

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: July 10th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

07/10/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm joined today by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. Another familiar face to her right, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan, great to be with both of you. Pat Callahan is not with us, please keep him and his wife Linda and their family in your prayers. He sends his best wishes. We're also joined by not only the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples but by Birthday Boy Jared Maples, so Happy Birthday, Jared.

Not surprisingly, I want to start today with a note about the weather, as Tropical Storm Fay continues to move up the coast and is sitting right on top of us. We're expecting significant rainfall and having just come inside, as you all have, it is actually, we're getting it from the storm across the state which means that there is already significant flooding and we expect more of it in low-lying areas and in areas with poor drainage along the shore. I've seen images of cars floating right now in South Jersey. As with any storm of this kind, we ask you to use common sense to keep yourself and your family safe. Frankly, if you don't have to travel, don't travel. But if you do have to drive out there, don't drive in any streets which may already be flooded. Turn around, don't drown. The White House, I want to give them a shout out, checked in to see if we needed any resources or support as of yet. We do not, but I want to thank them for checking in on us.

There is also the potential for some strong winds that could lead to power outages. So a couple of things that we say a lot in these storms, but I want to repeat. If you experience an outage, call it in immediately to your electric service provider, don't assume somebody else has already done so. And in fact, the more calls that

[Back to top](#)

are received, they may not want me to say this but it's true, the better information they're going to have and they are able to better pinpoint trouble spots so they can send crews to where they need to be.

If you happen to see a fallen power line, please God stay away from it. In our time in government, already we've lost a couple of residents due to not heeding that advice. Especially if you are in your car, do not attempt to drive over or around a fallen line, call it in immediately. Thankfully, this storm should be out of our region by tomorrow, but today is going to be a washout and I think into the early hours of tomorrow. So let's all just stay in and have some storm-induced social distancing.

Next, yesterday and this morning, we had very productive meetings with both the Senate President Steve Sweeney and Speaker Craig Coughlin, and I'm very proud and happy to announce that we have an agreement on bonding, and that the Senate will move legislation to provide our administration with the full authority we need to borrow the funds we need to keep our state afloat. As you know, the Assembly had already done so. It is absolutely critical that we get this done and get this done quickly, and now we can. I want to explicitly thank the Senate President and the Speaker for their partnership.

Also, something else we partnered on yesterday, it was one of these moments, you have a magical moment, it hits you. We came together very quickly after a conversation with Union County Freeholder Angela Garrison, former Mayor Angela Garrison of Hillside, and we are committed to forever ridding from this state, long past overdue, the word freeholder. And I want to again thank the Senate President and the Speaker for their partnership. I want to thank Angela. I was back and forth with Shanel Robinson today, Freeholder from Somerset County, Sheila Oliver was by our side yesterday when we discussed this. Sheila is herself a former Freeholder in Essex County, and it is high time this name went into the dustbin of history and I'm very happy we're going to do it, I hope sooner than later.

Next, I want to reiterate the announcement made yesterday regarding our efforts to serve all customers at the Motor Vehicle Commission. As it was announced, all driver's licenses and non-driver IDs, vehicle registrations and inspections and temporary tags were further extended to give customers more time to renew. So listen carefully, everybody. Documents that expired between March 13th and May 31st have been extended to September 30th. Again, if they expired between March 13th and May 31st, they've been extended automatically to September 30th. Those expiring between June 1st, Charlie Murphy's birthday, to August 31st, have been extended to December 31st. Again, those expiring between June 1st and August 31st have been extended to December 31st. And again, these are automatic extensions.

We also urge, as we have over the past couple of days, everyone, before you head out to an MVC agency, check online at that website, njmvc.gov, to see if your transaction is one of the many that can be completed online and if it is, skip the trip entirely and take care of it online. Additionally, MVC is taking steps to mitigate issues of crowding. A record number of licenses and registrations have already been issued, and more are being completed every day, but MVC is not going to get to everybody in line every day. So please, if you're told the agency has reached capacity, don't hang around. Don't camp out overnight, please. And please, while we recognize you may not be happy, by the way, I don't blame you. I'm not happy either, don't take it out on the hardworking MVC employees who are doing their jobs. They are our neighbors and fellow New Jerseyans.

Again, we know there is enormous pent up demand for services. We're making more progress on the backlog every day, and we won't rest until we've gotten back to the customer service that people deserve. And as I said on Wednesday, we're going to work harder to do better. None of us, again, I repeat, none of us are happy with how this week has gone. Not me, not Chief Administrator Sue Fulton, none of us, and we are committed to creating a better experience.

Next, Judy, given the weather today, it would be a good opportunity to go online to covid19.nj.gov/ testing and schedule yourself to be tested for the coronavirus. I would prefer you didn't do it today given what I said earlier about the weather, but you can go online and schedule a test. As we've said many times already, testing is how we get the data we need to make the decisions we need to make, to see ourselves and our state through this pandemic. Testing also gives you the knowledge you need to keep you and your family and your community safe from the virus. We know that there are people out there who are carrying this virus, even though they aren't showing any symptoms and who can very easily pass the coronavirus on. This is one reason why we are requiring everyone to wear face masks and coverings at all times while indoors, and when you are outdoors and unable to maintain social distances. Testing is quick, it is easy and it is painless.

Judy, I have to say back to the point I just made about the unwitting asymptomatic, seemingly healthy person who can pass this virus on, that was where it kindled so tragically in our long-term care facilities, whether it was heroic healthcare workers, staff, loved ones, vendors coming and going. I think people think that that's something of the past. Tina knows better than anybody and you, Judy, that this is not something in the past. The notion of passing this unwittingly exists and it continues to exist. There are currently, by the way, 244 sites across the state where you can be tested for COVID-19 and on Monday, July 13th and Tuesday, July 14th we are partnering with the Township of Montclair and Interfaith Urgent Care to provide free coronavirus tests at the Wally Choice Community Center on Maple Avenue from noon to 7:00 p.m. each day, Monday and Tuesday. Testing is free and open to all residents. And while an appointment is not needed, you can preregister by visiting montclairnj.usa.org. Again, you see that website at the bottom of the slide, so please go out and get tested. Testing is our best early warning tool for knowing where coronavirus is lurking, so our community contact tracing corps can get to work to stop a flare up before it even happens. Again, go visit covid19.nj.gov/testing to find a testing site near you. Together we test, together we trace, and together we thrive.

With that let's look at the overnight numbers if we can. We recorded an additional 367 positive coronavirus test results, bringing our cumulative statewide total since March 4th to 174,628. The daily positivity rate for tests conducted on July 6th was 2.23%, that's a little bit better than the past couple of days, Judy. The rate of transmission has dipped, thank God, let's keep it there below one. It is currently at 0.98. This is a good sign, as just two days ago it was 1.1, meaning a rising rate of spread. Again daily positivity and the rate of transmission, or RT, are the two most meaningful measurements we have of the spread of this virus across our state. And feeding into again, I want to repeat this, feeding into both of these metrics are the results of the coronavirus tests being recorded every day. The more testing, the more precise we can get these numbers. So please again, go out and get tested.

Looking to our hospitals, yesterday there were 904 patients in our hospitals for COVID-19, 162 patients in our intensive care units and yesterday, Judy, only 94 ventilators were in use. That's the first time below 100 in many, many weeks. I mean, I think probably months at this point, and this is definitely a milestone for us. Let's keep it that way. Here's how these numbers look over time. We've been showing you this almost every day. I must caution everyone that just because our hospital metrics continue to move in very positive directions does not mean that we can become complacent. We just reported, in fact, 367 new positive cases and we don't know how many of these new cases will end up requiring hospitalization. I hope very few, but we can say with almost certainty that some of them will.

But we know that keeping people out of the hospitals entirely starts with social distancing, wearing a face mask or covering, and with rigorous testing and contact tracing, so keep it up. I heard from my good friend, Judy, and this is for you because I know you'll like this. From my good friend Paul Bontempo who passed along something from a close friend of his, the former Mayor of Sparta and a former Director of the Sussex County Freeholder Board, Mike Laros. Mike's, by the way, a Vietnam veteran, so a shout out to him and to all our veterans. Here's Mike's line. Better to be six feet apart than six feet under. Amen, Mike. Bless you, thank you for that great line. Thank you for your service to your community, your county, our state and our nation.

Now in comparison to our peer states, in fact to all states, we are starting to see some better news. Our ranking for new cases continues to fall and finally we're dropping in terms of the number of patients in our hospitals. But the toll of COVID-19 in terms of lives lost continues to be too great. Again, the steps we take together are about saving every single life we can save, we cannot let up. So, with that with a heavy heart, today we're reporting another 31 of our fellow New Jerseyans have passed away from COVID-19 related complications. Our overall death toll now stands confirmed at 13,532 and the number of probable losses of life to COVID-19 is now 1,947. Judy will give some more color on the new deaths, but I want to repeat something we said on Wednesday. This is not 31 people who died since yesterday at noon. This is a cumulation of absolutely making sure that we get it exactly right and tying death certificates, cause of deaths to the fatalities. Judy can give you some color on what the more of the here and now looks like. By the way, we believe every other state in the nation is doing it the same way so as far as we know, it's still an apples to apples reality. But it is not the case that 31 people passed since midday yesterday. As we do every day, let's remember a few of these lives lost.

Let's start in Madison, this guy was extraordinary, and remember Dr. Arnold Demain. Dr. Demain, known to by the way, almost everybody as Arnie, was 92 years old. He was a research microbiologist and university professor who continued teaching and mentoring pretty much right up to the end of his life. A proud World War II US Navy veteran, upon returning home he would go on to study at Michigan State when it was still Michigan State College, by the way, and now obviously Michigan State University, where he met his wife, Joanna, and he'd go on receive his doctorate degree from the University of California at Davis. He was hired by Merck and moved to New Jersey to work on penicillin and other research projects, rising to become the head of Merck's fermentation microbiology department. Arnie was recruited away from New Jersey to teach at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, otherwise known as MIT, but he and Joanna would return, settling in Madison 17 years ago after his formal retirement.

Every few years since, his former MIT students have held the Arnie's Army and Friends Symposia in his honor. Arnie became a member of Drew University's Rise Institute, a place for retired scientists to continue research and teaching, and he stayed there until his final retirement shortly after his 92nd birthday. An endowed scholarship in his name is a lasting legacy of his time at Drew. Arnie was a true pioneer in the life sciences. He wrote or edited countless books and published scientific articles. His daughter told me she believes well over 500, by the way, received numerous awards including from the King of Spain and the Emperor of Japan. He became a member of the National Academy of the Sciences in the year 2000. He leaves behind his beloved Joanna, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, after 68 years of marriage. He also leaves behind his daughter Pam. Again, I had the honor of speaking to Pam, and Pam herself recently retired from a long and successful career at Merck. And his son Jeffrey, and Jeffrey's wife Lauren, along with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A tremendous life of discovery. God bless you, Arnie. Thank you for your service to our nation, our state and may God watch over you.

Next, we remember Dr. Joaquin Jack Garcia. Jack was a major in the Army National Guard and a physician at Whippany Family Practice in Morris County, which he opened more than 28 years ago. He continued to practice throughout the pandemic. As a physician, he took time to make sure his patients understood their conditions and what it would take to get better. He took on young doctors to mentor. He treated everyone as equals and as if they were his own family. He wanted everyone to be comfortable and safe. His family will remember him as a caring father and loving husband, quick with a joke or a story, and an inveterate prankster. Jack's family says he was an outside-the-box thinker who enjoyed trying to solve the most complex problems. He had a deep love of music and would often retell a story from his youth when a specific song would trigger a favorite memory. My kids would say I do something similar. Jack was only 65 years old. He lived life in the words of his favorite song, I did it my way, written by Paul Anka and son, immortalized by Hoboken's own Frank Sinatra.

He leaves behind his wife of 38 years Miriam, along with his two daughters, Jennifer and Suzanne and his son David, and I had the honor to speak with all four of them yesterday. He's also survived by his mom, Iris. We thank Jack for his years of service to our nation, our state and our community. May God bless and watch over you, pal.

Finally today, we recall Highland Park Councilman Susie Welkovits who passed away one week ago after a long, valiant battle with COVID-19. Her husband told me, Judy, that she went into the hospital on April 1st. If you don't think this thing is lethal or it can just shred you, folks, listen to these stories. Trust us, please believe us. These are real people, real lives lived and lost in communities in New Jersey. Susie was adopted from Michigan by her family after they fled to the United States from Hungary due to the Soviet Union's invasion there in 1956, and she grew up in Highland Park. She had a successful couple of decades long career in financial services in New York City but returned to Highland Park to raise her kids. As a leader in Highland Park and member of the Council since 2011, Councilwoman Susie Welkovits was a strong advocate for the borough's public schools and dedicated her service to creating a safer community for pedestrians and cyclists. In the words of another good friend of ours, Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler, and I quote the mayor, "Susie's incredible commitment to making Highland Park a better place should never be forgotten." She leaves behind her husband, Randy, I spoke to Randy yesterday, and you can imagine, he's devastated, and their 11-year-old twins, god bless both of them. Susie was just 59 years old. May God bless you, Susie and watch over you and Randy and the twins.

Let's keep all of them in our collective memory. Let's remember them whatever we put on our face coverings because we don't want any more families to have to cope with the losses that so many thousands already have. We can do this, and we can do it together.

I want to change gears, if I may, to speak as we do each week to our progress in responding to the 2020 census. As we have noted numerous times, an accurate and correct county count is vital to our state's future. Our statewide response rate continues to track upwards. Today, it's at 64%, which means more and more of you are taking the time to go to 2020census.gov to be counted now. We continue to run ahead of the national response rate. In fact, five of the top 10 responding counties in the entire northeast are ours, Hunterdon, Morris, Burlington, Somerset and Bergen. Additionally, Sussex County and several communities that including Bogota, Dunellen, Galloway, Highland Park we just spoke about and Woodbine are already tracking above their 2010 response rates where we know we were under counted, but we cannot let up folks, until we have a 100% response rate.

The Census is absolutely critical to ensuring New Jersey gets its fair share back from Washington for education, for human services and nutrition programs, for transportation, for our healthcare networks and for so many other areas which will be critical to our recovery from COVID-19. The census means roughly, you ready for this? \$45 billion to our state and to our communities, so go to 2020census.gov right there. Every New Jerseyan who isn't counted is essentially money that doesn't come back to New Jersey and instead heads to some other state. Let's make sure we keep it all here.

Our census team at the Department of State under, again Tahesha Way's leadership, she's had a big week and they're doing a great job there, is continuing its community-based information efforts, urging those residents who have yet to be counted to get counted. And those efforts will continue in advance of the Census Bureau's initiation of going door to door to those residences which do not respond in advance. In other words, if you fill out online today, you won't get a knock on the door in the weeks ahead. Make sure you're counted by going to 2020census.gov and make sure your family and friends do the same. Online, you can find guides narrated in 59 additional languages about how to fill out the census. No one should be left uncouncted. Let's make sure, folks, that we have an accurate count. The census only happens once every 10 years and if we are undercounted again, as I mentioned, as we were in 2010, we will lose out for the next decade. Let's make sure we don't miss out on the ability to craft a better future for our state.

And speaking of a better future, let's highlight another one of the small businesses that we're going to rely upon to help us stay strong as we continue our restart and recovery. And in this case, when I say stay strong, I mean figuratively and literally. For 20 years, Drew Hayes, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, has owned and operated United Martial Arts Academy in Westville in Gloucester County. He built a successful business all by himself, never asking for a loan or borrowing money until COVID-19 came along. When UMAA had to close its doors in March. It didn't qualify for federal help. Thankfully, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority was able to step in, and with a micro loan from the EDA, Drew has been able to keep his four part-time instructors on the payroll, as well as meet costs for operations, marketing and to purchase new equipment and make building repairs so when it's safe for his students to return, he'll be ready. As Drew said, everything happened for him just in time. To you Drew, thank you for keeping your spirits up throughout this pandemic. When we spoke, his attitude was really, really good. And when we come back stronger than ever, you're going to be part of the reason why. A shameless self-promotion, check him out at UMAAkarate.com. Judy, I know you're going to go on there right after we leave here.

And finally today, with a heavy heart, I want to acknowledge the passing of this guy, a really good guy. The passing from non-COVID causes of David Applefield, a Red Bank resident, a neighbor not too far from where we are, a noted journalist and author. On Tuesday of this week, David was a candidate for Congress. He passed away suddenly on Wednesday morning, as I understand it, while exercising. As a journalist, he covered some of the most pressing challenges of our time, but as a candidate for Congress, he sought to do something about them. And in that campaign, he reached back across his years of journalistic experience to propose new ways of looking at old problems. He was an outside-the-box thinker, and we need more thinkers like David in our politics. He developed a regular pipeline relationship with my wife, Tammy, where he was feeding her really cool, out-of-the-box policy ideas. This guy was a really incredible thinker.

David's surviving family, including his mother who was a Holocaust survivor, and his many friends and colleagues are all in our prayers. I spoke yesterday in one call with his mom, Janet, David's sister Deb and her husband Craig, his brother Jonathan, his son Alex. You can imagine how they're just completely devastated. He's also got two other kids, Anna and Ernest and his wife with whom I did not connect. They are in France at the moment. May his memory be a blessing to them and to all who knew him and may the good Lord watch over his memory.

With that, Judy, over to you. Please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. Well, as we remain vigilant about protecting ourselves and our families from COVID-19, we must also take precautions to prevent and control mosquito-borne diseases. Spending time outdoors is a good way to maintain physical and mental health, but it is important to take steps to minimize your risk from mosquito-borne illness. Already this season, some mosquito testing has shown positive results for West Nile virus, Eastern equine encephalitis, and Jamestown Canyon virus. To protect against these diseases, residents should wear EPA-registered insect repellent, avoid being outdoors during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, wear long sleeves and long pants. Cover cribs, stroller and baby carriers with mosquito netting, and repair holes in screens to keep mosquitoes out. Dumping out standing water on your property weekly goes a long way toward reducing mosquito bites by limiting where they grow. Anywhere that water collects can breed mosquitoes, so checking flowerpots, pet food and water dishes, bird baths, swimming pool covers, and other places can reduce the risk of mosquito bites and the illnesses they can carry.

Symptoms of mosquito-borne disease typically appear 2 to 14 days after exposure but most people do not show any symptoms. Mild symptoms include fever, chills, headache, joint pain, body aches and rash. Those who get serious illness may experience high fever, stiff neck seizures and confusion. Contact a healthcare provider if you develop any symptoms of a mosquito-borne disease, and mentioned recent travel and outdoor activities. And as a reminder, while enjoying the outdoors, you should be wearing a mask or a face covering. The New Jersey DEP has a great campaign, Mask Up. These materials are also posted on the Department of Health's website.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, we're reporting 904 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients or persons under investigation, of which 162 are in critical care, with 58% of those patients on ventilators. Fortunately, today there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome. The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.2%, Black 18.3%, Hispanic 20.2%, Asian 5.5% and other 1.8%. As I said yesterday, many of the deaths that we report every day go back in time. Of the 31 newly reported deaths today, 18 or 58% of them died earlier than July.

At the state's veterans homes, the numbers remain the same as they do at the psychiatric hospitals. Much of the data I reviewed today is posted on the COVID-19 data dashboard. We will begin posting the RT on the dashboard on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. As we frequently state, the daily RT can fluctuate. It's important to focus on both the daily and the recent trends. For example, on July 8th, the RT was 0.98, on the 7th, 1.04, and on the 6th, 1.10. RT should be viewed in context with other metrics, including new cases, hospitalizations, and percent positivity. On July 6th, the New Jersey percent positivity was 2.23%, the Northern part of the state 1.78%, Central 2.12%, the Southern part of the state 4.25%.

We will also be making some changes to the long-term care data presented on the dashboard. As you know, we have facilities listed that have had outbreaks and many of those outbreaks date back to March, April, May and June and are no longer ongoing. To provide the public with a clearer, real-time picture of which facilities currently have outbreaks, beginning next week, only facilities that currently have active outbreaks will be listed on the dashboard. About 100 long-term care facilities that no longer have outbreaks will be removed. Cumulative cases and deaths will still be listed. That concludes my daily update. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, get tested, wear a mask and be counted. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, as always, thank you and thank you for also the clarity that you gave to the fatalities in terms of how that number is built up. You know, the seven-day rolling average is what you and Tina and Ed and others look at, as you noted, a one day up or down movement, but just for folks just to read

off. This is now the past seven days, not just the seven days we've been together but the past seven days, and I'll begin with seven days ago. New hospitalizations, 49, 35, 30, 30, 39, 28, 52, 53, 41. Spot positivity, 2.48, 2.06, 2.14, 2.07, 3.23, 3.03, today 2.23. And then the RT as you mentioned, which we made much about the fact, as we should, that it got above one: 1.01, 1.03, 1.03, 1.05, 1.1, 1.04 as you mentioned, now 0.98. I think our great hope is that that spot positivity rate remains low single digits, as you mentioned, higher in the south and it's been that way of late. That RT remains below one and not above one. And that new hospitalizations are measured in a few dozen, hopefully we get to zero. That's sort of where we are at the moment. I think our collective view, without putting words in your mouth, is we need to sort of be in that kind of steady state for a period of time to make sure that that we've got a full sense of not just what our reopenings have led to, but also any other activity that may be related to folks coming in from other hotspots, etc.

I think we'll start over here. Before we do, Matt, Matt Platkin, by the way, has also joined us. We will be together, we'll be virtually with you, Mahen, both tomorrow and Sunday and I can say definitively we'll be together with you at one o'clock on Monday. There is a White House call, but it's at 4:00 p.m. so we will be with you at one o'clock on Monday, and we are still trying to get ourselves into the rhythm of the Monday, Wednesday, Friday thing. We reserve the right to revisit that at some point. For instance, yesterday, we have not talked about it today, but yesterday a lot more people were making their first claims for unemployment insurance. We're certainly still in the throes. It's better than it was, of a pandemic as a public health matter. We are right smack in the middle of an economic crisis unlike any we've ever had and let's not forget that for one second. We'll come back to you, but at a minimum, we'll see you at Monday at one o'clock. Dustin, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. What's your response to criticism that the symbolism of removing the Freeholder title or supporting that doesn't square with the substance of your proposed budget cuts? Does the borrowing deal you announced mean you'll restore funding for racial justice and anti-discrimination programs? Are you looking at anything else that is racist or has connections to prejudice that you can change or get rid of?

Will you take any of that borrowed money and invest it in a wholesale upgrade of the unemployment system? What about aid to businesses still struggling under lockdown restrictions? Any other specific priorities for you that you can say for certain will be restored?

And since many nursing homes have had a high infection rate, some of them close to 100%, do you think this will create herd immunity in those homes and protect residents from an expected second wave? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Dustin, you won't be surprised that I'm wholly unqualified to answer your last question, but the good news is we have people here who are. Listen, folks, I'm proud of the fact that we've come together so quickly, although it's way past due, but at least when it was raised so quickly to put the title of Freeholder into the history bin.

The answer is we're out of money. I can change that, we can collectively with the Legislature, and we should and we must and we will change forever and always the name Freeholder, that doesn't cost us anything. We need the ability to borrow, which we now will get. We need the federal cash. We need to, if possible, revenue. The whole range of potential revenue alternatives, we need money. If we get that money, and again we had a nice breakthrough here and I want to again reiterate that, we'll be able to fund those programs. I don't see anything at odds with that. It's just we're out of money and folks have to understand that. And that's cutting across the entirety of government. Judy knows this because we've asked her, even in the midst of this, all departments to look at 15% cuts. I mean, that's never been done in the state before. This is a moment in history that is unlike any other.

I've got nothing else on the list right now, Dustin, but we're constantly thinking that through and we're taking advice from folks. Again, Angela Garretson walked up to Steve Sweeney, Joe and myself yesterday and said, you know what? This isn't right, she herself a Freeholder. She then, I believe, had a similar conversation separate from that with Craig Coughlin and we all said, you know what? You're right. So I've got nothing else on the list but I promise you, we're open to anything else that folks find offensive.

Upgrading, all of the above. I don't want to – upgrading the unemployment system, absolutely would be on the list. There's the whole range. We've cut back, I think in the four-month budget Matt, that we passed, we had \$5.2 billion of cuts or deferred expenditures, including a lot of things that are near and dear to us and me personally. That certainly would be on the list, for sure. And I'm interested, Tina, I think we're going to put you up to bat here on herd immunity. There's a lot being written and spoken about it. There was a very interesting piece in The New York Times about it. I would love to get your sense of that reality for New Jersey.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: We still don't know a lot about immunity and how much protection people might have after they were exposed to SARS Co-V2 virus. We also have to recognize that particularly related to the long-term care facility populations that we're talking about several other factors as well. Older populations who might have weaker immune systems, who might have waning immunity over time as well. We don't know the length. Even if there is a little bit of short-term immunity from an infection, we don't know long term. We also have to recognize that there might be some transient populations as well with regard to changes in resident population, as well as the staff who work in a long-term care facility.

That said, as we start to learn more and more about the concept of whether individuals have some sort of immunity, it still doesn't take the place of taking all the precautions that we've been taking this entire time with regard to the social distancing, the masking the appropriate hand hygiene and other personal hygiene factors that really keep not just COVID infection down, but other respiratory infections. Because we have to recognize that there are other illness, if not COVID, there's going to be other potential viruses and other infectious threats within these communities as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: So it's a fascinating question and it's a fascinating topic. I think no one has a – right, Judy? No one's got a definitive answer on this. I would just underscore what Tina said. Judy, I'm not sure if you want to add anything. But we know we don't have therapeutics yet that are developed explicitly for COVID-19. We know we don't have a vaccine yet, and we're not sure about herd immunity. So in the absence of all that, social distance, face coverings, wash your hands with soap and water. If you don't feel well stay back, get tested. I mean, that's sort of the basic stuff we're going to have to rely on. It's not sexy, it's not high minded. It's very basic, but incredibly important. Thank you. Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. Regarding borrowing, \$9.9 billion is 98% of the estimated \$10.1 billion revenue shortfall, so does this obviate the need for federal cash grants? Have you received word that that cash absolutely won't happen?

And the Senate President has said that to support borrowing, he'd need to know which taxes would increase and by how much to repay the bonds. What are the details on that? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. So the maximum is \$9.9 billion, number one. It does not obviate the need for federal cash. I was actually asked in an interview this morning, Elise, what I thought the hole was in New Jersey and I believe, my colleagues and I believe, that from plus or minus middle of 2020 to plus or minus end of 2021, it's probably a \$20 billion hole, so it does not obviate the need for that. I still don't have a better handle on the federal cash. I would assume what I think anyone would assume, with this virus ravaging so many states, the probability of something happening is probably, sadly for all the wrong reasons, going up. But I can't tell you how high, when, or how New Jersey will be treated in that context and those are all pieces that we're very focused on.

We did not, at the end of the day, get into a discussion of revenues as it hinged on this and that's not because the Senate President is not interested in that discussion, nor because I'm not or the Speaker isn't. That just wasn't the linchpin here at the end of the day that got it done. I think in fairness, everybody recognizes the need for the borrowing, as painful as it is and none of us feel – you know, we don't wake up, as I've said many times reflexively, hey, let's go out borrow more money. But we know we don't have a choice, even with federal cash, even with revenues.

But I think in fairness, it took us a little bit longer because we wanted to make sure, I don't want to put words in other people's mouths, but the checks and balances and the right, the relationship that we currently, and I think New Jersey does this better than any other state in terms of budgeting process, that that process between the Executive Branch and the Legislature is held sacrosanct inside of the borrowing. Details on that

later, but revenues, at the end of the day were not the discussion. That's on the table, for sure. As I said, borrowing, federal cash and the gamut of revenue alternatives have got to be on the table in these unprecedented times. Matt, anything you want to add, or are you good with that?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, just as the Governor said, I want to underscore Elise that bill is an authorization, so it doesn't mean that that will be the full amount borrowed. We'll be working with the Legislature on that as part of the budgeting process over the next month-and-a-half, two months. And then the second piece is, just following up on the Governor's last point, there's nothing in the borrowing bill, there's a misconception, there's nothing in any version of the borrowing bill that would mandate a revenue increase to pay for these bonds. I just want to be clear about that point.

Governor Phil Murphy: It's separate from the fact that we need to have the revenue discussion, the whole range of consideration. Thank you for clearing that up. Good afternoon. Hold on one second.

Reporter: Governor, as we head to the end of the week, what are you hearing about the vote by mail process from Tuesday? What is the state's actual goal with testing right now? Who is getting tested? Is it the symptomatic or the asymptomatic? And without understanding details on who is being tested, are the positivity rate and RT meaningless? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll obviously rely on the experts to help me out on the tested the meaningfulness of the data that we track. Yeah, I'd give the same answer I gave on Wednesday, based on what we know. I mean, there are always going to be some very particular specific kinks in the system, we feel pretty good. And again, it was a hybrid process. I still don't have the complete answer. As you know, we extended the period to seven days from the postmark date, it had to be postmarked as of Election Day, but you've got seven days to be included. I don't think we'll be giving a full accounting of this for a little bit. But the process feels like it worked. I think we need, on the in-person piece of this, it's pretty clear that the counties are going to need a longer runway, not in every case, but in some of the counties. We want to make sure that we're adhering to that at least 50% capacity by county and at least one location per municipality. Anything you want to add to that, Matt?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: No. Once we get the full results on it next week, we'll begin the full – we already have begun, but we'll start digging into the full after-action report on the state side, and then we've already been engaging with the Postal Service based on what we saw. I think generally speaking, the department here did a really nice job with it under challenging circumstances, but we'll certainly review everything that happened and dig in and see how we can improve. And we're also waiting for some results of investigations from the postal service on issues that we flagged during the lead up to the election, and they owe us those answers as to how they can improve going into November as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: And we would, I repeat something I referred to the other day, we want to balance both a full after-action understanding with giving as long a runway as we can leading into the November elections. So we're not going to wait until the – we want to make sure that we've got full visibility on what happened, but we're not going to let any grass grow once we have that in terms of deciding what the model looks like.

Yeah, I just would say one thing on testing before we hand it to the experts. Our capacity is outstripping demand. Now as fires have raged elsewhere in the country, raw materials have stressed the testing labs and their turnaround time has clearly slowed, Judy, since say a month ago. That's a national reality. But in terms of the capacity, it is outstripping demand, number one.

Number two, again, remind everybody, if we've got the capacity and you have any reason to think you've been exposed, you've been in a hotspot, you're symptomatic, for whatever reason, go out and get tested. We've got the capacity, let's use it. We haven't shown this slide in a long time. Maybe, Mahen, it's worth rebooting this next week. But Judy and Tina and team came up with sort of three levels of category, and the vulnerable communities were in the highest priority and they've been racing through those communities now for weeks, if not months. Second would be essential, I believe the second category largely defined by the essential workforce, healthcare workers, first responders, etc. And the third group is largely general population. I think these numbers are overwhelmingly meaningful as an amateur epidemiologist, but I'll turn it to Judy and Tina to give some more color on both testing and the data that we track.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'll talk about testing. Our goal is to test 20,000 individuals a day, and at this point, our grand total is 1,599,000 individuals have been tested in New Jersey, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, and our positivity rate as of the 6th, 2.2. Obviously, the number of positive cases identified impact the positivity rate. The new cases also impact the RT, so I'll let Tina talk about that formula.

State Epidemiologist Christina Tan: Well, the meaningfulness of the data is not just for characterizing the burden of disease in the state. The most important thing for us when we get these positive results is what you do with it. And that is, if you've got disease, if you've got confirmed disease, you isolate, you contact trace so that you can then subsequently prevent and mitigate the spread of illness. That is the main purpose from a public health perspective of what we do. It's great, it's icing on the cake that we get the characterization of the number of cases and the burden. It's information that we know where there's more highly burden in certain parts of the states versus other but ultimately, it's what you do with that information, the public health intervention that then takes you to the next step of then stopping the spread of the disease.

You know, on top of that, is that knowing things like the positivity rate allows us to have some sort of insight into the intensity of the spread of virus in the community. If you've got adequate testing and you have a very low positivity rate like what we are seeing right now, in comparison to where we were several months ago, that again is just another metric that shows that we're fortunate. We've done a really good job. Everyone's done a really good job with flattening that curve, with really trying to minimize that spread of the virus in our community. It's a testament to our work.

Governor Phil Murphy: And by the way, plus or minus 98 out of 100 people who got tested on Monday, which was the date we're referring to today, are negative, and let's keep it that way. I'd like that to be 99 or 100, but we'll take 98 for today. Brent, good afternoon.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: I know you kind of mentioned this before, but what kind of tax increases are we possibly looking at? Millionaire's tax, sales tax, toilet paper tax? Is there any real chance school may not start in person this fall, especially with what's been going on in other states, and the NGA saying some teachers may not come back to work? Do parents have a right to opt their children out of in-person learning?

What should someone do if they see someone outside not wearing a mask? Are you worried about people getting confrontational, especially in a fraught political climate? Will opponents of Rutgers Football and other college teams be exempt from the out-of-state quarantine?

Why do we keep seeing one hospital not reporting data? Like, can we get them in line?

How close is the state to meeting its HHS testing plan?

And one from, a question from Dan Munoz, you mentioned the explosion of cases in other states putting a strain on New Jersey's testing, and labs are taking longer to get results. Could that throw a wrench in the state's reopening?

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt you may have to stay close to Brent because I'm going to forget some of these. I can say definitively no toilet paper tax. I can take that off the table, Brent, but thank you for asking. Listen, it's too early to tell on taxes or revenues. This a personal opinion and this is not reflective of any budget discussions that have taken place. I personally like the notion of the folks, both individuals, companies, certain purchases that reflect folks who have succeeded helping us to pay for a comprehensive program toward shrinking the inequities in our state. But that's a personal opinion and not breaking news yet, but that's the sort of thing, if we have these gaping inequities, and I mean including from explicitly in the case of from the stain of racism that is still with us, finding ways to be able to surgically address that.

Listen, on school, my strong hope and expectation, but Judy and the Education team will have to, at the end of the day, working with all the superintendents of the districts, have to feel comfortable when it's go time. The bias, the strong bias, hope, expectation, the plan is to open. But if we get close and if we see something that again, not just on any given day, but a trend that is causing enormous concern, we're not going to put people's health at risk. I continue to believe, and this gets, I think, a little bit to your question about teachers. I hope at the end of the day that educators, administrators, parents, kids will look at the district plans as they're being developed and say, you know what? I feel confident that I can safely and responsibly be in that

environment. But as I've said many times before, Judy, the number one nut that we've got to make sure that we crack is the passing, as we said earlier in our remarks today, from the asymptomatic, healthy, probably young kid to an older educator, administrator, mom, dad, or someone with comorbidity. So that's the particular thing that I think. The opt-out question, I think, let's wait on that. That's going to be a district question and folks should deal with that.

Here's my view on the confrontational, what happens if you see someone without a face covering? First of all, if it's somebody walking their dog or out by themselves for a walk or a jog, we're not going to -- that's not what we're after. We're after intense congregation, people on top of each other, not from the same family, not wearing face coverings, you know standing in line on a boardwalk, bunched up for a slice of pizza or a beer. My advice would be to go tell someone in authority as opposed to go to the individual directly. This political notion and nonsense associated with face coverings is bad enough already. I don't want to suggest to inflame it. Find a police officer, find somebody of responsibility. Maybe it's the person who owns the pizza parlor.

But I was asked this question about out-of-state sports teams in the context this morning of the Jets and the Giants. I answered, Matt, you'll correct the record here and Judy will want to make sure that she's happy with this, is that essential travel is exempted, but we would expect testing. If anyone is symptomatic or is certainly COVID positive, they shouldn't be getting on the plane to come here in the first place. Would you agree with that as a team matter? You good? Okay.

Where are we along in our plan relative to HHS expectations?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: How close is the state to meeting its HHS testing plan?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think we're well along.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I think we're well along. I'll come to you if we think that's not the case. But again, that gets back to the vulnerable, essential workers, general population paradigm. In the wrench. I just wrote the word wrench, but I can't remember --

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: This is from Dan Munoz. He texted me and asked, is the explosion of cases in other states putting a strain on New Jersey testing and results? Could that throw a wrench in the state's reopening plans? I know you've paused reopening plans, but.

Governor Phil Murphy: Putting aside indoor dining and any other of the not many more steps that we are not taking, the answer is it could but it is not at the moment. I think he's referring to the fact that with the explosions in the other states, the reagent and the other raw materials associated with testing that's become a scarcer resource, he's absolutely right about that. Secondly, it has slowed the turnaround time down as opposed to a binary yes/no. We haven't done this in a while, Judy and Mahen, but we may want to come back and refresh folks with, for instance, the Rutgers saliva test, where that stands in terms of the scaling, etc., Judy, just to give people an update, I think, on the variety. Because we're not sitting on our hands either, as you can imagine. As these other states explode, we were expecting this as a reality, so.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Why is one -- we keep seeing 70 out of 71, has one hospital been sleeping, or?

Governor Phil Murphy: No, lately it's been 71. The past several days it's been 71. It was 71 today, right? Yeah. It has moved around, I know University Hospital was --

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: On the weekends, it's a staffing issue.

Governor Phil Murphy: No, it's 71 out of 71 today. Yep. No, no, that's all right. I'm going to cover up here. I want to thank Judy and Tina, as always. Jared, Happy Birthday, enjoy. Say hi to Mary and the little guy. Matt, thank you, and Mahen, for everything. In addition to my normal thanking you, everybody for the extraordinary work that you've done to get us to the place we are, and just by the millions, I want to not only thank you, but ask you to keep it up. And I want folks to know that if you're newly unemployed, if you're a restaurant that can't get opened on the inside or a bar or a theater, we will do everything we can to be there for you. You have my word. That borrowing capability puts us into a really much better place. We still need the federal cash assistance. We need a consideration and a discussion, a smart discussion about revenues.

But I want you to know, I know you're frustrated. I know you're angry, in many cases. In some cases, depressed. We understand that. We'll do everything we can with the resources we have to be there for you but we can't, I just want to say this, we can't do that and put public health at risk. It's got to be, we haven't said this in a while, public health creates economic health and not the other way around. We've seen, and I'm not taking shots at these states, we pray for them. We hope they have speedy resolution. But we've seen examples, not just in America, but around the world where the economic and public health realities were transposed or the gun was jumped, and the price that's being paid is awful. We can't do that, but we will responsibly deal with public health as best we can we, I promise you. That will god willing lead to more economic health and in the meantime, there are a lot of folks who in the state who need that bridge over troubled water and I promise you we will do everything we can to be there for you and to get that bridge to be a reality. Thank you all, god bless you. Please be safe, be safe, it's nasty out there. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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

Administration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Initiatives

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Events

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Statements on Legislation](#)

[\(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](#)

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

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

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

Social

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact Us

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

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

Statewide

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(//nj.gov/opra/)

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

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

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