

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: June 2nd, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I hope you had a great Memorial Day and start to the summer. I kicked today off in Bergenfield High School in Bergen County with US Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona. It was great to see kids and educators in classrooms together. Thank you all for joining us for what is our 200th briefing since the start of this pandemic. I don't think this is a milestone any of us could have ever conceived of reaching at our first briefing back on March 13th, 2020, but as we reach it today, we do so in much better shape than at any other time over the past 15 months.

I'm joined today by the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli, the State's Epidemiologist, another familiar face, Dr. Christina Tan, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of our State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan, and to Judy and Pat especially, although Tina's been there every step of the way, you all have flanked me for nearly every one of our 200 briefings, so I thank you all for what you personally and your teams have done. Over these 200 briefings, we have reported the numbers to you as they are given to us each day. We've ridden these curves as a roller coaster these past almost 15 months. We've always been up front with you about the challenges we've faced, and we have strived to give you the information that you needed to keep yourselves and your family safe. It certainly hasn't always been good news, but together, we are getting to a good place.

As you can see, I don't need to tell you, we are virtual today, and there's a good reason for that. We have the great honor of being joined today by the White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator and very good friend, Jeff Zients. Jeff, it's great to have you with us. I'll ask Jeff to speak to our position in this race as a nation against COVID in just a few minutes, but first, I want to just give us a little bit of grounding as to where we currently are, and let there be no mistake, we are where we are today because of the great partnership that we have had with Jeff and his team since President Biden and Vice President Harris took office in January.

As I mentioned, I hope you had a great Memorial Day. We just came off Memorial Day weekend. Although the weather may not have been as cooperative as we would've hoped, there was no doubt that for many of our businesses, especially, it was a successful weekend. Even with bad weather, our Shots at the Shore program succeeded in giving 235 individuals their first vaccine doses on Saturday and Sunday in Monmouth County. I know Judy will have a fuller report. All total, we are today counting a total of 4,259,893 fully vaccinated individuals. Our in-state sites have fully vaccinated, as you can see, nearly 4.1 million of those who live, work, or study in New Jersey. The Department of Health has counted just shy of 168,000 others who have been vaccinated New Jerseyans but vaccinated out of state. Looking at the CDC numbers, more than 5.3 million New Jerseyans age 12 and older have now received at least their first dose, and that's more than 70% of the total vaccine eligible population.

We are one of only six states, and the largest I might add, to crack 70% of the 12 and up population having at least their first doses. With 60.5% of our total population having received at least their first dose, we are seventh in the nation in this regard. Again, I don't say with any sort of patting ourselves on the back, but I would put our vaccination program up against any state in the country. Remember, no state is as dense as we are, or no state is in a region as dense as we are. No state has such great diversity in such limited space. Not that we're in a competition with any other state. Please know that we all must reach the finish line, and we do nothing but root for our fellow states, but we certainly are meeting all of our objectives, and having a White House that is working step by step with us is a huge reason why.

Judy, I looked up the communities today, the civil corps is knocking on doors in 12 communities. It's the ten that we announced last week and the two new ones at least I've got as of today are Clifton in Passaic County and Hamilton in Mercer County. Because of this effort, we have COVID on the run. We are reporting only 290 additional positive cases today. The positivity rate is 2.12% and that's as of a Saturday. Remember how much higher the weekend positivities had

been until a couple of weeks ago. Rate of new cases is now .73. That's good news. Hospital count, a total of 518. That's the lowest it's been since October. ICU and ventilator counts are each both at levels we haven't seen in eight months. Discharges and new COVID positive admissions both continue to trend in the right directions. Thank God we've had a number of single digit losses of life of days in a row. Anything north of zero is a tragedy, but thank God these numbers have begun to come down. Remember, those are not yet confirmed.

I cannot overstate how important the partnership of President Biden and the Biden administration, especially through Jeff and his team, has been to our ability to crush the curves again and to achieve these numbers. From getting us the vaccines to partnering with us directly and setting up community vaccination centers, this has been a collaborative effort at every step, and there is a direct correlation between the increase in vaccinations and the decrease in cases and hospital counts. Moreover, Jeff and his team have remained imminently accessible, in constant touch with us throughout, whether it's with me personally, Chief of Staff George Helmy, Judy, or Pat, every one of our calls has been answered. With that said, it is now my distinct pleasure and honor to turn things over to the White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator, Jeff Zients. Jeff, take it away.

White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Jeff Zients: Thank you. It's an honor to be here. I just thought I'd start knowing New Jersey with my credentials. My mom was born in Elizabeth, grew up there, my father in Newark, so I feel like I've got a little bit of credibility coming in here. Thank you, Governor Murphy and team, for inviting me to this 200th briefing. That's truly remarkable, and we all admire your extraordinary leadership, the Governor's and the team's, and the commitment with leading with science, facts, and transparency. That's exactly what President Biden said he would do when he entered the office, and it's what you've been doing from day one. Honoring the memory of people we've lost to this virus, you remind everyone that behind each data point is a human story, and as you said, anything north of zero is a tragedy. It all reinforces why we're pushing so hard to get more folks in New Jersey – even more folks in New Jersey and across the country vaccinated.

I want to thank you right back at you for your incredible partnership with the Biden administration and for all that you're doing to win the fight against COVID-19. To use a benchmark, let's remember where we were when President Biden took office, which is about four and a half months ago. In the Governor's terms, it was 39 briefings ago. We were averaging 184,000 cases per day nationwide. Tragically, more than 3,000 Americans were losing their life each day, and our daily lives had in many ways come to a halt. It was not life as we know it at all, and it was very difficult for everybody. Today, just four and a half months later, we're down to fewer than 20,000 cases per day, and deaths have dropped by over 85% across the country. As you just reviewed, Governor, you've made extraordinary progress in New Jersey, including a 93% decline in cases across the last four and a half months.

To be clear, we're further ahead in the fight against the virus than I think anyone thought we would be at this point. As the President says, the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter and brighter each day. I think we've gotten to this point, I would argue, because of three key reasons. First, the President – he started this during transition – mobilized a plan to have a whole of government war-time effort to build for the first time a nationwide vaccination program and support the state efforts that were ongoing. In New Jersey since the President took office, that's meant working with the Governor and team, providing over 208 million in federal funding for your community vaccination sites, to complement the team, the strong team that you have in place, over 700 federal personnel were deployed to your state to support vaccination and over 500 federally funded national guard members working on the COVID-19 response in your communities. We've also gotten vaccine doses directly to the community health centers in your state and over 1200 pharmacies across New Jersey. In partnership with the Governor and team, the federal government set up a mass vaccination site in Newark run by FEMA and the US Air Force.

Second, governors like Governor Murphy have worked to get the job done at the state and local level. The Governor and his team have built one of the best performing vaccination programs in the nation. I hear that from my team all the time, one of the best performing vaccination programs in the nation. You were one of the first states, as the Governor has said, to hit the important milestone of 70% of adults with at least one shot. Now you're continuing to drive that percentage even higher with more than 74% of adults in the Garden State with at least one shot. That I believe is 6th best now in the nation as 61% of adults in New Jersey are fully vaccinated, which is obviously important that people go back and get their second shot. From working with houses of worship to build vaccine confidence and post-vaccination clinics to meeting people where they are in the community through mobile units, including at the beach this Memorial Day weekend, to incentivizing vaccinations with free passes to state parks and even the chance to have dinner with the Governor, which I think is an incentive, and certainly with his wife, which is certainly an incentive, so really cool stuff going on in this state consistent with all the best practices that you've implemented. I think just overall, Governor, you and your team are doing outstanding work.

Third, and most importantly, our progress is possible because nearly 170 million Americans, including more than 5 million in New Jersey have done their part and gotten vaccinated. In a state that you know well was hit hard and early, New Jerseyans have heeded the Governor's call. You've gone out, you've gotten your shot, gotten your friends and family

to get the shot, and done what it takes, to put New Jersey on the right path. As a result, in communities across the state and across the nation, the virus is in retreat. This isn't just saving lives. It's letting folks in New Jersey and across the country get back to living their lives. As the Governor says, public health drives economic health, and the progress you've made in advancing public health and improving economic health is thanks to the hard work of millions of people in New Jersey.

For all this progress that we've made, we're not done yet. Many communities have lower levels of vaccination putting them at higher risk now and going forward and no matter where you live, if you are unvaccinated, you are still at risk. That's why today, in fact in a few minutes, the President is announcing a national month of action to mobilize an all of America sprint to get more people vaccinated by July 4th, including new commitments from some of the largest childcare providers in the country to provide free drop-in childcare to parents getting vaccinated, extended hours at pharmacies for vaccinations, including many pharmacies open 24 hours every Friday in the month of June starting next week, and continued commitment from the private sector to incentivize vaccinations and celebrate our progress including free beer for everyone over the age of 21 on July 4th courtesy of Anheuser-Busch. They just announced that this morning. You can visit [vaccines.gov/incentives](https://www.vaccines.gov/incentives) to learn more about free childcare and other incentives to get vaccinated. That's [vaccines.gov/incentives](https://www.vaccines.gov/incentives).

Together we've already made so much progress across the country and in New Jersey, and we're counting on New Jersey to keep up the amazing good work, to give it their all through July 4th by taking advantage of the Governor's Operation Jersey Summer incentives and getting vaccinated to enter the summer safer, free from fear, enjoy a beautiful summer on the Jersey Shore and celebrate our independence as a country from the virus on July 4th. We know you'll make us proud. You have at every step of the way. Congratulations on all the progress. Thanks for the good work still ahead, and now back to your great Governor. Thank you, Governor, for the opportunity to join in.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Jeff, thank you so much. I know you've got to run to be with the President, but that was really – first of all, thank you for your gracious words and most importantly for your extraordinary leadership. Please give the boss our best. You are full on Jersey cred, and anybody's offering up free beer on the fourth of July, Callahan and Murphy and several million other of us got really happy just now. Thank you again.

White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Jeff Zients: Thank you for the great partnership. You've been stellar, and we count on it going forward to, so thank you, and I'll give the President your best. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Alright, Jeff. Thank you for everything, man.

White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Jeff Zients: Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Take care. Again, I want to thank Jeff and his team. They've been extraordinary for the support and for being with us today. As he said, we still have a lot of work to do together to defeat this virus and then to spur the economic recovery both here in New Jersey and across the nation, but I promise we will continue to stand with Jeff, with President Biden in all of these efforts. What a treat to have him with us today and what great work he's done and continues to do.

Moving on, I've got a couple of quick announcements if it's okay. First, with close to 1800 vaccination sites located across the state, the time has now come for us to begin to transition away from the mega site model that we built at the very beginning of our vaccination effort and to the community-based model that we will – that will see us through to the end. Because of this we're now scheduling the final shots for our mega sites, so here goes. As of today, both Atlantic County and Gloucester County mega sites have stopped delivering first doses. The Bergen County mega site at the Meadowlands will administer its final first doses on Friday. These sites will remain open to ensure that everyone's who's scheduled their second doses at these sites receives it. The last day as you can see on the chart for those second doses are June 18 in Gloucester County, June 19 in Atlantic County, and June 24 in Bergen County.

Let's look at the other three mega sites if we can. Final first doses in the Morris County mega sites in Rockaway Townsquare Mall will be on June 23, and the final day for their second doses on July 16. The Middlesex County mega site in the New Jersey Expo Center will give its final round of first shots on June 26 and the last follow up doses on July 17. The Burlington County mega site at Morristown Mall – at the Morristown Mall, pardon me, will discontinue first doses on July 1, and will remain open for second shots up until July 23rd. Also of note, as you can see at the bottom, the federally run community vaccination center at the New Jersey Institute of Technology will remain open until June 20th. I'm in a room where if you don't move around the lights go out, so excuse me one second. I'm back. That's technology for you.

For the past five months, these sites have been the backbone of our overall vaccination effort as we built out and into every community across the state combined these sites have delivered nearly 2 million doses and have fully vaccinated as you can see more than 954,000 individuals. We are exceptionally grateful to the healthcare systems who partnered with us at each of these sites and to their nursing and administrative staffs, AtlantiCare, Atlantic Health, Hackensack

Meridian Health, Gloucester County, RWJ Barnabas Health, and Virtua Health. We thank all of the partners, whether they be federal, state, or local, who provided essential on the ground services that made these sites run including FEMA, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, the All-Hazards Incident Management Team, county and local law enforcement, state policy, National Guard, health officials amongst – at many levels among so many others.

This in no way means that our job is done or that we've accomplished our overall vaccination goals. We still have work to do, but as I've said, we are now at the point where our attention will be focused on the local and community-based sites we've spent the better part of the last six months building and supporting, whether it's at your corner pharmacy, at a school, at a house of worship participating in our Grateful for the Shot program. Whatever it is, this phase is moving forward at full speed. Remember, we've been saying this now for the past month We're going on the offense. We have to bring the vaccine to people, and we are going local. We're localizing, and this is yet another step in that direction. Wherever you live, there is a vaccination site near you, and I encourage you if you have yet to be vaccinated to visit that website [covid19.nj.gov/finder](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/finder) to find that location nearest to you. Every New Jerseyan who wants to be vaccinated will be vaccinated. That's our promise, and that is our goal.

By the way, relatedly, we do not want any worker to feel that they have to make a choice between going to work or getting vaccinated. For this, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development under Commissioner Rob Asaro-Angelo is reminding employers that they are to honor earned sick leave for any worker to travel to or from a vaccination or to take a day off if their side effects may require. We are certain that some workers who have not yet gotten vaccinated because they do not want to lose even an hours pay – and that's a fact. Research has reported nationwide that the majority of these concerned workers are from our black and brown communities. This should not even be a consideration. Protecting public health is critical for protecting our economic health. I thank Rob and his team and the Department of Labor for their work, and I thank every employer in advance for their cooperation. Now let's get back to today's numbers because we have one more set to report for today, and it is with the heaviest of hearts that it is our obligation to report another 20 New Jerseyans have passed due to confirmed COVID related complications, and the number of probable deaths was also updated now to 2,678.

As we do every day, let's take a minute to remember three more of those blessed members of our community who we have lost. We begin today by honoring this guy, Robert Campbell, III of the Bayville section of Berkeley Township in Ocean County. That's a place in Jersey I know well. Rob was just 47 years old, folks. 47 years old. He grew up in Lacey Township, and as I mentioned in Bayville and had called Bayville home for most of his life. After his graduation from Central Regional High School, Rob found a career in the bread industry, most recently working as the general manager for the New Harvest House Bakery in Farmingdale and part of the Gianella's Bakery. Away from work, Rob loved to go fishing and boating, two pastimes made easy for a life spent along the shore, but most important to him was time spent at his home in Bayville alongside family and friends.

Rob leaves behind his wife Lydia, his grandson Xzavier, his daughter Katelin passed away tragically five years ago at the age of 22. Please keep her memory in your prayers. He leaves behind his two step-daughters. He's also survived by his mother Karen – keep her in your prayers. She had COVID-19 – and his brothers Christopher and four nephews. He also leaves two half siblings, Jerry and Diane. Lydia and I had the honor of speaking last Wednesday, and she reminded me that Rob was in the hospital for 53 days through twists and turns before finally succumbing. God bless Rob and his family who he loves behind.

Next up, we remember this guy, Millville's Augustus "Gus" La Due. Gus was born in upstate New York, in Binghamton to be precise. He was educated as a chemical engineer and glass technologist and moved to Millville when the area was still the center of the nation's glassmaking industries. He would later teach and pass on his knowledge as an adjunct professor both at Cumberland County College and Gloucester County College. Gus was 85 years old at his passing. Gus is survived by his wife of 61 years, Joan, and five of their six children together, Katherina, William, Michael, James, and Jonathan. A daughter, Susan, had previously sadly passed away, and he leaves behind numerous of theirs children and their grandchildren or his great-grandchildren. I spoke with Jonathan last Wednesday. I had the great honor to have a conversation with him. He said two things. My dad worked until his death, literally, and that his mom Joan still mows her own lawn. Wow. We are honored that Gus chose to make his home in New Jersey, and we thank him for all that he added to south Jersey's rich cultural and manufacturing heritage in glassmaking. May God bless and watch over him and the family he leaves behind.

Finally, today let's honor that woman, a true Jersey girl, Monmouth County's Kathleen Eovino. Kathleen was born in Neptune and a long-time resident of nearby Manasquan, a life spent along the shore. With a degree in arts from Kean College, Kathleen found a job as a librarian and educator with the Matawan-Aberdeen School District. That as the start of a more than 38-year career. Along the way she would also meet her husband who was a math teacher. Kathleen served as the superintendent's representative to the Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library Board of Trustees along with advising the high school's literary and art magazine, coaching the chess team, co-advising of the district's chapter of the National Honor's Society, serving the faculty advisory board, and helping to lead Girl Scout Troop 645.

Retirement meant that Kathleen could focus on her other pastimes, including jewelry making and collecting Pez dispensers. Kathleen leaves behind her husband Peter, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last Wednesday. He now works, by the way, for the Jersey BlueClaws, the signal A Philly's affiliate, and she also leaves behind her daughter Kate in Florida along with an extended family and many friends and former colleagues. When the Board of Education recognized her long career upon her retirement, Kathleen responded simply, and I quote her, it's been a pleasure. I have a feeling that that went both ways. On April 29th, two trees were planted outside Matawan-Aberdeen Regional High School in her honor. We thank Kathleen for her years of service to the Matawan-Aberdeen Schools and may God bless and watch over her and may those trees grow tall and proud. Three more extraordinary lives. On Monday, by the way, we'll be back together. We'll remember three more. Each one represents the many more left unnamed here but remembered by families and friends across our state.

Moving forward, I want to recognize another of the great small business owners making a difference in their community. Meet Lisse Cielo, who is a proud member of our Dominican community, and is the owner of Cielo's Floral Designs in Passaic, which has been in business on Main Avenue for the past 14 years. The pandemic decreased business in her store, but a grant made possible through the Department of Community Affairs Neighborhood Preservation COVID-19 Relief Grant Program meant that rent and utilities would be paid. Not satisfied to just protect her business, she assisted the barbershop next door in applying for their own grant, which they received, by the way. That meant two businesses were saved, and Lisse's generosity of spirit and community focus are the reason why. I had the pleasure of catching up last Wednesday with Lisse thanking her for keeping the spirit alive on Main Avenue through some really tough times. Cielo's Floral Design is a true community anchor. Check them out, by the way, at cielosfloraldesigns.com. Cielosfloraldesigns.com.

Before I turn things over to Judy, a reminder that on Friday, all indoor gathering limits will be lifted, including the limit on seating at indoor venues with at least 1,000 fixed seats. We are ready to take this next step, and we ask that you be respectful of your neighbors at these facilities who may feel more comfortable wearing a face mask. Also, this is kind of cool. This week marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of a Jersey musical icon, a composer, bandleader and thought to be by many the best musical arranger of all time, Nelson Riddle, born June 1st, 100 years ago yesterday, in Oradell in Bergen County in New Jersey. He worked alongside Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, and quite famously, 200 different cuts with Hoboken's Frank Sinatra, and that is to name just a few. Finally, as of yesterday, not only are Charlie Murphy's 20th birthday and the 100th anniversary of Nelson Riddle's birth but we kick off June, which means it is pride month. Throughout June we not only honor and celebrate the accomplishments of our extraordinary LGBTQIA+ communities, but we recommit to ensuring that New Jersey remains a state that honors all who call it home. We know the pandemic has been especially hard on some in our LGBTQIA+ community who have suffered from long-standing inequities and access to healthcare. We also recognize the especially hard road for transgendered New Jerseyans and commit to doing all that we can to ensure that they live a life of dignity and pride. Happy Pride to one and all. I'm pleased this year means the celebrations and parades can return.

With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. We continue our work to bring vaccinations into communities making it more convenient for residents to get vaccinated. Despite the rainy and windy weather over the weekend, vaccines were administered throughout the weekend with 235 shots given in Ashbury, Long Branch, Sandy Hook, and Grateful for the Shot events, which brought vaccinations to congregations in targeted communities. On Saturday, 293 doses of vaccine were administered at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Lakewood and at St. Steven's Grace Community Church in Newark, 195 doses were administered. Pop-up vaccination clinics like these are playing an important role in helping to get people vaccinated in their state. We are committed to meeting individuals where they are, where it is convenient, familiar, and safe.

The Department is making also a renewed push to ensure residents get their second dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine. Our call center has begun calling and texting individuals who may have missed their appointments for their second dose. We are seeing high rates of those returning for their second shot overall. Approximately 92% of individuals have returned for their second shot in the state. By getting fully vaccinated, residents can help protect themselves and others, enjoy more activities with families and friends, and help us control this deadly virus. You must receive two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine to get the best protection against COVID-19.

We are pleased to report that over 4 million New Jerseyans are fully vaccinated and almost 5 million have received at least one dose. More importantly, 88% of our highest risk individuals, those 65 years of age and older, have received at least one dose and 80% of the individual in our state 65 and older are fully vaccinated. Residents can get their second dose anywhere in the state. They don't have to return to the site where they received their first dose. If you missed your appointment or you're a little late, it's still not too late to get that second dose.

Vaccination percentages are rising among all age groups in our state. 88% of those, as I said, 65 and older, have received at least one dose and 80% are fully vaccinated. 74% of those 50 to 64 have received at least one dose; 61% of those 30 to 49 have received at least one dose; 49%, 18 to 29; and 39% 16 to 17. The percentage for those ages 12 to 15 who have received at least one dose of vaccine is rising rapidly in the state and is now up to 21%. I want to thank the parents of those individuals, of the younger individuals, who understand the value of this vaccine and are consenting for their children to get vaccinated. The best thing parents can do is to protect the health of their children and that's to vaccinate them against this virus. Visit covid19.nj.gov/finder or call 855-568-0545 to schedule an appointment.

Moving onto my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals are seeing decreasing trends in their census of individuals with COVID-19 and report 518 hospitalizations of COVID-positive patients and PUIs. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. There are cumulatively 126 cases in our state and none of the children are currently hospitalized. There are no new cases among the residents at our vet homes and no new cases among our patients in our psychiatric facilities.

As of May 29th, the daily percent positivity in New Jersey is 2.12%. The northern part of the state reports 1.77%; the central part of the state, 2.48%; and the southern part of the state, 2.39%. That concludes my daily report. Please continue to stay safe and let's get vaccinated. We're seeing the benefits of vaccination with more activities opening up in our state and less virus circulating in our communities. Now is the time. If you haven't done so, let's get vaccinated. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. The Grateful for the Shot program is a really successful and cool one. I know you – I believe you were at Lakewood. Tammy was at Newark and even in bad weather, which held numbers down, it continues to be a very successful program. I would just say this: to the 235 people who went to the beach in Monmouth County Saturday and Sunday, they have redefined hearty and strong of body and mind and soul because the weather was absolutely miserable. I frankly think that's a success given the awful weather. I should say this as a general matter, not specific to vaccines, but I don't know about you all but we were out and about. We went to a soccer game; we went out to dinner a couple of nights. It just felt – first of all, places were packed and it felt like a burden – a complete – like a house had been taken off of people's shoulders. The spirit – we were on the shore for most of our time – was just really, really strong, even in the face of, on Saturday and Sunday, Biblically bad, miserable weather. Judy, thank you for everything.

Pat, I know this is the beginning of the hurricane season, and at one level – we talked about this earlier. We'll probably be hearing a lot less of executive order compliance, the violations, because we're going to have a lot less restrictions. Folks have to remember still, if you're on a plane, a train, a bus, in a state office building, at least for the time being, a healthcare setting, a prison – there are a number of vulnerable community settings. Folks still are required to wear a mask and they will likely be required to wear one at least for the foreseeable future, and folks have to abide by that. With that, great to see you, Pat. Great to see you. Over to you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you, Governor, yes, and we will continue to monitor those settings where masks are still required, whether that's port authority, NJ Transit, state office buildings. We're going to continue to monitor that from the ROIC. To your point, yesterday did mark the official kickoff to hurricane season. That is a year-long process for us, Governor, as you long know, with our federal, state, and county partners going through plans and procedures and that decision support tool have all been updated. Our task force is certainly ready to deploy in-state or around the nation if need be. I did see that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, otherwise known as NOAA, their climate prediction folks are predicting an above-normal season and that kicked off last week with the first named tropical storm Anna. We obviously in New Jersey as a coastal state don't take hurricane predictions lightly.

I would just remind everybody of the – our website, ready.nj.gov is certainly the place of one-stop shopping with regards to survival kits to go-bags, which have a new nuances now with – due to COVID, whether that's hand sanitizer, soap, cloth face coverings. Having that communication plan with your family is critical. I also remind people if you, or a family member, or neighbor has special needs to visit Register Ready and that register for disaster planning. That's registerready.nj.gov. It's important whether that's for our electric power service providers to make sure we focus and prioritize where power goes back on, but again, that's registerready.nj.gov. As a dog lover and dog owner, I also remind people to include your pets in the plans. We saw it after Sandy. A lot of people did not evacuate because they didn't have a plan for their pets. You put your life in danger; you put first responders' lives in danger. That's animalemergency.nj.gov which is – we have animal response teams, believe it or not, ready to shelter people's pets in the counties throughout New Jersey. It's sometimes an overlooked point of disaster planning and preparedness but it's one that I just remind everybody about. I will take you up on July 4th, Gov, for that Anheuser-Busch deal that was announced today. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: This Bud's for you. As a fellow dog lover, I echo your admonishment. Thank you, Pat, for everything. We will – I think Michelle will coordinate. We'll take a few questions. We will be virtually – we'll go back to the rhythm that we've been on. We missed Monday because of the holiday, but we'll be back virtually Thursday, Friday, over

the weekend, and we'll be back in person at the War Memorial in Trenton, unless you hear otherwise, next Monday at 1 o'clock. We'll communicate our numbers either at other events if we're on the road or alternatively, electronically over the next couple of days. With that, Michelle, let's tee up a few questions and go from there.

Q&A Section

Michelle: Great, we will start with Matt Arco.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hello, Matt.

TODAY BY 5 PM EST

Matt Arco, NJ.com: Good afternoon, Governor. Real quick, how many breakthrough COVID cases do we have in the state from people who've been vaccinated? Are there any plans from your Administration to extend the utility moratorium that's set to end at the end of this month?

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt, I'll defer to Judy and Tina on the breakthrough cases. I think we can safely say – by the way, this is not your question – petty definitively that folks who are getting hospitalized or sadly passing will increasingly be among the unvaccinated population. We don't have a number to hang our hat on yet, but that is at least the overall sense based on national research. Nothing new to report on the utility moratorium, but we'll likely have news on that one way or the other in the next week or two would be my guess. Judy or Tina, any reaction on the breakthrough cases?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I think Dr. Tan has some info on that.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Yeah, we're still actually in the process of finalizing our reports on our vaccine breakthrough cases at this time. What we can say is that right now, what we're seeing in New Jersey and what's being seen nationwide as far as vaccine breakthrough cases – and we define that as any sort of COVID case that's detected two weeks after you get fully vaccinated – is that it's very rare. We anticipate that they probably associated with individuals who might have been – had underlying issues. We also know that vaccine breakthrough cases probably are less likely to be more serious, less likely to cause more severe consequences. We know that also that CDC right now is currently following vaccine breakthrough cases that are primarily among hospitalized individuals or individuals who had died because of the need to look at the more serious public health issues associated with that. Just to remind everybody that when you talk about vaccine effectiveness, we like to look at the studies, the ongoing analyses of vaccine effectiveness overall as a better indicator of how well the vaccines are working. We know that CDC has many of these vaccine effectiveness analyses that are going on at this time because this is a more robust way of capturing a comparison between unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals. Based on the vaccine effectiveness data to date, we know that our current vaccines that are available here in the United States are effective in preventing our COVID-19 cases in general, both asymptomatic, milder illness, as well as more serious hospitalizations and deaths.

Governor Phil Murphy: Tina, thank you for that. Pat, thank you. I should've said we've got Parimal Garg on as well, our chief counsel to answer any questions. Michelle, back over to you.

Michelle: Great. Next we'll go to David Wildstein.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hello, David.

David Wildstein, New Jersey Globe: Hey, Governor, how are you?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm well. How are you?

David Wildstein, New Jersey Globe: Well, thank you. I have two questions. One is for Superintendent Callahan. A five year old child named Dulce Alvarez went missing in September 2019. Some members of the Bridgeton community have said there's concerns by potential witnesses that their illegal immigration status might hamper their willingness to come forward. My question is will law enforcement ask about legal status if someone comes forward as part of that investigation? Secondly, are there any developments in finding Dulce Alvarez? Governor, one question. The Attorney General is opposing a lawsuit to eliminate organization lines. Does the state's position on that lawsuit necessarily reflect your position?

Governor Phil Murphy: David, good to hear from you. I'll answer the second first and I'll give one thought on the first one, or two thoughts. I was asked this. I can't recall if it was at a COVID briefing or in some other format. The organizational lines are based on statute, and the Attorney General and his team have an obligation to defend the law. That's the position that they're taking unless Parimal Garg disagrees with me. They're doing what they're required to do. Again, I've said this. I was asked about this yesterday in Camden. I'm very much open to a discussion about ballot design without question, but I do think it's a false premise. David, in fairness, you're not making this so this is not directed at your question – to have this notion that it's a bunch of machine politicians on one side in one line and bunch of enlightened candidates independently – of independent mind in other parts of the ballot. There are good people all over these ballots, and that's always the case regardless of where they may fall.

On the first one, first of all, it is a tragedy, this – bless this little girl who continues to be missing. Secondly, Pat, unless you or Parimal disagree, the immigrant trust directive that the Attorney General propagated early on in our time in office, it speaks explicitly to the fact that immigration status is of no interest as it relates to an investigation like this. Is that fair assessment?

Superintendent of State Police Col. Pat Callahan: That's correct, Gov. I was going to point right to the Ag's immigrant trust directive for that reason to not want to quell or prevent witnesses, especially in a tragic case like this, from coming forward. In missing persons unit, it is still an ongoing investigation. A lot of time's gone by, but it's not a day goes by that our missing persons unit detectives are not focusing on this investigation.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen and bless that girl and keep her in your prayers, everybody, and her family. Parimal, anything to add or are you good?

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: I'm good, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Alright, thank you for that. Michelle?

Michelle: Alright, we'll go to Alex Zdan.

Governor Phil Murphy: Alex, you here?

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: How you doing, Governor?

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Alex.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: I wanted to ask you about the new version of the public emergency bill that was posted today. Do you support the provision of that bill that includes extending immunity, legal immunity, for healthcare workers and facilities until September 1st of this year? Would that potentially immunize nursing homes against any sort of bad actors that you've mentioned that you believe did occur during the pandemic? It still contains 14 executive orders which would extend through January 1st of 2022. Why do you need all this power when you could simply declare an extension of the public health emergency and your governorship is already – your office is the most powerful in the nation.

Governor Phil Murphy: Parimal may want to weigh in, Alex. Thank you for those questions, all good ones. Don't be disappointed. I will not comment on the specifics of the bill, but I will say this, that between our office, the Assembly Speaker and his office, the Senate President and his team, we've had a very good level of cooperation on bringing this to a good, rightful resolution. We have said for some time we don't want to extend these health emergencies any more than anyone else does. Both the legislators on their side and we on our side committed to working together to put into statute our ability to, on the one hand, bring the health emergency reality, which we have to re-up every month, to a close, and on the other hand, to make sure that we have the abilities still, particularly if this thing takes a U-turn and comes back on us, that Judy has the ability to deal with at a level of information that we need with our hospitals, that we've got the ability to do the testing or the vaccinations that we need to do. Again, I want to give a shout-out to the legislative leadership.

I haven't said this in a while. This may be a little bit dated, but notwithstanding the legislation, Alex, that you referred to, it's not as though the Department of Health has been sitting on their hands as it relates to long-term care providers and operators who didn't do the right thing. At one point, Judy, this is stale. We should update this, but about a month or so again, I know you had crossed a thousand infection control inspections, more than 500 regular surveys. You had dealt with 750-something complaints; 600-something deficiencies have been cited; \$2.2 million – again, this is dated – at the time, penalties had been imposed against 79 providers. We should update those numbers. Notwithstanding the good questions, Alex, that you've asked, it's not as though we've been sitting still and calling out operators who did not do the right thing. Again, like everything else in life, most of the operators did the right thing, but not all that did. Thank you for that. Michelle?

Michelle: Okay, we're going to go to Charlie Kratovil.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hello, Charlie.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Hey, Governor, how you doing?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm well. How are you doing?

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: I'm good, thanks. My questions are for Commissioner Persichilli. You finally backed off the suppression of case and death data for populations less than 20,000. When was this change made and who made it and why? For the record, I think it's a good change. Then also, I've been trying to get some information about the contract for the vaccine call center. On February 3rd, I asked for the basics and was told by Department of Health to file an OPRA request. I filed that OPRA request on February 24th, got radio silence. April 5th, I was told that the DOH

estimates it will be able to request on April 23rd and here we are nearly five weeks – nearly six weeks later and no response. Can you give me some basics on the contract like the value of the contract? Will your Administration ever release the contract with Extend? Why do officials at Department of Health direct reporters to file OPRA requests when they're not prepared to respond to those OPRA requests in a timely fashion? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Charlie. I'll start and then hand things over to Judy, if that's okay. I was told that was our last question, not because of the nature of the question, Charlie, but I was told that even before you asked it. I would just use the word suppression. With all due respect here, we're not in Belarus. This is the United States of America. It's New Jersey. We believe in transparency. Judy expressed rightful concerns I think about – and listen, there's a healthy debate on what number – what population size can you go down to that you feel like you're not compromising individuals' privacy and health data? That was the reason; it wasn't for any reason to suppress I think separately, Judy, we should follow up with Charlie on the vaccine call center. We have no problem sharing that information. Mahen is running the show today. Mahen, make sure we follow up with Charlie. Judy, anything you want to add to either of those? I think especially the first one, was there anything in particular that prompted you to lower the threshold? I assume – the number of cases at a certain point, when you combine PCR and presumed positive antigen, we're over a million cases. I assume the law of large numbers must've been a factor there. You're on mute.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: You're absolutely right; I don't remember the exact time frame, but we had a lot of discussion at the Department pertaining to privacy issues and making sure that we release data in such a way that people get the information that they need and to be as transparent as we can be without compromising anyone's individual privacy concerns There was nothing more or less than that.

On the other hand, as far as the contract for the call center, that was fully bid according to all of our procurement policies. I don't see any reason why it cannot be released, so I'll have to get back to Charlie.

Governor Phil Murphy: We'll do that, Charlie. We'll get back. Mahen will put that on his broad shoulders.

Charlie: Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: My pleasure. Thank you, everybody. I want to thank clearly Judy, Pat, Tina, Parimal, and the team on the screen. I want to thank Jeff Zients in absentia, who's been a great partner and has just been a transformative figure in the Biden/Harris Administration. I thank him and his team. I thank each and every one of you who are watching. We continue to move the needle dramatically in the right direction. It's allowed us to open this state up wide, and we're taking some more big steps on Friday. There's not much left other than in those particular settings I referred to earlier when I was introducing Pat where we do need you to wear a mask inside.

By the way, I'm walking across – I'm in Newark into my offices. I've got this. I'll be putting it back on as a traverse back in state offices in that list of places where you need to wear a mask. Again, to each and every one of you, huge thanks for everything you do. We will be again together. We will be on the road in one form or another the next couple days, some amount of politicking for me over the weekend as the primary is next Tuesday, and then we'll be back in person with you next Monday at 1 o'clock Again, to each and every one of you, thank you. Stay safe, everybody. Thanks for everything you're doing and God bless.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Bye-bye.

[END OF CALL]

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