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Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: October 27th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media


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Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. With me to my right is the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli, to her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Great to have you both. To my left, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan.

Before we get to all the numbers, I want to relay a quick announcement from the Department of Human Services and Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman. Starting next Monday, November 1st, the Department will be increasing the reimbursement rate for childcare providers who serve children through the state's childcare assistance program by an average of 25%, a total of 83-million-dollar investment in childcare. Certainly, yes, a discussion of reimbursement sounds a little bureaucratic and wonky, but it is a direct impact not just on the affordability of childcare but on the ability of childcare providers to attract and retain the caring individuals they need. As we've said many times here, access to affordable healthcare – or childcare, rather, is a critical part of our overall economic recovery from the pandemic as more and more parents get back to work, especially moms, and even more especially single moms who we know are nearly always the first ones to leave the workforce when childcare is hard to come by. This is all part of what is a more than one-billion-dollar total investment across the board is making childcare more affordable for families and in strengthening the ranks of providers. I thank Sarah and her team for their continued efforts.



Back
to top

Now let's peel through the numbers, and as we weren't with you Monday due to President Biden's visit to New Jersey, we have more ground to cover than usual. Let's start with the latest vaccination count. As of 9:30 a.m. today. With successive actions by the FDA and CDC last week, many more fully vaccinated New Jerseyans who received either the Moderna or the J&J vaccines are now eligible for a booster shot. For folks who got either Pfizer or Moderna, your eligibility window opens six months after you received your second dose, so anybody who got their second shot by the end of April. These boosters are currently for anyone age 65 years and older and for all adults 18 and up who live – are in one of these categories. You live in a long-term care setting, you have underlying medical conditions which may put you at higher risk for contracting the coronavirus, or you work in a high-risk setting. For those who had J&J, the window for receiving your booster is two months after your initial shot, so that would be late August. Everyone ages 18 and up who has received the J&J vaccine is eligible.

For everyone, regardless of which vaccine you initially received, you are approved to get a booster dose of a different vaccine. You may mix and match. To be clear, we have the supply needed to meet the demand for boosters. There are sites and clinics in nearly every community in our state where you can get your booster shot. Head over to covid19 – that website right there – covid19.nj.gov/vaccine for more information on where and how to sign up to get yours. By the way, Judy checked – as of yesterday I believe at least, we have 1,739 distribution locations, so they are literally all over the state, which is why – among other reasons why our vaccine numbers are as high as they are.

While we're on the topic of vaccines, let's take a look at the latest breakthrough case data, which takes us through October 11th. First, for the preliminary numbers for the week of October 4 through 10, 2,766 of the reported 12,633 positive test results were from individuals who were fully vaccinated. You can see right below that, there were 24 reported hospitalizations of fully vaccinated individuals with one – and then below that with one confirmed death from COVID-related complications. These numbers represent a slim minority of the total – thank God of the total hospitalizations and deaths reported for the weeks. You can see 24 hospitalizations of folks who were fully vaccinated out of a total of 734 and sadly one loss of life out of a total of 124.

As we've been saying, the most completely picture of the vaccine's effectiveness comes from the cumulative numbers, which Dr. Ed Lifshitz and his team at the Communicable Disease Service have been tracking since mid-January. When you look at the total of nearly 5.7 million fully vaccinated individuals – that's through October 11th – the vaccines continue to keep more than 99% of these folks safe from COVID and thank God out of the hospital and still alive. Again, if you're in your window of eligibility for your booster shot, please go and get it. The weather is turning colder, which means more of us will be moving our social activities back inside. Get the added protection that a booster can provide.

Next up, here are the newly reported positive PCR and antigen test results for today. These numbers do fluctuate day to day, so that's why we also look at the seven-day rate of transmission, which continues to trend downward. One week ago, it was hovering around .9. Now it's been hovering closer to .8, and that's a good thing. While we're on cases, let's also take a look at the latest in-school transmission data. Excuse me. For the week of October 19th through the 25th, 11 newly reported outbreaks have been determined to have originated from in-school transmission. This gives us a total of 137 outbreaks cumulatively impacting both students and educators and staff across 110 municipalities. These 11 new outbreaks have been tied to – as you can see – respectively 49 additional student cases and eight new cases among educators and staff. A one week – by the way, we would never suggest that one week is a trend. This is a significant decrease from last week's report. As a reminder, you have to remember what the denominator looks like. There are more than 3500 schools in our state serving more than 1.5 million children from pre-K through grade 12. Excuse me. Overall, while we take every case with the utmost seriousness, these numbers are well within our expectations.

The Departments of Education and Health under Judy's leadership along with local health officials and partners will continue to work with districts and school leaders, educators, and other stakeholders to ensure a layered approach to safety to everyone in our schools and broader educational communities. As part of this, we are also closely watching the FDA and CDC for their anticipated follow-up actions after yesterday's recommendation by the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee –

rolls right off your tongue there, Judy – the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Getting our kids eligible for vaccination against COVID will be an absolute gamechanger not just for keeping our schools safe but for further protecting all families and communities.

Next up, here last night's number from our state's hospitals. Today is the first day – Judy, you mentioned this to me earlier – since August 14 that our hospitals collectively reported a total of fewer than 800 individuals in their care either COVID positive or persons under investigation. Since October 1st, the number of people hospitalized has decreased roughly 23%. That's a good thing. The number of patients requiring intensive care or a ventilator is also down to 196 and 96, as you can see, respectively. You have to reach back to August 26 for the last time the ventilator count was under 100 and August 24th when we had only one other day where the ICU census was under 200. We are hopeful that these one-day drops become long-term trends needless to say. Today, we are also reporting an additional – with the heaviest of hearts – 33 confirmed deaths from COVID-related causes. The number of probable deaths has been adjusted upward by four to 2,814, and Dr. Lifshitz and his team continue their investigative work on all these. Let's take a minute as we do every day to remember three more of the precious lives that we have lost.

We'll start with this guy, Keith Shaw. He was 74 years old and lived in Waterford, in Camden County for the past 43 years. Keith passed on August 22nd. He was a father of four and a grandfather of eight. Due to complications from his youth, he remained susceptible to the coronavirus. In fact, having spoken to his wife and daughter, he received a lung transplant, Judy, three and a half years ago, and we know we've said this before, sadly, that transplantees are particularly susceptible to COVID-19. Keith was a Vietnam era army veteran, a world traveler, and a noted jack of all trades who made sure to pass his litany of skills on down through the family. He was equally skilled in the kitchen and his family will especially miss his annual Thanksgiving feasts.

He leaves behind his wife Eileen and his four children, Kelli Ann, Keith, Eileen, and Kevin. I had the great honor of speaking with both Eileens last week and their families, including his nine beloved grandchildren Jordyn, Connor, Lainey, Evan, Logan, Kiera, Riley, Avery, and Aubrey. Keith also leaves seven brothers and sisters and one special niece in particular, Megan, to whom he was a beloved father figure. We thank Keith for his service to our nation and for being a bright light in his community, and God bless and watch over him and the family he leaves behind.

Next we'll move up to Cinnaminson, the home of Robert Happe, a lifelong New York Giants football fan living deep in Eagles territory. Rob was just 42 years old when he passed away 11 days ago. A graduate of Lenape High in Medford for the past 15 years, Rob was a machinist and underground lineman for PSE&G following both his dad's and grandfather's boots and gloves. He made a lasting impression on everyone who he worked with who knew they could always count on Rob for his quick wit, whether it be for a good joke or anything else that could brighten the workday and make it go just a little bit faster. Away from work, Rob was happiest seated around his firepit surrounded by his friends and family, and you can bet he made them all laugh uncontrollably too.

Rob leaves behind his fiancée Nicole and her daughter Gianna. He also leaves behind his parents Maggie and Len, his little sister Caitlin, and many aunts, uncles, and countless friends. I had a pretty emotional call last week with his mom Maggie. Sadly, Rob was unvaccinated despite many pleas from his parents and his sister who's a nurse, by the way, to do so. Maggie asked me to pass on her personal urging for everyone to get vaccinated in Rob's memory and honor. Please take those words from a mother. No parent should have to go through what she and Len and their entire family is now going through. She told me through tears, and I quote her, "If my son had been vaccinated, he would be alive today." May God bless Rob and his memory. May his humor live on, and God bless his family that he leaves behind.

Finally for today, we'll travel to River Edge in Bergen County, which was the long-time home of this guy, Mike Mantell, who we lost this spring at the age of 66. One of six siblings raised by a single mom, Mike learned early the importance and value of a strong education, of a strong work ethic, and of always reaching for the stars, whether it be for yourself or to help others reach for theirs. In his professional life, Mike served for more than three decades with the New York City Transit Authority, rising through the ranks to be the chief financial officer. That on its own is laudable, but Mike will be best remembered for all he did in his community, especially to help kids achieve their dreams of going to college. For his own kids and many

others, Mike was a trusted advisor, helping to pick out the colleges for which they were best suited, honing essays, and helping with earning financial aid packages. After his passing, Mike's family noted that they received numerous thank you notes from the now adults he helped along the way.

He was also deeply involved in River Edge's youth sports scene, coaching girls' softball, including his daughters' teams, along with basketball, and he organized swim meets for the River Edge Swim Club. Mike left behind his wife of 38 years, Mary, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last Wednesday, along with his five daughters and their families along with many friends. We thank Mike for his amazing community spirit. We know his legacy will live on not only through his daughters but also through every now adult who he helped achieve their dreams. May God bless and watch over him, and I'd love to raise, Pat, a figurative glass and toast a great life lived taken from us too soon. As always, we remember everyone who we've lost.

Now switching gears as we usually do to highlight one of the small businesses working hard to keep their communities moving forward in this case caffeinated, Judy, I suspect this is one you will know well. In West Windsor, right here in Mercer County, you'll find Grover's Mill Coffee (family-run coffeehouse owned and operated by that mother and daughter duo of Mickey DeFranco and Joey Chase. They've been roasting their coffees for their neighbors and customers since 1955 (Mike's specifically takes my favorite pitouphy) in the coffee she serves but also in the fact that she is a woman roaster in an industry which is 90% men. I don't think I ever realized. To keep the business brewing through the pandemic's darkest days, Mickey teamed with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and received grants that helped cover the store's expenses. (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgovmurphy/)

Today, business is coming back, although she wanted me to (https://www.snapchat.com/add/gbhmurphy) please go by and pay them a visit. When I spoke with Mickey I guess last Wednesday, we shared our optimism that we're going to come through this together, and that logo, by the way, in case you're wondering, is in honor of Grover's Mill's place in popular history as the supposed Martian landing in Orson Welles's famed telling of the story *War of the Worlds*, which broadcast on radio nationwide October 30, 1938. She's in the – Grover's Mills is in the Southfield Shopping Center. The website is groversmillcoffee.com – drop the apostrophe – groversmillcoffee.com, and I have one other fun fact. Mickey's dad is 91, and he comes to work every day. That's a good place to end today, so for everyone who's preparing for Halloween and trick or treating this weekend, we hope you to have a safe but enjoyable time. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, even virtually, the Commissioner of the of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. Last week, the CDC issued the recommendation enabling Moderna and Johnson & Johnson booster doses to further protect all New Jerseyans who have completed an initial vaccine series. According to the CDC, for individuals who received a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the following groups are eligible for a booster shot at six months or more after their initial series: 65 years and older, age 18 who live in long-term care settings, age 18 and over who have underlying medical conditions, and age 18 and over who work or live in high-risk settings.

The authorization also recommends that everyone ages 18 and older who received a first Johnson & Johnson dose receive a booster dose two months after completing their single dose primary regimen. Following the issuance of the CDC recommendations, the Department directed our vaccination partners to begin administering booster doses of Moderna and J&J vaccines immediately to those who are eligible. As a reminder, everyone who has not yet received their second dose of either Pfizer or Moderna should receive it. The second shot increases the vaccine's effectiveness at preventing COVID-19. You can receive your second dose at any location. Additionally, the Moderna booster, which is half dose from the original regimen, and the CDC has approved the use of any of the authorized brands for your booster.

Also, yesterday an advisory panel to the Food and Drug Administration reviewed Pfizer data and voted in – voted to support Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Next week, the CDC's advisory committee on immunization practices will examine that same data and make their recommendations. We will be prepared to vaccinate younger children. There are 760,000 5- to 11-year-olds in New Jersey. We have ordered – pre-ordered 205,000 doses of pediatric Pfizer. Sites will be receiving the vaccine to start

immunizing children as soon as the approval is granted. All 21 counties will have sites prepared to vaccinate children with the lower dose pediatric Pfizer vaccine that is safe and highly effective. In addition, 65 primary care sites, 35 acute care hospital sites, 40 independent pharmacies, eight chain pharmacies, 27 FQHCs, seven local and county health department sites, six urgent care sites, and right now one megasite will be receiving pediatric vaccine as well.

In New Jersey, there were 895 vaccine for children participating entities. 522 have signed up to be COVID-19 providers, and 267 have already administered COVID-19 to 12- to 17-year-olds. We continue to reach out to these providers and encourage them to join our COVID vaccination network, but we are waiting for further guidance on when this group can be vaccinated. Those 12 to 17 are eligible for the Pfizer vaccine right now. 62.3% of children between the ages of 12 to 17 have received at least one dose within that age cohort. 70.8% of 16- to 17-year-olds have received at least one dose. To those parents that see the value of vaccination for their children, we thank you. When we look at the 12- to 15-year-olds, only 57% have received at least one dose. We need to increase that coverage as we prepare to vaccinate children between the ages of 5 and 11 as well.

We are all pleased that this year children are getting back to more of the activities they enjoy, and that includes celebrating Halloween. To help protect their health and safety, we encourage parents to make sure their children have a safe and healthy Halloween. Children should trick or treat in small groups and engage in Halloween activities outdoors as much as possible. It is best to avoid indoor parties. As always, practice good hand hygiene and stay at home if you're sick.

On to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 792 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation. There is one case of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 134 cumulative cases in our state, and one of the children are currently hospitalized. At the state veterans' homes, there are no new cases among residents, and there are no new cases among our patients at the psychiatric hospitals.

The daily percent positivity as of October 23rd in New Jersey is 5.20%; the northern part of the state reports 4.02; the central part of the state, 6.38%; and the southern part of the state, 6.31%. That concludes my daily report. Please continue to stay safe and get vaccinated. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you for that. Thank you for all. A game-changer if we can get our kids vaccinated, so God willing, that's going to come, maybe in a matter of days, right? So it'll be a busy week, as you said earlier, next week. Thank you for that.

Pat, a lot of balls in the air. I mean, I'd love you to give us, if you don't mind, a quick recap on the storm, on FEMA both if you've got it, retrospective action by them and also prospective steps that they're taking. Spoke to several mayors. Largely flooding, not at the same level as Ida. Winds got pretty – up there pretty good, but power outages were a lot less than we feared, which I think is a good thing, obviously, needless to say, but over to you for whatever you got. Great to have you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. I'll start with one of the historic parts of state police history. In my office, we have a picture of Orsen Wells doing the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, and next to it, a copy of the station record where the poor trooper who was taking the phone calls as that unfolded, and it's just a pretty special piece of state police history and that trooper, what he thought was happening.

Governor Phil Murphy: Can I ask you a favor?

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Sure.

Governor Phil Murphy: Can you take a picture of it and throw it in? Dan, can you help us with – maybe show this on Monday?

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: That'd be great, because it's going to be – Saturday is the anniversary

Governor Phil Murphy: Saturday's the anniversary. We won't be with you Saturday, but we'll hit it on Monday.

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you. As far as the storm, just a few things to note. The Demarest Dam partially collapsed yesterday. Luckily, nobody was hurt, but that dam contains about a two to three acre body of water. No evaluations or road closures caused from it, and that investigation of how that happened is ongoing. Middlesex County is reporting, thankfully, that the water in those towns that were flooded the most – those waters have receded and conditions are returning back to normal. To your point about power outages, I think as of this morning, we were about 500, so that even happens on a blue sky day, Governor. As far as state police, accidents-wise, as of this morning, we had handled 368 motor vehicle accidents and 241 motorists' aids. We do have flood warnings that remain in effect for Bergen, Morris, and Passaic, and a coastal flood advisory for east and western Monmouth, Atlantic, Cape May, Ocean, Southeast, and Burlington and Middlesex Counties in effect til 5 o'clock tonight.

We are expecting some wind and rain again on Friday, so we're keeping an eye on that. Currently, there are 15 rivers that are near flood stage. There were this morning at 10:30 in the Hackensack River and Riverdale is at moderate flood stage. That flood stage is five and a half feet, and that current level is almost at seven feet.

To the few three positive pieces about our FEMA response in the individual assistance realm, to date there's more than 73,000 registrations for individual assistance that've been received by FEMA. Over 162 million have been awarded from the FEMA Individuals and Households Program, and SBA loan guarantee approved for more than 2800 applicants. More than \$134 million awarded from the SBA. Americorp, which is a group of disaster recovery teams from all over the country have volunteered from all 7 states, Iowa, Colorado, Utah, Virginia, and North Carolina. Currently that team is of 86 personnel serving to assist homeowners that were devastated by Ida. I was happy to report that last Friday, 30 troopers assisted in East Brunswick Railway, in Irvington, and the feedback I got from not only the troopers involved with helping with the homeowners was the homeowners' response of the morale and the boost that they felt from that support. That was good, certainly, for all involved.

Also glad to report that FEMA recently approved a mission assignment request for up to 100 canvassers to assist with community outreach for vaccinations. That campaign will begin the first week of November. They're going to train this Saturday on October 30th and outreach activities will focus on priority areas identified by the Department of Health, and they're going to prioritize age groups that are 5 to 11 and 12 to 17, and we're certainly going to publicize state and federal resources for accurate information on vaccines and publicize local vaccination sites and initiatives. So a lot going on on the FEMA front, Gov, from storms and COVID, but as always, we're humbled and honored to do it.

Governor Phil Murphy: A lot going on on October 30th. That's great, though, getting the FEMA approval for those hundred canvassers Judy, that's a game-changer for us, particularly as we are on the cusp of having kids vaccinated I thanked the President on Monday for the FEMA partnership, which has been hugely, hugely important to so many individuals and so many small businesses. I was on with, among others, the mayor of Dunellen earlier today, and Jason said to me, and all I could do was echo it. We got to stop seeing this movie. I mean, the flooding, it wasn't nearly as severe, thank God, as it was in the two storms prior, especially Ida, but he said it's – folks, there's that blue acres question that he raised again, and it's a fair one. How many times does a homeowner have to see the same thing happen when they have to dig out, rebuild, only to let that happen again? Thank you for everything, Pat. Deep appreciation.

We'll start over here with Mike. We're going to be together – back together on Monday at 1 o'clock, so we will see you all then. Obviously if there's any between now and then we need you – or we need to update you on, we will come back to you, so thank you.

Q&A Session

Mike, with that, good afternoon.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Good afternoon, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't think that mic is on. Still not on, sorry. Give us one sec. Yeah, I'm good. I can hear you, but I want to make sure folks watching at home – you got to send it through, Brent, and –

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: [30:18].

Governor Phil Murphy: That makes two of us. We might've been able to figure this out without a microphone.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Is it working?

Governor Phil Murphy: No. Do you want to use that one? Does that work? Okay, so what I'll do is best I can, I will repeat your question.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: [30:34].

Governor Phil Murphy: That would be a big help from everybody if you could keep it brief.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: [30:38].



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Mike. First question I'm going to hand to Judy in a second, which is can you describe the preparations for rolling out the vaccines for 5 to 11 year olds. Secondly, do I know Phil Sellinger and do I have any reaction. I know him well, and I think he's an outstanding, impeccable choice. I think it's – bless you – a great nomination by the President, and I have every confidence Phil will be, assuming he's confirmed, a great US attorney. Judy, do you want to talk about the 5 to 11 approach?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Sure, but the first thing is to understand that the Pfizer pediatric dose is a two-dose regimen but a lower dose. So it's 10 micrograms, one-third of the dose for teens and adults. In order to discriminate for the vaccinators, the Pfizer doses will be packaged in a different color. There will be – it looks like a bright orange cap and lettering for the 5 to 11 year old doses.

The second thing is we want to make sure that we have enough outlets that give the parents and the children places to go where they feel safe, places to go where they have perhaps in the past trusted the vaccination sites. We hope to have school-endorsed and school-based clinics for those kids that are used to getting their immunizations at the schools. I'm getting – I had a call with the superintendents last week getting great support from the school superintendents in setting up school-based clinics.

Additionally, we want to make sure that any large site has a pediatric section that is welcoming to the parents and the kids so that children do not have to be afraid to get their immunizations in a large area. Most importantly, we want to see as many pediatricians and primary care physicians that children are used to being prepared and ready to give vaccinations.

Governor Phil Murphy: Well said, thank you, Judy. I was going to say, Jamil, we can go over to Brent but we don't need you to do that at the moment. I don't think we're working, so Brent, if you could – I'll do the same thing I did with Mike and repeat the question.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: Yeah, no problem. [33:30] want passports, but it's a fear of a white conservative backlash before the election. Can you please respond?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so Judy, you want to take – the when is potentially as early as next week, right?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Yeah, they ASIP is meeting I believe Monday and Tuesday, and I'm pretty sure it's Monday and Tuesday; it may be Tuesday and Wednesday. What's happening is they give the recommendations to CDC and what we've seen is that the CDC is turning around their guidance pretty quickly. If by Tuesday night they turn around guidance, we're ready to go Wednesday morning.

Governor Phil Murphy: By the way, the microphone's working now, right? Great. Listen, Reverend Boyer is a dear friend, and I cannot say enough good things about him. I mean that literally, a guy who fights for equity in the state unlike anybody I know. On this one, I'm going to say with great respect, politics doesn't enter into this and it never has. I genuinely – Judy, what are we, about 80 or 85% on the Latino community

of vaccinations relative to their representation of the population but probably still only two-thirds the 70% of the African-American community, if those numbers are off the top of my head. I would never say heck no to anything. We still have to leave options on the table, particularly if this thing takes a turn for the negative, but that is genuinely the reason. It's been my reason from day one, and I hope it isn't forever and always. I hope the equity gets solved regardless of what we end up doing with our policies. Part of the reason we been knocking on doors and the FEMA approval was a big deal, not just for kids and adolescents but in particular communities of color, black and brown communities Again, I love Reverend Boyer. Thank you.

Sam, is that you?

Sam Sutton, Politico: Yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: How are you, Sam?

Sam Sutton, Politico: Good, and glad the mic's fixed because I got a bit of a wind-up here. The EO requiring vaccines or tests for healthcare workers and high-risk workers took effect on September 7th. I understand that acute care hospitals haven't had to submit vaccination data (https://www.facebook.com/departmentofhealth) and with the notable exception of long-term care, I would imagine that's the case for other healthcare settings as well. So my question is without that data, how is this order being enforced? (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)

Separately on the vaccine or test EO for state workers, can you (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgov) permit to release information on vaccination rates within the state's workforce before election day? Lastly, even as a lot of new funding, I think upwards of a billion, as you said earlier for childcare as well (https://www.instagram.com/governorphilmurphy/) groundbreakings over the last few weeks, how should we view these announcements and appearance in the context of your pitch for a second term? (https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, Judy, any comment on Sam's first question on the EO for folks who are in high-risk employment situations, which I think you mentioned kicked off on September 7th? Any color on that?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Sure, as you know, the covered entities is pretty – it's a pretty expansive list, probably north of a thousand. We have required through the ED that every entity have a policy that is made available to the Department that outlines the process for record-keeping of vaccination and testing and their enforcement policies, which are directly related to their human resources policies of each individual employer. Those records must be available on request from the Department in response to regular surveillance, outbreaks, areas of high transmissibility that require more vigilance as examples. We do expect that the policies will be developed and submitted to the Department and we will follow up through our surveillance activities to be able to identify areas that need more vigilance.

Governor Phil Murphy: Sam, you asked on state workforce, I would add educators to that. We will release this when we have the data completely. I can't commit to the date, but I would expect fully that it's sooner than later measured in, I would think, weeks and not months. I'm not sure I can say it's measured in days. If we have it, we'll release it. We do know just from anecdotal evidence that the compliance is very high, including in the educational field. Judy's getting a lot of the reporting coming in, and my guess is we'll have that on both fronts sooner than later.

My reaction on your last question is wait til you see what we're going to be talking about after next Tuesday, whether I win or lose. There's just a lot going on in New Jersey right now and that's largely a good thing. We're still in the battle in a pandemic, and it's a lot better than it was. NJ Transit's board voted to fund the Portal North Bridge and in a matter of days, the President was here with me talking about that. That's just the timing of things. Our foot is on the gas pedal because there's a lot happening in New Jersey and as I say, measure us not just between now and next Tuesday Win, lose, or draw, we're keeping the gas pedal pressed down because there's that much activity going on in Jersey these days, and that's a good thing.


Joey, is that you?

Joey Fox, New Jersey Globe: Sure is, hello.

Governor Phil Murphy: How are you?

Joey Fox, New Jersey Globe: Early voting is now halfway done. There hasn't been a ton of uptake so far. Do you see that as concerning, and is there anything your Administration plans to do to try and boost early voting turnout? Then a really quick addendum for Colonel Callahan. Did the flooding from nor'easter affect any early voting sites that you know of? Visitors to state legislative buildings are now subject to a vaccine or test mandate. I know the Governor's offices have fewer visitors and already have a mandate for staff, but do you intend to enact a similar mandate on visitors in Governors' offices? Then finally, several polls recently have shown Joe Biden as increasingly unpopular, including in New Jersey. Is that something that you take into account with your policy choices, the visits you host, things like that? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Joey, on the – I'm not aware of any flooding, are you?

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: The only question we had at the SEOCs today was in Patterson where I asked the same question, and I was told that four citizens had showed up to vote, and we did not believe that flooding impacted that in any way. Thank you.  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. So on early voting – and I can't remember when we had this conversation and whether it was here or not. There's no question by the people step, and yes a special right direction. A lot of states – we've talked about this – a closing down democracy, making it harder to vote. We're making it easier to vote, and I'm glad to be on that list, which unfortunately is not as long a list as it should be right now. I like this a lot. Here's the thing: we've got no muscle memory. We've never done this before. I did it with my family. All six of us voted on Saturday. Best voting experience of my entire voting life, which goes back now 40-something years. Really easy-peasy, great technology, font size, where you can read it. It's increasingly important. I'll leave myself – I won't acknowledge either Pat or Judy on that one. It takes – it will take time. The fact that we're doing it this year, hugely important. This is something that will pay dividends, my guess is, measured in a number of years going forward. You look out three, five years from now, I think you're going to have a very significant amount of early vote. Amy Klobuchar and I were talking about this a couple of weekends ago. Minnesota has the biggest early vote block of time in the country They do 40 days early, which is jaw-dropping. She said it's become part of the mindset of the electorate.

Yeah, we basically do that already in the front office but if you're asking would we be willing to make that official, you have to either show – you're talking about visitors or anyone in the building either has to be vaccinated or be subject to a negative test. I know our entire front office is a hundred percent compliant with that, so either vaccinated – and our levels are very, very high. I can't give you an exact number, but I do know we're a hundred percent compliant on the staff. On the visitors' side, we essentially do that already but if you're asking would we be willing to formalize that, absolutely.

Joe Biden's polls – my own polls or his polls just don't factor in. They just don't. We had the President here on Monday, and I thought it was a home run. It was particularly important and all-official, and particularly important because we did – he and I did two different things. One was the hard infrastructure I mentioned a moment ago to Sam's question, the Portal North Bridge. NJ Transit just approved the funding last week or the week before; I can't recall. That's a huge game-changer, hard infrastructure. We desperately need that bridge replaced. William Howard Taft was the President when the bridge was inaugurated. Hard to believe, so we need that replaced. We need the gateway tunnels. That's a huge, hard asset priority.

Then we also did a pre-K visit. On that one, on the so-called human infrastructure – and the President said this. New Jersey's basically doing everything that they're debating to do in Congress, so this is not an abstract question. Do you think this stuff would be helpful to kids, or students, or college-goers, or someone looking for affordable housing, or whatever it might be? We know the answer. The answer's yes, because we're doing it here and it's having a huge impact. In this case, we were in a classroom with four-year-olds. By the way, a hundred percent mask compliance by the kids, no fuss, period. So this notion that kids can't get used to putting it on, even though it brings me no joy to make them do it, it's just not true. I've been in now a number of classrooms or childcare settings, and they're complying. It doesn't occur to me. Those are two huge priorities, one hard, one soft for New Jersey. The President is championing both. He

and I go way back and obviously New Jersey – he was viewed as our third senator for decades, so it's a place both he and the First Lady feel very comfortable coming to. He's always, always, always welcome. I don't care what the polls say good, bad, or otherwise. Thank you for that.

Alex, good afternoon.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: Good afternoon. Colonel Callahan, on the dam, can you just restate the name of the dam and where it is? I didn't hear you clearly. How exactly did it collapse? What kind of damage was caused? The two to three acres you were talking about, is that the reservoir that's near the dam and is any of that water leaking out?

For the Governor, I'd like to ask if you have any concerns about the electronic polling books that are being used for early voting and if there could be a conflict between the electronic voting records and the folks who were showing up to actually vote on election day? Why not have folks voting early vote provisionally and then have the poll books for the actual election day? I'd like to ask you about something you said here on October 4th. You said, "I don't anticipate we're going to need to do that in terms of mandating the kids." You were referring to vaccinations. Governor Newsom in California survived his recall. Shortly afterward, he mandated that schoolchildren be vaccinated. Will you be the same? Will you at least be waiting until next school year to do that? Will you at least allow parents some time for these approvals to come through or is that an option that's on the table?

Finally on your order to state workers should be vaccinated, yesterday your opponent, Jack Ciattarelli, told me it's not a mandate. You either get vaccinated or you get tested. I think that's the right policy. He did that for teachers. He did that for state workers. I do think that's the right policy. I support that policy. It provides choice. Why is your campaign running ads that Jack Ciattarelli has an extreme position on mandates when his position is your policy?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not going to get into a lot of politics but let me just go through this. Did you hear all of Alex's question on the dam? I might've missed one part of it, but do you have it?

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: I did. It's in Demarest borough. It is called the Demarest Dam, obviously in Bergen County. Again, a two to three acre body of water partially collapsed. It is fed by Crestkill Brooke, again, but DEP's out there assessing it and assessing why that that partial collapse happened, Alex.

Governor Phil Murphy: I apologize. What I missed, I didn't get all of Alex – the question on the electronic – electronic poll books so far, outstanding performance, so that's part of your question. Then you said something about a link.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: If there's any concern that there could be a discrepancy between the electronic polling books and the people showing up on election day and if you're confident of the security of those polling books for days of early voting.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yes, the answer's yes. In fact, Parimal and I and Zakiya Smith Ellis just had a meeting this morning with Homeland Security and the Secretary of State just to get updated. So far, so good. We talked specifically about – I'm good, by the way, Jamil – what it looks like in an early vote versus election day and hit this very topic. Very, very high degree of confidence

We have no plans to do that in terms of mandate. I'm not going to "commit" to something because I – as I said to you, the virus has taken so many turns that none of us expected. It's very humbling, but we have zero – I have zero expectation that's going to happen. We just don't – at the moment, we just don't need to and that's been the case. It's quite clear the numbers are getting better. The school outbreaks, we take every one of them deadly seriously, but they're well within any reasonable expectation. The package we have in place is working. Knock on wood that it stays that way.

I'd rather get into the – can I – can Dan and I get you on the political stuff separately? Is that alright? I'd rather hit you that. I feel very good about the package we have in place right now. We've made every call based on science, fact, and data. We have not let politics ever creep into this, and we won't. That is a

commitment I will make whether it's before Tuesday, after Tuesday, win, lose, or draw. We just will never let that happen, I promise you.

Alex, how are you?

Alejandro Rubian, NJ2AS: Hi, Governor. Good afternoon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. Glad to see you [49:05].

Alejandro Rubian, NJ2AS: Alejandro with NJ2AS. Governor, you have been a self-proclaimed gun safety advocate since becoming governor. In light of the recent tragedy where Alec Baldwin shot and killed an innocent mother due to his negligent mishandling of a firearm, can you recite the three basic firearm safety rules so that future tragedies like this can be prevented? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Okay, awful tragedy, right? Just an awful, awful, tragedy, and I have no insight into exactly what happened or why it happened. I'll just leave, Alex, where I've been. I'm a big believer in gun safety. We have the strongest gun safety laws of any American state. I'd like to see us take a few more steps, which is part of this gun safety package 3.0. I'm even more importantly would love to see – beg the United States to have national federal gun safety legislation because 85% of the crime guns that are confiscated – Pat, I believe that's the right number – in New Jersey come in from out of state, so we're not an island. Thirdly, I want to reiterate what I've reiterated to you before. None of the above undermines our support and belief in the Second Amendment. We'll leave it at that. Thank you.

Hey, Dave.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. First question for the Commissioner, just to clarify, the 5 to 11 year old Pfizer shot that we expect to be given the green light, is it just one dose that's lower than the adult dose, or did they break it up? I know in the trials, I think the younger kids were getting an even lower dose, and then the older kids, 10, 11 – 9, 10, 11 were getting more. Governor, you've mentioned a couple of times today that the 5 to 11 year old Pfizer vaccination will be a game-changer if they do approve it. At the same time, school transmission remains extremely low, so why is it just a game-changer? What's the big deal if all the COVID metrics are going in the right direction already and transmission's very low in schools?

Then finally, with all of the pandemic-related issues that we have, many schools are reporting that their administrators, the teachers, the nurses are exhausted and at the breaking point. There were shortages of teachers, as we know, substitute teachers also, nurses. They are reportedly June tired. Some lawmakers are now suggesting that mental health breaks be built into the schedule as long as COVID remains an issue and as long as the pandemic continues. They're also calling for steps to ease the teacher shortage by not requiring them to live in New Jersey and taking other steps as well. What are your thoughts about this? How big of a problem, in your eyes, is this with the – everybody's working in a school wiped out already and it's only October. What about these proposed solutions? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Dave. Judy, do you want to address the kids' vaccine, the dose question?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Yeah, first I want to address the ASIP meeting. As far as we know, it's subject to change. The ASIP meeting is going to be the 2nd and 3rd, Tuesday and Wednesday, which means we may get the approvals by Wednesday evening and we'll be able to give – we can start pediatric dosing by Thursday morning. It'll be a two-dose regimen, 2 micrograms each, which is the lower dose, but a two-dose regimen for pediatrics.

Governor Phil Murphy: Game-changer first. I'd say two things, Dave. Number one, the numbers are good, but we've had good numbers before and this thing took a turn we weren't expecting. As many people possible who are eligible getting vaccinated is probably the best defense we've got. I hope it doesn't take – I've said this before. If I had to predict, Judy and Tina – we got to get Tina to come in here, get your money's worth here, Tina. Tina, I've said it feels to me like a sine curve. It goes up first mountain and then the second one goes back up again, but it's not as big or as high as the first one. You have that – I'm preparing – at least this guy's preparing mentally for another bump up but probably not as big as the Delta bump when we're almost entirely inside and the holidays are upon us.

Second part of the question is it is necessary, perhaps not sufficient, but it's necessary to our objective of one day being able to lift the mask mandate inside of a school building. It's hard to do what when you got a lot of the percentage of the population who aren't eligible for vaccine. We know that that's a step that has to be precedent to that happening.

Listen, we had this very conversation, Dave. Zakiya and I had a conversation this morning with Sean Spiller, who's the mayor of Montclair, but the President of the NJEA, and Steve Swetsky, the executive director. This was one of the main topics, and I don't think there's one magic bullet. As I sit here today, I think it's a badge of honor that our educators all live in Jersey, so that's one of my – given my strong druthers, I'd like to see that stay that way. We have the best educators in the country. We have the best educational system in the country, but there's also no doubt the premise of your question is accurate. People are spread thin, and not just educators. This is staff, school bus drivers, anybody associated with this. We do a lot of – I've used the word matchmaking here before at the local level, district on one side, Department of Labor on the other side with knowledge of where there may be folks to fill in on things like the staff side, bus drivers in particular. Again, no magic wand. Using the bully pulpit to remind folks that teaching is a great career that pays well with great benefits. A lot of that was in jeopardy in the last Administration. That's no longer the case. Working with the teacher – the colleges that are big pipelines – Kean University would be an example of that, so a lot of different pieces to the puzzle but there's no question the premise of your question is right.

Tina, we can't pull you all the way out here and not give you a chance. How are you feeling about things generally right now? Obviously the numbers are going in the right direction. I characterize it as the numbers are going in the right direction, but we're not out of the woods yet. More importantly, what's your assessment?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: That's right. We're always cautiously optimistic right now, particularly as we see the cases go down. There are several different reminders that it's important to remind people that we also are coming into our flu season. I just want to put a plug for the influenza vaccine, that CDC recommends that people get vaccinated before the end of October or any time during the flu season because we want to prevent that twindemic possibility. Also, just wanted to make a comment about how it's such an exciting time to actually have the opportunity to have pediatric vaccine for this 5 to 11 year old age group, because it's real important that while we are – we may say that okay, we're not seeing that much in-school transmission. That's great. It's because the layered prevention is working, that people are doing all their efforts to minimize disease transmission and keep kids in school. The fact is right now is that right now, the 5 to 11 year old kids – 10% - 11% of the cases in the US reported last week are among this age group, and about 40% of the pediatric cases are occurring in this 5 to 11 age group. There are over 5200 MISC cases that have been reported nationally. There have been many deaths associated among these pediatric populations as well, close to 50 deaths among these MISC cases. As a parent, even though these numbers may seem small, we have a vaccine that's going to be – prevent these possible complications in the future. Why would you want to take that chance with your kids?

Governor Phil Murphy: That was really well said. We've said this in different contexts. The numbers are not large but if it's your kid, that doesn't – you don't really care. You don't give a hoot about the numbers, right? Thank you for that. Thank you all.

So Judy and Tina, as always, Pat – I forgot to say Parimal Garg, but there's Parimal, Jamil, Dan, cast of thousands, thank you all. Again, we'll be here Monday at 1 o'clock unless you hear otherwise. Folks, keep doing what you're doing. If you're eligible for that booster, get boosted. Stay tuned on the big kid news next week, which'll be a huge step in the right direction. In the meantime, stay safe. Keep doing all the great stuff you're doing and God bless.

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