

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: January 11th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for your patience. With me today is the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. To my far left, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan, who by the way, Pat, there you are, looking lean and mean there. Pat received his first dose of the Moderna vaccine this weekend. How was it, by the way?

**State Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan:** Smooth sailing.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Smooth sailing, good stuff. And today we're also honored to be joined by the woman to my left, the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan.

Before we get to the Acting Commissioner in a couple minutes, a couple of quick updates. Judy and Pat and I were this morning at a very impressive mega site in Gloucester County at Rowan College, really impressive with the Senate President Steve Sweeney and others, members of the National Guard, members of the State Police, county officials, local officials. Rowan did a phenomenal job. We were in Morris County – I'm losing track of the days, I think on Friday – at Town Square Mall in Rockaway Township, another incredibly impressive, very different feel. Both with a similar amount of square footage, but Rowan is in sort of a chain of rooms together and in Rockaway, you're in a former Sears, which has a big box feel to it. Judy, you and I were also with Joe DiVincenzo in West Orange and Essex County. I think you'll get into this, but we've now got, in addition to the six mega sites that are coming online, we've got close to 300 other points of distribution. When we get the doses we need from the feds, we will not be caught flatfooted. We're also getting, you know, as we'll report in a minute, over 200,000 people have already received a vaccine.

Separately, had a very good call with Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo over the weekend. She is the Commerce Secretary Designate for the Biden Administration, really good conversation about working together right out of the blocks with a particular focus on small businesses.

Thirdly, we're doing this at noon today because we were to have had a White House video conference on corona and vaccinations. That got pushed, actually at the last minute, to tomorrow. So when we regather on Wednesday, we'll have a readout of what will be among, if not the last I would think, Whitehouse VTC with the current administration. We are also joined by Jared Maples, the Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness, whose mission has never been more important, Chief Counsel Parimal Garg and, as they say, a cast of thousands.

Before we get to Angelica, first of all, and this is with a heavy heart, if you're out and about the state today you will notice the flags up and down the state are flying at half-mast. I have ordered our flags to be lowered in honor, in memory of United States Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick. We would normally lower the flags for someone lost in service for a day. We have made the decision, I've made the decision to extend this until he is laid to rest, and they'll remain at half-staff until then. Brian died last week following an assault by insurrectionists in the United States Capitol who, according to reports, pepper sprayed him before attacking him with a fire extinguisher. A native of South River in Middlesex County, Brian was a six-year veteran of the New Jersey Air National Guard and had served two overseas deployments during his years in the guard. He was a 12-year member of the Capitol Police. He took his duty with the utmost seriousness, but also enjoyed interacting with the visitors who would come from around the world to tour our Capitol with the members and Congressional staff, regardless of party, by the way, who worked there. I had the honor of speaking with Brian's dad and brothers this morning a short while ago, and to extend condolences not just from the First Lady and me, but from our entire New Jersey family. Once a New Jerseyan, always a New Jerseyan, and Brian will always be a New Jerseyan. He was honored and proud to serve. He was honored and proud to uphold the Constitution. He was honored and proud to work in the United States Capitol which is, let us not forget ever, the greatest symbol of democracy in the world. His death is rightfully being investigated as a homicide.

Take a deeper look at the crowd which overran the capital: neo-nazi, other symbols of anti-Semitism, including shirts disgustingly glorifying the Holocaust were present. Just think about that, inside the halls of the United States Capitol in 2021. So let's just talk about these jerks. On the upper left, 6MWE. If you don't know what that means already, it means 6 million weren't enough. That's the number, plus or minus – I suspect it's far more plus – of Jews killed during the Holocaust in the Third Reich under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.

The guy on the right, it says Camp Auschwitz, which as we know is a concentration camp that was located in Poland; in fact, still is. And it says I can't read it exactly, but I can read the German, but underneath the skull and crossbones, it's "work makes you free" I think is what it is in English, the translation. The picture in the middle actually is the front gate at Auschwitz in Poland. "Arbeit Macht Frei" means work makes you free.

So these two jerks were at our Capitol last Wednesday and they were among many other jerks who were there. So in addition to the broad stroke condemnation of all that happened, let us be very mindful of the fact that our Jewish brothers and sisters do not need to be told this or reminded, because they live it every day of their lives, anti-Semitism in this world, in this country, and sadly in this state is alive and well and runs deep. That is an extraordinary set of images.

To anyone who has not spoken out yet against this insurrection last week, this is who your silence is enabling. This is who you were standing with. This is what you are telegraphing to the world that you're okay with representing. These are images from the most violent and radical fringes of the right wing and when you refuse to denounce what they've done, that's the same as giving them a pass. When you excuse their actions, you empower them to try again. So think about that. Think about what your silence in the face of political violence is enabling. Let's go back to where we started and may God bless and watch over the memory of Officer Brian Sicknick and his family, and may God bless our nation at this time.

I did not know when we were here last Wednesday at one o'clock when I said – and by the way, as we sit here, our Republic is in the balance. Please say a prayer for our country. I think you can look that up on the tape. I was not aware of what was about to happen. But that's indeed what did happen. So keep our country, keep Brian Sicknick's memory in your prayers.

Okay, switch gears. As I noted at the top, we're joined by the woman to my left, the Acting Commissioner of Education, Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan. Today I'm signing an Executive Order waiving the graduation assessment test requirement for all current high school senior who has satisfied all other statutory graduation requirements. The Executive Order removes student growth objectives as a component of formal educator evaluations for the 2020-2021 school year, and it will extend the time in which certified teachers, or those in the process of becoming certified teachers can serve as substitute teachers during the public health emergency.

Each of these steps is being taken because given the unique challenges our students and educators are facing, we simply have to all reach the conclusion that this is not, as we've said from moment one, this is not a normal or regular school year. We have to be more flexible and more understanding. Given the limited availability of opportunities to meet the state's graduation proficiency test requirements, this order waives the requirement for the class of 2021 and ensures that they are still able to graduate as expected, so long as all credit curriculum standards and attendance benchmarks are met.

In the same vein, we cannot adequately evaluate educator performance based on student growth objectives when remote learning has thrown so much uncertainty into the mix. We know our educators have all gone above and beyond this year, whether in an in-person or hybrid classroom, or entirely online. Instead this year, we are asking school leaders and departmental supervisors to evaluate educators solely based on teacher practice. While student growth objectives should remain a tool for assessing other aspects of professional development, and assessing student progress, they should not impact our educators annual evaluations, given this unprecedented year, and finally allowing substitute teachers who are either in the process of obtaining their certifications, or who will hold their teaching certifications but are employed as substitutes in an area outside of their credentials to remain in the classroom for an extended period of time as necessary to ensure proper class supervision and continuity of instruction.

With all that the pandemic has thrown in our school districts, they deserve the added flexibility to ensure that students are in capable hands whenever substitutes are necessary. Again, I will ask Angelica to speak to these steps that we are taking today, and I thank all the stakeholders from our educational communities, notably the New Jersey Education Association, for working with us on these steps. Few things are as important as ensuring continued high quality education for our children throughout this pandemic. Remember, we are the public education state. To not make these sensible adjustments, given the current situation, would be a failure to properly serve our students, our educators, and the best interests of our education communities.

With that said, let's turn our attention to the latest numbers. First, today we are launching a new dashboard on the [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov) information hub, which will report our vaccination numbers. We will update this dashboard each day with the latest numbers as of 9:30 a.m. reporting time. The dashboard will show the numbers of vaccinations administered across each county, among other available data. As we have more information we can break out, we'll add it to the dashboard. I thank Judy and the Department of Health Healthcare Quality and Informatics team. Especially I want to give a shout out, Judy, to Manas Mustapha and David Powell from the DOH digital communication side for getting this new dashboard up and running. Well done.

So if you go to [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov) now, you will see that we have administered a total of 214,433 vaccinations. That includes 199,293 first-dose shots, which also includes Colonel Pat Callahan, while 14,984 folks have now received their follow-up second doses.

We are also announcing 5,042 more positive PCR tests today, as well as another 540. Again, we use the word presumed positive antigen rapid tests for a consolidated cumulative total of 590,165 which breaks down to 532,959 PCR tests and 57,206 antigen tests.

The positivity rate for all of the 49,724 PCR tests recorded last Thursday, January 7th was 11.32%. The statewide rate of transmission for today, as we predicted Judy, a week or so ago, is 1.09. Let's stop here for a moment. The transmission rate is once again above the benchmark of one, meaning an increasing spread of this virus. Now if we look at our calendars, we note that it is January 11th. We had anticipated, as I said, an increase in positive tests coming out of the holidays and it is safe to say that we are now experiencing that increase. This is likely from indoor gatherings where neither social distancing nor wearing a face mask were adhered to.

This is what we were afraid of: people letting their guard down over Christmas and New Year's and spreading the virus among their families and friends. For the next upcoming days, we're probably going to see the impact of this now.

Now moving on to our hospitals. The recent increase in positive tests has not yet – and I say not yet with fingers crossed, is that fair to say? – led to a spike in hospitalizations and we certainly hope it remains the case. As of last night, there were 3,653 total patients being treated in our hospitals. 3,402 of them were known COVID, 251 were persons under investigation awaiting tests.

Before we move on, just repeat the past week of where we are in total hospitalizations, because as we've said many times, this is the number that we cannot allow to overrun us. So to seven days ago, 3,633, 3,702, 3,744, 3,711, 3,669, 3,638, 3,589, 3,653. It is bouncing in a range and it's been bouncing in that range, plus or minus with a couple of anomalies for at least a month. We just have to hope it stays in that range or starts going south. That's what we need.

Of these patients, 649 of them were in intensive care, and there were 438 ventilators in use. Throughout the day yesterday, 347 live patients were discharged, 377 new COVID positive patients were admitted. Again, at the risk of comparing apples to oranges, 43 not yet confirmed deaths were reported in our hospitals.

We are announcing, with a heavy heart, an additional 51 confirmed COVID-related deaths today, bringing the cumulative total of confirmed deaths to 17,873. Another 2,059 deaths remained listed as probable. Let's now remember, if we can, three of those who we have recently lost. We begin today with this gentleman, Keith Wong. Keith was 91 and while he had most recently called Philadelphia home, as I noted before, once you're a New Jerseyan you're always a New Jerseyan, and Keith called both Bloomfield and Milltown home for more than half a century. Keith was born in Hong Kong and came to the United States 67 years ago. He was a biochemist by training and trade, and also held an MBA from Monmouth College and worked for some of the legendary companies in the sciences who called New Jersey home, Schering, ER Squibb and Carter Wallace. He loved classical music and

opera, taking in as many live performances as he could. He was an avid tennis player, and the organizer of the Chinese American Cultural Association's tennis club. Keith was also an avid photographer. When his son Ed, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last week, participated in the Boy Scouts as a youth, Keith was right there alongside him as the Assistant Scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 33.

Keith now leaves Ed and his daughter-in-law, Dr. Kathleen King, and his daughter Amy. He's also survived by his grandchildren, Keith's son and daughter Keith and Sarah. He also leaves his sister Rebecca, who lives in Auckland, New Zealand. Keith is now reunited with his late wife, Mao Yun, who passed away just six months ago. We thank Keith for being a part of our New Jersey family for so long, and may God bless and watch over him and may he be remembered fondly by all.

Next we honor the life of Richard Stype. Richard was 79 years old and dedicated more than 50 years of service to the United States Postal Service at the post office in his hometown of Robbinsville, nearby here in Mercer County. He spent so much time there that his wife Emma, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last week, joked that the post office was his second home. Richard leaves behind Emma and his grandson Brian. He also leaves his sister, Carol. And of course, he leaves behind his family at the Robbinsville Post Office. We know everyone will remember him with warm hearts and smiles that will once again come across faces when he comes to mind. May God bless you, Richard, and thank you for your many years of service.

And finally, for this Monday, we remember Michael Meany, who was a lifelong resident of Morristown in Burlington County. Mike was 81 years old when he passed due to complications from COVID three weeks ago today. He was just nine days shy of his 82nd birthday. Mike was an avid ham radio operator of W2OF, and was active in multiple radio clubs for many years. His interest in radio grew from his service in the United States Navy, which he joined following his graduation from Morristown High School. Following his discharge, he began working for RCA Global Engineering, a job that took him to an array of interesting places, including the shores of Thule and Greenland. He also served with the New Jersey State Marine Police. RCA Global Engineering was one of the contractors working with NASA on air-to-ground communications throughout the 1960s. And while aboard the USNS Coastal Sentry, Mike was involved with ensuring communications with Mission Control during the first moon landing.

Back home in New Jersey, along with his ham radio passion, Mike was an avid boater and was an avid volunteer aboard the Battleship New Jersey. He now leaves behind his wife Sandra after 57 years of marriage. He also leaves behind his son Michael and daughter Megan and their significant others, along with three grandchildren, Sophia, Gabriella and Genevieve. He's also survived by his sister, Catherine. I had the honor of speaking with his wife Sandra and son Michael last week. What a guy. What a tremendous piece of human history to have played a role in. For that, for a lifetime spent in New Jersey with thanks for his service to our nation, we honor Michael and may God bless and watch over him.

Three more distinctly Jersey lives all lost to this second brutal wave of COVID-19. For them and for the families they leave behind, we must find it within us to keep up with the practices that have become our routine for the past 10 months: social distancing, wearing our face masks, washing our hands frequently, using common sense. We're not done with this virus yet, and it's not done with us. Even with 214,433 vaccinations already logged and counting, we have a long way to go. But we will get there. Let's just do all that we can to make sure that we all get there together.

Finally, as we also do every day, let's put a spotlight on another of our small business leaders who's helping our economy stay strong for the future. And when I say 'stay strong' today, I mean that literally. This is Mike Piercy, and he runs The Lab, an athlete training center in Fairfield. Mike is a former professional baseball player, multi-award-winning personal trainer and author, and his team helps budding athletes and regular folks alike achieve their fitness goals.

When the pandemic hit and forced Mike to scale back The Lab, he worked through the Tara Dowdell Group through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's application process and was able to receive grants that helped him cover expenses. The Tara Dowdell Group has done really good work, by the way, particularly for minority-owned small businesses and the engagement they have had with the Economic Development Authority.

We've spoken many times about the importance of sports for not just physical health but mental health through the pandemic. I had the opportunity to chat with Mike last week and Pat, you'll be happy to know, I told him I was not going to mess with him. And he's doing all that he can to keep our residents fit and focused for the days ahead. Check them out at [thelabsports.com](http://thelabsports.com).

I think that's a good place for us to leave it today. But before I close, a program note that at one o'clock tomorrow, at 1:00 p.m., we will stream my State of the State Address via our social media channels. The past year brought us many, many challenges that we know, but we have also had tremendous opportunities that lay right before us in 2021. We're ready for this new day and I encourage you to join me tomorrow as we reach for that day together.

Now, it is my great pleasure to introduce the woman to my left, the Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education, please help me welcome Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan.

**Acting Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan:** Thank you, Governor Murphy for the opportunity to participate in today's press conference. When the administration announced the reopening of New Jersey schools to in-person instruction last August, we acknowledged that the 2020-2021 school year would look different than any other in New Jersey's history. The health and safety standards required to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff necessitated a complete reimagining of school schedules, operations and instruction and support delivery models. I must once again commend our educators who have done yeoman's work, upholding New Jersey's high quality education system against those unprecedented stressors.

One of my most important priorities to support students and educators in that work has been to extend compassion and flexibility in how our state uses student and educator performance data, and how schools utilize their staffing resources. While maintaining the rigor and quality of our accountability systems must remain our North Star, it is undeniable that implementing brand new instructional models has forced changes in how to effectively use performance data.

It is also undeniable that the pandemic has forced our teachers and administrators to take on new roles and confront new challenges to meet a district's educational and operational needs. That is why I'm so proud to join the Governor today as he announces the signing of Executive Order 212. The flexibility granted by this order represents a meaningful and significant step in further adapting our education system to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Specifically, Executive Order 212 is designed to address three challenges: Current seniors are in their second year, marked by varied access to the standardized assessments traditionally required for high school graduation; new learning models hinder the effective use of student growth objectives as measures of educator effectiveness; and substitute teachers have served as a critical resource for schools and district staff operating at maximum capacity.

To that end, the order does three things. First, it waives the state graduation assessment requirement for current seniors who have met all their other graduation requirements. Second, it eliminates the use of student growth objectives in educators' summative evaluation scores for this school year, while maintaining schools' systems and procedures for developing and measuring students growth and progress. And third, it expands the maximum length of time that certain substitute teachers may serve in the same teaching position in a single district. The expanded time limits will be in place for the remainder of the public health emergency.

All three of these actions are the result of sustained engagement with stakeholders and practitioners whose voices remain critical components of our decision making. These voices keep the New Jersey Department of Education abreast of our state's ever-evolving teaching and learning conditions. I would like to thank the associations, teachers, administrators, legislators, and other stakeholders whose voices and advocacy made known the need for

this Executive Order. Our collaborative work will help ensure that schools and districts have the flexibilities necessary to better address students and educators instructional and support needs while maintaining stability and continuity in classroom instruction. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Angelica, and thanks for your leadership. Great to have you on the team. Blessings. With that, please help me welcome to the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Well, it was an exciting morning as the Governor and I marked the opening of the second mega vaccination site in the state at the Rowan College of South Jersey. The site will ramp up as the supply of vaccine increases, and ultimately we'll be able to vaccinate more than 2,000 individuals a day. We cannot thank the Gloucester County officials, Rowan College, the New Jersey State Police and the National Guard enough for standing up that site. Putting together a large scale vaccination site is a massive undertaking that requires immense collaboration and many hours of hard work.

It was great to see vaccinations underway at another mega site. With every vaccination given we come closer to the light at the end of the tunnel where we can move beyond this epidemic. We are on our way to a better future.

I do want to remind everyone, however, that because the demand for vaccine is currently greater than the supply, we are vaccinating only healthcare workers in the 1A category and sworn law enforcement and fire personnel from the 1B category, as well as residents and staff of the state's high risk congregate settings. We are trusting the integrity of all of you to do the right thing in this regard and not, quote-unquote, jump the line. We know everyone is anxious but we're asking for your patience as we await a larger supply of the vaccine. We currently do not require documentation to prove eligibility, just you, just your most trustful part of you.

We are excited that more than 1 million individuals have preregistered for vaccination and we don't want to discourage anyone but right now, we have a situation where the demand is much greater than the supply. Therefore the focus will be those at highest risk of morbidity and mortality, and those in police and fire who have a high risk of exposure, and are essential to protect public health and safety and respond to 911 calls. We wish we had enough for everyone. But again, demand at this time is greater than the supply.

For individuals who want to preregister for vaccine, they can visit [COVIDvaccine.nj.gov](https://COVIDvaccine.nj.gov). As I told you, over a million New Jerseyans have taken advantage of free registration, so that they will be called up when their time comes and vaccine is available.

As the Governor shared, we're launching our dashboard today. As of 11:00 a.m. 214,433 doses have been administered. The dashboard, which will be updated daily, will include a breakdown of administrations by county and by gender and race and ethnicity.

Moving on to my daily report, again, as the Governor shared, our hospitals report 3,653 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and PUIs, that was last evening and that number is staying pretty stable between, 3,500 and 3,700 hospitalizations. There are 649 individuals in critical care; 67% of them are on ventilators.

Since our last briefing on the 6th, there have been two new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are a total of 75 cases in our state.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 55.2%, Black 17.1%, Hispanic 19.5%, Asian 5.2% and other 2.9%.

At the state veteran homes, sadly there has been one additional death at the Vineland home. The individual was in hospice, and we are awaiting the confirmatory death certificate. At the state psychiatric hospitals, there have been seven new cases among our residents since our last briefing; two at Ancora, four at Anne Klein and one at Trenton Psych.

The statewide positivity as of January 7th is 11.32%. The Northern part of the state 10.14, Central 11.69, and the Southern part of the state 14.15. That concludes my daily report. Stay safe, continue to mask up, socially distance, wash your hands frequently. If you're sick, stay home, call your doctor and get tested. For each other and for us all, please take the call and remember to download COVID Alert NJ App. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you, and thank you for the update as always and for your leadership. I will tell you, going on the road and seeing these sites as they're set up, the pictures are good but being there, just seeing the energy, the activity, the service, many folks volunteering, I might add, it's really impressive. We get the feds to get us more of the doses to put through the system, we've got the infrastructure in place. I'm completely confident in that. Thank you for your leadership on that and so much else.

Pat, tell us how did the vaccination feel? Where'd you get it, by the way, and compliance? I know there's been a lot of ABC activity since we were last here, right?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Yes, sir. Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon. I received the Moderna vaccine at Morristown Medical Center and the staff couldn't have been any more accommodating and I'm honored to be a part of that and I hope folks seeing me get it instills public trust in the vaccine. I will be back there in about four weeks.

With regard to compliance since we last met, Paterson Police report the owner of Bison Cafe was cited, as was Did you mean: Bison Cafe was cited, as was Mazaj Lebanese Cuisine. Also, a little bit of a lag in reporting, they also reported that they attended a large New Year's Eve party that they found in a warehouse where there was approximately 60 people. The promoter of that event was cited. And to your point with regard to ABC, on Friday night, ABC conducted 66 inspections in both Bergen and Hudson County and cited 12 different establishments. On Saturday, ABC did 16 Compliance Inspections and cited three establishments in Essex, Gov. That's all I have.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, sir. Great being with you this morning and in Morris last weekend. I thought Dr. Palmer, the first speaker today, an African American health professional in Gloucester County, made a really good point about the notion of, particularly for communities of color, particularly with the Tuskegee and other chapters in our history, to be able to stand up there as a role model and say this thing is safe, it works. We can all partake.

With that, again, we will be with you virtually tomorrow. Again, we have a White House call, at least at the moment, scheduled at two o'clock.

I want a point of personal privilege to give a shout out to our former colleague Justin Doose, who's just been announced as joining President-Elect Biden's Council Office in a very senior position. Justin's a great guy, incredibly talented, is richly deserving of that. And again, unless you hear otherwise, from us, we'll be back together live here at one o'clock on Wednesday. With that, Dustin, we'll start with you if that's okay.

#### Q&A Session

**Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record:** Good afternoon. Are you aware of a planned armed protest planned in Trenton on Sunday? If so, what security measures is the state taking and is it doing anything to add more protection at the State House or elsewhere? What role, if any, will the National Guard play? Has anyone from New Jersey been arrested in connection with last week's storming of the Capitol?

On vaccines, of the million people registered on the site, do you have a rough breakdown of what phases they fall in? Is New Jersey considering phasing in those over 75 like New York did this week? If so, when? And if not, why not?

And the last question, with no real holidays coming and gather over the next three months, do you think that should help bring down the cases and spread? And with that apparent holiday spike beginning, what do you expect to see in terms of hospitalizations and deaths for the next couple of weeks? Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'll jump in on some of these and then ask either Pat, Jared or Judy, depending on what the topic is, to come in. We're very much aware of the disgust protests on January 17th and I think on January 20th as well, but more likely on the 20th in the Nation's Capital. Pat and Jared will, I think forgive me and agree that we're not going to get into much detail on this. But needless to say, we're taking nothing for granted. Do you want to add anything to that, Jared, or are you good?

**Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples:** I think that hits it. We're putting all the resources available to make sure that violence doesn't happen in Jersey.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I do not know if anyone has been arrested from New Jersey from the Capitol from last week. Are you aware Pat, Jared, Parimal?

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** Not at this time.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Not that we're aware of. That doesn't mean it hasn't happened. And then Judy, these largely will go back over to your direction. Of the 1 million-plus folks who have preregistered, I'm not aware of what groups they're in but perhaps you are, although that that is known because you have to self-identify as to who you are. I don't know about the 75-plus Dustin, but we will clearly, as we mentioned last week when we opened up police and fire, this is going to be a series of overlapping waves and if we feel like we've got confidence in the supplies coming out of the feds, we will not let any grass grow but nothing yet to report on that.

And I would think the lack of holidays is a positive data point. The weather, unfortunately, being cold in the middle of January is a negative data point, without question, and people letting their guard down doesn't help us but I do think that largely there are some holidays. We've got Martin Luther King Day, for instance, a week from today. But we don't have any holidays in the next few weeks that are like Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve. I would think that is a positive data point. But Judy, anything you want to add on especially the million folks who have signed up and/or your and Tina's views on the holidays?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We have the breakdown, Dustin, but I don't have it with me, but I'll make sure you get it, and it's self-identification. I just don't have it with me.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And would you agree that, Tina, fewer holidays is a good thing, right?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Well, ensuring that we keep our guard up is probably the best safeguard, as well as getting the vaccination rates up. What we can say based on what we're seeing with our epi curve data right now, like disease over time, is that yes, we did have a small peak at the end of November, beginning of December, and then kind of, you know, started to see the cases trend down a little bit. And then we saw a little bit of a bump roughly the week after Christmas. So I think we still have to continue to watch and monitor but hopefully with the ongoing vigilance on top of less holidays and opportunities for gathering, we'll continue to see this trend toward less cases.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Tina, your view, if I may ask you now that you're on center stage, positivity rate continues to be double digit, rate of transmission, as we predicted has crept up again, you know, many thousands of positives a day, but the hospitalization numbers have stayed in that range. Any insight on that? Any thoughts?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** You know, right now, as we have repeatedly said over time, that hospitalizations and deaths are lagging indicators. Typically, if you see increases in cases, unfortunately, one would potentially predict that there might be more deaths that follow in subsequent weeks. But that said, given that the trend in cases is somewhat plateauing a little bit that we would hope that the hospitalizations continued to stay kind of steady at this point.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Boy, let's hope so. And again, for folks, again remember that today we're at 3,653, the peak was 8,270. But as Judy reminds me, that was also at a time when we had no elective surgeries in the state. That's a lever we have not pulled. I hope we don't have to pull it but that's a lever that still is available for us. Thank you for that. Alex, I'll go to you and then we'll come down to Matt.

**Alex Napoliello, NJ.com:** Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon.

**Alex Napoliello, NJ.com:** First question for you. Do you approve of Twitter's ban of President Trump's account? German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called it problematic. Why should President Trump be banned when leaders like Xi Jinping are still allowed free access on Twitter?

I'd like to ask you a question about January 17th Some progressives might want to counter protest, whatever is going to happen here? Are you going to implore your supporters to stay home and not get involved with these folks who are going to be at the State House, potentially, on Sunday?

For Colonel Callahan, have you received any evidence or indications that any current or former members of the state police or law enforcement in New Jersey were in the crowd in the Capitol, or potentially among the insurrectionists? Have you heard anything about that?

Lastly, I want to ask about the preparations for the 17th Obviously, you say you're ready, some barricades are up, but twice in the last year during a riot downtown on May 31st and when there's a peaceful crowd of anti-vaccine advocates at the State House, they were peaceful but they were jamming up the works inside, law enforcement has lost control or come close to losing control of parts of Trenton. How can you and others guarantee that that same thing won't happen on Sunday?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So I'll start Pat, and you're welcome to weigh in, and Jarod may want to weigh in as well. Listen, I've run out of things to say about President Trump. I've been asked if you were in the House, would you vote to impeach him? Yes, I would. If I were in the Senate, I would vote to convict him. And if I were in his Cabinet, I would join in the 25th Amendment afoot, even with only what is I guess nine days to go.

I'm normally a big freedom of speech guy but I think when you're inciting insurrection and you're the President of the United States, I think it's a bridge too far, to be honest with you. I've got a lot of regard for Angela Merkel, but I have to say that's where I come out. By the way, that's why I always stumble over your name, I have to say Angelica, because I am used to saying her name in the German pronunciation.

I'm going to say the following and I'm going to ask my colleagues to weigh in. I would ask you on Sunday, January 17th even if your heart is 1,000% in the right place, stay home. Stay home. There's just no need to get in the mix. Pat, you're welcome to answer whether or not there's any members of law enforcement. I'm not aware of any but that's not to say there weren't. And by the way, if you're aware of someone I would like to know. I assume you meant at the Capitol last week.

And I don't want you to think, and Pat again, you should weigh in or Jared – I don't want you to think to say that when I say things like all steps are being taken, that does not mean that we've got our feet up thinking we've got this all in the bank. We take all this very, very seriously. We do not want to under prepare for this in any way, shape or form. But with that, Pat, anything on any of those?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor, I do not know of any current or former state troopers that were involved in that in any way, shape or form, Alex. It's not come to my attention. If it does, I will certainly let you know. And with regard to Sunday, we often say as far as a guarantee goes, I'm not sure I could do that. But we need to bat 1,000 every day, and to the Governor's point, we will be prepared and we trust that those if they do show up, that they do it in a peaceful manner. That's our request, and Director Maples and I are in lockstep on that and trust that if people do show up to the State House, that they go home safely at the end of it.

**Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples:** One thing to add that's important to this conversation. That is we also need the public to report to us if there's suspicious activity, if there's planned violence, if people are saying things that don't seem right, surveillance, etc., please take advantage of our hotline which is 1-866-4SAFENJ, or email tips at NJOHSP.gov. But we need the community, we need the public to report to us and we deal with it in a way that's respectful of everyone's rights, but also ensures that everyone's rights are protected as well on the other side, and no violence occurs.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Just to prove that people are watching, my friend Luis Delado just reached out and said don't forget Super Bowl Sunday and don't let your hair down on Super Bowl Sunday. Now that has to be in February but that's a very good point. And as Judy and I just noted, our Head of Technology, Chris Rein, who our family occasionally makes the mistake and call him Chris Pine, but of the over 1 million folks who have registered, here it goes, 7% are in 1A, 31% are 1B, 43% are 1C, and 20% are in Phase 2. That adds to 101%, but I think that's due to rounding. Thank you for that. Matt, good afternoon.

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Good afternoon, Governor. Commissioner, I apologize if this is kind of what you were just answering, but does the state have a breakdown of exactly how many people are in that 1B group, such as how many firefighters, how many people over 75, etc.?

On your comments earlier, do you have any reports of people trying to, quote, jump the line? And lastly for the Commissioner, has the UK strain been found anywhere in New Jersey yet or identified?

Governor will standardized testing be cancelled this year and what do you think about the fact that students in Newark will go an entire year without stepping foot in a classroom? Does delaying opening until April seem premature to you?

And on legal weed, after the deal with lawmakers fell apart on the cleanup bill Friday, will you veto legislation on decriminalization bills on your desk, or legalization and decriminalization bills on your desk? Are you still considering them?

And Governor lastly, the FBI just issued a bulletin banning armed protests at all 50 state capitols from January 16th through the 20th, so I know that we've been asking about specific instances here but I'd like to get your reaction on what the FBI did, and maybe just sort of a state of mind, here and across the country.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Matt. Judy, do you want to jump in on the first couple of questions, and I'll come in behind you? Angelica, you should maybe weigh in on that.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, we do. I don't have it with me. We do have a breakdown of the number of individuals in each category, including the specific categories within the phases. We do know 650,000 healthcare workers. We do know there's about 50,000 police and fire. We also know that essential workers together is 2.7 million. It covers an awful big territory.

In terms of jumping the line, people are showing up and registering at some sites and are not within those categories. What we ask these sites to do is take their information, call them back, if at the end of the day no one else is there and there's a possibility of wastage, call them back and give it to them. Again, we're trusting that people will do the right thing here. We know it's difficult. I get many, many emails a day, people really begging to get the vaccine and I don't blame them. But we just have to try to do it in an orderly fashion, so that we avoid what is going on in some other states; long lines of people waiting overnight in the cold to get vaccinated. We just don't want that to happen. Everybody will get vaccinated, we will have enough. It's just a matter of time.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And by the way, it's matter of time and it's not a matter of years is what the good news is. We're talking about weeks and months here. We've heard anecdotal evidence but there's no rampant systemic jumping of the line, at least that we're aware.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** It's pretty controlled, I have to say. People are being really pretty good about it. You can tell by the percentages of people that are self-identifying on the site. They're not all saying that they're 1A.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Just under two-thirds of the group are either 1C or in Phase 2, to their credit. Secondly, when people make the case to me, I haven't heard one case that was so-called illegitimate. I mean, no one is wrong about this. And then thirdly, I think there's some honest mistakes. We had this a couple weeks ago. I'm a member of a board of trustees of a hospital. It turns out that was an honest mistake.

Angelica, do you want to address first of all, any school district, particularly one that is in an underserved community that's remote for a long period of time, there's no joy associated with that, but folks who are close to the ground in those districts are up against the facts much more close to it than we are. We have to respect those decisions. I would hope that if we get good news after January 20th, and all of a sudden the vaccine dosages that come to New Jersey are unleashed and go up not just gradually or somewhat but to a quantum different level and we're able to get this much more aggressively with fed support, that folks would revisit decisions that they're making. Any comments on that, Angelica, as well as on standardized testing?

**Acting Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan:** I'd like to speak to the standardized testing question. We are planning to continue with our scheduled administration this spring as our federal guidelines mandate that we administer the New Jersey student learning assessment. If there is a change with the incoming administration, we will weigh all of our options at that time.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's a federal call, right? And the Trump administration waived it last year. At the moment it is not waived and so to your point, we continue apace until we are told otherwise by the Feds.

Matt on legal weed, I would be in the following, I was asked this earlier. I'm still optimistic we're going to figure something out. I would just reiterate, there are two principles here that had been present from the beginning and these haven't changed. I think these are principles that are broadly shared, which is why I'm optimistic. Number one, the last thing we need is more young kids getting tangled up in the criminal justice system. None of us want that, period.

Secondly, I'd say with equal passion, this was never about legalizing marijuana for our kids. That was never what this was about. That's not what the voters voted on in the referendum. That's not what we've felt strongly and passionately about from moment one. We've somehow got to thread a needle that gets both of those accomplished.

I had not seen the FBI pronouncement, maybe Jared or Pat can talk about it. I'm sure as heck not surprised. This is banning any armed protests between January 16th and January 20th. It makes complete sense to me. I don't know if anyone wants to --

**Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples:** Yeah, I think there's a lot of variables at play and you'll see additional announcements that will restrict, I think, a lot of potential violence on the Capitol that has clearly been talked about quite a bit in bulletins, etc. I don't want to comment specifically on the FBI guidance, I defer to the FBI for that. But certainly all measures are being taken to try to tamp down the violence before it starts.

Amen. Again. And again, I would just reiterate, it makes complete sense. The UK strain, we're assuming that it's in our midst. But Tina, do you want to comment on that?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Right now we have not identified the variant B117 which was first identified in the UK. But, you know, we do know that right now that there are over 60 cases in at least eight states, including our neighbors New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania so it would not be surprising that eventually this variant is identified here as well.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** In fact, I'm the least qualified person up here to say this. I'd go one step further. We're assuming it's here. Right. Is that fair to say, Tina?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, and the most important thing, the takeaway is that the management, the public health management doesn't change. If anything, it just kind of reinforces the need that we have to continue to social distance, masks, stay home when you're sick, wash your hands, get vaccinated.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And again, let's remember unless the science has changed over the weekend, and I don't think it has, it's a strain that is more easily transmissible, but not necessarily more lethal.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** At this time, the evidence suggests that there isn't more severe disease associated with this variant, but because it's more transmissible that's why we have to make sure that we don't lose our guard.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Basically it's the same stuff we preach, but doubling down with intensity. You're good on the camera, sir. Okay, sir, how are you?

**Reporter:** For the Governor and Jared Maples, after last week's breach of the Capitol, do you think there is sufficient security at the State House and surrounding the Governor? Given some of the predicted protesters may try storming State Capitols, are there any plans to boost security?

New York is opening to two 24/7 vaccination sites. Are there any plans for that here? There have been several reports in New York of vaccine doses being thrown out? Are you aware of any doses being thrown out in New Jersey? Obviously, these medical questions go to the appropriate professionals. And do you believe districts should require teachers to get the COVID-19 vaccine? And if so, would you want to go a step further and want that to be required legislatively?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I think we've answered your first two questions. We obviously are taking the security risks deadly seriously, and will continue to do so and we will take all the precautions that we think are necessary. I don't think there's anything more on those two questions that I can add to that.

New York going to 24 hours, I had not seen that. You know, we're leaving all of our options open, particularly if we get the supply that we need. For instance, we were in Gloucester, as we mentioned earlier at Rowan College, a fabulous campus, by the way. They have a capacity far exceeding the federal doses that have come up to support their infrastructure. Just expanding the hours, in the absence of more supply, doesn't necessarily magically get you there. This was mentioned a few minutes ago by Judy. We also don't want to go into a no appointments mindset which we're seeing the price that is paid in Florida where people are literally camped out all night, in the cold, waiting, waiting, waiting and then getting there and supplies running out. I'll let Judy throw anything on top of that.

Throwing doses out, we know that's been a discussion point in New York. Judy, anything on that? And Angelica, I would say this. I think we believe that educators will come of their own free will, assuming that they're next up, whenever they're up to bat, they'll come of their own free will to get vaccinated. We're not seeing a whole lot of pushback here in any corners, including among our great educators. Any comments, Judy, especially this question about throwing doses out?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We keep track of end-of-day dose wastage. I don't have the numbers in front of me. It's minimal in connection to the number of doses out there, but we do keep track of that. That's why I've advised all the sites to call people back in to get doses if they show up and they're not within the appropriate category. We do not want any wastage. But you know, inevitably there will be some.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And please God, not much. And so far the evidence is there is not much. And again, folks, keep doing the right things in terms of being honest and the honor system, which largely is working really well right now. Thank you, Dave, please take us out.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Thanks, Governor. I know you've made some points about you're taking very seriously the possibility of threats to the Capital of New Jersey on Sunday. There have also been threats we just heard to courthouses as well as administrative buildings in New Jersey. Could you guys comment on that? What words, Governor, can you offer residents of New Jersey who saw what happened in the Capitol, the attack that took place, were shocked and horrified and are nervous now that we're hearing about possible violence in New Jersey? Can you offer any assurances in this regard that this is not going to go crazy here?

There are, I think, Commissioner, you had mentioned that we're doing a sort of the honor system in terms of jumping the line. You know, we require people if they want to buy a beer to show identification; certainly for more serious things like trying to get a firearm, I mean, you need to have identification for all kinds of things. And people are, you know, even if you put your best foot forward, some people are sneaky and liars. Why not just simply require ID, for instance, for age or if somebody says they're of a particular occupation to show some kind of proof? You're advertising today the fact that you're not requiring this so again, I don't mean to suggest that most people are not honest. I'm sure they are, but some are not.

And finally, the group New Jersey Families for In-Person Learning may hold a planned protest on Wednesday. They feel that steps have not been taken in a strict enough manner to force schools to offer some kind of in-person instruction. Could you comment, perhaps Commissioner and Governor, in terms of is what has been done so far sufficient to really push schools to have some in-person instruction? Many of them were told, you know, by the Governor, everybody was told in August, you're going to have to come up with a plan if you're not going to offer some in-person instruction. And many schools, almost half of them still are all virtual. So what's our sense about this? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Dave. I'll start. I've never bought beer, so I'm not familiar with how that process works so I'll defer to Judy on that front. I don't think I'll comment and Jared, you're welcome to add to this. I don't think we want to get into much more detail on security other than we're taking this very, very seriously. And it isn't just one building or one community. And suffice it to say, any public building, any soft target as it were, is something that we're looking very seriously at it. I don't think you can give people assurances, because that would be I think, irresponsible on my part and our part by guaranteeing something when we're in unprecedented times.

I'll tell you what would really help. First of all, I think one thing is to stay home next Sunday, that would help, and probably the 20th but certainly next Sunday. I'm not begrudging New Jersey Families For In-Person Learning for doing what they want to do and we'll come back to that in a second. But I would just be careful with everybody protesting right now. And it's not to say you don't have a right to protest but please, everybody be safe. But what would really help are the folks who have enabled the President to stand up and say the right things right now, it would be really helpful. It would have been really helpful for Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley not to have proceeded with their challenging the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris last Wednesday. It would have been a really helpful sign for folks as some did, by the way, Lankford in Oklahoma, Ben Sasse in Nebraska, folks who have been on the side of the President who said, "You know what? This has gone too far." That would really help in the country and it would really help in New Jersey for those folks to stand up and say the right thing and mean it. And that to me would be on my ask list.

I would just say, and Judy should talk about how she purchases beer, and Angelica should talk about the in-person learning piece of this. But I got handed the numbers just before coming over, 351 districts are hybrid, so there's some form of in person and remote; 337 remote, 79 all in-person, 44 a combination of the above. I take the 351, the 79 and the 44 and add that together and know that there's at least some amount of in-person learning there. The hybrid went up a couple and the remote went down a couple which we were hoping for coming out of the post holidays. But again, as I said about a question earlier, the districts that are at the point of attack, we work with them. They know exactly what we're requiring of them. But we also have to give them the respect that they're close to the ground.

There's no question, no question, I'm saying in the presence of a professional, that the far richer educational experience is the in-person experience. But this isn't a normal school year, we have to do that safely and responsibly and we have to do it equitably, Angelica, anything you want to add?

**Acting Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan:** No, I think that the Governor actually captured what we've been working to do throughout this pandemic. As I stay in touch with associations and administrators, I hear from teachers, even students on occasion and having a child who was a high school senior, I'm living this firsthand, and he has not been in school this entire academic year thus far. While there are pain points, we do work to be responsive, to be flexible and to be compassionate. And so just know that we are taking this very seriously and we want to do everything that we can to support our local school districts.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And again, I don't want to misconstrue what I said earlier about the right to protest. Everyone deserves it. If they do it peacefully they have the right to protest, whether we agree or disagree. I would just say in this unusual moment in our country's history please be careful.

All kidding aside, Judy, requiring identifications, how old are you, age right now is not a metric in any of this, so let's remember that at the moment. It ultimately will be, but profession, what profession you're in etc.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, that would require certain delays in the registration process when you show up if we said where are you employed, prove that, you know, do you have an ID badge? You know, the culture of vaccines generally, hopefully will be a more positive experience than not, and we want it to be a positive experience because it will set the stage for future vaccinations. So, you know, I think we would rather it be a positive experience. People show integrity, show up, get vaccinated. This is not a situation where you if you don't show up now you will never get vaccinated. Everyone will get vaccinated that wants to get vaccinated. So far, we don't see any reason that further mandates on identification are necessary. It may be in the future but we just want a culture of positive vaccinations.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Mahen, I was going to suggest to you to what Judy just said, we go to these mega sites and the press show up but they typically are following us around and then doing a press availability afterwards. Mahen, I don't think it would be a bad idea at all, to Dave's question, to literally either at a mega site or do it here, this is exactly how it works. You show up in Room A, this is what you need to do at what time, etc. I think that's a good exercise for us. Judy, do you want to hit anything before I – apparently not let me just check here.

Okay, Pat, I'm going to do this in your honor, in fact. I've just opened my hermetically sealed bag here and put on my new NJ State Police – these are new, right? Brand new this week. So I am going to mask up on behalf of our troopers, the New Jersey State Police's 100th birthday this year so a particular honor. Judy and Tina, thank you as always. Angelica, great to have you with us. Pat, Jared, Parimal. Mahen, again, we will be virtual tomorrow, together at one o'clock on Wednesday. My guess is we'll have some insights, Judy, out of the White House call tomorrow, I would think at least for their last, that'll be I guess eight days to go as of tomorrow, what we can expect out of them.

Folks, keep doing what you're doing. You've been extraordinary. We're through the holidays. Keep doing the right things. Don't let your guard down. Better days are not too far from now. Thank you, everybody. God bless.

## Governor Phil Murphy

## Statewide

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