

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: April 7th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. I am honored to be joined today as I am, I believe, every single day by the woman who needs no introduction to my right, Commissioner of Department of Health Judy Persichilli. To her right, Department of Health Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz, another guy you've seen a lot of lately. Nice to have you with us, Ed. Far left, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan. Pat, as always. Director of the Department of Homeland Security Preparedness Jared Maples is with us. Jared, nice to see you. And the man to my immediate left, the Department of Education Commissioner, Dr. Lamont Repollet. Nice to have you with us, Lamont. I've asked Commissioner Repollet to join us to provide an update on the situation with regard to our schools, which I have previewed over the past number of days.

As has been our practice of late, we will open with the reports we have received over the past 24 hours. First, we are announcing another 3,361 positive test results, 3,361, which moves our statewide total to 44,416. Sadly, and this is with the heaviest of hearts, we have also lost, and this is sadly our highest toll to date. We have lost another 232 of our precious fellow New Jerseyans to COVID-19 related complications. Our state has now lost 1,232 precious lives.

At this time -- Judy, if I'm wrong about this, you'll correct me -- three previously reported deaths have been removed from our count and Judy will be able to speak not only to that, but to give you some color on the positive tests as well as the blessed souls we have lost. It's almost unfathomable, folks, when you think



about that, 1,232 lost lives.

I would like to mention two of the tremendous individuals in particular who we have lost. First is Dr. James Wilson, who passed away on Monday night at the age of 93. There he is with his son, Syd, and I'll come back to Syd in a moment. He had lived in Bergen County for the past 50 years. Born in the Dominican Republic, he was a pioneering physician. In the 1960s he became one of the very first Dominican physicians to open a clinic in the United States, in New York City's Washington Heights, where he tended to patients for more than 40 years. He and his wife Nilda recently celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary, along with their six children and extended family and friends. And as I say, in this photo, he's with his son Syd, who is a dear friend. We send our condolences to everybody who knew him, obviously and most importantly, his family, to Syd and his fellow family members. What a life.

We also lost Diana Tennant of my county, Monmouth County, and there is Diana. She worked for many years at the Fulfill Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, helping to feed countless families. She was a leader within the Latino Coalition of New Jersey and was a past chair of the Latino Festival, a festival that I've been to several times at Monmouth County. She is remembered by her friends as someone who always had time to lend a hand. Diana was only 51 years old and had so much more to give. We also send our condolences, prayers to her family and friends at this time.

These are just two stories of the many, many more we could tell of those who we have lost. Every single one of them has made our New Jersey family what it is, and we honor their legacies as we grieve with their families. None of them, you have my word, none of them will be forgotten. And for them and for their families, we need to continue doing all we can to keep slowing the spread of coronavirus. We don't need to, nor do we want to, in any way, lose any more members of our family. The best way we can protect this New Jersey family is by social distancing.

Yesterday, we noted that we're beginning to see, and I say I don't want to overstate this in any way, the very first potential signs that the curve may be finally flattening. And if you look at the positives today, and you put the denominator of the positives that we've already had, you'll see a little bit more of that evidence. But we cannot be happy with only reaching a plateau. We need to keep strong and keep determined to see that curve begin to fall and ultimately get to zero. That's going to require many more weeks, at the least, of our being smart and staying at least, at all times, six feet apart.

This morning I spoke with Governor Cuomo and exchanged notes with Governor Lamont. I reached out to Governor Wolf. Well, we are not there yet – I repeat, we are not there yet – we all agree that just as we had a regional approach to dealing with the upside of the curve, and still do, we discussed, in a general sense, a regional approach to the things like testing, tracking and the reopening, slowly and responsibly whenever that moment comes, of businesses and schools, and potentially a regional approach for mobilizing resources when coronavirus comes back as many predict it will, or for the next pandemic to come.

No one wants to see our state get back up and running as much as I do, or anyone up here wants to. It's the singular goal that we are all working toward. But we need everyone in this with us. We can't do it alone, and it's not just for the five of us to do or our other colleagues who are here, Parimal Garg, by the way, from Counsel's Office is with us. Parimal, thanks for being here. It's not just for us to do, it's for all 9 million of us to do. So keep practicing your social distancing, even when outside and even when wearing a face covering. Remember, a face covering as we've all worn them coming in this morning and we're wearing them now regularly, if not constantly, a face covering – Judy, am I right? Does not trump social distancing. Social distancing is the king. Face covering is important, but it is not more important than social distancing. Stay indoors, stay at your home unless you absolutely need to go out, or unless you're one of the essential workers we need out there to help us get through this. Keep washing your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. And if you feel like you're under the weather, that's okay, but don't even think of going out or getting near anybody. There's going to be plenty of sunshine and summer to come and the sooner we can flatten that curve and come down the other side of that curve, the faster we can all enjoy it.

Switching gears for a couple of announcements if I may. Tomorrow morning, I will be touring, Pat, I believe with you, with Colonel Callahan, I believe Senator Cory Booker, the field medical station being set up right now at the New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center in Edison. We will be joined, I believe, by both Major General Jeffrey Milhorn and Lieutenant Colonel David Parker of the US Army Corps of Engineers. And we'll

also be joined by Major General John King from the Department of Defense, and just up from the great state of Georgia, and in our rock as we speak. As you know, folks, this is our second field medical station. It will also be our largest, Judy, of 500 beds, right? We remain immensely appreciative of the partnership from the Army Corps, and of the federal administration, in helping us bring these much needed beds online.

Next, today I am signing not one, not two, not three, but four Executive Orders. That is not a typical day, by any stretch. Number one, I am extending by 30 days the Public Health Emergency I initially declared on March 9th. These declarations, unless extended, actually expire after 30 days so this ensures we'll continue on our current war footing for at least another 30 days.

Second, I am signing an order, and I don't do this lightly and I don't do it with any joy, to close all state and county parks in the state of New Jersey. We have seen far too many instances where people are gathering in groups in our parks, erroneously thinking since they're outside, social distancing doesn't matter. Nothing could be further from the truth. We understand that staying at home is hard, we get that, and that you need to get some fresh air. But you must do this close to home. Take a walk or bike ride in your neighborhood, or at a park in your town that is own.

And by the way, the decision, unless Parimal corrects me, of municipal parks to be open or closed is up to the municipality. That is a decision that is made locally by the municipality. And by the way, don't travel to somebody, if you hear your town's parks are closed and the next town's are open, please don't travel to someone else's parks. We need 100% compliance to flatten the curve and unfortunately, that now requires us to take this step. And again, don't think that I take this action lightly. Some of my fondest memories with my own children and Tammy are beautiful spring days in parks playing soccer, going for a run, enjoying our family. But my focus and our focus, our sole mission right now is the health of every New Jersey family. And we must not just flatten this curve, we must crush this curve.

My final two orders pertain to our public schools. Charlie, I hope you're listening, wherever you are. I am signing an order to extend certain deadlines for boards of education that still operate on an April election timeframe, because their elections, as you have heard a couple of weeks ago, have now been postponed until May 12. There are only a few more than a dozen districts statewide which still hold to the April timeframe, and my order will ensure that they have enough time to certify their budgets and make staffing decisions for the following year.

My final order follows my directives last month indefinitely closing our public schools and canceling our statewide assessments. First, I am waiving the student assessment requirement for graduation this year, including the portfolio appeal process. This means that the 13,000 current high school seniors who have not yet satisfied the student assessment requirement will no longer have to submit a portfolio appeal in order to graduate. This order also waives the use of student testing data for educator evaluations, which was not feasible anyway, given that we have canceled this year's standardized tests. I thank the man to my left, Dr. Repollet and his team for his work with, among others, the NJEA, lawmakers and stakeholders on this, and for the work to come on a process for properly evaluating our educators without this data.

A couple of announcements on testing. First, tomorrow April 8, the PNC Bank Art Center drive-through site will be open at 8:00 a.m. and remain open until either 4:00 p.m. or when it hits its capacity of 500 tests. The Bergen Community College site will be closed tomorrow, but it will reopen on Thursday, April 9. Additionally, and this is a little bit of a switch, both of these sites will be open Saturday, April 11 for 500 tests apiece, and they will both be closed for Easter Sunday.

Separately, Gloucester County will open a testing site tomorrow at Rowan College of South Jersey. This site will operate for Gloucester County residents only, and is by appointment only. To receive a test, you must be pre-screened for symptoms. Again, in a world of scarce resources, we must focus and continue to focus on symptomatic folks. You could be pre-screened for the Gloucester County site by calling 856-218-4142. As I mentioned yesterday, there are now more than a dozen publicly accessible testing sites whose information can be found by visiting our online portal at covid19.nj.gov/testing. However, there are many more sites being run by hospitals or other private sector partners that are not listed. If you believe you are showing coronavirus symptoms, please call your primary care practitioner right away and they can assess you. If you meet the standard for testing, they can direct you where to go to get a test. Brady, I believe at our last count, we had at least 50 sites around the state.

Onto donations and PPE. I want to start by giving a huge thank you to Hilton and American Express, which in partnership with Hilton's ownership community, are donating up to 1 million hotel room nights across the nation and through the end of May to doctors, nurses, EMTs, paramedics and other frontline medical workers who need a place to sleep or recharge, or to isolate from their families. We know that there will be frontline responders in our state, including many of the volunteer medical responders we are bringing in who will need a place to stay throughout this emergency, and we cannot thank Hilton and American Express enough.

Next on PPE, we continue to pursue every possible avenue for PPE on our own. I know in addition, Pat, to your compliance report you'll want to comment on any developments there, whether that's on the open market or via the Strategic National Stockpile. And from the stockpile, our latest accounting shows that we have brought in and distributed more than 1.1 million pieces of PPE, but goodness knows we still need more.

I want to give a big shout out to BASF, which is donating 1,000 gallons of hand sanitizer that it is producing right here, in state, at their facility in Washington Borough and Warren County. We are greatly appreciative of their efforts.

From Monmouth County, we learned that Hatteras Press in Tinton Falls created 7,000 protective face shields for healthcare providers and first responders that have been distributed across the state. Owner Bill Duerr reported that he is planning to create another 10,000 a day over the next two weeks. We cannot thank Bill and Hatteras Press enough.

And notably, Bristol Myers Squibb is donating \$345,000 worth of PPE to New Jersey. Some of these supplies are already at their facility in Princeton and will be delivered immediately to medical facilities in need and an additional shipment is expected to arrive in the coming weeks. BMS, as you may have seen this, also announced this morning, I believe, that it is expanding its Patient Support Program to provide free medicines to those who have lost their health insurance due to this emergency and its impact. I spoke this morning and I want to thank him publicly, the CEO of Bristol Myers Squibb, Giovanni Caforio, who's a good friend, for all that BMS is doing. And I might also add, in addition to Giovanni and the BMS team, his wife is running a food bank in Princeton that is feeding upwards of 400 families a day. We thank her and the entire BMS family.

If you have PPE to donate, or the means to produce it, we are still, believe me, and will be for a long time accepting your donations. Please reach out to us at covid19.nj.gov/ppedonations. Colonel Callahan's team will be in touch with you to accept your donation. In advance, we thank each and every one of you for both the small slugs and the big ones, and every one in between. So we'll keep doing what we're doing and you keep donating, and together we can get what our public health and safety responders need. They are our heroes today and every day.

First, before I close, I want to give a huge collective thanks to the communities across the state who are getting creative in celebrating their friends' and neighbors' major milestones while practicing social distancing. Tammy and I had a call with members of our team this morning with faith leaders, and thanked them, particularly with Passover beginning tomorrow. We're in the midst of Holy Week, Easter on Sunday, Ramadan not too far down the road. All of us have the inclination to want to come together and we can't. We must resist that at all costs. There's been enormous cooperation around the state, both by community leaders and faith leaders, and the creativity is extraordinary. Folks are getting creative in particular, as I say, as they celebrate their friends' and neighbors' major milestones, sadly including funerals and memorials, while at the same time practicing social distancing.

Thanks to the news reports and to all of you tweeting us at #NJThanksYou. We've learned of countless stories of friends, standing across the street with Happy Birthday or Just Married signs, posting signs of support for our heroic essential workers on their front doors, or residents organizing online fundraisers to support our public health and safety responders. This is precisely the community spirit we need right now to get us through this time. We can't be physically together, but what you are doing to ensure that your community knows that everyone is being thought of and everyone is being celebrated, that's how we do it.

I want to share another idea before I turn things over to Judy, that was sent to my way by my dear friend Bill Lavin. Bill is the former president of the State Firemen's Mutual Benevolent Association, or FMBA, and he's a retired Elizabeth firefighter. Today he founded and he runs Where Angels Play Foundation, which builds playgrounds for kids who need a safe place to be kids, in memory, by the way, of fallen kids, and it has a global reach. Recently, Bill's team lost a longtime volunteer to COVID-19. They couldn't gather with her family

to mourn her passing, but they wanted to do something to let them show how much she meant. So they took up a collection and they purchased gift certificates to that volunteer's favorite restaurants, which they then gave to her family. In doing so, they were supporting a small business that really needs a helping hand right now, and once this emergency ends, the family will be able to gather and eat at a place that was so special to the loved one that they lost.

I think that's a good place to end my formal remarks today. We will get through this, unequivocally. We will be able to be together as a family, as one family, again. But to do so, we must continue to keep what we're doing right now and have been for the past many weeks to flatten the curve, break the back of that curve, and then get to that better place where we all can be close and be together again. We can do this. It will not be easy and I know it isn't easy right now, and you have our enormous thanks and respect. It won't be fun. We know that we are not out of the woods yet. We're not close to that, and that more residents sadly will fall in and some will not be with us when we get to the other side. But we have to do this to make sure that those numbers are as low as we can make them and certainly as low as they otherwise would be. We get there together, folks, as one extraordinary New Jersey family. Keep doing what you're doing. Keep staying home. Keeps staying a distance from each other. And if you do that, we will get there. We are all in this together, we will only come out of this if we stay together by ironically, right now, staying apart.

With that, please allow me to turn things over to the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. As I've mentioned before, we are being vigilant about all of the residents in New Jersey, especially the most vulnerable, those in mental health facilities, long-term care facilities, pediatric long-term care, and state and county jails. We know these individuals are at risk because of the congregate settings within which they reside. As I've shared with you, our long-term care facilities continue to be severely impacted. Right now, 188 of our long-term care facilities in the state have at least one COVID-19 case.

On Saturday, I spoke with the head of the Long-Term Care Association and I advised him that if the facilities weren't complying with state law to notify staff, residents and families about their outbreaks, that we will release their names, of those that are not in compliance. We are still contacting each and every facility to make sure that they are releasing the information, and to receive documentation of that. A majority of them are telling us that they're complying, but what we are learning is somewhat more disturbing. They have also shared with us that they feel they don't have sufficient resources or sufficient staff to take care of their patients.

We decided this morning, the team at Department of Health, that we have to develop a statewide plan to assist the nursing homes that are experiencing outbreaks and also shortage of staff and equipment. This will be a whole of government approach. It will cover from North Jersey to South Jersey. It will require, in some cases, for patients to be moved around, and that's extremely disturbing to elderly individuals. But for those that have not been exposed, we want to keep them safe. For those that have been exposed, or perhaps diagnosed positively, we want to make sure that they get cared for.

The department has also been closely monitoring our four state psychiatric hospitals. Currently, there are 46 staff members and 34 patients who have tested positive for COVID-19. We're working with the hospitals to conduct surveillance and implement the infection control protocols to reduce exposure.

The Department of Human Services has reported 24 positive cases, including one death among the 1,200 individuals that they serve at our developmental centers in the state. The Department of Corrections has reported a total of 67 employees, five inmates and three individuals in their residential communities that have tested positive for COVID-19. The Department of Corrections website identifies those numbers and are broken down by facility. The Department of Health is in close communication with all of our sister agencies on these impacted populations.

Currently, as of this morning, there are 7,017 hospitalizations which include COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation. 1,651 individuals are in critical care and 94% of those individuals, 1,540, are on ventilators. You may recall that in our worst-case predictive modeling, we shared that we may have 8,000 critical care cases with 7,000 on ventilators. I want to assure you that our plans are moving in the direction to be able to accommodate these patients but we still need ventilators.

I want to take a moment to go over some of the department's COVID-19 guidance for healthcare providers. Current department guidance does not allow for healthcare providers to return to work while they are still symptomatic. With the understanding that some have mild symptoms, such as a slight cough that may persist for long periods of time, that is not considered to be exclusionary. Our guidance, which follows the general CDC guidance, recommends that symptomatic healthcare workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 may return to work seven days after the symptoms first developed and 72 hours, or three days, after fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications, with a significant improvement in symptoms, whichever period is longer.

Although it's not recommended that those without symptoms get tested, should an asymptomatic healthcare professional test positive, they should continue home isolation for seven days after their first positive COVID-19 test. Provided that they remain asymptomatic, and out of an abundance of caution, they should also be masked while at work. If an individual who has no symptoms tests positive, they can discontinue isolation when at least seven days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 test. Please go to the Department of Health website or the CDC website for more information on this guidance. It is important to follow these recommendations to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our state.

As the governor mentioned, we are reporting 3,361 new cases for a total of 44,416 cases in the state. And yes, sadly, 232 new deaths have been reported to the department, of which 33 were residents of long-term care facilities. So there are now 1,232 fatalities in our state. As the governor mentioned, three of the deaths reported yesterday were removed from our count. These numbers change occasionally, because after further investigation, we find more details that could lead to the individual being removed from our count, such as a death being reported in New Jersey, but it turns out the individual may not be a New Jersey resident, or not meeting the criteria to be classified as a death due to COVID-19.

Of the deaths totally, the trend continues 60% male, 40% female; 1% under the age of 30, or 11 cases; 5% 30 to 49 years of age, 17% 50 to 64, 32% 65 to 79, and 45% over 80 years. 60%, or 435 of our cases are reported as individuals who report as White, 24% or 175 as Black or African American, 5% reported as Asian, and 11% as other. At this point 44% have documented underlying conditions. However, there are 670 cases that are still under investigation for underlying conditions. And as reported, 10% from long-term care facilities. Of course, we offer our sympathies to the families who have lost loved ones, and as in the past, and now in this most spiritual of times in our calendar, I remind you to stay connected, support one another, reach out to those, your relatives and friends who are alone or with you, who may be fearful. And remember, be careful, be safe, be healthy and stay home. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. You may have said it, positivity rate on the testing. Did you say that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I did not. Let me just find that. The positivity rate is tracking the same, over 40%.

Governor Phil Murphy: Low to mid-40s.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, mid-40s.

Governor Phil Murphy: Also, top five counties in total cases, this has stayed about the same, although Hudson has really shown over the past several days, unfortunately, it's closed in closer to Essex. So you've got Bergen number one, Essex, number two, Hudson three, Union four and Passaic five. Those continue to be the five counties with the most cases now for 7 or 10 days.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: On the positivity rate, we have tested 89,911. The positivity rate is 43.77%. That's 39,353 testing positive.

Governor Phil Murphy: And again, we'll remind everybody, a couple of things. Number one, these are overwhelmingly symptomatic people so they're going to be – Ed, unless you disagree – they're going to be, on average, less healthy than the average New Jersey resident.

Secondly, we're getting these, you know, I'm not sure what we think our current delay is, but these are specimens that we're announcing today that were collected 12, maybe 10 to 14 days ago, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, the commercial labs were all overloaded, as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: And then we continue, and it's early, and I'm proud of the fact that we've added it but again, I think Judy and I both agree it's imperfect. But you're beginning to get some sense of race of the fatalities, bless their souls. And one of the things that we're focused on, and many are focused on, not that that's the only metric by which one can draw conclusions, but it is overwhelmingly the case that even in peacetime, never mind in times of war such as the one we're in now, that communities that are usually left behind are further left behind. It doesn't correlate entirely to communities of color, but invariably, that's the reality that we're dealing with. The more we, as Judy and team go through this, and with each passing day, the better a handle we have on the profile of these blessed fatalities, the better we'll be able to react and respond to the community work that's going to need to be done to pick up the pieces going forward.

Long-term care facilities again, Judy, you mentioned a hundred and?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: 188.

Governor Phil Murphy: 188, and that's almost exactly half of the long-term care facilities in the state.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, there's 375 long-term care facilities and another, probably 200 assisted living types, dementia homes. So put it all together, it's still a number that we're so concerned about.

Governor Phil Murphy: And so this is going to be an area that you mentioned, with a state plan, that's something we're going to be coming back to folks, just to give them more color on what that looks like over the days ahead. Pat, with your blessing, I'm going to turn to Lamont next and then we'll have you bat clean up. Is that okay with you? Again, great to have the Commissioner of the Department of Education with us, one of the most dramatic steps we've taken is to shut schools in this state, period, public, private, religious all and it's something that we've never done before. As we said at the time, we wanted to do as good a job as we could to get out ahead of what we thought some of the challenges would be. The ability to learn remote, period, but also for the big chunks of our state which don't have ready access to devices; to be able to feed kids when their most reliable meal every day is from the school; the general challenge of remote learning and all of the extraordinary work that our educators and moms and dads are doing. And so we thought it made sense to give folks a quick sense of where we think things are, maybe a little bit on where they're headed, and I'm honored that the boss is with us. Please help me welcome the Commissioner of the Department of Education. Dr. Lamont Repollet.

Commissioner of the Department of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: Thank you, Commissioner and Colonel for your leadership. These extraordinary circumstances call on all of us, me and my colleagues at the Department of Education, superintendents, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff, food service directors and workers, child study team members, parents, to reach for new heights of innovation, collaboration and mutual support.

We have been in this now for 20 days. Twenty days ago, all New Jersey schools were ordered to close and I asked that the education community give itself some grace. Adjusting to these unprecedented times requires unprecedented acts of leadership and humanity. I'm extremely proud of, and impressed by, the education community and parents for meeting these complex challenges.

Today's executive orders are designed to allow to keep uninterrupted focus on what matters most, our community's basic educational needs. We recognize that at this time, completing the portfolio appeal process will be an unwelcome and counterproductive burden for our students and our districts. We recognize that we must provide some flexibility from typical educator evaluation procedures to allow districts to engage meaningfully with their teachers, students and leaders. These adjustments are necessary to allow districts to continue the important work of providing critical educational services to all of our students, in light of the complex challenges we face.

I'd like to highlight some of that work, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Please.

Commissioner of the Department of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: Instructional technology. As schools and districts began preparing to carry out closures, the department strove to provide every flexible available to empower school leaders to continue providing instruction to students. That was Phase 1 of the department's COVID preparedness work, meeting the needs of students and meeting the 180-day requirement. In Phase 2, we have been gathering feedback and data from districts on their successes and challenges in implementing their instruction.

To make good on our commitment to equity of access to instruction, the department had to better understand the digital divide and how the state can go about bridging that divide. A survey distributed to every district helps us better understand this landscape and our ongoing challenges. 70% of districts have reported that at least 90% of their students have access to the internet at home. But to help fill gaps, districts across the state are actively helping families connect to the internet at home through activities such as connecting eligible families with free internet services, providing donated or purchased hotspots, launching public private partnerships to boost internet access, and working with local public libraries to lend hotspots to families. Our last report indicated that even with the help of innovative measures like these, of the New Jersey's 1.4 million public school students, about 110,000 cannot access the internet at home, and nearly 155,000 students need one-to-one devices.

We continue to work with districts and provide any resources and flexibility we can to help drive those numbers as low as we can. For our students with special needs, we were proud last week when the state board adopted temporary regulations that allow school districts and educational agencies to deliver special education and related services to students with disabilities through the use of telepractice. We are hopeful that this flexibility will help school districts and educational agencies ensure that students with disabilities receive the services that are entitled to them.

And for our schools and for our students. school districts around the state are using nurses, counselors and other health professionals to increase mental health service and emotional supports, assists with wellness checks, and provide targeted assistance for students identified as most at risk. My staff has been working with social and emotional learning associations to collect research and resources in how schools can manage the emotional impact of this pandemic on their students.

Food. It is impossible to address the health of our students, however, without addressing food security. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture has been doing the critical work of ensuring our school districts have the tools to continue providing school meals. I would like to thank Secretary Fisher and his team for their collaboration. The DOE is partnering with local Office of Emergency Management to help ensure food is safely distributed. We have visited over 100 food distribution sites, and continue to provide assistance on safety protocols, such as establishing grab-and-go distribution models and using social distancing best practices.

We know that more work remains to be done. We know that districts face particular difficulties with their youngest learners and with the readiness of their workforce to shift to a remote instructional environment. With this data in hand, Phase 3 of our plan will be to bolster targeted, individualized supports through our boots-on-the-ground field service efforts. We also hope to synthesize the many lessons we learned in an after-action report on school closure to ensure our state is prepared should, God forbid, Governor, we ever confront a challenge like this again.

Thank you again to the entire educational community for rising to these complex challenges and continuously centering the needs of all of our students and educators. It is an honor to partner with you in this critical work. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Lamont, thank you. A couple of things before we turn to Pat to bat clean up here. I want to give a big shout out, someone I was on a lot with today, I just want to reiterate, Andy Slavitt has been a huge resource for our state and for our team, and I can't overstate that enough. Part of the reason I raise that is he and I were in a conversation this morning, and we're going to have a massive postmortem, whenever it is the dust settles as a nation, for sure. I hope that it emulates at the national level as well as at the state level. We in New Jersey will need to do a big postmortem. I hope it emulates the leadership that Governor Kaine showed along with Congressman Lee Hamilton for the 9/11 Commission. We need to do that as a nation, and we certainly need to do that as a state, whether it's healthcare matters and certainly

educational matters. When you do something you've never done before, and as you said, Lamont, God forbid we never have to do it again. But in the off-chance we do, we better darn learn those lessons. As they say, if you don't learn the lessons of history, you are destined to repeat it. Thank you for that.

One other comment before Pat jumps in. I think Judy and I would both want to say this. A life lost is a life lost, so sadly, the numbers are what they are. By the way, of the total fatalities in our state, almost 1,000 of them had been in the past week. So of the 1,232 precious lives lost, just under 1,000 have been in the past week. Think about that for a second.

But it's also fair to say, Judy, I think this is a national phenomenon, not just a New Jersey phenomenon. The weekend skews when the data comes in. A fatality is a fatality and sadly, we can't bring these people back but the up and down on the numbers, just we wanted to mention again. We've said this before, they didn't all happen since two o'clock yesterday afternoon. Is that fair to say? It's a multiple-day reality that comes through.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, and the reporting during the weekends. It has been noted nationally that it's not as accurate so if you average, if you smooth this out, you average it out, it's still, we don't like the numbers, but it's about 130 a day Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

Governor Phil Murphy: And a life lost is a life lost. Nothing we can do to bring them back. Our job collectively, all 9 million of us by the way, is to lose as few lives and have as few people sick as possible. Thank you for that, Dr. Lamont Repollet, thank you for your leadership and for your remarks. I'm sure folks will have questions. Colonel Callahan, as usual, the bat cleanup on compliance, on PPE, any other matters, Department of Defense update. Great to have you in and thank you for your leadership.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor. Very quickly on PPE. In addition to the tens of millions of orders we have from the state for PPE, we do have a request in to FEMA for 4.5 million N-95 masks, for 5.7 million surgical masks, for 6.8 million gloves, for 3.9 million gowns, as well as 3.8 million face shields. We have more than 1,000 medical beds on order for the upfitting of that hospital capacity relief team that's out there trying to upfit wings in mothballed hospitals.

I think one of the greater stories, which I don't even know if it's been reported yet was last night, we received word from the State of California on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, EMAC mission. California, knowing what New Jersey and New York are going through, the Department of Defense is flying 100 ventilators out to us today, and they will land today with the understanding that in three weeks or so they're probably going to be needing them in hitting their surge and peak. That's the type of, I think, that collective effort. Understanding we're being hitting now, but as this thing moves its way across, that return of the favor, I think, is what we'll be in the position hopefully to do that when we get to the other side of the curve. Just a good story, and an indication of the team effort that's happening across state boundaries.

With regards to compliance, I just want to lead with a story from the Attorney General's Office in conjunction with the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control. If you recall last week, I had reported a pub up in Blairstown was cited twice. Well, the Attorney General, Attorney General Grewal and Director Graziano from the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control are seeking to revoke the liquor license of that establishment, in an indication that not only will the violation of the Executive Orders not be tolerated and zero compliance, but that the Attorney General as well as the Division of Consumer Affairs and all the licensees and the regulatory functions they oversee, including Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, that they have that authority too, to go after those licensees and revoke them. I thank the Attorney General for his action and leadership in that regard.

Just a few on the overnight, Elizabeth, there was a domestic violence stabbing incident. That subject, while being taken into custody, coughed and spit on the officers indicating, screaming, that he had COVID. Newark issued 38 Executive Order violations summonses and didn't have to close any businesses last night, Governor, so that was good. Trenton Police Department reported enforcing two Executive Order violations and closed one business in Rumson. If you can recall the party that the Governor spoke to, after further investigation, an additional subject, a 46-year-old male was charged with disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. Another subject in Monmouth Beach was arrested for at a closed pavilion in violation of the

Executive Order, in order to smoke a controlled dangerous substance. And in Camden, a large gathering of 20 or more people who were arguing was broken up, and a woman who refused to comply with the officers' orders to disperse was also charged. That's all I have, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Colonel, thank you. And again, I meant to give this shout out earlier to Governor Newsom. All I can say is, I hope that we have a "Lafayette, we are here" moment and we can say that it may take some time, but we will return the favor as soon as we can responsibly do so. Thank you for all that. And again, we're going to enforce. We reserve the right, as we've said today, again with mixed emotions, but there's no question we have to do it, closing state and county parks. We reserve the right to take further action. But in most respects, it's going to be whether or not all 9 million of us are adhering to the actions that we've already taken. Thanks to Colonel Callahan, the Attorney General and to law enforcement up and down the ladder and up and down the state, enforcement is going to be the name of the game. Thank you for that and for every day.

I think with that, Matt, I don't want you to pull a hamstring so I'm going to give you a second to get over there. We'll start with Brett and we'll sweep from my left to right. Just while you're doing that, tomorrow, I think at 10:15, we're touring the field medical station in Edison. I'll be there for a brief with the Colonel. As we mentioned, I hope Senator Booker and some representatives from our military Army Corps, and then we'll be here tomorrow, unless you hear otherwise, at 1:00 p.m. Thursday is always subject to whether or not there's a White House VTC. Assuming we can get the data, and so bear with us on this, in respect of folks who observe Good Friday, and I would be on that list, we are likely going to be here, but earlier than normal on Friday, try to finish before noon if we can. We'll give you more details, Mahen will let you know. Brent, we'll start with you.

Q&A Session

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: All right, so I have a few because I'm reporting for other people. One, the Public Health Emergency, that's the State of Emergency you ordered on March 9th that's been extended? Two, I missed the racial breakdowns. Was that for total cases or just the new ones?

Governor Phil Murphy: Keep going.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Three, how many total cases, active and inactive, would we be expecting at the peak, whenever we're expected to peak? Are you aware of a standard policy of issuing one surgical mask and face shield per employee per week? Is this acceptable? Are we really that bad off? How does this policy not spread infection? Should candidates not be campaigning in person or door to door? How many police officers have tested positive and how many are quarantined? New Jersey has the fifth-highest number of legal immigrants with healthcare backgrounds who are not working in the healthcare industry because they hold degrees from foreign universities. Are these among people you're asking to volunteer to help cope with the virus?

You mentioned coordinating to restart the economy. This is from Politico. You mentioned how you're coordinating a regional approach to restarting the economy. Do you anticipate this will rely on widespread testing in each state? And how long do you think --

Governor Phil Murphy: I just want to ask, do you think we should -- maybe we'll just roll into tomorrow's briefing?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: How long do you think it will take to scale up testing to that level? I could go all day, so.

Governor Phil Murphy: We love you, but we can't let you go all day. Do you have a microphone, Parimal? The Public Health Emergency from a month ago? Just if you could, real quick answer Brent's first question?

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Sure.

Governor Phil Murphy: Brent's question started yesterday, so I think that was his first question.

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Today's order is just extending the Public Health Emergency. The State of Emergency that we declared on March 9 is indefinite, so that didn't need to be extended. But the Public Health Emergency pursuant to the law the Legislature passed has to be renewed every 30 days or else

it expires.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Do you know what order number that was?

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: That was Executive Order No. 103.

Governor Phil Murphy: 103, Thank you for that. Judy, one more time on racial breakdown, do you have that handy? Do you have your mic there?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, these are obviously not all the cases of the 729 known cases.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, this is 729 cumulative. You'll note that there's another almost 500, or perhaps more than 500 that we still don't know yet, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: 60% or 435 are white, 24% or 175, Black or African American, 5% or 36 Asian, and 11% or 83 are listed as other.

Governor Phil Murphy: I would just say this, I meant to say this earlier when I made the comments about, as imperfect as it is, getting the racial breakdown is something that we all feel is important. Just without knowing what's in the other category, the number that jumps out is the African American number as it relates to the overall population. That is a meaningfully higher percentage, at least of that cohort, than it is in the state of New Jersey. Judy total case, as I remember these, total cases at peak?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: According to the last remodel, I believe it was 37,000.

Governor Phil Murphy: I've got 36, I'm in the same neighborhood. Again, remember, the Lakshmi model we showed you yesterday had as the runaway freight train number of folks who are infected as just about 3 million. The good news and bad news. Good news is based on the evidence that we have, and we're in the second or third inning maybe at most, but based on what we now know, we've brought that number down, the range for that number down meaningfully in terms of total persons infected. The Lakshmi model, and again, I'm not referring to Chime, but the Lakshmi model's worst case is 509,000, as I recall.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, it's over 500.

Governor Phil Murphy: Over 500,000 infected, and from that, 35,000 folks would require 35,000 or 36,000 require hospitalization. Again, let me just say this. Those are still huge numbers, and the 36,000 hospitalizations, no matter all the heroic efforts that are being put in to expand capacity, that is outside of any realistic ability of us to withstand that, so the social distancing must continue. We have no choice.

One surgical mask per person per week. I've not heard that. What type of workers are we talking about?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: It's a question one of my colleagues sent me, so I'm not sure.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not aware of that. Are you?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'm not aware of that either. We are looking at what hospitals are currently doing in New Jersey, because some hospitals are determining their own guidance. And we're looking at what's going on nationally, making sure that we have the appropriate masks for the clinical staff. We are looking at putting out guidance for masking after we finish finding out what the rest of the nation is doing.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure who you may have in mind, Brent. I'm not running for anything right now, but my personal opinion is, people should not be going door to door campaigning, period. That's not what we need right now. Stay at home, pick up the telephone, send an email, send a text, unless I get any disagreement from the right. Police officers, number of infected did you have? I'm sorry.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Number of police officers who have tested positive and how many are quarantined.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I've got that, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, Pat.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: As of this morning it was 562 statewide tested positive. Right now 2,941 are self-quarantining.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, do you have any – I should know this. What's the denominator, total law enforcement?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I think it's 36,000.

Governor Phil Murphy: I was going to say 35,000 so about the same. This seems to be a convenient number, by the way, 35,000 or 36,000. And how many quarantined again? Pardon me.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Almost 3,000.

Governor Phil Murphy: Almost 3,000.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: To give you an idea, within the next 48 hours, 111 will be back to work. We are on a daily call.

Governor Phil Murphy: Cycling through.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Just always making sure that we're able to provide law enforcement.

Governor Phil Murphy: This is another reason, I mean, we've talked about the heroic healthcare workers. The first responders who have to go in and enforce what we're talking about, they're putting themselves in harm's way and they're doing this at less than capacity. Brent, your legal immigrants question, you said we're the top five?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: This is again from colleagues. I've got like 30 colleagues sending me questions.

Governor Phil Murphy: No problem.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: New Jersey has the fifth-highest number of legal immigrants in healthcare who are not working in the healthcare industry because they hold degrees from foreign universities or do not speak English well. Are these among the people you're asking to volunteer to help cope with the coronavirus?

Governor Phil Murphy: The answer is yes. We were pretty definitive about the fact. My friend, Felix Rocha in West New York was pounding away on this point for many days. And the answer is yes, but they've got to go through a process, right? So they've got to sign up in the regular way to sign up and volunteer. It's the volunteer page on the covid19.nj.gov. And then you were saying, your last one was?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: This is from Politico, the regional approach to restarting the economy. Will that rely on widespread testing in each state? And how long do you think it will take to scale up to that testing level?

Governor Phil Murphy: I would say too early to tell, and perhaps other governors would have more color on that. But I mean, the house is still on fire, and we're still fighting the fire. But we acknowledge, and that was the basis when I was on last night with the Center for American Progress. I mentioned Andy Slavitt earlier. That was the basis of a lot of the part of my conversation with Governor Cuomo. Certainly, Judy and Ed, tell me if you see this similarly, but the notion of contact tracing is going to have to be a big part of making sure that the house doesn't catch on fire again. There's going to need to be infrastructure. You know, what's a restaurant look like? You know, do you have somebody with a temperature gun at the outside and what are the protocols going to be for servers and capacity and distance? I think too early to tell, but I do know this. We can't wait X weeks or a couple of months to begin. We have to start that now. We think that if we do it on a regional basis, just as we did when we closed the economy and we closed our states, we will be a lot better off for that. Ed, anything you want to add?

DOH Medical Director, Communicable Disease Service, Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Yes, what the Governor said, basically. Right now, when we're hopefully moving towards the top of the curve and we have 44,000 cases and that sort of thing, contact tracing on all those people is just not possible. As you begin to slide down the

curve, as our number of cases decrease, then yes, certainly beginning to go back to that basic epidemiological response, where you try to find those people, you try to isolate them as soon as possible, it becomes extremely important.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. I think we're going to Dave next.

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: Hi. So, Governor, as you I'm sure are aware, high school graduation is a big deal, not only for the kids, but their families, relatives, and so forth. It seems extremely obvious at this point, even in the best-case scenario, we're not going to have large gatherings for high school graduations at the end of May or June. Question for you and the Commissioner, if there has not been any specific plan made in terms of delaying those ceremonies, possibly, as the Commissioner indicated to me before the press conference started, what would your advice be to families in terms of how to look at this issue? Would it be possible that we may have bigger kinds of celebrations later in the year that the individual schools might suggest? Is there going to be a virtual graduation when kids graduate at the end of the school year, which presumably is not going to start again, and so forth?

Another question for the Commissioner. You had mentioned that 110,000 kids, I believe, in New Jersey did not have any access to the internet. That's like 10% of the state's children. How are they learning? What are they doing? In simple terms, are they getting any lessons? I mean, what if anything is being done with regards to trying to help those kids at least have some kind of structure and assistance and learning and so forth?

The final question for the woman who needs no introduction, you had mentioned the plan by the state to try to help the long-term care facilities and separate those patients who may be asymptomatic or we don't believe are sick now. But as we know, this can be tricky because they may appear to be asymptomatic. Obviously, this is a plan in flux, and you're just starting to put this together but can you talk a little bit about how this is going to be handled? If they're moved, would they be in a quarantine situation? Is everybody going to have to wear masks? You know, where are they going to go? Is it going to be in the same region of the state? Etc., etc.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll start with the first one, Dave, on the graduations and then maybe turn to Lamont for anything on that he wants to add, as well as how are the kids learning? We had talked earlier about preprinting materials one month at a time. I'm sure that's part of it. And then Judy, to you on the long-term care. I'm not trying to be flippant, but I wouldn't put any nonrefundable checks down on your celebrations right now. I mean, it's hard to say otherwise. I hope I'm wrong but I fear that I am not.

Again, we're going to get through this. There's no question about it and notwithstanding what Judy and I have said about the fatality, bless each of those souls, the numbers moving around, the testing numbers are beginning to look like there's a trend, and I hope I'm right about that. So, you know, slowly but surely, assuming we keep our foot on the gas, we are going to get there. But I think in my shoes, you wouldn't be dealing with the facts if I were to say publicly right now that you should feel okay about a late May, early June, graduation celebration. I just personally don't see it. I hope I'm wrong.

Whether or not we can come back and figure out something creative, I hope we can. And my suspicion is that will be up to the district or to the private school or the religious school to do something creative on their own, just like we're seeing, sadly, funerals and memorials, weddings, births, bar mitzvahs, confirmations, in a very unique, creative way. My guess is you'll see something similar applied to graduations. Any thoughts on graduations, and also importantly, on remote learning?

Commissioner of the Department of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: You're absolutely correct. The governor is correct. Graduation is a local decision, so whatever event or activity they plan, we just hope that they follow the health guidelines as far as social distancing and things of that nature. We will provide whatever support necessary for those districts that choose to do a graduation, but when it comes to that time.

In regards to the tool online, online learning is just one tool. The goal for us, the objective was to provide continuous instruction. Continuous instruction can look like many ways. In some districts we have, as the Governor said, pen and paper packets go home every month. Kids give them back. They have their books,

they have book reports. So it's various tools that you can actually use. Online is just one tool, and it's popular right now because a lot of technology, however, there are districts that go back to just the pen-and-paper traditional route.

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: Could I just ask a follow up, Commissioner? Are you getting reaction and feedback from your different school districts? Is that working? Are kids doing what they're supposed to be doing? Are they getting encouragement? Is the learning taking place the way you envisioned that it would and should?

Commissioner of the Department of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: No, I'm very pleased with where we are. I mean, in 20 days, we asked them to go from a brick-and-mortar school to a virtual learning school, so you know there's going to be challenges. I talked earlier about the digital divide, and you see right now we are addressing those issues. Districts are taking it upon themselves to address those issues as well, so we're very pleased with that. Some of the challenges you're going to have is the youngest learners, as I indicated earlier. How do you, you know, parents at home working with these younger students that normally have one-on-one or paraprofessionals. We're seeing some of those challenges, but we're also looking at some innovative approaches that our districts are doing, whether it's looking at YouTube, whether it's the partnership that the state has with the Department of Education, NJTV and also NJA to provide educational programming. So it's an individual, localized situation, but our job is to support them every which way we can, whether it's support for professional development, professional learning, which is one way or whether it's just providing guidance across the board. So right now we're in a position we're very pleased with where we're going right now.

Governor Phil Murphy: I would just add a couple of quick things, and Judy should address the asymptomatic question as it relates to long-term care facilities. You can't bat 1,000, as we've never done this before, we've got, per capita, more school districts than any state in America. We've got more school districts than we have townships. You've also got a question of execution at the local level, with strong state leadership and state guidance.

And then you've got the other realities. Christine Norbut Beyer referred to this when she was with us last week. We have to also remember that things like, you know, we saw that very sobering chart of lesser child abuse reporting. I'd love to think it's because less of that's going on, and please God that is, but it's much more likely that there is less interaction with teachers, coaches, nurses who would otherwise have seen that. That's another part, I know, of not just Lamont's focus, but also the other state agencies and departments. Judy.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. The direction that I've given to the team is to look at a statewide plan but with a regional approach. There will be an algorithm where we'll identify patients. For example, asymptomatic, no exposure, asymptomatic exposure in an organization where either the employees or the other residents, that there's a significant cluster or outbreak. Symptomatic, but test negative, symptomatic and test positive. And I'm sure there might be more iterations of that. Then we'll identify the most appropriate location for the resident to be in. Within the locations, there will be all infection control precautions taken along with cohorting of the residents, and also cohorting of the staff.

We have found that staff going from facility to facility, and then within facilities, have lent itself to some of the problems that we're seeing. So the algorithm is going to be a little deep, but we think we can do it. And actually, we must do it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, David Levinsky, Burlington County Times. Thank you, Judy. Do you have something, sir?

Reporter: Governor, a couple of questions for the reporters at NJTV News. As long as we've been getting together like this, we've been talking about people who aren't listening or adhering to your social distancing guidelines. Is there a tipping point where you implement a full lockdown? Is that on the horizon?

Bus riders on NJ Transit complain that there's not enough distance between because of service cuts. NJ Transit is saying it's only a few bus routes that are affected by this and they don't have enough manpower to add more service. But riders that have no choice but to take the bus don't feel safe. Do you have a comment on that?

And finally in business, can you update us on how the process for collecting unemployment is going, since there's so many people who are trying to get unemployment and just can't seem to get through?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think that these are largely on me, but anyone who would like to come in, please feel free to jump in. You know, I think as you've seen today with state and county parks, which is a big step, the question of a full lockdown, there's not much left that we haven't bolted to the floor at this point. We are still looking at a few other, I mean, Judy's just been, in answer to David Levinsky, Burlington County Times's question, you know, long-term care facilities is an area where we know that we need to even drill down even further. We've talked about corrections. I think our Commissioner is going to be with us at the end of the week. Homes for the developmentally disabled, psychiatric hospitals, there are certain pockets of our state or communities of our state where we know we need to be as sharp as we can be.

But there are other steps that we're considering, but we've taken most of the big ones that we think we both need to take and at the same time, allow the state to reasonably and responsibly get on its feet in a reasonable timeframe. On NJ Transit, and Dan Bryant is here, who spent a lot of time there. You know, we want to know. If folks are having that experience, go on our website and let us know explicitly which route that was. NJ Transit has got the challenge right now, and I'm not absolving a bus that's overcrowded, but diminished service. Their ridership is down, I think 93%. They've also got manpower challenges, which are real. And when we hear these stories, we want to make sure we run them down.

And there's still a lot of, particularly essential folks, who are using buses in particular, to get to – you know, a healthcare worker, by example, get to a hospital. I'm not going to say we're batting 1,000 but we do want to know those experiences. I can't throw a rock at NJ Transit because I know that ridership is way down. Service has to somehow approximate that, and they've got real manpower issues.

Business, no, unemployment, pardon me. I don't have an update for you today. I promise you, Mahen or Dan will get you one in terms of what their numbers look like in terms of early week, Rob Asaro-Angelo talked about, I forget what day he was with us, but they had processed 33,000 claims. We'll come back to you and give you a sense of how many claims they're processing per day right now, and give a sense, maybe, what the backlog looks like. I don't have a specific answer. But again, we're on it.

And by the way, if you are having trouble getting through, again, there's a page on covid19.nj.gov if you've lost your job and you want advice, you want to know where you need to go to get unemployment insurance, etc. Charlie.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Yes, thank you, Governor. Just one question, and maybe a follow up today. It's for Dr. Repollet. It's about long-range facilities plans for districts. The New Brunswick Board of Education submitted an amendment to their long-range facilities plan that is controversial, to say the least. I for one have not been able to obtain the language of this amendment, because the Board of Education has stopped responding to open Public Records Act requests. I know other community members are still waiting on records requests that would show the extent of contamination at sites where school construction is proposed. In light of that, Mr. Commissioner, will you wait to make a final decision on this very significant proposal until the State of Emergency is over and the public can obtain the information that they need to give your team intelligent and informed input, and make their voices heard?

Governor Phil Murphy: Do you have anything else sir, or is that it?

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: That's all, just maybe a follow up, depending on the answer.

Governor Phil Murphy: Depending on what your answer is, okay. Lamont.

Commissioner of the Department of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet: There's a process, but right now we're in the midst of ensuring we have continuous instruction. However, I have Colleen Schulz, our Deputy Assistant Commissioner right there to get the information in regards to we can try to track down and find out exactly the long range facility plan that you're actually talking about. Because that sits in our Office of Finance. We'll make sure we get back to you with that.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Okay, thank you. Just in case you do move forward with that process, you know, how would you advise parents and taxpayers and other stakeholders to, you know, either protest the plan or provide comments or input? I mean, sure, they could have a gathering outside your office,

but the Governor and the state police probably wouldn't look too kindly upon that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so I would say, back to what you asked me about protests the other day, don't protest as a group. We respect folks who want to protest, find some other way to do it virtually online, whatever it might be. Secondly, we're going to get back to you with a more specific answer on this in particular, if that's okay. Thank you. Do you have a question, sir? No, you're good. Back here. Elise, how are you? Come on down.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: I'm good, thanks for asking,

Governor Phil Murphy: So we'll make sure, can someone get back? Make sure with Lamont's office we get back to Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today. Thank you.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: What's the status of any ventilator ethics guidelines that the state was considering? Nursing home operator, Care One, reportedly had five coronavirus deaths at its New Milford location in Bergen County. Care One issued a statement saying it wasn't prudent for it to update the public daily on coronavirus in its nursing homes. What information exactly have you told nursing homes to make available, and to whom? What is the deadline? How much information does the state have from nursing homes on hand? Are there penalties for non-compliance? And has Care One responded to the state's request for information about New Milford and its other locations?

Finally, a FEMA question. You've had a lot of praise for FEMA's work in New Jersey. Other states aren't so happy. Does New Jersey have a special relationship with FEMA because of Sandy? In other words, did that disaster help ease operations for this one? Also, some states and even a hospital system here in New Jersey have said that the federal government has seized some equipment shipments. Do you know whether any of that has been redistributed for use in New Jersey? That's it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, you should hit the ventilator guidelines and nursing home questions, Care One and more generally. I just want to repeat something Judy said earlier. We remain. I'll do the litany as I do every day, we remain way short of ventilators, personal protective equipment, beds and healthcare workers. We need help on all of those fronts. We're doing everything we can to stay out ahead of it. With that health warning having been spoken, over to you, if I may.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I didn't catch all of the questions on Care One, but I can tell you that we're in active, regular daily communication with the principals from Care One because of their exposure in the state. What I mean by exposure is the number of facilities that they have. We're working with them to determine whether their facilities can support the statewide plan, along with a number of other systems that have a number of facilities within the state. Specifically, Elise, I'm not sure what else you wanted about Care One. I just didn't hear it.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Well, I'm asking what you've requested from nursing homes throughout the state, what the deadline is, and to whom this information will be made available? And has Care One responded to the state's request for that information? Are there any penalties for noncompliance if a nursing home operator chooses not to disclose coronavirus information?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, the first thing is we put out a guidance yesterday to all the long-term care facilities that they must report through the portal that the New Jersey Hospital Association has set up. I have to tell you, I think that they're all reporting. I don't get any indication that they are not reporting, particularly their COVID-19 individuals, residents. I just don't have indication that they're not reporting. By the number of reports that we have, which are over 1000 at this point, I believe they're reporting.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think the penalty would have been we named and shamed, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah. And, you know, we still may have to publish, along with the statewide plan, what this looks like. I just don't want to put out information and say there it is. We have to put out information and say, here's the plan.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: But are individuals who have family members, will they be privy to the information that's being put out? In other words, what is the purpose of collecting this information? Is it solely for the state's benefit? Or will this information be disclosed publicly, and when?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We've asked every long-term care facility to advise according to their statutory obligation, to advise the residents, the employees, and all of the relatives of the residents of any outbreak, of any type of infection. That's been on the books for a while. We reminded them of their responsibilities and as I shared today, we're calling every single one of them and asking to show evidence of documentation that they have either sent a letter, or an email, or made a phone call to the individuals noted in the statute.

It is important for individuals to know what's going on in these residences. We feel strongly that the obligation rests with the owners. However, we do believe at the Department of Health, we have an obligation to protect all of the residents of New Jersey, including the most vulnerable, which are in the nursing homes. That's why we are moving to a statewide plan.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, the onus is, and we're going to go to the FEMA questions because we've got to keep rolling here. But the onus, if it's your loved one who's in nursing home X, it's nursing home X's responsibility to communicate with you and next of kin. It's less, I would think, less valuable to hear about aggregate data or data that relates to some other loved one's nursing home.

FEMA, I think there are several elements to this. But I want, when I give you a quick answer, I'd love Colonel Callahan to come in behind me on this. I think the elements that I would suggest are common ground that any state and our state, for obvious reasons in particular has been able to find with the administration and the federal government, as a general matter. I think it also depends on the relationship you have with the particular FEMA region. In our case, Region 2, Tom Von Essen is the guy who runs it. Number 3, as Pat Callahan may have mentioned, I think he did, the Army Corps matters here and the relationship with FEMA does matter, and Sandy experience actually is relevant at many levels, including some of the specific players who are still on the scene, who are now working with us.

So I think it takes, and I hear this all the time, I have nothing to do with this because it's Pat and Judy and their teams. I heard this from the general who's up from Georgia this morning. He said, you all have a really, you know, The Rock is a unique asset. You've got really good people, you've got a war room mentality. You know, keeping the barriers low between parts of government is a huge part of the mantra that we've tried to execute on from day one, in peacetime as well as in a challenge like this. So the fluidity of the relationship between Judy and her team just to pick, and Pat and his team, or when Lamont's making a decision about shutting schools, the fact that matter is, people get around one table. That all matters, I think, in our ingredients into having a good relationship. Pat.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I would agree, Governor. I think across all the pillars of emergency management, we are shoulder to shoulder with FEMA from preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation. It is a daily relationship and certainly Sandy assisted in that, but we've probably had, if I'm not mistaken, more than a dozen since Sandy. Well, it was El Derecho, straight-line winds, flooding. Irene, snowstorms. All of those come with the responsibility of doing preliminary damage assessments and then working through that public assistance and mitigation process to recover all of those federal dollars. And, again, whether it's Tom Von Essen, Pete Gaynor himself, and on this particular disaster, the federal coordinating officer, who's FEMA's leading rep embedded at The Rock is the retired major of emergency management from the state police. So you just couldn't ask for a better combination to all strive to get to that, you know, that goal of guiding us all through this crisis. It's a special team to be a part of, Elise.

Governor Phil Murphy: I forgot, Elise, in my answer that it's nice to have a guy who was a major in the New Jersey State Police on the other team. And Jared Maples has lived this, Dan Kelly in my office. These folks are known to each other and that helps. One more time?

Elise Young, Bloomberg: The ventilator ethics guidelines, what is the status of that?

Governor Phil Murphy: I missed that. Ventilator ethics guidelines status.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We have a professional advisory committee that's looking at not just ventilators, but in a crisis mode, all of the types of decisions you make. Admission-discharge criteria, admission-discharge criteria to a field hospital, those types of medications that we need to have on hand to advise our team to make sure we have what we need, and ventilator allocation and all medical allocation, medical treatment allocations, are being discussed. We will be coming out with some guidance for the

individual hospitals. We do know at this point that mostly every hospital has their own guidance, what we call value-based or ethical decision-making process. We will be putting guidance on top of that to make sure that, as a state, we are considering all of the special populations that we have and the types of decisions that have to be made.

Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry about that. I forgot that question. But secondly, just as a general matter, when folks hear these questions and then they hear our answers, the point is not to shock people or make them feel uncomfortable. It is to give folks the confidence that while we are hoping for the best, we're considering all alternatives, all paths, all considerations. We have to. We would be abrogating our responsibility if we did otherwise.

Again, this is a war with two fronts. One front continues to be all 9 million of us pounding the heck out of that curve, staying at home, keeping away from each other and lessening the burden. The other front is making all the decisions, capacity and other otherwise over here on the healthcare system. Please, God, the 9 million of us, the so many do the work over here so that the so few over here don't have to deal with these eventualities and we have the capacity that we need to be able to digest this crisis. So thank you again. Sorry, I missed it. Nikita.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: I have a few for you today. I'm wondering, have you spoken with either Bernie Sanders or Joe Biden about the issues that New Jersey faces as a result of this crisis? Have you gone to any of your predecessors in the Governor's Office for advice on how to handle the same? And on compliance for either you or Colonel Callahan, have there been any issues of election-related non-compliance incidents, whether it be political events or canvassing or anything of the like? And then lastly, have there been any changes, or are there any changes under consideration, for safe haven laws in the state?

Governor Phil Murphy: For what? Sorry.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: For safe haven laws.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. I have not spoken with either Joe Biden or Bernie Sanders. Nothing personal, by the way, I just haven't spoken with them. I want to make sure this isn't one of them calling me right now. Predecessors, I'm sure I have. I'll have to come back to that. I know I've gotten inputs from a lot of folks. I get that constantly. I'm sure that that was one of them. I mostly have looked, frankly, at models of what's worked and what's not worked in other challenging times in the past. Pat, are you aware of any election-related non-compliance?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I think I would be and I've not heard of any.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nor am I. I'm not, at all. And safe haven laws, Parimal, anything you want to add to that?

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: No, I don't think we've had any discussions on that.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't think we've had any, not that I've been a part of, no. Thank you. John.

Reporter: To quickly follow up on some things Elise was asking about nursing homes. Is there a deadline for the nursing homes to disclose this information to you and if there's any penalties to be assessed on that? And then I have questions regarding the decisions, Governor, you were talking to other governors about reopening things. What specific benchmarks are you looking at to make the decision about reopening things? And the way things were shut down in New Jersey, it was almost rolling into the full lockdown. Do you envision or have you discussed whether restrictions will be lifted all at once or eased into? And again, in making these decisions and talking about them, have you thought about how you are going to do this again, if needed, if there's a bounce back from the virus?

And again, following up on the on the New Jersey Transit questions, is there any consideration at all to halting New Jersey Transit services if, especially in the crowded bus lines, social distancing can't be maintained? And given the staffing shortages, there's almost, I think, 800 or so employees on quarantine and several ill.

And again, on the developmental disability and psychiatric hospitals, is there widespread testing of employees right now or is it just symptomatic employees? Can you give any specifics about the Hatteras Printing Company, how that donation came to be? Who did it?

And a while back you signed an executive order about providing hospitals –

Governor Phil Murphy: You're starting to sound a lot like Brent.

Reporter: There's a lot of questions. You signed an executive order for hospitals to provide information to you guys, and you said that would, at some point, be made public. Can you provide the daily updates in terms of hospitalization, ICUs, all that in the charts that you present at the beginning? Because people are really wondering, how many people are sick? Are they getting better? What's it looking like? And that's one of the biggest questions we're getting, for that kind of information.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me let me hit a couple, and then Judy. I almost don't even like talking about lifting restrictions because we're not even close. We just say that as, everybody watching, stay at home. Until further notice, we're not close to changing things. I hate to break people's bubbles but we're just not close. That curve has got to come down. Even with the heroic efforts by all of you out there, almost all 9 million of us, we've brought the numbers way down, but they're still way above any capacity, realistic capacity, we have in our healthcare system. I don't begrudge you asking the questions, but just to say that again. Very limited right now, I just don't have any good, specific, because it's just too early to tell.

And I want to go back, I want Ed to answer the question of what he would look for as an epidemiological matter, and that's the most important part of this. But in terms of specifics, very, very limited but I do know a couple of things. We're going to need, you know, really good data. We're going to need some amount of infrastructure; the more regional we can be the better.

And I would say, in terms of the lessons learned, John, bringing us down, do those lessons apply symmetrically in reopening? Not necessarily because – and I'll give you a good example today are state and county parks. I don't think we thought two weeks ago that that was a step that we necessarily had to take. It was raised to us, first of all, the anecdotal evidence was challenging, Pat. I think it's fair to say this was not somebody throwing a Pink Floyd party on their front lawn, but it was too many people gathering in too close of proximity. You've got a hipbone connected to the thighbone. If a local municipality closes its park, or County X closes their parks, which they have a right to do on their own before today and now, as of today, they're all closed. Then you'd put undue pressure on the state park that was nearby that was left open. That's one example.

I don't know that how we got to the closing down piece, and we're still considering other steps, necessarily informs what the opening up reality will look like as well. Ed, as an epidemiological matter, what would you want to see before you said it's safe to put your toe back in the water?

DOH Medical Director, Communicable Disease Service, Dr. Ed Lifshitz: There's no single perfect measure that we can look at. I mean, we've talked many times about the question about testing, and in an ideal world, what you know from testing. So what we look at is a combination of a whole bunch of different things, most of which are really backward looking. I mean, we put a lot of emphasis on things such as deaths. We know that somebody who died now was probably infected two to three weeks ago, so that's very far backward looking. We've talked about the number of new cases and we look at that as well, but that's really looking back probably about 10 days or so from the time they got infected until they got tested and so forth.

We do look at the number of patients in the hospitals. But again, that's backward looking. It tells us what the capacity is as far as hospitals goes. It doesn't tell us how many new people are going to be coming into that picture and going to need care. We look at things like utilization in emergency departments, essentially how often are people going to emergency departments for symptoms that are suggestive of COVID? That gets us closer to when they were likely infected, but that's still also backward looking because it takes an average of about five days for people to develop symptoms, and another three to four days after that before they would typically show up in an emergency department.

So to kind of answer the question, we are looking at all these. And we're looking at the positivity numbers that we've talked about many times. We'd like to see the percent of positives go down, because that would again suggest with the same amount of testing that this was less common in the population.

We're looking at all these different things and we'd like to be able to say, hey, you know, there's one number. When this number gets below 12 or whatever, that's going to be when we'd recommend opening things back up. We can't quite say that because it's a much more complicated picture.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me ask Judy the question related. The positivity percent is going up at a very slow rate at the moment. Does that also occur for the folks you know that we've looked at as well?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: And you can correct me, it's not only the positivity percent, what we looked at are the number of people in the hospital as a percent of the people testing positive. We know nationally 80% to 85% of individuals that are COVID positive have mild or moderate symptoms. We know that 15% to 20% may need hospitalization. And then again, you know, 3% to 5% may need intensive care. So if we look right now at the percent of hospitalizations as a percent of those that are positive, we're about I think, 17.5% or 18%, which kind of tracks what we would expect to see, 20% coming into the hospital.

Governor Phil Murphy: Recognizing that the denominator is, of course, highly –

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, it's the information we have, but it does kind of track what the rest of the nation and other countries have seen.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let's quickly answer a couple of these. NJ Transit, bringing it to a halt, the answer's no just because we've got too many essential workers. We need to get them to where they've got to get to. I think, again, I'll harken back to Dan, in the back. We want to hear, to the earlier question however, where there is a persistent challenge in terms of overcrowding on a particular line. That we do take seriously and we can't let that go without addressing it.

And also, I think you asked at the end about hospital data, and would we consider putting what we have in our charts to put up online? I assume the answer is yes. Assuming we get, if it's data that we get every day, Mahen, let's make sure it's not an eye chart, that you can actually read it. Certainly, the more information we can give to folks, the better informed they're going to be and that helps all of us.

Judy, real quick, deadline on nursing homes, penalties, anything on developmental disability testing in, was it Hatteras Printing?

Reporter: Hatteras, the one to which you gave a shout out earlier.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hatteras, yeah. What was that about?

Reporter: Any details about how they came to you? Who was it? That kind of stuff.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I don't have the detail on how it came to me. I apologize. I didn't understand the question, but we can come back to you on that. This is Hatteras Printing which, by the way, is a great success story and hats off to them again. We'll come back to you in terms of how they got to us.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're testing symptomatic individuals, and then doing, within the facilities, contact tracing and quarantining those that have been within six feet of the individual that has tested positive. So quarantining, isolation, all of the epidemiological and infection control precautions, but it starts with symptomatic individuals first.

Governor Phil Murphy: How about deadlines and/or penalties on nursing homes?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, you know, we've suspended our regular inspections. Our survey teams right now, two a person, are on nursing homes, along with the infection control team from CDS. They're visiting nursing homes, they're training, educating, trying to see face to face what's going on. We have not considered levying penalties during this time. Our work is to try to improve the situation and make the right decisions for the residents.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. I want to thank Judy, to you and Ed and your teams who are doing extraordinary work, thank you and keep up the great work. Lamont, to you and your team members both here and back, at this point, probably in their homes. Pat to you and colleagues, Jared, likewise. Parimal, thank you.

Again, we will be in Edison at about 10:15 in the morning surveying the field medical station, and then we'll be back here, unless you hear otherwise, at 1:00 p.m. tomorrow. Thursday is a little bit to be determined because of the White House VTC. And Friday morning, assuming Judy we get the data, we're going to try to be here early to let folks be out before noon to observe Good Friday. Thank you all.

Governor Phil Murphy

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