

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 6th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, sorry to be a couple behind here. I'm honored to be joined by the woman on my right, who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health Judy Persichilli, Judy; State Epidemiologist, again someone who needs at this point no introduction, Dr. Christina Tan, thank you both; The guy to my left, also not in need of an introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan; Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples is with us, and I know Matt Platkin, Chief Counsel with be with us shortly.

A couple items I wanted to hit upfront if I could. Today I'm signing an Executive Order to extend by 30 days the public health emergency that I declared on March 9, and had been previously extended on April 7. I want to make it absolutely clear that this action does not mean that we are seeing anything in the data which would pause our path forward, and it should not be interpreted by anyone to mean we are going to be tightening any of the restrictions currently in place. These declarations, unless extended, expire after 30 days. This ensures we will continue on our current war footing for the coming month. The conditions underpinning this declaration have not changed. We are still in a public health emergency.

We continue to work to carefully track data and to put in place the things we need to have in place to meet the core principles I laid out last week in our Road Back Plan. The planning to expand our testing capabilities, to implement a robust system for contact tracing, and securing spaces for those who will test positive in the future to safely isolate continues. The work of the Restart and Recovery Commission to responsibly get our

economy working again continues. The Regional Council's work continues. Our efforts to work with our shore communities and downtowns regarding the coming summer months continues, and our work to ensure our long-term resiliency continues.

I get asked a lot, I know Judy and Pat and the rest of our team gets asked a lot, why can't we be more specific? Why wait? Why not now? And I would just say this: we are working morning, noon and night, but I will say we also don't have all the answers. No one does. I want to read a couple of excerpts I read this morning from the same newspaper.

"The near doubling of coronavirus death predictions, by the way in America not New Jersey, please God, in a closely followed model this week underscores a frustrating reality for officials weighing how and when to open society. Many basic facts about the pandemic remain unknown. Epidemiologists have created many computer models to predict surge capacity in the healthcare system and guide policymaking and we've spoken about those with you. These seek to predict how many people might be infected, how many will die and when and how transmission might slow or speed up. But the models are only as good as the underlying data and knowledge about COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. Models are based on assumptions and estimates and shift with new information, often because of changing behavior as we've discussed, but also because the scientific understanding of the virus is still evolving. Researchers have strained to pin down basic bits of information about the disease such as its infectiousness. Undercounted infections and deaths have blinded public health authorities and modelers alike to the full scope of the pandemic."

And another article in the same newspaper. When French Prime Minister Édouard Philippe announced plans last week to reopen the French economy, he warned and I thought that this was a very good way to say this, and I quote him, "It is a fine line that must be followed. A little too much carelessness and the epidemic restarts. A little too much caution and the entire country sinks." The balancing act facing leaders like Mr. Philippe is difficult enough, but it's aggravated by the dearth of essential information. Those two articles from the same newspaper in that renowned, left wing, crazy newspaper, The Wall Street Journal.

If this extension of the public health emergency signals one thing, it is this: we can't give up one bit on the one thing that we know that is working in this fight, social distancing. So continue to stay at home unless it's necessary for you to go out. And when you do go out, please keep your distance from others and wear something to cover your face. Remember, in the absence of either a vaccine, or proven therapeutics for COVID-19 specifically, our only cure is social distancing, covering our faces, washing our hands with soap etc. And we know, by the way, that the efforts of millions in this the state, of you, is working. We have made enormous strides, folks, unlike any American state. Let's keep it that way.

Today, we're announcing an additional 1,513 positive test results for a statewide total of 131,890. However, let's keep in mind that the big number we report is a cumulative total, which has been growing since our first positive test was received back on March 4. Of these, more than two-thirds of these individuals, more than 90,000 New Jerseyans, have now exited the important two-week incubation window. Overwhelmingly, they have defeated COVID-19.

As we look to the trend of new cases, we continue to see the daily counts leveling, even as more testing sites continue to come online and I'll touch on that in a few moments. The rate of positivity among those who are tested continues to decrease as well, as we've heard consistently now, I think for the past couple of weeks from you Judy, right? The spread is slowing. This is the map. The map of New Jersey continues to show slowing rates of doubling of cases, and this is a very good thing. Stay on this if you could. The two orange counties, Salem and Cumberland, have each seen fatalities and they each have positive test results but the numbers are meaningfully lower. By example, as of today, Salem has 353 positive tests. Bergen County has 16,520. It has come to that part of the state more slowly. It's migrated, as we've said. So while the orange is darker in the bottom two counties on the left in Salem and Cumberland, the fact of the matter is the numbers are a lot slower. And God willing, they'll get to that lighter shade sooner. But look at that, more than 30 days is that whole swath of counties that we now see, that that's what it's taking to at least double, and that's very good news.

Switching gears for a second, we continue to directly and aggressively confront the challenges at our long-term care facilities, as the number of positive cases and deaths connected to these facilities continues to grow. That is the number of fatalities from long-term care. May I say this? We've said it before, we say

consistently that our healthcare workers are literally heroic. I want to give a particular shout out to the healthcare workers and the workers generally who are going in and out of our long-term care facilities, and have been doing this day in and day out. I've said in the past couple of times, there's a special place in hell reserved for whatever. There's a special place in heaven reserved, in particular, for those healthcare workers who are doing the Lord's work, literally.

As Commissioner Persichilli and Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said yesterday, we are taking aggressive measures within state government to protect the residents and staff at these facilities. But we also know we won't have all the answers, and in the midst of their efforts, we will also need to look more broadly at this issue. Not just for the immediate days ahead, which obviously is our priority, but also for the months and the years to come.

To meet this challenge, we are announcing today that we are bringing on a nationally experienced team of experts to take on three principal tasks.

1. To provide immediate support to the great work of Judy and her team at the Department of Health, specific to long-term care.
2. To conduct a two to three-week review to address immediate concerns related to protecting long-term care facility residents and staff, the folks I just referred to a minute ago, as we look to restart our economy.
3. To make long-term, systemic reform recommendations.

Leading this team will be Cindy Mann on the left, a 30-year expert on health policy and former deputy administrator at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under President Barack Obama, where she was also tasked, by the way, with implementing the Affordable Care Act. And secondly, Carol Raphael, former chief executive officer and president of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, as well as the former board chair of AARP.

We know the long-term care issue has been among the biggest challenges, both here in New Jersey and nationally, if not, frankly, the biggest. This will be an inclusive approach to solve this challenge that will make us a national model, God willing.

Switching gears, as of 10:00 p.m. last evening, 5,221 patients with COVID-19 were being treated in our hospitals. As you can see, this curve continues its steady overall decline. And as we see the number of hospitalizations across our healthcare systems regionally continues to also trend down. That's North, Central and South. Our field medical stations reported 36 patients last night, while hospitalizations had a small increase, the number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care ticked up negligibly, but it did tick up, to 1,549 but that is down roughly 25%, Judy, from just three weeks ago.

Ventilator use currently stands at 1,146 and this number too, thank God, continues to decline. There were 439 new hospitalizations yesterday. That's up meaningfully over the past couple of days, but there were also 435 live patients discharged yesterday. All of these numbers are pointing us in the right direction. While they are positive, they still mean that thousands of our fellow New Jerseyans are still in the hospital battling COVID-19. This is why I needed to extend the public health emergency. We're seeing good signs, without question, but we cannot lull ourselves into thinking that all is well. So let's keep focused on pushing these numbers down further. That means keeping up with social distancing, wearing a face covering when in public, and doing all the other seemingly little things that can make a huge difference.

And Pat, this is especially for you, I get criticized by a few, although most love the phrase, the word knucklehead, to describe the folks who are non-compliant and doing silly things. Check the Governor from West Virginia, he's got a little bit more of a graphic assessment of those folks. If you folks are worried about our being too graphic, I think we look like a Disney movie in comparison.

We need to keep working with two things in mind: public health creates economic health, and data determines dates. Public health creates economic health, data determines dates. Of course, notwithstanding all of this progress, we continue to lose precious members of our New Jersey family. And even with this good news that we see from our health systems, we cannot forget that there are families up and down this state

who are receiving the worst possible news. Today we're reporting the loss of 308 more New Jerseyans to COVID-19 complications. Our statewide total now stands solemnly at 8,549. Bless each and every one of them. Let's remember a few of those we've lost right now.

First up, Antionette "Toni" Shadiack of Franklin in Somerset County. Born in Paterson to Italian immigrants, she did not learn English until she started school and then she taught her parents to speak English. It was a sign of things to come. She graduated from what is now William Paterson University in 1960, and would make her career as an educator in Paterson, teaching fourth and fifth grades as a math resource teacher and in computer education. And if that weren't enough, she also taught English as a second language night classes for adults. Toni retired in 2005.

At home, she loved baking and arts and crafts, and she was the one organizing the family get-togethers. In 2009, Toni was diagnosed with vascular dementia and even though her condition diminished greatly, she could brighten up a room with her smile. You can see that smile right in front of us. She leaves behind her daughter's Annette, and I had the honor of speaking with Annette yesterday, and Michelle. Toni was 81 years old. Her husband Thomas passed away shortly after their 50th wedding anniversary in 2013, and Toni passed the day before what would have been their 57th wedding anniversary. I am sure the two of them are now making up for lost time. God bless you, Toni.

Next up, this is Joseph Cavalieri, Kendall Park, Middlesex County. That was his home from 1980 until his move to the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home in Menlo Park last year. Joseph was 93 years old. He was born in New York City, also to Italian immigrant parents. He served our nation as a sergeant in the US Army in both World War II and in the Korean War. After completing his service, he completed his education at NYU and would become a draftsman. He spent much of his career with the Vermont Marble Company as a draftsman in New York City, and as manager of the Detroit branch, among other stops. And in retirement, he continued as a consultant for several small New Jersey-based marble businesses. He was a member of both St. Augustine of Canterbury Church in Kendall Park, and VFW Post 9111.

Joe lost his wife of 66 years, Matilda, just 10 months ago and he leaves behind his three daughters, Joan, Margaret and Mary, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, and his son Tom, as well as 10 grandchildren and many great grandchildren. We salute Joseph for his service to our nation, and we keep him in our thoughts and prayers.

And Leslie Kalmus of Andover in Sussex County. Born in Morristown and raised in Lake Hiawatha and Pine Brook sections of Morris County. After graduating Montville High, she managed Kalmus Jewelers in Lake Hiawatha before owning and managing Leslie's Auto Body Shop in Rockaway, and I commented to some of our colleagues earlier, you talk about a broad range of skills, going from a jeweler to an auto body shop. She had a passion for cars, she had her own red Corvette, and for the Jersey Shore, cooking and music. She also loved dogs, most especially her own, Benny and Diesel, quite appropriately named.

Leslie leaves behind her father, Michael Kalmus and his wife, Barbara, her sister Michelle and her brothers Robert and David and their families, including her niece Kristen and her nephew David. I had the honor of speaking to her brother Robert and his wife, Nancy, talking about, reminiscing about Leslie and they wanted me to give a big shout out, which I'm doing here, to Newton Medical Center, which they said performed heroically on Leslie's behalf. We send our condolences to them, to the Kalmus family, and our prayers at this time.

Our flags are at half-staff in their memory, and in memory of all who we have lost throughout this pandemic. They fly in half-staff in solidarity with those left behind. We are a strong and diverse family. And when we see these flags flying low, let's remember that we all have a job to do, so we can stop the spread and stop this overwhelming loss of life. God bless each and every one of them.

Let's switch gears for a minute. I mentioned testing a moment ago and as we all know, an expanded and accessible network of testing sites is one of the critical markers for us as we get back on the road to restart and recovery. The number of available testing sites across the state continues to grow. As of this morning, there are 122 up and down the state, different sites. Thirty-one, which are either publicly run or open to the general public, can be located at our information hub at covid19.nj.gov/testing, and on top of those 31, there are 91 more privately operated testing sites available and your private primary care practitioner can tell you where to find the one closest to you.

In the coming days, we hope to be able to announce even more sites, which will open soon. Make no mistake, we are pushing as hard as we can to get the testing regime in place. Remember, that's Step 2 of the six-step plan on our road to recovery. Step 1 is to flatten and break the back of these curves. Step 2 is a broad, scaled, rapid return testing regime. We are pleased with the work we are making through our partnerships with everyone from the federal government to Rutgers University, with our private labs, and everyone in between. We are leaving no stone unturned and we are not leaving anything on the table. We will get this marker in place.

Next, I'm proud also to announce that we have now exceeded, Pat it's hard to believe, 35 million pieces of personal protective equipment, or PPE, distributed by the Office of Emergency Management from our central warehouse, a line of business that New Jersey, as a state, was not in just over two months ago. As with testing, we have left no stone unturned in finding the masks, gloves, shields and other PPE our frontline public health and safety responders have needed to keep safe throughout this emergency. Specifically, I want to give some shout outs to Patty Pinero at the Office of Emergency Management who works under Pat, and Wayne Jacobson at Central Purchasing, who undertook much of the procurement of these items. And to Chris Dempsey and the team at the Department of Treasury, who vetted every vendor. And another big shout out to New Jersey State Police Sergeant, your colleague, Dan Cunning, who leads the logistics team tracking everything that enters and leaves the warehouse.

More importantly, we're not going to stop. We know that we have an immediate need. We mentioned this the other day, Judy and I were calling gowns the new ventilators, right? We have an immediate need for hospital gowns, and we're doing all that we can to source these. Through the multi-state procurement partnership that we announced on Sunday, we are confident that we will not only be able to deliver the PPE and supplies we need, but that we'll be able to do so at a lower cost to taxpayers. Getting PPE has been a race against time and in some cases, it's also been a race against our neighboring states. No more. Now we're working together to not just meet our collective needs for today, but to ensure our entire region is better prepared for tomorrow.

Finally, this is something not related to COVID-19 but frankly, indirectly it is, but it is of critical importance to our state, and that is the Census. Right now, New Jersey is ranking 21st of all 50 states, plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico, in terms of our response rate to the 2020 census. While that's better than some of our neighbors, it's simply not good enough. We're at only 58.6%. We need to get this number up, get it up meaningfully, and get it up fast. Ensuring every New Jerseyan is properly and accurately counted in the 2020 Census is incredibly important. The Census, by the way, is more than just a population count. It is the data that the federal government, and quite frankly we in state government, rely upon to make decisions that impact every community in New Jersey. We know that New Jersey was undercounted in 2010, and because of that we have left, over the course of the past decade and even today, untold billions of dollars in federal aid on the table. If that money isn't coming to New Jersey, it's going to some other state like Kentucky. Let's make sure we get the darn money here. If you have not taken the time yet to be counted, please take a moment. Go online to 2020census.gov and make sure that you are counted. So much rides on an accurate and full count.

Before I hand things over to Judy, I want to take a moment, as I do every day, to recognize some of the New Jerseyans who are really doing some good things during these unprecedented times. You've shared a lot of their stories with us on social media by using the hashtag #NJThanksYou and I ask you to please keep it up. As we get closer and closer to our restart, these are the stories that remind us that our New Jersey spirit and our New Jersey values are our greatest assets.

First up, here's a story that came to us via Twitter. We have to give a huge shout out to the students of St. Joseph High School in Metuchen. The students there decided to put together a fundraiser with a goal of \$19,000 to deliver PPE to frontline workers at nearby JFK Medical Center in Edison, and they delivered. In just two days, they raised more than \$20,000 and all of it will go to support JFK Medical Center's healthcare heroes. So it all at St. Joe's, New Jersey thanks you and go Falcons.

And let's close today with a face that may be a familiar face to many of you. If you watch the Real Housewives of New Jersey, as Pat does, you know Jennifer Aydin, but you may not know that both Jennifer and her daughter Gabby have recently recovered from coronavirus. Jennifer has used her social media platforms, which are considerable, to urge her followers to do what they need to do to stop the spread. Now while Jennifer is waiting for the test results which could determine whether she could be an antibody donor,

she's been busy trying to source PPE for the frontline and nursing home staff at Bergen's New Bridge Medical Center. She has donated roughly 3,000 N-95 masks. To you Jennifer and to Gabby, our best wishes for your continued recoveries, number one, and secondly, New Jersey thanks you for keeping our frontline responders in your thoughts.

So I'll wrap it up there. To all of you, to each and every one of you, keep doing what you're doing. We're making steady, undeniable progress. We can do this, we will do this, and we will emerge as one extraordinary New Jersey family, stronger than ever before. Please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Well, as the Governor announced, Manatt Health will be working with us on a very tight timeframe to complete a review of the state's long-term care facilities. The review will look at what additional protocols, resources and equipment should be put in place to best protect our residents. They will compare New Jersey's oversight of these facilities to other states and examine differences in outcomes. They will make recommendations on potential state or federal action to improve quality, safety, resilience and funding within New Jersey's long-term care system. We look forward to working, to building on these efforts with this team of experts, who have more than 30 years' experience in federal and state health policy.

These recommendations will guide how long-term care facilities can, in the future, safely care for their residents and the wellbeing of their staff. They'll look at outbreak protocols, they'll address mitigation, protection, and resiliency against future outbreaks. The Department of Health will continue implementing protocols, inspections and testing at all long-term care facilities while this review takes place.

So we are receiving lots of questions about the allocation of personal protective equipment, or PPE. Specifically, this applies to our nursing homes. Here is what we did back in March. The department worked with the New Jersey Hospital Association and the State Police to create a centralized inventory system. That was set up around March 24 at the New Jersey State Police headquarters at the Regional Operations Intelligence Center, the ROIC. On March 28, the Governor signed an Executive Order requiring all healthcare facilities to report daily their data concerning not only their capacity, but also their supplies, to the Office of Emergency Management. The PPE distribution system was originally set up for hospitals but on April 6, based on reports we were getting, long-term care facilities began reporting their PPE needs to the portal. Remember, the supply chain contracted nationwide, and there were hospitals with less than three to five-day supplies at the peak. At the peak of COVID-19.

All forms of PPE were in short supply, and the state aggressively stepped in to purchase PPE to bolster the supply chain. We recognize that even today, there are still challenges, particularly for smaller facilities like long-term care. That's why the state continues to use its purchasing power as part of a joint multi-state agreement to develop a regional supply chain for personal protective equipment, other than medical equipment and testing.

Similarly, testing resources had also been in short supply. Until last Thursday when Governor Murphy and I met with the President at the White House, we needed and we continue to need test kits, reagents, swabs, and PPE, especially gowns. There are 9 million residents in our state. We won't need to test every single person, but there is no doubt that we need to greatly increase our testing as a key to reopening the state. This will be dependent on the resources that are available to us. As I've reported, we've delivered about 10.7 million pieces of PPE to long-term care facilities. Additionally, we inspected 60 facilities, curtailed admissions at several homes, sent federal Veterans Administration to staff our veterans homes. We've issued over 18 guidances.

Now, we are testing every single resident and staff statewide. This focus on these facilities will continue. With 358 of the long-term care facilities reporting, similar to hospitals, 5% are reporting an urgent shortage of face shields, 4% are reporting a shortage of gowns, 2% reporting a shortage of gloves, 2% N-95s, and 1% surgical masks. We will continue to work with them to source their needed PPE.

As the Governor shared, we are reporting 5,221 hospitalizations, of which 1,549 are in critical care and 74% are on ventilators. The Governor reviewed the new case and death report reported today. In terms of deaths, I will report the race and ethnicity: White 52.6%, Black 19.3%, Hispanic 17.5%, Asian 5.3% and other 5.4%,

basically unchanged. There are 512 long-term care facilities in the state with COVID-19 cases. There are now 23,345 COVID-19 cases in long-term care facilities.

At the state veteran homes, among a census of 676 residents, there have been 361 residents that tested positive for COVID-19 and there have been a total of 125 deaths, unchanged from yesterday. And at our state psychiatric hospitals with a census of 1,250, 168 patients have tested positive and there have been 10 deaths, again unchanged since last week.

According to lab data from this morning, we've tested 256,000 individuals; 101,000 tested positive for a positivity rate of 39.59%. That concludes my daily report. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, and I thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. When you go over the race and ethnicity, it reminded me, I meant to say this yesterday, your very close friend and New Jersey, superstar Rich Besser, CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation wrote, and by the way, also a member of our Restart and Recovery Commission as well as one of our representatives on the Regional Council. To say he's wearing multiple hats is an understatement. He wrote an op-ed for USA Today which I think is a must-read for everybody. And it's called, "On Coronavirus, We Know Who Will Pay The Price When States Reopen Before They Should." And it goes right at the inequities that you and I have been speaking about now for over a month. It paints a sad but accurate picture of the reality, particularly across race in America and sadly, we know we live with that in our state. I was just responding to a couple of urgent – I missed positivity rate for today.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: 39.59%.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so this continues to again go in the right direction and as you and Christina would want us to remind folks, that's a cumulative number so the spot number is going to be inevitably better, and it's also still disproportionately, overwhelmingly disproportionately, persons with symptoms, right? That will change over time.

As I said yesterday, we would hope sometime in the next number of days, don't hold me to a day or don't hold us to a day, but I know, I think Judy will be in violent agreement with me here that we would hope to have both a testing protocol to very explicitly go through it with you folks, as well as on the heels of that at some point, sooner than later, contact tracing protocols as well.

I just go back to the all-in effort on long-term care. I think I could speak for Judy and myself, we have no less an objective – this is not a New Jersey specific reality. If you pick up any newspaper in about any state in America right now where this has hit, it's crushing places. We have no less an objective not only to deal with the here and now as best we can, but we want New Jersey to be a national model. We want to be as good and get this as right as any state in America. That's the spirit with which we enter this. Thank you for everything, leadership report. With that, the guy who needs no introduction, any updates on compliance, PPE, infrastructure, other matters. Please help us welcome Colonel Pat Callahan.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Generally quiet overnight with regards to compliance. Newark police issued 75 EO violations. In Perth Amboy, two beauty supply store owners were cited for opening and having open a non-essential business. In Teaneck, a carwash owner was cited an EO violation for having his business open. Point Pleasant, an individual was cited for allowing the gym that she operates to be open. In Point Pleasant, a vape shop owner was cited for being open as a non-essential business.

Real quick on gowns, we've talked about gowns a lot. I'm happy to report that we expect 400,000 gowns to be delivered to our warehouse this week. Our fingers are crossed on that because as the Governor and Commissioner said, they are in short supply and the burn rate on those gowns is phenomenal. We're glad to report 400,000 coming in.

Lastly, I'm happy to report that the Commissioner and I will be meeting tomorrow morning up in East Orange with Lieutenant General Laura Richardson. She's the Commanding General of the United States Army North. She's a Three Star General, one of one four Three Star women in the United States Army. And she's coming to meet with the Commissioner and I to discuss the Department of Defense's current staff here and any future

needs or any adjustments to the staffing. The Commissioner and I are looking forward and certainly appreciate Lieutenant General Richardson's time, as well as Region 2 FEMA Administrator Tom Von Essen will be joining us as well. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: I was just saying to Judy, the General has got an extraordinary reputation. She is somebody who, from all corners you hear, just a great leader. Good luck with that and very happy she's in New Jersey. We're going to start with Matt, but before we do, I believe at the moment we do not have a White House VTC scheduled for tomorrow, Mahen will correct me if I'm wrong, which means we will be gathering at about, we'll be here at one o'clock tomorrow unless you hear otherwise. I would expect the same for Friday and Saturday as well. We'll stay on the same schedule. We're not going anywhere. This is still, you know, we're making a lot of progress but the fire still rages so you should assume we're going to stay, plus or minus, with the same schedule we've been on. Again, we hope to be able to get you, over the coming days, more information on testing strategy, contact tracing at a minimum. Other updates will continue. Thursday's are unemployment data days, both nationally and in New Jersey. I'm sure we'll be have something to say about that, at least summarize where that stands. And with that, let's jump in.

Q&A Session

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. Governor, real quick, I understand that you said contact tracing, an announcement will be forthcoming but just curious if the state has hired any contact tracers to date?

And just a couple on unemployment. Some people who have received regular unemployment benefits have said they haven't received the \$600 extended benefit. They know they'll get it retroactively but some of these folks need it now. Just curious if there's a reason why they aren't getting them.

We know you're working through the backlog, but some people say they've been approved for benefits and they see the amounts that they're going to be paid but they've been waiting weeks or longer for that money. Any idea what the delay is in those cases?

Just lastly, what are people supposed to do after they get approved for unemployment benefits and then it later goes back down to show that they aren't approved or that their balance is zero and it says it's not payable, and they're not able to get anybody on the phone to clarify in those situations?

Governor Phil Murphy: On contact tracing, nothing to report but bear with us, we're going to have something for you over the next number of days. We want to get this right, so we want to make sure. Testing and contact tracing are Steps 2 and 3 in our Road to Recovery. I know I speak for Judy here, we want to make sure that we get this as right as we can. It'll be a combination of technology and boots on the ground. Who's doing the hiring and how many boots, to be determined.

Mahen, I don't want to get out over my skis but am I right in saying we may have the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development here tomorrow? I don't have a good answer for you, Matt. I know that the \$600 is coming. I'm not sure what the lag time is, if you don't have it yet, between what we're giving you versus the federal plus-up. I'm not sure. I don't have a good answer for you. You're approved, but you don't have it yet, what's the lag time there? I think your third question is, what if you at one point got registered and everything went well, and then you find out that you're not? So if you could bear with me, we'll either come to you offline or if you can have the patience until tomorrow we'll have Robert Asaro-Angelo, I think with us tomorrow. Thank you for that. Paul, good afternoon.

Paul Mulshine, Star-Ledger: First, in your view, are there any limits at all in either the duration or the extent of your powers under emergency declarations?

Second, how can New Jerseyans accept having their economic freedom subject to the will of some of the out-of-state political operators on your Recovery Commission, such as Washington anti-Trump activist Neera Tanden? Why are there no representatives of small businesses on that panel, and Shore businesses specifically?

And then Steve Sweeney suggested letting other businesses open up under the same social distance guidelines as Walmart, Home Depot and other stores.

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt Platkin, welcome, Chief Counsel. Any comment about the limits or duration of the executive power?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: There's two statutes that have been invoked. There's the Disaster Control Act, which gives the authority to declare a state of emergency, and then there's the Public Health Emergency declared under the Emergency Health Powers Act. The public health emergency, by statute, expires every 30 days unless it's renewed. In order for it to be renewed, the facts giving rise to the public health emergency have to continue to exist. The Governor today signed the second renewal of the public health, an EO for the second time renewing the public health emergency. The duration of a state of emergency is dependent on the facts that have caused or created the emergency, and clearly the facts that created the emergency based on the presentation today continue to exist.

Governor Phil Murphy: You obviously didn't see that Ben Bernanke was on there, as George W. Bush's representative running the Federal Reserve, so we've got people from all spectrums, both in New Jersey and around the country. We've got at least three CEOs of big companies in New Jersey current or former. Charlie Lowry of Prudential, Ken Frazier of Merck, Denise Morrison formerly of Campbell's Soup, so we want all perspectives. Center for American Progress has done a lot of really good work on very data-specific testing, contact tracing, not at all related to any of the politics that might enter into this from time to time.

We do have a small business representative. Her name is literally, I'm embarrassed to say is slipping my mind, so I apologize, and other businesses. Listen, we're looking at that. We're looking at that. I think I mentioned this yesterday, I had a really responsible reach out to me from a mayor, and it was a private exchange so I don't want to give up identities here, but it was a really well thought out plea for Main Street small businesses. And again, that's something we want to get to. There's no question about that. But you look at the progress we're making, that's because people are staying home. They're not going out and that's the sort of still guiding principle here.

We've started to slowly take the baby steps, Judy and her team and Christina, they're going to tell us what the health reality, what the market can bear, and we started with state and county parks and golf, and that's gone well. The weather's turned against us, but it's gone well. Non-essential retail is on the list that we're looking very carefully and closely at. You know, stay tuned. We just want to get this, I started off deliberately reading from the Wall Street Journal a couple articles that said there are an enormous amount of unknowns associated with this. We do know that social distancing, to your point, your question, is probably the best weapon we've got. I've said that time and time again, Judy has said it time and time again. If we could do that responsibly, you should assume that that's on the list of things we want to do. Thank you. Do you have something sir? Please.

Reporter: I have two, first for the colonel. If you could give us an update on the numbers of – sorry, can you give us an update on numbers of law enforcement statewide who have tested positive for COVID-19 and the numbers of those quarantined?

Secondly, for you, Governor, what is the progress on universal testing for inmates in state prisons and correctional police officers? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, do you have that number?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I do have it. As of this morning, 495 law enforcement statewide tested COVID positive, which was a decrease of just over 4% in the last day. Currently, 396 law enforcement officers are out quarantined.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Jessica Gonzalez is the name that I was reaching for, Paul, on our commission. I apologize to Jessica if she's watching. I've had the honor of being introduced by her, so shame on me. You should assume that what we would call, Judy, I think fair to say vulnerable populations, including our corrections populations, are going to be high on the list when we go through the testing protocol. It's already happening, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The Department of Corrections has a full plan for universal testing. They've already started.

Governor Phil Murphy: But you'll hear more on that as part of the testing protocols. But again, to give you a preview, vulnerable populations are first priorities. Thank you for that. Sir, you're good? Please.

Reporter: Afternoon, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Afternoon.

Reporter: Three for you. First, could you tell us the number, or do you know the number of children who have been tested and how many of those tests have come back positive?

Governor Cuomo is ordering 3D printed nasal swabs to increase COVID-19 testing capacity. Is this something that you and the state have considered?

Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry? Say that again.

Reporter: Governor Cuomo ordered 3D printed nasal swabs to increase capacity. Is that something that the state has considered?

And then regarding migrant farm camps, are there any updates on the safety guidelines and how the entire migrant community will be tested for COVID? And in the event of an outbreak in these farm camps, how will workers be quarantined and given medical service?

Governor Phil Murphy: Just bear with me one second here. Judy, unless I'm looking at fatalities, not number of kids tested. We have no fatalities under the age of 18 in the state. I do not know the number we've tested. Do you all know the number of kids that have been tested? Christina?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Unfortunately, I didn't bring it today either. But we do remind people that if you are looking for the specific demographic, descriptive stuff, you can always go to our website. We have a daily report cumulative of our cases. We have the breakdown of the ages, we have the breakdown of gender. We ask you to refer to that, or otherwise we can get that later.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, Mahen, you could follow up, if you could, with Christina. We're looking at everything on testing, nasal swabs, saliva, the whole shooting match. I don't have any specific on 3D printed ones, but I'm sure that if we do, we'll have that as part of our testing news. Judy's talked about the seasonal agricultural workforce as a big focus. I mentioned that Singapore thought they had this whole thing beaten to zero and they've had a flare up because of this very same reality that we have in terms of the warmer weather, where we've got folks coming in to help our farms up and down the state, especially in the south. It's going to be another one of those communities that we're going to have to pay particular attention to. Do you want to add anything specific to that, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. We have a taskforce, or I should say a committee, with agriculture and labor that has been meeting regularly and we have a full plan for seasonal workers. We know that there have been several that have tested positive down south and that Salem Hospital is helping with that. The FQHCs from the south are ready to set up tents at the camps. We're working with the growers, the farmers. I'll be on a call with them beginning of next week to set up the whole system for testing.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, look for that to be a part of our discussion in the number of days ahead on testing. Let's go to Elise. Good afternoon, Elise.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. On nursing homes, what's the progress on the reexamination of causes of death? Do you know about how many fatalities now have been classified as coronavirus related, upon that reexamination? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Judy or Christina?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Again, this is a work in progress. You know, we know we get the questions on deaths, particularly in long-term care facilities very routinely and we have various ways that we're looking at the different death numbers. We get information that is reported to us from the long-term care facilities, which is a little bit different than the actual numbers that we're looking at from our laboratory confirmation reconciled with our death certificates. Again, this is going to be something that we're continuously honing in on.

Governor Phil Murphy: Elise, as a non-medical, certainly not an epidemiologist as Christina is, this will be, I think, iterative and a work in progress. I suspect not just in New Jersey, there's going to be a constant review, three steps forward, one step back reality in terms of cause of death, among other realities. Thank you. Dave, good afternoon.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Hi, Governor. Could you guys give us a little more of an explanation regarding this expert panel that's going to look at the long-term care situation? How long are they going to be working? When do you think we might see some recommendations from them? How is this going to play out? How quickly do you think we could enact this stuff?

Governor, we've received some information that people in living in buildings, either apartment buildings or condominiums, they have elevators. There seems to be no rhyme or reason as to whether you get in the elevator with somebody else, especially if it's a small elevator, whether you wear a mask or not. Some of these condo associations don't have any guidance about this. What would your recommendations be? How should people handle this?

Lastly here, you've been talking for many, many days, but in particular recently about the importance of wearing a mask. We know and we've seen, all of us, that we see knuckleheads, yahoos, wise guys, slime dogs, for whatever reason don't seem to be wearing a mask.

Governor Phil Murphy: Numbskulls.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Numbskulls in that group as well, yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: They call them something else in West Virginia, I'm told.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Okay. So, could you remind everybody and perhaps the Commissioner who needs no introduction would also be good here, why is this important to wear a mask? I mean, what are we accomplishing and what do we not accomplish if we don't wear a mask? Would you, Governor, recommend that people should say something to somebody, like I saw, he appeared to be a wise guy, in a supermarket and he was not wearing a mask? Do I confront him? Do I ask him politely? Should I be afraid? I know the Colonel is armed. He would not have a problem making a comment. But for those of us that are not, what do we do?

Governor Phil Murphy: On that last one, you may want to call the Colonel, have him come in and help you. May I say a couple of things and then I think it sounds like there's an ample opportunity both for you, Judy, and you, Pay, to weigh in here. It's not an expert panel. These are people who have a business that are going to come in, hired by us as a state, by Judy, ourselves, to actually do the three things that we talked about, the near-term and the long-term steps. Judy can give more color on that. Unlike the Commission, which we're going to for advice, these are folks who are going to come in, roll up their sleeves and help us.

I don't know that we've got elevator protocol. I know that in our offices, you have to wear a mask and our capacity limit is two per elevator. Do we have a statewide elevator protocol, Matt, to the best of your knowledge?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: We don't have an elevator-specific protocol, but we have various protocols for different types of buildings.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah. Let's give that some thought. It's a very good point. If I had to hang my hat on something, I'd say two max, must wear a face covering, unless you're in a family group, right? Allow us to come back to that.

Listen, Judy and Christina could tell you why we wear face coverings and the health bone fide around it are unimpeachable. It's quite clear why we do it and I'll let them say it. I personally am of a strong opinion that there's sort of at least three very basic things we could do. Stay away from each other, cover our face, wash our hands with soap and water regularly. I think if we all did that, we would be -- and I think a lot of folks are doing that right now and have been doing it. Those are really basic but really smart things to do. And again, by wearing this and that's why I don't want to get any closer to you, it's for your benefit, not for mine, right? So I'm not spewing droplets on you within six feet. We take these off only to speak at these press conferences. I don't want to get you in harm's way.

First of all, let me just say this. That in a supermarket right now they have to be wearing the mask. That has to be enforced by the operator And it's up to you, but I would tell somebody. That's not optional. In an elevator, fair point, I don't think we've got guidance. When I was at Thompson Park in Monmouth County this weekend, folks along the path, for the most part, were not wearing masks. I wish they were. We were not mandating it. We were recommending it. I'm of the category that I think we should be stronger on that, but then there's massive compliance challenges that make life for guys like Pat even more, almost unreasonably complicated.

Any comments to either of the two folks to my right on masks in particular, Christina?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: As the Governor mentioned, yes, the main importance of the mask is to protect others from you. But, you know, as a secondary note, sometimes the mask is a nice reminder for us that, don't touch your face. Because, remember, contamination, your hands might be dirty. If you accidentally touch your face you could potentially introduce virus into your mouth or your nose, whether it's coronavirus or another respiratory virus. Primary protection is for others, but for yourself, just a reminder, don't touch your face.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, anything you want to add on the folks we're bringing in? They're in to help us work, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Oh, yeah. And I was on the phone with Cindy Mann last evening and again this morning, and they're going to hit the ground running to look at not only what we're doing here in New Jersey, they have national presence. They've been working in a number of hotspots. We're going to start comparing. Is there more that we should be doing? How do we implement certain protocols and what they would recommend. I look forward to any input that they can give us. You know, the residents of the long-term care facilities deserve it. They deserve as many eyes on it as possible.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen, and the heroic workers who go there every day, right? Again, just to repeat, sort of three prongs. One is immediate support on long-term care. Two is to do a very fast, you know, measured in two or three weeks, review of where we are. And then thirdly, to give Judy and me and any of us involved in this a recommendation, sort of what this needs to look like as a long-term structural matter. Thank you for that. John, you get to bring us out here today.

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Thanks, Governor. Is the state collecting data from county jails on testing and deaths? Anything from Essex on its antibody testing program? Are you getting details about ICE detainees?

Governor Phil Murphy: Anything from Essex?

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Essex has an antibody testing program. And are you getting any details about ICE detainee testing?

Governor, you've been very vocal about other government agencies holding public meetings they shouldn't be, holding them virtually. Last night in Sussex County, the Montague Board of Education held another in-person public meeting, it's the second. Any comment on that? Any idea if the Department of Education signed off on that meeting?

I have a couple questions about the taskforce you formed in January. Can you tell us what it's been doing since January? Anything specific? For example, did it suggest any of the EOs you've signed? Can you tell us the people you've talked to, the experts, anything that's going on? Is it still meeting? What's happening behind the scenes with that taskforce? We've been trying to get some details on what it's doing. Do you see it continuing for a while? How's it integrating with these other commissions and taskforces you're putting together?

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me start with the public meeting. People should not be meeting right now. Matt, am I right in saying if you've got under 10 – what's the 10 or under 10 metric here? I want to make sure I don't violate my own Executive Order.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Your ban on gatherings is still in effect. The Colonel has issued an Administrative Order that says gatherings under 10 are presumptively in compliance with your Executive Order.

Governor Phil Murphy: But we're not encouraging them. I don't know how many people were in the room, but if there were more than 10, neither Judy or I or Pat would be happy.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: I should say that if the evidence indicates, even under 10, that the gathering shouldn't be happening, that there's still discretion.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't have the – do you have the county jail information, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have it.

Governor Phil Murphy: We don't, can we come back to you on that? That includes, I think, you asked both about the status of Essex County antibody tests, county jails, as well as ICE detainees? Can we come back to you on those? Mahen, will you help me with that?

The taskforce, so I would just say this and Judy should come in behind me as she's the Chair of the taskforce. The taskforce, we started discussing sort of what this looked like as a leadership team and certainly, most importantly, in the Department of Health, this being coronavirus in January. I think it was Super Bowl Sunday that I put pen to paper to establish it under Judy's leadership. I'd say, and again, Judy will come in and correct and amplify the record here, in the first number of weeks this was like a lot of taskforces, whole of government, figuring out where we thought this was going to come at us. What sort of a response we needed to have by some time, and Judy, I'm going to say late February, early March, certainly by March 4th we had our first case. It's now all-out war. It's a taskforce in the sense that it's the entirety, almost it's every moment of every day of all of our lives. It's the reality of almost all of what we're doing in government right now, as opposed to, we're going to have a taskforce meeting at two o'clock on Tuesdays. It's all consuming. It's clearly, under Judy's leadership, it's the war room at the ROIC. It's the variety, it's Jared Maples, it's Carol Johnson in Human Services, it's the entirety, our team in the front office. So I don't want to say it doesn't exist. But in fact, it's morphed into almost everything we're doing right now.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The taskforce has met weekly since February 3, when the Governor convened it and the work has generated from how do we protect the people in each department, meaning the people that care for people in group homes, how do we keep up the WIC program? How do we make sure that nutrition occurs? I mean, when I think, it seems like we've been working on this for years, and it's only been since February 3. We're now meeting and sharing, in fact, I think we have a meeting today, the algorithm for testing, and making sure that all of the group homes that we're responsible for, the populations that each and every department is responsible for, whether it be transit or children and families, Human Services, that we identify vulnerable populations and make sure that the testing algorithm covers end to end, from identification of the population, all the way to isolation and quarantine for those that don't have a place to go. That's what we're working on now and it's been a weekly journey.

Governor Phil Murphy: And you mentioned interaction with the Commission, our first Commission meeting, Judy, was on Monday on our side, other than led obviously by Dr. Shirley Tilghman and Ken Frazier, on our side. It was me, Judy, Tim Sullivan talking about the economic impact and Liz Muoio talking about the impact on our budget. They're all members and that was a tangible example of the interaction.

I cut you off earlier, I should have, back to Dave's question before we break here. Any other advice? You're in a supermarket and you see somebody not wearing a mask? What do we do?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I think you nailed it, Governor. I think the most prudent thing is to let the store management or operator know. We don't want to see physical and verbal altercations at supermarkets. I think, to the Governor's point, that's what I would do. And if I can just add to John's question about the taskforce that the Commissioner chairs, right out of the gate we laid the incident command structure over that which is the planning, logistics, operations as well as the fiscal/administrative support, so we're guided by those four, basically pillars of incident command. That's under, as the governor said, under Commissioner Persichilli's oversight. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. So I'm going to mask up here as we exit stage left. Again, tomorrow we are here unless you hear otherwise at 1:00 p.m. and Friday assume as well at 1:00 p.m. and Saturday at 1:00 p.m. Again, folks, thank you for everything you're doing. Keep doing what you're doing. Again, I have to repeat this, it's making a huge difference and in particular, a huge kudos for the state and county park and golf protocols that you all observed, because it was overwhelmingly really good. And that's going to allow us to move the ball, if we keep that up, that allows us to move the ball down the field on things like what's the beach scene going to look like? What's that non-essential retail reality going to be? What's construction going to look like? What's elective surgery look like? Those are all decisions that we have to chop through.

Again, you'll hear in the next number of days, and don't hold me to how many, a very comprehensive discussion of testing going forward. I think on the heels of that, at some point sooner than later, a similar discussion as it relates to contact tracing. Thank you all. I want to thank Commissioner Persichilli, Dr. Tan, Colonel Callahan, Director Maples, Counselor Platkin, the rest of you, God bless you all. Stay safe. See you tomorrow.

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