

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: September 23rd, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. Happy first day of fall. The Germans call this weather [Kisavetta]. I think closer to home, it is a day that the Lord made, it is a week that the Lord made. This is an extraordinary week of weather folks, please get out there and enjoy it. Happy Birthday Congressman Tom Malinowski, Happy Birthday to the Boss, Bruce Springsteen, and Happy Birthday to a guy I spoke with this morning and very good friend, Tinton Falls Mayor Vito Perillo. Vito turned 95 today. He's the mayor, he's not the retired mayor, he's the current mayor of Tinton Falls. He won in a bruising election a couple of years ago. We talk about folks in the Greatest Generation who we have lost and we will never forget their service to our nation and the lives they lived. Vito is a World War II Veteran, the United States Navy, fought in the South Pacific in World War II and again I repeat, he's the current mayor of Tinton Falls. So to all those three guys, and to everyone else today celebrating a birthday, Happy, Happy Birthday.

With me to my right, the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the State's Epidemiologist, another familiar face, Dr. Christina Tan, great to have you both. To my left, the guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan. We have the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples with us. Good afternoon, everybody.

So tomorrow morning, as we previously announced I think on Monday, I'll be hosting a Facebook Live Chat with Dr. Tony Fauci about our fight against the coronavirus. The livestream will be available on my Facebook page, so go to Facebook.com and then slash Governor Phil Murphy. And please join us live at 11:15 a.m. again tomorrow, September 24th. I'm really looking forward to my discussion with Dr. Fauci. I hope you'll all

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join in. He's been really good to us as a state, whether it's on a VTC call in a group or in private conversations. He's married to a Jersey gal from Livingston and he's got a special place in his heart, or we have a special place as a state in his heart, really excited about that.

Also tomorrow, the Senate and Assembly are scheduled to vote on the next state budget, which will take effect for the nine-month 2021 fiscal year which begins on October 1st. All in all, I am proud of the budget that we have agreed upon. First and foremost, the budget lives up to our most important objective, preparing our state for a stronger, fairer and more resilient future. It protects the increased investments we have made over the past two years in our public education system, and in our classrooms it will continue our work to expand pre-k opportunities statewide. It maintains vital tuition assistance for our college students and protects job training programs to ensure more New Jerseyans can get a jumpstart in a good career. It invests in key infrastructure to provide cleaner air and water and better transportation options for our residents.

I'm especially proud that our budget will include meaningful tax fairness by reinstating the millionaire's tax and therefore providing direct tax relief to hundreds of thousands of middle class and working families with children. The budget will further our ongoing effort to restore fiscal responsibility and accountability, live up to our obligations, and ensure the strong surplus we need for the unknowns ahead. The budget safeguards key programs that our families and residents are relying upon to see themselves through the pandemic, especially our most vulnerable residents, and does not pull the rug out from under them.

Yes, not everything I proposed or that the Legislature wanted is included in this final budget, but I will keep advocating for the programs and causes I believe in and I know the Legislature will do likewise. That's the way the budget process works. I will say, especially on baby bonds, it is something that I remain committed to and I put it very much in the category of not if, but when.

But with all our state is facing, this budget will do tremendous good. I'm grateful to Senate President Steve Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, to the budget chair Senator Paul Sarlo and Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin and all of our Legislative partners. Because of the work we did together, New Jersey will have a budget that will help us grow stronger, fairer and more resilient, even as we continue to combat the ongoing pandemic and guide our restart and recovery. I look forward to tomorrow's votes and to signing this new budget into effect.

Next, as it was reported yesterday, the list of states from which travelers to New Jersey are being advised to observe a 14-day self-quarantine period has been updated. The list grows; the other available avenues, Judy, narrow. The 35 states and territories in red on this map have over a seven-day rolling average either – and it is either – more than 10 new cases of coronavirus per 100,000 residents or a daily positivity rate greater than 10%. Anyone entering New Jersey from one of these states or reentering in the case of traveling residence is advised to observe a two-week self-quarantine period and to get a coronavirus test. Visit at the bottom there [covid19.nj.gov/travel](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/travel) to learn whether you should be self-quarantining and to fill out the Department of Health's travel survey.

And on the subject of testing, the testing program which we announced last month, Judy, for residents in senior housing in multiple cities continues to move forward. Last week the program began in Paterson at the Governor Paterson Tower 1 and is progressing to the other senior housing buildings throughout Paterson until October 29th. I want to give a shout out and thank Congressman Bill Pascrell for his partnership in getting this program moving, for his continued work on behalf of his constituents, and for his great efforts on behalf of our entire state. I just spoke with Bill and furthermore, congratulated him on filling the enormous shoes of John Lewis as the new Chair of the Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee, a really important position, and he will do an incredible job there, as he always does.

Likewise, testing for senior citizens continues in both Camden and Elizabeth, and in Newark testing begins today and will run through October 19th. The testing, I want to make sure everyone knows this, provided through this program is available only to the residents of the senior housing where personnel will be set up and residents will be advised of the dates and times when testing will be available. These tests are not open to the general public. However, there remain numerous testing facilities, I think numerous understates the case dramatically by the way, numerous testing facilities in every county where you can get tested, and you can visit right there, [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov) and click the link for "Get Tested" underneath the search bar to be directed to the locator page.

Now with that, Judy, let's look at the overnight numbers. Tonight we're reporting an additional 430 positive test results. We may not do this every day, but I will do it today, and as we see that the data suggests we should, we will do it. 53 tests initially included in the reported counts on Monday and Tuesday have been removed for being either duplicates or from out of state. That has been the case from time to time. The numbers lately, I think largely because our testing numbers are so large, the numbers feel like they've gone up a little bit, so we've removed those. The new overall count cumulatively since March 4th is 200,998. For all tests recorded on September 19th, the spot positivity of 1.93%, that's good, under 2%.

The statewide rate of transmission currently sits at 1.15. Judy, you warned us that this would be the case, it would stick up around there for a while. It is. We'd like that to get to below one. We keep a close eye on that but it is about what we expected.

In our hospitals as of last night. 231 confirmed COVID patients, another 228 persons under investigation awaiting results, the total is 459. Of these, 90 were in intensive care units, 31 were using ventilators. And today, with a heavy heart, we are reporting seven additional deaths bringing the total of confirmed deaths to 14,291. Each of the newly reported confirmed deaths occurred, by the way, within the past week, Judy. The number of probable deaths remains at 1,791. And again, as we have been reporting lately, at the risk of comparing apples to oranges because they're not in the confirmed numbers, there were 10 deaths reported in our hospitals yesterday. Again, not lab confirmed yet.

Now, as we do every day, let's remember a few more New Jerseyans who COVID-19 has taken away. We start by remembering Lois Ann Tack, Lo, as she was called and known by many, was a longtime resident of Scotch Plains and called Leisure Village East in Lakewood her home for the past 25 years. She grew up in the Vailsburg section in Newark. Her dad, in fact was a retired Newark police lieutenant, Pat. She and her late husband Edward moved to Scotch Plains shortly after their marriage.

Lois was a trailblazer who became the first woman in our state to work as an automotive salesperson when she took a job selling cars at Ward Ford in Newark. Lois was an eternal optimist, as evidenced among other things by her love of the New York Mets, and she was an avid bridge player too. Living in Lakewood also meant that she was close to the Jersey Shore, a special place in her life since childhood. Lois leaves behind her children, William, Patricia Ann and Bob with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Monday and their families, along with her granddaughters Christine and Stephanie and many relatives and friends. She was a Jersey Original. May God bless and watch over Lois and all who loved her.

Next we recall Joseph Rotolo. I don't have to tell you he had a big family. He lived in Mahwah, but had also called Palisades Park and Kenalog home. Joseph was a proud United States Army veteran, a member of the Seventh Infantry Hourglass Division during the Korean War. He was also, and this is important, one of the so-called chosen few, a survivor of one of the fiercest battles of the entire Korean conflict. Back home in New Jersey, Joseph made a name for himself in the business community of Palisades Park as the owner of Rotolo Realty and in the 1970s and 80s, as an owner and partner in the Soap Factory Disco. He was also a member of the Lions Club and the Palisades Park Ambulance Corps and served on the Palisades Park Board of Education, playing a role in the planning and construction of the borough's first high school, which was built in 1968.

Joseph was 89 years old. He is now reunited with his beloved wife Carol, to whom he was devoted until her passing in 2009. I should note that today would have been Carol's birthday, so keep her in your prayers as well. Joseph leaves behind his son Joseph, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Monday and he is, by the way, a municipal judge in Ramsey. Joseph's daughter-in-law Carol and daughter Lynn, along with his four granddaughters, Leanna, Allison, Julia and Trisha and six grandchildren, Isaiah, Kaylie, Myles, Alexandra, Oliver, and Hudson. We thank Joseph for his service to our great nation and to his community, and may God bless him and his memory. For Joseph, by the way, we'll hope for a win tonight for his beloved New York Yankees.

And today we also remember Peter Altamura, Jr. Peter was born in Hoboken and raised in Weehawken, but Saddlebrook was his home for the past 47 years. He had a 40-year career in public education, having been a classroom teacher and guidance counselor in Bergenfield. He too was a proud veteran, a member of the

United States Army during the Vietnam War. Peter was a man of great faith, a parishioner of St. Philip the Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Saddlebrook and a longtime CCD teacher. But through it all, he found his greatest joy in the presence of family and friends, especially seeing them at the Jersey Shore.

Peter leaves behind his wife Helen, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Monday. By the way, they were married 52 years, and Judy, they got married one week after he graduated from college. He also leaves behind their children, daughters Kimberly and Melissa and son Scott and their spouses. Peter is also survived by his grandson Jonathan, and will be remembered fondly by many in-laws, cousins, nieces and nephews. He was 74 years old. God bless you and watch over you, Peter.

And finally today we remember a New Jersey icon, Belleville's Tommy DeVito, one of the founding members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, the Four Seasons. He remained active in the entertainment business his entire life, even releasing an album of Italian folk songs in 2006. He was 92 years old when he passed away on Monday in Nevada. Remember, in addition to Tommy, it was Nick Massey, who also passed away in the year 2000, and the surviving members the genius Bob Gaudio and the one and only Frankie Valli. Tommy was, by all accounts a hellraiser, certainly in his youth and throughout his life. I want to thank my dear friend Ralph Caputo for raising this one with me. I also reached out to Tommy's daughter Darcel Collins, and later in life when he was on tough times another childhood friend who had allowed him to live with him when Tommy was famous and this guy wasn't, he became famous and helped Tommy, including getting him parts in movies and that is New Jersey's one and only Joe Pesci.

We remember everyone who has passed due to COVID-19. Even as the numbers of deaths we report every day continue to be low, we cannot take any solace in that. Our goal must be to get them to zero; not three or five or seven like today, but zero.

Finally, for today, I want to give a shout out to Manisha Merchandani. Manisha is a small business owner who has put her energy behind three franchised Great Clips hair salons. Pat, I know you got a haircut this morning. I don't know that you were at Great Clips but as I said to him earlier, he got his money's worth. These are businesses she built from the ground up and which support more than 20 jobs. When the pandemic forced Great Clips to temporarily close its doors, Manisha made sure her staff was taken care of while she simultaneously worked to secure the funding she would need to pay the bills and position Great Clips for reopening.

She found her partner in the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and she was able to secure a combination of small business grants and loans that she needed. Because of this, all three Great Clips salons were able to reopen in June, with 18 of her employees returning, I had the opportunity to check in with Manisha on Monday, and today her business continues to rebound. Manisha asked me specifically to give a shout out to her incredible staff, her team, for returning back to work despite the challenges during the pandemic and we wish them nothing but the best going forward. I'm proud that the EDA was there to support Manisha and Great Clips, and so many other small businesses and entrepreneurs across our state. Check them out, by the way at GreatClips.com, and then check out her three locations in Chester, Wharton and Newton.

That's all I've got for today. To everyone, I know it has been a long haul but we're only going to beat this thing if we keep it up. Please keep social distancing. Keep masking up, keep washing your hands frequently with soap and water. We want therapeutics, they're going to come, I'm sure. We want a vaccine. It will come, maybe more than one I'm sure, but we have neither right now. We're left with the basics. We have got to continue to lean on those basics.

Look, by the way, at what's happening right now in Great Britain where cases have been rising and restrictions are now back in place. I desperately hope we don't have to do that here. And the more we keep up with our new routines, the better our chances are that we keep our numbers low and dropping and we keep moving forward. You've been extraordinary folks, let's stay at it.

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

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. We have been working hard to establish a robust contact tracing program in our state. We have boosted the workforce considerably and launched a public awareness initiative to make residents more familiar with how contact tracing works, and certainly to encourage them to participate. Contact tracing is key to any public health effort to contain the spread of disease. However, it can have limitations when individuals don't cooperate, or if they have close contact with individuals they don't know.

Yesterday, the CDC released a study of two contact tracing programs in North Carolina that found challenges with participation among the residents. Although the two county health departments studied investigated the majority of their cases, a high proportion of persons with COVID-19 did not report their contacts. Therefore many contacts were not reached, reducing the impact of contact tracing as a mitigation strategy. The CDC study found improved timeliness of contact tracing and community engagement are needed to interrupt virus transmission.

To enhance the New Jersey's contact tracing efforts, we are enlisting technology. We have begun piloting an exposure notification mobile app. In addition to testing the app with state workers internally, we also have been testing the app with three colleges: Montclair State University, Passaic County Community College and Stockton University. The app communicates through Bluetooth on mobile devices. It will detect and log anonymous codes from devices with the app that are in close contact, within six feet of a user for 10 minutes or longer. You may not even know that you've been exposed, but the app will tell you. The app can alert users if they have been potentially exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and provide information on what to do next.

We recognize that protecting individuals privacy is key and the app does not use location data or collect personal information. It also offers daily information on COVID-19 numbers, deaths, cases, hospitalizations by county, and will also provide symptom tracking. This testing period is vital to improve the user experience and to resolve any technical issues that arise. In total, we've had 130 individuals piloting the app. It has been receiving good reviews from testers, 4.6 out of 5 stars, and the issues raised by those who found problems are being addressed. The pilot will wrap up this week, and we will examine all the feedback received and make necessary improvements with the app developer before rolling it out statewide.

To move on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 459 hospitalizations, with 90 individuals in critical care and 34% of those critical care patients are on ventilators. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. The total remains 57.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.1%, Black 18.3%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.5% and other 1.9%. At the state veterans homes and the psychiatric hospitals, the numbers remain the same.

The daily percent positivity in New Jersey as of September 19th is 1.93%. The Northern part of the state reports 1.86, the Central part of the state 1.92, and the Southern part of the state 2.06.

Lastly, we are beginning to receive reports of positive cases in our schools. Each case is being investigated and contact traced to determine if there is in-school transmission. Our goal is to identify, isolate and mitigate as quickly as possible and share that information when it is complete.

I need to remind you of this virus is still with us. Stay safe and remember for each of us, for all of us, please take the call.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. That last point, I mean, we've said it now almost countless times, it's inevitable. We know we've had cases in schools, we just haven't been able to tie it down for sure whether it was in the school or through some other non-school activity. It's been a heavy dose of non-school activity up till now, but it's just a matter of time. Thank you for everything and thank you for the report.

Pat, great to have you. Anything on compliance, our team of firefighters, weather. Unless I'm mistaken, the weather's awfully good, so I assume that's not on our list today, knock on wood. Great to have you. Please.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. There are no compliance issues reported to the ROIC in the last two evenings. And with regards to our forest fire service, it's out in California, the incident commander out there reported to OEM that they are healthy and well and

certainly contributing to the efforts out there. We were contacted by California today, requesting a two-week extension, so we're working through the logistics right now to swap out the current crew with a new fresh crew, so we'll keep you posted on that as well, Governor, about how that swap out goes. We're continuing to support California in all of their efforts in fighting that millions and millions of acres of forest fire. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Unbelievable, thank you for that and thank God they're safe. You know, one thing on compliance which probably wouldn't rise to the level of a law enforcement matter, we heard this today from a friend of ours who owns and operates a physical fitness facility. She said that there were an uncomfortable number of examples of folks showing up, almost as though we've got security cameras as people walk into the gym or the yoga studio or the Pilates studio wearing their face covering. They walk in the door, they take it off immediately and say, we all know this is about politics, so I just want the record to show I wore it as I came in. It ain't about politics, folks. This is about science. It's about data. It's about public health. And if you take your mask off inside of one of those places, you're going to get thrown out. It just is not on. So either the operators have done a really good job, but I want to plead especially with them, don't let anybody do that in your place. And as individuals, folks, that's not the point. This isn't just to get in the door. This is especially when you're inside. The window is narrow on when you don't have to wear it inside and it's basically when you're putting the fork of food in your mouth or you're having a sip of wine or whatever it is at your table. Please, please, this is tried and true. It works. Please keep your face coverings on when you're inside. So thank you for that and Pat, thank you for the report.

We'll start over here. Matt, good to see you. Before we do just to say I have lost Mahen. I'm sure he's here somewhere. There he is. Tomorrow we're virtual and unless you hear otherwise, we'll be here at one o'clock.

I thought we had a good discussion with the White House on Monday. There's been some stuff that's sort of leaked out of that conversation. It was probably the most comprehensive discussion, I think, that they have hosted on vaccines and on PPE and stockpiles. Judy, we had a really good meeting on Friday, Judy, that you chaired on vaccines. People ask us this all time. We're going to make sure that we kick the tires. There's a federal process. There are private sector players who are making their own statements and making their data on trials transparent, which I think gives people a lot of comfort. And importantly, Judy, and we can go into this at some point, there's a very rigorous State of New Jersey process that all of this has to go through before it goes live. We want to make sure folks hear that. But I thought it was a good, comprehensive discussion. With that, Dustin, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. On schools, is the state going to be making public in any way the details, like the school names and locations of where these positive cases are? And just a few questions on Motor Vehicles. Despite officials saying that lining up isn't necessary, customers are still doing it. Is there anything being done to limit lining up or to monitor the lines? Many of the customers that we talked to today were trying to conduct transactions that can't be done online.

Are any efforts being made to help those people, or people without internet access? Agency officials recommend checking the website for up-to-date information about locations that have net capacity but in Wallington today, it took more than four hours for the site to update. Anything being done to ensure that's more accurate?

And finally, Motor Vehicles said on Twitter that people joining the line at 8:00 a.m. are getting tickets just like the people camped out but agencies are reaching capacity before that. So which is the case? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure I'm going to have a comprehensive set of answers on Motor Vehicles Commission, but let me start with schools. The answer is yes. Judy and the Department of Education are jointly, I think it'll be sooner than later, trying to come up with a nomenclature or a structure for how we're going to report this and the extent to how specific it is will somewhat also depend on privacy matters, obviously. But that is in process and I think it's sooner than later. Dustin, I don't want to hang my hat on a particular day. But putting a structure around that so that we're sort of not one-offing is something that we are committed to.

I will defer. I mean, Matt Platkin is with us. I don't know that I've got a whole lot to say to you on the Motor Vehicles other than they're still digging out. I did ask Administrator Sue Fulton and she is working on one of your questions, if you don't have access to the internet, if you don't regularly email, the example I used I think a few meetings ago, a few press conferences ago was a senior citizen who may not have been regularly online. I don't have the specific answer for you but I know they're absolutely working on that. You know, folks who are lining up and cannot get it done online, well, the only silver lining to that is they need to be there.

I want to come back to you on the Wallington question to give you a more specific answer. Mahen, where are you? I've lost you. Make sure we come back, I want to answer some of these more specifically.

Listen, if you can do it online, please do it online. There are still people who it sounds like that wasn't in your spot check today, Dustin but there are still people showing up to do things in person that they could do online. That's a block of folks that we could take care of in a way that does not make you get online.

Secondly, if you are frustrated, I don't blame you. Sue Fulton doesn't blame you. We're still working through this. Sue, I'm not surprised, has weighed in and I will just quote her. On every weekday, customers arriving at 8:00 a.m. are ticketed just as those who camp out, the exceptions are Newark Regional and Wayne, which is under construction. And again, beyond that, we will come back to you with some more of the specifics.

The most important part, I'm not making light of MVC, but I was going to raise this on schools and I'm glad you asked it. We had a very robust conversation on this earlier in terms of finding a structure, a nomenclature, a place that we can put that information and we're committed to getting there sooner or later. Thank you. Mahen, you'll come back on a couple of the other points here, if you could.

Hold on, I've got one more from Sue, Dustin, for you. Wallington customers, she's saying, arriving at 8:00 a.m. on a weekday are ticketed. I think maybe it might make sense, Mahen, if I could do your job for you, to connect Sue directly with Dustin, if you could. Thank you. Brent, good afternoon.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: We're now almost three weeks into gyms and indoor dining reopening. Have we seen any spikes at all from these? What are you looking for to increase capacity limits at businesses across the state?

Students who have traveled out of state, a reader asked about this. If a student travels out of state meaning K through 12, will they be required to quarantine and work remotely, even though it's only suggested? One principal told someone that no, they don't have to quarantine because it's not mandatory.

Parents of a teen were charged in Massachusetts for hosting a house party that forced a school to go remote. Has New Jersey issued any citations for house parties linked to outbreaks? And if not, why?

There's a significant rise of cases in Gloucester County. Is that because of Rowan University, or why is that?

And the last one from Tom Davis of Patch. Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, who I know you know well, Governor, last week laid out a priority list for a vaccine. What are your thoughts on that and will New Jersey do the same?

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, tell me if you disagree here. We're not aware of any specific outbreaks on gyms or indoor dining. However, there are sports-related outbreaks that we don't have any evidence are related to the sport, but may well be related to adjacent activities. We've said this before, the whole team goes out for a pizza and they're on top of each other. But in terms of the regular notion of a gym or indoor dining, we're not aware at this point.

I think the extent to which, I would say a sustained lack of outbreaks in either gyms or indoor dining would ultimately, I can't tell you when, will ultimately lead to a decision on capacity.

If students travel out of state, they're subject to the same deal, right Judy? I mean, we're not politely asking on that one. You've got to hole up, do it responsibly, register with the Department of Health, get tested? Agree?

Yeah, I think Pat, you tell me, if a parent or a kid hosted a party that was in willful violation of our restrictions, would we be prepared to charge them? The answer has got to be yes. I just don't know whether or not we --

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I don't know of any of those large house parties that we've reported, Brent, that the owner or host or the party was not cited for an EO violation.

Governor Phil Murphy: You don't know of any that were not cited, right?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Were not cited or just warned. To my knowledge and what was reported to us was that they were all cited with the EO violation.

Governor Phil Murphy: I read of one in Deal today in the press that happened, apparently in June. That was a comedy gathering of some sort. I think there may well be, I'm not aware of that one. There may well be some in the past that we were never made aware of that may have may come to light, but the extent to which we're made aware of them, charges are being pursued.

Judy, any color on Gloucester County and the extent to which that's Rowan? It's got to be partly Rowan, I would think. And separately, yes, Judy hosted this meeting I referred to a few minutes ago, a very thorough discussion of protocols, priorities as it relates to vaccines. We're preparing, we don't know when or what yet, you may have seen Johnson & Johnson talking today about going to trials with a one-shot vaccine that does not require deep freeze temperatures. That's potentially a game changer. We don't know yet what it will look like or when it will come, but that does not mean that the preparations on the ground are not being laid. So Judy, Gloucester and vaccine priorities.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're keeping a close eye on Gloucester, their percent positivity over time is above the statewide average. So far, the biggest outbreak was in off-campus housing. On the vaccine, the Communicable Disease Service and our internal vaccine team meet every day, receiving information from primarily the CDC, awaiting approvals. When they do come, they'll have identification of the priority populations. At that point, we'll be prepared to allocate whatever doses we get appropriately. I don't know, Tina, you've been involved. Your team knows a lot about vaccines.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Yeah, you know, this will be an evolving work in progress. Because again, there are a lot of assumptions about what will be available early on versus what might be available subsequently. With different planning assumptions, as far as recognizing that there might be limited amounts at the very beginning that we have to be very mindful of priority groups where we can really make a huge difference for the public health impact of those vaccines.

Governor Phil Murphy: I walked away with a deep impression that again, without knowing the what yet or the when, but I was really impressed with the structure and the thinking that is around this whole question of vaccine distribution, priorities, etc. Thank you. Sir, good afternoon.

Reporter: All right, good afternoon, Gov. Nursing home operators say that they've gotten point of care rapid antigen testing systems from the federal government, but that the state health department won't allow them to be used. Why not? Would the health department approve of the antigen tests if they were done more frequently?

Another question, the federal government permits indoor visits at long-term care facilities if there haven't been any cases for 14 days, while New Jersey requires 28 days with no cases. Why is the state's requirement twice as long as the feds?

Do you have any update on the Abbott rapid tests the federal government plans to distribute to states, and would long-term care facilities still be the main recipients of any tests the state receives? We have some questions from our readers as well and people watching the live stream. What's going on with the ventilator total? Is that the same people or are people coming off and going back on? Or going on and coming back off? And also on a similar subject, why have they stopped breaking down the hospitalizations by regions on the website dashboard?

Also from our readers, several states –

Governor Phil Murphy: Last one, please.

Reporter: Okay. Several states are releasing details about how people are contracting COVID now, based on the information from their contact tracers. For instance, 10% of cases from indoor dining 50% from house parties. Will New Jersey be releasing similar information? And if so, when?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, thank you. Judy, you've addressed the antigen tests at long-term care, but maybe hit that briefly. Indoor visits, I think your question is, we're stricter than the federal guidelines?

Reporter: For nursing homes specifically. The federal guidelines are 14 days and our state's guidelines are 28 days no cases for visits at long-term care facilities.

Governor Phil Murphy: I have no problem being more conservative on that, I will just say, but Judy, you can talk about that. Abbott rapid tests, please also Judy weigh in on that. That was part of a discussion we had with the White House on Monday as well. Ventilators, you all are far more qualified on these than I, as well as hospitalizations by region and how folks have contracted COVID, which has been obviously a source of discussion here almost every day. We talked about schools, indoor dining, gyms, etc. So please, Judy, any thoughts?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Let's start with the antigen tests. The antigen test, as you know detects the virus. It's more sensitive when someone is actively symptomatic. We've been careful about the use of antigen tests because of its sensitivity and specificity, I should say more sensitivity. We're working very closely with Dr. Kern, who is head of our labs, to develop a directive that we will be sharing with the long-term care industry about the use of the antigen test and how to follow up with a PCR test if you get a false positive. That's been pretty well explained at this point to the long-term care industry. We're on the phone with them every Thursday, and we'll be revisiting the use of the antigen test with them.

As far as indoor visits, we know how anxious people are to have more indoor visits. Again, we are more conservative at this point in time. We are reviewing the CMS guidance that just came out, of which we are more conservative, some people would say more stringent. We are going to look at our guidance and determine whether we can move it closer to the CMS guidance with the appropriate safeguardings that we would need. The 28 day, I'm going to let you talk about the incubation period because that's really important versus the 14 day for visits.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Typically, how our Communicable Disease Service approaches when we declare an outbreak over or how long we would feel comfortable before giving an all clear is waiting two incubation periods, which is how we derived the 28 days. And you know, this is typically how we approach all of our different outbreak investigations, whether it's related to SARS COV-2 infections or other infections with other respiratory viruses or other infectious agents.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: And on the Abbott Binax, which is at this point the technology that has the highest sensitivity and specificity, right now that is not to be disseminated generally. The federal government has control of that equipment and therefore control of who gets that for testing. But we're keeping an eye on that because it is as far as we know, a very good antigen test.

Governor Phil Murphy: So Judy, the ventilators over the past seven days, ventilators in use, 40, 36, 27,39, 32, 34, 31. Is that the same people, different people? What's your sense of that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: It's in use, so it could very well be the same people. And what we are learning in discussions with our CEOs of our hospitals just last week is that the treatment protocols and standards of care are changing. We're learning more every day about how to treat individuals with the virus and using therapeutics sooner, those that we have, the antiviral and the steroid. Using high flow oxygen, proning patients, turning patients over to take tension off the heart and the lungs are proving to be pretty effective so that we're not getting to ventilator use.

Governor Phil Murphy: I had this conversation with Kevin O'Dowd, who has been overseeing the South region and just the whole approach to the virus, especially Tina, with use of ventilators has changed dramatically since six months ago. Real quick, hospitalizations by region and how folks are getting the virus?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, the first thing is the contact tracing by how. We're starting to collect that information and we hope at some point that our contact tracing dashboard can be more robust in that regard. I know that Tina looks at it.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Well, I think the other thing that we have to keep in mind is that a lot of times we won't necessarily know what might be the source definitively of an individual's infection with SARS COV-2, and while we can make association sometimes between a contact and a particular case,

probably I would say the vast majority of our cases you'll never know what the actual source is. Because the fact is, as long as you have SARS COV-2 virus in the community, it's going to be kind of hard to necessarily pinpoint where a person might have become infected.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: And hospitalizations by type, I'll have to check why we're not by region.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure why that is. We had been the whole way so we'll come back to you. Mahen, can you come back? Thank you, sir. Dave, how are you?

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. One question here.

Governor Phil Murphy: Geez, Matt, slip him a \$20, I'll pay you back later.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: As amateur meteorologists, I know you and Pat love tracking storms and forecasting the weather and so you're no doubt aware that it is getting colder, especially at night and soon outdoor dining will be curtailed. What's your thinking on expanding the 25% limited capacity on indoor dining? You just said you're looking for sustained periods of time for indoor dining with no spikes or incidents. Please explain what you mean by sustained period.

And the reason obviously, Governor, you understand this is crucial for the restaurant industry is, you know, it helps them plan if they know, we need to do see these metrics for this period of time to be able to get to the point where these restaurants can break even, because a lot of them need 50% to 60% of capacity. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, and thank you for your being so economical. By the way, many in fairness to them, and we speak to them all the time, not just the association, but the individual restaurateurs, even at 50% it's hardly Nirvana. I don't have a specific answer for you and I don't think Judy has a specific answer, either. This is a step that we took, as you know, with great trepidation, we held off, particularly based on what we saw happening in other states.

The very good news is this has been now since September, gyms since September 1st and indoor dining since September 4th, so you're now 19 days into that reality. I hope it's sooner than later. The weather, obviously, is an X factor here. This week, by the way, it's with us. So please, take advantage of it. I can't tell you what next week looks like. Increasingly, we've seen a lot of these mushroom outdoor heaters, the propane, in most cases, heaters that have popped up -- please use them carefully -- in a lot of restaurants. Those aren't cheap, either, by the way, which we recognize. But all I can say is Dave, I don't have a specific answer. I don't think Judy does but it's something we're looking at we hope, again, sooner than later. And we get completely these restaurants, listen, you need to -- okay, do I buy another one of those mushroom propane heaters or do I put that money that I otherwise would have put there into Plexiglass between tables inside to allow our capacity to expand?

It does give me the opportunity before we go to Elise to close out. It would sure be nice if the federal government, through Congress, a bill signed by the President, stepped up as the Chairman of the Federal Reserve said yesterday was essential, with another big slug. Because a lot of that would not just go to states and counties and localities that we need, but it would go to the industries, especially small businesses, especially hospitality, that desperately need help. Thank you. Elise, good to see you.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Likewise, good afternoon. Your administration initially wanted \$4 billion in borrowing for the budget. Although revenue gains are better than expected, yesterday your administration agreed to another half billion dollars in borrowing. That's an amount that's well beyond tax increases that the Legislature is rejecting? What's the justification for borrowing growth of 13%. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Elise. Good to see you. Remember that any borrowing again, general statement. we're comparing our time here in terms of economic and fiscal crisis to only the 1930s and the 1860s, so you're already at a level of rarefied air.

Secondly, you're borrowing to offset revenue reductions. While revenues, we may have settled on a little bit of a stronger number than when we originally submitted, it is still off dramatically.

Thirdly, Elise, I'd say this is a negotiated budget with a lot of different levers that we're pulling. None of us wake up reflexively wanting to borrow. That includes yours truly. I think I can speak on behalf of the Legislative leadership, probably everybody in the Legislature. This is not something that you just jump at. But we need to because again, these are unprecedented times. That's one lever.

Federal, to Dave's question, federal cash is another lever which we have not yet pulled. I've said right from the get go, privately and publicly, the extent to which we do get federal cash or the extent to which revenues indeed turn out to be better than we think, at or near the very top of the list of what we would do with those proceeds would be debt reduction.

The budget still includes, even though we added collectively and negotiated that quite constructively with the Legislature, we added back some amount of expenditures. There are still meaningful and deep cuts in this budget and programs that we really want to do that we can't do. And if that weren't enough, to your point, you've also got taxes in there. So it is a mix, like anything that's negotiated, you're trying to find common ground with a lot of different moving parts. Matt, anything you want to add to that?

So with that, thank you for that. Thanks to each of you. Again, I will mask up as we always do. We will be virtually with you tomorrow. We will be with you in person on Friday. I know Pat's going to have a very specific commercial for a very fun event that is near and dear to many, including to him and me, on Friday. Judy and Tina, thank you as always. Pat, likewise, Jared, Matt, Mahen, the whole team. Virtually tomorrow, live and in person on Friday.

Again, please keep doing what we're doing. We clearly have some pieces of the state, Brent asked about Gloucester, Ocean County continues to be another area, Monmouth a little bit less so but also. We mentioned sporting, you know, we're working with sporting pieces, schools, elected officials up by the way, hats off to elected officials on both sides of the aisle. It's extraordinary how folks have come together. Faith leaders, we've seen that in and around the Lakewood community especially. We'll continue to work with them, proprietors themselves, school leadership. But you all have done an extraordinary job. Stay at it. Don't let the fatigue get to you, don't let up. We will get through this together. Many thanks, God bless.

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