor said, really, no EO violations issued there. A few parking summonses for those folks who parked outside where they shouldn't once the parking lot was full, but really overwhelming compliance. The shore towns saw an influx of both vehicular and foot traffic. There was a few extra drawbridge openings, I know, in Sea Bright which caused a little bit of traffic because the recreational boating was kind of through the roof. I also had a call yesterday morning with all the police chiefs from the entire state, and again from Sussex to Cape May, just overwhelming compliance on what everybody knows were two gorgeous days.

With regards to the EO violations, Newark issued 210 and closed 17 businesses. An Elizabeth homeowner was cited for having more than 10 subjects at his house for a party. In Bridgewater, a woman who was in a rehabilitation facility refused commands by the nurses to get back to the COVID floor for cohorting and she spit on her hands and wiped the medical equipment with the saliva that she had spit. In East Hanover, an employee at a gas station was cited for not wearing a mask and social distancing. In Mount Olive, a subject was cited for being in a closed basketball court. In Paterson, a subject was cited for an EO violation for not wearing a mask and not social distancing. Paterson, a store owner was cited for the second time for having a non-essential furniture store open. In Rahway, two subjects were cited for having a large party. East Orange, two subjects cited for failure to socially distance. In Roselle, a non-essential beauty supply store owner was cited. In North Bergen, a non-essential business, a car wash, was cited, a vehicle detail, and in Secaucus, a subject who was initially arrested for shoplifting at a Home Depot stated to have coronavirus and coughed on the officers involved.

But again, for two beautiful days, overwhelming compliance, I think, as the Governor said. Hopefully that continues and we are monitoring it as we move forward. I will just close with saying God bless all our nurses. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: God bless our nurses and our teachers. I got them on both sides of me here. Pat, thank you and again, deep appreciation to everybody out there who really did the right thing and I saw it with my own eyes and all of us were, anecdotally, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine McCabe, I want to give a big shout out. She and I spoke on Saturday night, we exchange last night. Her people were out there, Pat's folks who are out there. As I mentioned earlier in my county, counties up and down the state were really doing the right thing. And most importantly, you all were doing the right thing.

We've got to come back to you on masks. I'm a big believer that that's something we need to be more, I'm not going to use the word forceful, but that's a game changer. And again, the faster we break the back of this sucker, the faster we'll be able to get back into business. But I will say this, the overwhelmingly good

compliant behavior I mentioned on, I think, Thursday and Friday, and I know on Saturday, the behavior that you all showed everybody, this weekend, is going to give us more degrees of freedom in terms of decisions that are not just outdoor decisions, but also other decisions down the road. Most importantly, because through that behavior, the curves continue to come down.

I was criticized by someone, a Legislator, for using the word knucklehead. So I looked it up for myself and the definition is a stupid, bumbling inept person, which I think is, with all due respect, quite consistent with some of the behavior. Martel, we're going to start over here, with some of the behavior, Pat, that you have highlighted. But I was given two alternatives to consider, not by that person, by the way, blockhead or numbskull? I like knucklehead because I think we started there, it's got three syllables, it's got a little bit more umph. But to the legislator who raised that, that's the point. That's the point. Overwhelmingly, folks are doing the right things, but for the very small minority who are not, they need to be called out. That's why we're doing it. Hats off to everybody out there, so impressive on the compliance.

Again, we're going to ask you to keep this short, John, welcome back. We're going to start with you.

Q&A Session

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: The schools order, talking about colleges and universities, daycare centers, how are they fitting into this? What metrics will you be using to think about September reopening? Can you talk about how the reopening of schools is linked to the general reopening of businesses in the state in general?

And on borrowing, is this the fed bill you're talking about borrowing or is it new market borrowing to do short-term expenses?

Governor Phil Murphy: The borrowing is the fed for the time being, because the private markets are not hospitable at the moment, to say the least, even though the equity market shows sort of these bounces one day to the next. Nothing new to report on daycare, to the best of my knowledge or higher ed. Is that correct, Matt?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Daycares will continue to operate under Executive Order 110, which has the emergency daycare system. And just on the bill itself, it authorizes both private and fed borrowing.

Governor Phil Murphy: And metrics, bear with us on that. Lamont mentioned that there's going to be an enormous amount of stakeholder engagement, including what the summer might look like in terms of enrichment opportunities, etc. So bear with us on that. We're going to go to the back and then we'll come down. Actually, Mike, I didn't see you there. We'll start here, go to Mike and then come down. Please.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Good afternoon, Governor. What would you have needed to have seen in the data in order to be confident in opening schools again? Why did you decide to kind of go this route, ultimately? What didn't you see?

Second, graduation will be allowed to continue to some degree. What creative ways have you already discussed and what's kind of feasible at this point?

And just third, how does the current financial situation impact state aid? Any update on that? How much schools are getting?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so to be determined on the last question, but everything will get crushed. I'm more worried right now about manpower. State aid, in fact, has an indirect impact on manpower within our education system. I'll ask either Lamont or Judy because they were deeply involved in this.

On graduation bear with me on that. We're trying to figure out some ways, you know, everything from virtual stuff all the way toward something down the road, depending on if the virus, please God, we get this thing to go away, we could find a way to celebrate maybe in some social distancing, compliant way going forward, but there's a lot of good thought being put into something on graduation, because we owe it to the seniors to give them a tip of the cap. I would just say the NJSIAA, I think even though that was directed at sports, I think you could make that statement more broadly. You've got a balance of the school year beyond May 15 of what looks like about five weeks for most schools, I think, and you've got real health care issues and what we would need to prepare to make that school reality compliant with social distancing. We don't have

therapeutics or a vaccine. We've got big intergenerational concerns. Even though this has been very benign with kids, I think the experts to my right would suggest that there's unwitting asymptomatic passage of this that we don't, any of us, have our arms around yet. And so for all of the above reasons, it felt like a bridge too far.

I believe this is true, and Matt may correct me if I'm wrong here, or Mahen who's been studying this, I believe we're state number 46 to close for the balance of the year. It was 43 on Thursday. New York has – does that sound right, Lamont? New York is now shut for the balance, remote only. Connecticut, I believe, is doing something similar. So we're not exactly George Washington here, but we did want to give this every shot we could, in particular for the seniors. It just feels like a bridge too far. Anything you want to add to this, Lamont.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: I think the Governor is correct. I think we need to get more information on social distancing, I think as they provide the standard of minimum guidelines that we have. Right now there has been, as the Governor mentioned, there has been a variety of ideas tossed out, whether it's to have a graduation in August, to have virtual graduations. I think it's more of an individualized decision. However, we're going to continue to work with the Department of Health to really kind of ascertain more standards, I think, for opening schools or doing anything that has to do with social distancing.

Governor Phil Murphy: If we think there's something fun we could do at a state level, sign us up, that's healthy and compliant. Anything you want to add on schools?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I think we have to realize, and I get these questions as well, it doesn't seem like children are getting hit as hard, but they can still be carriers. I think you mentioned the intergenerational homes. We have to be concerned about safeguarding everyone. You know, another five weeks does not seem like, to do that, a stretch too far when you're balancing that with the risk of more people getting contacted with COVID-positive individuals. We're looking at the epidemiology every day. We track new COVID cases, cumulative cases, hospitalizations of COVID-19 patients, hospitalizations into critical care, overall hospital availability. We're tracking the extent of the disease every day and although we see it coming down, we still have over 5,000 individuals in our hospitals ill enough to be hospitalized with COVID-19.

Governor Phil Murphy: By the way, I read Jersey papers every day, so don't be offended by my citing in New York paper and I'm probably the last person who reads it – actually Judy and I established, we're the last two people who read a physical print version. But above the fold New York Times today, if you haven't read it, why does COVID hit you? Where does it hit? Why does it hit? The amount of unknown and open questions, particularly in the epidemiological front, Ed, sorry to practice without a license, is long. This is among experts. And so the view that we have taken, one other way to put it is we're going to know a lot more a month from now, two months from now, three months from now, than we know today, inevitably. Please.

Reporter: Question about access to technology for education. We've heard from some families, even if they have received a computer from their district, they have multiple kids at home and they're having to share. Any plans to quickly resolve that? I understand that with the federal aid that can pay for some of that, but how quickly do you think that that might come through?

And in terms of requirements to move ahead to the next grade, will any of those requirements be relaxed or adjusted because of this situation, to move up?

Governor Phil Murphy: Lamont, do you want to hit both of those? The federal money that you talked about, you and I talked about, is part of the technology answer, I think, right?

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: Well, I'm proud to say that the number of districts with students that did not have access to technology had decreased to about 15,000. So districts are everyday working on that, using their federal funds. They currently have Title One funds, using their general funds that they have, knowing the fact that they can get money from the CARES Act allows them now to spend money, because as the Governor said, this is the rainy day. So they are prepared for that. We're very encouraged to see that digital divide will be lessened as we move towards September.

In regards to what the second question was?

Governor Phil Murphy: Requirements any loosening or changes?

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: Yes, we're currently working with districts right now to put some guidelines. I mean, and so people think and ask, why aren't we giving out directives? Because there's individual districts and there's different needs, different grading policy that they have with their own policies and regulations within their district. So what we're doing right now is just having communication and conversation with them to really kind of come up with a concrete guidelines set. You know, because some district don't pass fail, some district are doing the alphabet, some districts are doing -- whatever their board policy states with regards to their retention, that's where they're going to follow. But we are encouraged to really work with them was to provide guidelines.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Mike, is that you? I can't even see you there behind that mask. Go ahead.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon. I wonder with summer coming up, what you can say the state will do about beaches that try to restrict their access to residents only? And with schools staying closed now, is it safe to assume that casinos will also be closed at least through June 30? Or have you made a decision about casinos at this point?

Governor Phil Murphy: Was that implying the correlation between whether or not our kids are in school or casinos?

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Unintentionally, if it's...

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not a lawyer, I'm going to practice without a license. I said this, I believe last week. This is not my call. This is a legal call. I believe communities cannot restrict, they're not allowed legally to restrict to just their residents. Is that correct, Matt? He's giving me the nod. But as a general matter, notwithstanding a beach decision, maybe a local decision, bear with us because we think some guidance may make sense here. In fact, we're certain it will make sense. We're encouraged by the compliance over the weekend with the state and county parks. That's a good thing.

One of the particular striking elements, and seeing it with my own eyes, and Pat referred to this as well, was limiting parking to 50%, as an example. That may well be smart as communities think about how many day tickets or monthly passes they're going to sell, maybe there's something on the capacity side that speaks to that, but bear with us on that. We're not making any news today on beaches yet, but we do think some general guidance, even though the decision may be local, with the exception of say, Island Beach State Park, which is the State's, we think some guidance is in order, so bear with us.

And nothing new on casinos. I think, you know, we have sort of a ring of decisions to make and out-of-doors decisions, to us at least, feel like they're in the early stages of decisions. We can make indoor, compact, we're all aggregated together decisions are going to be more difficult to make. Let's go, we'll do Nikita, is that you? And then we'll come down to Dave and go back to Ian. Please.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Hi, Governor. So I just have a couple of questions about the R&R Commission.

Governor Phil Murphy: Can you either speak up or get closer, Martel?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: So I have a couple of questions about the R&R Commission. Are its members going to be required to file financial disclosures and will they be given government emails? Regardless of the answer to that last one, will communications that they send on personal lines, like cell phones, be subject to disclosure under OPRA?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? I have no idea. Do you want to?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Because it's an ad hoc commission that is created by the Governor, the commission members are serving in their personal capacities, they're not subject to the same ethics and disclosure laws. There's a long history of this. We can walk you through it offline, Nikita.

Governor Phil Murphy: They're also not being compensated, as we've said before, so.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Just they will follow any recusal policies that we have with respect to their own personal conflicts, and we've walked each one of them through any potential conflicts.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Hi, Dave.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Hi, Governor. So on the fiscal disaster that you were talking about, you had mentioned you're vetoing bills. Which ones are you vetoing? How likely do you think we'll have layoffs? What kinds of state programs do you think will be eliminated or cut back significantly?

And then on the whole issue of schools, I know the Commissioner mentioned there's a committee that's being put together or has been put together to look at metrics about reopening summer school, possibly, and then obviously, in the fall. You had mentioned, Governor, you know, stay tuned, we'll give you more details. Could you talk maybe just in general terms about the kinds of stuff you're going to be looking at? Because you've got classrooms, school buses, lunchroom, especially younger kids, you know, fighting pulling masks off each other? That's going to be rough, I would think.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the vetoes, we'll come back to you with a specific list, but they fall into a couple of categories, Dave. One is, which I think is the biggest number, bills that had been introduced and subsequently there have been clean-up bills that I have already signed so that these were no longer the gating reality. We had already worked with the Legislature to clean it up.

Second category would be some bills where we believe the feds either are or will fund. As an example, Lamont referenced the CARES Act, that we can get the money out of the feds, so that we don't need to spend our precious remaining coins.

Third category would be, it's a noble notion, but we can't possibly execute on it fast enough to deal with the crisis before us. In other words, it's a good idea, but it's going to take too long to execute to address the here and now challenge that it was intended for.

And then the last category, and there are only a couple and I don't make light of this, but we just don't have the money. They're completely well intentioned. In a normal time up until a few months ago, these are things that we would have clearly entertained. But we just don't have the shekels right now to do that.

I can't give you any more color on eliminations, cutbacks, layoffs, but they will be large scale. I'm not saying that with any joy, we will have no choice. And again, I pray that both we get very good interpretation of the CARES Act, which we may get later on today. That's an important piece, that we get a big bucket of federal direct cash assistance through Congress and a bill signed by the President. And thirdly, that we get the flexibility to borrow which we need our Legislature to help us get there. That's an important, again, you don't wake up every day, particularly if you look at our first two-plus years in office, we were managing aggressively. In fact, we got elected in part to do that, to manage aggressively structural deficits, but we've got no choice at the moment. Lamont, I'm not sure if you want to add anything in terms of the deliberations you'll be expecting.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: As a member of the Council of Chief State School Officers, all the commissioners throughout the country, there's a framework they put for best practices and guidelines. We'll be working off that framework, and really kind of flushing it out more and make it tailored to New Jersey. Those guidelines, one is continuity of learning, which is reopening schools, including summer learning, conditions for learning, talking about the safety, leadership and planning and policy and funding. Those are the four areas, broad areas that we're looking at, using that framework that's predicated on best practices. That's also part of the Consortium of Commissioners throughout the country.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Martel, let's hit Ian here.

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: Governor, while a portion of our student population has adapted to schooling remotely online, are you concerned about the estimated 90,000 children in the state with no internet access at home? What will New Jersey do to keep these kids from falling behind?

Commissioner Persichilli, how soon can New Jersey start asymptomatic testing for residents to get a clear picture of how the virus is spread? Why aren't all the residents and staff at Andover Subacute getting tested, after it's become clear the virus was prevalent there? When is the official report on the investigation there going to get released? Finally, what percent of the total deaths reported are attributed to long-term care facilities? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think Lamont is acutely concerned about folks, I think we've addressed this, but from day one, I know I am and I know he is concerned about. You know, we deliberately took, recognizing we have over 600 school districts, we took deliberately a couple more days to bring this to a close, to go remote only, in part due to food security, remote learning generally and specifically access to devices. That's why, as an example, you had the 30 day in advance, print the school program out that Lamont had worked through with a variety of the districts. This is a particular, this is not ideal. It is not ideal. I don't want anyone to think that we think this is an ideal state. We're trying to keep as many people alive as well as push forward the great public education system. Do you want to comment on that for a second before we go to the--

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: Yes, Governor. We've been tracking this data, as the Governor mentioned, from day one. We currently have approximately, in the public school system, 1.4 million students. We've surveyed over 520-something plus districts and of that survey, we've been monitoring that and districts have been updating their emergency plans. We've noticed there's been a decrease in the number of students that do not have technology. Currently, right now, we're looking at approximately close to 90,000 students out of 1.4 million students in New Jersey that do not have access to internet access, also technology. So districts are now working on that, because that's now becoming a new reality.

As we look to the future, we don't know what it looks like in regards to social distancing, so districts are using the federal funds that they're going to anticipate to get from the CARES Act. They're using the Title funds they currently have, and they're also looking at general funds to make sure that those basic needs of our students are being met, so it will become kind of a basic need.

Governor Phil Murphy: I would just say on testing, Judy, I'll turn it to you. But we finally, as of the end of the week, I guess toward the weekend, we have the raw materials that we needed to be able to at least double our testing capacity. We have other allies in the fight, Rutgers, let's give them another shout out. We are right now, and I know Judy and her team are leading this, going through the rankings of where we're going to deploy those resources. That's being developed as we speak. Communities of particular exposure, I think we've said this already, are our highest priority, the most vulnerable communities among us. That's homes for developmentally disabled, corrections system, as well as densely populated areas, the notion of mobile vans in our biggest urban centers. We're sort of, again, going through rings of priorities. Judy, I'll turn it to you to clean up and give this the answer it deserves.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Okay. We've identified vulnerable populations. Here's a partial list. Department of Corrections, we'll be starting to do universal testing there. The veterans homes, there has been universal testing. What we mean by that is all of the residents and all of the employees. The developmentally disabled homes have been through universal testing. Long-term care facilities, we're continuing a wide-scale plan, identifying those long-term care facilities who have the most opportunity to cohort negative individuals. In other words, they have a lower incidence right now. That will be brought through the state night.

I have to give a shout out to a number of our healthcare facilities, our hospitals are helping us with that program, which I'll be able to give you more information fully tomorrow. Seasonal workers, we have a taskforce in place, including our FQHCs in the South, to help us with seasonal workers. We expect 12,000 to 15,000 that they come in every year, they work on the farms in the south. We'll be working with the growers to make sure that we have full testing and follow-up and isolation and quarantine for all of these.

Lastly, the inner-city populations that cannot go to drive-through or do not have walk-up possibilities. We're looking at releasing vans into those communities to increase testing. It would be primarily asymptomatic individuals, those that first and foremost, have had contact with a positive COVID-19 patient, individual.

Governor Phil Murphy: Did you hit long-term care?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Long-term care overall, we have a complete plan for – was the question specifically--

Governor Phil Murphy: The number of fatalities.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I was looking. I think Ed has that.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: It's right around a third of all associated deaths, confirmed deaths, are associated with long-term care facilities.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Do you have one in the back? I could barely see you.

Reporter: Thank you, Governor. Will the Department of Education require the equivalent of a minimum of 180 days of class instruction remotely, or offer districts more flexibility on that? And then on equity for children on free and reduced lunch programs, there's really a wide range of interpretations of the March legislation on feeding these students. Some kids are being given fresh food they pick up every day or every other day, while others are being given a week's or a month's worth of processed food in boxes. Are you issuing any detailed guidance on how districts should carry out free and reduced lunch programs for the remainder of the school year?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Lamont, do you want to hit that? The first question is any change to the 180-day minimum requirement? Secondly, any color on the free and reduced lunch guidance, which I guess the question is, it's being interpreted broadly, whether it's intended that way or not is the question. Please.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: In regards to the 180-day statute, that is law and we have not. We will continue to hold to the 180-day statute until the Governor deems otherwise. As far as the food and the meals, we have been tracking that and working with them. However, we are working in close collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and also the guidelines. The districts are following the guidelines prescribed by the US Department of Agriculture as well as our State Agriculture Program. We've actually observed over 200 meal sites just to make sure that, A, that they're doing what is right and they're following those guidelines. But secondly, are they adhering to social distance and safety rules? So yes, they are meeting the minimum standards in regards to that need. As you said before, each district is different based off of their needs.

Governor Phil Murphy: One thing I would say is, if afterward you think there's a particular example of a district that is not complying and that you've heard about, we'd love to know what that is. We can get you offline if that's okay. Thank you. Sir, do you have any? Nope. Sir, how are you?

Reporter: Thank you, Governor. If businesses like supermarkets and liquor stores can implement social distancing guidelines and remain open, why can't other businesses use similar protocols? For example, if a small retail store could only allow one person in at a time, why not let them open?

And on the unemployment front, over the weekend, people were having trouble accessing the website. What do you say to people who need that money but can't access?

Governor Phil Murphy: On the first question, that's on a long list of things for us which we constantly do consider and observe. Again, remember, the core mantra so far is stay at home. And so then we've said, okay, on what basis can you go out, reasonably, in the parks? Let's put aside supermarkets and pharmacies, etc., which will make sense and we've talked about and we expect those organizations, as you rightfully point out, they have to make sure that social distancing and protecting of folks is happening.

We started, again, largely overwhelmingly because of mental health reasons, we needed to let people get out, assuming that they adhered and complied, and overwhelmingly they did. Other retail, other sort of releasing the steam, clearly on a list of considerations. We need to continue to see more progress on the healthcare curves for us to take more steps.

That's not to say that this is a lifetime sentence. It's not to say it won't come at some point, sooner than later, but we're just not there yet. Unemployment, the only thing I can say is we've been overwhelmed. The system, the entire state system, crashed over the weekend as we've already highlighted. We're going to come back to you. We would really, I think I'm going to speak for Judy, I'm going to suggest Sunday, Monday, Tuesday numbers on everything we report be averaged. That's something we've said before, but particularly, Ed, would you agree with that?

The Saturday numbers have typically been money good because they're really data that was collected on Friday. The Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, particularly with our system crashing, adds to that. The message I would say is we understand your frustration. Stay at it. We are chopping through this. We had a big roadblock taken away on the independent contractors last week, but by virtue of catching up on the independent

contractor claims, which had a big backlog, that didn't allow us to get more aggressively with the regular bread-and-butter claims that had come in last week. You then have the system go down, but stay with it. We deeply appreciate your patience and know that you will not lose one penny of what's coming to you. That's probably the most important thing to say. Thank you.

Sir, do you have something? You're good? Okay. I can't tell if someone's behind you. We're good? Okay. Matt, we'll come to you. Good afternoon.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. Related to unemployment. Governor, you answered part of my question there, but our readers have been asking if you would consider having somebody from the Department of Labor attend these daily briefings to give updates, given the backlog. I'm curious if that's something you've thought about.

Just on schools, we've heard a lot from frustration from parents and students and officials about the time that it took to get to this. I'm just curious if you could tell us why you waited to this point, even though it is before the May 15 deadline, given the frustration?

On Saturday, Commissioner, you said you planned to ask the National Guard to help staff nursing homes. Could you specify what steps have been taken or what will be taken, and the tasks that the Guard will handle and when they will arrive?

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me jump in on that first, on this stuff, and then as usual, throw it to you. Yeah, we have had the Commissioner here before, I think that's a good suggestion, actually. I'm not going to guarantee it but Mahen, maybe get Rob to come in for at least a cameo. We've had him here before but I think it's a very fair one.

Listen, we said this, you know, I think our first deadline on schools was April 17. The pressure has been, again, I'm accepting seniors and parents of athletes, in many cases, in particular seniors who are athletes, putting that group to one side because there was a lot of vocal, and I think very well-intentioned pressure applied from them, and I completely get it. I'm sitting next to the dad of a senior myself, so I understand it. The pressure has been far more on the other side, to make the announcement to close sooner than later. We took a very simple and again, we beat the deadline we promised by 11 days, I want that on the record as well. But we, and the we is mostly Lamont and his team, our team, Judy and her team, we took the decision that with each passing week we're going to know more. I mentioned this New York Times article today. These are the world experts trying to figure out why Singapore looks like it does and some other place that feels a lot like Singapore doesn't.

By the way, in Singapore, Judy, and I meant to say this a minute ago on seasonal workers, that's been a big reason why they've had a flare up for that very reason, getting that right, getting the testing right, including asymptomatic testing.

Frankly, the passage of time, Matt, gives us a lot more information than we have. You know, I can tell you right now, three weeks from now we're going to know a lot more than we know today. This is an iterative, it's a war but it's an iterative war. Because it's an elusive enemy that we're fighting, someone you can't lay your eyes on, it makes it even more challenging.

I want to say one thing and Judy can correct the record when I say this. There's a couple of different, when you think about augmenting staffing in nursing homes, one path that we're pursuing is actually, and you didn't ask this, but is the VA. The VA has made some exceptions in their deployment. Clearly they're in in a big way in Menlo Park and Paramus, and God knows we needed them. But they have indicated in some places in the country that they would they were at least open minded to surge capacity in non-veterans homes. That's one thing that we are still working on today.

Judy, I don't know if you see this differently, but the challenge with the National Guard is the following. If you're medically qualified in the National Guard, you're already being used. You're already working in your day job somewhere. You've got a rob Peter to pay Paul reality here. Say you're a nurse, the chances are if you're a nurse in New Jersey right now in your day job, the chances are probably 100%, unless you're quarantined, God forbid, unless there's a medical reason, you're already working fighting COVID. There is a robbing Peter to pay Paul aspect here.

I think the piece that we haven't spoken to is that there are other members. There are other, yet again, a large population of members of the Guard who are not healthcare specific, who are not first responders, who are not already deployed in the COVID fight. That is the group that we are looking at aggressively to take and deploy and do non-medical stuff in our nursing homes like cooking, cleaning, basic stuff that doesn't rob Peter to pay Paul, but at the same time adds and augments to our staff. I didn't mean to go on so long. But anything you've got, Judy, on that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, you said exactly what my first comment is that the clinical people, which is what we need the most, are already called up and working in hospitals. We're asking for medical assistance, and that they would work under a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse, help with site testing, janitorial, cooking, meal service, family communication, administrative work, security, logistics, such as making sure that supplies and equipment are where they need to be, and then general purpose. So we've been on the phone and working with the General and his team all weekend and throughout today, so we hope to have something more positive in the next several days, but they've been more than wanting to help out. It's just to make sure that we put them in the right spots.

Governor Phil Murphy: But I don't want to get your hopes too high on the VA front, but I just wanted to make sure I distinguish the VA from the National Guard, and that's something that we're trying to run the traps on as we speak. Elise, you're going to close us out. Good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. Earlier you said that layoffs are coming. Do you mean that layoffs are a certainty or only if relief isn't forthcoming via the CARES Act and fed borrowing? My second question is, with the Northeastern States Buying Cooperative, are you now setting up a scenario where groups of states are bidding against other groups of states? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thanks, Elise, and thanks to each and every one of you for being straightforward and brief with your questions today. Again, we have less time on the clock. Layoffs, Matt will correct me if I'm wrong, they're already happening at municipal levels. This is not a theoretical argument. We can come back to you with some of the communities where we're seeing it.

But I think it's going to be a question of scale, whether or not this is here and there or if this is a massive, across-the-board reality, and please God it is not that. You know, we cannot fathom that. This is the worst healthcare crisis in our state's history, in our country's history. The 9 million folks out there need, more than ever before, firefighters, healthcare workers, police, EMTs, frontline essential workers, we need them more than ever before at the municipal, county, state level, the folks processing unemployment. It's unfathomable to think of not just spotty reductions, but if that were to become broad scale, and that rests almost entirely and exclusively on the combination of federal assistance, most importantly, in size, both interpretation of the CARES Act but in a bigger scale, the next wave, as well as our ability to borrow.

I would say on the buying cooperative, I meant to say this earlier. I'm glad you raised it with the last question because I realized I forgot to raise it myself. We were very happy yesterday. I was very happy to participate, hosted by Governor Cuomo, but with several other Governors. That's already happening. So the notion of one state competing with another, that's the case right now. I think this is a much more adult, much more sensible way to think about it.

We were having a conversation today. Remember, the sixth leg of the road to recovery is resiliency. That includes everything from addressing the racial and other socioeconomic inequities that this virus has torn open and allowed us sadly to see in vivid detail, but also to the very specific, cold-blooded, how many ventilators do we have in stock, etc. You can see the real potential implications of a buying block that includes the seven states that have been aggregated in this Regional Council. You know, that aggregation of economic clout, probably, I'm going to say with the possible exception of California, which by the way, if it were its own country would be the fifth or sixth largest economy in the world, that buying power, that economic power would rank five, six, seven in the world. Using that to our collective advantage when you sit across the table from manufacturer X or Y, that to me gives you an enormous leg up.

I'd say one other thing, I think it without question advances our ability to make this stuff not just in the USA, but to make it in the region and I hope a lot of it in New Jersey. This virus has torn open the racial and other inequities in our society for full view. It's also ripped off any masking of the enormous diminution of manufacturing capacity in this country. We're not immune to that. New Jersey is not immune.

You know, when we say that, as we've said last week, that gowns are the new ventilators, I think folks could appreciate that a ventilator, while it may not be an airplane, it's got a lot of moving parts but gowns for crying out loud, Judy. There's no good answer to that. I think this Regional Council gives us also a leg up to say, you know what? Let's have a strategy to actually make this stuff. Not just have a better negotiating position, but let's be more likely we can make it.

I'm going to mask up as I conclude here. I want to thank, I forgot who gave this to me, but somebody sent this American flag mask to me, which I wear with great honor. We will be back together tomorrow, unless you hear otherwise, at 1:00 p.m. in this room. This is a big decision day for us. This decision on remote learning and education for the balance of the school year is a big one and it's not one we take lightly. I want to thank everybody, beginning with the Commissioner, Lamont to you and your team, Judy, to you and Ed and your team and the inputs that you gave, and obviously for your leadership generally, to the educators, administrators, moms and dads, kids, others who weighed in. This is a tough decision, but it's the right decision. I want to again thank everybody for being so good this weekend. Please keep that up. You've been extraordinary. The more we keep that up, the more the curves flatten, the better and sooner we can begin to really take the other steps we need to take to reopen.

Again, Judy, Ed, thank you. Lamont, to you, thank you. Colonel, thank you, as always. Jared, Matt, others, thank you. God bless you all. We'll see you back here at one o'clock tomorrow.

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