

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 10th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

05/10/2021



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. With me to my right is the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz; great to have you both. To my left, a guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Superintendent, Colonel Pat Callahan. We have Jared Maples, starting goalkeeper for the New Jersey Devils, in his day job Director in the office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Parimal Garg, Chief Council, cast of thousands.

This morning we are reporting that the ranks of the fully vaccinated stands at more than 3.6 million. This includes both the roughly 3.47 million vaccinated at one of our in-state sites as well as the nearly 162,000 New Jersians identified by the Department of Health as having been vaccinated at sites outside our state. Judy, I'm going to go out on a limb and say that 161,194 is a floor. That's at least the amount we think - I know there's a lot of buzz around a lot more having been vaccinated, for instance, in New York City. That's a number we'll continue to watch and update as we get the data that we need to do that.

Judy, you and I were together in Hunterdon County on Friday. I thought that was a really good Johnson & Johnson drive-through county seat; give a shout out to the Hunterdon County folks. They did a really good job. We have at the same time nearly 4.5 million New Jersey residents who have received at least their 1st vaccination shot at one of our in-state vaccination sites. We continue to put ourselves in a favorable position for reaching our goal of 4.7 million vaccinated New Jersey adults by the end of June.

We're seeing some real progress among the 16 midsized and large population municipalities we highlighted last week, which had vaccination rates at that time of lower than 40% of their adult populations. Over the past week we've seen marked increases across the border. While this is a very good thing, no one should rest on any laurels, as there is still much work to be done.

A few things to pick out, at least as I saw it, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Trenton each increased their vaccinated totals by six percentage points in seven municipalities. Bridgeton, Fairview, Garfield, Newark, Orange, Passaic, and Plainfield have now each crested 40%. Moreover, we are also today launching a new dashboard. Pat, could you give me some particulars, for instance, in Passaic County? Could you walk me through some of the - we are launching a new dashboard and apparently some more iCharts on our covid19.nj.gov information hub where you can see the percentages of adults in each municipality who have received their first doses as well as percentages for those who are now fully vaccinated.

Remember, this mapping tool is not meant to create competitions among any communities, nor is it meant to shame any communities. Through this data we hope that you will not only have access to the same data that we do, but that you can see why we will be deploying resources, for instance, to certain communities as opposed to others. Reaching our 70% goal by June 30th is a key benchmark for us. We know there are hard to reach neighborhoods where we will have to push a little more or a maybe a lot more to bring the resources in.

Judy, we talked about this with Pat earlier. This is not a discussion, per se, about long-term care. I want to reiterate something that you and I said a couple of weeks ago. In long-term care, the vaccination rates among residents is as good as it is in the country, and it's as good as really any population we have in the state. That's the good news.

The staff vaccinations continue to lag. We're going to stay on that. I'm asking you if you could join us. If you've got a loved one in a long-term care facility, please ask management two questions. What percentage of your staff is vaccinated, and what's your plan to get that number up if it's not at an acceptable level?

We're all in this together. We're all on the same side of the table. The staff vaccination levels continue to be unacceptably low. Also, again, I'm switching gears, as we start the week, we are anticipating the CDC's advisory committee on immunization practices as well as the FDA. We'll be giving the green light to Pfizer's emergency use authorization application to vaccinate adolescents between the ages of 12 up to 15.

This approval would be a big step for the health not just of our state broadly, but in particular of our school communities. Judy's team of the Department of Health has already been thinking ahead for this eventuality. The department's overall goal is to ensure that adolescents who are eligible to be vaccinated receive their doses in an environment that is comforting and accessible, whether it be through partnerships with their schools or their pediatricians, perhaps at a local pharmacy, or even at one of our mega sites.

Importantly, we are also going to remain focused on ensuring that parents have access to information. The broad-based outreach campaign that we discussed last week will be a part of this. We know we can also undertake this by working directly with and within our schools. Formal plans to guide both parents and guardians and practitioners are being finalized by Judy and her team at the Department of Health. We anticipate being able to transition to

vaccinating eligible adolescents as soon as Pfizer receives the authorization. This is one of the areas where we anticipate using our mega sites in what we referred to last week as a hub and spoke model and bringing doses from our mega sites directly to the communities with these adolescents and their families reside.

Additionally, our partners at Walgreens have already been working with multiple school districts across the state to vaccinate students ages 16 and over. They too will be ready to transition to vaccinating this younger cohort once the approvals come forward. All in all we know that it is only a matter of time until this happens. We have spent our time preparing so we can get this latest expansion underway with minimal lead time.

Before we turn to the overnight numbers, I do want to briefly look at the school reopening numbers compiled by the Department of Education. As we noted last week, the number of districts remaining in an all-remote stance is now at the lowest it's been. We are continuing to work with the remaining charter, special services, and regular operating districts to have their students return to in-person instruction in some form.

Irvington, for instance, is now on a hybrid model. Hillside remains on course to see its students return for a hybrid schedule in 2 weeks on May 24th. Still as of today, there are 13 districts that are still all remote. I say districts because it includes six charter schools and three serving students with special needs. We need to work to get these 45,000 students back into their classrooms.

The biggest movement in numbers continues to be, as we predicted, from hybrid to all in-person instruction, which over the past week has increased by 73,000. Make no mistake; the overwhelming majority of our students, educators, support staff are back in their familiar classrooms. This is a very good thing for them, their families, and their communities. By my math we are just over 90% in either hybrid or all in-person.

Now, let's turn to our overnight numbers. Judy, today we're reporting a total of 565 additional positive PCR and presumed positive antigen tests. Statewide rate of transmission is now 0.94. As we had noted several times over the past week given the rapid drop in cases, this recent increase of the transmission rate is not causing us alarm, as our base number has decreased. Judy, you made the point a couple weeks ago this went down precipitously to an artificially low level because of a data adjustment. We think the numbers have jumped up to this number also rather precipitously due to a reverse data adjustment. I know you've got some thoughts on that.

The positivity for the 35,060 PCR tests recorded on Thursday was 3.55%. That's four days in a row where our positivity rates began with the number three. In our hospitals, we continue to see declining totals with 1,063 patients counted last night, 995 of whom were confirmed COVID positive. As a point of reference, last Monday, seven days ago, the total hospital census was 1,424. You could see that that single week decrease is about a 25% drop. May that continue.

Likewise, the number of patients in our ICUs dropped to 250 and ventilators in use are now down to 165. Throughout the day yesterday, 114 live patients were discharged, while 92 COVID-positive patients were admitted. Our hospitals did report 18 deaths from among their patients yesterday. Those remain under investigation and are not yet confirmed. We are with a heavy heart reporting an additional 10 confirmed COVID-related deaths today, bringing the confirmed total to 23,170. The probable deaths remain at 2,640. Let's take a minute as we do every day to remember several of the lives who have lost from our New Jersey family.

Let's start by honoring this woman, one of Madison's own, Mary Flood. What a great shot. Mary spent all – ready for this – all of her 96 years as a proud resident of that Morris County Bureau. Mary was a nurse, Judy, educated at both the Newark Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing and Seton Hall University. At Presbyterian Hospital, she was a labor and delivery nurse, but she would eventually leave that post to take a position as a public health nurse in Newark's Health Department.

After taking a leave from her career to raise her family, she would return to nursing as a public health nurse in her hometown of Madison where she served for 30 years. Mary and her late husband, Robert, a member, by the way, of the Newark Fire Department, had four children before his untimely passing on his 49th birthday back in 1976. Those four children, Robert or Bobby, Junior, Rosemary, Steven, and Susan survive her. I had the great honor of speaking with Susan last Wednesday.

Apart from her public health duties, Mary also became a strong advocate for education of the hearing impaired and deaf, spurred on by her son, Bobby, who is profoundly deaf, and attended the Katzenbach School for the Deaf. I reminded Bobby's sister, Susan, that we were incredibly proud of the sign language professionals who we have on our team, who have been with us, I think, from the very first time we gathered. They used to stand behind us and have been in the remote corner for many months. I hope Bobby's watching and can benefit from that. God bless you, pal.

In addition to her children, Mary leaves her seven grandchildren, Andrea, Jacqueline, Dena, Bill, Kyle, Terry, and Luke, as well as five great-grandchildren, James, Jake, Avery, Liam, and Will. You cannot make this up. Mary's sister, Palmy, died three days after Mary passed; unbelievable. We honor and thank Mary for a life dedicated to serving others. What an incredible legacy, and may God bless and watch over her memory and her incredible family.

Next up, talk about a family, we remember Phyllis Zakim. That is Phyllis literally dead center in that photograph. She was born and raised in Paterson and attended Montclair State University. She believed strongly that learning was a lifetime pursuit, and was attending classes at Ramapo College well into her 60s. Phyllis loved the arts, and she loved her Jewish heritage.

She was a proud member of Temple Beth Tikvah in Wayne, as well as numerous Jewish organizations. Phyllis was 88 years old. She is survived by her son, Stuart, who is in Montclair, and daughters Elayna in Rockland and Joyce. I missed where Joyce lives.

I had the great honor of speaking with Stuart and Elayna last Wednesday; by the way, husbands of Elayna and Joyce, David and Peter, respectively. She is survived by her grandchildren, Josh, Grace, Deena, Jesse, Shari, Phillip, Andrew, Joanna, Alex, Aaron, Michal, Jason, and Naomi, and her three great-grandchildren, Lev, Leo, and Lila. Phyllis was predeceased by her husband of 68 years, Gerald. He's passed just in January of 2020. She was also predeceased by a grandson, Jonathon.

She was also predeceased by her son, Leonard, who died after a battle with cancer in 1999. For anyone traveling through Boston, which is the city I was born in, that name may ring a bell. The Leonard Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge is named in his honor for the work he did to promote tolerance and healing as the long-time head of the Anti-Defamation League in New England. That bridge was formally christened and inaugurated on October 4, 2002 by none other than the boss, Bruce Springsteen. That bridge is as much a part of Phyllis's legacy as it is Leonard's. May her memory be a blessing and God bless her extraordinary family, including those that went before her.

Finally, we'll stay in North Jersey to remember Butler's Robert Brown, Senior. Robert was one of – look at that. What a great shot. Robert was 1 of 11 children born and raised in Butler. After he and his wife, Donna, also a Butler native, got married in April of '73, they settled in Bloomingdale.

Like so many people, the draw of one's hometown becomes too great. They resettled in Butler in 1986, calling the bureau home ever since. Robert was a trucker for a company based in Virginia. When I finish this point, Pat, it's a literal point. Hold onto that thought.

He was a trucker, Judy, for a company based in Richmond, Virginia, but his run up and down the Eastern Seaboard meant that he could be home in Butler for almost every weekend to be with Donna and attend his son's football games. He never missed one game; unbelievable. The open road was a calling in a bigger sense, and Robert was a

car and motorcycle enthusiast, a passion that was renewed when he received a lung transplant several years ago that gave him a second life. Robert was only 69 years old. He left Donna just months shy of their 58th wedding anniversary.

He is also survived by his children, his daughter, Sharon; son, Bob, Junior and his wife, Judy; and son, Scott, and daughter-in-law, Magda. I had the great honor on Wednesday to speak with Donna, Sharon, Bob, and Scott. What an incredible family, and what an incredible guy. He also leaves his beloved grandchildren, Tyler, Delaney, Jacob, Lucas, and Charley, as well as his step-grandchildren, Daniel and Stephanie. He also leaves six siblings. May God bless and watch over that guy and his incredible family.

Even as we enter what we hope will be the final push, the final decisive weeks and months against this pandemic, we must always pause to remember those who we have lost. We are carrying on this fight in their memories and to protect countless other families from having to experience the grief of losing a loved one to this virus. Let's all keep it at it, folks. Let's keep getting vaccinated and especially going back for the all-important second shot if you're receiving either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. Let's keep using our common sense.

In ten days we're going to be making our most aggressive step forward in terms of our reopening process. Let's make sure that more of our New Jersey family can enjoy this with us. Finally, before I pass things over to Judy, I want to give a huge shout out today to Meals on Wheels of Mercer County and its CEO, that woman, Sasa Olessi Montano. Meals on Wheels has been serving Mercer County's homebound seniors and most vulnerable residents for a half a century.

Over the past year, Sasa and her team of 5 staff members and nearly 800 volunteers have provided more than 105,000 meals to their clients, an increase of more than 25% over 2019. Providing that many meals requires partnership. Meals on Wheels partnered with a New Jersey Economic Development Authority through its Sustain and Serve program. Through that partnership, Sasa and her team have purchased more than 6,000 meals from restaurants in and around our capital city, including the 1911 Smokehouse Barbeque, which was highlighted several months ago by us.

Sustained and Serve is allowing us to meet two goals; tackling food and security on the one hand and supporting our restaurants, God knows they need it, on the other hand. Meals on Wheels of Mercer County and Sasa are showing the way. I had the opportunity to catch up with Sasa on Wednesday to thank her and her tremendous team for all they are doing. Check them out on their website, mealsonwheelsmrcer.org.

Likewise, I thank you all for all that you are continuing to do in your communities. Remember, Operation Jersey Summer. Let's keep up the fight. Let's get vaccinated. Let's prepare for that Jersey summer we all know we want and which we all know that we can have. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. As part of our vaccination initiatives with faith-based leaders, on Friday the Department partnered with the St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church in the city of Elizabeth to hold a popup vaccination clinic at the church. During this event, 60 doses of vaccine were administered to church and community members.

We continue to work to reduce barriers to vaccination at sites across the state with expanding access to walk-ins. Starting tomorrow, the FEMA Community Vaccination Center in Newark will hold walk-in vaccinations daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for all New Jersey residents 16 years and older. As the Governor shared, today we are updating the COVID-19 dashboard with vaccination data by municipality. Both individuals with at least one dose and those with vaccine courses completed can be viewed on the dashboard. Additionally, you can filter the data for total vaccinated, individuals 18 and older, and individuals 65 and older vaccinated.

Each municipality is shaded on the map, with those with the highest percentage vaccinated shaded the darkest. We continue to examine the data to see how we are progressing in terms of meeting our goals. We need approximately 280,000 first doses administered weekly this month and 220,000 second doses each week through June. Our counties will have to administer, depending on where they are, between 3,000 and 35,000 first doses weekly in May and between 3,000 and 23,000 second doses through June, depending on how successful they have been to date. We have a lot of work ahead of us.

As the Governor mentioned, the Food and Drug Administration is reviewing Pfizer's Emergency Use Authorization Application to vaccinate adolescents between the ages of 12 to 15. On Wednesday, ASIPP will convene an emergency meeting to review whether Pfizer should be recommended for ages 12 to 15. Their recommendations will be made to the CDC directory. If, as expected, the CDC director approves the application, the recommendation will be published in the morbidity and mortality weekly report.

Moving onto my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 1,063 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation. These numbers continue to steadily decline. There are 3,655 reports of CDC variants of concern in New Jersey. The majority of them, 3,376, are the UK variant B.1.17. Additionally, we have 122 reports of the Brazilian variant P.1, 11 reports of the South African variants B.1.351, and 146 reports of the California variants B.1.427 and B.1.429.

Thankfully, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. We have a cumulative case count of 116 in our state, and none of the children are hospitalized. There are no new cases among residents at the veteran's homes and no new reports among patients at our psychiatric hospitals.

As the Governor shared, we are still seeing outbreaks in long-term care facilities, many attributed directly to staff. We encourage residents and their families or guardians to know the rates of vaccination at their facilities. The daily percent positivity as of May 6th in the state is 3.55%. The northern part of the state reports 3.49, central part of the state 3.43, and the southern part of the state 3.90. The rate of transmission or the RT, the rate of transmission at a point in time, is based on the reporting of positive PCR and antigen cases to the CDC. Several days ago, the RT was artificially lower due to the cleaning of data and the removal of duplicate cases. Today it is higher due to the opposite, the reporting of backlogged antigen cases on May 5th at the affected – it affected the seven-day rolling average. The standard RT based on one day, today, is .67. Obviously, we want the RT to remain below 1.0, so that concludes my daily report. Please continue to stay safe, mask up, physically distance, stay home when you are sick, get tested, and let's get vaccinated. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, Judy, not to beat this one harder than we should, but I think we have to say it again. Residents and the family of residents in long-term care have every right to know what level of staff is vaccinated and what the plan is to get that number to an acceptable level because residents with the support of their families have been a gold star extraordinary success. Staffing is continuing to lag. It's gotten better, but it's not anywhere near where it needs to be. Thank you for all that, and thank you for explaining the RT, and you and I had connected over the weekend. Your view was that this was going to be in the .6 to .7 range, and the standard, in fact, is – what'd you say – .62 today?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: .67.

Governor Phil Murphy: .67, so it's right in that sweet spot. Pat, good afternoon. Anything on compliance? Belated Happy Mother's Day to your family. Looks like weather is in a going steady as she goes. Over to you.

Superintendent of the State Police Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Since we last met just one executive order summons was issued. Newark Police Department responded to a private residence where it was estimated 300 to 500 people, the homeowner at that residence was cited and issued a summons for a violation of the executive order. Weather looks good, and I'll just highlight our civilian of the year from our OEM logistics team, Kevin Palmer. We had a small but poignant ceremony where the humble man that he was accepted that award on

behalf of the entire logistics team who if you recall it was reported for our state stockpile, ventilators, isolation gowns. Wasn't home a lot, so I got to thank his wife Jackie as well because she didn't see Kevin for months on end and just a special day and certainly an award well-deserved by Kevin Palmer and the entire logistics team. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: What a year they have had. My Lord. Absolutely extraordinary. Please give him my best, Pat, and thank him on behalf of all of us. Bear with me one second here.

Q&A Section

We're going to start over here. Stephen is that you? You're interning, right? You with Brent?

Stephen, NJ.com: I'm with Brent, yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: Any good Brent stories?

Stephen, NJ.com: I'm a fellow.

Governor Phil Murphy: You're a fellow. Anything we should know about Brent?

Stephen, NJ.com: He's a great guy.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. I just want the audience watching at home to know Brent was slipping a 20 to Stephen during that. Stephen, fire away.

Stephen, NJ.com: Thanks, Governor. This past Saturday marked a year since the first individual under 18 died of COVID-19, a four-year-old, where does the state stand – I know you talked about vaccinating individuals 12 to 15 based on the emergency use this week, but on vaccinating individuals even younger, 12 and younger. Also, with the significant number of adults vaccinated, what impact will that have on cases and deaths among children?

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me just go to the data, Judy, and to the best of my knowledge the number remains – I guess it's now under the age of 18, seven losses of life out of the total 23,177 losses of life. We mourn every single one of them, but the number remains quite low. I don't know. Is there any guidance – I'll turn this to you, Judy. We know that Pfizer is going to pursue the 12- to 15-year. I don't know that we've got any visibility on vaccination prospect for under 12 unless you may have that or Ed may have that. Secondly, the impact – I think your second question was if you get a lot of adults vaccinated, how does that impact the prospects of our kids who are not vaccinated. I assume the answer is positively. The more we get vaccinated, the better it is even for those who are unvaccinated or in this case not eligible. Ed, good to have you. Any comments on either of those?

Department of Health Medical Director Ed Lifshitz: Not much. I agree, obviously, getting more people vaccinated protects the people who can't be vaccinated as well as the people who can, so that's extremely important. I do know that clinical trials are ongoing to – looking at vaccination down to the age of two, so by potentially this fall – again, we never know how those clinical trials are going – there may be a vaccine that's authorized for use in people that young, but I wouldn't expect anything earlier than that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Than you. Good to have you. Brent, good afternoon.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: Good afternoon. A few from me and then Brenda Flanagan of NJTV I'm asking for.

Governor Phil Murphy: By the way, Sarah has the microphone. I should've given Sarah a shoutout.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: Are you including both New Jersey residents vaccinated out of state and out of state residents vaccinated here in your percentage of total vaccinations, and if so why, meaning does that all count towards the 70% because that might seem to cancel each other out.

Governor Phil Murphy: We are not counting out of states in our numbers.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: Only the people who – okay.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. We are beginning to count – it's an approximation because of the data feed is good as we can get. We're counting New Jerseyans that got vaccinated outside of New Jersey.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: When you say it's 50%, that does not include people from out of state being vaccinated here even if they're students here.

Governor Phil Murphy: Does not include.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: On the new dashboard some numbers –

Governor Phil Murphy: Am I right, Judy? I'm right. Okay.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: Okay. On the new dashboard, some numbers are over 100%. Can you explain that? What will New Jersey use the new federal coronavirus funds for? What will the state urge local governments to use it for, and what does it mean for the state to get theirs in one lump sum? The NFL schedule is out Wednesday. What do you think are the odds of having a full house at MetLife Stadium on week one? Edna Mahan has been without power since Saturday. Is there an update, and what is the state doing to fix it? From Brenda Flanagan, a recent study found that about a third of vaccinated people are willing to get the shot for cash. Are you open to a program like that in New Jersey like the ones in place in Detroit and West Virginia? Commissioner Persichilli, you said at a recent budget hearing that Trenton a labor and delivery services desert. What is the DOH doing to increase access for residents here?

Governor Phil Murphy: You can breathe now. Bear with me. I'll leave to Judy the dashboard of over 100%. Very vaccinated, is that – we'll come back to that in a second. The new CRF money, too early to tell. I think literally the US treasury just came out just now, I believe, so bear with us. We have to parse through that. That guidance has been – we've been predicting it was coming. It's come, which is great. We now need to get a very specific sense of the parameters.

I think pretty good in terms of Jets and Giants. I'd say the prospects are pretty good. This is a classic case because it's a fixed seat stadium, obviously, where the six-foot rule bites a lot faster than if you went to 50%, so I think – I continue to think, Judy, that the six-foot rule, both the masking guidance from the CDC and the six-foot guidance are going to shift, and they're basically saying that. Then the question is will it shift down to zero. In other words, can you sit beside someone who's not in your family or in your bubble at a Giants or Jets game. Too early to tell, but I think there's a good shot of that. We keep making the progress we're making. I think that's the key part.

Edna Mahan, I literally had a meeting shortly before coming over here. I know PSCNG has been on site for a couple of days. Apparently, there's something to do with cables and/or transmission underground, and I don't have a specific answer in terms of when that comes back up, but they are on it, and we need them to be on it. From Brenda, are we willing to basically bribe people to get vaccinated? Everything's on the table. Literally everything's on the table. Judy, any thoughts on any of that, but why more than 100% in some communities, and the question about labor and delivery services deserts I think was the question.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: First thing on over 100%. It may be seasonal residents. Many counties down the shore for an example could have over 100%. A lot of people from Pennsylvania have residents at the shore and they got vaccinated here. On labor and delivery, I'll use Trenton as an example. Right now, there is no labor and delivery service in Trenton, so we want to make sure that the women that reside in Trenton have access to first-rate post-partum – I'm sorry – prenatal care, first trimester prenatal care and post-partum care

after they deliver the child to the city. That's just an example. In order for us to work with the first lady's program on particularly black infant mortality and maternal morbidity and mortality, we have to make sure that everyone has immediate, convenient, and excellent access to care.

Governor Phil Murphy: By the way, Chris Ryan who is the head of information technology for the state as you know just sent me a text with the exact same explanation. You get over 100% because you may have seasonal folks who have a shore house within the New Jersey – our four walls. Thank you, Judy. Dave, good afternoon.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5 Hi, Governor. Many pharmacies are now selling home COVID tests, and they're modestly priced. How accurate are they? Does this really work? Do you recommend this, or is it better to go to one of the official testing sites in New Jersey? Maybe Ed could comment on this since he is the expert, I assume. How significant do you think it is for New Jersey that kids between the ages of 12 and 15 are getting the green light to get vaccinated? How is this going to impact schools and family members of kids who are going to school? Can kids just show up at a megasite or some place else, or do they need a parent? Finally, considering how many long-term care COVID deaths we've had in New Jersey as in other states, will the state consider stepping in and mandating vaccines for long-term care staff, or might you guys try to do something to push nursing home operators to in fact do the mandating so that these people get vaccinated? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Dave. I will leave it to Judy and Ed on the accuracy of the home COVID tests, but this is something – we haven't said this in a while, but early on – I remember when we were desperate to get testing capacity up, we predicted, I think, and it has come to pass, that this would be like a home pregnancy test, but I'll leave it to Ed on the reliability etcetera. How significant is it? Again, I'll have Judy or Ed add to any of this – to have 12 to 15-year-olds – how significant? It's quite significant. It's yet another data point. It's not necessarily the only one, but it's yet another data point. We want to see schools back in person, and we are highly confident we can do that safely and responsibly.

Whether they can just show up – I referenced this, and I think Judy did as well. The department has not yet put guidance out. Bear with us on that. There's going to be very specific guidance for parents, guardians, and the kids themselves. We have been working with operators from moment one since the vaccines came upon us, so that work continues at pace, but would we consider other steps? I think if we had to, we will, honestly. This is one that is one of the few areas that, frankly, is somewhere between frustrating and angering for us because, again, the residents have been so extraordinary in their willingness to get vaccinated and their family members supporting that.

Whether we get to mandating or not, we have – I've expressed many times a personal preference as a general matter that folks get there of their own free will, but if we continue to see the entire – Judy, I believe the entirety of the new outbreaks at long-term care that you have referred to today – all of them, and there aren't many – there's like four of them – all staff-related. At a certain point, our patience runs thin on that. Ed, any comment on the reliability of the home test and whether or not that's the route we want folks to go versus going to a third party and any other comments on other topics that Dave raised?

Department of Health Medical Director Ed Lifshitz: Sure. I'll start by saying that we want people to get tested in all these different ways, whichever way often works best for them. The important thing is, particularly if you're not sure, you think you might've been exposed, you have traveled, any of a variety of different situations, you should go ahead and get tested. The newer at-home tests that you can now walk into a Walmart or CVS or order online, without a prescription – you can do them completely at home. You don't need anybody watching you. These use – as the governor said, it's the same technology, really, as a pregnancy test, and it's also the same technology in the same antigen test, which these are, that are done in doctors' offices and other places, the so-called rapid tests.

As such, they have the same advantages and disadvantages of those other rapid tests. Obviously, the big advantage is you get a result very rapidly, within 15 minutes you can do it at home. It has been said recently priced four or five dollars, maybe 10 dollars at most for one of these tests, and that's a very good thing. If it comes back positive and you're feeling at all ill, you can be pretty sure that's a true positive and that you really have the disease, and certainly, we'd want you to talk to your doctor and get it confirmed by a test that they might do just to make sure, but it's very accurate.

They also have some of the same limitations of the antigen test, meaning they're not as sensitive as those PCR tests that we've talked about for a very long time at this point, which means that if you did it very early in the course, or just a little bit too soon, or a little less careful on how you did it, you might get a test that might say that you were negative even though you might be – just be turning positive and just might not have enough virus that that test would be positive. That's also why these tests often come packaged in pairs or more because what they want you to do is not just test yourself once but then go ahead and repeat that test just in case you essentially did it a little bit too early and there wasn't enough virus for that test to turn positive, so you get another chance to do it.

Yes, we like these tests. I encourage people to do it. Certainly, if you're not sure or if you have symptoms and you come up negative and you're not sure, you should always go to your doctor. You should always get it confirmed as far as that goes, but as far as just screening at home, it's a very reasonable way to go. I actually bought a box when my daughter traveled back from Washington, DC and tried it out on her, and it seemed to work.

Governor Phil Murphy: Well done. Judy, you good with that? Ed, thank you. Dave, Thank you. We'll go to Daniel please. Daniel, good afternoon.

Daniel Munoz, NJ BIZ: Good afternoon, Governor. If the state reaches your goals of 4.7 million adults by the end of next month, then what? I assume that won't be the end of the pandemic. Is herd immunity going to be a constantly shifting target? Regarding this labor shortage that businesses are facing, what do you think is fueling that? Is it unemployment bonuses keeping people home, or do you think businesses are underpaying worker or some kind of under – some kind of other – something else going on? Do you plan to discontinue the 300-dollar unemployment, or what are you considering to help businesses alleviate this shortage? Regarding the reopenings, do you expect difficulty from business owners in complying with this myriad of reopening rules, either out of laziness or inability to understand them, or just outright refusal to understand them? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy and Ed, you should tell me. We've said the 4.7 million adults getting fully vaccinated is our initial goal, so your question is a good one. If we get to 4.7 million – which as Judy laid out is not a lay down hand here. We're going to have to scrap to get there almost certainly. Do we say – do we declare victory? No. We stay at it, and we'll continue to try to vaccinate as many adults as possible, and remember, the 12- to 15-year-olds now would be added as a separate category to that, so the 4.7 million is 16 and up. We would then have our objectives with the 12 to 15, keep going 16 and up, 12 to 15, and then depending as Judy mentioned what the CDC and what the drug companies come up with for the under 12-year-old crowd.

Remember also in the back of our minds, we do not know yet if this is – and no one knows yet. Is this an annual flu shot, or does it look like a once in a lifetime tetanus or every ten years? The science is not complete, so we have 814 locations, I believe, distribution locations. Whether or not they literally stay in place or at least figuratively, Pat, you've still got the field medical hospital beds, right? They still exist in this state. If we need them on a moment's notice, they could be constructed. That'll be a similar mindset for the vaccination infrastructure, particularly I would say for the big locations.

Labor shortages, I've read a lot about – there's been a lot of speculation since last Thursday where the number came out a lot lower than folks had thought, and it seems to me – I don't have a particular insight here. I think it's probably a combination of a number of reasons. Is there some amount of this related to folks still getting their benefits? That is quite possible. I continue to believe the overwhelming amount of folks who are getting benefits are desperately in need of those benefits. When you look at the arrearages and the carnage that families economically have gone

through, that may be some of it, but there's an overwhelming amount of folks who desperately need those benefits. I think it's probably a combination of that, lack of access to childcare, kids not all in school yet, a combination of a number of different factors. We have no plans to curtail the \$300.

What happens in the reopening process – I think it's different if somebody doesn't legitimately understand it versus willful violation, and I think we've shown pretty good patience and partnership on the – I literally didn't understand it. There was a hospital early on. Judy, I forget. It was in Bergen county, where I think there was a legitimate – there was one later on that we didn't like, but early on there was a legitimate misunderstanding of whether or not members of the board of trustees, particularly if they were medical professionals or not, that they were eligible for vaccination on the 1a crowd. I forget the hospital, but we work with them. There was apparently an understandable miscommunication.

At the other end of the spectrum, if somebody willfully violates what we're doing, they will be taken to task. They will be – Pat Callahan will speak to them publicly, whether it's through an ABC action, a local health authority action, or some other form. Again, we're good guys and gals in terms of understanding you may not have understood the rules of the road, and we'll work with you, but willful violations, we have zero tolerance for. Thank you. Mike, is that you? How are you?

Mike Catalini, Associated Press I'm good, Governor. Thank you. Good afternoon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nice to see you.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Likewise. I wonder if – some states are reducing the number of vaccines they're requesting because of falling demand. You just said a minute ago it sounds like the state will have to work pretty hard to get to that 4.7 million figure, but can you say – is New Jersey reducing its request for vaccines at all? On another matter, Governor, on Friday you announced \$40 million of CRF funds for people who didn't get federal benefits. Can you please say whether that's in direct reaction to the hunger strike that some immigrants without documentation, I believe, were pushing for for much of this year? Will that money need to be approved by the legislature, or can that just be appropriated through your office? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, unless there's a new development since this morning, we're not reducing our asks. By the way, both of the following statements are true. It will not be a lay down hand to get to our initial objective of 4.7 million fully vaccinated by the end of June on the one hand, and on the other hand, we want all the supply we can get because we will get there, and by the way, this is – to Daniel's question, this fight doesn't just end magically when we get to 4.7 million.

We made a number of announcements on Friday, and I believe all of this was CRF money, so that's an important point. This is Coronavirus Relief Fund, so this is federal money. You may have seen the pieces – the 40 million. Again, we want an economy that works for everybody. We want to bring everybody along here, so it included the monies you referred to, Michael, as it relates to folks who had been heretofore excluded from other programs that the federal government had put up, so we were happy we were able to do that.

I think it was \$120 million to micro-businesses, so that's the folks that employ five or fewer or fewer than five, 20 million for bars and restaurants, I think 10 million for childcare facilities; new businesses and startups had 20 or 25. We extended Sustain & Serve which has been a wildly successful program, which accomplishes barbell objectives that feel at one level like they're exact opposite of the other, but we stand in the middle and are able to address both. In other words, food insecurity on the one hand and restaurants that are desperate to sell meals on the other. I think there was another catchall category of small businesses just generally of another 50 million. The entirety of the program, including doing – bless you – including doing what's right for those who have been excluded heretofore. We were glad to take that step.

With that, I didn't say this earlier but I assume that we will and you should assume that we'll be on a schedule that's similar to that which we've been on over the past number of weeks. We'll be with you virtually tomorrow and then back here at 1 o'clock unless you hear otherwise on Wednesday.

With that, I'm going to mask up, Judy. I'm going to take the step, Judy. I have to get your blessing on this. Two weeks from when I'm fully vaccinated, I'm going to back to one mask. You okay with that? Okay, wanted to make sure I didn't embarrass myself in front of everybody here. I think the big – other than, folks, bless you and continue to do the right thing as you have by the millions, and proprietors. I mean, yes, we've got EO violations, but it's a fraction of the amount of establishments out there that are doing the right thing. We were actually out to dinner on Saturday and lunch on Sunday at two different restaurants and each doing a really good job as an example. There are examples of folks doing the right thing.

Judy, I think the one – and Ed, the one big ask we would have is get vaccinated, right? If you have, please remind a relative, neighbor, a friend, a coworker that their health risk is dramatically higher being unvaccinated than any small risk associated with being vaccinated. The faster we get to our objectives, the more aggressively we can open this state up. Brent, to your question, if we blow through our objectives, there's a lot higher likelihood that the Jets and Giants games can sell a lot more tickets, and that's what our hope is, to put a fine point on it.

To Judy and Ed, thank you, Pat, Jared, Parimal, Dan, everybody else, God bless y'all. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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