

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 26th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good morning. I'm honored to be joined by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan, another familiar face. Thank you both. To my left, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan, another guy who needs no introduction. Jared Maples is with us from the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. Thank you all for being here. We're a bit earlier than usual today because there is a one o'clock White House video call, so we'll work to keep things brief and move along this morning.

I want to lead with several important announcements. First to the class of 2020, I am proud to say that you will have your opportunity to join with your classmates and families to celebrate your graduation. The Department of Education and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will both release guidance on this tomorrow, Wednesday, to allow for outdoor graduation ceremonies to celebrate our students accomplishments, starting July 6. This guidance will include social distancing requirements and other necessary health and safety measures.

Additionally, given that some graduating classes may be too large to accommodate a crowd within the restrictions in place for outdoor gatherings, this guidance may require multiple ceremonies to be held across different times and even different days to ensure proper social distancing. Our goal is to ensure that our students are given the send-offs they richly deserve and which they have been working toward. We want them to celebrate and to be celebrated by their families, friends and the educators who helped get them

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there. Certainly these will be graduations unlike any others. The steps we are taking are necessary to ensure the health and safety of everyone in attendance, but we are equally as confident that no one will ever forget the way we will celebrate the Class of 2020. Amen to that.

You may ask a question that we don't have an answer to, so please wait for the guidance, and that is as of July 6, what is going to be the limit in terms of folks we're allowed to gather out of doors. The health data will guide that and dictate that and direct us toward that, but we would want to give folks, particularly the districts that are organizing this, plenty of advance notice in terms of what sorts of capacities we're talking about, so bear with us on that, if you could.

Secondly, I want to point out a portion of the Executive Order that I signed on Friday. And in particular, I want to reiterate that my order expressly makes it possible for the professional sports teams which train or play in New Jersey to return to training camps or even competitions if their leagues move in that direction. We have been in constant discussions with these teams about the protocols they will have in place to protect the health and safety of the players, coaches, and team personnel. We know they have the facilities where proper sanitation and hygiene practices can be readily maintained. I recognize that, obviously, not all of our sports are back, and we continue our work with all stakeholders, including, if not especially, youth sports leagues, to hopefully see their resumption in the near future. But where professional teams are concerned, and with the facilities and resources they have to meet the demands of public health, we felt we could take that step forward.

And finally a non-COVID-19 announcement, but one which is directly related to our restart and recovery. The Federal Railroad Administration today is awarding \$91.5 million to Amtrak and NJ Transit to get the replacement of the obsolete portal bridge moving forward. This is a huge win for our state, for our commuters, and for the future of our economy. And quite frankly, given the economic power of the Northeast Corridor, it's a win for our entire nation. Replacing the antiquated and unreliable portal bridge with a modern and reliable span will mean fewer headaches for commuters and travelers, and better on-time performance for our mass transit system. This has been a team effort. This is the ultimate it takes a village. From our administration to our federal delegation, especially and including Senators Menendez and Booker, Representatives Bill Pascrell, a longtime champion, and Albio Sires, Donald Payne Jr. and Tom Malinowski, who I might add, each sit on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I want to thank each of them. And I also want to thank the Trump Administration for hearing our case, and coming down on the right side for our state and our future. Now, let's keep moving forward and building the new portal bridge.

Since we were last together on, it seems like a million days ago, Judy and Tina and Pat, it was only on Friday, I've had a lot of one-on-one conversations, most of which have related to direct federal cash assistance. One that stands out that was not specific to that was I had a good conversation with the President late afternoon on Friday about houses of worship. But the other conversations were almost exclusively about the need for federal cash assistance and wargaming how we could advance that case. Some individuals with whom I spoke included Leader Chuck Schumer, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senators Menendez and Booker, Governors Larry Hogan, who chairs the National Governors Association, Roy Cooper in North Carolina, Andy Beshear in Kentucky, Janet Mills in Maine. Also spoke with Chairman Frank Pallone about this, and over the weekend with Randi Weingarten, who is the President of AFT and I'll be on a town hall with her members across the country tonight.

Again have to reiterate and underscore, particularly given the budget that we announced on Friday, the stub period through September 30, the need that we have, the overwhelming need we have for direct federal cash assistance. It isn't just a New Jersey reality, it isn't just a blue state reality, it isn't about legacy issues, it's an American reality, red and blue states alike. And frankly, it's my opinion the best lever we could pull as a country to get our economy back up on its feet and at the same time, keep our first responders, our firefighters, police, EMS, healthcare workers, educators, let's keep them employed. Let's keep them at the point of attack. Let's keep them servicing our residents at our greatest hour of need, literally in our states' and country's history.

With these, let's take a look at the overnight numbers. Yesterday, we received an additional 703 positive test results for a current statewide total of 155,764. May I just say this before we move on? I think Judy would want me to say this, and I think she's going to give you have a much more professional sense of correlations here. We think these numbers are distorted by the holiday weekend, both in terms of testing, as well as, sadly,

the fatalities that we report. But even with that being said, the trends continue very meaningfully in the right direction, and that includes ones that are money good which you'll see in a minute, things like hospitalizations.

Here's the trend line of the new cases. As you can see, it's going in the right direction. Again, we know there's a lag in a weekend reporting, especially in a holiday weekend, it may take a few more days for these numbers to smooth out. However, in this case, we know that our most accurate measure will be from the daily positivity or spot positivity rate for test samples, in this case, from May 21. So that's last Thursday, and that number is 5%. That is a very good number.

We can see on the map that nearly every county is the lightest shade, meaning the spread has slowed considerably, and our hospital data will bear this out. Looking at our long-term care facilities, the new cases continue to be far down from the peak. There was over 30,000 of them, so let's not make light of that, and the numbers of lab-confirmed deaths associated with our long-term care facilities also continues its decrease, but again, 4,768 lab-confirmed fatalities of blessed souls in our state and long-term care facilities. And again, where our long-term care facilities are concerned, our National Guard and the clinical staff from the federal Veterans Administration remain on hand to help us protect residents.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated for COVID-19 has fallen to 2,723. This is down by roughly 1,500 over the past two weeks. Our field medical stations reporting 45 patients. This is a breakdown of total hospitalizations across regions. The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care is now at 786. That's down roughly 450 persons from two weeks ago. Ventilator use sits at 578, that's down 350 from two weeks ago. New hospitalizations yesterday 134, live discharges 131.

Here are the numbers charted across the region. To be sure, we continue to see many positive signs that we can keep moving forward. The key metrics from our hospitals continue to move in the right direction, we are way down from our peak and key indicators keep falling. The progression across the past two weeks has been constant and undeniable. The green light, as you know, means a day we saw a decrease where we needed to and we're seeing many more good days than bad. We see this across regions and again, the one that Judy and her team, and I will add myself to that, that keep the closest eye on is the fluctuations in new hospitals, where there's a lot more red balls. Just to remind everybody though, the experts would want us, and we do on those on those graphs that we show you, we typically show three or seven-day moving averages because you do get spikes up and down in any given day. That may not be demonstrative of, in fact, what's going on underneath.

We're hopeful that nothing will change in the near future given how many residents and visitors were out across our state throughout this past weekend. Each day brings with it surer signs that we're moving closer to be able to enter phase two of our economic restart. But we also have to balance our optimism with this reality. Among our neighbors and other major states in the country, we still lead in some indicators that we would rather not. And you can see new cases per 100,000, we're now comfortably in second place. That's a good thing, I guess. Patients in hospitals per 100,000 we continue to lead the nation, and new deaths per 100,000 we're just behind Connecticut. We want to see those numbers continue to get better as well.

But from my personal observations on the boardwalk, and we went for a run on the boardwalk in Seaside Park and we strolled up and down and got some coffee and hung out in Seaside Heights after that. We saw plenty of residents taking responsibility, specifically social distancing and wearing a face covering. I have to admit, Mother Nature helped because the weather was God awful. It was cold as heck, so there weren't many people on the beach. Decent amount on boardwalks, those were all, you know, what we saw were all very good science and the practices that are now part of our routines will continue to put us in a strong position to move into the next phase of our restart and recovery in the not too very distant future.

Before we flip over the anecdotal evidence, Pat, you'll get to this, was decent around the state. I had an exchange this morning with Catherine McCabe, our Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection. County parks and state parks in the western counties filled up to capacity pretty quickly in a bunch of cases, because the weather was better in that part of the state. Face coverings anecdotally, and I think Catherine agreed and I think we all feel this, are going in the right direction, but they're still not where they probably need to be, particularly where social distancing is not as achievable, and so we'll continue to monitor that very carefully. Again, Mother Nature, did we learn a lot of lessons from this weekend? I'm afraid

only to a degree, particularly on the shore because the weather just wasn't good, for the most part. It got decent yesterday, but by that point, a lot of folks had packed up. We're going to get warmer weather beginning today and over the next number of days. My guess is it'll be more seasonable this weekend.

And again, just to ask everybody to keep doing what you're doing. Social distancing, face coverings, wherever you can, the basic washing hands with soap and water, just being responsible. You've been extraordinary. No state's been better, we've just got to keep that up as we continue to open things up.

So for all of that progress, with the heaviest hearts today, we announced another 54 of our fellow New Jerseyans have passed due to COVID-19 related complications. Our statewide total now stands at 11,191. As we do every day, let's recall a few of them now. First, we recall Julian Capron. He was only 45 years old. Julian was born in Jamaica and came to the United States as a child. And with his family, they called Fairview home. For the past 10 years, he worked as a security officer at the Meadowland Sports Complex. He leaves behind his wife Nanda, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, and two stepchildren, Angelica and Vikram and his almost two-year-old step-grandson and other family members, all of whom he loved so much. Julian was also a great animal lover and loved a whole plethora of dogs.

Nanda, it should be noted, was successful in her own battle with COVID-19 and has since returned to her job with American Airlines at Newark Liberty International Airport, and we send our best wishes for her continued health, even as we extend our condolences to her, and everyone who knew and loved Julian. Nanda summed up her husband best with the following, and I quote her, "Nothing was impossible for him to do, as long as the end result made you happy." Boy, wouldn't that be great if everyone was like that? Perhaps that's the best way any husband or spouse could ever wish to be remembered. God bless you, Julian.

Next up, this is Marquita Hobbs, an award-winning career paraprofessional at Essex County West Caldwell Technical School for the past 40 years, where she was beloved by students and staff alike. But Marquita was just as involved outside the classroom and she and her family were active participants in the community, whether it was for breast cancer awareness with the Clinton Memorial Church or with the Paction Consortium in Newark, which presented her with its Unsung Angels Award in 2013. And speaking of family, Marquita was the one who took on the task of planning reunions and keeping the bond among the generations so strong.

She leaves behind her husband Cornell, with whom I had the great honor to speak yesterday, who himself, by the way, is recovering from COVID-19. Please keep him in your prayers, and their children Cornell Hobbs III, and Tiffany Hobbs. She also leaves her brother Julian and sisters Deborah and Patricia and their families, including many nieces and nephews, among many other family. Marquita was only 64 years old, and of course, she leaves many colleagues and students who also loved her dearly. May God bless you Marquita, and may her legacy of selflessness and service be a beacon for all.

Finally today, we remember Elizabeth Fulop, the grandmother of the handsome guy to her left, Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop. She passed away at the age of 95. I had the honor of going back and forth on a number of exchanges with Steve, expressing our thoughts and prayers for his grandmother. She was a strong woman who lived independently in Bloomfield until she was 94 years old. Born in Romania, her route to the United States was circuitous. She and her husband Bentsy left their native Romania after being forced to live in a Jewish ghetto during World War II, moving first to Israel, then eventually to America and New Jersey, specifically Essex County. She worked alongside her husband Bentsy and her oldest son Arthur, at the family-owned Newark deli that stood next door to City Hall.

Elizabeth is remembered for her strong will, outspoken, offering her opinion regardless of whether or not you wanted it and independent, living again on her own until she was 94 years old. However, the abiding quality that she will be remembered for was her generosity. Whether it was for a charity, a family member or a stranger, it did not matter. If someone needed help, they knew they could count Elizabeth. She leaves behind her sons, Arthur, Steve's dad, and by the way, Steve and his dad and mom have had tragedy over the past couple of years in their family, having lost Steve's brother; and Elizabeth's other son, Eugene, five grandchildren and six great grandchildren. May her memory be a blessing. God bless you, Elizabeth.

Three more great members of our New Jersey family which COVID-19 has taken away. And as we continue our restart and recovery, we will remember them because we cannot fail their memories by needlessly putting the lives of others in danger. But as I noted, the reports from across our state were overwhelmingly

positive, so I want to give each of you a huge thank you for making this weekend a success. Thank you for taking to heart your greater responsibility to your communities, to your families and to your fellow New Jerseyans. I've said it many times before, but we are all in this together, and this weekend showed how strong our New Jersey family is.

Finally, before I close, I want to note the passing of a legendary New Jerseyan one whose name may not have been recognized in every household, but whose work certainly would be. Candace McKee Ashmun. There she is. She dedicated her public life to the conservation of our state's historic and environmental legacies. She was the last surviving original member of the Pinelands Commission, appointed by Governor Brendan Byrne to ensure that one of our state's true natural gems would be protected for future generations. The heck with state's true natural gems, it is one of America's true natural gems. Although she was from Somerset County, she recognized the need for preservation, and she was known as the godmother of the New Jersey Pines. She served on numerous other boards and commissions. Her work still guides us, and so we note Candace's passing at the age of 96 and God bless her soul.

With that, I will turn things over to the person who needs no introduction, the woman to my right, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. Well, as New Jersey continues along the road back with the phased reopening of the state, today, hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers are beginning to perform urgent elective surgeries, procedures that have been postponed due to COVID-19. This is an important step forward for the health of New Jersey residents.

Today I want to focus on a serious children's health issue that has also been impacted during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While staying at home has slowed the spread of the virus, it has also resulted in delays and decreases in the number of children getting recommended vaccines. Like the rest of the nation, New Jersey has seen a dramatic drop in vaccine doses ordered and administered between March and April 20 of this year as compared to the same period last year. According to the New Jersey Immunization Information System, there has been a 40% decline in pediatric vaccines administered for children aged two or younger, and a 60% decrease in vaccinations for children greater than two years of age.

The need to protect serious childhood diseases like whooping cough doesn't disappear during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Well Child visits and vaccinations are essential services and help ensure children are protected against deadly vaccine preventable diseases like tetanus, measles, mumps and influenza Type B. The department encourages all healthcare providers to follow the CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physician guidelines to continuing vaccinating patients whenever possible, by considering some of the following strategies: scheduling well visits in the morning, and sick visits in the afternoon; collaborating with providers in the community to identify separate locations for holding well visits for children. We are also encouraging clinicians to consider novel approaches for vaccinations, such as curbside vaccinations, and to share measures they have in place to maximize patient safety during immunization visits.

If a pediatrician or family practice can provide only limited well child visits, healthcare providers are encouraged to prioritize newborn care and vaccination of infants and young children through 24 months of age whenever possible. Ensuring access to vaccinations is an important part of maintaining the public's health. Last year, more than 1,200 individual cases of measles were confirmed in 31 states. There were 19 confirmed cases of measles in New Jersey. So I want to urge parents, grandparents and other caregivers to contact your healthcare provider and find out what special measures are in place for you to safely schedule a Well Child visit so your children can catch up on their vaccinations.

I also want to remind parents to watch for symptoms of multisystem inflammatory syndrome and children and seek prompt medical care if they suspect their child may have this rare illness. Most children with the syndrome have tested positive for COVID-19. The state now has 23 reported cases in children between the ages of 1 and 18. All were hospitalized, 15 have been discharged. Some children with the syndrome may require intensive hospital care. Your child may experience symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, red or pink eyes, red cracked lips, or red tongue that looks like a strawberry, swollen hands and feet, which

might also be red. They may also be sluggish or irritable, have abdominal pain without another explanation, and an enlarged lymph node or gland on one side of the neck. A fact sheet for parents is available on the Department's COVID-19 webpage.

Health care providers have noted that this inflammatory syndrome can also be characterized by severe inflammation of heart, blood vessels, the gastrointestinal tract, or other organs believed to be caused by a reaction to the coronavirus. The syndrome has features like Kawasaki disease and toxic shock syndrome, but they are not the same. It is important that your child be evaluated by a healthcare provider if they are experiencing symptoms of this syndrome.

For my daily report, last evening, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 2,723 hospitalizations with 786 individuals in critical care and 74% of those critical care patients are on ventilators. A total of 23 cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome, no deaths reported due to that syndrome. The Governor reviewed new cases and deaths. The breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 53.4%, Black 18.5%, Hispanic 19.3%, Asian 5.4%, other 3.3%.

At our state veterans homes, among a census of 654 residents, there have been 384 residents that tested positive with a total of 144 deaths. Our state psychiatric hospitals, with a census of 1,240, 211 patients have tested positive and there is a total of 13 patient deaths. As the Governor shared, the spot positivity as of May 22 for New Jersey overall is 5%. In the northern part of the state it was 4%, Central 5%, and South 6%. That concludes my daily statistical report. Stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you for everything and I want a big underscore on the vaccination point that you're making. We just can't let that, folks have to really get that top of mind. Thank you for everything. Pat, after Memorial Day weekend, compliance has got to be on the list of discussions. Thank you for everything, and fire away.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Certainly. Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Governor. This report represents Friday through last night, so there's about a dozen compliance issues, but to the Governor's point when he opened up, 12 incidents over four nights of varying degrees, but I'll go through them now.

In Monmouth Beach, police responded to a noise complaint. There was a large gathering where the homeowner was cited with making alcohol available to minors, and also with the EO violation. There was probably about 30 or more teenagers not socially distancing and not wearing facial coverings. In Stratford, a COVID-19 patient had left the hospital, still with his IV in, and ultimately was returned to the hospital but that subject was cited with aggravated assault against law enforcement as well as an EO violation. In Wildwood, a motel owner was cited for renting motel rooms to unauthorized individuals at two separate hotels that he owns. In Elizabeth, a bar and restaurant owner was cited for having patrons inside the establishment, both inside and outside. In Hillsborough, a salon owner was cited for an EO violation. In Clementine, a subject held two separate church services. In Berlin, a similar incident where a subject hosted two church services with more than 100 people. In Perth Amboy, a nail salon owner was cited. In Union City, a restaurant owner and her workers refused to wear masks while preparing food, had been warned several times and subsequently was issued an EO violation. In Long Beach Township, 50-plus juveniles were found to be on the beach having a party with alcohol. In Palisades Park, a carwash owner was cited, and in Pompton Lakes, a disorderly person complaint while being processed, she subsequently coughed on the arresting officer claiming that she had COVID-19. That's my compliance report, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. I think overall, again, perhaps while not batting 1,000, overall pretty darn impressive. Again, there's no doubt we got an unintended assist from Mother Nature. It just wasn't that good, even when it wasn't raining. It wasn't warm. Yesterday started to break in the right direction, if you look at the forecast, and you and I've talked about this over the coming days. It's going to look more seasonable and we need everyone to stay at it. Just really impressive to everybody.

We'll start over here with Dustin. Before we jump in, we're together tomorrow, we're back to one o'clock, Mahen, right? So we're back to our regular schedule tomorrow. Thursdays are typically potential about 50% of the time, White House VTCs as well, but we'll come to you if there's any change. Although it's one o'clock this week unless you hear otherwise. Thank you. Dustin.

Q&A Session

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Thanks. On the graduation announcement, is that for high school or colleges or both? And do those schools have to submit plans with the state to get an okay? Do you have any thoughts on the Senate creating a select committee to investigate issues relating to the coronavirus?

Governor Phil Murphy: Dustin on your first question, it is for both high school, colleges. And in fact, we're not even stipulating that it's just high school. So it's any graduations of any sort. And the plans, the details if you could bear with us until tomorrow, both the Commissioner of the Department of Education and the Secretary of Higher Ed will come out with guidance. And again, the one question that folks can rightfully ask is, what are you looking at on July 6th in terms of the amount of folks who can gather? And so bear with us on that,

Listen, I've said, we had our first case in March, on March 4th, rather. I was under the knife that day, so I wasn't at this table. It was in a different room, it was over at the ROIC until Friday, March 13. So that's two-and-a-half months. And I'll bet you if you look back at a transcript, I've said between 10 and 20 times that we need a post mortem, a la the 9/11 Commission, and I've said that both as a nation and as a state, so I'm completely committed to that.

Here's where I'm going to also be as committed. We're still working 24/7 to save lives. We get new hospitalizations every day. For as awful as that long-term care fatality rate is, there's literally hundreds of thousands, literally, of other residents, staff, related folks who Judy and her team and Pat and his team are trying to save literally every day. With all due respect, that's got to be job number one right now and it is going to be job number one. I want to remind everybody, by the way, because I looked it up, the 9/11 Commission was established in late November of 2002. So there's no question, we've said from day one, we want to do a full, comprehensive, head-to-toe post mortem. We have to do that as a country. I think that's even more urgent, but I guarantee you we're going to do it as a state.

But let's remember the fact that we're still in the fight. This is like 1943 trying to have a separate investigation on whether or not, which front you wanted to land your troops in, in '44. I mean, bear with us on that one, if I could ask that. But thank you. Again, on your first one, bear with us on the details. I think when the details come out, I think then we can have maybe even have Lamont and Zakiya with us if we want to do that. I'll leave it to Mahen and Matt and others here on that. Different Matt, Matt Arco.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Governor, we keep on hearing reports of people not getting that extra \$600 payment, and they've been missed for the last two or three weeks. Just curious if you've heard about this? If there's any sort of widespread problem or issue?

Regarding hospitals and with elective surgeries coming around, when will people be able to go, COVID or non-COVID people be able to go visit family members and patients in hospitals. Is that something the state will give guidelines on? Or is that sort of a hospital by hospital call? And one quick thing, Governor, on outdoor pools, any timeline on when an announcement will be made?

And lastly, Colonel, just curious, you know, the citations that you're talking about, how much is that? Is it across the board one amount, or does it vary from town to town? We were trying to get answers about what was going on in Wildwood, and we haven't been able to hear back from them.

Governor Phil Murphy: So Matt, I can't say whether it's widespread on the \$600 payment, but I can say this: in almost every case that has come to me, I was on the boardwalk on Sunday and a guy from Toms River had a very particular case. And I said, listen, you could tell me what your case is and I'm going to say a prayer for you, but I need you to get your information to the person who could actually fix it, which I did with one of our colleagues. I don't know where that has come out with him yet, but it invariably is very specific to the individual. And if Mahen or Matt determined otherwise, we will come back to you on that.

I will just comment that outdoor pools are still on the list of, they're a little bit more complicated. When I first started talking about outdoor pools, I had in mind out of the Shore community, mayors and county executives, a legitimate suggestion from a couple of them that if you loosen up pool restrictions, you also

give yourself more space in which to spread your capacity, which makes sense. The problem is that you've got a municipal pool that's far from the Shore, that is a very different dynamic. So I would just say it's on the list but I've got no news to report on that.

Judy, elective surgeries and ability to visit hospitals, either you or Matt, and then Pat on citations and how they may differ from place to place?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The guidance that Department of Health put out on resuming of elective procedures outlines the visitation requirements, which have not changed.

Governor Phil Murphy: I assume at some point they will, but we're not there yet.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: That will come down from the State Department of Health, or will it be hospital by hospital?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: At this point, it will come from the Department of Health.

Governor Phil Murphy: Colonel, any thoughts on citations?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I would just have to, I would defer to the Office of the Attorney General, who at the front end of this worked with all 21 county prosecutors to put together those charging manuals and what that looked like, Matt. I would defer to the AG.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Elise, good morning.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good morning. What are the specific data points that supported allowing pro sports practices and competitions to resume, and to allow graduations starting on July 6?

And, New York City has hired more than 1,700 contact tracers who will be on the job by June 1st. What is the status of New Jersey's program? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. I'll let Matt come in on a couple of these, and Judy may want to come in on contact tracing. The specific data point, for me, is the ability, given the facilities, the commitment, the paid nature, the full-time nature of professional sports, not just the athletes, men and women, but also the folks in their milieu, the ones who maintain the facilities and maintain the health reality. So that's the most compelling piece of this, as opposed to a youth sports reality, which is a much more, we all know, it's a much more sort of, it's not a professional, it's less rigid or less – it's more casual than a professional reality, but I hope we can get there sooner than later.

We have thought now for a couple of weeks we wanted to leg into July for outdoor graduations. And quite frankly, we had a discussion yesterday about whether or not it should be ahead of July 4th or after it and we said, you know what? Let's let July 4th pass, and so we picked the Monday right after July 4th. No magic with that day per se, but July there was magic, we feel strongly if we keep making the right progress, we're going to be in a different place. I hope well before then, but certainly by then. Anything, Matt, you want to add to either of those?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Sure. Just on professional sports. I think it's important to note that the Governor, a couple months ago, signed an order that said basically if you can work from home you should be working from home. With respect to professional athletes, in many cases, they obviously can't perform their profession at home. So what was signed on Friday is actually a codification of the practice that has been in place, though professional sports teams have actually not been allowed per their league rules to practice or to come into their facilities until very recently. We've been working closely with both the leagues as well as the teams that have a presence in the state to determine what the appropriate policies are, and they've been great partners.

With respect to graduations, I think it's, again, important to note that the graduations will still be subject to the same gatherings rules that will apply to everyone as of July 6th. The guidance was, if we push it into July, the safety around having any type of gathering outside that's larger than 25 is much more likely to be a safe activity, so that's what we're looking to.

Governor Phil Murphy: And again, we don't know what that number is yet, but bear with us. That's something that we will get. We know folks need to know in advance, particularly if you've got a big school that you're trying to graduate and you have to parse it up into cohorts.

You know, one thing is, I think tomorrow, Mahen, if I'm not mistaken, we're going to talk about testing in a little bit more depth than we have for the past couple of weeks. We have already, just to give you one preview, we've already begun to exceed meaningfully what we had projected, not just capacity, but actual daily tests that are being taken, what we had projected for the end of May. And contact tracing is something that we also signaled we wanted to have up and running before we sort of lifted the lid on phase two of our restart and recovery. And so that's a work in progress, but Judy I would love you to add any meat to those bones.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. We have a group working on contact tracing. They've chosen the information system that will be used statewide. They're interviewing staffing agencies that will help with our onboarding. We hope to work with counties and municipalities to support the 900 contact tracers we currently have in place. We will have, very shortly, a plan for how many we will on board and the timing.

Governor Phil Murphy: And it will be, I'm not sure it'll be June 1st, Elise, but it will be June something and it will be over the next, my gut tells me in the next couple or three weeks. Thank you. Sir, do you have any? Nope. You're good. Ian, how are you?

Ian Elliott NJTV News: Good morning, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good morning.

Ian Elliott NJTV News: Some Catholic churches began distributing communion this past Sunday. Is that permitted or is that safe? Some Catholic churches have already reopened and announced indoor services with more than 10 people will begin Sunday. Wouldn't that violate your orders? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I mean, they do. But I want to make sure folks realize, these are not black and white questions. Are you for worshipping or are you against worshipping? That's not the question. I personally would like to do that, as someone who goes to church. This is a question of doing it responsibly and doing it at the right time. So at least up until now, if somebody has more than the amount of gathering capacity that we've got, which is 10 people indoors, and communion is being served, we would ask respectfully to not do that. Does that mean we're not going to get there at some point? I hope sooner than later, I believe we will, but we've got to do it right. There's just too many – and we don't make this stuff up.

There's the nail salon story in Missouri. There's the Baptist Church in Germany. Right, Judy and Christina? This notion of congregation, if you don't do it responsibly, and you're sort of on top of each other, and then there's an intimate exchange. Cardinal Tobin reminded me of, this is now a couple of months old. I think I've said this here. You had a couple of outbreaks. I think it was in Staten Island, because of the very act of giving communion and the intimacy associated with that. So I'm all for getting there. We want to get there. We're going to get there outdoors before we'll get there indoors, but we've got to be very careful. We're not holding back for some crazy reason. We're holding back because we want to do it responsibly and we don't want to kill anybody. Thank you. Sir.

Reporter: Governor, could you just refresh my memory? Did you say March 4th was the first case or first passing?

Governor Phil Murphy: First case. First positive. That's it? Okay. Thank you. Bear with me a second. We will be together, as I say, tomorrow at one o'clock unless you hear otherwise. I'm going to mask up as I say my farewell, Judy, if that's all right with you. Again, I think we came out of this weekend, you know, not batting 1,000, but about as good as we could have hoped and that doesn't surprise any of us because New Jersey's been head of the American class.

By the way, there were also some really emotional Memorial Day remembrances, I was at one myself in Wrightstown where I go every year and it was a much smaller group than normal. But as part of that, let's remember, not only do we honor our veterans, particularly those who have given their life and service to our nation and its values, as well as our active duty, but we acknowledged a group of members of our National

Guard who will be deploying to the Middle East in mid-June. So this is about our history, and honoring those who have served and especially those who have fallen, but it's also about honoring the here and now and our brave women and men in uniform.

So keep up doing great work, folks. God bless you all. I cannot thank you enough. We'll be back together again tomorrow. Judy, Christina, Pat, Jared, Matt, the whole team, thank you very much.

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