

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 20th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

05/20/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. I am honored to be joined by the woman to my right, who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan, another person who is well known to many; great to have you both here. Guy to my left needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan, Pat. Jared Maples, Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and other colleagues.

Since yesterday, a couple of interesting conversations. Number one - we have many, as you can imagine, around the clock seemingly, but one with the Chief Executive Officer of Lockheed Martin. Lockheed Martin has just about 5,000 employees in the State of New Jersey, they make stuff here. They've got a big presence in both Moorestown and Mount Laurel, they probably have 4,000 of their 5,000 employees. We were talking about very specifically, not only what Lockheed Martin is doing for the community, but very specifically, what they're doing to make sure they're ensuring the proper protocols, social distancing, and whatnot in in their facilities.

Also had a good conversation with the Commissioner of the NFL, Roger Goodell, just talking generally about the spirit of cooperation, I want to give him a shout out. The NFL has been very good in terms of communicating with us and then this morning, somewhat relatedly also with John Mara of the New York Giants, it's too early to tell. I don't want to put words in their mouth. It's too early to tell what the season looks like, but they're beginning to put in motion the process of their front office folks getting back in and where they can continue to work from home, it sounds like they'll continue to do that. But they're going to begin to have some kind of a physical presence around the league coming in the weeks ahead.

Back to top 

I want to go and hit another announcement related to our continual efforts to expand accessibility to testing across our state. Certainly a strong testing program is one of the foundational principles for our state's road back to restart and recovery. And while we have set a goal for the capacity to conduct 20,000 tests per day by the end of this month which, by the way, is a week from Sunday. As I have said, this is a floor and not a ceiling. We're going to continue building the partnerships necessary for us to keep building out our testing program. More testing means more people will know their health status and that means more peace of mind. More testing creates more data, and more data allows us to take more steps forward.

We've been engaged directly over the past weeks with Walmart to add them to our list of private sector partners and through them, with their corporate partner, Quest Diagnostics. And today I'm proud to announce that we have formed a partnership that will help us along our road back. Beginning this Friday, so in two days, New Jersey residents will be able to take a self-administered, self-swab COVID-19 test at seven Walmart locations, as you can see, up and down the state. Garfield, North Bergen, Kearny, Flemington, Howell, Burlington and Mount Laurel. Tests will be provided at specific drive-up locations outside these stores from seven in the morning until nine in the morning, three days a week, weather permitting. Next week is a little funky because of the holiday, so they're going to be on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, but beginning the next Monday, June 1, they'll be available Monday, Wednesday and Friday, again from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Results, Judy would want me to say, will be available to folks who take the test in roughly two days, and that's what they're promising.

Walmart pharmacists and trained medical volunteers will provide the test kits, and everyone will be required to adhere to specific safety protocols. To be clear, for everyone's safety, there will be no testing inside the Walmart stores. Tests will be administered by appointment only, and you can schedule your test through Quest's MyQuest online portal and app by visiting myquestcovidtest.com.

Again, we're proud of the work our team has put in to create the partnerships that will get us to our goal. This is an all hands on deck effort from the people within our administration, led by Judy and her team, to our county and local public health partners, our higher education partners, and our private sector partners like Walmart and Quest. Again, I welcome Walmart and Quest Diagnostics to our COVID-19 team and I know that together, we're going to be able to come back from this pandemic stronger than ever.

Judy and I yesterday talked about sort of the broad priorities, and Mahen can show us what we've got. Let's just remember, this goes from left to right. Vulnerable populations, highest priority; frontline, healthcare, first responders, essential retail, NJ Transit, longshoremen and women, factory workers and then thirdly, importantly, last but not least, but the general population and that's sort of as we see the pulsing and the waves of testing through the state.

But again, to get to the point that we need to get to, we also need to see more data that points us forward. And in that spirit, let's turn to the overnight numbers. Yesterday we received 1,670 positive tests for a statewide total of 150,399. The curve that we show you every day continues to move in the right direction overall, and we must remain mindful that because of the way test results come in, Judy, in batches, etc., we'll continue to have up and down days. So these trend lines are more accurate, a more accurate depiction of these numbers, as opposed to a spike up or a spike down on a given day. The daily positivity or spot positivity rate for tests from May 16, which was a Saturday, was 18%. Judy's got it by region, which she'll go through in a minute. We don't think we're alarmed, it has been at 12% and 13%, the past couple of days. There may be some weirdness in the number given that this was from data or swabs collected on a Saturday, and obviously that's something we're going to keep a close eye on.

The map that we've been regularly turning to puts this in slightly a different perspective. While the colors are unchanged, the rate of doubling has increased since yesterday. That's a good thing. If we look at our long-term care facilities, which is next up, Mahen, we've got the total number of positive cases 28,603. The rate of cases continues downward from the peak and we continue our efforts, our all hands on deck efforts to push that number even lower. The numbers of, now remember, these are laboratory confirmed fatalities, 4,349 blessed souls, also decreasing with from our peak, but bless each and every one of them.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated for COVID-19 decreased again, it's now 3,405. Field medical stations have 47 patients. The total number of hospitalizations is now well less than half of what it was just four weeks ago. This is a breakdown of total hospitalizations across regions. Those curves

continue in a good direction. The number of patients in either critical or intensive care also fell again to 969. There were 39 fewer ventilators in use today than yesterday for a total of 750. And again, these three data sets, hospitalizations, ICU, and ventilator counts are the most significant known metrics which influence our thinking about where we are on our road back. These are the concrete numbers which speak to both improving overall public health and improving conditions, clearly, in our hospitals.

Certainly, we have to keep in mind that 3,405 of our fellow residents are in bad enough shape to require hospitalization from COVID-19 related. But when that number, just four weeks ago, was 7,400, with 2,000 blessed residents in our ICUs and more than 1,450 ventilators in use, we've made enormous progress. And again, that is just numbers from four weeks ago. And we've made this together, by the way, folks, because of the 9 million of you through social distancing, through personal responsibility, you've had the power to make this happen, and you have the power to continue to make it happen.

There were 261 new COVID-19 hospitalizations yesterday, while 282 live patients left our hospitals. Here are the admittance and discharge numbers from our three regions. And again, the biggest numbers continue to be up north, that lower left number is one I know Judy and team and I will continue to watch, because that's 106 new in the South on a base of population which is meaningfully less. Again, these two numbers fluctuate daily and can fluctuate greatly, but the overall trend of more people leaving our hospitals than going in is what we want and what we need to see.

With great sadness, we report another 168 blessed lives lost from COVID-19 related complications. This now brings our total statewide number to 10,747, which is almost unfathomable. And as we do every day, we remember a few more of those we lost. Remember why we do this, by the way. First and foremost, no one deserves ever to be relegated to just a statistic, and certainly not at a time like this. We must remember that we are one diverse family and that we only rise and fall as one, and also that we celebrate and mourn as one as well.

And secondly, because of this pandemic, these families in many, if not most cases, and I speak to many of them every day, are unable to properly say goodbye to their loved ones in the way in which they have wanted. We hope that our words today and every day can provide some closure and some peace. So let's begin in Long Branch, in my home county of Monmouth, to remember Raul Alberto Solorzano Guillen. He was 86 years old, and his story is the American story. He was born in Managua, Nicaragua, and came to the United States in 1971 in search of a better life and better job opportunities. He found that job working in the linen cleaning industry and stayed at it for 33 years before retiring in 2004. By the time he retired, by the way, he was an American, having become a citizen several years prior.

Raul loved Tango music, and his magnetic personality meant he had lots of friends. He never married, but he treated his nieces, and one of those is Deb Cuernavaca, our Deputy Chief of Staff, so bless you, Deb, and nephews, and that includes Ray Castaneta, who I have not only gotten to know before, but had the honor of speaking with yesterday, and he had them around him, if he were ever on his own. He also leaves three siblings, sisters, Socorro, Yolanda, and brother Manuel. May God bless that guy and all who knew him and loved him, a truly American story.

Next, let's head to Dover in Morris County, the lifelong home of legend William Bill Schuler. He left his hometown to study at Gettysburg College but everything else about Bill's life was always close to home. For example, He met the love of his life, Peg, on a blind date in neighboring Rockaway. Bill would again leave Dover for 14 months and serve in the Korean conflict, but when he returned in 1954, he took a place in the family -run business Shuler Tire Service. He and Peg bought a home in Dover and raised a family of four.

Serving Dover's youth became his true passion. He was a founding member of what is now the Dover Area Little League, and in 1964, he took a seat on the Dover Board of Education. He held it, by the way, for the next, everybody ready? 52 years, second-longest serving member of a Board of Ed in New Jersey's history. He worked on every board committee including running the board, and encouraged parents to get involved in their children's education. He showed kindness to everyone and made everyone feel at ease. He received honors for his service from the New Jersey School Board Association and the Morris County School Board Association and was the Dover Area Chamber of Commerce's Public Official of the Year in 1993. Fittingly, he took a spot in the Dover High School Hall of Fame in 2003. He was a constant presence in his family's life, leading in everything from music to sports to family vacations. Bill leaves his beloved Peg, please keep her in

your prayers, their children, Melissa, Eric and Bill Jr., and I had the great honor of speaking with Bill, Jr. yesterday. His wife's a German teacher at Dover high another reason I love the family, and their families, including nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He's also survived by his brother Ed and his nieces and nephew. Bill was 90 years old and is now also reunited with his blessed son, Jim. To you, Bill, we thank you for your lifetime of service to the people of Dover, especially the countless children whose lives you impacted and to your family, thank you for sharing him with us. God bless him and God bless you all.

And finally, today, we mourn Carol Ann Lockett, a dedicated and popular crossing guard for the Elizabeth Police Department who was locally famous as quote, "The Unofficial Mayor of Elizabeth." I don't want my friend Chris Bollwage to get nervous out there, but that was her title. Born in East Orange, Carol would make her impact on the families around the intersection of Linden Avenue and Grove Street in Elizabeth. Known for her compassionate nature, she became a mother figure to not just the children she made sure she got home from, to and from school safely and back, but to many within the Elizabeth Police Department and NJ Transit members. Besides a community that will miss her dearly, and her daughter wanted me to say in specific the police department in Elizabeth, Carol leaves her four children, Donna with whom I had the great honor of speaking, Keith, Eric and Kevin, as well as many uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, cousins and other relatives, and of course, countless friends. Carol was only 73 years old. We will remember her and keep her in our thoughts and prayers. God bless you, Carol.

As I've said, we take the time to remember those who have died because we cannot ever hear the number of how many COVID-19 has taken from us just as a number. Everyone has a story. Everyone leaves behind families and friends. I wish we had the time to remember every single one of them. But we can remember them all, at least at a minimum, when we see our flags flying at half-staff. And they are also remembered in the actions of countless New Jerseyans who are working in their own communities to protect their families, friends, neighbors, and in fact, in some cases, in fact, many complete perfect strangers. Some are working by themselves to do amazing things, but others have come together along a common thread to put their creativity to work together. And that's what I'd like to highlight today.

Let's head to Westfield in Union County and meet the collaborative that calls itself NJ Sews In Unity. Looks like a little bit of a Soviet Union motif there on the right, I love the Workers First notion. Shortly after our public health emergency was declared, and when I and others put out the call for personal protective equipment for our frontline, public health and safety workers, NJ Sews In Unity brought together a host of sewers, cutters and organizers from across Union and in fact, as well, in Somerset Counties. They got down to business creating whatever was needed. And to date they have donated more than 7,500 hand-sewn masks, 120 gowns, and gowns continue to be in short supply, and more than 570 other items. And they're not done, and they're looking for some more volunteers to join them. They're on Facebook at NJ Sews In Unity. So to one of the cofounders of this tremendous effort, Marcy Kleinberg, Ben Deli and every member, New Jersey thanks you and great work. There are so many stories just like this from everyone using the social media hashtag #NJThanksYou. If you have a minute, folks, take a scroll through the submissions to see just how deep our well of New Jersey spirit runs. It will really, literally, take your breath away. If you need a little hope and optimism for the days to come as we continue on our road back, you can find it right there, #NJThanksYou.

Finally, I want to give, as I always do, a huge thank you to everyone who keeps doing the things we need to be doing to get through this. I know the news likes to highlight those who want to be examples of defiance or who want to make a point, but we know that the overwhelming majority of you, residents and business owners alike by the way, understand this battle that we're waging. You understand that we need to pull together. You understand that we need to be responsible and deliberate. And you understand that our economic health can only flow from safeguarded public health. Remember, public health creates economic health.

I want to close today if I can before I turn things over to Judy, by going back to some graphs we've seen over the past several days. Let's put them up here. You see the metrics in our hospitals are down significantly since their peak. Everything we're watching has gone in the direction we've wanted. Across the board, the key numbers are down by half, or in some cases, way more than half from the peak. And yes, there's been a steady progression across the past two weeks, and we're seeing many more green lights than red ones. And we're seeing them across our regions, although again, each day a green ball means it's down from the day before, a red ball means it's up. We still have a lot of new hospitalizations. Let's not forget that.

Again, we still have a lot of work to do. This is the comparison of how we stand per capita with other big state, some in our neighborhood, some across the country. We see that it's improving, but we can't move forward unless we're confident that doing so won't move us backward. Again, this is per 100,000 residents, new cases on the left, we're just behind Connecticut. Patients in hospitals, we lead the nation. New deaths per 100,000 residents, we are tied with Connecticut at the top of the list, so we need to see those numbers continue to come down. We're clearly, as we've said, in stage one of our restart. We know we can get to stage two, but we have to all get there together. So folks, keep up the extraordinary work that you all have been doing. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. Expanded testing is vital to containing the spread of COVID-19. For our testing plan, we've cohorted our population into three broad areas: vulnerable populations, priority and essential populations, and the general population. The state has been working to expand access for testing for all populations, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable, since they are at most risk for COVID-19 complications. Those vulnerable populations include long-term care facilities, psychiatric hospitals, facilities for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, group homes, seasonal farmworkers, correctional facilities, homeless and densely populated cities.

Through partnerships with local hospitals and academic medical centers, 100 long-term care facilities are implementing universal baseline testing protocols, representing about 14,000 residents and 42,000 staff members. Yesterday was the deadline for long-term care facilities to provide an attestation to amend their outbreak plans to include testing plans of residents and staff. Out of 678 facilities, we have received 586 attestations. The department is calling administrators of the facilities who have not complied with this requirement. For long-term care facilities that need testing materials, the state has shipped 90,000 test kits to the county Office of Emergency Management, which will be available to long-term care facilities.

In the state psychiatric facilities, universal testing of patients will be completed today. We will continue to test all new admissions, discharges, and any symptomatic patients 779 staff have tested positive, and we are working to ensure that universal testing of staff is completed as well. The state developmental centers have completed testing in their facilities and we are now working together to improve access to testing in their group homes, of which there are 1,925. The Veterans homes have been supported by both the VA and the Department of Health, and have been able to complete universal testing of all residents and staff.

The Department of Corrections has partnered with Rutgers University to complete universal baseline testing of staff and forensic individuals, with more than 7,300 tests completed to date, 27% of which have returned as positive. We are currently working with Rutgers University to support their continued testing.

Seasonal farmworkers, or migrant workers are another population we're focused on. The federally qualified health centers are working with farms to test their workers. So far, 595 individuals have been tested at 16 farms with 69 positive cases. Today we are releasing guidance to the farm owners that will help them protect the health of their staff. The guidance will cover social distancing, screening of staff, and education on the need to wear masks at all times on the worksite, hand washing and personal hygiene practices, and also cleaning and disinfecting.

We have also partnered with the local federally qualified health centers to ensure that persons who experience homelessness and those who live in urban centers are tested for COVID-19. More than 19,000 individuals have been tested in urban centers, including 700 individuals who experience homelessness. Plans are underway to bring mobile testing to populations and also pop-up sites to these underserved areas in our densely populated cities.

As I said yesterday, there are more than 140 testing locations available in the state. I encourage residents to get tested if they have symptoms, or they feel they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Along with the expansion of testing, we're working to increase contact tracing in our state to identify those who may have been exposed to a positive case, so immediate public health actions can be taken. The Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness has alerted the department, however, about an increase in contact tracing scams via text. I just want to remind all of you that a contact tracer will not ask for your social security number, your bank or credit card number, or your insurance information over a text or over the phone.

For my daily report last evening, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 3,405 hospitalizations, of which 969 individuals are in critical care with 77% of those patients on ventilators. There are a total of 15 cases today, three additional cases since yesterday, of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are no deaths reported. The ages of the children range from 2 to 18; 11 out of 15 have tested positive for COVID 19, and four children are currently still hospitalized.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 53.5%, Black 18.5%, Hispanic 19.3%, Asian 5.5%, other 3.4%. At the state veterans homes, among a census of 658, 381 residents have tested positive and there has been a total of 142 deaths. At our state psychiatric hospitals with a census of 1,240, 209 patients have tested positive and there are a total of 13 patient deaths. As reported, our percent positivity in New Jersey overall is 18% from a low of 14% in the north, reported 25% Central, and 23% in the south. That concludes my daily statistical report. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. A couple of things. You and I are on a call right after this, digging into the racial realities here, and I said this yesterday, we both said it, actually, we're trying to give you the best sense of that. Even I think more crystallized than a per capita basis, so bear with us on that. A special place in hell reserved for people trying to scam you on contact tracing. Again, remember what Judy just said, you don't give up your social security number, your bank account number, anything like that, either in a text or on the phone. And the spot positivity, Christina, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you're not alarmed by a little bit of a spike. It was a Saturday collection. It looks like there was a big reason, coming out of the central part of the state. Is that fair to say? So I don't want people at home to think oh my Lord, they went from 12 to 18. Obviously, we're going to watch that very carefully. If we see a trend developing, that's going to be something that we're going to be focused on. Thank you, Judy, for today and for everything. Please help me welcome Colonel Pat Callahan with any updates on compliance and other matters. Pat, great to have you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. With regards to overnight compliance, a gym owner in Hillsboro was cited for the second day in a row for having a nonessential business open. In Irvington, two stores were cited for EO violations as being nonessential. In Newark, a transit bus operator flagged down a Newark Police officer, a customer was refusing to wear PPE, ultimately complied, but continued to be disruptive and aggressive and was ultimately arrested for disorderly persons and resisting arrest. In Union, a few workers at a pizza parlor were not wearing masks as required, and the manager of that pizza parlor who had oversight of those employees was cited for an EO violation. In Perth Amboy, 18 subjects were cited for being in a closed barber shop. In Plainfield, four subjects were charged for EO violations, failing to disperse at a gathering that had about 150 people at it. In Bellmawr, gym owners were cited for a third time today, in addition to the EO violation, they were also cited for making a public nuisance.

And just from a law enforcement perspective, Director Maples and myself were on a call this morning with the US Attorney's Office. All of our federal partners from Secret Service, ATF, Postal Inspection, Homeland Security, Invest, Customs and Border Patrol, really just beyond the pandemic, making sure that we don't lose sight and take our eye off of the other balls. Craig Carpenito you know, hosted that. And again, aside from violent crime, fraud, drugs, those things still are occurring in the midst of all this pandemic and I just wanted to assure everybody that we've not taken our eye off of that ball either. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. We basically, I'll point to Jared and Pat, we basically speak every day so this is not making news, but we have a particular meeting that we have every year, a couple of days before Memorial Day and a couple of days before the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, just to systematically go through Homeland Security from top to bottom, and that'll take place in the next, I think it's tomorrow or Friday. We're going to start over here, but before we do, Matt, tomorrow we're likely to be together at 1:00 p.m. Mahen, unless we hear otherwise. As always, Thursday a potential for a White House VTC. But at the moment, there is not one so we'll be together at one, and we're going to move Friday up in observation of the fact it's Memorial Day weekend, we'll gather at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, so 1:00 p.m. tomorrow, 11:00 a.m. on Friday. We'll give you more guidance about the weekend as we get closer. That sounds good? Okay, with that, Daniel, welcome. Let's keep these moving today, if we could.

[Q&A Session](#)

Reporter: Hey, Governor, three questions. With the NFL Commissioner, have there been any discussions with any of the other sports, like say the Scarlet Knights or Jersey Devils? How do you think any of these teams can make money if they're not getting ticket sales and there's no concessions?

Second question, I think it was Somerset County put up their own reopening plan –

Governor Phil Murphy: Their own what?

Reporter: Reopening plan, multiple counties I think have done the same. I think barbershops and hair salons have put up their own reopening plan. Are you on board with letting them sort of chart the course with the guideline for their plans? Or is there anything you're considering from their plans? Or is it kind of just set in stone, minus for the dates?

Third question, after Memorial Day, after seeing how things go with compliance, do you expect that you might change any of the restrictions, either make them tighter or looser or adapt in some way?

Governor Phil Murphy: All good. Again, spoke to the NFL Commissioner as well as with the Giants ownership, both good conversations. They're just literally in the early stage process of bringing in their non-player community. Again, they don't have to hear from us, they're already doing it. There'll be some folks, they'll continue to be able to work from home, and others they'll need to have in the building and they're very good about saying they'll comply with all of the social distancing requirements.

Matt's been on, I know with the Sixers in particular, as you know, are headquartered and train in Camden. And they've been again, as usual, very responsible. I'm not aware of others. We talk about the pro reality all the time. I'm not sure that, I spoke to the owner of the Devils and Sixers a couple of weeks ago, but that was still in the teeth, in the height of the crisis. I'm not privy to what their economic model is with no fans in the stands. I'm not sure all of those leagues have made that decision yet about fans. And that's obviously another area that we're going to continue to have a high degree of communication with them.

I haven't seen the Somerset County plan. I was asked about the Morris County plan, I think yesterday. Very happy to see folks really thinking this through at a tactical level, but we move as one state. And so the Executive Orders, the steps that we take, are taken as one. If the county plans fit within that rubric, terrific, but we've got to be very careful that we are, and Judy's and Christina and their colleagues' input is the most important input that we have. Public health is the thing that creates economic health.

After Memorial Day, yeah, we do that every day. So certainly we'll look at it after Memorial Day and see how we felt about beach compliance, etc. I think tomorrow, I don't want to make news tomorrow today with what we're going to talk about tomorrow, but we've got a bunch more steps that we're going to lay out. A lot of this continues to be out of doors. So outside stuff, not exclusively, but a lot of it is outside. And that'll continue to be, or at least in the near term, our bias. But we are trying constantly to learn from the steps we've taken. And I've said this on a number of occasions, part of the reason why we don't take 10 steps on one day, in addition to the fact we don't think we're ready, is that we want to be able to take incremental or baby steps that we can more easily isolate and determine the health impact in particular, of that step that we're taking, so we'll continue to do that. Thank you. Matt, good afternoon. Matt has the mic and it's in front of Matt.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: A couple quick questions. I'm curious what the status of universal testing of employees and residents of nursing homes, and how often this will be going on?

Something that may have been covered in the past, what's the cost of testing for the COVID testing? Is that something, does anyone recall, are insurance companies covering or just helping to cover some of it?

Commissioner, really just curious how widespread or prevalent are the cases of these fraud contact tracing that you've been hearing about and that you mentioned?

And lastly, Governor, over the past week, it seems like hospitalization rates have sort of plateaued. Is that not maybe alarming, but a cause for concern? Is there any explanation why, you know, it sort of seemed like it was on the downward trend, and then it kind of just leveled out a little bit.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. So on universal testing on long-term care facilities, they are mandated, in fact, not even by us by the federal government, to have that completed by the end of this month. And that those attestations that they attested, I'll use it as a verb, is that they are raising their hand saying we will in fact,

legally, we are certifying that we will comply with that. And so I'm not sure we've got a number literally as we sit here, but we know when it has to be done, which is next week.

COVID testing, Matt, is covered, right? Insurance is covering. I'm not sure what a test costs these days.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, it's covered. I think the Medicaid, CMS reimbursement rate is \$100. Right, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. How widespread is the fraud? Jared, you do want to get near a mic? Do you mind if we ask Jared to answer this? Are you good?

Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples: The fraud that we're seeing started actually all the way back in April, and they're text messages that say you've been infected or someone near you has been infected, and it's included in a link. There have been thousands of those throughout the state. One of the ones that was recently brought up, I've seen it in the press and certainly we're aware of it is that they're asking you to reach out and connect the link to an actual contact tracer, an interviewer. That's been more recent. That's been over the last week. But again, prevalent. We're seeing that throughout the state, all 21 counties.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Jared. And again, a special place in hell for the folks who are doing that. New hospitalization rates, I'm probably the wrong guy to answer that, Matt, but I would just say – or I shouldn't say new, I think you said hospitalizations – oh, new as well? It's sort of plus or minus, in the 200 to 300 range every day. Yeah, I think we remind everyone every single day, if you want to point to one data point that says that we're not out of the woods yet, it's that one. That people, as tragic as the fatalities are, those are from folks who were infected, Christina, three plus, maybe four weeks ago. New hospitalizations is a new hospitalization literally between 10:00 p.m. two nights ago and 10:00 p.m. last night. Judy, any comment on that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think new hospitalizations just talk to the evidence of ongoing spread in our communities. That number is really an important number. And we know and we've said from the very beginning, some people will experience mild symptoms, some moderate symptoms, and then a percentage will experience symptoms requiring hospitalization. And certainly we're looking at that every single day.

Reporter: First, do you know when we can expect the data on the number of people who have attempted to get tested but haven't been able and were turned away? Also, do you know when you're going to be able to get the data on the breakdown? We're assuming that the breakdown of the age, ethnicity, gender and race of people who were tested positive, is that going to be broken down by county and municipality, and when can we get that?

Can you show us new modeling that shows predictions of what the second wave coronavirus might look like and how many anticipated hospitalization and cases?

Fourth question is, have you hired a firm to handle contact tracing yet? And if so, who? And will you be providing us with the number of healthcare workers who have tested positive or died?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, the data on folks who were turned away. I don't know that anyone is being turned away right now. I don't know that that's actually happening. So in the past, potentially, I don't have that data. I'm not sure we have that data, but I don't believe that – we've now, Judy used the number that I think with the Walmart takes it up another seven, but we've got plus or minus 150 locations in the state, Rite Aid is going to drop 50 separate locations on us. That was a huge issue for every state, including ours, six weeks to two months ago. It is not an issue today. In fact, frequently we're tweeting that the Bergen Community College site has got capacity.

I can't hear you, sorry.

Reporter: I believe there was a requirement in a bill you recently signed that required that information to be posted online.

Governor Phil Murphy: It may be a requirement, but it doesn't change my answer. Testing positive data by county and by age and by demographics, we have it by county, for sure.

State Epidemiologist Christina Tan: And we actually do provide breakdowns by age, whoops, wrong summary, but we do actually have breakdowns according to age range as well, among all of our confirmed cases. And again, you know, the predominant age groups that are impacted are probably just quickly eyeballing it, from 30 and above. And for more granular data, we do have that all posted up on our website as well, which we can provide that link offline.

Governor Phil Murphy: Christina, you're far more qualified to answer this one as well. Predictions of a second wave? I mean, I don't know that I'm qualified to answer that. I don't know that anyone is qualified, but certainly you are more qualified than I am, Christina, so over to you.

State Epidemiologist Christina Tan: And I actually think that we aren't quite qualified yet to make predictions about that. This is a new virus and we have to see, we're still monitoring the trends of COVID-19 right now. And certainly we are potentially anticipating the second wave a little bit later, but it's really hard to tell, you know, what that's going to look like. But that's why we're in the process of thinking through, after we have an opportunity to breathe, to take a look at what we have done. What are some after action things to consider as we prepare for the next wave?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll tell you this, in terms of resiliency, that sixth marker on the road back to recovery, a big chunk of that is addressing the racial and other inequities, but a big chunk of that, that is going to continue to be an OEM-led effort is to keep our capacities. So beds, like East Orange, where Judy and Pat and I toured, I was on this morning with someone getting 5,000 masks this morning, so PPE, as an example. Ventilators, you know, we're still going to be in the market for ventilators and make sure that we've got our own capacities. And so as the epidemiologists and other experts guide us in terms of where this may head, we want to make sure that we don't start from a standing start, as we did as a nation this time. That we, in New Jersey, are anticipating as best we can. Judy, do you want to hit contact tracing and the firm that we've hired there?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure, for technology support, after a review of several organizations by the Communicable Disease Service, Dr. Tan was involved, and our Innovation Center. They chose Dimagi CommCare, and that'll give technology support to the contact tracers. Right now we're looking at firms to help us with sourcing and staffing the number of contact tracers we need, but that's not been awarded yet.

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt Platkin reminds me that it is a federal mandate and it's a state mandate for universal testing in long-term care, not just federal. Do you have anything, sir? Please.

Reporter: For the Commissioner or Dr. Tan, just give me one moment while I load this up. Can you give us updated numbers on multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children? What are the differences between multi inflammatory syndrome and Kawasaki? What are the symptoms for both and what should parents be aware of?

And a second question from a colleague of mine from 6ABC in Philly, in reference to the South Jersey gym that has defied orders to remain closed, is this what enforcement in New Jersey is going to look like, just fines and summonses, or anything with more long-lasting repercussions? I know you touched on this yesterday, but if you could address that again briefly. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. The second one, I could let Pat and Matt take if that's okay. We did update you on the inflammatory, Judy said that there were 18 cases, up from 15, is that right? I'm sorry, 15 up from 12. Thank God, I got that wrong. Christina, please.

State Epidemiologist Christina Tan: Sure. We're still learning a lot about this multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children and there certainly are some overlaps with the condition known as Kawasaki disease. Some of the common symptoms that you see in this MISC syndrome might include persistent fever, it might include conjunctivitis, you know, redness of the eyes, it could be hand and foot swelling. The syndrome is

also characterized, unfortunately, with potential multisystem organ failure, particularly with the heart system. So, you know, the potential for serious illness associated with this MISC is really something that we're very concerned about.

And again, you know, we're still trying to understand this process, we're still trying to understand how this relates to COVID-19, given this association and how that overlaps with other inflammatory diseases like Kawasaki disease.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, you mention 15 cases, my bad, up from 12? How many also tested positive for COVID-19 of that? Did you say 11? 11 of the 15. Pat, do want to start us off on the gym, and then maybe Matt can jump in.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Sure. I talked to Matt prior to this morning. Beyond the law enforcement measures that are being taken, it really falls under the purview and the authority of the Commissioner of Health. There are additional actions and measures that we're looking into that fall under her authority as to what we can do with a business that refuses to remain closed.

Governor Phil Murphy: You said there was a third summons issued today?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: It was today, that is correct. And in addition to the making a public nuisance, which they had not been charged with the last two days.

Governor Phil Murphy: You good with that?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: I would just add that we expect every business in the state to comply with the orders that the Governor signed, and we certainly expect businesses, when cited by law enforcement, to follow with law enforcement and cooperate with what they say. And to Pat's point, if there's additional actions that need to be taken, I know that they'll take them.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll just say, as a general matter, again, you've not just got law enforcement, you've got Department of Health, which has jurisdiction here as well, as Pat points out. The very good overwhelming news is most everybody, businesses and people alike, are doing the right thing. So please, thank you for that. Keep up the great work.

Inside stuff, we've said this almost every day and Judy and Christina, it starts with them. This is the health reality. This is a health crisis unlike any we've faced, and an economic crisis unlike anything we've faced. We understand both of those points, but you don't solve the second until you solve the first. We are quite dogged, and we're quite clear about that. And the data is quite clear, as it represents itself to us. Inside, no ventilation, close contact, is a hard nut to crack. We're just not there yet. You're not there yet on gyms. We're not there yet on indoor dining. Do we want to be there? Will we get there? Please, God, yes. But we're not there today. And we just have to repeat that. This is not just sort of a point of principle. This is a reality that we are just not there yet as a public health matter. Thank you. Please.

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: Governor, state laws give you broad power during emergencies and you've exercised them. But would you characterize that you've gone too far? Should you be working with lawmakers more to get their approval for your actions in opening or if necessary, closing the state again?

In reopening, isn't it important to know how people are getting the virus? Are there any plans to leverage the contact tracing data and creating a database of how people got COVID? For instance, from working in a hospital, from another nursing home patient, etc.? What drove the decision to keep big box stores open for essentials when small businesses across the state offer those same essentials?

There seems to be some confusion amongst our viewers about the 8:00 p.m. statewide curfew. Is that a hard curfew? Because there are some stores that appear to be remaining open later than that? Can you help clarify that?

Finally, on a COVID vaccine, what are you doing now, if anything, to ensure that New Jersey and its residents are treated fairly in the deployment?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll go quickly. In terms of have we gone too far? I would just say emphatically that it takes a village. We've said that from day one. There's a role I have to play, that we play, that the legislature plays, that county executives, especially the health teams at counties, mayors, others, everyone's got a role to play here. In the case of the Legislature, again, I thank them for their role that they're playing.

Will we leverage contact tracing information? You betcha. Without question. We're already doing that to some degree, because that's going on at the county level. We're going to amp up that workforce and that technology, but absolutely is the answer.

Listen, we are trying to get the nonessential retail thing as right as we can, curbside pickup is now, as of 6:00 a.m. on Monday available for any nonessential retail entity, big and small. I am hopeful that at some point sooner than later, we'll be able to open that up even wider. We're just not there yet.

There was never a curfew, the word curfew I used inappropriately in answering a question about two-and-a-half months ago. There's never been a curfew. Matt, is there any other color you want to add to that? No, you've said that. Okay, well, I've said my piece.

In terms of, I mean equity, New Jersey happens to be, on your very good question about New Jersey's rightful access to a vaccine, please God sooner than later, you know, we have a great asset in the fact that we are home to an overwhelming amount of pharmaceutical companies, bio companies, including many that are aggressively pursuing a vaccine. I've mentioned before that I've had a number of conversations with Alex Gorsky, the CEO of Johnson & Johnson, to pick one example. And so that puts us, that's a good data point.

But there's also the question of equity within our state, and that's another reason why Judy and I are on this call earlier today. It's another reason why we're constantly making sure that we are doing everything we can to make this as equitable and fair a distribution of all of the elements that matter here. We talked two months ago at this point, I think, about ventilator use and protocols. Thank God we never got there. And vaccines will be on a similar list. So not only is the state well positioned, we want to make sure, beginning with the women to my right, that within the state, that all communities have their fair shot at this, and that's something that matters a lot to us. Thank you. Dave, good afternoon.

David Matthau, New Jersey 101.5: Hi, Governor, a question for you. A New Jersey School Boards Association report today recommends districts create an environment of calm reassurance, but also develop a range of alternative education plans for when schools finally begin to open again, whether it's September or whenever. It also urges a lot of communication with parents, teachers and students, but acknowledges many basic questions about school cannot be answered yet, because we just don't know. What's your reaction to the report? What would your message be to parents and students about this lingering uncertainty about the future? We're sort of in Never Neverland at the moment.

And for Judy and/or Tina, could you guys talk a little bit about, you said that these contact tracing scams, they may try to get your bank number or your social security number. Can you give us an example of if you're contacted by a contact tracer, how is that communication going to come? Would it typically be on the phone? Would they send you an email or a text? Would they show up and knock at your front door? And then just could you give us a flavor, an idea, of what kinds of discussion would take place? What would they ask you? And how long would they go on?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll jump in on the first and you all can do the second. Matt, you may want to weigh in because you actually were called, and you may want to just give us 30 seconds of what that call went like. Yeah, listen, I haven't seen the report, so I'm not commenting on the report specifically, but the Commissioner of Education Dr. Repollet has a large army working on, as I used the phrase yesterday, wargaming what school might look like in the fall. There's a huge component from Judy's team involved in that. We think we need to give, I'm not talking now about graduations for this year, and again, that's something that there's a lot of desire to get guidance on and I hope to be able to provide that sooner than later, so I'm putting that aside. But I mean for the upcoming school year, I would hope that we'd be able to, within a matter of weeks, give folks a broad outline of what we think it will look like, and also what contingency plans we have within that.

So I would just tell everybody to stay calm for now. There's a lot of uncertainty. We completely understand the anxiety associated with it, but we're working on it and we're going to, as best we can, you know, you're going to be predicting, say in early to mid-June, what you believe things will look like in late August to early

September and with a virus like this, that may be harder to do, easier said than done. Judy or Christina, any comments on what a legitimate contact tracing interaction looks like?

State Epidemiologist Christina Tan: Yeah, that is definitely an excellent question, especially in light of the scams, because first of all, first and foremost, contact tracers again, you know, just to reiterate what was said before, will not ask for social security numbers, will not ask for other personal identifier things like accounts and things like that. So, typically what would happen in a contact tracing investigation, and again, this is something that our local health departments are commonly doing and are currently still doing right now, is that it will begin with a call, usually. Individuals will identify themselves as part of the XYZ local health department. And that, you know, is this so-and-so individual, you might have come into contact with an individual who was a case of COVID-19, or whatever the communicable disease might be.

And then, you know, there's an opportunity for the contact tracer to then try to build some trust with the individual who's being interviewed, you know, to provide information about what exactly is COVID? You know, what exactly are some of the things that you need to be concerned about? What are the precautions that you need to take to protect yourself, as well as other individuals from potentially exposing other individuals? What happens if you, as the contact to the case patient, develop symptoms? What are the steps that you need to take?

So all of these questions and all of these conversations that the contact tracer is having with the contact are, you know, steps to educate the individual, steps that are actionable so that an individual knows what to do if they become ill, if they want to get tested, if they have follow-up questions that they want to discuss with the contact tracer. Because a lot of times, if you're getting a call, you're not going to necessarily know the questions that you might have to ask. And of course, during that entire time, the contact tracer is making assurances about the contact's privacy, because that is first and foremost. You know, that's part of what we do in public health, we want to respect the privacy of the individual.

Governor Phil Murphy: A couple of quick things, it won't be a knock on the door because that's against the spirit of social distancing. It'll be electronic or telephonic. Secondly, to Christina's last point, that trust gets built as we're amping up what is now the county reality into a broader statewide reality, as we as we sit here and speak. We want to make sure that folks are getting called and contacted by folks who they view as like them in their community, as diverse as our state is. Matt, give us a quick 30 seconds, was it a cold call? Where you warned that you'd be getting called? How did it go?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: It was actually very similar to how Dr. Tan described it. It was a very helpful call.

Governor Phil Murphy: How long was it?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Probably 20 minutes.

Governor Phil Murphy: So this a meaningful interaction. Thank you for that. Elise, I think you're going to take us out today. Thank you.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, good afternoon. The EDA today put out a preliminary offering statement for \$150 million in water utility refunding bonds. Earlier this month, it did an RFP for school construction bonds refunding. Do you expect to line up more refunding in the weeks and months ahead? And do you have a ballpark figure on savings from those deals? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. As a general matter, we are trying to take as much advantage of a low interest rate environment as possible. So in addition to the specific examples you raised, we have been at that, rates have been at historically low levels for a significant amount of time here, predating coronavirus. So I don't have a specific answer for you, but if we can refinance and cut our interest rate obligations, we had been doing that already, and we will continue to do it. Assuming there's a market, and that's gotten a little bit better, thankfully, than it was six or eight weeks ago. We're going to look back at this time. It's why we want to borrow, even though we don't reflexively want to borrow. It's why we want to borrow because of this crisis right now, among other things, we need the money. That's the most important reason. But secondly, I think when we look back at this period of time, and you ask yourself with the benefit of hindsight, was that a smart time to borrow money? The answer is going to be resoundingly yes. If you had to borrow it, you took advantage of a very good historically low interest rate environment.

I'm going to mask up. I want to thank Judy and Christina and all of their teams for their great work. Pat, same to you, Jared, Matt, the rest of our squad. Again, we'll be with you at one o'clock tomorrow and 11:00 a.m. on Friday unless you hear otherwise. Again, folks, we talk and we're as guilty of this as anybody. It's not just how the news is reported, it's how we speak to it, you get an impression sometimes that there's a disproportionate amount of weight in one area or aspect versus another, and the one that's come up the past few days are folks who are noncompliant. The fact of the matter is, you all have been extraordinary. No other state like us in America, the compliance, the spirit of doing the right thing, has been extraordinary in the state. All I ask you, other than to say thank you, is to keep it up. Particularly as we turn toward a holiday, particularly as we take more steps, and we will take a meaningful amount of steps over the next couple of days so stay tuned. Particularly as we take those steps, do the basic stuff. Don't give up on that. Stay away from each other, wear something over your face when at all possible, wash with soap and water. If you don't feel well, stay away from other people. If we keep doing that, we will be able to accelerate and achieve a lot more of those steps that we all want to achieve together. God bless you all and thank you.

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