

Governor Phil Murphy

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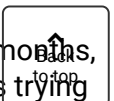
Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. Sorry to be a minute or two behind, lots going on. I want to give a shout out to a young, very good friend of mine, Connor McCabe. Hello, Connor. Thanks for watching. I'm joined today to my right by the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, that woman right there, Judy Persichilli. Judy, thank you. To her right, the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, another guy who is very familiar to you, Dr. Ed Lifshitz, great to have you with us. To my immediate left and another familiar face, Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan, great to have you. And to his left is the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Rob Asaro-Angelo. I've asked Rob to join us again.

Matt, you get the assist on this, with your questions and suggestion to provide an update on the department's ongoing work to ensure that every New Jerseyan who is eligible to receive unemployment benefits not only receives them, but also receives every penny for which they are entitled. We know that for many of you, this has been a frustrating and challenging process. And while we know that great strides have been made in chopping through the tremendous backlog of claims, that's no comfort if your claim is one of the ones still yet to be processed. We have heard you loud and clear on this.

Let's put this in perspective. The department has now received more than 1 million claims in just two months, and it has sent out \$1.9 billion in unemployment assistance. Other states are facing similar challenges trying to get people paid. But I know the Commissioner and his department will continue their incredible work to



make every eligible New Jerseyan whole. Last week, the department was able to process an additional 72,000 federal pandemic unemployment assistance claims, and these are the claims which make up the lion's share of the backlog. However, even as they remove claims from the backlog, more are piling up right behind them, and I know Rob will be able to give us greater detail.

I also want to note that we are getting standing up a detailed one-stop page on our information hub for those of you who are out of work and looking for answers. That page is [covid19.nj.gov/work](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/work). I thank the team at the Office of Innovation and especially its leader, Beth Novak, and the department, as well as our partners at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, Carl Van Horn, under his leadership, for getting this resource center up and running.

And for those of you who want to keep working, our jobs portal continues to post available jobs at a range of essential employers, and that link is prominently displayed as well at [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov). But we urge everyone to please remember a couple of things. One, this is an unemployment crisis unlike that which we have ever seen before. The sheer volume of claims filed in just the past two months is far, far greater than anything the department or its systems has had to work through. Weekly claims are literally many times more than the department has historically dealt with across entire months.

And, please remember the people processing your claims not only are committed to getting the job done, but they too are New Jerseyans worrying about their own health and safety and that of their families. They're working overtime. They're working behind the scenes into the evenings and on weekends to get people paid. Let's remember the ties that bind us as New Jerseyans. We know some of you are frustrated. I don't blame you. But let's get through this together.

On another topic, and I'll be brief on this. We have spent a significant amount of time over the past couple of days speaking about our efforts, not just the past couple, but especially the past couple of days, to tackle the ongoing challenges and crisis at our long-term care facilities. Both Judy and her team and the Attorney General Gurbir Grewal and his team have detailed their ongoing work, and yesterday we announced the nationally recognized expert team we are assembling to take our reviews even further. But we know that the heroic frontline staff at these facilities need some extra helping hands. I have been very critical of the ownership and corporate management of some of these facilities, but to be clear, the nurses and aides on the ground working to keep their residents safe and healthy deserve our deepest, deepest thanks.

And they also deserve some backup, some relief from the bullpen. So today I am announcing that I've directed the New Jersey National Guard to deploy its members to long-term care facilities beginning, I think they're in fact visiting today and it's going to take place this weekend at the latest, Judy, right? This coming weekend at latest, to assist in our COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Over 120 soldiers will be in the first tranche of assistance and we are working with our long-term care centers to backfill the need, they are not able to fill on their own. And, Judy, we've said this before, but just to reiterate, these are non-clinical folks and we are not robbing from Peter to pay Paul, which was our challenge before. If you're a healthcare professional in the Guard, you're already doing something that we need. This is folks who are not healthcare professionals, doing non-clinical but a very essential work. I thank not just Judy and her team, but the Adjutant General Brigadier General Jemal Beale, and New Jersey Air National Guard Colonel Yvonne Mays, who will be the officer in charge of the long-term care facility teams. We don't take this step lightly, but we take it knowing that the crisis in our long-term care facilities requires us to take it.

While we're on this topic, I also want to note that the Department of Human Services has availed its Medicaid transportation provider to assist in getting COVID-positive residents at our long-term care facilities both to and from a hospital. We are taking, as we have from the get-go, a whole of government approach to overcoming the challenges that COVID-19 has thrown in our way and we will continue to do so.

Now please allow me to turn our attention to the overnight numbers. Yesterday we received an additional 1,827 positive test results for a current statewide total of 133,635. And as we look to the trend of new cases, we continue to see the daily counts leveling, and the rate of positivity which Judy has given us every day, among those who had been tested, continues to decrease as well. The map that we have been regularly turning to continues to show slowing rates of spread across the state, and that's a very positive sign. Remember, the very lightest shade is at least 30 days for the virus to double. That is a color that we want to see the entire state blanketed in.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently been treated for COVID-19 has decreased, Judy, to under 5,000, I think for the first time in a while, and that stands currently at 4,996. And as we see, the number of hospitalizations across our health systems regionally continues to also trend down, really more flattening in the south, but trending in the right direction. Having fewer than 5,000 people in the hospital for COVID-19 is a milestone. It means that, among other things, that the stress on capacity is lessening. Just three weeks ago, we hit our peak at 8,270 and there was a time when we were speaking to a possibility of 36,000 hospitalizations. The reason why it peaked at 8,270 was because of you. Everything that you have done to stay at home, to keep social distancing at the front of mind, to wear face coverings, to wash your hands regularly with soap and water, all of that has paid off in a big way. The number from the peak of 8,270 down to 4,996, that's a reduction of 40%. And again, it has been brought down in large part, if not overwhelmingly so, because of you. We cannot let up our social distancing. The fewer new cases, the fewer people in the hospital, it doesn't get any simpler than that.

However, let's also keep in mind that this is still a fact that 4,996 of our fellow New Jerseyans are in the hospital for COVID-19, so we also take this news in its full context. We still have far too many of our fellow New Jerseyans in the hospital and let's not forget that. Our field medical stations reported 32 patients last night. At our long-term care facilities, the numbers of positive cases and deaths connected to these facilities continues to grow. Go back if you could one. However, we are confident that the efforts we are taking are going to save lives.

This is the number of facilities that have positives, and then if you go to the next one, this is the number of positives. And lastly, if you go one more, this is the number of fatalities, and that is a sobering number in the context of what is overwhelmingly a sobering reality. The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care in hospitals dropped considerably yesterday to 1,470. And this, too, is a milestone. I'm told, Judy, we've not been under 1,500 since April 4th, and that is good news. Ventilator use currently stands at 1,107 and this number, too, continues to decline.

Good news, bad news. There were 325 new hospitalizations yesterday, but there were also 460 live patients discharged yesterday. Let's stop there just for a second. The great news is 460 people walked out or got out of the hospital, either to a step down or rehab center, or maybe straight to their home, and that's great news. But folks, as we look at what we need to do to responsibly reopen the state, we can't help but note that yesterday, May 6, so this is now over two months since our first case, 325 people walked through or were taken through the doors of hospitals.

Let's look at this regionally, by the way, both the walk-ins and the discharges. This is the first time we've shown this number. This is again 24 hours. This is the number of new hospitalizations by region and the number of folks who were discharged. And you can see, just as Judy has predicted for now many weeks, this has migrated. It exploded first in the North. It started to migrate through the Central part of the state, and now is sitting firmly in the Central and South, more so than it is in the North. Let's just look at that for a second. Again, think about what Bergen County looked like only a few short weeks ago. We're going to keep, this is a statistic, I think, assuming we can bring it to you daily, we'll continue to bring it to you daily.

Again, overall, the numbers in our hospitals continue moving in the right direction, but as I said yesterday, and I've probably said this on more days than you'd like, while we're seeing good signs, we cannot lull ourselves into thinking that all as well. We are still in the midst of a public health emergency. Our hospital counts are still above what they would need to be in normal times. So let's keep pushing these numbers down further. We need to keep working again with a couple of broad statements, themes, in our in our heads.

Again, public health creates economic health, it's got to be in that order. And that data determines dates. We will make the decisions, as we have from day one, on the data, the facts and the science. So keep these in mind when you let out that sigh, and I don't blame you for letting the sigh out, before you put your face covering on to either enter the supermarket or go out for a walk in your neighborhood. I know it has long lost it's fun factor, but it is necessary for us to keep up with these practices. They are working, undeniably. Remember, public health creates economic health, and data determines dates.

However, even with the positive news from our hospitals, there are still families and communities up and down the state who are grieving the loss of more members of our collective family. Today we are reporting 254 more deaths, more blessed souls, blessed members of our New Jersey family who have passed from

COVID-19 complications and our statewide total now stands at a staggering 8,801. As we do every day, to ensure that these are never just numbers, that this is never ever, ever abstract, let's remember a few more of those blessed souls that we've lost.

Let's start by remembering Howard Arnesen, Howard Arnesen, Jr. I might add, of Cranford. Known as Howie, he was a member of Cranford High School's Class of 1960. Howie graduated from Rutgers in 1966, and was, among other things, a member of the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity. He made his career as a senior system analyst for both supermarkets General and Wakefern, but many locals remember him more fondly as the longtime owner of the First Place baseball card store that stood in downtown Cranford. Howie was a sports enthusiast, coaching for the Cranford Little League in the 1960s and 1970s, and his voice was often the one announcing Pop Warner football. In 2003, he retired to Florida but his roots were in Cranford and he returned to his hometown in 2018. As I heard from his daughter, by the way, if my math is right, Howie's grandparents - talk about having your roots in town -- moved to Cranford in 1922.

Howie, when he passed, was 77 years old. He is survived by his daughter Pamela, who I had the great honor of speaking with yesterday. She's a probation officer in Union County, as well as by Howie's son Jeffrey, his grandson, Jimmy, that's Pamela's son and by the way, she has a picture of Pamela, Jimmy and Governor Christie. I promised her when the dust settled and this awful thing passed that we would take a picture of the three of us together, so she could have both the last administration and this administration. Howie's also survived by three sisters and a niece and a nephew. He is reunited with both his wife Carol and his son Scott, along with many other family. May God bless Howie and his family, both here and those who have passed.

This is Alhaji Allie Kamara of Franklin in Somerset County. Alhaji Allie worked with Bristol Myers Squibb for more than 20 years, and had only recently retired to spend more time with his family and with his Majid. He held multiple certifications from the DeVry Institute and was studying toward a master's degree. I love, by the way, that hat in particular. He was active in many community, social, political and cultural organizations and was the past president of the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Leonean Group of All Peoples Congress and was active in the Sierra Leonean Cultural Organization, [Mabahanda], among much more. He is survived by his wife, a son, three daughters and many grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. I had the great honor yesterday of speaking with his widow, his wife, his son, Akim, his daughter who goes by I think both Allima as well as Wilhemina. He and his wife met in Sierra Leone. They were married for 45 years and they have been in New Jersey for 35 of those years. We wish them all peace at this trying time.

This one is a particularly tough one. Next, we remember two of our healthcare heroes, Dr. Satyender Dev Khanna on the left, and Dr. Priya Khanna on the right. They were father and daughter. They both dedicated their lives to helping others and we lost both of them to COVID-19. The dad, Dr. Satyender Khanna was a surgeon who served both on staff and as the head of the surgical departments for multiple hospitals across our state for literally decades. He passed at Clara Maass Medical Center where he had worked for more than 35 years. He was a pioneering doctor and was actually one of the first surgeons to perform laparoscopic surgery in our state. He is being remembered by colleagues as, "A gentle and caring physician." And for a doctor, I'm not one, but I would bet, I don't think there could be a more fitting way to be remembered, or a nurse or a healthcare worker of any kind, Judy, right? He also had a passion for bicycling, and he often found peace from the hustle of the hospital in biking along the Jersey Shore.

His daughter, Dr. Priya Khanna was double board certified in both internal medicine and nephrology, who proudly did all of her medical training right here in New Jersey. She was Chief of Residents at Union Hospital, now part of RWJ Barnabas Health, and then did her fellowship in nephrology in South Jersey with the Cooper Health System. And like her dad, she also worked at Clara Maass, where she passed. She was Medical Director at two dialysis centers in Essex County and was a teaching attending, taking pride in teaching the next generation of doctors. And it should be noted that the ICU physician who cared for her was trained and taught by her as well. Priya will be remembered as a caring and selfless person who put others first. And even while in the hospital, fighting her own battle, she continued to check up on her mom and dad and her family. She loved swimming, spending time at the shore, beaches generally and traveling. This is a family, by the way, dedicated to health and medicine.

They leave behind a grieving wife and mother, Dr. Komlish Khanna who I had the honor of speaking with this morning. You can imagine how she's doing. She is herself a pediatrician. They also leave behind two daughters and/or two sisters, depending on how you look at it. Dr. Sugandha Khanna, an emergency

medicine physician, and Dr. Anisha Khanna, a pediatrician, along with the next generation of Khannas, Satyender's four grandchildren, or in Priya's case, her three nieces and a nephew. Unbelievable. Our words cannot amply express our condolences nor, I am sure, can they express the pain that the Khanna family is feeling. But I hope that the fact that our entire state mourns with them is some small comfort. And we mourn everyone we have lost. We commit in their memory to saving as many lives as we can.

Let's move on, switching gears. On testing, we continue to work with various partners to scale up our testing capacity. I've mentioned this over the past couple of days. I'm not sure when it will be but in the next few days, Judy and I are going to want to walk through our comprehensive, both testing and contact tracing paradigms going forward. We have been developing, as I mentioned, this comprehensive test and trace plan for New Jersey, which as we've said, is essential to our reopening strategy. And few states, we believe, what we will have and what we will do.

Many private entities are a key piece of our testing expansion and I am proud to announce that Rite Aid will be opening appointment only COVID-19 testing operations at 11 more of their locations across New Jersey. As these stores come online, we'll be adding them to the list of publicly available testing sites at covid19.nj.gov/testing, or you could go to Rite Aid's website to find the location nearest you, offering testing to make your own appointment. And with all of these sites online, we will have well over 130 places across the state where you can be tested. We thank Rite Aid and their partners in our private labs for taking these steps together with us to ramp up our overall testing capabilities.

As I said, expanded and accessible and rapid return testing is one of the most critical steps in our Road Back Plan for restarting our economy and getting our recovery underway. This takes partnerships up and down the state, whether it's with our federal partners, institutions of higher education like Rutgers, our private labs, and our commercial, in this case, retail partners.

I also want to give a few more shout outs to some of our other corporate partners and great corporate citizens who continue to step up with, whether it's money, supplies of PPE and other materials that we continue to need. Not just, by the way, for the here and now, but to begin building, as Pat knows, the stockpiles we will need to secure our resiliency.

It goes from Verizon, I want to give a shout out to CEO Hans Vestberg and General Counsel and EVP Craig Silliman, who continue to come through in countless ways. To Bristol Myers Squibb and their CEO Giovanni Caforio and their team, which set an early commitment and keeps living up to it. To Amazon, which is also backing up its donations of PPE with donations to a food pantry. We've said this many times, but it truly takes a village and we are grateful for everything that we have in the help toward that objective.

And even beyond our corporate partners, we are extremely lucky to have tremendous residents who continue to inspire us, so let's celebrate a few more of them. First up, here is Jake Ezzo. He's the choir director at South Orange Middle School. But on top of that, he's also become a leader of the SOMA 3D Printer Alliance, which is bringing together his students and their families, and even some complete strangers from across the state, in an effort to create face shields for our frontline workers. And so far, Jake and his team have produced the delivered, are you ready for this? 18,630 and counting face shields to hospitals across New Jersey, and even in some cases into New York, and they hope to crack 20,000 before the end of this week. So to you, Jake, and the entire 3D Printer Alliance, congratulations and New Jersey thanks you.

Next, let's head down to Long Branch in Monmouth County to meet Shannon King and Kris Parker. Shannon is a bus driver and special assistant with the Long Branch Schools, and Kris is a football coach, and that won't surprise you, looking at Kris. When they learned of students whose families were having a hard time accessing food and other necessities, Shannon and Kris decided to start their own pantry to support the kids they work with every day. They took their idea to Facebook, and soon it received enough donations to supply 200 food baskets. But they weren't done. They expanded their effort to include a weekly hot meal. Some they made, others donated by local restaurants. Now they're helping families not just in Long Branch, but in other communities, too, in the neighborhood in Monmouth County, including Asbury Park. To both Shannon and Kris, New Jersey thanks you.

This is what it is going to take to get us through this. It's going to take teamwork. It's going to take compassion, and it's going to take focus, and all three are among our strong New Jersey values. There's no other state like us. We're getting there. And if we lean in on these values of teamwork, compassion and focus,

there's nothing that could stop us. There's nothing that we can't beat. 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. Good afternoon. Well, with Mother's Day this weekend, I want to remind everyone to love your moms from a distance. I understand how difficult it is to adhere to all of our restrictions, particularly those on visitation in healthcare facilities, but they must remain in place to protect your loved ones, the patients, the staff, and to prevent further spread of COVID-19 and save lives.

I know how hard it is for families to not be able to hug their mothers and their grandmothers, whether they're in hospitals or nursing homes. And I know that we all need a big hug. But that's why I want to thank all of those healthcare facilities and staff in hospitals and nursing homes, who have taken creative approaches to ensure that families can connect and can bring well wishes safely. Through phone calls, FaceTime conversations, video chats. Many are bringing in extra staff to accommodate these chats, and setting up seating outside of windows for family visitation. I know how much that means to families, and I encourage all healthcare facilities to celebrate the moms in your facilities, and to offer virtual visits to accommodate those who want to see their loved ones this Mother's Day.

This is a difficult time to be away from loved ones and we recognize that there are circumstances where support, no matter what, is essential. We have made some accommodations, so I just want to take a few minutes to remind you of them. In some very select circumstances, we are allowing healthy visitors. By healthy, we mean individuals with no signs of respiratory illness such as fever, cough, shortness of breath. They should not have had contact with anyone with or suspected of COVID-19, or any other respiratory illness for that matter, and individuals should be able to wear appropriate protective equipment.

So one healthy support person is certainly permitted throughout the labor, delivery and the postpartum period of our new moms. The person can be a spouse, partner, sibling, doula, or any person the expectant mother chooses. During end-of-life situations, healthy visitors are permitted. A designated healthy support person is permitted to be with an individual with a disability during the hospitalization. The designated support person may be a family member, a personal care assistant or another disability service provider. But remember, all of these visitors must be screened and must be able to wear appropriate, protective equipment. So check with your local hospitals and healthcare facilities to know what restrictions they have in place and please continue to adhere to the restrictions, and celebrate your mom from a safe distance to protect your health, and certainly hers.

We've talked a lot about long-term care, particularly their need to maintain adequate staffing, specifically certified nurse assistants. To give flexibility to these facilities, the department has granted waivers to bring on additional staff. These waivers give our nursing students an opportunity to serve. To help mobilize student nurses, the department, in collaboration with the Secretary of Higher Education, Zakiya Smith Ellis, is launching New Jersey Student Nurse Strong, an initiative that will match interested students who meet the eligibility requirements to facilities in need of staff. Students can work in teams of four to six to supplement the function of certified nurse aides. They will be supervised by the Director of Nursing or existing nursing staff of the facility which is in place. The students who are matched to a facility will actually be hired and compensated by that facility. And the department will coordinate with nursing programs and facilities to ensure that proper provisions are in place to ensure student safety and wellbeing, such as adequate PPE, training and education, and if necessary, accommodations for students who need housing. Yesterday a notice about this program was sent to the leadership of the nursing schools and programs across the state, and we look forward to hearing from their students through our volunteer portal.

Additionally, as the Governor noted, tomorrow the National Guard service members will be at Andover Subacute to provide support to the facility. They will be there seven days a week. Their roles will include nurse aide assistance, janitorial duties such as cleaning and disinfecting, culinary services and logistics, logistics work such as managing the PPE supply. The Guard is talking with other nursing homes as well to give support to their staff. We are extremely appreciative of their services during this time of need, and any additional support from them, be it direct care or direct caring and comforting of the residents, is appreciated.

Now for my daily report, as the Governor mentioned, our hospitals report 4,996 hospitalizations of COVID-19 with 1,470 in critical care; 75% of them are still on ventilators. The Governor reviewed the new case and death counts today. But in terms of the deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is basically unchanged. White 52.5%, Black 19.3%, Hispanics 17.5%, Asian 5.3% and other 5.4%. There are 513 long-term care facilities right now reporting COVID-19 cases for almost 25,000 cases of COVID-19 in these facilities.

At our state veteran homes, we reported two additional deaths yesterday, that number has stayed the same at 127. At our state psychiatric hospitals, with a census of 1,250, 173 patients have tested positive and there has been an additional death at Ancora for a total of 11 deaths due to COVID-19. According to our lab data from this morning, 261,869 individuals were tested, 102,846 are positive, for a positivity rate of 39.27%.

I want to mention our call center details again for individuals looking for COVID-19 information. As you know, the state, working with the New Jersey Poison Information Center has established a dedicated line, a hotline in January, reachable at 1-800-962-1253. Since that time, trained health professionals have taken more than 300,000 calls, NJ 211 has answered more than 17,000 calls from residents seeking general information. These continue to be excellent resources for information on COVID-19 and the state's response.

In closing, stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy and Happy Mother's Day. Give your moms a virtual hug. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen, Judy, a couple of numbers and then a couple of non-numeric. First of all, I want to also give Jared Maples a shout out, I neglected to say earlier he is with us. I don't think I said that but if I did, you get two shout outs today Jared, thank you. And Matt Platkin, our Chief Counsel will join us shortly. Top six counties remain the same in terms of overall positive tests. Hudson County, by the way, is on the edge of eclipsing Bergen County with positive tests, I should note.

Secondly, positivity continues to come down. You and Ed sent me a very interesting chart which we don't have up today, but maybe we'll have that, the spot rate. This was as of specimens collected May 1, I believe, because it obviously takes a number of days to process them. That's something I'd love, Dan Bryant, if you could help us, we should throw that up at some point because it shows this has peaked and has really come down. Because remember, what Judy is reporting every day is that cumulative. It's also interesting to see the spot rate over time. The racial inequities continue to be something that we have to underscore because we see it, particularly in the fatalities, particularly in the African American community. Thank you for everything.

Now the non-numbers. Amen on the Mother's Day piece, the virtual hug. Secondly, we got a nice day today, I think the weather's going to turn bad for a couple of days but Sunday, it looks like Mother's Day is going to be a nice day. We had a great start with county and state parks, pleased with it, and golf, let's keep it up. And again, the more runs we can put on the board collectively, the more optimism and confidence that gives us all collectively to take more steps. I underscore that.

Let's get away, this is both a health crisis of proportions we've never seen before, and an economic crisis of proportions we've never seen before. Nowhere is that felt more than in the ranks of our unemployed, in the folks out there up and down the state who have lost their jobs and who are facing times unlike any they ever thought they would face. With that, please help me welcome back to go through the status of the unemployment insurance claims, and any other insights that he has, the Commissioner the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Rob Asaro-Angelo. Rob.

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro-Angelo: Thank you, Governor. Thank you, Judy. I'm definitely going to give a virtual hug to my mom right now. Happy pre-Mother's Day. This continues to be an incredibly trying time for the workers of New Jersey. As of this morning reporting, we have now received more than 1 million initial unemployment insurance claims since March 15. The department has received an average of 155,000 new claims each week since the pandemic began.

With this in perspective, the most new claims in a week after Superstorm Sandy was just 45,000. After Sandy devastated much of this state, after years of back and forth with multiple state and federal agencies, in the end, about 1,000 SBA loans were processed, a little over 3,000 disaster unemployment assistance claims

were paid, 5,000 homeowners received FEMA buyouts or assistance, another 5,000 receive rental or other social services, and around 20,000 received rebuilding or mortgage assistance funding from HUD.

Over the past month-and-a-half, the department has provided more than 700,000 unemployed, underemployed and furloughed New Jerseyans \$1.9 billion in unemployment benefits since the pandemic began. That figure includes \$905 million in state unemployment benefits since mid-March and \$989 million in supplemental payments distributed over the past four weeks alone. That includes 72,000 independent contractors or self-employed workers who are now being brought into the fold to receive their federal pandemic unemployment assistance, and there are still more to come over the next few days and weeks.

Now, I've said this before, we know this is of little comfort to those who are waiting to receive benefits. We have over 1 million claimants and have paid close to 700,000 of them, including the pandemic unemployment assistance. So let's talk about the 300,000 that haven't yet received benefits. About 150,000 of those have just come in over the past couple of weeks and they would never see benefits yet under any circumstance. We estimate there will be a little over 100,000 in the next two batches of the pandemic unemployment assistance, including tens of thousands we can certify tomorrow for well over 100,000 weeks of payments. They're being emailed as we speak right now, with instructions to certify over tomorrow and over the weekend. We're getting there, Governor.

Let's talk about the fast-moving nature of this situation, how we've been able to respond and what we are doing in the future. On March 15, this pandemic brought employment to a staggering halt for hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans. Two weeks later, on March 27, Congress passed the CARES Act to bring extended relief to workers. After waiting for federal guidance and building brand new systems to be able to bring family-sustaining income to our residents, we began issuing \$600 supplemental payments on April 10 to every person collecting unemployment benefits of any amount.

Last week, on May 1, we began issuing the federal PUA benefits for the first group of self-employed independent contractors and others not normally eligible for unemployment for reasons like not earning enough. Tomorrow, as I said, the second group will begin certifying their weekly claims and on May 18, we expect to start offering extended benefits to those who have exhausted UI since last July.

As a reminder, 50% of claims go through right away and are paid in two to three weeks, just like a year ago. In general, the median time it takes for a claim to hit the payment database is six days. From there, 93% of claimants received benefits within two weeks and 97% within three weeks. But yes, there are still a number of people waiting to have their claims reviewed. When you have over a million claimants, small percentages equal tens of thousands of people.

There are a number of reasons a claim can be delayed, including missing information. The claim has wages from another or multiple states, and we're waiting for that confirmation from those states. Their employer contests the reason for their separation. Social Security numbers entered incorrectly. More than 4,000 claimants a week enter incorrect direct deposit information. And by far the biggest number is claiming to incorrectly answer the weekly certification questionnaire. More on that in a bit.

We have been working hard to reduce the number of claims that need an agent to review the case. Perhaps the most significant technological upgrade the department made was a programming rewrite that has enabled 60% of claims that were being kicked back for an agent's review to be pushed through instead. This improvement alone has moved forward roughly 270,000 of the claims that had hit a snag. So if we did not do that, that backlog today would be close to 600,000 New Jerseyans instead of just 300,000.

And we want to prevent more problems going forward. As I said, there are now more than 1 million New Jerseyans added to the unemployment system. All of these claimants are required to answer a federally mandated questionnaire on a weekly basis in a process known as certifying benefits. But the certification questions are proving to be an obstacle for tens of thousands of filers per week because of their work situation. For example, a worker who expects to be recalled to their job after COVID-19 should nonetheless answer yes to the question, "Were you actively seeking work?" It should be noted that if a claimant answers any of these questions incorrectly, per federal law, this is a federal program, they will be met with a claim is not payable at this time message. Answering the certifying question incorrectly will delay payment of benefits. We don't want that and you don't want that.

All these legally required questions could not have been written with the current global pandemic in mind. We have issued a clear, step-by-step guide with answers to ensure there is no inadvertent or unnecessary holdups to our residents receiving the money they're eligible for, especially in a time of such economic uncertainty. The guide, which can be found at myunemployment.nj.gov, is perhaps the single most important piece of information for our unemployment benefit recipients. It also appears as the first screen users will see prior to their weekly certification. And as of tomorrow, a claimant cannot proceed to certification without acknowledging they read this question for question cheat sheet – I'm sorry, answer guide.

We are doing everything we can to make sure the best, most helpful information is out there and we encourage everyone to read it, as it's in their best interest. To that end, tomorrow, we'll be launching a new helpful chatbot developed in collaboration with our colleagues at the Office of Innovation and Google. It will answer the common questions we're seeing, reducing the need for phone calls. And for those who do need to speak to an agent, we're in the process of contracting a new call center to supplement our hundreds of call center staff. This has been in the works for some time and the RFP window closed yesterday. We hope to have this fully up and running within a couple weeks to help us meet the demand.

In addition, we've made hundreds of non-unemployment staff essential and brought them to the unemployment insurance division. We're finishing up the interview and hiring process for an additional 130 new full-time staff and processing dozens of retirees to return to work. This is all on top of the tens of thousands of hours of overtime worked by our UI and information technology staff.

We're doing everything in our power to get everyone the income they are entitled to. But as I mentioned, these are astronomical numbers that we've been working around the clock to address, in a sadly historic economic situation. If I can get one message across to the New Jerseyans relying on us, this is it. Thousands of workers in our department have not stopped working to get you the help that you deserve.

Recently, we heard from one of our incredible unemployment specialists who said, "In the middle of the night, I find myself hoping for 7:00 a.m. to come around so I can get to work helping as many people process their claims as I humanly can. By the end of the day, my hands are cramped and my legs are swollen from the hours at my computer, but it is all worth it when someone is able to get the money they need. On more than one occasion, we've cried together on the phone as their claim gets processed." This is who we are in our department. We know how important this mission is and we are making incredible strides for more than 1 million New Jerseyans at this uncertain time. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Rob, thank you, to you and your team. Again, we understand completely the frustration folks have. I did Ask The Governor last night, and an overwhelming amount of questions were from folks who were living literally from hand to mouth as a result of being unemployed. And this is as I said, not only a once, never mind in a lifetime, a once in forever healthcare crisis. It's similarly an economic crisis and the pain runs deep. I want to thank you and your team, as I've said, Rob, in many, many cases, if not maybe most of the cases your folks on the phone or answering, replying to emails, have also got their own issues with their own families and neighbors and friends and healthcare concerns. I'm sure you may get a question or two when we turn to questions, Rob, so please don't go anywhere. Thanks for coming in today.

Let's hear from a guy we all know very well, Superintendent of the State Police, Pat Callahan, on compliance, PPE, infrastructure, protests, anything else that you've got. Thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon, everybody. On the overnight compliance, Newark issued 73 EO violations. In Lakewood, a clothing store owner was cited for being open as a non-essential business. In Avenal, a vape store owner was cited for being open as non-essential. In Union City, a barber shop owner was cited for being open, a non-essential. In Irvington, a used car lot dealer was cited for being open for business. Also in Irvington, another barber shop was cited for being open.

And this one is timely because your question yesterday, David, with regard to customers in a store and what should they do? This customer, this subject came into a big box store without a mask. The customer in line asked that subject to stand back since she was not wearing a mask. That escalated into a verbal assault, if you will, and that subject without a mask ended up coughing on the woman that had asked her to stand back. So to that point of de-escalation, the quicker the store operator and/or manager is involved, I think the better, in that case.

Beyond that, from facilities and staffing, I just wanted to note the meeting that we had this morning. Commissioner Persichilli and I went up to meet with Lieutenant General Richardson, Major General Milhorn from Army Corps as well as FEMA Region 2 Administrator Tom Von Essen. Beyond, really, it was about the demobilization of the Title 10 Medical Task Force personnel that have been deployed throughout not only our hospital systems, but our field medical stations. But the Commissioner brought up a point that sometimes gets lost on the day-to-day grind that we're all in, and that was the amount from facilities, staffing, equipment, all those things are phenomenal. But what they really brought was hope. The Commissioner did such a great job of showing our appreciation as a state, beyond all of the physical things and personnel needs that they met. The fact that they delivered hope, and hope in the midst of the chaos of a pandemic, is just a phenomenal spiritual cure. And I thought Judy did a phenomenal job of being so eloquent and expressing that to the highest levels of our Department of Defense and our federal partners, in what is certainly an unprecedented crisis. Thank you for doing that, Commissioner. Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. Thank you, Judy, for that. We're going to start over here, Dante. I think just a housekeeping matter. I've lost Dan. Is Dan still here? Hey, Dan. Tomorrow we're at one o'clock unless you hear otherwise, and Saturday we are at one o'clock unless you hear otherwise, right? I just want to say one other thing on your compliance report. Nothing's changed. I would view that we're sympathetic. We're under consideration, Matt Platkin will agree with me on that. We're all looking at what other steps we can take. We will let you know if non-essential retail is allowed to be open. It is not at the moment. When we get to the point we feel like we can take steps like that, you will be the first to hear it.

And Pat said this to us earlier in a call, that the increasing percentage of the compliance is related to non-essential retail being open. We just have to say that. Nothing has changed. I hope it can change, I hope it'll change sooner than later. No one would be happier. I could unload probably half of my emails, texts and phone calls as a result, but until further notice, nothing has changed. Thank you for that. John, we'll start with you. If we could limit these folks, that'd be huge. Thank you.

Q&A Session

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: I have two quick ones from Daniel Munoz again. When do you expect the State Labor Department will have to borrow from the Federal Unemployment Fund? How many PUA claims have been paid out this week and what's the dollar amount?

And the other questions I have are, the 120 Guardsmen, are they all going to Andover, or is that the total available throughout the state? How many are going to Andover right away?

We know of about a dozen cases of the Kawasaki Leg Syndrome in children. What does the state know about that right now? What are you tracking and what are you seeing?

Governor, on these numbers again, we're getting the curve is flat and we're under 5,000 hospitalizations and all that, but that's still a lot of people going in the hospital, a lot of people dying each day. What are your models saying now about how long is this going on? How the projected deaths are coming, especially as you're looking to reopen? And yesterday you said there's no magic formula, no recipe, there's nothing -- but do you have specific benchmarks that you are looking to as you're making this decision?

Governor Phil Murphy: John, thank you. I'm going to have Rob address, you said at what point will the state need to borrow? Dante, don't go anywhere. The state need to borrow from the feds and what was your second?

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Yeah, for the unemployment, for the UI fund, yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: And the second one was the PUA?

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: PUA, yeah. Numbers this week in total dollars.

Governor Phil Murphy: Rob, do you want to hit those two real quick?

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro-Angelo: Sure, first on the PUA claims and the reason why I had to be sort of not giving super specifics is just like regular claimant numbers, those are embargoed by the US DOL to every Thursday. Last week's PUA, the first group couldn't certify until Friday. We had so many that they couldn't process them in time on Saturday for us to get it into the DOL numbers. I

mean, we're talking hundreds of thousands of claim weeks, not of claimants, of claim weeks, because they were claiming for multiple weeks prior to that point in time. So next Thursday, I'll be able to give you a better number on that. That'll be from last week. But that's why we're talking about estimates and what we think will be in that universe going forward.

On the borrowing for the trust fund, we're way far away from that. We were in really good shape going into this. Obviously, we couldn't plan for this kind of economic issues, but the trust fund was the most solvent it's ever been leading up to this pandemic. I know that a bunch of other states have had to borrow already. I saw one very large state had the same balance on the US Trust Fund as we had going in, and they are multiple times our size. So I'm really proud of the work done by the Governor, Legislature and our staff to make sure our trust fund was so solvent going into this. We plan to be solvent for a long time.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I mean, we've used the Mike Tyson quote a lot of times. We went into this in a very good place relative, particularly where we were a couple years ago financially. And needless to say, everything has been blown up. I believe this is right, Judy. They're going to start it at Andover but they're available to go across the entire system as you assess the need.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, we're working on where else they will go. I expect 22 people, 22 Guards people at Andover tomorrow. There are some there today for kind of a site review, but we expect them there tomorrow.

Governor Phil Murphy: Anything on Kawasaki?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'm going to ask Ed to talk on Kawasaki, because we've heard, we get a lot of incoming that we think we have children with Kawasaki that CDS is trying to track.

Governor Phil Murphy: Please.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Kawasaki disease is a rare inflammation of blood vessels that essentially affects children. It is particularly concerning because they often have relatively nonspecific symptoms and it is something that there is some treatment out there that can help prevent a pretty severe outcome.

Recently, we have been hearing more, and becoming aware more, of an association with COVID in younger children, and particularly this has been reported out in New York State. In New Jersey, we have begun to hear these reports as well. We're reaching out to our clinicians in New Jersey to get a better understanding about what's going on, and to the CDC for additional guidance.

But I do want to say this to the clinicians out there. I do basically want to say, you know, be aware of this, pay attention to this. If you suspect that one of your pediatric patients might be experiencing symptoms that could be consistent with Kawasaki disease, please rapidly reach out to experts in the field of infectious disease or whatever else in your hospital to further evaluate them because again, this is something that is potentially treatable.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, you said predominantly impacts kids. We had at least one of our kids, maybe more, contract it in a pool 10 or 15 years ago. Is it rare in adults?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: It's very rare in adults. This is a pediatric disease for very much the large part.

Governor Phil Murphy: John, you make a very fair observation, so I'm not going to give you a particular set of benchmarks because we hope it's not going to be one moment in time that we decide, assuming we do X, Y, and Z, everything is open again. We're going to begin as I said, we're looking at things, we are looking at non-essential retail. We're looking at, you know, elective surgeries come up a fair amount. Construction, things like that, particularly things that are out of doors, gives us more latitude and more confidence that we could begin there as opposed to.

But I will say this. You've got 254 people reported fatalities, 300-and-something new hospitalizations. We're thrilled to be below 5,000 people in the hospital for COVID-19, but think about that, 5,000 people 4,996 to be exact, are still in the hospital. We're not there yet. So I don't have a magic number or set of numbers. I don't think Judy does either. We're making progress. And again, I think you're going to see an iterative series of

steps here. This is not going to be one moment in time that we're going to turn the lights, flip them back on. Somebody used an analogy of not a light switch, but a light dimmer and getting brighter and brighter over time. And I think Judy, unless you disagree, that's how we're thinking about it. Is that fair? Thank you. Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. The first question is from Nikita from NJ Globe. Do you know when the state will release specific lost revenue estimates? Also, do you have any data on lottery revenue, specifically if revenues have dropped and by how much?

Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry, I missed the second? Which revenues?

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Specifically if lottery revenues have dropped and by how much?

And my question, with regard to long-term facilities, is there evidence that some operators were deliberately under reporting, or at least failing to comply with timely reporting? Are you confident that the nursing home numbers you have now are accurate, or will it take more time?

And my last question is, is there any progress on an appearance here by the State Treasurer to answer financial questions? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. I think getting the Treasurer in is a good idea. Dan, help me, and Matt, that's a good idea. I'm not sure when and I'm not sure I've got a good answer on either when you'll hear about lost revenues or lottery revenues. Lottery revenues, we can come back to very specifically on. I'm not sure I've got a good timing answer. Matt, do you have one on either of those questions?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: The Treasury Department updates the revenues every month. They'll be providing an update to the Legislature soon as part of the budget process. But to understand the full scope of our lost revenues, you know, we're going to have to be monitoring this through the next several months as we see the impact of the last two months of the shutdown. But they will be providing updates soon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Elise, I'm looking at my note, I don't know what your first question on long-term care was?

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Is there any evidence that some operators were deliberately under reporting cases or deaths or at least failing to comply with timely reporting? And are you confident that the nursing home numbers you have now are accurate or is it going to take some more time?

Governor Phil Murphy: May I just make one comment, Judy, and then turn it to you and Ed? My only comment is on the, was it just a delay in reporting versus willful? I think that's why the Attorney General is involved with a taskforce looking at this. I think we should defer to the results that come out of his work. That's all I would say on that, because I literally don't know anymore. I hope it is, believe me, I hope it is, we were late. we were overwhelmed, it was a 500-year flood as opposed to anything willful.

In terms of the accuracy of the fatalities, I assume this is something Judy and Ed, we continue to assess and reassess. Is that fair to say?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, obviously, I think they've gotten better. They've certainly gotten the message about reporting accurate numbers. I think that we're fairly confident of the mortality reports. All the other reports that we're expecting there, they need a lot more work, to be honest.

Governor Phil Murphy: From the industry?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: From the industry.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. And we'll come back to you or Nikita on the lottery and the question specific, if that's right. And again, I like the idea of the Treasurer at some point being with us, so Dan will keep me honest. Dave, good afternoon.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Hi, Governor. I guess this first one is for you and the Commissioner of Labor. You know, we get information from people desperate, crying, hysterical. I understand, you know, you've outlined a never in the history kind of scenario here. But some people say they call, they put in the claim and then it takes a month and then they get a message that they have to talk to somebody. They then call, they

can't get through for weeks, and they call 100 times a day. Sometimes they finally get through after the phone rings 30 times, we've been told, and then the line disconnects. Is this just simply a case of it's too huge of a problem for normal stuff to happen, where people can get an answer?

You had mentioned, Commissioner, some sort of a partnership is being launched tomorrow with Google. Could you give us a little more specifics exactly what that is, how that's going to work, what the impact of that's going to be?

And then finally, for Dr. Ed, you had mentioned that Kawasaki disease is very rare in adults. Can you give us a sense of how rare or common it is in terms of a percentage out of 100 kids or 1,000 kids? I mean, how many are going to get this or could get it? Do we have any sense of what the connection is with COVID?

Governor Phil Murphy: So I will just say a couple of very brief remarks, turn it to Rob, and then over to Ed, if that's okay with everybody, in that order. Listen, again, I was on Ask The Governor last night. People are literally, I mean the folks, the particular cases that we're hearing from, I'm hearing it as well. I want you to know that this is not something that's abstract. Because of the way we're doing Ask The Governor lately, even though it's on television, these are coming in largely through Facebook or some other. These are posts as opposed to conversations, but you can see the desperation jumping out from people.

But at the same time, and Rob was listening and he and his team have or will follow up with everybody who weighed in with me last night. I think one thing, Rob, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, is there's no blanket answer. That's one of the points I was trying to make to folks last night. You saw the lists of why that Rob put up, and there's a half dozen or eight of them. It does depend on the specific situation. You know, does the system go down, which impacts everybody? That's happened a couple of times, yes. That's a general, the flood is a general reality that Rob and his team are dealing with, but there's also a lot of bespoke reasons why someone is where they are. But let there be no doubt this is not abstract for us. This is real. It's painful. We get it, and we're doing everything we can to chop through it. Rob, please come in on that, as well as – and we've heard the same, you know, I've heard the same so-called quote-unquote horror stories as well. Rob, also any comments on that, as well as the Google partnership?

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro-Angelo: Thank you, Governor. I certainly echo your sentiments there. I think I've sort of hinted before that we in the department are getting the same issues from everybody we're talking to, every phone line. What I'm about to say in no way demeans any of these individual stories, but they really are anomalies. The ones that are waiting a long time, most of them are in the PUA universe, who have been cleared last week, this week and going into next week. That's a large chunk of them, but certainly there are others who have been waiting a while with some of the issues I mentioned before, about maybe an employer contesting, multiple state wages. And every time I see one of these come in, whether it be from one someone just calls me or emails me or some from a legislator, these folks, you know, there's no doubt they're desperate. But in the end, it ends up being something that is a normal course in an unemployment insurance claim. While there is, as the Governor mentioned, there is a flood, in the end, those claimants would be having the same issues if this was five months ago.

I've got to say, the biggest surprise to me are folks who have W-2 earnings who think they have an employer who's putting their timesheets in the right way and submitting things to us. But over and over again, when we look in, these employers are not submitting wages to us, even though the employee thinks that they are, which is very troublesome on a lot of fronts. Again, I can't say enough that in each of the individual situations, whether it be a single parent who has been furloughed who has got to feed their kids, somebody who had a house fire, I dealt with yesterday. There's all kinds of emergent situations, just like we all dealt with in Sandy when I was with the federal government, and each one of those, all you want to do is to cure them right away, and to get them benefits right away. And it's just not possible when you have a load of a million coming in.

Again, I can't say enough, that does not mean that we don't empathize with every single person and we're not working as hard as we can to get every single person the benefits that they are eligible for. But again, given the number is so big, those outliers and anomalies become very large in the raw numbers. Again, in general, six days is the median to get your claim processed. From there, 97% are getting paid in three weeks.

On the chat bot real quick. That was a partnership we started a few weeks ago with the Office of Innovation, which is going to be, we have so much information on our website and we're updating it all the time with 15-page FAQs and it's hard to sort of go through that, obviously. I mentioned certification before. I mentioned

that so strongly because that is by far the biggest impediment for folks. When we were finally getting them processed and approved for their claim, they're finally going through to certify and get one of the questions wrong, it really jams you up and jams us up. We want to have this chat bot which will be more intelligent, right? So then you could ask just general question, it's going to take you to the right spot, to the right answer, to the right FAQ. Major props to our whole Division of Information Technology, Sharon Pagano, our UI team, Greg Castalani and as the Governor mentioned, Beth Noveck at the Office of Innovation, for getting this up and running. I think it's going to be live tomorrow. I can get you some more information on the background on that afterwards, David.

So we're very clear, though, you can't go in there and put your claim number and then get an answer for your claim. But how it is going to help people who have a claim issue is even now when people are getting through on the phones, and by the way people do get through on the phones. It doesn't seem like it from what you hear, but our claims agents are taking calls every single day. But most of them are still generic, general questions, not even about claims. I heard about this new program. I heard about this, or my friend got that. How do I get that?

So by us having the chat bot availability and our other triage or other non-UI staff who are helping us out, what that really does is take the load off the folks who are answering and can attend to people's claims. Just so you know, the claims don't just get fixed on the phone. Our agents are going through that pile every day on the computer. In some ways it's this balance we have to do because we have a call that could take 8 or 10 minutes that may fix one claim. They could probably fix 20 claims in that 10 minutes if they had it, just going on the computer and going through the backlog and punching in keys to cure some of those claims. We can get some information about the chat bot later, David. Thank you for the question.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Rob. Ed, how rare is Kawasaki among adults? What's the connection, Kawasaki, kids or adults, with COVID?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: So first off, this is a very rare disease. We're still learning a whole lot more about how its associated with COVID. I do want to put some things in perspective. I want to start with the fact that out of about roughly 130,000 confirmed cases in New Jersey only about 2% are in the pediatric population, the zero to 17. And what that tells me is not that those kids aren't getting infected, we know they're getting infected, but that they're not getting sick enough that they're even getting tested to be confirmed. This is what you keep hearing about the mild cases, the asymptomatic and so forth. The very large majority of children either don't get sick at all or get minimally sick, and it's not even picked up. This is not something that I'm terribly concerned about.

And of that population that's confirmed in the pediatrics, only about 6% of them end up being hospitalized, which is the lowest group of any of our age groups. So, children in general, much milder symptoms, they are much less likely to be hospitalized. We are hearing about a handful of this association. We do not yet know exactly how often it occurs, but certainly it's rare. So certainly this isn't something that is going to have a major impact on the large majority of kids out there.

But we do want the clinicians to be aware because this is something that certainly can happen or it appears that it can happen. It is something that would need to be acted on should it happen, rapidly. So rare, but needs to be kept in mind.

Governor Phil Murphy: And extremely rare among adults is what you're saying, right?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Correct. Extremely rare amongst adults.

Governor Phil Murphy: By the way, let me just say this and please God it stays this way. We have no fatalities still as we sit here under the age of 18 from COVID-19. Please God it stays that way. Thank you, Dave. Please.

Reporter: Governor, Assemblyman Kevin Rooney has called for Commissioner Asaro-Angelo to resign if he can't fix the weeks-long backlog of unemployment claims. Governor and Commissioner, how would you respond to this call, please?

Cape May County has proposed opening their boardwalks by May 11, their beaches and most public facilities and businesses by June 1. Governor, Commissioner Persichilli, are these feasible targets? What's your response to this reopening proposal?

Finally, currently, my understanding is that the deaths due to COVID-19 that we're hearing reported day by day are after they're confirmed. Is there any use to correlating this data set to the actual date of death rather than the date of confirmation? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. I'll leave the last one in particular to Judy and Ed. I think we've been clear on this, that when we report, as we did today, 254 fatalities I'll repeat this again if you're watching for the first time, that does not mean 254 people died since yesterday at two o'clock. To your very good question, these are confirmed cases.

Kevin is a good guy, a very good public servant. I consider him a friend, but Rob's not going anywhere. This is a 500-year flood. He and his team have laid it out. I know that's not making up for anyone's frustrations. I don't blame you. But all I would say to anyone who thinks that, go to another state, because New Jersey's performance in this regard – again, this is not going to give any comfort to anybody who's out there, who's frustrated, desperate, upset, it's not intended to – but New Jersey's performance is in a different place than most American states right now. So I respect Kevin, but Rob's doing a great job and he's not going anywhere.

The decisions, Matt, you tell me as a legal matter, if I'm wrong here, that a boardwalk and a beach has been historically and continues to be under the domain of a local decision. I don't have any comment on the dates, but I will say this. One of the high priority areas, not surprising, given it's May 7, that we're working on is guidance, very clear guidance on beaches and boardwalks, given that Memorial Day is coming up in a couple of weeks. So I don't know when we'll give that guidance, but I would hope sooner than later.

And as I mentioned, we like what we saw with county and state parks, not just the compliance, but the things like restricting, Pat, restricting parking capacity to 50%. Capacity steps, not just social distancing, face coverings, I think there's a widely held view that face coverings are going to be an even bigger challenge on a beach, which I accept. That's something, you know, I don't have a reaction one way or the other, other than we're going to give guidance. I don't begrudge Cape May County for sort of trying to lay a plan out. Tourism is a huge part of their economic reality. We respect that and understand that, and we want to do everything we can responsibly to support it.

Did I cross any legal grounds here that you would want to correct?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: No, that's correct. It's still a local decision but we're actively, as the Governor mentioned, working to come up with statewide guidance. Also, I would note that we're working with regional states to try and coordinate as much as we can, especially with New York and Delaware. We're actively working with local jurisdictions to get a sense from them. A lot of them are doing really thoughtful work, Cape May is one. There are a number of other communities, you know, the beach is an iconic part of the state, but the beach isn't the same up and down the shore. So we're working with them to make sure that guidance makes the most sense.

Governor Phil Murphy: Great point on the last point you've made here. We're not in a bubble. We take a lot of inputs, and we've gotten some really good inputs right from the get-go from leadership both in the counties on the shore as well as municipalities and mayors, in particular. That last point, Matt and I were on with Senator Carper from Delaware earlier today, talking about the need, again, we still need a lot of federal cash. I want to reiterate that. I hadn't said that yet, Judy, so I want to make sure that I got that off my chest. And Senator Carper was very good. We made the point that when you look at the Regional Council, getting the coordination in particular, in our case, with Delaware and New York, right as it relates to beach protocol is a big deal. Otherwise, you could have huge unintended consequences. So Judy or Ed, anything you want to add on beaches or boardwalks or specifically the question of reporting fatalities, when confirmed versus a daily account?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: I'll talk about the deaths and how that happens. We report out two numbers every day. The number today, for example, 8,801 deaths. Those are lab confirmed deaths. We also report out a number that's related to long-term care facility outbreaks. Today

that was 4,505. That number actually includes both confirmed as well as non-confirmed deaths as reported by the facilities. That's where there's a little bit of difference between those two numbers. The 8,801 are confirmed.

You are absolutely correct that in a lot of ways, looking at by the date that it's being reported is not the most accurate way to get a sense about what's really happening. And even better than the date of death, we look at the date of illness onset to try to get a sense about what's happening, because that's our best judge of when somebody first got infected and then sick. And that matters more to us than when they actually died, because there can be a significant lag between those different events and for different people, it's a different amount of time.

The department does publish this data every day on the website as a PDF in what's known as an epi-curve, which kind of shows these numbers over time. That's available there. I can say that it's looking like these numbers, as far as death by date of illness onset, peaked probably roughly two weeks or so ago.

Governor Phil Murphy: And one of the things when I speak to families, inevitably what comes up, Ed, to your point is when did the person who pass get sick? It's quite striking to look at those dates relative to when they passed, bless them, and also as we discuss them each day. Thank you for that. Sir, do you have something?

Reporter: Yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Please.

Reporter: Some people who have pending unemployment claims are now getting letters telling them they have phone appointments scheduled for the year 2040, 20 years from now. Can you explain why that's happening? What should people who get those letters do?

My second one is similar to Mr. Matthews, I don't know if you feel like you've addressed it already. Some people are also contacting News 12 New Jersey saying that they were approved for unemployment benefits two months ago, but have not gotten any money yet. They want to know what the holdup is.

And lastly, Governor, your reaction to the Bridgegate case being overturned? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Rob, why don't you, because I got at least one of these last night. I know Matt asked me about one of these, where somebody's got approved, they haven't gotten their money yet. Secondly, I assume the 2040 is a typo. But please, God, tell me that that's the case.

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro-Angelo: Well, a couple of things. I think you're conflating two different things. Originally, when this first started, there was a placeholder date held when we had certain kinds of appointments that had to be scheduled. That was in the year 2040. That was fixed right away, but people thought that was because we were so backlogged, but it was not. It was a placeholder. I think that was fixed weeks ago.

And as far as being approved and not getting the benefits, generally when we get these kind of inquiries, it's because something's gone wrong with the certification process that one, a lot of folks don't know they need to certify. They think, oh, I got approved, now I'm done. The money is going to come in the mail. Obviously, this is all laid out in the instructions that they get. But again, like I mentioned, the certification questions before, that would keep you from getting it. But even then you would get a note saying you're not eligible at this time.

If someone becomes eligible for unemployment and gets approved, there's going to be other communications coming from us. The money just doesn't come automatically. There's steps that they need to take and certification each week is one of them.

But yes, the 2040 was a placeholder date we had in one of our systems early on. I think that was fixed in the second week of this going on. And then there are other dates that folks are getting for monetary meetings later on this spring and early summer. But a lot of those are going to be moved up once the PUA universe moves out of there, because a lot of those appointments are being made for folks who are coming up as ineligible, but they'll be eligible for PUA and their appointments will get cancelled so folks who actually need

appointments over the phone to talk about their earnings and to verify information, who are getting scheduled for, like I said, June and July, once that PUA universe gets cleared out over the next week or two, they're going to get new dates and times that are much sooner, obviously, for their issues.

Governor Phil Murphy: Bridgegate, you asked about. I'm not a lawyer so I don't have any comment on the legal aspects of it. I mean, this was, there's no escaping that this was a deep violation of public trust. It's a stain, no matter how you slice it in the history, the modern history at least, of our state. I don't think it's cause to spike any footballs. The fact of the matter is that had long legs in terms of the public trust in particular. I probably got elected overwhelmingly to fix the economy, both stronger, make it grow and make it fairer. But I think I also got here based on, at least in part, on the fact that folks are sick and tired of the way things have been working in the state for too long, and feeling like there's a bubble with a bunch of insiders and everybody else is on the outside saying, hey, what about me? I'm paying the price for your gamesmanship.

I say that because I don't think there's a bigger or better example than what folks felt about Bridgegate. That's not going away. I've got no comment on the legal elements of this. I think trust and public trust is a sacred cornerstone of our democracy and it behooves all of us, on all sides of the aisle, both sides of the aisle, all corners of the state. And I'm not saying that to be holier than thou or that we've got it all figured out. But this was a big dent in the reputation of our state, in the trust that our people have in the way our state works. And you know, you could argue that we're still digging out of it in some respects.

It's nothing, God knows it's nothing like what we're dealing with every day here, but public trust is a hard thing when you lose it to get it back. God willing, every day we collectively together are putting one foot in front of the other and hopefully we will succeed in that respect. Thank you. Sir, do you have anything?

Reporter: Good afternoon, everybody. Commissioner Asaro was talking about the hundreds of thousands of claims that his office is seeing for unemployment. That number is obviously going to jump when state workers are furloughed. How do you determine which 100,000 workers get furloughed? And do you anticipate it being the only round of state workers getting furloughed?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? I commend you for your brevity. Listen on furloughing, I would just say this. I've said this, I think publicly, that as a conceptual matter it's something that we're open to. I don't have any more meat to put on that bone, other than the point that I also have made. You could make a pretty compelling argument that we've never needed government more than we need it right now. I don't know if Judy's people literally could work more hours in the day. I know, likewise, could Rob's people. You may be frustrated, but it ain't because they're not working. Pat, you've got people around the clock. It's hard to see where we've got slack right now. But it's something, again, I'm not passing judgment on whether or not it may or may not make sense.

Here's what I'm worried about, however, far more so than I am about where a possible furlough plan would come out. And we've said this before, but I have to say it again. If we don't get federal cash assistance direct to the state, in addition to what I think, we've made a lot of progress on interpreting the CARES Act to be able to spend that money, in addition to getting the ability to borrow, including from the fed window. We need direct cash assistance. We were on, not just with Senator Carper, but Matt and I were on with a group of Regional Congresspersons from both sides of the aisle, I think represented Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and certainly Jersey. I want to give Mikey Cheryl a shout out, she convened it with Congressman Peter King of New York, Bonnie Watson Coleman was with us, and give her a shout out.

That's the topic. If we don't get that cash, the unemployment rate is going to go up, if it's already not through the roof, it's going to go up through another roof. It's going to be exactly as a state and municipal matter, exactly the folks who we need the most to keep employed. It's going to be, and I take no joy in saying this. It's going to be firefighters, police, EMS, first responders, healthcare, educators, it's going to be the folks at the point of attack for our residents who right now are living through something that none of us have ever lived through before, the healthcare crisis of all time in our state and our country. That's my bigger worry. Not just for what it will do to claims and backlogs and all the stuff that Rob's dealing with, but the numbers will skyrocket in exactly of the population that we can least afford it. Thank you. Matt, you're going to close us out here. Thank you.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Thanks. Commissioner, just a couple of follow ups on some of your remarks. I'm just curious about the call center that you referenced. Could you be a little bit more specific about maybe how many people would be working there? And a little bit more specific about where we are in terms of how close it is to opening?

And for those who have exhausted their benefits, you said the extended 13 weeks will start to be processed on May 18. Is the computer system not set up to handle these claims? Why is there such a delay there?

Curious also, how many staffers are working on unemployment insurance claims right now? How many are working maybe on the weekends and what's left in the backlog? You may have answered that last one there, but I just wanted to make sure I got it correct.

Commissioner, many readers have told us they have been unsuccessful applying and getting a message that said authentication failed. If they can't get in by phone, how do they proceed? Maybe just one last one here is, some people said they received one \$600 payment, but then they stopped and others haven't gotten the payments at all. This additional federal payment. I'm curious if you know what the reason for the delay is there?

Governor Phil Murphy: That last one is either they haven't gotten the \$600 yet, or at least in one case, you know of where someone got it and then it stopped. Is that right?

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: More than one case.

Governor Phil Murphy: More than one case, okay. Rob, I think these are all over to you. Please jump in.

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro-Angelo: I was going to say, one broad statement is that it's hard to respond to a lot of these things that are individual one-offs, right? When obviously we're getting a lot of inquiries from a lot of your colleagues in the press about Person X or Y, or we're doing a story about Jim Smith and we can't respond because privileged information and confidential information. I just want to say that off the top.

Call center, we don't know. The RFQ just closed out yesterday and we have a great team at the Department of Labor looking over the bids. I don't even know what I'm allowed to legally say so I don't want to, I don't know the procurement laws but I would imagine that it's going to be based on the output, not necessarily number of folks who will be participating in the call center. I'll say that. We're in the hundreds of folks working in UI. It's changing all the time, because we have folks coming in and out from other departments who are able to help us. But like I said, we're looking, we're in the process of hiring 130 additional folks to specifically be claims trainees.

The \$600, a couple things. One, the payment comes in three or four days after your regular unemployment payment. That being said, I know there was some issues on Friday when the big PUA numbers went in. Because there were so many folks filing for so many back weeks, the amount of money that was coming in to certain individuals set off some other kind of trigger we had in our system. That cut off the \$600. They're all getting refunded back that money going forward.

I have not heard, to be honest, in a while about anybody not getting the \$600 at all. I know there was that glitch last Friday and Saturday about folks who had claimed so much money that we had basically a governor on at the top that we had to go back and fix afterwards. But those are all going to be cured now. The authentication failed, I have not heard that one at all, and I think I've heard them all. So I don't know if that's somebody's specific system. The one good thing about getting so many calls in, so much stuff goes on social media, it's like a live feedback loop about what our system problems are. I have not seen or heard about the authentication error one, so I'll definitely check that out when I get back to the office.

Governor Phil Murphy: I have a suggestion with two levels on it. Could you guys connect offline? Because Matt's had a bunch of good questions on unemployment, and Dan can be a part of that. But secondly, also to your point that you started with, not just for privacy, but I also would say it's beyond the privacy point. It's hard to have a blanket answer to some of these without knowing the very specifics. So if you've got, the other reason to talk to you is if you've got somebody in particular that you could get Rob directed to, we have

literally been, he personally and his team have been literally calling people. I know coming on to Ask The Governor. I've got another Ask The Governor tonight, by the way, so clear the decks. But for both of those reasons, we'll follow up.

Thank you all. Again, logistically, Dan, we are here tomorrow. I'm going to remark here as I say this, at 1:00 p.m. Thank you. I want to thank, as I always do, Commissioner Judy Persichilli, Dr. Ed Lifshitz, thank you, folks, for your extraordinary leadership. Ditto to Pat Callahan, to Rob Asaro-Angelo, thank you for being here, for your leadership, Jared, Matt. I would just say again to everybody, a couple of things.

Most importantly keep at it. It is working. We're not out of the woods, but it is working. There's no question about that. I think you should be prepared for a significant amount of guidance over the next sort of five to seven days. I'm leaning, I haven't asked Judy this. I'm leaning toward doing testing and contact tracing in the same session. That may be a day or two after that we could have done one without the other, but I'm leaning toward doing both together, Judy. But we'll come back to you on that. But also some more guidance. You know, we're looking at a lot of the things you've asked us about, whether it's beaches or non-essential retail or whatever it may be, and there's a lot of different considerations and a lot of steps that we're looking at. Again, in the meantime, keep doing what you're doing. Stay safe, stay home, keep your distance. Wash your hands with soap and water. Hang in there. Everybody, no state is doing what New Jersey is doing right now and we should all feel really good about that. Let's just stay at it. God bless you all. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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