

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: April 8th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone. Honored to be joined by the woman to my right, who needs no introduction, Commissioner of Department of Health Judy Persichilli; to her right, State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan; and to my left, State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan. We have Jared Maples with us, who is the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. We have Deputy Counsel Parimal Garg here to answer any legal questions which may come up; Mahen Gunaratna, our Comms Director, and assembled other colleagues are with us today. Thank you for joining us.

Again, I think tomorrow, unless you hear otherwise, we're looking still at one o'clock, although there may be a VTC from the White House and if there is, we'll let you know and change that. Friday, we're going to try to go, Judy, earlier, right? Assuming we have the data, as early as 10:30, perhaps, in respect of Good Friday services. Or actually no services, but in an observation of Good Friday.

As we have, over the past couple of weeks, let me get right to the numbers first and then we're going to add a lot more detail over the next half an hour. Since yesterday's briefing we have received another 3,088 positive tests, pushing our statewide total to 47,437. Since yesterday, with a heavy heart, the heaviest of hearts, we are reporting another 275 lost souls, deaths in our New Jersey family. After verification of our previous reports, our statewide total of losses now stands at 1,504 precious, blessed lives. I believe, Judy, that's yesterday's total, sadly, the 275 minus three, I believe. Again, we've prepared you for the fact that we're going to need to revise these from time to time.

I want to remind everybody, I had a conversation now about a week or so ago with Dr. Tony Fauci, and he has said this publicly, he said it privately, and it bears repeating again. Even if the rate of our increase is lessening – which it's hard to argue that it hasn't over the past week – we have two realities that we cannot escape. One is, it is still increasing. So with all due respect to this notion that we've found some plateau, we're not on any plateau, and you're going to see based on some decisions we're taking today, we need to continue to be absolutely vigilant and if anything, tighten as opposed to loosen. I don't say that with any amount of joy. It brings me no joy to say that, but my job number one is the safety and security of the 9 million folks who call this state their home. Every decision we make based on data, science and facts suggests that we need to continue to stay vigilant; if anything, more vigilant.

The other observation is this paradox where you have a flattening, we think, the beginnings of a flattening of a curve of new positive cases, yet sadly, fatalities continuing to spike. That is the paradox that I discussed with Dr. Fauci and that's the paradox we've shared with you. Judy reminds me, sadly, the fatalities that we're announcing today are folks who were infected something like two or three weeks ago. So even though the curve may begin to look like this, it's still going up. I hate to say it, it's still going up. And secondly, while it may be flattening, beginning to flatten, the fatalities are going up and sadly, will continue to go up.

As we do every day, we mourn with the families and friends and coworkers and neighbors of those who we have lost. Our flags continue to fly at half-staff and will continue to fly at half-staff in solidarity with them, so that our whole state remains cognizant of this tremendous toll this pandemic is taking on our New Jersey family. Think about this: over 1,500 lost lives, and sadly, that number will continue to rise.

Here are just a few of the wonderful New Jerseyans we have recently lost. First up is Joe Hansen. There is Joe. For more than 20 years, he served the riders of NJ Transit as a conductor on the Raritan Valley Line. His son Brian followed him into the rail yards and is a mechanic for NJ Transit as well. This picture is of Joe with his grandchildren. He was just 62 years old when he passed. By the way, I'm 62, so that's a wake up for yours truly. His wife, Denise, and the entire family is in our thoughts and prayers. God bless Joe.

To call Jerry Lynch a Belmar icon still couldn't capture his essence. We lost him too, at age 91. Jerry was the founder of the Belmar St. Patrick's Day Parade. I had the honor of meeting Jerry. In his youth, he performed on Broadway. He had an incredible voice. In fact, he appeared with Ray Bolger for you Wizard of Oz fans. Dave, I'm looking at you. But then he settled at the shore and was the owner of Lynch's Hotel. He served on the Belmar Board of Education, was President of the Kiwanis Club, remained a loyal member of St. Rosa's Church and gave himself fully to his community. He leaves a large family headed by his wife Francis. He will be sorely missed and long remembered.

Richard E. Barber Sr., there's Richard, was a Senior Deacon at the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Franklin, Somerset County. Since his youth leading civil rights protests in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960, he had dedicated his life to the cause of social justice and community empowerment. He was a Past President of the NAACP of New Brunswick, a Deputy Executive Director of the National NAACP, and served as the Regional Administrator of the Small Business Administration under President Jimmy Carter. He founded numerous community-based organizations. He too is sorely missed and will not be forgotten. And I know my friend, Reverend and Pastor Buster Suarez is brokenhearted right now, with the passing of Mr. Richard Barber.

And again, let's repeat the point that Judy and I made yesterday. In honor and respect to Mr. Barber, we're only early stage in getting a full handle on the racial toll that this is taking, but the early data points are that we may be seeing a similar reality in New Jersey as we're seeing nationally and elsewhere, that communities of color are paying a higher price. Again, as we get the data and get more comfortable with it, we will be very clear with you in terms of how we see that headed.

Again, these are just three of the wonderful New Jerseyans we have said goodbye to. There are many, many more whose stories deserve to be told and celebrated and remembered. Each one was a precious, blessed member of our family. But now, what's our job? Our job is to continue honoring them by continuing all that we're currently doing to flatten the curve and to slow the spread of illness. We cannot let up.

Tonight, especially, is the first night of Passover; more on that in a moment. Traditionally, families and friends and entire congregations, indeed, would gather for the Seder. Some of Tammy's and my favorite memories, particularly with the Jewish community, and then with other faiths with us, not just in New Jersey, but in our prior life in the Federal Republic of Germany, some of those Seders were some of our favorite memories. But

stealing from the four questions, tonight is different from all other nights, as are all the nights of Passover this year. I cannot say this strongly enough. We cannot gather together. There cannot be large community Seders or gatherings, either by the way, indoors or outdoors. We will have to get creative to come together virtually so that we can gather together again someday soon in person.

Folks, let's remember one thing as a general matter, this is not specific to Passover, but it certainly includes Passover. It will include Easter, it will include Ramadan, it will include every minute of every day. This is a war that we are fighting on two fronts. I said this the other day. It's both Churchill's "never have so few done for so many" and at the same time, the symmetry of so many doing for so few.

On the many side, on what we can do, the 9 million of us, we have got to stay home and stay away from each other. It brings me no joy in saying that during Passover, Easter, Ramadan or any other moment, but that is the only way out of this. We have got to stay home.

And at the same time, the other front of the war is Judy and Christina and Pat and all the others who are aggressively and heroically building out and sustaining our healthcare capacity. And so you've got two lines: the lines of those infected, which will lead to the lines, Judy, of those hospitalized, and in turn to the lines who will require critical care and sadly, to those whose lives were lost. That's one line. The other line is our capacity: beds, healthcare workers, the heroes, ventilators, personal protective equipment, the right drugs that we need.

Our plea, our challenge, our mission is that both of those lines cross at a reasonable rate, at a reasonable date, at a level that we can sustain. Again, what we can do, the many of us, all 9 million of us, is to stay home. Stay away from each other. Flatten the curve aggressively. Don't let the warm weather or the holidays fool us. We are in the fight of our lives and we remain in the fight of our lives over here. And while we do that, we allow our healthcare professionals to build out the capacity, to get relief from that bullpen for our heroic healthcare workers. And, God willing, those two lines cross at a level and at a date that we can manage within our system. That is our collective challenge. Those are the two fronts of the war in which we find ourselves.

The story of Passover is a story of strength and perseverance and ultimately deliverance. So we must exhibit these traits today, throughout Passover, and every day until this emergency ends. And to our family members of the Jewish faith, Bless you. Chag sameach Pesach. To each of you, bless you. We wish you a happy Passover. We know it will be the most unusual one of your lives. May you all be safe and healthy. And our job is, while this one may be really unusual, is to stay home, stay away from each other so that next year we may be able to say in a big room like this or at a big table together, chag sameach Pesach.

And Easter, by the way, comes on Sunday, April 12. Ramadan comes less than two weeks later on April 23. This is not just Passover, this is those holidays as well. This is every minute of every day. As I noted yesterday, when the time comes that we can begin to put this emergency in the rearview mirror, please God, do not think that we're going to be able to -- again, please don't get upset about this -- but we cannot think that we're going to be able to get back to normal all at once. It is going to take time to reopen our state, and indeed our country, in a systematic and careful way to protect against a boomerang of coronavirus. If we open up too soon, I fear we are placing gasoline on the fire.

This is not a situation where when the lights go out you go to the basement and flip the main breaker, the whole house gets powered back up. We're going to have to go room by room, carefully and methodically to make sure we're doing it in a way that is smart and that it keeps us safe. So I ask you again for your patience, not just for the days and weeks ahead as we work together to flatten the curve and come down the other side. But for the weeks that will undoubtedly follow, as we carefully begin to get our state back open again.

And we will get there. Let me say that unequivocally. Assuming all 9 million of us, including yours truly and my colleagues, assuming we all do our job -- and we will -- we will get there. We'll come through this together as one extraordinary New Jersey family, stronger than ever before, not without casualty. We've already seen that, the blessed lives lost. Not without mistake, I'm sure, and not tomorrow or next week, as much as I'd love to see that.

A couple of announcements, if I may, on testing. The PNC Bank Art Center in Holmdel is open today. It began at 8:00 a.m. today, April 8, and it will go to its capacity of either 500 tests or 4:00 p.m. Tomorrow it will be closed but likewise, this is the on again, off again. Bergen Community College will be open tomorrow, April 9.

If you go on our covid19.nj.gov and you look for testing sites, you'll see according to Brady O'Connor, we now have at least 54 up and running around the state. That's both government sponsored by ourselves or counties, as well as private.

As was mentioned yesterday, and Pat gets a lot of credit here. California Governor Gavin Newsom has availed 100 ventilators to New Jersey. Those ventilators arrived last night and are currently being prepped by Colonel Callahan's team. I want to say, as I said last night in a television interview to Governor Newsom and the great state of California, New Jersey cannot thank you enough, and know too that we will repay this favor. We are all in this together and we will support our fellow Americans at every step of the way, just as they are supporting us in New Jersey. Thank you.

While I'm at, I want to give a shout out to Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi on their call today for an additional \$150 billion in direct financial assistance to states, to help us mitigate the impact of this emergency on our budgets. I was just on the phone a short few minutes ago on this very topic with Senator Bob Menendez. To be sure, we're going to need more than that, a lot more than that. And we will need flexibility to not only cover lost revenues, but to also meet unprecedented needs. But this is a good next step. And again, our state is probably like a lot of households right now, expenses that are challenged and rising, and income and revenues that are falling. The American people and our businesses rely upon states to deliver essential services to them. We need to come out of this emergency in a strong position to ensure our state's recovery and our national recovery.

Next up, switching gears, I'm signing three Executive Orders. First, a poorly kept secret: I am moving the date of our primary elections from Tuesday, June 2, to Tuesday, July 7. This is being done for two simple reasons. First, we want to preserve the possibility that improvements in the public health situation will allow for in-person voting, and delaying the primary by five weeks increases the likelihood of that. Two, if, failing that, we eventually have to make the move to a statewide all vote by mail election -- which has never happened before, by the way -- we must make sure our systems are able to handle that. That task becomes easier with an extra month of time. Our democracy cannot be a casualty of COVID-19. We want to ensure that every voter can vote without endangering their health or their safety. And I don't want a Wisconsin, and saw yesterday were folks had to pick between exercising their right to vote on the one hand, and protecting their own personal health.

The second order I am signing will further our aggressive efforts to enforce social distancing. This one, if you think that for some reason just because the curve is beginning to flatten that we're out of the woods, this Executive Order will disavow you of that. All non-essential construction across the state will cease indefinitely, effective 8:00 p.m. Friday. Exceptions to the shutdown include projects at our hospitals and schools, in our transportation and utility sector, the building of affordable housing, other individual housing sites that can adhere to strict limits on the number of workers on site at any given time, emergency repairs and work needed to safely secure a construction site, and other limited instances. This same Executive Order also aims to mitigate the instances we have seen of overcrowding at essential retail stores, and most notably in our supermarkets. All essential retail must indefinitely limit the number of customers in their stores to 50% of their approved capacity. And if we don't see adherence to this, you can assume, as we have had with other steps, that 50% will go down.

And they must do more than that. Customers and employees must wear face coverings. Stores must also provide special shopping hours for high-risk individuals, erect physical barriers between customers and cashiers and baggers where practicable, and regularly sanitized areas used by their employees, among other requirements. Things you've heard us preaching, Judy, for the past several weeks. This is codifying all of that. These restrictions that I have laid out must be followed throughout the state. No municipality or county may impose additional restrictions of their own on essential retail businesses. This is one set of rules for everyone in New Jersey.

Additionally, this Order will also put greater protections in place for the workers in our warehouses and in manufacturing. No one should be working where social distancing isn't being practiced to its fullest extent. Now again, I want to say something very clearly. We are not running out of food or other items, period. Our supply chain is feeling the stress, but it is holding strong. We are taking the step to protect both customers and essential workers. Ensuring social distancing may require you to change the times in which you go to the store, but that's a small price to pay to ensure the health of your community.

My third Executive Order will increase the weight limits on our interstate highways and toll roads from 40 tons to 46 ton for trucks carrying COVID relief supplies. We had this flexibility because of the Major Disaster Declaration we received from the federal government and we will keep our supply chain moving.

Other news. This morning Judy, Pat, myself, along with Senator Cory Booker, Major General Jeffrey Milhorn, Lieutenant Colonel David Park of the US Army Corps of Engineers, Major General John King of the Fifth Army, Adjutant General Jamaal Beal, and others toured the 500-bed field medical station being set up at the New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center in Edison. I want to also give a shout out to our brothers and sisters in labor who helped get that up and running so quickly. This is the largest of the three stations being stood up in our state. We express our thanks to the US Army Corps, the federal administration, our in-state hospital networks, State Police, Department of Health, and others for their partnership in getting these stations up and ready to serve patients. There we go, some pictures.

While these sites are preparing – again, this is a bigger one. It's similar, it looks very similar to the one that we toured in Secaucus, but twice as large. While these sites are preparing to go into service, I know Judy would want me to say this, we have a critical need for volunteers with direct medical experience. And specifically, the Department of Health's immediate need is for people with experience as a Chief Nursing Officer or Chief Medical Officer, physicians certainly, respiratory therapists. That I think is the top of our list, to help lead these field medical stations. I should note that these positions would be paid. We urge you to contact us through our volunteer portal at [covid19.nj.gov/volunteer](https://covid19.nj.gov/volunteer).

As we have stated before, in addition to the field medical stations, we have undertaken aggressive efforts alongside our hospitals to increase their bed capacities. So far, our health systems and independent acute care hospitals have already increased their potential bed capacity by approximately 60% and they continue to explore other creative solutions for expanding further. Judy stressed this earlier on a call today, the creativity being exercised by our hospital systems is truly outstanding, and by their extraordinary workforce.

A couple of examples. Over the past several weeks, Hunterdon Medical Center has increased its bed capacity from 178 to 366 beds, I believe my math says that's a 93% increase. Hackensack Meridian Health, I mentioned I was on the phone with their senior leadership on Monday, and its hospitals have more than tripled negative pressure beds from 278 to 869. At Hackensack University Medical Center, critical care capacity has gone from 48 to 191, and other areas of the hospital have been converted to create more than 70 non-critical care beds for COVID patients. We will continue, and this is all under Judy's guidance and leadership, to pursue every possible avenue to expand our capacity. And again, I tip my hat to the extraordinary healthcare systems in this state and the creativity that they are exhibiting.

Additionally, same church, different pew. Our online portal is now open for people with experience in a variety of technological areas, and for those who wish to join our team at this time, please head to [covid19.nj.gov/tech](https://covid19.nj.gov/tech). For all of you COBOL programmers in particular, now is your chance.

And we're also cognizant of the many reports of overcrowding on buses and other issues being reported by NJ Transit riders, and we mentioned this the other day, a direct link to NJ Transit's feedback form is now available on the [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov) page. Get there by searching NJ Transit. By the way, speaking of [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov), just to give you a couple of data points of how useful this is turning out to be for so many users so far, this is as of yesterday, over 2.5 million sessions, over 4.5 million page views, 8.66 million. On the Business Information Hub, again as of yesterday, users 429,000; sessions, 644,000; page views over 1.5 million; live chat conversations almost 14,000. And finally on the jobs portal, users 461,000; sessions, 599,000; page views, 1,000,002 plus; employers who have posted openings, 614 jobs that are posted. Folks, don't forget [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov), 49,018 jobs posted right now.

Switching gears again, I want to shout out a couple of our corporate citizens who continue to step up to help out. First, I want to thank PSE&G, who's advised that they'll be making an additional donation of 200,000 gloves for use by our public health and safety responders. We remain grateful to them, so to Ralph Izzo and team, thank you.

Second, I want to give a shout out to Wawa. They had heard about our need, with a heavy heart, for refrigerated trucks to help take the pressure off our morgues and funeral homes, in protecting the bodies of those loved ones we have lost. Yesterday Wawa sent a 53-foot refrigerated truck to Bergen County, which as

we know, has been so hard hit. The fact that we even have to prepare for the unthinkable is on one level extraordinary, but having a corporate citizen like Wawa ready to step in to help is invaluable.

I want to say, Judy is going to hit this in more detail. I want to just say that, we've said this, I think almost every day for the past couple of weeks. Long-term care facilities continue to be an area of high focus for us, and we didn't just get to this focus in the past couple of weeks. I remember coming back from a trip to Germany and Israel and going straight off the plane to Wanaque, to talk about the tragedy there. That was October of 2018. And from that, a law that I signed was the Outbreak Response Plan, which is the first of its kind in the history of our state. Judy will go through the broad elements of a state plan that is meant to take that outbreak response plan and add a lot more fuel to it. There was a directive, I know on March 6th that you put forward. We continue to focus laser-like on this.

This is a particular area of concern, not just in this outbreak, but based on that experience of a year-and-a-half ago, our concern then was preemptively of any outbreak. Our hearts go out to the folks who are losing loved ones everywhere, anywhere in the state, but in particular in long-term care facilities. I was just on with Bob Russo, my dear friend, he and Christina Montclair, his mom Florence passed on Monday night. I think she was about to celebrate her 101st birthday. They're not even sure necessarily it was COVID-19 that ended her life, but she was in one of these facilities and our hearts go out to everybody, not just the lives lost, but the folks who are trying to... loved ones and family and employees, by the way, and everyone associated with these facilities. And again, Judy will have more on that, not just today, but in the coming days.

Before I hand things over to you, may I refer to a couple of heroes in our midst, if that's okay. You all have been great sending us your stories and the stories of your communities by using the hashtag #NJThanksYou and we ask you to keep doing that. The spirit of community is what's going to get us through this. First, take a look at this picture. On the right, that's Xanilyn Red. She is an ICU nurse working the COVID floor at St. Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick. On the left is one of the respiratory therapists she's working alongside, who also happens to be her father, Valentine Red. So to the Red family, thank you for sharing Valentine and Xanilyn with us. We cannot be prouder and we hope they both stay safe as they do their work to keep their patients safe. I know that they're friends of our colleague Lauren Lalicon, so God bless you, Reds.

Next I want to give a big shout out to Raritan Valley Community College. The college's Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Programs, along with the Arts and Design Department and Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School have turned to producing 3D-printed face shields that are heading to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, New Brunswick and Somerset So to Advanced Manufacturing Program Coordinator Conrad Mercurius, and everyone involved, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

And finally, a shout out to the members of the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 2 in Clifton. Look at that group, God bless them. The veterans there pooled their donations and were able to provide gas gift cards to 100 emergency room healthcare workers at St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Paterson and St. Mary's General Hospital in Passaic. So to Commander Malvin Frias and his team, thank you for your service on our nation's frontlines in times of war, and thank you for stepping up to help the healthcare responders in this war. Again, folks, please continue to share your stories at that hashtag, #NJThanksYou.

So all that said, I just want to thank everyone for all you are doing to help us get ahead of this pandemic, and to stay ahead. It's neither easy nor fun, but social distancing is, whether we like it or not, the key to get us through this. Again, a particular shout out to the members of our Jewish community, our brothers and sisters. I wish you again a happy Passover, a blessed Passover and I ask you, not urge you, I ask you again, that tonight's Seder and any other gatherings must be small, with immediate family at most, at most, in your household only. No more than that. Please, it breaks my heart to say this but you cannot gather in any numbers. We want to make sure as I said earlier, that next Passover, everyone in your family and your friends can gather as you did last year, and in the years prior, and God willing in the years ahead.

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

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. As the Governor said today, we toured the second field medical station in Edison. These field medical stations will be vital to support our regional hospitals, and we need them for low acuity medical surgical patients who cannot yet be discharged to home and need some convalescent. These sites are designated for low intensity medical

surgical patients, lower acuity. They're expected to have a length of stay from a couple days to up to five days. The initial priority will be for non-COVID conditions and then expanded to those with COVID-19 illness, as our resources permit. Some examples of individuals that will be in the field hospital are patients that need IV antibiotics or IV fluids and need to be monitored on an hour-by-hour basis, or patients that have had some operations.

As you know, we've curtailed elective surgeries but there are still patients who, on an emergency basis, may need operations and are needing operations in our facilities, in our hospitals, and they still may need some further monitoring. Or maybe they need some symptom control for pain or nausea or vomiting. Or, individuals in need of regular physical exams, such as checking for non-healing wounds and some minor treatments. Patients who require critical care will remain in the acute care hospitals. Additionally, this site will not serve critical patients, and also pediatric patients and pregnant patients will not be appropriate for the medical field service, and any patient that requires a higher level of intensive care nursing.

So as you know, this pandemic is unprecedented. These situations in our history show clearly the vulnerabilities of a healthcare system. I think you would agree with me that the long-term care system right now is one of them. To address this challenge, we're working on a statewide plan to assist nursing homes experiencing large outbreaks and shortages of staff and equipment. Let me share with you some of the basics of the plan. The goal is to develop a statewide response to control the spread of COVID-19 in our long-term care facilities, to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to those residents who have not been exposed, to provide safe and appropriate care for those that are suffering from COVID-19 disease, and to provide appropriate protective equipment for our staff.

As you know, the activities to date, we have reviewed all of their outbreak plans that they were required to put together after the Wanaque situation. We've required them to assess all employees and vendors coming into the facilities, for symptoms. We've curtailed visiting. We've distributed guidance on pandemic planning, and we've advised all facilities have their obligation, as you know, to report outbreaks.

Going forward, our plan right now is surveying all long-term facilities and their ability to cohort patients on a separate wing or a separate floor, and their ability to place residents in private rooms with private bathrooms. We're taking an inventory of their PPE, which is a continuing issue. We're surveying their employee capacity and reviewing the facility staffing plans. We're identifying employees that are available to work, those home on quarantine, those symptomatic and isolated, and those that are positive and hospitalized.

We're requiring cohorting of residents according to the following classifications: asymptomatic no exposure; asymptomatic with exposure at a facility with an outbreak; symptomatic tests negative, could have a respiratory illness, not COVID-19; symptomatic and tests positive; and positive transfers in or back from an acute care hospital.

Determining the ability of the facility to cohort employees is also an important aspect of our plan to limit the movement of staff between negative and positive residents, and to isolate residents exhibiting signs of respiratory illness. We're evaluating the compliance with the guidance for monitoring residents per shift for fever, respiratory and other COVID-19 symptoms, such as malaise, change in mentation, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, shortness of breath and fever. Facilities that cannot conform to the CDC or Department of Health guidance will be prioritized for transfer of patients based on the prevalence of the disease in the facility.

The transferred patients will go to COVID-positive facilities. We're developing statewide contracts between the three systems to accept transfer of these patients. We will regionalize the transfer of patients and develop an enhanced reimbursement plan with the Department of Human Services and an existing transport plan, using existing transport, EMS, or developing regional contracts if we have to transport a significant number of individuals.

We know that any movement of this population will be disruptive, so we're hoping that this planning can be implemented with the least amount of stress as possible for our elderly in these homes. Our goal is to keep those who haven't been exposed safe, and to ensure that those who are exposed, or those who have tested positive, get the care they need.

According to the data reported from our hospitals right now, there are 7,026 hospitalizations, which include COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation; 1,617 individuals who are in critical care, and 1,576 of those individuals in critical care are on ventilators. That means that 97% of our patients who are in critical care require a ventilator. You may recall, I've been sharing for weeks that we felt in New Jersey it was going to be a one-to-one ratio. As the Governor has shared with you repeatedly, we need ventilators. Of the more than 7,000 individuals hospitalized, however, if you look at that full number, about 22% are on ventilation.

Today we're reporting 3,008 new cases for a total of 47,437 cases in the state. And as the Governor shared, sadly, 275 new deaths; 48 of these new deaths were residents of long-term care facilities. There are now 231 long-term care facilities in the state that have reported at least one COVID-19 case. These case numbers include reports from 375 nursing facilities and approximately 200 assisted-living facilities, and other settings such as residential memory care housing. There are now 1,504 fatalities in our state. Three of the deaths reported yesterday were removed from our count. They were found not to be residents of New Jersey. These numbers change occasionally because after further investigation, we find out more details. The families of all of the individuals, as you know, repeatedly, considerably are in our thoughts and our prayers.

For all of you, one of the best ways we can honor those we have lost is to do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19 by staying home. By staying home, you can actually save lives. According to data from this morning, of the seven laboratories sending us COVID-19 results, 94,525 tests have been performed, of which 41,550 are positive, with a positivity rate of 44%. That means that more than half of the results have been negative. But we remind those who test negative and have symptoms that they should continue staying home and be mindful of respiratory etiquette and social distancing. As always, the Department of Health encourages you to stay in touch with each other. Call your neighbors, friends and relatives, as the government has said, be in social solidarity. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, top five counties again, on total positives have remained the same, Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Union and Passaic. That hasn't changed in probably 10 days, at this point at least. Secondly, you may have said and I apologize. Of the fatalities any more color in terms of age, race, gender, etc.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Sure, thank you. I did not go over that. Of the total 1,504, at this point 59% are male, 41% are female. The age range is as follows: 1% under 30 years, 4% 30 to 49 years of age, 17% 50 to 64 years of age, 33% 65 to 79, and 44% over 80 years. We are still evaluating almost 1,000 of the cases. Of the deaths, the racial breakdown is as follows: 61% White, 22% Black or African American, and 6% Asian, and less than 1% is native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. We're still reviewing 112, or 11% of the cases. 44% of the cases at this point have documented underlying conditions, 2% or 28 of the cases have not documented an underlying condition, and 814 of the cases are still under investigation.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you for that. We discussed this the past couple of days. I believe, just by example, this is on the front page of the New York Times today as we discussed earlier, communities of color appear to be, and again, we can't draw complete conclusions yet with so many cases still under review, but New Jersey looks like it is in a similar reality. As we had feared, the communities of color are sadly more disproportionately represented in the fatalities than in the community at large. I think it was yesterday you had a 24, it's 22% African American today, by example, by the way. I'm not ignoring other communities of color, but that would be up against a 14% or 15%, I believe, percent of the general population. Thank you, for all.

Again, we have to keep reminding folks. Again, fatalities are folks who got infected probably two to three weeks ago. Tests that we're announcing today could have been 10 to 14 days ago. A positivity rate of 44%, that's crept up, but it's really stayed, it's crept up slowly, it's fair to say, over the past couple of weeks. Again, we're testing overwhelmingly, not exclusively, overwhelmingly symptomatic people. And so we have to keep reminding folks, if we had the materials to do universal testing, we'd be all in for that. And as you've seen every day when I announce how many testing sites are available, the number goes up literally every day, and God willing it will continue to go up, and innovations will come to pass, whether it's from Rutgers or Abbott Labs or others We're bird dogging all of those in such that we'll be able to eventually have a much broader regime. But given the hand that we've been dealt, particularly in the federal piece of this, we have prioritized for the moment only symptomatic folks.

Pat Callahan, we're going to start over here in a second, Brendan, but Pat Callen, anything on compliance, PPE equipment, manpower or other matters? Great to have you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Very briefly, with regards to compliance overnight, yesterday troopers had to break up a funeral that had 40 to 50 attendees at a funeral that was in Millstone. Troopers from our Port Nora Station responded to a motor vehicle accident, and the woman was charged with driving under the influence. She was threatening to spread COVID-19 on them. Newark issued 34 Executive Order violations as well as closed three businesses. Pemberton Police charged a subject with the Executive Order violation, he just refused to disperse and continued to disrupt the community. In Union, a subject in violation of the Executive Order was not at home and was observed burglarizing multiple vehicles. And in Paterson, a subject who was in violation of a final restraining order was arrested for that, in addition to try to avoid arrest by threatening to have corona.

As far as overall operations, to the Commissioner's point about transportation, we're finalizing contracts with 50 basic life support ambulances, as well as 25 advanced life support ambulance services in order to facilitate the transportation and transfer of patients.

I would just end with, I know you referenced Ray Bolger and Jerry Lynch. I know he was obviously famous for the Scarecrow role, but I could not think of a more fitting line. The last line of that movie means more today that it did back in 1939, and that is, there's no place like home. Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Well said, Pat, well said. Thank you for that. And again, our compliance energies, our enforcement energies, and not only do we have to tip our hat to our heroic healthcare workers, but first responders who are going in harm's way and breaking up these gatherings and dealing with knuckleheads who are coughing and spitting and threatening that they've got corona. We can't thank them enough. We have to make sure we all have them up on a pedestal and remember what they've been doing here, right with our health care workers.

And then, by the way, the circles that go from there. The essential retail workers who, with one of these executive Orders today we're trying to protect even more so. NJ Transit, longshoreman, supply chain warehouse workers, the folks who are keeping the show going during all of this. So Pat, thank you, Judy, thank you.

We're going to start with Elise. By the way, I want to record a show that as I watch occasionally Governor Cuomo, he walks out with people screaming questions at him. So I want to make sure that we get some credit for the patience that we have with all these questions, but let's try to keep it south of a three-act opera today and keep things moving. So Elise, with that, fire away.

#### Q&A Session

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Let's see. What is considered non-essential construction and how many projects will be affected? How many patients are at the Meadowlands pop-up hospital? One of my colleagues has written about a nursing home in Elizabeth, you probably read about it in the Star Ledger today, a nursing home in Elizabeth with multiple coronavirus fatalities and potentially others as well. The mayor of Elizabeth is asking for an Attorney General investigation into operations of that nursing home. Do you have any comment on that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I would just say on non-essential construction, I don't know how many projects are impacted. Parimal, do you know?

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** We don't have a number.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I don't have a number and the definition is literally, I'm not kidding you, this is -- where is it? Make sure I've got this. Elise, this is the bullet points. I think it probably makes the most sense. We will, I assume is public or will be public?

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** It will be public later this afternoon.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah. And then maybe you could allow us to make it public and then follow up with Parimal or Mahen on questions specific to that would be -- I mentioned some of the big categories in my remarks. But there are, as you can see, many. Judy, pop up, you've got some customers coming in today, I

believe, is that right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, in Secaucus. We hope around 20 to 25, it may be lower than that. We have admission criteria that identify the specific types of patients that are appropriate to come in, and we hope between 20 and 25.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And just for the record, the three of us were in Edison today, and they said they would be sort of looking at a soft opening as early as Saturday. That assumes they get the manpower to actually run it.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Right.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And Atlantic City, Pat, you had mentioned the other day the 14th. Are they still holding with that or has it slipped a couple?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** That's correct, still on target for the 14th.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay, so again, the 14th is next Tuesday. That's the equivalent of what the three of us saw today, so not with patients but with construction essentially completed. I read the article, Elise, awful. And again, I'm looking at the article as opposed to having the inside view that Judy will share with you. It appeared as though there was both COVID and non-COVID-related fatalities based on the reporting. I have not spoken to the Mayor, and if the Attorney General is involved, I'm sure the advice I'm going to be given is to not comment on that, but obviously it's something that, heartbreaking understates it. It's heart-crushing to see something like that. Again, long-term care facilities, we've known from moment one are going to be, for a whole variety of reasons, more at risk than perhaps even any other category of persons, or at least as much so. Judy, any comment you want to make on that particular case?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** No. We are keeping all of the long-term care facilities on our radar screen. We actually have three facilities that have a death rate due to COVID that we think deserves more attention, and we're giving that attention to them. The plan will go into effect as we're speaking. We plan to address this as aggressively as we can.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Again, tragic. No other way to put it, God rest their souls. We're going to go back to the Nikita.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Alright, so I'm just going to ask that you cut me off once I start asking too many questions.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'll have no problem doing that.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** All right. So first off, why choose July 7, given that it's just three days after the Fourth of July? Why not maybe pick July 14 or some other day like that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I didn't to upset the French.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** And then given that pre-election days tend to be pretty hectic for election officials, do you expect to have to order county or state election officials to remain open on July 3? Will you require the counties that have weekend, in-person pre-election voting be ordered to remain open on the Fourth of July? Further, do you anticipate issues with polling locations or poll workers for the July election? Have you discussed the effects of the order with the judiciary, given that it gives them a month less to make certain determinations related to the general election? Finally, have you considered giving any state funding to enhance county level vote by mail efforts?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let me just quickly go through. The runway from July 7 to the Democratic Convention, which was always going to be the first of the two, and by the way, again, remember this is a nonpartisan decision here. We posted and consulted with folks on both sides of the aisle, is about the same runway as June 2 had been to what had been the July 13 convention. Keeping something that resembled that runway in terms of the amount of days was important.

No real insight. I'm not trying to dodge it, we just don't have any insight on your questions on July 3, 4 polling locations, workers. You probably heard me say in my remarks, we don't want to be in a Wisconsin situation yesterday where you've got people at the height of a, please God we're not in this on July 7, but we have to

reserve the right, the decision on workers, locations, vote by mail or not. It's happily not a decision we need to make now. We've bought ourselves a significant number of weeks here, and so that is to be determined, all the above.

I don't know on the question, do we consult the judiciary? I assume we did, Parimal, but –

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Not that I'm aware of. Okay, Parimal is correcting me, as usual. And again, on vote by mail, no monies that I'm aware of from the state which, by the way, are as scarce as they've ever been right now. Nothing that we've designated to counties, but we haven't also made a decision about the breadth of vote by mail in this particular primary. Thank you. Real quick, yeah.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Is all VBM still on the table for?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** It's still on the table, yes, but no decisions, and the good news is we don't have to make a decision on that for a number of weeks. My hope, by the way, let there be no doubt, my hope is that we are through this horror crisis, that we've begun to get back on our feet and we can with directions from the woman to my right, have social distancing guidelines that can work with polling stations. That would be a hope, I really hope for a result here and so we're going to play that out as long as we can. Thank you, Matt.

**Matt Friedman, Politico:** Hi, Governor. We've been hearing about nurses and other medical professionals who've been disciplined, and some even fired, for bringing their own protective equipment and sharing it with coworkers. I'm curious, what do you say to hospitals that are doing this in this critical time? Will you get involved? And also, is there any indication, and maybe Commissioner, is there any indication that the hospital admissions are leveling off, with maybe fewer divert statuses on a given night?

Real quick, Governor, I'm curious how you square telling everybody that it's not safe to go to the polls that first week of June but we're still contemplating whether or not schools will be in session then, or even the rest of the year. I mean, I'm just curious where we stand on that. And just lastly, curious Governor, what do you think about cities like Newark and Trenton exceeding your executive Order for things like curfews, in order to stem violence there?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I'm going to leave, certainly hospital admits and diverts, and to a large extent nurses, to Judy. I don't know. I read of the situation, I think it was at Shore Regional, to the best of my knowledge. Actually I may have the hospital wrong, so don't quote me, but I read of someone being disciplined, I think losing their job on some basis. I don't have any insight into the particular situation, so I have to put that aside. Although we're, you know, we stand on the side of working families always in this state, let there be no doubt about it. But again, without any insights there, I can't comment on the specifics.

But boy, I'll tell you something. I assume somebody has to be doing something really bad, if you're a healthcare worker right now, to be cut from the team. Because we are literally diving on every loose ball we can find. I'll leave it to greater minds. And again, that's not any comment about the specifics. Yeah, there's nothing.

The primary we had to make a decision on that, Matt and I was asked about schools. The Senate President and I had a conversation about this yesterday afternoon or last night. The schools, the good news is we just don't have to make that decision yet. We promised we'd give guidance by April 17, which is a week from this Friday, and we will do that. But we had to make a decision as it relates to the primary.

Listen, I said this in my remarks. There's one set of Executive Orders that hold, that matter, that overarch all others and they're ours. We have to have one state. I can't say enough good things, and I'm not as familiar with Trenton, although I'm a big fan of the mayor's, but we've said a lot about the leadership that Mayor Baraka and by the way, Director Ambrose and their colleagues have shown in compliance and enforcement. I think as it turns out, most of these are recommendations, as opposed to hard and fast executive orders, so there's no question which Executive Order has primacy and that'll stay that way. No more details on that. Judy, on either nurses and/or hospital admissions or diverts or any other topic you'd like to address.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I'll talk about divert first. You know, hospitals go on divert for a number of reasons. Their critical care beds are all filled, and they can't take any more critical care patients. Or maybe their E-Room got slammed and they just couldn't appropriately take care of any more patients, they go on E-Room divert. Sometimes their total hospital census requires them to go on divert. What we're finding now is, putting all that aside, they're going on divert primarily because of workforce issues, staffing issues. We really do need to look at the 15,000 volunteers and we're sorting through that, getting licenses in line, and we need them not only to staff the field hospitals, but to help our hospitals, particularly in the north, right now.

On the nurses, I have regular telephone conferences with the CEOs. The last one I had I said to them very clearly, I've sat where they sit. I've done what they do. I've been through HIV/AIDS, I've been through Ebola, I've been through H1N1. I have never seen a situation that we're in right now, so I have a lot of empathy for them trying to bring control into what right now seems like a chaotic situation. Will we make good decisions during this time? You betcha, and the majority I think will be good. Will we make some difficult and maybe some not so good ones? That will happen as well, and perhaps that's what we're seeing and that's what gets reported.

As far as nurses are concerned, when I was a nurse, sometimes I was the loudest voice criticizing or complaining as well, when I didn't think we had enough staff or things were not going right. So again, I have a lot of empathy for both sides of the equation. I just think we'll just have to stick together and we'll get through it.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, by the way, is not only the first nurse who has ever been the Commissioner of the Department of Health, you are, yet again, the first person who is a former nurse, once a nurse, always a nurse, and has been a CEO of a hospital.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's never happened before. So neither the first one has never had before, and the combination gives the Commissioner an extraordinary perspective that is shared by very few of your peers. Certainly in the history of our state no one has had that and in the country today, so thank you. Do you guys have any? You're just cameras? There was a woman here who left, I don't know if it was something. Sir, have you got something? Okay. We'll go to the back here.

**Reporter:** Pardon the list of questions, Governor. What are the plans for turning East Orange General's East Pavilion into a COVID-only hospital? What kind of COVID patients will they take in and where will they be coming from? Can you provide us with any information on the timeline of this plan?

Did all nursing homes in New Jersey comply with the Monday deadline to communicate their COVID positive in presumptive positive cases? Have they released the names of those that haven't?

We're a tourist state, the shore is probably going to be impacted pretty severely by COVID. Could you speak to that, please? Jersey City is offering a voluntary separation package for eligible employees to avert layoffs. Could the Governor please comment on these buyouts and whether he expects this to continue throughout the state's municipalities.

You mentioned earlier in your remarks that this disease is impacting people of color due to no access to healthcare, job insecurity and underlying medical issues. Is this something the state is examining demographically and if so, what are you finding?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** One more, please.

**Reporter:** I've got one more. Specifically for you, Health Commissioner, while we are getting more ventilators in the state, we're seeing reports that hospitals are facing a shortage of medications needed to keep patients on ventilators and treat their symptoms. What is the state doing to address this concern? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. Judy, I'll jump in on a few of these and then correct me and bat cleanup. Listen, we take the tourism piece of this very seriously. I'll be the happiest guy in the state, and maybe in the country. If the shore is able to be on its feet by the time the summer session comes around. But again, repeat right now, please stay in your primary residence. The shore does not have the infrastructure, particularly health infrastructure, to be able to withstand the sort of challenges we have right now, and certainly in the offseason. But please God, we're able to get back on our feet in a responsible way in the summer.

But again, the order of events here is break the back of the virus and then responsibly reopen, not just for the shore, but the economy more generally. We can't get that order wrong. We do the second step too soon, it's pouring gasoline on the fire.

I've got no insight into Jersey City's voluntary separations other than I saw the article. We need all hands on deck, I'll say on behalf of the state, at least as far as I can see forward. Communities of color, we take that very seriously. This is what we had anticipated may be the case and I think I've said this in this room. In peacetime, in normal times, you've got certain communities that are invariably left behind, and invariably they are communities of color, so that matters a lot to us as the most diverse state in America, in particular. And again, the early data has been specific as it relates to the disproportionate representation in the African American community in fatalities relative to its representation in the state. But as we know, it's broader when you talk about diversity and communities of color. It's a broad, rich tapestry, not only the African American community, but beyond.

I would just say this is I hand it to Judy. The list of areas where we're not where we need to be, but we got a plan, and Pat, you should chime in here, hospital beds, personal protective equipment, ventilators, the medicines that you take when you're on a ventilator, healthcare workers, we are running as fast as we can to get out ahead of those curves as best we can. But with that, Judy, anything on East Orange, nursing homes, and/or the medicines that may be in strong demand?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Sure. On East Orange, we finalized our contractual relationship with East Orange to take over the heretofore called Kessler building. And the Army Corps will be going in and bringing that up, I think within the next week, week-and-a-half. That will be for – let me start by telling you that we've identified six tiers of patients, and we have identified the most appropriate setting for those six tiers. It starts with intensive care, step down and they will go stay with our community and university acute care hospitals. Then we have medical surgical high acuity, they will be appropriate for a hospital like East Orange, and to be followed by a hospital that we will bring up in Woodbury. And then we have the medical surgical low acuity, which is appropriate for the field hospital. The convalescent care, medical shelter individuals will be at hotels. The next tier is lowest acuity, needing some vigilance but not much, perhaps cannot go home until a quarantine period is over, and they may find themselves in dormitories, of which we will have them throughout the state. East Orange will be considered a medical surgical high acuity, COVID and non-COVID. But the way the statistics are going, I think we will find that the majority of our patients in our hospitals will either be persons under investigation or COVID-19 patients, so we just have to make accommodations for both and all.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Hospital medicines, anything?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** That's interesting. We have a list from most of our hospitals of the medications that are in demand and short supply. There's actually a taskforce that's being headed up by the Governor's Office to work with pharmaceuticals and sourcing of those medications. I just heard recently that they had some support in Propofol, which is a big one, as you can imagine.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Great. Thank you. Very quick, please.

**Reporter:** The nursing homes in New Jersey, their compliance rate?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Oh, sorry, I forgot you there.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We have found that with the phone calls that we've made this week that the majority of the nursing homes are now compliant with advising residents and employees and the loved ones of residents of their status. They are also compliant with reporting. The last wave of reporting which I went through, which includes their ability to cohort, their physical plant capabilities, their status of all their employees, we're expecting that today. I don't have a report on that last wave. But the prior wave of surveys have been completed.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Apologies, we forgot that one. Sorry about that. Dave, you're up. Thank you. Brendan's coming in here.

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** Thank you, Governor for acknowledging my love of the Wizard of Oz. I appreciate that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** It's my honor, given your lineage, I knew you would be in that category.

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** Thank you. A couple of questions for you, Governor, and then one for the health team, and then Mahen asked me to ask a question as well for somebody from Politico. First question for you, Governor. In the Executive Order today, requiring supermarkets to have everybody wearing masking. What happens if somebody doesn't wear a mask? My good friend was in the supermarket yesterday. Most people were not wearing masks. Will they be kicked out of the supermarket? Will they face another punishment? Will they be added to the jackass/knucklehead list? You know, will there be a criminal charge? What's going to happen and are you giving direction to the supermarkets?

Second question for you, sir. You announced yesterday the closure of the state and county parks. You're probably aware there's now a petition that has started, asking you to reverse the order in some situations, particularly in parts of the state where it's very low population, Sussex Warren. You did not order the closure of municipal parks, and so then some have been wondering, is there a checks and balance system in terms of your issuing Executive Orders and is there any way to police that or do you feel, you know, could you just explain your rationale behind that?

For the health team, in particular, Dr. Tan, we had mentioned earlier to you that the 10-year average for flu deaths and pneumonia deaths in New Jersey is 1,285. We passed that today significantly. We're now up to 1,504. Could you and perhaps the Health Commissioner talk about the marker and compare COVID-19 with the flu in terms of its impact and deadliness, and seriousness in this state?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Dr. Tan, do you mind if I go first and then we'll have you come in? I was going to call on you and ask you a question because I felt badly we hadn't gotten you pulled in yet. So I'm glad Dave did that for us.

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** I've got the question that Mahen asked me to ask from Politico. The Phase 2 stimulus package included money to help states update their infrastructure for processing unemployment claims. Has New Jersey received any of this money? And if so, what has it been used for? Does New Jersey need more money from the federal government to help this process? And if so, why?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay, I'll give you my answer on the face covering. These are not masks, per se. This is face coverings, Parimal, correct? I hope people get asked to leave. Now I'll ask Parimal, what's the actual legal remedy?

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** So if someone refuses to wear a mask when entering a supermarket, for medical or other reasons, the supermarket is to allow them access to the store but they can limit their time or their proximity to other customers to keep everyone safe.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I think that's benevolent. I'd prefer to even be tougher than that. But state and county parks, I am aware, I've heard from a couple of legislators. By the way, I have to say with great respect that I think they knew that this is not a step that we enjoyed taking. Never say never, but we have to tighten the ship up, and I feel badly saying that. I don't envision going back on that in the near term until we're through this. We've left, and Parimal, tell me if I'm wrong about this. We've left the decision on municipal parks up to municipalities.

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** That's correct.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Right, and so what we have said, however, is we don't want, you're in town A, your parks are closed. I'm in town B, you all come over to my parks to hang out. Is that something we may reconsider? Perhaps, but the overwhelming square footage, square miles are in the county and state systems, and that's where we saw issues.

Phase 2 stimulus, I'm not sure, has any money gotten to anybody from the CARES Act yet, for anything? I don't think – I know we haven't gotten it. I believe unemployed folks have not gotten it. I don't think Small Business Administration monies have gotten to folks yet. So I'm not looking a gift horse in the mouth, but I don't think anything is out there yet, on the street. We would welcome the money that would help us bolster our unemployment system infrastructure. Rob Angelo was here the other day and we've got an overwhelming

demand. We've got legacy systems. We could use all the help we can get. But to the best of my knowledge, we've gotten nothing and we'll welcome any monies we can get from the federal government out of that or future bills to come. Please real quick.

**David Levinsky, Burlington County Times:** On your answer, and the supermarket answer, you know, they're going to be asked to limit their time in the store. So in other words, there's been no specific directive guidance to the markets on how to handle this. Because if you just put that out in the air, well, you know, they should limit their time, that means nothing.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah. Well, there is guidance and I think one of the things we could do is, I showed Elise the bullet points for the non-essential construction. The same, I'll show you now the bullet points for the retail and warehouse and it goes on. May I come back to you? I'm on the side of, frankly, you don't come in. That's a personal view. I'm sure Counsel will pull me back to perhaps a slightly more reasonable place. But my view is, we're at war right now and you do things that are not popular. Non-essential construction. I can't tell how many incomings I've gotten from friends, state and county parks, I'm sure from the supermarket or other retail interests.

And for the most part, folks are cooperating, I have to say, overwhelmingly folks get it, even if they're taking personal pain, and I want to make sure I say that. But these are unusual times. Doctor Tan, compare this to the flu and how we see this generally and going forward.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Right. First of all, we have to underscore that all of these deaths, whether it's related to flu or whether related to COVID-19, they're all tragic. It's difficult to make comparisons, per se. Influenza, we know a lot of those deaths and illnesses, this is a vaccine-preventable disease. I think what the deaths underscore right now and what we understand about COVID-19-related deaths is that we have been seeing, again, we've been repeating this time and again, that they predominantly are occurring among individuals with underlying illnesses, with older individuals. And that while we don't have a vaccine, we still have to really remember the seriousness of the potential for hospitalizations, deaths with COVID. That's why we have to continue to take these measures, use the vaccine that we sort of have, which is the social distancing, which is the different measures that we have already in place for community mitigation.

It's early to tell right now. I wish that I had a better answer to better characterize this, but as we learn every single day, as we gather more information day to day, and as we get the national picture together, we'll be able to provide even better information about the deaths moving forward.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thanks, Dr. Tan. I just want to come back to supermarkets. We're going to go to John to close up. This is a summary, in fairness, so Parimal, the summary doesn't do justice to the actual underlying Order itself. Require workers and customers to wear cloth face coverings in accordance with CDC recommendations while on the premises and require workers to wear gloves when in contact with customers or goods. Businesses must provide, at their expense, such face coverings and gloves for their employees. Business policies should outline how to handle customers who need access to services, but refuse to wear a mask. Individuals who are not medically able to wear a mask or who are under two years of age should not be required to wear a protective covering.

So I would just say, I think a little bit of a variant on Parimal's good answer is how to handle customers who need access, but refuse to wear for whatever reason, but there is a need for some reason. Is that a fair assessment of it?

**Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** Yeah, that's correct. There's just a need also to ensure that customers who might not be able to wear a mask for medical reasons can have access to essential goods.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** But again, if it's not medical, if you're not a kid under two years old, my personal guidance is you got to go out and find something to put on your face before you come in. John.

**John McAlpin, Bergen Record:** A couple of follow ups. On the primary delay, have you had discussions with legislative leaders about it? Does it need any legislative action, particularly with vote by mail?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So we, just on that one, we made sure, either I personally our members of our team, had interactions with leadership on both sides, elected officials, not everybody, but certainly our Senators and Members of Congress on both sides. I did some of those myself, and to the best of my knowledge, there's no

legislative action required.

**John McAlpin, Bergen Record:** Have you talked to them this week about the possibility of delaying the May 1 property tax payments?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Have not.

**John McAlpin, Bergen Record:** Okay, when you give us numbers on long-term care facilities, does that include veterans homes run by the state? And if not, can we get details on the number of cases and the number of fatalities? We've been reaching out, on one of them we were told there were about 20 fatalities, but we can't get clear details on that because we're told it's state run, it's not a local issue.

And on New Jersey Transit, a lot of riders and workers are complaining about, again, the closeness but they're also saying there's a lot of homeless people who are now using the stops and the shelters and the buses and trains as shelters for themselves. And that's putting people at risk, workers and people that need to take the bus to work. Any talk about using potential hotels or any other expanding shelters for homeless to aid that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** A couple of things. John, I think I've already answered the ones, nothing on property taxes to report, no legislation required. I mentioned earlier, this is not related to homeless folks, so please, I don't want to get those complaints. I'll answer that separately. But if you're on a bus and it's regular ridership and you're too close for comfort, or a train, we want you to go on that page I mentioned earlier and make sure we know about it, particularly if there is a consistency in a particular route.

And as it relates to homeless in those, Carol Johnson was here a week or two ago and talked about some of the programs we've got in place. This is, I've said this now a number of times, and it's just worth repeating and it's true. The folks who are normally left behind in society are being further left behind. I can't say that I know of any specific conversations about hotels or dorms toward our homeless community. Maybe you all have, have we? So Judy will correct my record here, but I would be a big supporter of that, assuming we can feasibly do that. Judy, could you add anything on that, as well as veterans homes fatalities or illnesses?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, first on the veterans homes fatalities, I don't have that. I was just looking. I don't have that documentation but I will get it for you, for sure. On the homeless, we work in collaboration with Department of Human Services. I think I said a couple weeks ago, we have great collaboration with Commissioner Johnson and Deputy Commissioner Sarah Edelman. We are responsible, meaning Department of Health, for convalescing homeless individuals who are discharged from the hospital that perhaps are COVID positive and need a quarantine period or some convalescence before they go back to their shelter. They are responsible for individuals that are exhibiting symptoms of respiratory illness but are negative, or have not been tested yet, and finding them a more appropriate place to stay while they're being evaluated. So it's a two-pronged approach. We're working together on it. But the hotels that we're contracting with have agreed that they would be available for our homeless population.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** This is again, Judy, I thought it was a general, which I would endorse, by the way, if we could figure out for the entire homeless population. Are you speaking specifically to folks who are homeless who are PUI?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** The homeless that end up in the hospital and on discharge need a place to convalesce because they shouldn't go back to a shelter. They would go to a hotel.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yep, got it. I misunderstood your question, John. So with that, pardon me while I put my mask on here. We're going to be here again, unless you hear otherwise, Mahen will be here at one o'clock tomorrow and that may be impacted by the VTC with the White House. Otherwise, one o'clock, and then we're shooting for 10:30, I believe, on Friday. Also here, I want to thank the Commissioner Judy Persichilli, Dr. Christina Tan, Superintendent Pat Callahan, Jared Maples. Again, everybody, God bless you all. Happy Passover. Please stay home. Keep distance from each other. That is our best weapon and that is how we will beat this virus. Thank you all.

# Governor Phil Murphy

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