

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: April 25th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. I wanted to give a shout out, Pat won't be upset with me that I want to pay homage to the DCA brothers and sisters led extraordinarily by Sheila Oliver, in particular the Division of Fire Safety. So to State Fire Marshall, my friend Richard Mikutsky and Lenny Inzerillo and all the other guys over there, hats off to you and to every one of the firefighters up and down the state who, along with our law enforcement, are as good as it gets anywhere in this country, if not the world. We salute you and thank you for everything you're doing.

I'm joined to my right by the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. This is our third engagement today, in fact. Two on the phone and one in person, so always honored to be with you. The Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, another guy who's familiar to you all, Dr. Ed Lifshitz. Ed, great to have you again. The guy to my left, again who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. I also want to give a shout out to the Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples, and welcome everybody.

Let's start with the numbers, if that's okay, and I think we're going to go relatively briskly today. We're announcing an additional 3,457 positive test results for a total, as you can see, statewide of 105,523. And as we look at the curve of new COVID-19 cases -- again, these are positive tests -- we see continued flattening. We cannot ease up one bit on our social distancing. Again, let's leave this on here for a second and remind

everybody. We know that folks have tested positive, but as Judy reminds me, a lot of those folks have now battled and won. That's an important point to make and the curve is flattening, as you can see. It's undeniably flattening and that's in the face of a lot more testing. Judy can give you the positivity results on that, as she will in a minute.

But let's also remind folks, 105,523, we don't know what the denominator is, we don't know how many people are infected in this but we guarantee you, that's not the number. We know that's the number of positive tests, but what exactly that denominator is, people around the world literally are trying to wargame that. We need to see more progress and more slowing before we can begin implementing any effort to get ourselves on the road to the new normal that awaits our state on the other side of this pandemic. And again, we're going to give you some sense of principles, I think as early as Monday if Mahen doesn't correct me, in terms of the broad values and parameters that will guide us in terms of responsibly beginning to take steps to reopen, whenever that may come.

In our healthcare system, as of last night's reporting there were 6,722 residents hospitalized for COVID-19. This means, Judy, we have had consecutive decreases since Thursday, and let's hope it stays that way. Unlike the 105,523, where we know those are positive test results, but we know that's not the denominator or the total number of people infected. We know to the person that that's the amount of people that are hospitalized as of last night in this state.

Our field medical stations reported 99 patients. There were 1,971 patients in either critical or intensive care. We see that number on that chart in front of you has stayed pretty steady, Judy, over the past week. Hard to say otherwise and notably, ventilator use continues to trend downward slightly to 1,442 currently in use. There were 561 new hospitalizations yesterday and while we continue to see one day increases and decreases, that set of bars on that curve, as you can see, it's a little bit more choppy, the overall trend line continues to keep moving in the right direction.

For the 24 hours preceding 10:00 p.m. last night, our hospitals reported 686 discharges. Notably, if you look at the three-day average, we still see discharges exceeding admittances, and this is another important measure for hospital readiness and the availability of beds who need them. Again, those curves are all going largely in the right direction. We need them to go down aggressively, and that is what we will need to see, and God willing, will see sooner than later.

Sadly, with the heaviest of hearts, we report an additional 249 deaths, meaning that we have now lost a total of 5,863 blessed souls from our New Jersey family. Just think about that. Let that sink in for a minute. It's an extraordinary loss of life, by any measure. Of course, the worst number that we report every day is the number of residents who have passed away, the blessing souls that we have lost due to COVID-19. And as we do every day, I'd like to take a minute and honor a few of them, if we could, together.

Let's get Kenneth, Ken House up here. Look at that. Looks like out of central casting for an airline pilot. Ken was born in Elizabeth, raised in Southbound Brook and as a boy, he used the money he earned from his paper route to pay for flying lessons at Somerset Airport. And on his 16th birthday, he earned his solo flying license. He flew commercial planes from Princeton Airport at first, but in 1965 found himself in the cockpit for Eastern Airlines, a blast from the past, the place he would remain for 25 years. In 1991, Ken and several of his fellow pilots founded Kiwi Airlines, and later he would be at the controls as a captain for Spirit Airlines. After retiring from passenger service, he would continue flying corporate jets and was an instructor at CAE in Whippany. Flying was his first love, but as his family recalls, cookies were not far behind on the list, and he was a certified member of the Cookie Monster Club. I'm not making that up. He served in the US Army Reserve and was a longtime member of the Pilots Association and the Secret Order of Quiet Birdmen. Ken was 77 when he passed from COVID-19 complications. He leaves behind his wife Joyce, with whom I had the honor of speaking earlier today, their grown adult daughters Megan, Melissa and Michelle and their spouses, his grandson, Luke, a brother and sister and many other family and friends. We keep his memory and each of them in our thoughts and prayers. Bless him.

The Reverend Rufus McClendon Jr. Wow. He was known to some simply as Bumpy, but to others as Pastor of First Park Baptist Church in Plainfield. A native of Harlem, a basketball scholarship allowed him to attend Winston Salem Teachers College in North Carolina, and he even, by the way, got to play some pro ball in the 1950s in the former Eastern League. He was drafted into the US Army in 1961 and among other highlights of

his service, he served two years as a member of the Presidential Honor Guard. An educator first and foremost, Rufus would go on to have a 28-year career as an educator in the Newark Public Schools. After retirement, he found his second calling in the Scripture, and he joined the Ministry in the early 1990s, and he served as Head Chaplain of East Jersey State Prison from 1994 until 2008. Reverend McClendon is survived by his beloved wife, Geraldine, who I think goes by Gerri. I had the incredible honor to speak with his First Lady and their congregation's First Lady earlier today. In addition to Geraldine, their sons Todd and Alex, his sister Marilyn, grandchildren Sir and Takia, and many other relatives, not to mention his congregation. And by the way, Gerri said to me, when I asked her how she's doing, she said that she was blessed to be a part of that congregation. They have come out from all sides in Plainfield to be there with her and her family. Reverend McClendon was 82 years old. May God bless his memory and his family at this time.

And finally, Filomena Phyllis Acerra Diebold, known as Phil, lived in Long Branch where she was born 85 years ago, but having spoken with her son Sylvia, I might be hit by a lightning bolt for having given up her age. And she was not only born there in Long Branch, but that's where she was raised. Phil started her career as a factory assembly line worker, but a reputation for perfectionism earned her a fast promotion to the administrative office. And wanting to do more, she applied for and earned a place as an administrator in the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, where she would serve with pride and distinction for 25 years. To say Phil had an indomitable spirit would be an understatement. At the age of 72, she endured surgeries and rounds of radiation to defeat breast cancer. Later, she would be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. But even in the face of this, she never let it define who she was. The same can be said for the stroke that she suffered in 2017. Again, just another obstacle to overcome. And sadly, we lost her to COVID-19 last week. Phil leaves behind her children, Christopher Diebold, and Foster Diebold Jr., her daughter Sylvia, Sylvia Chaffee. I spoke to Sylvia again earlier today and had an extraordinary conversation about her mom. And in addition to her kids, she's left behind their families, including her grandchildren. She's also survived by one of her brothers and many, many other family members and friends. God bless you, Filomena and God bless your family.

Three more beautiful stories of these tremendous members of our New Jersey family, whom COVID-19 has taken away. For them and for everyone we have lost, our flags remain at half-staff in their honor. I truly hope that when we see our flags flying low in the sky, we will all look into the blue beyond and say a little prayer. It's the very least we can do. And beyond that, we can commit to defeating COVID-19 and to redoubling our efforts to stop the spread of the disease.

This is up to us, and us alone. The 5,863 who we have lost must be our inspiration so we do not lose another 5,863. This is in our doing. We are New Jersey tough, through and through. Together, we are flattening that curve that leads to lower hospitalizations, and please God, lower numbers of lives lost. Together, we will beat this. And I know, by the way, as time goes on and the weather gets better, as it is today, it's not getting any easier. We understand that and we have deep respect and appreciation for that, but you've got to keep at it, folks. Please, please, please stay at it and if we do, and I know we will do, we will beat this.

Changing gears, we had a good, I thought Judy and Pat, a good call with our legislative brothers and sisters earlier today. A good update on how we see things. We took their questions, had some good follow up. I want to thank each and every one of them. It takes a village to win this war and that includes the strength of our legislative bodies on both sides of the aisle. I can't thank them enough for their cooperation and their spirit of teamwork.

We don't have any new announcements to make today, but I do want to reiterate one of the things we discussed here yesterday. As I mentioned, I've signed an Executive Order allowing for renters to have their security deposits used to cover their rent payments, either in part or in full. With May 1 coming quickly upon us, this order takes on increased importance. But we must also reiterate that no renters are to be threatened with eviction through this emergency, and under no circumstances may any landlord even attempt to evict a tenant. No one should fear losing their home right now, period. We have set up a special standalone page on our information hub and you can see it there, [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov), which is our master website, and then [/renter](#). That page explicitly spells out the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords. We urge every tenant and landlord to make this their first stop when there is any issue.

If you're a homeowner and you have questions regarding your rights under the mortgage forbearance agreements that we have reached with multiple lenders -- in fact, more than multiple, I think virtually every lender -- there's a page for you as well, [covid19.nj.gov/mortgage](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/mortgage). We encourage you to make that your first

stop if you've got questions, to get them answered and to find additional information and resources. We all have to get through this emergency as one, and no one should feel threatened that they will lose their home.

Switching gears, on testing, there are currently 95 locations across the state where residents can be tested for COVID-19. We have listed the information for 30 publicly run and community-based testing sites on our information hub at covid19.nj.gov/testing. In addition, there are 65 privately operated sites across the state that your primary care practitioner can direct you to.

We are continually pushing to expand our testing capabilities. You'll recall we started literally, as a country, with two arms tied behind our back and a peashooter, not remotely prepared for this. New Jersey, I'm proud to say, has cobbled together up to 95 testing sites. I think we're fourth, if not third most-tested state in America right now, but it's not where we need to be. I will remind you again that having a robust and accessible testing program in place is not only a great need for the here and now, but it will be a great need and a requirement, in fact, for the weeks to come. This is a key element that we must have in place. As I've said, ensuring the public's health must come before we can begin restarting our economy. Remember, public health creates economic health. Thankfully, this is New Jersey and our reach into the life sciences is deep and strong. With a multitude of great partners from Rutgers University to our private labs, we are confident that we'll be able to stand up the testing regime that we will need to move forward.

Now switching gears again, I'd like to highlight some of the good news coming from our communities. These are the stories that can help lift our spirits and generate the optimism we will need to carry us through the weeks ahead. I have been so proud to see how many of our young people, in particular, are stepping up to help out. Let's add another one to that honor roll. This is Natalie Ix of New Milford, Bergen County. She has relatives who work at Holy Name Medical Center in Teaneck, which we all know was virtually ground zero of this, so she knows firsthand, by the way, because of those relatives, the personal toll that COVID-19 is taking on our heroic healthcare workers. To support the frontline heroes in her hometown, Natalie began taking orders for yard signs that have not one purpose, but a dual purpose. First, they're allowing residents across New Milford to show their pride and support for our frontline public health and safety workers. But additionally, with the proceeds from the signs, Natalie is going to buy a whole lot of pizza to feed our army fighting against COVID-19. And just as importantly, Natalie is supporting New Milford small businesses. The signs are being printed locally, and the pizza is coming from a local restaurant, as well. So to Natalie, New Milford and New Jersey thanks you.

Second, I want to give a shout out, if I can, to all the leaders across Middlesex County, starting with our dear friend, Freeholder Director Ron Rios and his team, for the amazing cross-county partnerships that have been forged to ensure that healthcare workers have the PPE, or personal protective equipment, that they need to stay safe on the job. This runs the gamut in Middlesex County. It goes from Middlesex County College, which is producing face shields and mask extenders on its 3D printers, you can see some of that right there. To the staff of the George Street Playhouse who are putting their knowledge from building sets and props to also produce and assemble PPE. It continues to the Middlesex Fire Academy, which has spearheaded PPE donation drives to benefit first responders. It goes to the County Office of Health Services, and by the men and women on the front line administering tests at Middlesex County's two drive-through testing sites. I say all the time, it takes a village, or in this case, I should say a county. So to everyone across Middlesex County, from Ronnie right through to every single one of you, I thank you. New Jersey thanks you, and keep up the great work.

And I also thank all of you who have been working nonstop in your homes and communities to help stop the spread of COVID-19. But we can't as I said a minute ago, we cannot let up. We cannot let a beautiful spring day like this allow us to slip in any way on our social distancing. We have to keep at it. There will be many more beautiful spring days ahead. I promise you, and I want us to be able to enjoy them together. But not yet, not now. Please, please stay at home. What you are doing is making a difference and you're helping us beat this awful scourge.

With that please, help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health Judy Persichilli

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Well, earlier today I had the privilege of joining First Lady Tammy Murphy in a discussion with Germany's Minister of Health Spahn. We talked about the success that Germany has had not only in containing COVID-19 but in tracking the virus throughout their country. Similar to New Jersey, they enacted strict social distancing, and they are beginning to very slowly lift the restrictions. They have developed a very slow opening of some small stores, book shops, and car dealerships, places that can safely social distance. They took this action after closely monitoring the spread of the virus in their country.

However, he emphasized the importance of robust testing to help to quickly identify new cases, as well as their contacts, so they can be isolated immediately. They are being very aggressive in their contact tracing, using a team of five officers for every 20,000 members of the community, to trace people who have come into recent contact with every confirmed case. Their experience can inform our efforts as we look ahead, to ease some of our social distancing restrictions in the state, and increase our testing capacity. When that time comes, it is vital that we don't forget all that we have learned. We will still need to take steps to protect our health and the health of others, particularly vulnerable populations at greater risk of hospitalization and death.

As the Governor shared, last evening our hospitals reported 6,722 hospitalizations of COVID-19 and patients or persons under investigation. That is a decrease over the last week. The number of individuals in hospitals continues to decline. However, there are still 1,971 individuals in critical care. Although that has been flat for the past few days, we have not yet seen a decrease. But we have seen a decrease in the number of individuals in critical care who require ventilators. Hospitalizations, however, are declining in the North, flattening in the Central part of the region and actually are on a slight increase in the Southern region.

Today we're reporting 3,457 new cases for a total of 105,523 cases in the state. As the Governor shared, we're reporting 249 new deaths. The breakdown of deaths overall are as follows: White, 53.2%; Black, 20.3%; Hispanic, 16.3%; Asian, 5.2%; and other, 5%. I was asked yesterday about hospitalizations and the breakdown of ethnicity. In a review of 40,309 hospitalizations, we report 36.1% White; 28.4% Hispanic; 19.7% Black; 4.9% Asian; and 10.8% other.

Sadly we are reporting four additional resident deaths at the state veterans homes, one at Menlo Park and three at Paramus. Of the 722 residents at the three veterans homes, 252 have tested positive for COVID-19 and sadly, 95 have passed away. At the state's four psychiatric hospitals, their numbers have stayed steady. 145 patients have tested positive and nine patients have passed away, out of a total census of 1,290. According to lab data from this morning, 191,813 individuals have been tested, 83,650 have tested positive. That is a positivity rate of 43.61%. That concludes my daily report.

On the statistics, I want to take a moment to thank the dedicated healthcare staff at our long-term care facilities, hospitals, and our first responders for the work that they do. The impact of this virus on our healthcare system has been unprecedented. But again and again, we hear stories of how our healthcare professionals are rising to the occasion and putting the needs of their patients well before their own, and we're grateful for their work. We can all help them by continuing to follow social distancing measures. We need you to continue to do your part. Stay home. Wash your hands frequently during the day with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Cover your coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. If you are sick, please isolate yourself from your family. Do not share household items such as towels, eating utensils, or cups. Stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't know about you, but I do what Judy tells me to do. I mentioned the loss of life is now 5,863 which is staggering. And just to put that in perspective, I meant to say this earlier, that is more than the lives lost from New Jersey in World War I, the Korean War and the Vietnam War combined. Think about that, folks, for a second. When we say we're in a war, we mean it. This is literally a war. It's multiple wars in terms of casualties. It's extraordinary.

Secondly, Judy, just a couple follow ups. Positive tests, it's the same six counties that continue to have the overwhelming bulk. In order: Bergen, Hudson, Essex, Union, Passaic and Middlesex. We mentioned Middlesex, great work earlier and those six counties continue to be the ones that were hit the hardest. On the hospitalizations, the African American number is broadly consistent with the representation among the fatalities, sadly, but in either case, or in both cases, about 50% more than the representation in our society.

We're going to talk a little bit more about that on Monday when we talk about how we see the principles that will guide us, the inequities here. The Hispanic fatalities have been about the representation and this is the second data point you've had this week. I just want to make sure folks know that we're highlighting that, the 28% Hispanic, these are hospitalizations, right? That is now more consistent with the New York City experience. Again, that would be about 50% as well higher than the representation in the Latino communities in our state, but not translating into fatalities. I know that's something we're going to continue to watch.

Before we turn to Pat, a question for the house, either for you or Ed, any theories, anecdotal or otherwise? We know hospitalizations have begun to come down here. Not as low as we would like, but they're coming down. ICU beds have stayed about flat, not going up, which is great. Ventilator use has come down. Any thoughts to that, for folks out there thinking through why that's the case?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I can just share anecdotally what I'm hearing from the CEOs of the hospitals. I think individuals are coming into the hospitals. They're coming in at a time where the hospitals can intervene at an earlier stage of their disease. I also think that, you've heard me say this before, the extraordinary work of the physicians and the healthcare workers to kind of adjust to this new novel virus and look at ways to better care for them has helped.

Governor Phil Murphy: So this is an important point that you and Ed and Christina have been making. We're now getting to the point of seven or eight weeks into this war in terms of the actual folks who are showing up at hospitals. Seven or eight weeks ago, while this had similarities, and I'm way out over my skis here, Ed, particularly relative to you and Judy, it had similarities to other experiences of the past. It had uniqueness to it as well, including in the scale of people getting sick. And your point to me and to us has been that there's a certain amount of an experience curve that is taking hold. Is that fair to say?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I would say so.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, anything you want to add to that?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: I think that you're saying it very well. We are also, in addition to the other data that's being sent out there, one of the things that we do also keep track of is not only who's being admitted to the hospital, but how many visits to the emergency departments are happening. We're seeing similar data there, where we're seeing it's dropping down significantly from its peaks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, folks, this is due to a lot of great work by professionals on either side of me. It's due to heroic work by healthcare workers. But the biggest factor is what you're doing. I mean, literally, that is leading to the lower number of hospitalizations. It wasn't that long ago, Judy and Ed and Pat, that we were talking about a worst-case scenario. And by the way, if everyone let their hair down right now, unfortunately we'd probably see it, 36,000 hospitalizations. We're now 6,000, upper 6,000s. So you're about 30,000 below what was our worst fear. The great news is, we have not lived that. Please God, the more cautious news is, don't let your guard down. These models can change literally overnight. We would have shown you a map today, but we don't think the New York Times heat map changed, as far as we could tell, overnight, so I'm not sure if they don't do it on the weekends, or maybe I was just stale or late getting the map. But those heat maps have trended so dramatically in the right direction. That's the contributing raw material to the lower number of hospitalizations. While each one of these lives is precious, please God, there is an element of math and derivation here from one number to the next. And so folks, we've got to keep it up. Because the problem is with these models, they can flip on you. If you let your guard down, they can come right back at you. And so please stay at it, everybody. Judy, thank you, and Ed, thank you. I'm sure we'll get to you for questions. Colonel Callahan, any updates on compliance, PPE, infrastructure, or other matters?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. To your point with regard to compliance for our state with, you know, the most densely populated state with 9 million residents, I think the compliance has been exceptional. And to that point, I'll read you the few on the overnight, but 204 of these EO violations have risen to an indictable offense level, which is, again, not that many when you lay it up against what 9 million residents, for the most part, are doing.

With regard to the overnight, Newark Police Department issued 36 EO violations and closed two businesses. In Hackettstown, a subject was cited for driving around a police barricade into a park, cited for EO violation. In Galloway, an owner of a tobacco shop who had been warned a few times was ultimately issued an EO violations summons. In Parsippany, police responded to an anonymous call with regard to an open vape shop. That owner was subsequently cited.

Lastly, I just wanted to take the time, Hudson County expressed their phenomenal appreciation to not only the EMS Task Force, but also if you remember a few weeks back, I had reported that the basic life support and advanced life support national ambulance contract came to help. That was 75 ambulance services. And in the short time that those 75 ambulances were here, they responded to more than 5,000 EMS calls for service in Hudson County alone. Sadly, for us, they departed last night, those 75 but I'm happy to report that they were replaced by 100 additional ambulances, 50 basic life support, and 50 advanced life support, and their service has proven to be invaluable to the region with regards to our response to COVID-19. Thanks, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, one more time, how many ambulances and how many calls?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: 75 ambulances responded to more than 5,000 calls for service in less than a month.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good Lord. Hats off to them and to everybody else who's come from near and far to help us out in our hour of need, just extraordinary. Obviously, first and foremost, up and down the state, but all around the country and frankly, as we mentioned yesterday, we're getting help from around the world. And you don't get the German Health Minister on the phone every morning, and I want to give him, Jens Spahn, who's a good friend a shout out. You know, people are coming together and they know that this is an hour of need for our state and we could not be more thankful. And we have long memories, we will never forget it.

We're going to start over here, Brendan, with John. One thing I just want to repeat, that tomorrow we will be with you electronically, on paper, unless there's something meaningful, in which case, we will come back to you. And then otherwise, at the moment, it looks like we'll be together here at 1:00 p.m. on Monday. We don't yet have a White House VTC, having had one yesterday. There's a decent chance we won't have one on Monday. Assuming we don't, and that's the current assumption, we'll be back here at one o'clock. I welcomed Jared earlier. I also now want to welcome Matt Platkin, Chief Counsel. Matt, good to have you back here. John, you're up to bat.

Q&A Session

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: A couple of things from this week. Can we get an update on the release of data by zip code case data, if that's coming? Also, a breakdown of where discharged patients are going, how many are going to hospice? Is there an update on the total state expenditure for PPE so far, if that's available?

Governor, you've talked, you mentioned again today, but in the past you've talked about these models that show the 36,000 possible hospitalizations with the peak spike. Now that you've taken social distancing measures, and all the while you said that they were the same area under that curve, there was the same number of hospitalizations, the same number of cases, with the social distancing measures. We're seeing this flattened peak now. Any idea what the models are showing about how long that peak will extend? How long this will continue into the summer? Does it show the same number, the same area, the same volume of cases that you had earlier, about six weeks ago?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, John. I'm going to say a couple of things, then turn it to you. So you had data by zip code, discharge, where folks are headed, and then PPE money spent, and also the area under the curve were the four things as I understood. I don't have a PPE number right now, but it's a big number. My guess is it's somewhere, several hundred million dollars at this point. I don't know. Can we come back to you on that? It's a lot of money. And by the way, we're still operating under a 75-25 cost share. We were the first state, I think, in America, to ask the President of the administration to flip from a 75-25 to a 100-zero, at least during the period of this crisis. You can just imagine, if you're talking about the numbers we're talking about, that's a huge amount of money that we would get back. We just reiterate, that's an ask, a persistent ask we've had of the administration. But Mahen, let's get back to John with a specific number.

I'm going to say one thing about models and then turn it over to the experts to my right. That is a point we haven't made in a few weeks because we haven't had our handy-dandy chart behind us. And the point, to John's point, if you weren't watching, the awful case peaked sooner at levels that were unfathomable. There was no amount of work we could have done to build out our capacities, whether human healthcare workers all the way to beds and ventilators and PPE, etc. And then the better curve, I'm not sure it was a best-case curve, but I think it was the average result, was a peak that happened later, but much lower. We made pains to say that in each of those trajectories, the area under each of them was equal. And so your question is a good one.

I would just say, I think, and folks, let's keep this up, we've been far better than average. A layman's interpretation is, we have shrunk the area. We've not only had a lower peak, at least so far, and again, this could go the other way, folks. Please don't let your guard down, but the area has shrunk because we've had a better than average performance. I've now exceeded my complete capabilities on this and turn things over to Judy and Ed.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: As far as the peak, I think what we actually have done is flattened as we worked on this, we have flattened the curve, but it has spread it out. And that's exactly what we wanted to do to be able to handle the capacity through, particularly our hospitals. We do expect to be seeing cases through May. The number changes every day, but we do expect to see cases through May.

I think what's interesting is the syndromic curve that the epidemiologists look at. That's individuals coming into the emergency room with respiratory. Maybe Ed could share that, because I think that's an interesting curve.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: One of the things that happens in New Jersey is anytime an individual goes to the emergency department for any reason, and they sign in and they give kind of a litany of complaints that they have, you know, I'm coughing, I have a fever, and so forth. That person at the desk then enters that into the computer system. That comes back into a central database in New Jersey, we don't get the patient identifiers, we have no idea who's actually going or any of that sort of stuff. But we will know that hey, you know, six people showed up at St. Peter's hospital today complaining of cough and fever, for example, and we look for patterns. It's a little bit of an oversimplification, but that's basically what we're doing when we're looking for the symptoms that go along with COVID, so we get an idea about how many patients are presenting to the emergency departments across New Jersey every day for COVID-related symptoms.

And it's not perfect, because it doesn't catch everybody and it misses some people, but it gives you a very good idea. Actually, this is what we're looking at right now. This is kind of our baseline here. We peaked up very quickly to a very high level at the very end of March, the beginning of April. And from there, we've been gradually decreasing and we're on a steady decline. We're not yet back down to the baseline before this started, but we're doing a whole lot better than we were just a few weeks ago.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Do you mind, Judy, on zip codes and discharge destinations?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have that. In fact, that data gets accumulated after discharge, after the charts are completed at the hospitals, because it's what they call the discharge data set. It identifies whether someone's going to hospice, rehab, skilled nursing, home, or whether the individual has expired. That is by zip code. I'll see if some of the data people at the department can get some of that information for you. I owe that to you.

Governor Phil Murphy: How about discharges?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: By zip code, I don't have it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Your question was by zip code, but also just broad categories, when people are leaving hospitals, some of them sadly have passed. Again, those are apples and oranges in terms of when I say 10:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. that's a different data set than the deaths we're reporting. Some go home, some go to step down, some go to hospice, etc. We'll come back to you. Thank you. Charlie, good afternoon.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Good afternoon, Governor. Thanks for the opportunity to ask you some questions. Some cities have been furloughing workers. I wanted to ask if you have any advice for them on ways to avoid that or have these public servants continue to serve the public during this crisis? Maybe doing contact tracing or any of the work that needs to be done.

I was pleased to hear Dr. Strom talk about walk-up testing coming soon to New Brunswick and Perth Amboy. And I just wanted to ask how that's gonna work. Is it going to be done in a vehicle or a trailer or what? Who would oversee that? When exactly might that be starting? I know a lot of people in urban areas want to be able to have a walk up place to go.

I did see an NJ.com article about prisoners potentially being released but prohibited from giving interviews or opinions to the press, radio and TV? I wanted to ask whose idea that was and how that came about?

Governor Phil Murphy: One more, Charlie.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Yep. And then finally, the Middlesex County Democratic Organization is now considering a proposal to cancel next year's county committee elections and to double the length of their terms. As the titular head of the Democratic Party, do you have an opinion on that? Do you think that's inappropriate to use this crisis to take away people's rights to vote next summer?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for those. On municipalities furloughing workers, I don't have any particular insight other than one piece of your question I thought was a good one. We were discussing we've been discussing, as you can imagine, quite a bit lately, what does a contact tracing architecture look like? Don't hold me to what the answer is completely at the moment, but we had a good conversation. I can't remember the past couple of days, when you've got the extraordinary amount of folks who are unemployed right now, if there are paid positions, that's an obvious place to add to our website, to make sure folks know that there are jobs available. I don't have a particular insight. But your latching in to that is a good one.

I would just reiterate my plea of almost every day now is we need more money. We need to have the good progress that Matt and I had with Secretary Mnuchin come to fruition from yesterday's good conversation, so that we can unlock all of that CARES Act money. We clearly are going to want to borrow and take advantage of the Federal Reserve municipal bond buying program, which we're working on with the legislature, that's an important piece. And we certainly need something very much akin to Senator Menendez and Senator Cassidy's \$500 billion direct cash to bring life back fiscally to states, not just New Jersey.

I don't have any insights on Dr. Strom, unless you do, on Brian's timing. We'll come back to you on that. I assume that it is in combination. Again, I want to give a shout out to Middlesex County. But can we come back to that question, Mahen?

The no interviews on the prisoners, who came up with that? Somebody before I was Governor, that actually was a mistake. That's been withdrawn, so that's no longer valid. That was from some old protocol and we've lifted that, and so that's not relevant.

I may be the titular head of the Democratic Party, but I'm not the titular head of the Middlesex County Democrats. I don't have any insight on that, so let me find out more about that and come back to you if I've got any insight. My guess is I won't, but if I do, I'll come back to you. Thank you for that. Sir, do you have one? You're good? Anybody else I'm missing back there? Brent? Are we going to be able to make this a two-act opera today and not a three-act opera?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: At least I'm pretty fun. Your conversations with Mnuchin and federal officials you just mentioned, is there an assurance now that you'll get more flexibility with state aid? Have they promised more aid? There are 670 licensed long-term care facilities in the state according to the Healthcare Association of New Jersey. How many have at least one COVID case?

Jersey City's mayor now says he plans to open up some parks soon. Any similar plans to open up parks and golf courses? People apparently really want to golf. I don't know why, but they do.

Do you think there'll be enough money to cover unemployment insurance? Or will you have to turn to federal aid at all, if that's possible?

Governor Phil Murphy: So I'll give you some quick thoughts. I think, Judy, you'll want to come back to the second one, which is how many of the 670 licensed – and by the way, folks may be scratching their head on what the denominator is. We had been using 375 because when we started this six or seven weeks ago, we weren't including assisted living. Similar, but not exactly the core of those facilities that we had defined. We got no assurances, but I think we had a good conversation, Brent, that leads us to a better place, but we will not declare victory until we're in the end zone.

And in terms of the administration's general, so that's related specifically to the CARES Act. As it relates to the general posture of the administration, I would say they have been somewhere between open and receptive. But there's, you know, we're going to still have a "Where's the beef?" moment here until this actually gets across the goal line. And as I mentioned earlier, Senator McConnell, I mentioned the other day, his comments don't help us here.

But the President himself, to his credit, said the right things in public, was open to it in private with me and on the video call, the Vice President was certainly open.

I hadn't seen that on Jersey City. I would just say this, and Mayor Fulop is doing a great job. I had a thrill yesterday with Mayor Baraka, he had me on his Facebook nightly Town Hall, which was very cool. He's doing an extraordinary job. I think Mayor Fulop, likewise. These are our two biggest cities and I take my hat off to each of them. But there's only one set of Executive Orders that bind and that matter, and those are the ones that come from us. That's state parks and county parks and golf is as it is for the time being. If there's anything new on that, and we know those are the ones that come up most often and we get it. We understand folks want to get outside and get fresh air, but we just cannot allow folks to congregate. When we think we can responsibly either tweak or reverse those decisions, we will, but that's a decision that I make, along with Matt and others.

Unemployment insurance, I can't recall, Rob, whether he addressed this, Matt, earlier. But so far, so good. But the numbers are, what did he say, we've paid out already \$1 billion?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, fortunately, we've built up a substantial surplus in the UI fund over the past decade, since the end of the last recession. Unfortunately, we're seeing a historic number of claims come in. There is a possibility, and this is true for every state in the country, that we may turn to the feds for borrowing. More broadly, as the Governor has spoken about, we may need to access the federal window for bridge loans more broadly for the state, just given the fiscal impact.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll make two quick comments and then I'll turn it over to Judy on how many COVID cases in the licensed long-term care facilities. Number one, I don't see any – and by the way, I'm proud, if you go up right to the front end of the coronavirus crisis in New Jersey, I'm incredibly proud of the fact that we had increased our surpluses two years in a row. We put a budget up for a third, bigger increase, rainy day fund. We were able to clip our outstanding indebtedness. We made historic pension payments. We were going in the right direction. As Mike Tyson would remind us, everyone's got a plan until you get punched in the face, and we've been punched in the face.

I'd say one thing is that I don't see any scenario right now, so I'm a guy who wants to reduce indebtedness, not increase it. I don't see any scenario where we get out of this without having to borrow a meaningful amount of money. I just don't see it. Even if it's a bridge borrowing through the fed program. And by the way, importantly, we would want to make sure any borrowing we did had no prepayment penalties. So in other words, if you borrowed when there was still uncertainty as there is right now, in terms of whether or not you're going to get federal cash assistance, you could see the need for both. I think it's and/both, but if you got the cash, you could use that to address and pay down the debt.

If you're unemployed out there, and the numbers are staggering, please God, we are doing everything we can. This will give you no solace, because I know folks are still frustrated by how long it's taking to get through on the phones or to get through when they log on a website. Again, this is not to make you feel any better. Our performance relative to other states is literally night and day. I think our team at the Department of Labor, beginning with Commissioner Asaro-Angelo and their whole squad, should be very proud of that. Again, that doesn't make you feel any better if you haven't got through yet, but we looked at other data today and talked

about other data. All I can say is, as bad as this is, you're better being in New Jersey than you are anywhere else in America. Again, that gives you no solace but they deserve some credit for what they've done. Judy, of all the long-term care facilities, defined in the broadest sense, how many COVID positive do we have?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're tracking 375 long-term care facilities, 199 assisted living; 474 have identified at least one COVID positive case.

Governor Phil Murphy: So your denominator, Brent, just to make the point, an obvious one, is different than Judy's yours is different than what Brent had, so. I'm going to start to mask up. As I do, Colonel Pat Callahan reminds me that, at a minimum, and we think this number is bigger, but at a minimum, we could identify \$120 million of PPE that we've spent so far, and we've got a lot more orders outstanding. That number is, without any question, I was gonna say overwhelming probability that number will go up. That number will go up, period.

I want to thank Commissioner Judy Persichilli for all of her extraordinary leadership, Dr. Ed. Lifshitz, thank you so much to each of you and your teams. Ed, thank you for everything you do. Colonel Pat Callahan, bless you for your extraordinary leadership. Jared, Matt, each and every one of you. Again, tomorrow is electronic paper unless you hear from us otherwise. At the moment we'll be together Monday at 1:00 p.m. unless you hear otherwise, and that will depend on the White House. In the meantime, enjoy this beautiful spring day, folks, but responsibly. Please, please, please stay home, stay away from each other, get some fresh air. But we are winning this. There's no question we are winning. Not without casualty. Look at the enormity of the lives lost, the precious lives, bless you each and every one. Brett, good protocol there, by the way. But we are not out of the woods yet. We are not home, folks. So please, particularly in a day as beautiful as this. stay the course. Do the things that Judy's telling all of us to do, including yours truly. God bless you all and thank you.

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