

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: March 23rd, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

03/23/2020

Updating New Jerseyans with the latest on COVID-19. WATCH LIVE:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let's get right at it. I want to thank the overwhelming number of New Jerseyans who are heeding our call to stay home unless they are needed for our frontline response efforts. I cannot say it enough. Social distancing works and slowing the spread of COVID-19 only happens if we take steps to protect ourselves and others.

So, when we hear of people hosting parties or other gatherings we will not take it lightly. We will ask law enforcement to cite them for their irresponsible behavior, and the Attorney General will have more on that in a few minutes.

And before I continue, to all school districts we have received your questions. We continue to receive them and we need you to continue your food service operations and to provide meals to the students who need them. The reality is that schools will likely – we've not made an official decision but they will overwhelmingly likely remain closed for a long and extended period of time. And we must ensure that every student is taken care of.

There is an enormous amount going on as you can imagine. We had our pre-call earlier. I've been on with members of Congress to try to get a sense of where things stand, both on the House side but frankly even more importantly on the Senate side. Senator Menendez and I had a conversation; we've been in touch with Minority Leader's Schumer office. We continue to watch that very, very closely.

  
Back  
to top

And among other things, to beat the drum again, we are desperate for direct state cash assistance. I mentioned this before but Governor Cuomo, Governor Wolfe, Governor Lamont and I believe that our region alone is in need of something like \$100 billion and that is essential. Again, think of this. We are at the frontlines; we are at the point of attack with folks who are sick and need healthcare – in some cases hospitalization, with workers who have lost their jobs, with small businesses in particular, businesses of all shapes and sizes that are impacted.

We need to continue to do our job, and in order to do so we need the federal government to come in with a big bucket of money to help us, allow us to continue to do that. And so, we are very anxious to see where the Congressional road takes us. We have been weighing in aggressively, not just with our own Delegation but beyond as well as with other Governors.

We are doing this at noon today because we have a video call at 2:00 PM with the President, Vice President and their teams. That's the weekly Monday call. Again, I think we flipped it today. I just got off a call with the Executive Board of the AFL-CIO in New Jersey, both to update our brothers and sisters in labor as to the corona fight as well as to take some questions. As you all likely know, the AFL-CIO is a very broad labor umbrella and it includes everything from bricklayers to retail workers to firefighters and everyone in between, educators, etc. So, I want to give them a big shoutout. They gave me the opportunity in one compact gathering by telephone to give a sense of where we are.

I just got off a one-on-one call with President Trump, thanked him for help and pleaded on three different fronts: number one, to reiterate the need for personal protective equipment. And I said to the President on the phone with just the two of us, as I've said in our video gatherings, "We understand that the Lord helps those that help themselves." And so, we're doing everything we can in New Jersey led by the likes of Judy and her team and Pat and others who are turning over literally every stone. I mentioned the email address, I'll repeat it – ppedonations@njsp.org (mailto:ppedonations@njsp.org). NJSP as in New Jersey State Police. But we still need a slug of support from the federal government. We got a fraction of our ask; we need a lot more. And we're hearing this all over the state.

Secondly, I reiterated that I had hoped the Congressional road would lead toward a result with a big chunk of direct cash assistance for states. It's too early to know where that comes out. The President did indicate and acknowledge that he knows there was support for that from both sides of the aisle and we did hear that at the end of the week and over the weekend. Red and blue states agree on this.

And then, thirdly, after having gotten off a call with Judy and actually this entire team up here, I thanked the President for the particular support out of FEMA Region 2, which by the way includes two of our testing sites and I'll get to that in a minute. But I asked him for his support for four pop-up field hospitals that FEMA Region 2 would be the primary federal interface with.

The President, to his credit, said he would support that and that I should relay that on to FEMA Region 2 leadership – which we have in the intervening very few minutes between that call and being here, we have done that. Judy will go through, either today or in the coming days, as to exactly how we see capacity over the next number of weeks, but we are clearly going to need these field hospitals. And I want to thank again FEMA Region 2 for their partnership as well as President Trump personally for his support on that.

Since our briefing yesterday, 935 additional positive cases have been identified. That brings our statewide total, Judy, I believe to 2844. And as usual, Judy will go through some of the details associated with that. As I have said, as we have said, this increase is not a surprise nor is it necessarily a cause for great alarm to us seated up here. There's clearly community spread going on, and when Judy goes thorough some of the concentrations by county you'll see that.

But there's also a lot more testing going on, and we've said all along as the testing regime expands we're going to see these numbers go up in a big way. And we've been saying now for many days, these will go into the many thousands. And on the one hand, folks I'm sure will have a reaction, "Oh my Lord, that's a lot of positives." On the other hand, the more data we have at our disposal the better and more equipped we are to be able to break the back of this virus.

As we begin, as I said, more rigorous collection statewide we are in actuality getting a clearer and better sense of how far the coronavirus has already spread. We expect, as I said, these numbers to continue to rise as more testing sites open.

And I'm going to say something – I'm out over my skis and I don't ski so bear with me on this one. Some of today's numbers may include early results from Bergen Community College or we don't know yet? We don't know yet. So, I'm going to use the word 'may' still. We just got, by the way, we're doing this two hours earlier than normal and again, want to remind you of two things: the earlier we do it the less comfortable an insight we have into the data, and secondly we continue to have the gap between what the Department of Health knows in terms of the demographics of the people they test versus the increasing scaled operations by the private sector firms.

So, I'm going to keep the words in my remarks as prepared, which is today's numbers may include early results from Friday's tests at Bergen Community College. And by the way, in the coming days we know we'll be adding results not just from there but from the PNC Bank Arts Center as well as county sites.

Additionally, Homeland Security Jared Maples two to my left, in coordination with Commissioner Persichilli to my immediate right, today directed all private labs conducting COVID-19 tests to report their results directly to the Department of Health. This centralization of data is critical for us to get testing results in real time so we can make further decisions on mitigation in real time. And again, there is that gap that exists. At one level it's understandable but at a certain point it can't go on. We need that information. So, I want to thank the Director and the Commissioner for that.

Sadly, we have seven more COVID-19 related deaths to report, and as always, these families, these lost souls are in our prayers. God bless each and every one of them. Again, Judy will provide not only more color on the positive cases but also on these fatalities.

I alluded to this this morning – the drive-through testing site at the PNC Bank Arts Center opened at 8:00 AM and it quickly hit capacity. It will reopen at 8:00 AM tomorrow and every day assuming we have the supplies and the manpower and will remain open until daily capacity is met. We urge everyone to please be patient and we know this has required patience.

We've seen the stories, we've heard them directly from folks who have waited in long lines, and we please ask you to follow the directions of state and local law enforcement as well as the brave women and men of the New Jersey National Guard who are onsite. Again, I thank each and every one of them and I express our tremendous gratitude, again to FEMA Region 2, for their tremendous help in getting this site open as they did with the site at Bergen Community College; and also to the Department of Health's teams and also all the medical personnel onsite.

Additionally, and I cannot stress this enough – again, you're not hearing this for the first time – if you are not exhibiting symptoms, if you do not show signs of respiratory illness you will not be tested. We know there is pent-up demand. We get that, we understand that and we are working as best we can to ensure that the testing resources we have available to us are properly distributed and preserved for residents who are exhibiting symptoms and need to be tested. So, please help us out there.

Also, I mentioned Union County over the weekend, I want to mention that Hudson County has announced the opening of a testing site for its residents and first responders at Hudson Regional Hospital in Secaucus. I just got a text as I walked in from the CEO of that hospital. This site is open by appointment only to individuals exhibiting symptoms of respiratory illness. And if you need testing, this is for the Hudson County site, please call 201-388-1097. Again, 201-388-1097.

Again, you must be either a Hudson County resident or a first responder working in the county and you must be exhibiting symptoms. And again, you must call on that particular site for an appointment. Do not just show up. I want to thank the leadership of Hudson County led by County Executive, one of the greats Tom DeGise, the leadership of Hudson Regional Hospital and Secaucus Mayor Mike Gonnelli and their teams for their partnerships and efforts.

Before I go on with testing, in a world of limited resources and manpower, we're going to be... And by the way, we've been as aggressive on testing as any American state. We've been out there expanding as we predicted testing dramatically. We are going to come to a moment sooner rather than later I would guess as it relates to manpower, healthcare workers in particular, PPE, the actual specimen collecting equipment that is needed to take the intake. We're going to come to sort of folks in the road between – again, I'm beyond my pay grade, Commissioner – but between resources and manpower dedicated to testing versus resources and manpower dedicated to care.

And that's a balance we're going to have to get right. And as much as we want to continue to be a leader in testing in our country, the fact of the matter is in a limited resource world, in a limited manpower world we may have to tilt the machine more toward the care side.

As Attorney General Grewal has announced today, this morning I believe, certain low-level offenders – was that this morning, Gurbir?

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** The process was started this morning.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** The process was started this morning. Certain low-level offenders will be released from county jails to prevent the spread of coronavirus within our correctional system. This is a prudent measure and all efforts have been made to ensure public safety. The Attorney General will address this shortly. I don't know that there's any other American state that's done this. We got a lot of questions over the weekend on it and I applaud the Attorney General for beginning that process. More on that in a moment.

Additionally, this morning I signed an executive order suspending all elective surgeries or invasive procedures both medical and dental effective at 5:00 PM this Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup> – 5:00 PM this Friday March 27<sup>th</sup>. No operation that can be safely delayed as determined by a patient's doctor or dentist will be performed after this time and until further notice. We must take this step, and it doesn't bring us joy to take this step but we have to, to lessen the burden on our healthcare system and to preserve especially the personal protective gear that our medical responders need and which we know is in short supply not just in New Jersey but nationally.

I am pleased that the New Jersey Hospital Association in partnership with the Department of Health, the New Jersey State Police and the Office of Emergency Management or as we call it OEM will be centralizing effective, I think, immediately the efforts – I believe this is immediate – to manage our PPE supplies. OEM at the ROIC where I'm headed after this for the video call with the President and Vice President, OEM will be coordinating with the Hospital Association to maintain an ongoing inventory of statewide PPE supplies to ensure that the individual needs of hospitals and first responders are being properly and efficiently fulfilled.

I thank our healthcare systems for their partnership in sharing their inventory and for their cooperation. As I've said many times, we are all in this together and that doesn't just mean all 9 million of us as residents but also our various healthcare networks. So, thank you to each and every one of them, and again, Kevin Slavin and I spoke about this over the weekend and I

want to give him as Chair of the Association a particular shoutout. I know you'd want to add Cathy Bennet to that list as well.

The Diabetes Foundation has also opened a hotline for individuals living with all types of diabetes to receive a free backup emergency kit. Anyone needing an emergency backup kit can apply to receive one by visiting [www.diabetesfoundationinc.org](http://www.diabetesfoundationinc.org) (<http://www.diabetesfoundationinc.org>), that's [www.diabetesfoundationinc.org](http://www.diabetesfoundationinc.org) (<http://www.diabetesfoundationinc.org>) or calling 973-849-5234. Again, [www.diabetesfoundationinc.org](http://www.diabetesfoundationinc.org) (<http://www.diabetesfoundationinc.org>) and 973-849-5234. And I thank both the Diabetes Foundation as well as its corporate partners, and again, the signs of corporate goodwill are everywhere. In this case Becton Dickinson, Novo Nordisk, Ascensia Diabetes Care, ARKRAY, Liss Pharmacy and Inserra ShopRite Supermarkets for their efforts.

I also had a very good call with the president of my former employer Goldman Sachs who maintains a significant presence in Jersey City. And they've got some important equipment and supplies they're looking to donate. And I give them a shoutout as well. Again, it's all about our entire New Jersey family.

Also, while we know that many New Jersey residents are currently working from home, we are definitely aware of those who are currently out of work because of our efforts to promote social distancing. And again, we were presented with two choices from the get-go. Again, we started meeting on this in January. On the one hand, let this virus run its course, no social distancing; ultimately a lot of people will lose their lives and a lot of sick people, and our economy will be cratered. That's one choice.

The other choice is to get out ahead of this as best we can, to aggressively implement and enforce social distancing. We will take short-term enormous economic pain but we are ripping the bandage off as it were, and God willing, as a result, lessening the amount of fatalities and sickness at the end of the day. We chose affirmatively, unanimously to take door number two and we continue to do that. But that does not come without a price and we understand that.

Now, for those who are out of work, I want to make sure that they are listening in particular. At the same time, critical businesses remain open, and some of them are desperately seeking people to help them on the frontlines of our response. By our tally, there are more than 8000 available jobs including grocery workers, warehouse, and manufacturing distribution personnel and many others.

The Department of Labor and the Economic Development Authority have partnered to create a single page where anyone willing to pitch in and work to help us respond to this emergency can find and apply for one of those jobs. That site is live and available through a link on our information portal. Again, I want to repeat this – this is the sort of central repository, [www.covid19.nj.gov](http://www.covid19.nj.gov) (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>), [www.covid19.nj.gov](http://www.covid19.nj.gov) (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>).

Finally, I know that many New Jerseyans have been reaching out to state offices for answers to questions or to apply for necessary benefits. We know this can be frustrating given longer than usual wait times or down online systems because of the tremendous volume. To be perfectly clear, no one is going to go without the vital services they need. No one will be left behind. And the women and men on the other end of the line are working tirelessly to help while also worrying about their own families.

I ask everyone to please be patient. We know you may need to vent your anxieties and frustrations. We understand that. It's human nature but we are all in this together. We will all get through this together. And to do that, we all have to be understanding of one another.

Before you call may I make this suggestion? Take a moment again to visit the same website, [www.covid19.nj.gov](http://www.covid19.nj.gov) (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>), [www.covid19.nj.gov](http://www.covid19.nj.gov) (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>) to see if your question can be answered online. In the first 24 hours this site was set up, it was accessed more than 1.6 million times – more than 1.6 million times. It is continually updated. It is there for you all, 9 million members of our extraordinary New Jersey family as a first resource. I want to again, give our Chief Innovation Officer and her team, Beth Noveck, a big shoutout for helping us set that up.

Finally, I want to reiterate where I started, unless you are needed as part of our frontline efforts, please stay home. Look, I know the numbers that you hear every day are worrying because they're not yet going down and they're going to continue to go up. But let's remember that each number is a fellow New Jerseyan who needs us to rally together behind them, and behind each other to flatten the curve and slow the spread of disease. Let's all do our part, and when we do there is nothing that can defeat us, period full stop.

I mentioned several times over the past number of days, we are at war. And you win wars like WWII not because you panic but because you're aggressive, you're smart, you're proactive. You shoot straight with each other. You've got courage. That's what we need right now. We're all in this together, and if each and every one of us does our part from the little things like washing with soap and water for 20 seconds all the way to the stuff that's painful – staying at home, keeping social distance. We have no choice.

If we do all of our parts we will come through this unequivocally. We will survive and be stronger as one family than ever before. So, thank you to each and every one of you. With that, please help me welcome a 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. I also want to welcome Dr. Bresnitz for joining us. I have to say to the people of New Jersey I cannot think of a better team than Dr. Bresnitz and Dr. Tan, two nationally-recognized epidemiologists to help guide us through this journey.

And I also want to thank all the New Jersey residents who are following our guidance to stay at home. Social distancing, good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene are the best tools we have to slow the spread of COVID-19. This effort is vital because it helps us conserve healthcare resources.

Our healthcare professionals are making sacrifices every day. They're caring for sick individuals, sick patients, and leaving their loved ones at home. So, this is our part. This is what we can do. This is what we can do to support them.

The goal of social distancing measures are to reduce the peak number of cases and the related demands on the healthcare system. While this effort to reduce peak cases is underway, we are also working to expand hospital capacity and most importantly to increase the supplies needed to protect our healthcare workers and to take care of our patients. Increasing resources for our hospitals and replenishing supplies to keep our healthcare workforce safe are definitely our top priorities. We are working around the clock to secure those resources.

We know the pressure on the healthcare system will escalate as our cases increase, and that's why we're urging the public to take personal responsibility to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by staying home. As the Governor has said repeatedly, we are all in this together so we must take steps to protect ourselves, our families and one another.

I am sad to report that we have seven new deaths for a total of 27 deaths, and we certainly send our thoughts, prayers and condolences to the families. The information I have right now, five of those were males; two females. Ages 57 to 91. We do know that two of the individuals had preexisting conditions. One of the individuals was from Warren, one from Somerset, one from Union, two from Bergen, one from Passaic, and one from Essex. One of the individuals was associated with a long-term care facility in New Jersey.

As the Governor has shared, we had 935 newly-reported positive cases. As I've done in the past I'll go through the counties for you. 1 in Atlantic, 128 in Bergen, 10 in Burlington, 11 in Camden, 96 in Essex, 5 in Gloucester, 58 in Hudson, 2 in Hunterdon, 10 in Mercer, 61 in Middlesex, 80 in Monmouth, 55 in Morris, 42 in Ocean, 42 in Passaic, 13 in Somerset, 3 in Sussex, 66 in Union, 3 in Warren; and we are still investigating 249 as to the county attribution.

It's 935 cases for a total of 2844 cases in New Jersey. As the Governor has said, not surprising. We've expected this and we do expect the increasing cases to continue as we increase the availability of testing.

We certainly understand that the level of concern about COVID-19 is high in our state. We monitor the calls to our call center and NJ211 and it certainly reflects that. Since opening the call center at the end of January where we have trained healthcare professionals, they've answered over 11,000 calls. NJ211 was launched just last week and has taken more than 3500 calls. And approximately 100,000 residents have opted to send in texts about COVID-19.

We urge you to continue to use these credible sources of information. Visit [www.covid19.nj.gov](http://www.covid19.nj.gov) (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>) which has information on this illness. It has information on employment benefits, education resources, and more.

In closing, as I've done in the past, I encourage and urge all of you to follow the mandates of staying at home. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you. I realize I did not shut my mic off. I assume yours was working, right? Apologies.

So, just tell me if you agree with this and then I've got two quick points before we turn to the Attorney General. So, not new cases but total cases, the top five counties: far and away Bergen at number one with 609 if I'm reading this correctly; number two is Essex County with 273; number three is now Monmouth with 238; number four is Middlesex with 210; and five is Hudson with 190. I read that right?

Secondly, as I was listening to you as I always do intently, I was staring at the curve that we had asked to have back with us. Chris, thank you for bringing that along with you today. I believe this is accurate: the volume – I'm going back to geometry here – the volume under each of those curves is the same, right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So, this is an important point. We really have two missions here, and again, if I get this wrong the experts will correct me. Number one, obviously through the aggressive social distancing, to keep the number of folks who get sick and who get the virus as low as we can humanly do it. I know Judy and her team are working on modeling as she had said over the weekend, and in the next couple of days we'll have more to report on that. But keeping the total number as low as possible.

But even in a scenario where you have the same amount of people who get sick, had we not done anything the key is that blue reality is one that we can manage as a healthcare system; whereas the red reality is unmanageable. You with me? So, even if you have the exact same number of cases, giving us no credit at all for our ability to try to lessen the amount of cases. With the same amount of cases, smoothing that out over time gives our healthcare system – the number of beds, I mentioned field hospitals. Judy's aggressively with Chris and team, with Pat Callahan trying to reopen wings of hospitals and complete hospitals that have been shuttered, etc., etc.

Assuming that we're able to latch onto the blue reality and not that red reality, it is manageable. And that's an important point that I felt we should make, only because Chris lugged the chart here with him today. So, I wanted to make sure we had not left that gone unsaid.

Judy, thank you. I don't know where we would be without you and your team. Extraordinary, extraordinary work. With that, it is my honor to introduce the guy to my left. I don't know where we'd be without him either, leading the nation in so many fights. Please help me welcome the Attorney General of the great state of New Jersey, Gurbir Grewal.

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** Thank you, Governor, and thank you for inviting me to today's briefing. And thank you for your leadership as we work together to meet these unprecedented challenges.

Before I speak about the enforcement actions that we're undertaking at the Department of Law and Public Safety, I too want to take a moment and recognize all the heroes on the frontlines of this war as the Governor so eloquently put it. Our first responders, our nurses, our doctors and our law enforcement officers – they are putting their health and safety at risk to protect ours. We have their backs because they have ours. But our officers and our first responders can't do it alone, and it's time for each and every one of us in this state to do our part to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in New Jersey.

And for those who refuse to do their part, let me assure you that there will be serious legal consequences. My office has committed to cracking down on those individuals who refuse to comply in three ways. First, we're pursuing violations of the Stay at Home Order. Second, we're going after companies and individuals that have illegally price gouged. And third, we're stopping those that are using this pandemic as an excuse to justify acts of bias and acts of hate.

Let me start with EO107, the Stay at Home Order. During this public health emergency, the Governor has extensive authority to take bold actions to protect the residents of this state against the spread of COVID-19. And he used that authority in issuing EO107, which shuts down all nonessential retail businesses and requires everyone to stay at home with limited exceptions.

While we shouldn't even be getting to the conversation about applicable penalties, let me be clear that violating these orders is a criminal offense in this state, and there are a range of charges available to us to ensure compliance. They include everything from disorderly persons offenses to second-degree, to third-degree and four-degree indictable charges.

Last week, we established a network of prosecutors across this state in each of our counties who stand ready to give law enforcement officers guidance on how to charge violations of the Governor's orders. In addition, we hosted a number of conference calls and virtual meetings with our states' Police Chiefs and other law enforcement leaders, and I thank the Governor for joining the call last Friday. The purpose of these calls was to let our chiefs and law enforcement leaders know that the time for warnings was over, and the time to ensure compliance by using all the tools available to us is here.

So, if you're a retail store or an entertainment center and you stay open, or if you're a bar and you keep serving patrons in your establishment, consider this as your final warning. Your actions are against the law in New Jersey and you will be held accountable. The same goes for individuals. If you and your friends decide to throw a party at your home and you invite 20 of your closest friends, stop. Law enforcement officers will have to break that party up and there will be criminal consequences.

It's simple. Shut down your nonessential businesses, stay at home whenever possible. Let's keep everyone safe. This will not only allow our law enforcement agencies to conserve their resources at this time and to focus on critical public safety issues, but it will also avoid putting additional and unnecessary strains on our criminal justice system, our courts and our jails.

At the same time that we are enforcing the Governor's EOs, we're continuing to take action to address price gouging related to COVID-19. We know that this is a concern to many people, and to date our Division of Consumer Affairs has received over 1400 COVID-19-related complaints concerning some 900 distinct business locations across New Jersey. Let me tell you that our investigators have been on top of this. They're working with our county partners to complete about 350 inspections to date, and we've issued about 160 cease and desist letters and served nearly 30 subpoenas.

The complaints that we received included allegations that retailers are unfairly raising prices on surgical masks, on hand sanitizer, on disinfectant sprays and wipes, food, bottled water and similar items. The good news is that our investigators are finding that only a small percentage of the retailers we received complaints about may be raising prices inappropriately. In many cases, the price increase we're seeing is being driven by the manufacturer or the wholesaler, not your neighborhood retailer. That's the good news.

But the fact that we're not seeing too many egregious cases right now is only a credit to the warnings we've issued and the inspections that we've done. It's a credit to the work of our investigators and our local partners. But let me tell you that we have to remain vigilant. Having been a Prosecutor for the majority of my career, I will guarantee you, absolutely guarantee you that additional fraud cases are going to come; additional cyber frauds are going to come; additional financial fraud cases are going to come, particularly when federal monies start to flow into the recovery efforts across this state.

So, we have to remain vigilant and to do so, we've upgraded the complaint form on the DCA's website, [www.newjerseyconsumeraffairs.gov](http://www.newjerseyconsumeraffairs.gov) (<http://www.newjerseyconsumeraffairs.gov>). We've done that to ensure consumers can give us the best information they have so we can conduct our investigations as efficiently as possible.

Finally, we're cracking down on bias offenses like we always do. This should go without saying but unfortunately it bears repeating right now. COVID-19 is no excuse for intolerance or for hate. There have been disturbing reports from around the country and also in this state of discrimination, of harassment, and even assault against people of East Asian descent. We

can't let ignorance or fear over COVID-19 lead to stereotyping and prejudice.

COVID-19 has been declared a worldwide pandemic. It doesn't discriminate based on race, national origin or religion, and no one community is more at risk of contracting it or transmitting it. We have zero tolerance here in this state for any type of discrimination or hate and we're here to help.

If you've been the victim of a hate crime including one related to COVID-19 contact law enforcement immediately. We're here to protect you now as always. And if you face COVID-19 related discrimination or harassment in employment, housing or place of public accommodation, then reach out to our Division of Civil Rights which is in my office and available at [www.njvivilrights.gov](http://www.njvivilrights.gov) (<http://www.njvivilrights.gov>).

I'm certain that there's going to be some questions from the media about the numbers, so let me just say this to begin with. In terms that we can unfortunately all relate to right now, hate in all of its forms – whether it's discrimination, whether it's bias crimes – is a disease. It's a disease that we have to contain in this moment like in all moments. So, in my mind, even though there are a handful of incidents that's a handful too many in this state.

Let me finish by addressing the order that the Governor referred to, that Chief Justice Rabner signed late last night. It's a consent order that allows us to initiate a process where offenders who are serving a county jail sentence, which means people who are serving a sentence of a year or less, 364 days or less, will be considered for release. These are individuals typically who've been sentenced to county jail as a condition of probation, or they've been sentenced there because of municipal court convictions or are serving time for fourth-degree offenses or disorderly persons offenses.

Under the process, which is a landmark process that we've established working with the Public Defender, working with the Supreme Court, working with other stakeholders, offenders will be released unless there's an individual-specific objection from a County Prosecutor or from my office, in which case there will be a hearing on it. If a prosecutor objects the public defender will have a chance to respond and a special master will decide the outcome. But to be clear, all these individuals will have to comply with the same stay-at-home orders that are in effect right now, and they'll have to complete their sentences when our public health emergency conclude

The order also creates a process to ensure that inmates who are being released have a safe place to go, and that we connect inmates to the necessary help they need outside of the wall – whether it's medical treatment or shelter or other housing services. We've been in contact with Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson who's agreed to help wherever possible, so that inmates who need access to these types of services receive them.

As I mentioned just a moment ago, I'm a career prosecutor and I take no pleasure in temporarily releasing or suspending county jail sentences, even for the lowest-level inmates that are contemplated by today's consent order. But this is the most significant public health crisis we've faced in our state's history and it's forcing us to take actions that we wouldn't consider during normal times. We know and we've seen across the river that jails can be incubators for disease, so we have to take bold and drastic steps.

And so, when this pandemic concludes, I need to be able to look my daughters in their eyes to say that we took every step possible to help all the residents of this state, including those serving county jail sentences. So, I want to thank the 21 County Prosecutors who have joined us in this effort. I want to thank the Supreme Court and Chief Justice Rabner for his leadership, the Office of the Public Defender, the ACLU, all the other stakeholders who came together in this unprecedented moment to help individuals who are at extreme risk right now behind the wall, to get them to a place where we could help flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19. Thank you, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Gurbir. Other than saying I don't know where we'd be without you and without your leadership, I have two reactions. On the last point as it relates to the county jails and the groundbreaking resolution that you've worked out with the Chief Justice – and I want to thank him in absentia as well, ACLU, your own office, the 21 County Prosecutors. You said it well. We're doing something because we're in uncharted water. And I'm proud of the fact that you've taken that step, and we are the first state in America as far as I know to have taken that step. So, thank you and bless you for that.

Secondly, on a slightly less optimistic note, there is a special place in hell for the people that take advantage of this crisis, whether you're price gouging or you view this as an excuse to pursue racist behavior or bullying behavior. There literally is no time for that in a normal time, and there sure as heck is no time for it in the midst of the war that we're under. And I appreciate enormously the steps that you're taking to address that explicitly.

The Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness has been busy. It usually is busy in both peacetime and at war. And in particular, I mentioned earlier that working with the Department of Health and Commissioner Persichilli, the Director is mandating that we get a lot more insight into the comprehensive testing data that's being done particularly now by our private sector colleagues. And we should give them a shoutout by the way. They've ramped up from doing zero to thousands of these tests overnight so they deserve an enormous amount of credit. But it is important that we get access to the information.

To give you a little bit more color on that and anything else that's on his mind, please help me welcome the Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples.

**Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples:** Thank you, Governor, and thank you for your leadership. At the Governor's direction, we are marshalling the full resources of the State of New Jersey to combat and fight this war against COVID-19. As part of that effort, we're constantly trying to sharpen our data to make informed decisions and resource decisions and allow the Governor to make those as well.

Today, I directed all commercial laboratories that are certified to test for COVID-19 to report their data, test data every day to the Department of Health. It will allow the Department of Health and indeed the entire government of New Jersey and our citizens to make informed decisions and gain the best data possible to have resources managed, etc.

As we continue to adapt and focus our risk mitigation strategies, this data will only help us get through this effort, as the Governor has mentioned often, as a stronger New Jersey. With that, I'll leave it back to the Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Jared, thank you. Judy and I were doing an offline but I promise you we were paying attention, so thank you for that leadership. So, Pat Callahan, Chris Neuwirth, Dr. Christina Tan as usual are with us to answer the tough questions while not having a speaking role per se. I am certain that we'll get to each of the three of you as well as potentially to Dr. Bresnitz as well. We'll go to some questions and answers.

Q&A Session:

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** Governor, you today have mentioned a lot about social distancing as you have for several days. The importance of this has been talked about over and over and over. Over the weekend, going to different stores I noticed some larger stores are doing absolutely nothing with regard to counting people going in. I know we've done away with the 50 limit but we're still trying to keep it very low, no gatherings obviously. Some other stores that are smaller that are food stores are giving people hand wipes, sanitizing lotion as they go in; they are wiping down carts. And then, other stores are cleaning belts for each customer as they hit the checkout counter but they're still not implementing any specific limits on how many people can go in the store. Do you have any specific directives, and do you feel it's important? Because I think there's a lot of confusion and it's like right now it's up to whatever they think they might or could or should be doing. What should they be doing, what should we try to be doing? And is there a question about enforcing this? Do we have enough police to check on supermarkets?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let me do my best to address some of this and I may ask my colleagues to come in. I'm also fresh, as I think I mentioned earlier, off a call with the Executive Board of New Jersey's AFL-CIO and that includes a lot of retail workers representatives. And this in fact came up as a discussion point, and my advice not just on that call but my advice to our retail brothers and sisters has been from the get-go, particularly to the folks who are literally at the frontline, to be excessive in their wiping down with the right quality cloth, the surfaces around them including the belts; exercising extreme hand hygiene and finding some way to keep distance from each other.

As a general matter, we have said there's a list of essential and nonessential; that's what the world's broken down into. And so, I'm going to focus on the essential side because those are the places that are open as you rightfully point out. We expect nothing less than not just good hygiene but social distancing going on inside those locations. Just because they're open does not mean that it's a free-for-all. And I appreciate the fact that it's early days, so this is now only three days into this and there is uneven behavior, but we must reiterate that the behavior is mandated – it has to be. That's everything from probably restricting the amount of people who are physically in the place and importantly how far they are from each other.

I'll ask the Attorney General to weigh in but let me just say this as a non-law enforcement official, and that is if we extend our enforcement capabilities to every corner of the state there will still be some corners that we can't get to – inside of people's houses is the obvious example, including inside of even in some cases essential businesses. That's not to say that we're not going to necessarily spot check but it is certainly to say that we expect a level of behavior.

Look at the Italian example; look at what they're living through. I think overnight, thank God, cases and fatalities are finally down today versus yesterday and I hope that's the beginning of a trend. But there was too much business as usual. And so, I've said this many times, just as it is not a time to panic it is just as importantly not a time for business as usual. Gurbir, do you want to add anything to that?

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** You know, I said it in my remarks. I wish we didn't have to talk about penalties and consequences and that people would take the personal responsibility. We don't have unlimited resources on good days and we certainly don't have unlimited resources today when you have law enforcement agencies trying to balance shifts so, in case they do have employees that are infected it doesn't spread to a larger number of individuals on that force. So, they're shifting resources and priorities, so we need public cooperation. And then, we're going to prioritize as we always do. If we see and receive complaints about large private gatherings or if we receive and see nonessential businesses functioning when they're not supposed to, those are clear cut cases and we're going to start our enforcement efforts in those places.

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** If I may just quickly follow, Governor. Specifically though, I mean if it's a store that normally holds 500 people should they have 50? A store that normally has 50 people, should they have 10? I mean, is there any way that we can start to do this or not?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I would say this. We dropped our gatherings from infinity to 250 to 50 to zero, so that should be where we start. And I think these stores have to... And by the way, for the most part they get it and they're doing this. I've seen it with my own eyes. They've got to aggressively manage the amount of people in the building and the amount of distance in particular people have from each other in the building. A store this size versus one that's ten times this size obviously has a different dynamic.

May I say something else though on law enforcement? Law enforcement members, first responders, just like healthcare workers are not immune to the challenges that face us. Pat and I were back and forth yesterday about a police officer in the state who's got the virus and was up against it, and God willing I hope feeling a little bit better today based on what we heard last night. And so, not only do we have the best in the nation in terms of first responders, law enforcement, fire, EMTs, and certainly healthcare workers but we only have so many of them. And these folks are indispensable and we've got to make sure we're caring for their health as well.

Dr. Tan, anything you'd add in terms of the general question?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, just to echo all the comments is that you know, we have to make sure that there's also, concurrent to what we're seeing in the cases that there's also an outbreak of common sense as far as what grocery stores and others might need to implement to keep in mind all the social distancing guidance that has been put forth by the Governor as well as all of our other agencies. You know, threshold numbers are helpful guides for most businesses and grocery stores in general, but again, outbreak of common sense about how to implement that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I love that, thank you. Matt?

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Governor, yes, with more than 2000 cases have we reached the point where contact tracing has stopped? If it's still being done to what extent is it happening and why is it still important? And at what time would that effort effectively cease?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let me just say this. Sadly, Matt, as you said we've got 2000 – in fact, we've almost got 3000 and those numbers... As we said, listen, we expected this. We're not having a holy cow moment here as in oh my Lord, these numbers have exploded and we weren't expecting this. We knew this would happen, particularly as we expanded the testing regime – and that's even prior to getting the full modeling returns that Judy and her team are working on. So, good question. Judy, do you want to hit this, or Dr. Tan? Let's go to Dr. Tan again.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, as we've been mentioning for the last several weeks, we know that it's a continuum of containment and community mitigation efforts. And there's no on/off switch as far as okay, when contract tracing will stop versus when we implement all these community mitigation efforts that try to promote social distancing. We are seeing, for example, in our state that there are fewer cases in certain areas of our state, like the southern areas where the contact tracing might be more reasonably achieved; where containment measures such as the contact tracing and the more aggressive tracing related to that might be effective. But as we've started to see in our northeastern area moving southward and westward, there's been more of that shift toward trying as best as possible with the local resources to do as best as possible identifying contacts. But again, the same strategies as far as community mitigation still would remain the same – the social distancing, the other efforts that have been employed already in the state.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** You make a fair point. There are still four counties with single-digit cases. The reality, to your question, Matt, may be very different there than in Bergen where you've got over 600 cases. Thank you.

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Two questions. Potentially how many county inmates would be released? Also, you signed an executive order mandating that testing centers report their figures to the state. It was my understanding that they were doing that all along, so what was the need for this mandate?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, so I would just say on the second one that I want to have the Health folks and Jared address that. It wasn't that they're not doing a good job; in fact, the scale... I think this was spoken, Bill Haas of LabCorp. I think it was Friday we were at Bergen Community College. He said they were up to 20,000 tests batching overnight. I said, "Where were you two weeks ago?" and he said they were still working on developing the actual test two weeks ago. So, this is not looking a gift horse in the mouth, as we say – we thank them. But as a matter of fact, and I think we've said this at every one of our gatherings, there's been a gap in our knowledge of what we can control and oversee directly at the Department of Health versus both in timing and in depth of information that we get from these entities. Let's stay with that for a second – anybody on the Health side hope to add to what we hope to get now that we weren't getting before?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, actually to your point, the Department of Health has been, by our regulations we're supposed to be getting all the positive results. And actually, many of our commercial laboratories, the largest volume commercial laboratories have also been providing the negative results. We have over 60 commercial laboratories that are providing us results. It's a matter of just kind of compiling all that information and getting this in a more systemic way. That's what we're aiming toward, getting that more complete data at this point.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** But I think it's fair to say, folks, we think from moment one, knowing what the total denominator is, the total positives and the total negatives is not just good for our ability to manage this challenge, but that gives I think folks in our job of trying to lessen anxiety, I think that's a step toward lessening anxiety. Jared, your name was on that letter. Any particular insight as to why you're particularly associated with this?

**Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples:** Yeah, I would. One bit of clarification: you mentioned an executive order. It's actually a directive from me in my role as the Chair of the Domestic Security Preparedness Taskforce. So, it's a directive to compel those laboratories and report the full results. It becomes a Homeland Security concern to ensure we have the full data picture as we, again, marshal all of our resources across the state of New Jersey and advise the Governor in his role in allocating those resources, and of course Commissioner Persichilli in prosecuting her duty as the Commissioner of Health. And so, really it becomes about getting the full picture in a timely manner, in an accurate manner. That's really the end result.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** In general to Elise's first question, how big a population of the county jails?

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** So, that work is ongoing. We're getting lists of those inmates who fall into the categories that I outlined and our prosecutors across the state are now trying to strike that difficult balance of public safety, public health with rights of crime victims to see which we're going to object to and which we're going to consent to of those inmates who fall into those categories. Our objections across the state are due by 5:00 PM I believe today, and so we'll know at that point how many we consent to. Then it would be a question of lining up services for those who need them, whether they're on medication-assisted treatment behind the wall. We don't want that to slip; we don't want to trade one issue for another. So, we are very mindful of all those issues, so we'll take the time that's needed to line up all of those services as well. So, we'll know better by the end of the day and a little bit better tomorrow after the hearings that will take place on the objections.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So, when we do get the information we'll promise either the General will be with us or I will, or somehow we'll get that information out.

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** We'll push it out.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, thank you.

**Reporter:** A couple education questions.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'm shocked by that, I'm shocked.

**Reporter:** I know you're surprised. You said that schools would likely at this point be closed for an extended period. Are we talking at this point close to closing for the rest of the school year? That's really only two and a half months at this point.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, yet to be determined but longer than not is our guess.

**Reporter:** And testing, have you set...

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Same answer, and I know we owe you an answer on that and we are... Again, we've got a group of folks who are trying to understand the federal directive that came out at the end of the week as well as our own reality. We know we owe you an answer but we're not just...

**Reporter:** Not just me, I think others.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** No, in the broad view – you as in the 9 million members of the New Jersey family.

**Reporter:** And just the last question on education: a group of advocacy groups today called for an Education Taskforce to be formed to keep an eye on this process as we go forward, especially concerned about loss of learning for special needs students but all students for that matter. Would you consider something like that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So, I hadn't seen that. I would want to first go to the Commissioner of the Department of Education; we've got a State Board of Education. I'd want to go to the professionals who are currently working on this. I don't begrudge, just hearing it for the first time I don't begrudge that interest because I think it's something that we're all keenly interested in. I've got four kids myself who are all doing remote learning right now and you want to make sure that, you know, we're the number one public education system in America. We're there for a reason – that has a lot to do with the model that we have prosecuted for decades if not centuries. We want to keep it that way. So, I'll come back to you separately.

**Reporter:** Good afternoon, Governor. It's a question about constitutional rights. You had a long list of businesses that are exempt from the closures but you didn't exempt self-defense centers, gun stores, FFLs, and gun ranges. Your executive order specifically says that people who are low income will be protected against [the loss of] any essential services. Why do you believe that a liquor store, which you exempt, and home improvement stores, which you exempt, are more important than a place where somebody can acquire tools to protect themselves? One specific woman went public, a low-income African-American woman saying one woman's message to politicians: "Don't leave me defenseless now." My second question is to Mr. Callahan. Would you use your authority in the executive order to make an exception for gun stores, make the NICS background check go live again because currently it's down because of the executive order so that thousands and tens of thousands of residents can be able to protect themselves?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Just as you're about to ask your question I was about to say, "You know, you only normally show up with gun events," so I could have predicted this. Yeah, you've got time on your hands obviously. Listen, we made the call on essential versus nonessential with the Attorney General, who's welcome to weigh in on that as well as the Colonel. I'm comfortable where we landed and I'll ask the Attorney General to give you a little bit more color.

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** There's a lawsuit, as you probably know, that's been filed on this very topic today so I won't comment on the litigation. And we're not going to comment on more specifics right now until we review the lawsuit, and we'll respond accordingly in court. But I will say that the Governor's executive order tracks every other executive order that has a stay at home provision and none of those – none of those – contain an exemption for firearm stores, nor does the federal guidance from Homeland Security contain that type of exemption when it comes to essential facilities and nonessential facilities. So, we're consistent with every other executive order that calls for stay at home. We're consistent with federal guidelines and we'll defend the Governor's executive order in court.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat, anything you want to add?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** The only thing I'll add is I've fielded several emails, phone calls over the past several days with regards to that very issue. And to the Governor's and the Attorney General's point, in consultation with the Governor's Chief Counsel and the Attorney General, those stores at this juncture are deemed nonessential. And that was my response.

**Reporter:** Question for Col. Callahan. Governor Murphy briefly mentioned the recruit who had tested positive over the weekend, resulting in a number of team members who are now quarantined. How is all this affecting the way State Police... What do you guys do different and is any of that trickling down? Has there been any directive to local departments on how officers are to do things differently in order to protect themselves and therefore protect everybody else?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** With regards to the first part of that question in the Training Academy, myself, the Attorney General, Commissioner Persichilli struggled daily with that decision. And I'll give you some insight. Last Sunday we put in a process to basically check in with the recruits, and one said Sunday afternoon, gave a few symptoms. We told that recruit to stay home. We had cancelled physical training, swimming; we had tried to do all the mitigation strategies and social distancing within the Academy and did.

On Thursday afternoon, that recruit who was home tested positive and I happened to be sitting right across the table from the Commissioner at the time. And in concert with her guidance and counsel as well as the Attorney General's, we decided to send all of those recruits home. And it was 196, and as much as I want to deem them essential, to protect those that will ultimately protect us – it was not an easy decision. They all went home with a laptop and will be doing, to the extent that they can, all of the blocks of instruction just like we're asking our students and college students to do remotely. A difficult decision; they are at this juncture, our goal is to have them come back on April 6<sup>th</sup>. That would fit the 14-day window. It was a difficult decision because we thought them being housed and together at [CGAR] helped us in some way 'cause then we send them home on the weekends and it becomes that back and forth and balance of what mitigation we could have done there.

So, very difficult and as far as our troopers, to the Attorney General's point, there'll be no different level of service or impact to response times. But we have, in order to preserve and make sure there is a 'bullpen' of troopers, we have split up our squads to have the same amount of troopers there on the road, meeting the minimum staffing requirement; but making sure that if a whole squad goes down or perhaps a station, that between the troopers assigned to field operations, as well as all the other responsive troopers in the admin section and investigations, that we have that cadre of troopers to make sure that we don't skip one beat. Because when somebody calls 9-1-1, as I said to the police chiefs the other day, somebody's got to respond to those calls. And that level of service will stay the same; we just need to be smart about our scheduling.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you for that.

**John Mooney, NJ Spotlight:** You've talked a lot today about the need for data to be able to make better decisions, for the public to be assured of these things, and the denominator. Can you tell us today the total number of testing and if not, at some point will these briefings include the total number of tests? And on that, number of hospitalizations – can you tell us the number of actual people tested who are positive for COVID-19 hospitalized? And does the Department of Health have a dashboard of sorts like the private health systems do to know the number of occupied hospital beds in total, the number of occupied ICU beds, in order for you to know what hospitals will be stressed and not stressed? And can you give us an update on the ventilator acquisitions?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So, Judy and team will give you all of the above. I would just say on a general matter, the data – you're absolutely right. The more data we have at our ready that's available to us, the better informed we are to make the right decisions. There's no question about that. I think what you're going to need, I'm going to give you the non-health expert's answer here – we're going to need the order that both Judy and Jared signed today to actually take effect in order to really effectively address the first question you asked: how many positives, how many negatives, what's the denominator? That's something we obviously want to have at our disposal as you can imagine. I think you'll have to bear with us a little bit for that to take effect. I think that's our expectation. Please correct that record, Judy, and please address the hospitalization and the ventilator question if you could.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Certainly right on the first account. On the hospitalizations, we are working with the Hospital Association and all of the hospitals to populate our predictive modeling algorithm. There's some information that is still outstanding; for example, not only how many patients do you have in your critical care units but what their average length of stay is for us to be able to project out. I can tell you as of Friday evening, there are about 600 patients in our hospitals in New Jersey that are considered persons under investigation, so they're waiting for their test results to return. And we have another 100 that have positive results on the record. That's the latest I have. We have a 5:00 call with the Hospital Association

this afternoon to start getting more regular data. So, if that gives you some indication of what our hospitals are dealing with. I don't have the critical care numbers. You know, patients move back and forth; they get admitted to a medical/surgical bed. Depending on their condition, they may go to an ICU bed for a number of days; then they go back to a stepdown, and then med/surg, and then discharge to either homecare, rehab. So, it's a process but they're the statistics I have right now.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, what about ventilators?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We have a total inventory of ventilators... Well, let me start with the number of critical care beds. We have almost 2000 critical care beds in our hospitals. We have an inventory of 1700 ventilators. Not all of them are in use at this time. We do believe for every critical care bed there should be a 1:1 ratio ventilator to critical care bed. So, looking at our full inventory and our number of beds, we have a deficit of about 300. We've asked the HHS for 400 ventilators because you should always have ventilators on standby. That will just cover our existing licensed critical care beds. We do expect with a surge that we will have to increase our volume of critical care beds and therefore increase our requirement for ventilators. That's still under review.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you for that.

**John Mooney, NJ Spotlight:** To follow up on that, how is the Department of Health able to track the timing of the surge without all that data? And Governor, quick on the budget, I heard you're meeting with the Treasurer and legislative leaders. Where do you stand in terms of revenues, particularly sales tax and casino revenues coming in, in terms of the budget and possibly going forward?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** The algorithm we're using, it's populated by the data that we do have. I think I shared that the average length of stay in ICU and the average length of stay in the hospital is still outstanding. I don't know... Dr. Bresnitz has been the key individual working with the team on the algorithms. Do you have anything you want to add?

**Former State Epidemiologist Dr. Eddy Bresnitz:** Just that we've reached out to folks, well, one person in particular who tried to give an estimate based on their experience in their hospital what the average length of stay is for those who are hospitalized but not in ICU; and what it is for those who have unfortunately been in ICU. That information will impact on the modeling of what the surge capacity will be. So, for example, if the average length of stay is lower then that makes more beds available over a period of time. If the average length of stay is longer then it decreases the capacity to basically handle any excess number of cases. And that is an important element in the model and hopefully we'll have that today.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. Real quick, I don't have a crisp answer for you. We do have a leadership meeting. As I said, we've got a video call with the President and Vice President and then we've got a leadership meeting after that. But the impact is significant would be a word I would use. Material, meaningful, large – this is a big deal. That's why we need so desperately the federal back and fill direct cash assistance.

**Reporter:** Your meetings last week with the Army Corps of Engineers, were there any possible sites that could potentially be used to house patients that could be started to be worked on in the near future?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I think the answer's yes. We're in intense engagement with them.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We're looking at the full continuum, the continuous life cycle of a patient. And we do expect that patients that would maybe be acceptable for a medical/surgical bed, we might be opening up med/surg beds in hotels and have them appropriately cared for with all of the supplies. So, we're looking at the whole continuum so that patients in New Jersey will be taken care of at the same level of care; it just may be a different venue.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Two quick things on that. Number one, I think you've heard the word 'displace' before, so you might be taking patients who are in category X and putting them over here to then have available space for category Y in this facility. Secondly, if I say this wrong please correct me – while the population is larger in the north, and unfortunately the population impacted by the virus is larger in the north, we started before this virus hit. While the population may be smaller and the infection rate may be lower at the moment in the south, we entered this with a mismatch in the south between critical care beds and the population to begin with – which is why that's a particular point of focus of Judy and her team.

**John Mooney, NJ Spotlight:** A prison question from a colleague at Spotlight: have there been any positive cases at all in the prisons, either inmates or staff? And is there more that can be done in terms of restrictions on people coming in and out of the prisons?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Well, they've already restricted... The Commissioner of the Department of Corrections has already made significant restrictions. Whether or not he's prepared or will go further I don't know. How about cases inside of the system?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I can just share with you at the state level we have not had any cases to date. The county I don't know.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I don't know this but I want to reiterate what we're doing is we're the only state in America doing that.

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** With regard to your call with the President, who initiated the call? How long did you speak? Why was the call taking place and did you tell him that you're appealing to citizens for PPE?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So, I want to give a shoutout where credit is due here. We put in a request for a call this morning and he called me back this morning. So, that I have to say, that turnaround when you're talking about the President of the United States is meaningful. Secondly, Elise, we spoke about... First of all, he knows New Jersey well so we talked a little bit about New Jersey. The call was probably in the five- to ten-minute range. I raised with him, I said, "Mr. President..." He said, "What's on your mind?" I said, "The three big asks continue to be PPE. We need a big bucket of federal money and we need to stand up as soon as possible, in this case really FEMA Region 2 but I know the Army Corps is involved, four field hospitals," just having gotten off the phone with Judy not ten minutes before that, so I had the right ask. And he said, on the federal, on the Congressional support for direct aide to states, he said, "I don't know how this is going to turn out but I understand that's something that's important to both sides of the aisle." He talked for a minute about some of these malaria drugs that he is very focused on and that he believes can change people's outcomes, even those who are very sick. I'm not a health expert so I don't have an opinion on that. And PPE was sort of more of a reiteration. I'm not sure I walked away from the call with anything specific on PPE – in fact, I know I didn't. But there was a very specific discussion about the field hospitals and we pursued that immediately.

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Another from a colleague, I'll try to speed through this one for you here, but we got a story today following your comments yesterday about Prudential donating 153,000 masks and respirators to the state. Could you also tell us if any other companies have similarly stepped up with any assistance and what does Prudential's donation mean for New Jersey? And how does the state intend to distribute those items, because several hospitals have called us directly asking how they can get some of those supplies.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'm going to give you a general answer and then I'm going to ask Pat to give you the specifics on Prudential. And I called its CEO or texted him and thanked him immediately, and he was very gracious in his reply. Prudential's on a list of really good corporate citizens who are stepping up in this crisis and we need that to continue to happen. Just think of the following, and if I get this wrong, anybody up here please come in and correct me. Think of the PPE process as going from a series of parallel inputs and then a series of parallel outputs – Pat in particular. This is now, Chris, this is now being funneled into one input point and one coordinated output point. So, we've gone to an hourglass, is that fair to say, on its side?

So, Pat can comment on Prudential in a second, although when folks say, and we have to respect this, "This is what we're prepared to do and we would ask you pay particular attention to Healthcare Institution X because it happens to be in their town," we're not going to ignore that as a point. We may have a reaction to it. But others, Goldman Sachs by the way – I'm not sure where or why or how much, but I want to give them credit for making that offer today. George Helmy as I walked in here was following up with them. Home Depot I gave a shoutout to already. And those are the three that I know particularly come to mind. We've got a lot of folks who are coming up with good ideas and potential places in particular to buy PPE, but again, we can use as many donations as possible, and that's ppedonations@njsp.org (mailto:ppedonations@njsp.org). Pat, any more color on Prudential?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Prudential, it was really amazing. I got that phone call at about 10:00 yesterday morning and by yesterday afternoon we had all of the masks, hand sanitizer, gloves picked up by troopers and stored in a location in north Jersey. University Hospital received a portion of that last night. That's how quickly that came together. We then, working in conjunction with Health, we have all of the hospitals in the state of New Jersey and we had to make the decision, based upon what we were seeing across the state how we were going to most appropriately prioritize the distribution of that. It is like the triaging of this PPE.

On another note, just this afternoon I had the Attorney General's Office assist in drafting a letter that went out today through the Commissioner of Education to all school districts, public school districts knowing that they have a lot of PPE in their schools and the schools are closed. We're not asking for it all but knowing that that PPE that they purchased in the wake of Ebola is sitting there, this is, as the Gov says, all hands on deck, pull out all the stops. And if 600 plus school districts can step up... I requested it; I think I do have the authority to mandate it – I don't think that's where we want to be. I do think every school district in the state of New Jersey wants to pitch in, and primarily this is going to be for healthcare. This is about keeping the hospitals open. First responders are a close second but I think it's our doctors and nurses and those folks in the hospitals, that we've got to make sure that they're protected.

So, Gov said Home Depot. That email address that he gave out, that's for anybody, any private, public, anybody who wants to donate. We have a private sector desk set up at the SEOC, phenomenal partners, and we have that email go to our donations management folks. And we will make sure that we have that full inventory, and based upon the priority hospitals that's where it's going to go to.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Again, that's ppedonations@njsp.org (mailto:ppedonations@njsp.org). Elise, one other point I made to the President and I made this to him by video at the end of the week, this is a quote on my behalf. "I know that the Lord helps those that help themselves," so I wanted to make sure that nobody thinks New Jersey's sitting back with their feet up, not doing everything we can to track and source PPE. The folks up at this table and all of their colleagues are literally turning over every stone. So, it's a little bit like our Community College Opportunity Grant – that's a last dollar program. The student has to exhaust and prove they've exhausted all of the other avenues before they get that grant. That's the mindset that we're having with the federal government. Our ask is big but I want to make sure that the President knows himself and his team knows it's big but it's legitimate, and it envisions aggressive behavior across the whole spectrum of channels available to us.

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** AG, a question for you with regard to releasing certain low-level prisoners. How does this impact who police are now going to arrest, take into custody? What kinds of crimes and so forth if at all? And a related question, Governor, for you: we've got Easter coming up. You see families going out for walks, for bike rides. They're probably figuring, "Well, if we have a family gathering, we can invite the aunt and uncle. What's the big deal there?" In regard to some guidance on that from you.

**Attorney General Gurbir Grewal:** There was a question earlier about guidance to law enforcement. We issued guidance last Monday about exercising discretion. And this is not to say that if there's an eminent public safety threat to ignore it. Certainly we're going to respond to those cases. But if there are cases we can wait and charge later – the old check fraud case that's been sitting around for a month, the old financial fraud case that hasn't moved for months – there's not a reason to charge that right now when we're in the midst of this pandemic. We've also told them to increasingly use complaint summonses over complaint warrants. A complaint warrant brings somebody into the jail system; a complaint summons gives them a future date at which to appear in court.

So, those are two steps we've taken and we've encouraged them to exercise their discretion. And certainly, we're releasing folks who are serving less than a year's sentence, and in some cases they were to be released in a matter of weeks if not months. But we're also mindful. We're not calling for the release of those who we've detained pretrial, who we've argued are dangerous to the public or a flight risk. These are people who we will assess their dangerousness to themselves and others before we consent to their release, but it's a common sense approach that we have to take right now.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Sadly, I wish I had a more upbeat answer, and God knows I hope by the time April 12<sup>th</sup> rolls around that we're in a dramatically different and better place. But with at least Easter and Passover coming up, to pick at least two big religious holidays and religious seasons really, when you factor in the days of Passover and the Holy Week, we can't allow to let happen what your question implied. You look at the blessed Fusco family who had a family gathering a couple of Sundays ago, and literally multiple fatalities and sicknesses that have come out of that. I don't want to be the grinch. I guess, I don't know what the equivalent of the grinch is for Easter or Passover but we're going to have to enforce the social distancing stuff that we're talking about. That brings me no joy to say that. Again, if we get to Holy Week, if we get to Passover and we're in a different place I'll be the happiest guy in New Jersey.

We're going to shut down. Again, forgive me, 'cause we've got to get over to the ROIC. If I'm not mistaken, Mahen, the next couple of days both at 2:00 and both in Newark, at Rutgers, Newark, is that right? One more time, tomorrow at Rutgers Newark; Wednesday as I mentioned in Trenton, back here at the War Memorial, right? Okay, I apologize.

I want to thank Dr. Bresnitz for coming out of the bullpen to help us out; a big deal, sir. Thank you for coming back and putting the band back together. Dr. Tan, to you as well. Chris, thank you. Judy, I don't know where we'd be without you and your whole team, so thank you. Likewise Mr. Attorney General, Director, Colonel. To each and every one of you, God bless you. Thank you, stay safe. See you soon.

## Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

### Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](#)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](#)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](#)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](#)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](#)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](#)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](#)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(<http://drumthwacket.org/>\)](#)

### Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

## News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\\_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

## Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[TikTok \(https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?)

## Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

## Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

**Privacy Notice ([//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html))**

**Legal Statement & Disclaimers ([//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html](http://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html))**

**Accessibility Statement ([//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html](http://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html))**

([//nj.gov/opra/](http://nj.gov/opra/))

(<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>)

(<https://tech.nj.gov/>)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023  
Office of Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000