

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 14th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

05/14/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. 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. In the audience today, but importantly with us, another person who needs no introduction, our State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. To my far left, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. We are also joined today by two special guests. Immediate immediately to my left, the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, Rob Asaro-Angelo is back with us. Great to have you, Rob. And to my far right, a very good friend, Cape May County Freeholder Vice Director and the Mayor of Sea Isle City, one of New Jersey's great communities, Len Desiderio. Len, great to have you, man.

I've asked Rob to give us an update on the work of his department to ensure every New Jerseyan who has filed for unemployment gets a swift determination of their claim. And the Freeholder is here because today we have some good news for our shore and lake communities. I also want to give a shout out to the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples is here; Head of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mike DeLamater is with us. He'll be answering questions, I suspect, for the next 10 days, or at least eight, on what this means for beaches. Mike, thank you for your help. Chief Counsel Matt Platkin will join us shortly.

Len, it's hard to believe you and I were together for a 5k on February 16 in Sea Isle City, It feels like 5,000 years ago at this point. It's unbelievable. Throughout this emergency the Freeholder, not just with me, but with Mike and our teams have had numerous exchanges about the big step we're taking today on our road back, and that is ensuring that the Jersey Shore can be open to families across our state and region, and we could do it in a way that is consistent with protecting the public health of every beachgoer.

The Jersey Shore, after all, is where memories are made. The last thing any of us wanted was for a summertime down the shore to be a memory. Today, I am proud to announce that yes, our shore and our lake shores will be open. As with all of our decisions, we followed our core principles, that data determines dates and public health creates economic health.

Just as importantly, the steps we are taking today are also coordinated with our neighbors in Delaware, New York and Connecticut. This is an approach that is absolutely essential to our futures, both as individual states and as a region. And here in New Jersey, we have also engaged in direct discussions with leaders up and down the shore at all levels of government, folks and friends, like Len who knows the issues of our shore communities and economies better than anyone else. I mentioned the other day that we had a great conversation with both the four shore counties and a number of the municipalities and mayors just a couple of days ago earlier this week.

I also want to give a shout out to some other folks, Senator Vin Gopal, who represents so many of our great Monmouth County beach towns. His advice and counsel and advocacy for our shore towns was similarly invaluable. I also give a shout out to another friend, Monmouth County Freeholder Director Tom Arnone. I also, just by example, again Monmouth's my county so I'll brag, Mark Walsifer and his team in Belmar put forward, in particular, a really smart beach plan. I want to thank all of the other local and county officials from up and down our coastal communities. This was truly a collaborative process again, not just Monmouth and Ocean and Atlantic, but obviously Cape May, represented by Len today.

We want everyone to have fun, but we need everyone to be safe. To accomplish both, we will be requiring restrictions on how many beachgoers may be allowed on any beach or lakefront, and the social distancing we've been practicing in our hometowns will be extended to our beaches. And to be clear, no one will be discriminated against. No community can turn a public beach into a de facto private one. All visitors must have the ability to enjoy our state's greatest natural resource. Every beach will be required to establish capacity limitations, but we will leave it to local leaders to determine the method that would be best for their community.

This can be done through methods including: limiting the numbers of available beach tags for any given day, or through utilizing technology such as with a geographic spatial analysis. Social distancing measures requiring at least six-foot distances between beachgoers will be enforced except for family groups, household members, caretakers or couples. This is the same approach we have taken with parks. And again, we will leave it to local officials to determine how best to implement these measures.

Each of our shore and lake communities have unique characteristics and we know there is no one size fits all approach. However, some restrictions do fit across the board. Organized games and contact sports will be prohibited, as will beach recreational summer camps and special events that draw people to the beach such as concerts, festivals, or fireworks. Sanitation will also be of great importance, especially since this order will allow for shower pavilions, changing areas and restrooms to remain open for visitors, and they must be regularly and properly cleaned.

And with this order, I am also directing the reopening of restroom facilities at our parks, so long as they undergo frequent and proper cleaning, as well. Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, Catherine McCabe, Matt Platkin would want me to remind everybody that it will take a while for us to roll through with the proper seasonal staffing to get all those restrooms up and running and open and properly sanitized. So at the parks, please bear with us. That will begin, I think, as early as Saturday, but it's going to take some time.

On our boardwalks, restaurants may continue to operate for takeout and delivery only, but the rides, arcades, games and other draws must remain closed. Other features that are meant to draw a crowd, a waterfront fountain, a playground, or visitor interpretive center must similarly remain closed for the time being. This is not a life sentence here. We could have a dramatically different reality a month from today, and I promise you,

we're going to monitor this for both sides, by the way. We've got to comply, folks, you've been extraordinary. We've got to continue to comply now at the beach. And assuming we do and assuming the curves keep getting better and assuming Judy and her team feel comfortable, we will be able to take more steps and I promise you, we will not hold those steps back one minute too long, nor will we jump the gun, I hope, not one minute too soon.

Our beach and lakefront communities and counties will also engage in comprehensive public outreach campaigns using both traditional and online media and yes, even the ubiquitous planes carrying banners to ensure that all visitors are aware of the restrictions in place, as well as what is expected of them while visiting. While we are not specifically ordering it, we highly recommend that you wear a face covering, particularly when social distancing is difficult to maintain, such as waiting in line for a slice of boardwalk pizza. As I've said many times throughout this emergency, that I wanted to find a way to allow our beaches to be open for the summer, I applaud Len for raising his hand in partnership, for bringing to together a broad coalition of Cape May shore towns and for working with us so we could reach this day. I can't say enough good things about the level of cooperation, Len, to you and your colleagues in Cape May and frankly, right up the coast in Atlantic, Ocean and Monmouth. But you're here today for a reason. It starts with you, and thank you.

We are living through unprecedented times, but we have confidence that residents and out-of-state visitors alike can take in a day at the beach safely, so long as the measures we are announcing today and which are outlined in further detail in the order itself are followed. By the way, I should say this, it does not say in my remarks. This is all effective Friday, May 22. Folks, we're giving the shore communities and counties an eight-day runway to take these general guidance points and make them work for their communities.

Again, public health determines economic health. Our shore economy is a tremendous driver of local jobs and revenues. Because of the work of millions of New Jerseyans, of you all out there to slow the spread and flatten and lower the curves, we can confidently take this step today. And, by the way, data determines dates. Memorial Day weekend is still more than a week away, but the data tells us we can make this announcement now.

After months at home, I know many families, probably measured in the hundreds of thousands if not millions, cannot wait for a day either down the shore or alongside one of our lakes, and I am proud now to be able to give them that day, a day they worked so hard to make possible. Again, I want to thank the Freeholder for traveling all the way from Cape May to be with us, and I thank him for his advocacy for our shore communities and his insight, which has been invaluable in crafting a plan that will ensure that families will continue to create their shore memories. We'll hear from Len in a few minutes.

So this Memorial Day, New Jerseyans can still have the words ring in our ears, thanks to Mr. Springsteen and Waits, because down the shore, everything's all right. And even in these challenging times, that is exactly as it should be. By the way, we are aggressively reviewing pool protocols, as well as charter fishing, which are not part of this Executive Order, but we would expect to have some guidance in the next number of days on each of those fronts.

And with that, let's turn to the overnight numbers. Yesterday, we received an additional 1,216 positive test results for a current statewide total of 142,704. The daily positivity or spot positivity rates from May 10, which is when the specimens were last collected, Judy, was 22%. Here's how this is reflected across regions of the state. As you can see, they're converged. The map that we've regularly been turning to keeps showing slower rates of spread across the state. And by the way, Len, not just because you're here, but a big uptick, which is a good thing in Cape May County, on this map.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated for COVID-19 has now dropped below 4,000 and stands at 3,958. This is a great milestone to reach, but let's remember this means we still have more than 3,900 of our fellow residents in our hospitals. Our field medical stations again reported 35 patients. This is a breakdown of hospitalizations across region, and here are total hospitalizations for every 100,000 residents, again across regions, to give a more balanced picture.

Looking at our long-term care facilities, here are the numbers of positive cases, over 27,000, and fatalities connected to these facilities 5,168 blessed souls. We continue to throw everything we've got to work to mitigate these numbers. And in our long-term care facilities, by the way, we can today announced that the

federal – this is not the National Guard, this is the federal US Veterans Administration is providing five 10-person healthcare strike teams who will join the staffs at some of our facilities until June 30. This is a big deal for us. I want to thank Secretary Wilkie and the whole VA team. They're expected to be in state by literally, I think tomorrow or Saturday,

The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care fell again to 1,157. Ventilator use continues to decline, 898. There were 171 new COVID-19 hospitalizations yesterday and the number of live discharges was 366. Here are the numbers from yesterday, by the way, broken down by region. Always nice to have bigger numbers on the right than the left, and that was the case even though just by a hair, in all regions just by a hair in the south.

Again, I cannot stress this enough. These trends are your doing. You're the ones who have pushed these numbers and these lines downward through social distancing and as we begin our long road back, we will need to keep it up, to keep seeing these lines move downward, and that will give us even more confidence in the steps to come.

Let's look at these numbers in a different light. This is a subset of a chart we've shown you for the past couple of days. Since the peak, all of the metrics we've needed to see in terms of hospitalizations have happened. New hospitalizations are down nearly two-thirds from peak and down by more than one-third in just the past couple of weeks. This is a strong number that relates directly to the slowing spread of COVID-19. Overall hospitalizations are down by roughly half since the peak, and more than one-third over the past couple of weeks. Patients in our ICUs and on ventilators have both dropped significantly since the peak and over the past couple of weeks.

Here's how the overall numbers we report daily compare day to day. In every category, there are a lot of green lights, so let's sit on this, Dan, for a second. The left side of this chart shows you what I just showed you, but the right chart, our balls for each day. A red ball is a spike up, a green ball is a reduction. You can see how the overall numbers we report compare day to day. Here we can see each of these metrics. Let's flip this if you can, by region, within that all-important 14-day window we've talked about. Again, a lot of green lights. There had been one-day increases here and there but as I've said before, and as Judy has said many times, we can't get distracted by a one-day number. We have to look at the longer term trend. It's just like the difference between the weather on a given day and say climate change, and the overall climate is now hospitable for us and sufficiently hospitable for us to be taking the steps we've been announcing these past couple of days to begin to restart our economy and summer at the shore.

Now, let's hold on this again for a second. Judy, you've said this from the get-go. You've got new hospitalizations, patients in total in the hospital, ICU patients, patients on ventilators. You see a pretty equal split regionally on new hospitalizations, there's no other way to put that, in terms of the upward spike days, and that's something we've got to watch. Otherwise, it's largely in the south, and that's exactly as you had predicted, that this was going to go from North, Central to South. And so you see more red balls on that bottom South line, in both patients in the hospital, patients in ICU, patients on ventilators. There's almost an absence with one day's exception of spikes in either the northern or central region. We're watching very closely, not just the migration, which we had predicted, but that upper left chart we've got new hospitalizations to make sure that all the great work, I'll pick a county like Bergen or Essex, or Hudson, which had been particularly slammed, and they had driven this so far toward the ground that we're not seeing any flare ups on the backside.

Again, social distancing has worked. It is still working and will continue to work in the weeks to come, as we take further steps. But, of course, let's not get too ahead of ourselves. We are not out of the woods yet, and this next slide is one we've been showing the past couple of days. It shows the current impact of COVID-19 across our region and in comparison with other states in America. Again, we can make the case that at this moment in time, we are the most impacted state in the nation. And this is why we need to keep up the social distancing, even as we begin to restart and recovery. Again, this has shifted. We're doing this, this is as of, I believe, yesterday, Dan? Is this the 13th? As of yesterday.

So you've seen we have slipped a little bit in new cases per 100,000, that's a good thing when you slip on this chart. Connecticut is now just out ahead of us. Patients in the hospital per 100,000, we're still number one in the country. And sadly, new deaths per 100,000, we are still number one in the country. So not only does this

chart remind us why we have to keep up our social distancing but the past couple of charts, I hope gives you some sense of the needle that we have to thread here. Enormous progress on the one hand, and that's unmistakable, with some flare ups that we got to make sure that we're keeping a very close eye on. And on the other hand, we are as impacted a state still, as we sit here today, as any American state. Clearly, the tragedy within the tragedy are the long-term care facilities and the notion that this can spread intergenerationally. It can spread from healthy to non-healthy folks with comorbidity.

So let's keep at it, everybody. Let's see good things at our construction sites and in our downtown starting on Monday, and let's make Memorial Day weekend not only fun, but safe. You've been extraordinary. Let's keep it up as we take these incremental steps.

So this good news aside in terms of the steps we're taking, there remain countless families who have been dealt the worst news of all, that they have lost a loved one to COVID-19. Today, we report that another 244 precious members of our New Jersey family have lost their lives from COVID-19 complications. Our statewide total stands now at a staggering 9,946. In all likelihood, we'd like to think otherwise, we will pass another solemn milestone tomorrow.

As we do every day, let's remember a few of the incredible lives we have lost. Let's start by remembering a guy I heard a lot about yesterday, Scott Geiger. He was one of our frontline public health heroes, a career EMT. Scott was only 47 when he passed, and he had been an EMT for 30 years, meaning he became an EMT when he was 17. For the past 17 of those years, he spent them with Atlantic Mobile Health.

His brother Ben, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, said Scott simply lived to help people in their most desperate moments. And he made a point of saying Scott never called what he did a job. He always refer to his EMT activities as his duty. Scott's second love was the New York Jets even if they did not always love him back. But he knew perseverance and you have to be that way if you're a Jets fan. After all, Scott defeated cancer seven years ago. He was a great friend to many, the first step forward to help or to get a colleague a cup of coffee or breakfast when they were busy. But he loved his family, the most of all.

To Scott's mother Joyce, and she's had her challenges, his father Sandy, his brother, Ben with whom I spoke, his loving aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephew, his goddaughter Lauren, we send you all our deepest condolences and you are in our thoughts and prayers today. And Scott, my buddy, we thank you for your service to the people of New Jersey and for always doing your duty.

Next up this is Judith Ann Ferrara-Coppola. Judy was born in Newark and lived in Union. You won't be surprised when I say this, given that photo. In her youth Judy was a model, but her real passion was her family. They recall that Judy was at her happiest when everyone was gathered around the table. But outside, she took equal pleasure in spending time on the beach at Spring Lake with her children, or going on a road trip with her sister Terry. I had a long conversation with her sister Terry, her big sister Terry, by the way, who essentially had acted not just as her big sister, but as her second mom. Among other things, they were both hairdressers and I've never met Terry face to face but I can tell you based on my conversation, she would fit comfortably into the category of a pistol. She was something, and so was her sister Judy.

Judy enjoyed a game of bingo and also enjoyed watching, in this case, her New York Giants play football. I incorporate the prior comments by reference. She was 69 years old. Judy leaves behind her two sons, Michael Jr. and Vincent, along with their wives and two grandchildren. She also leaves her beloved sister Terry, as I mentioned, her second mom and her family, including her nieces and nephews. We keep them all in our prayers and thoughts today. God bless you, Judy.

And finally, we remember Marie Specchio. She was born and raised in Newark. She lived for many years in West Orange and moved to Toms River 23 years ago. Her family remembers her as "The traditional Italian mother, who loved her family and ruled with a wooden spoon." And does that picture say that in spades, huh? God bless her. She loved to bake and to ensure that her family always sat down to a good meal, especially at Christmas. Marie devoted herself to St. Gerard, the Patron Saint of Mothers, and was a member of the St. Gerard Ladies Guild. She also was a breast cancer survivor, bless her, and now she is reunited with her beloved late husband, Michael. She leaves her daughters Susan and Michelle, and I will tell you having spoken with both of them yesterday, they remain and who could blame them, devastated by their mom's loss. She also leaves behind Michelle's husband Frederick and their two kids, Marie's grandchildren, Brittany and

Nicholas. She also leaves a sister and many nieces and nephews, and she also leaves behind her furry friends, especially her best friend, Zoe Rose. May God bless you, Marie. May God bless your family at this extraordinarily difficult time.

Three more members of our New Jersey family who COVID-19 has taken, let's never forget them. By the way, unrelated to COVID-19 and I have to say that explicitly, but we lost a giant overnight. Jeremiah "Jerry" O'Connor, former Saddle Brook mayor, Freeholder Director in Bergen County, State Senator, a giant. We lost Jerry overnight. I spoke with his wife Terry, who herself is a giant, and their son Kevin, who is a very dear friend of mine. I want to give a shout out to the O'Connor family and to say that Jerry and his memory are in our prayers.

Switching gears, I'm going to leave the report from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to the Commissioner, but I do want to give Rob and his entire team a huge shout out. As Rob will report, the department is clearing 140,000 residents' claims off the backlog this week, and I know they're going to keep at it until they deliver for every eligible resident. If you're frustrated out there, Rob doesn't blame you. I don't blame you, but know that an enormous amount of progress has been and continues to be made, and that you will get every single penny that's coming to you, including the federal piece. So Rob, thank you, to you and your team.

I also want to note I want to give Pat a shout out here, that the Office of Emergency Management has passed another milestone in their efforts to ensure that our frontline healthcare workers and first responders have the personal protective equipment, or PPE, that they need to do their jobs. The Office of Emergency Management, affectionately called OEM, has now passed out more than 42.6 million pieces of PPE that has been distributed. Two-and-a-half months ago, that was not a line of business in either the OEM or the State of New Jersey. We're now well over 42 million pieces out. Pat, to you and the team back at the ROIC and in the warehouse, congratulations and job well done.

Now, with the news that there will be summer at the Jersey Shore and at our lakes, let's close on an equally inspirational and upbeat note. Let's start in North Arlington with George Zakhary. That's a t-shirt George has got on, huh? George lost his father Adele on 9/11 and his sister is a healthcare worker. He's been running the Breakfast For Our Heroes campaign to provide breakfast for healthcare workers across the state. He's already hit 24 hospitals and is now focused on serving those at Clara Maass Medical Center in Belleville, and St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston. And just as importantly, he's been leaning on local coffee shops to provide the goods, so he's supporting our small businesses in the process. So to you, George, keep it up, one breakfast sandwich and cup of coffee at a time. I know our frontline heroes thank you, and we do too.

And lastly, this is a big one. How is this for an inspiration? Let's bring up Allendale's Silvia Goldscholl. Sylvia is 108 years old. She was seven years old during the 1918 flu pandemic and she survived it. Last month, Silvia tested positive for COVID-19. And now we can say she has beaten that. A tremendous life, a tremendous spirit, a tremendous show of strength, a tremendous role model for all of the rest of us. So to you, Sylvia, we send you all of our best for the many, many more years to come. How about perhaps another 108? I think that's as good a place as any for us to end my remarks today.

With that, I'd like to introduce again a friend, the Vice Director of the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Mayor of the precious Sea Isle City, please help me welcome Len Desiderio. Len, thank you for being here.

Mayor Len Desiderio: Governor, thank you and it is my honor to be here. Happy Birthday to Sylvia, 108 years old and I too wish her another 108-plus years. Governor, I have to start off and just thank you, thank you, thank you for your strong leadership during this entire time. Your staff and you have been absolutely fabulous. As I've said many, many times, this is not a Republican or a Democratic problem. This is a problem that we all need to work together with. We all need to come together and under your leadership, Governor, we are moving forward and I do see light at the end of the tunnel.

It is fabulous news about the beaches. I can't tell you how happy we are in Cape May County, and I'm sure across the 127 miles of beaches in New Jersey, to be able to open up our beaches. I know that in Cape May and in particular in Sea Isle, are now waving to me with five fingers, so I'm very, very happy for that and it's great.

What we are planning to do, and this is with Ocean City, Strathmore and Sea Isle, is to have a dry run this Saturday for capacity management, in which we can learn and go to school. This is something we've never had to do before. Our job has always been to bring as many people as we can to the beach, as many people as we can to our communities. Now we are practicing capacity management. We're going to have a Memorial Day; it's going to be a little different. We're excited about the beaches being open, but the three communities and I know other communities in Cape May will be joining us, but the three communities are going to be practicing this this Saturday. We're going to be observing it and we're going to learn how to go to school.

As you know, the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders put together a task force and it was headed by Freeholder Will Morey and myself, along with business leaders from throughout Cape May County, from all walks of life. We worked many, many hours to come up with a plan which promoted safety first, but was allowing us to get our businesses we feel open. We presented it to you and your staff and once again, Governor, I have to tell you, going back and forth with your staff has been a fabulous, fabulous thing for us. Because when we reported to our community, when we reported back to our council, when we reported to fellow freeholders and our citizens, they really do appreciate that the line of communication between us and the Governor is the way we're having it, and it's the way it should be. I do appreciate that.

As you know, we've presented this plan to you and your staff. We've had a number of conversations with your staff, your Chief of Staff, Michael, Alex has been wonderful dealing with the mayors, etc. You getting on the phone on Tuesday was wonderful with 24 shore town mayors. And as I said before, this is not a Democrat or Republican problem, we have all worked together. By opening up small businesses for curbside shopping, which will start on Monday at six o'clock, it has relieved such a burden from these mom-and-pop shops, these small businesses.

When this first started, we have to remember, they were bringing in their stock for the spring. It was March, they were bringing in their spring attire, they were getting ready to open, especially the shore communities. Some of them never even got to be opened when we had to close down, and they have been closed down for 59, 60 days. This is a shot in the arm to them. This is something we thank you for. This is something we're going to follow. And what I've said to the freeholders, to Cape May county and to my community of Sea Isle City is that we all need to work together. We walk together, we move together. This is something new.

When we have a storm coming, and as bad as a storm is, we generally know how to prepare. We know what to do. We know when we have to evacuate. With this, you know, and after the storm, we know that there's repairs, we know there's beach replenishment. We know that shop owners, homeowners have to make repairs to their property. With this, we didn't know what was coming, how it was coming. The Governor's daily briefings that he has done, along with these wonderful people up here, has been an inspiration, and it is given the elected officials and the citizens of Cape May County something to hope for.

And that's what we have, hope. We have great hope. We've been following the Governor's orders to the tee. We will continue to follow the Governor's orders, and we're moving forward, and great news for the shore with the beaches open. Great news for the shore with the small businesses able to do curbside business, and we will continue to move forward and we will watch capacity management, and we will move forward together. I have great hope for us, and I have great hope for us this summer. Thank you, Governor, once again, for your leadership. We will be working together. I have your cell phone number, so watch out. I'll be calling you many, many times. And thank you for compiling such a great staff that takes care of not only the freeholders, the mayors, but all of the citizens of Cape May County. God bless you all and thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Len, that was incredibly powerful and I cannot thank you enough for your leadership and your partnership. You're such a good guy. In fact, you even just promoted DeLamater. But seriously, you've been incredible to work with. We knew that before this, by the way. You and I have known each other before this crisis, but we've really gotten to know each other during this. And so to you and your team and your fellow freeholders and the mayors in the communities, cannot thank you enough. And again, you put together a really good model in many respects. What we've announced today through this Executive Order is an homage to the model that you put together in Cape May County. So thank you, Len, for this and for all. I know our team thanks you.

Now, I don't know why I feel this way today, but I introduce the woman to my right every day, both at the beginning, for her remarks, and at the end, and almost inevitably, it's Tina Tan is with her or Ed Lifshitz, and I want to give Christina Tan a shout out as well. But Dave, you asked me, I thought about this yesterday, you asked me how was this going for me? I chose to run for office and I chose this position as an elective matter and when you do that, with that goes not just the thick skin that I referred to yesterday, but you go into that with your eyes open. I'm going to be just fine, win, lose or draw. I know that for sure.

But you have no idea, folks, what it is like walking in the shoes of Judy Persichilli. Now, do we always bat 1,000? God knows we're going through this for the first time. Who could bat 1,000? But no one has done more over the past three months in this state, and I would argue in this country, as a health matter, as a leadership matter, she has been absolutely extraordinary with literally the weight of the lives of 9 million people on her shoulders, morning, noon and night. We could not ask for better leadership and I'm incredibly humbled to sit here every day alongside of her and to go to battle with her every single day, morning, noon and night. Please help me welcome the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Wow. Thank you, Governor, for that very kind introduction. As the Governor announced, we've requested additional support from the Veterans Administration for five of our long-term care facilities. These teams will include clinical staff, nurses and certified nursing assistants to provide additional staffing, implement infection control recommendations, and help residents with activities of daily living. These individuals are in addition to the over 100 VA personnel supporting our vulnerable residents at the Menlo Park Memorial Veteran's Home and the Paramus Veterans Memorial Home. The state now has over 300 National Guard members throughout the entire state from Sussex to Cape May, working in long-term care facilities and in our hospitals. We are grateful to the VA and the National Guard Services. Any additional support, be it direct care or direct caring and comforting, is appreciated.

As I covered yesterday, we are getting increasing reports of pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome from our healthcare providers. The department is investigating 17 possible reports of this condition. Yesterday I shared that there were 18 possible. One report did not fit the definition. These are among children ages 2 to 18. There are nine counties: Bergen, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic, Union and Warren. This is a rare condition, but it can be treated. Early recognition is important, so we ask that parents look out for the symptoms. Your child may seem irritable or sluggish. Your child may have abdominal pain without another explanation, or episodes of diarrhea or vomiting. Your child may have a rash, conjunctivitis, enlarged lymph nodes or red, cracked lips or a red tongue, and perhaps swollen hands and feet. Please call your healthcare provider if your child has any of these symptoms, so that your baby can be evaluated and treated. We are concerned about the incidents. We will look at every single report but at this time, we have not established a clear link to COVID-19.

The Department of Health put out a public health update on May 7 to all clinicians to alert them to be aware of pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome potentially associated with COVID-19. The alert noted that we are working closely with the CDC and our neighboring states to investigate reported cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome that may possibly be associated with COVID-19. Cases characterized by persistent fever and features of Kawasaki disease and/or toxic shock syndrome were reported in the United Kingdom and have recently been identified in children in the United States.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 53.5%, Black 18.6%, Hispanic 19.1%, Asian 5.4%, and other 3.4%. There are 525 long-term care facilities in the state reporting COVID-19 cases for over 27,000 cases. At the state's veteran homes, similar to yesterday, with a census of 662, 366 residents have tested positive with a total of 137 deaths of our residents. At our psychiatric hospitals, with a census of 1,240, we are reporting an additional death at Ancora for a total of 13 patient deaths at the psychiatric hospitals.

The daily percent positivity for the day of May 10 was in New Jersey overall, 22%; North is 20%, Central 23%, and South 25%. That concludes the daily statistical report. As we take incremental steps toward reopening, I want to remind everyone to continue to take steps to protect your health. Stay home when you're sick, clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces, cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others, cover your coughs and sneezes, and wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds. It is important that we stay vigilant to continue to reduce the spread of this virus in our state. Stay connected, stay safe, and stay healthy. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you, and thank you for that. We haven't said it in a couple of days, but the racial inequities are something that you and I and our teams, and Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, we want to give a big shout out, who's in Atlantic City by the way, today, is something we continue to look very carefully at. I meant every word and then some, so thank you very much to you and Tina.

And again, on this Kawasaki piece, you made the point Tina, on the call earlier, this is treatable. You've identify the symptoms early and get to your healthcare practitioner, and this is something people can recover from and get through with the proper treatment. Thank you. Again, another guy who's not sleeping much, to him and his team, who are doing an extraordinary job in the face of a tsunami, unlike any we've ever seen before. And again, that's not meant in any way to make you feel better if you're not getting through yet. We understand that, but it's Thursday. This is the day that both the US and each of the states announced the new unemployment claims and we thought it was a good time to ask the Commissioner to join us. Please help me welcome the Commissioner of Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Rob Asaro-Angelo. Rob.

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro Angelo: Thank you, Governor. As I said last week, it is a harsh reality that COVID-19 swelled the nation's unemployment rolls to unprecedented numbers in a few short weeks, as shown by more data released today. Business as we knew it ground to an abrupt halt here and everywhere else. But every single day, thousands and often tens of thousands of new claimants begin receiving benefits due to the hard work and dedication of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development staff. I want to lead with a sincere thank you to our claimants for their patience and understanding as we work toward getting 100% of our eligible workers the benefits they are due.

With such big numbers, it may not seem like it at first glance, but New Jersey's unemployment insurance system is working as intended, with nearly 800,000 unemployed and underemployed workers receiving state and federal benefits. That's more people than live in five US states. More than \$2.7 billion has been deposited into the bank accounts and onto the debit cards of eligible New Jersey workers. According to a Tuesday New York Times article, in 2019, New Jersey led the nation in percentage of eligible unemployed workers receiving benefits. The same was true in 2007 and many of those same folks who set this standard are working right now, as I speak, to process even more claims for our state.

The mission of this department has never wavered, to lead the nation in delivering on our promise to ensure our workers receive every benefit they are entitled to, unemployment and others. Right now, according to that same Times article, our state is still performing better than most, to pay out benefits after this crush of layoffs and temporary furloughs due to COVID-19. But as I've said, this means little to those still waiting for their benefits, and we want to do more.

Since unemployment insurance is a federal program, the US Department of Labor, my former employer during the Obama administration, has just reaffirmed strict guidance to states noting that many of the outside-of-the-box solutions we have been exploring, such as temporarily suspending or amending the troublesome weekly certification process, cannot be enacted without putting our entire unemployment system, including billions in CARES Act funding, at risk. This isn't some dusty law we just pulled off a bookshelf. This memo you see up there came earlier this week.

But here's what we can and have done this week alone. Today, through upgrades and improvements in processing, I'm proud to announce that an additional 139,000 claimants are being made newly eligible, which is hopefully of some comfort to many of those who've been waiting for benefits. To be clear, this is in addition to the tens of thousands who regularly become eligible each week in normal course. It includes nearly 60,000 claims in the third batch of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claimants that were just converted for processing, meaning essentially everyone who was eligible for this new federal assistance and applied by April 12th, which is an overwhelming majority of them, has been processed. This is incredible work, which I will detail more later, but I want to thank all of our staff who have been embarking on creative solutions to the historical volume of claims that came with this pandemic.

We also appreciate all the ideas coming from the public and our lawmakers to increase our staffing capacity. We've been working on this, as I mentioned, last week. It's important to note that an unemployment claims agent cannot simply be plucked off the street and sat in front of a computer screen. Handling sensitive personal information such as social security numbers, birth dates, and bank account information requires

trust and a State Police background check. Thanks, Pat. It means knowing the ins and outs of unemployment law. It means making benefits decisions based on nuanced state and federal regulations. And it takes experience with our systems, especially at this time.

However, in addition to hiring and beefing up our call centers, the Labor Department is making the most of the talent at our fingertips, and I couldn't be more proud of our employees for stepping up to the challenge of COVID-19. For those of you who are unfamiliar with unemployment, I'd like to take a moment to explain how the process works. Wage earners and their employers pay premiums into the Unemployment Trust Fund. And when they are separated from an employer through no fault of their own, and otherwise eligible, they receive the insurance payments they deserve. But now there are hundreds of thousands of workers who have never been part of that system at our door for their PUA benefits. We will be reimbursed from the federal government for the benefits paid out but the amount of time and effort that has gone into serving this new group of workers has impacted all of our customers.

This additional universe of workers includes independent contractors, self-employed workers, and workers who don't have enough income history to qualify for regular unemployment. While we're thrilled these workers who have been negatively affected by COVID-19 are getting government support through Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, it presented an entirely new set of challenges, as systems that have been in place for a certain type of worker are now serving as a catchall. These 200,000 to 300,000 need to have their claims reviewed because there's incomplete income information for these applicants, and their wages must be verified by labor staff, per federal law. There is no way around this.

Imagine if every VA hospital was told that tomorrow, in addition to veterans, they must immediately start accepting any patient who was ever in the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or wore any kind of uniform. Eventually, they'd be able to assist this population but in the short term, it's obvious to see the challenges and delays it would pose to its typical, traditional patients.

But we are absolutely making progress. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, this week another 139,000 will become eligible for benefits. And besides the PUA, it includes 82,000 claims that may have been pending for weeks due to nonmonetary appointments, social security number errors, and other identity-related issues, and those that were stuck due to lingering certification response errors. We will make these claims payable now, so claimants can receive benefits while waiting for adjudication. This is a big step, and it's one more piece to our puzzle that is falling into place. While there are small percentages of people who have been waiting for some time, it's not because of a system glitch or delay by the agency. It's because for some reason, under unemployment law and US DOL guidance, they're not immediately eligible for benefits. If not for system upgrades made during the Murphy administration, and programming improvements since the pandemic hit, the number of claimants receiving benefits would barely be over half of what it is today. But now that there is such an incredible number of people in the system certifying benefits, we ask all of our claimants to follow our social security number based schedules, so we can regulate the load coming into our systems. And take a moment, or two or three, to read the important guides we posted to make sure they're answering questions correctly.

We know many, many thousands are still getting tripped up on the required questions, as shown before in the earlier US DOL memo. This past week alone, over 40,000 claimants locked themselves out of the system for their weekly benefit and that is adding to the volume our agents need to handle. These inquiries are preventing those who truly need to speak to an agent from getting through. That is why we put out the step-by-step guides and why we launched Dolly, the Google chatbot last week, which has already seen 110,000 engagements.

We want to help everyone, especially as we're preparing to make approximately 139,000 additional self-employed workers, independent contractors and others awaiting benefits newly eligible this week. These folks will be receiving email instructions on how to claim their weekly benefits starting this Sunday. I am proud of this progress. And while we wish we could wave a wand, hire unlimited staff who've already had years of UI experience, and have everyone paid today, the process is not that simple. We must protect claimants personal information, prevent fraud, and more importantly, obey US Department of Labor rules, all while paying benefits in the timeliest manner possible. Until then, I'd like to remind all of you to visit our website at myunemployment.nj.gov, and please know we are singularly committed to our claimants and getting them every penny they're eligible for, as quickly as we can. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Rob, thank you and thank your extraordinary team. I know this is unlike anything any of us have ever dealt with before. To folks out there, please keep the faith. Again, to repeat something we've said every day, you will get every single penny that you rightfully deserve, including the federal monies. Rob, again, I can't thank you enough for your leadership and your team's extraordinary efforts. Thank you. With that, we have a guy we hear from each day, Colonel Pat Callahan, with any updates on compliance, PPE, infrastructure, protocols. Anything you've got, Pat, God bless you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon. Probably one of the more, if I can use the Q word in law enforcement one of the more quiet nights for compliance. Newark Police Department issued 275 warnings, which I think is a good thing. And one other incident in Elizabeth where a subject was cited for hosting a large gathering. And Governor, since you mentioned the benchmark that we've hit with regard to PPE, it's a good time to also thank, and he happens to be here today, Commissioner Asaro-Angelo and the Department of Labor, Public Safety staff who are responsible for inspecting all of that PPE before it goes out so we make sure that we're not sending bogus or not good equipment out to our first responders and healthcare workers. Just a huge thank you to you, Rob, and to your staff there.

And just lastly, to somewhat tag team on your remarks about the Commissioner of Health, I just did the math. I have been with her or on the phone with her for the past 83 days straight. I think it's within my authority to designate her as an honorary trooper, the synonym for trooper is fighter, warrior, soldier. She fits the bill on all of those things, and then some, and I'm honored and humbled to serve with her every day. Thank you, Trooper Judy, for doing what you do. Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: That's far more impactful than anything I could say, that's for sure. Pat, thank you, again, to the OEM team, to your inspection team, Rob, and certainly to Judy and Tina and the Department of Health. And again, Len's here today because we've said it all along, it takes a village. I had a good meeting with the Senate President and the Speaker last night. We spoke about a number of things, including we all felt a good meeting was had yesterday at the working group level on bonding and our ability to take advantage of the bonding opportunities. But we don't get here, any of us, by ourselves. Your point in terms of just the day in and day out nature of something like this is extremely well taken.

You know, one of the things that came up on the call that Len and I and Mike DeLamater organized the other day and Pat, I know you'll be all over this with your colleagues, as well as local and county officials. We'll have inevitably a lot of people who will want to let some steam off. Who could blame them? Having been stayed inside for so long, and so Len, I love the fact you're going to take it around the track in a few communities this weekend. I'm sure Pat, both in the parks as an ongoing matter with the Park Police, your own county and local law enforcement, as well as at the shore and our lakes, we'll be out there, God willing, folks will continue to do just as they've done. Overwhelming compliance and doing the right thing. Hats off to each and every one of you.

We'll start with John but before we do, we're going to go down and then come back to Dave and go down, so we're going to do lanes today. There are a lot of you so I'm asking you, John, please set the example. Please keep these brief and short. We will be here tomorrow at 1:00, I don't think there's a VTC, and we'll be here Saturday at 1:00, and Sunday will be electronic unless we think there's a reason to be with you, either on the telephone or face to face, in which case we will do just that. I mentioned this earlier. Matt Platkin is now with us. We hope to have guidance on elections in the next day or two. We hope to have guidance, I think on elective surgeries. We're still baking, which is more complicated, I think, than any of us thought. We are still, I mentioned earlier today, we're going to have some pool and charter fishing guidance as well. I hope all of that within the next couple of days or so, so please bear with us. If you've got questions about that, just give us another day or two and we'll get back to you. On charter fishing and pools, needless to say we're trying to get stuff in place so we can be in as full of shape as possible when next Friday, the 22nd comes around and we kick off Memorial Day weekend. With that, Matt, John, you're up. Good afternoon.

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Thank you, Governor. On the shore reopening, can you tell us what specifics you were telling the towns on how to formulate their plans? Will we be able to see what the plans are for each town? And enforcement on social distancing, can you explain how shore towns are going to handle keeping crowds away? I mean, what do you expect, like the Wildwood Crest Beach Patrol to be going up and down? I mean, how's that going to look?

There was a nurse's aide at the Menlo Park facility who died. She was the second of the frontline staff there who died. Her family in Union are there saying that there was a lack of PPE early on. Can you speak to that? As well as claims by the unions and others that the state prioritized hospital PPE over veterans and nursing homes.

Governor Phil Murphy: One more, please.

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Sure. And on the labor, on the unemployment website, all of the stuff that you're talking about, except for the number of claims, was in place a year ago, 20 years ago, in some cases. You guys knew that there were choke points with the labor system, your transition report said that. It's an archaic looking form, and people are going nuts, who aren't getting their claims, being told you didn't fill out the form properly. We'll get around to it. How can you speak to this?

And also, what are you going to do to fix this thing?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think on your first question, Len, you may want to weigh in here. In fact, I'd love you to weigh in. We are, as I think you're hearing today, giving guidance at sort of not a 10,000-foot level on beaches, but we're sort of setting the parameters and we're asking, which has been the partnership all along, the local mayors and county officials to actually execute on that. Part of the reason is not only have they forgotten more about shore realities than any of the rest of us, number one, but number two, it depends on what beach you're in. Wildwood is a whole lot different than Belmar, to pick two beaches that I've been at recently, myself. Len, any comments, particularly on social distancing?

Mayor Len Desiderio: Yes, Governor. Our Police Chief Tom McQuillan, along with our Beach Patrol Captain Rennie Steele, have been working on a plan and we do not want the lifeguards supervising and watching for social distancing. We want them to keep looking straight out at the ocean and do what they're supposed to do, watching to make sure everyone is safe. We're going to have some Goodwill Ambassadors up there that are going to be passing out materials, just giving people notification on what you can do, and please do practice social distancing. If you must stay together and you're a large family, we're going to ask you to please put on some face shields. We're going to ask you to please respect everyone.

As I said earlier, this is all brand new to us. We're going to be working together. I know our Police Chief is going to have a couple of police officers on quads riding up and down, making sure, just giving information out and making sure everyone is adhering to what we want them to do. But the lifeguards, we want them to do the job that they always do, and that's to watch the ocean and watch to make sure everyone's safe there. We'll remember, we'll watch what's going on. And that's one of the reasons why this weekend, Ocean City and Strathmore and Sea Isle has decided to do a dry run, because it's better to do it this week than we figure Memorial Day weekend, the traditional kickoff to the summer season. And we'll be able to come back and have a plan in place for next Friday. That's the way we're going to work that. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: My pleasure, Len. And I know each of the communities will communicate and the counties will communicate any parameters that they've got. I read of this tragic loss of life, John, as well. Remember, we started as a nation, literally, almost I would say with a peashooter in terms of PPE in the stockpile, in terms of testing materials, testing kits, and swabs, etc. and we have cobbled this together from nothing to 42.6 million pieces distributed of PPE and testing that will now be able to test within the next couple of weeks 20,000 or more tests a day. That doesn't make up, that doesn't compensate for any loss of life. Bless the nurse's aide. I don't have any insight on the particulars of the case, Judy, do you? We don't, so we can come back to you. Again, bless the loss of life.

Pat, I mentioned, I think two weeks ago that in particular, the White House is sending in a whole other wave directly for long-term care. I will, Rob, turn to you. You heard this, hey, you've got 19-year-old systems and all the anxiety that goes with that. Any comments you've got to John?

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro Angelo: Real quick. Thanks, Governor. I just want to be careful, I don't want to conflate the certification question issue with the age of our websites or how it looks, I because the certification questions are just questions that are on a standard form. No one has problems filling out forms, or there were no form errors that are causing any delays. That being said, yes, the system is old. Some of our neighboring states have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to fix their system, to no avail, quite frankly. By the way, just so you know, we're on these conference calls, I've been going to

conferences in this job, my last job, about UI systems. And quite frankly, some state might have a prettier looking website than another, but the behind the scenes architecture, the behind the scenes system are quite frankly all the same.

The fact that we need to interconnect with multiple systems across multiple states is part of the issue. You know, we talk very often about the jobs that COVID-19, that nj.gov portal that got up and running within a week or two of this starting, and that was easy to set up. It was our own data, our own information that we sort of house and control. We don't have that same luxury with the unemployment system, because we're made by the federal government to store data going back to literally the 80s, 90s. Everybody's, basically wage history for their entire work life. So it's not like we can start up a new system on our own. These things are interconnected with systems all over the country, quite frankly, our ICON system, which verifies information from other states, verifies identity. So it's not like we can – I'm not saying that we can't make improvements. I think we've made a lot of customer-facing improvements since we've been here, quite frankly. But I think that the back of the house architecture, that's got to be a federal solution, in the end. I'm hoping the one benefit that comes out this is that, you know, we've never heard anybody in Congress or anywhere else talk about unemployment data systems, computer systems. Hopefully this attention will give us a federal response.

Governor Phil Murphy: That would be one in a row if that were to happen.

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro Angelo: Right, because frankly, every single state is implementing the same federal system. The fact that we're all on 50-plus different operating systems, different ways to apply is totally nonsensical. I'm hoping that in COVID 7.0, whenever it's going to be in Congress, that one of those is going to be a unilateral unemployment system that every state can plug into, put their own parameters in, still have home rule or state rule about who gets benefits or who doesn't. But the fact that we're all running different systems is ridiculous.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Matt, you wanted to add something on beaches, I think, right?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, just on the beaches order. And John, when it comes out and you see it, I think it'll be a little clearer. But there's a number of requirements set forth in the order that are fairly specific, and then there are some that are broader parameters such as the requirements around social distancing. They have to maintain six feet of distance, how they do it, some of that is up to the local jurisdiction because beaches vary up and down the state, as we know. That said, there's also a requirement in the order that each jurisdiction conduct a communications plan to communicate the restrictions to the public, so that they understand what they can and can't do, and how access will work.

Governor Phil Murphy: Including before they get to the beach, importantly, that's the reason for that.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Correct, and we'll be doing that at the state level as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Sir.

Reporter: Yes, following up on the unemployment system, I have two questions. One for you, Governor, and one for your Commissioner. The question for you is, in your travels, you mentioned going to the beach recently, how often are people coming up to you about the unemployment system? Do you have anyone in your circle, your family or friends, struggling with this system, as so many others are?

And then for your Commissioner, I'd like to talk about the bones of the system. When people get a check one week, but then they go three more weeks without one, is that something in the way they're filling out the form? Or is there something in the bones? Is the glitch in the system?

Governor Phil Murphy: People come up to me all the time. And if you follow our press conference, which we do every day, I think John, one of your colleagues said, now we'll have to start answering the tough questions. This is the 58th press conference we've done, by my count, so you might want to tell Charlie that we're answering the tough questions every single damn day. People are rightfully coming out of the woodwork. If you've lost your job, in particularly the unprecedented numbers, and if you add to that the frustration that you can't get through, and you already, the average American has, we've already seen the studies and New Jersey's no different, people are living at the edge of their affordability. One bad, usually

defined as one bad healthcare event away from bankruptcy, who could blame them for being frustrated? So I've gotten calls at home, I get texts, I get calls on my own phone. People in every Ask The Governor, every interview, every press conference, we get it.

And by the way, we're no exception to the country right now. This is at levels that are just beyond anything we've ever seen before. Folks are upset. They're nervous, they're scared, and who could blame them? Rob, real quick on the second one.

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro Angelo: I also obviously have tons of friends and family coming to me about these issues as well. But based on your one question, it's always hard to answer a generic question, because every claim is different. But an overwhelming majority of folks who start getting paid and then don't receive benefits next week is because they've answered a question – and I don't want to say incorrectly, they answered the question how they answered it. But those are the US DOL guidelines. If someone answers one of these questions in a certain way, they are no longer eligible for UI benefits, which is why we've gone to great lengths from me being here, putting out press releases, putting out basically, now they need to attest that they've read the information about each question before they go through and certify. So yes, if someone's got benefits already, and they don't get them the next week, there is no glitch in the system. That means that one of the questions was answered adversely.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Channeling Sonny and Cher, we have Paul Mulshine. Paul, how are you?

Paul Mulshine, Star-Ledger: The Republican Senators are calling for an inquiry into the long-term care problem. I gather more than 53% of the deaths are there and they're complaining, and also a lot of my readers are complaining, that the administration was doing things like cracking down on golfers and joggers, while sending COVID-19 positive patients into nursing homes. I gather there still isn't full screening of the staffs in the nursing home. Do you think there should be an inquiry into that? Because that's where most of the deaths are.

Governor Phil Murphy: Anything else, sir?

Paul Mulshine, Star-Ledger: That's it.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't think how we're dealing with, this is not an and/or you can either deal with golfers who are non-compliant or deal with the long-term care tragedy. We can do both. Listen, Paul, it's an overwhelming tragedy and it's not unique to our state. Judy hired a national renowned firm A couple of weeks ago, they are right now digging through this whole, they're not only plussing up staffing, they're in there for a reason, to give us exactly what's gone wrong. What can we do better? How does this industry need to look in the future?

Again, the uneven performance of this industry is jaw dropping, and that's as charitable as I can get. I've said all along we can't get there by ourselves. We welcome the Legislative reality in the state and I think we've worked extremely well with the Legislature and communicated at a high level on both sides of the aisle. But you add National Guard, Vas, the firm we've hired nationally, the directives that Judy's been putting out since March 6, to testing now required by May 26, by mandate, universal of patients and staff, all staff. The numbers don't lie, it is an overwhelming tragedy. There's just no other way to put that. And I speak every day to families who have lost loved ones, and they are disproportionately families of loved ones who were lost in a long-term care facility. It tears your heart out. But we're going to stay at this. I don't begrudge anybody looking at this and saying, gosh, golly, how can this happen? How could we do better? We're doing the exact same thing. Judy, do you want to add anything to that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, I certainly agree with what the Governor said. This is a tragedy. Like he said, the numbers don't lie. I'll reach out to anyone that will help us determine what we should be doing going forward so that this never happens again. The resiliency of the long-term care industry is thin and they work at the margin. We know that. Did they have adequate PPE? They did not. And neither did anyone else in New Jersey and in the United States. There was no stockpile of PPE nationally, and there was no stockpile in the state. We were just scrambling to get as much as we could and through relationships, quite frankly, that our Governor and his Chief of Staff has with DC, we got more than our share, including

things like ventilators. We were able to do as best we could with what we got, and at the end of the day, the tragedy of long-term care will haunt us for a long time, but we will definitely put things in place that will prevent that from happening again.

Governor Phil Murphy: Also, I meant to in my list Judy, I forgot the Attorney General has launched an investigation, so this is not just all the things I've already said, but the Attorney General as well. Thank you for that. We're going to come down to Dave and then we'll go straight back again. Dave.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Hi, Governor, thank you. On the beach opening, this is huge news and it's going to involve a lot of people. Maybe I could hear from you, Governor, from the Mayor/Freeholder and from the Colonel on this. With regard to enforcement, law enforcement, you had mentioned, Mayor, that you're going to have the police out and about, but will there be a widespread encouragement to have law enforcement out and about? You may get, I mean, I understand you're trying to limit crowds on the boardwalk and the beaches, but you may get a huge throng of people. And the mindset is going to be yahoo, it's summer. Let's kick back and relax and get some fun. Will tickets be issued if people get out of hand? Will people be kicked off the beach if they're misbehaving or not following orders, directives and so forth? Parents, should they be encouraged to watch their kids? It's hard, kids are going to be playing, they're going to be running around, there is going to be roughhousing. Kids are kids. How much of a concern is that? And are you concerned, yourself, Governor, about the fact that this really is a very big step and it has the potential for a spike? How concerning is that?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll start, and maybe Len and Pat can come in behind me, if that's all right. Yeah, listen, if you go back to first of all, if you look at other places that have done, who were ahead of us in this corona reality and have driven this down dramatically, places like Germany, South Korea, Singapore, other places, you've seen flare ups. We've said, I think unequivocally, Judy will correct me if she sees this differently, if we bat 1,000 on taking steps responsibly, we're going to have flare ups, which is why we have the testing, contact tracing, isolation infrastructure that we're putting together. We accept that.

If you look at those charts that we have showed the past number of days, lots of progress, still a stark reality that we are arguably the most impacted, as we speak now, state in America. And so I'd say two things about that. Number one, there is a benefit to take a lot of smaller steps, particularly ones that may on the surface look unrelated, because you are much better able to real time, in an iterative way, to judge the impact of those steps. Admittedly, beaches is a big one. Parks and beaches will be the two biggest ones we've taken so far.

But curbside pickup and retail is not really connected to non-essential construction. Or, frankly to what we'll say when we say it about elective surgery, as an example. My point is if you take a series of incremental steps, you can be much more nimble in assessing the impact of those because you can, as opposed to if you took 10 steps at once and there's a flare up, you have a hard time parsing through why you had that flare up.

Secondly, I would say there's a range of responsible action right now. There's a range that goes from very conservative to very liberal in terms of the steps you can take. I personally would assess the beaches are getting toward the edge of what we can responsibly do right now. This is something that we're all going to hold hands and do together, recognizing that we know people are dying to let steam off. They're dying to get out. And, you know, we're going to have a big burden of responsibility to get that as right as we can.

I'd say one more thing before I turn it over to Len, yes, if people are non-compliant, they will be dealt with. How they're dealt with will depend on the community that you're in. How the social distancing will be enforced is going to depend on the community that you're in. But this is a big step, there's no question about it and we've got to rely, as we have done from day one, we've got to rely on all of us to get this as right as we can.

And with that, I'll ask Len just real briefly and then Pat, how you see enforcing, how you see the reality of dealing with people who are non-compliant, etc. Please.

Mayor Len Desiderio: Thank you, Governor. Yes, having the police on the beach is nothing out of the ordinary. Every day during the summer, we do have police on the quads that ride around just to make sure everyone's safe. If anyone needs anything. We're not looking for any problems. We're not looking to arrest anyone. We're not looking to have anyone removed from the beach. I think the majority, or most of the people

that are going to be going to the beach know where we were, and where we are now and what we have to do. I don't envision what happened recently in Naples, Florida, where they opened the beach and had to close it because of non-compliant and them not following the rules.

But as the Governor stated, if we do run into someone that does not want to follow the rules, then they will be dealt with and removed from the beach and/or ticketed. But I don't envision this. I think everyone's going to be able to police themselves. I think they're going to be happy that they're finally allowed to get out. There's a lot of cabin fever going on right now, and I think that they're going to be ready to go and enjoy themselves in a safe manner.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen. Pat.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I'll just add briefly that as recently as this morning we were on with Mike Delamater, Ocean County and Cape May County do the special police officer training. Obviously, training across all law enforcement was suspended. I think the Cape May class has about five days of hand-to-hand training left, so we're working with the Police Training Commission to make sure, as we do every summer in those shore counties, to bolster up our Class 2 and 3 officers to make sure that we have that workforce out there in place to monitor social distancing,

Governor Phil Murphy: Len referred to this. The great thing about New Jersey beaches, they may be configured differently from town to town, but you do have an ability to control the capacity, and that's something that is, in this case, a huge blessing. Thank you. We're gonna go to Elise, if we could, Matt.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. I'm curious about the risk to lifeguards. There's no way you can social distance what they do. So will beaches be open to swimming?

Regarding the predicted \$10.1 billion shortfall through fiscal 2021, are you working out how to plug that hole? For instance, the percentage of borrowing, the percentage of spending adjustments, the percentage of federal aid? What's Plan B if enough federal aid doesn't materialize?

Finally, do you plan to continue to make the quarterly pension payments at the amount that you pledged? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll start and I don't know whether or not you may want to weigh in from a health standpoint. There will be swimming at beaches. I don't know of any beach, do you know of any beach, Len or Mike, that is not allowing swimming? A local municipality has the right to shut their beach and to make that decision. I'm not aware of any. Are you?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: There's also legal protections around swimming, but under your order, Governor, swimming can be allowed both at beaches as well as in the parks.

Governor Phil Murphy: But again, a local municipality or county theoretically could say no to swimming, but at the moment we know of none. Is that --

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: I think we'd have to review what they're doing, because there are rights to access to water.

Governor Phil Murphy: Anything you want to say on lifeguards and protecting themselves?

Mayor Len Desiderio: Yes. Generally you have two lifeguards on a stand. What we're preparing, and I know our Police Chief and our Chief of the Beach Patrol, we're going to have one on a stand, have another stand a little further so that we can spread out the swimmers, so we'll be able to do that. So it'll be one on a stand at this time.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, anything you want to add? We're good? I don't know what the mix is right now, Elise, and part of this has to, you know, we need legislative support. As I said, I think the Speaker, Senate President and I all agree there was a very constructive, good working group meeting on bonding yesterday. But we still need to see where that turns out, where the federal assistance, the direction it is headed. It feels, we had this discussion, I had this with the leaders last night. It feels better than it did a week ago in the sense that you're starting to see folks on the other side of the aisle come out, particularly Governors and Senators.

Sadly, the plan B is, which we can't fathom right now, is enormous cutting of services and headcount from the very people that we need at the point of attack right now in the biggest healthcare crisis in the history of our state and country. So it's not even as though you could, that your crisis is over here and you could do something over there to deal with it. We can't. This is the frontline workers, the exact folks we need. And by the way, we don't need to be raising the unemployment ranks any more than we've already had them raised. Can you imagine if states weren't able to continue to employ folks?

By the way, I heard of a poll yesterday, which was encouraging, that 80% of Americans believe that state aid, that they support direct state aid, including a majority of both parties, and I hope that finds its way to the deliberations in Congress. I would just say, we will make the quarterly, we'll make the pension payments, was your last question, I believe. Sir.

Reporter: Governor, a follow up on the budget shortfall. Do you think that number is going to get any higher? Because you had previously told President Trump that could get as high as \$20 million to \$30 million. On long-term care, given the concerns and outcomes, do you have any confidence that long-term care operators can deliver and implement universal testing and continue testing in the deadlines you set? If so, what gives you that confidence?

Lawmakers from both parties have called for hearings into the state's response to long-term care providers. Do you think that situation, in particular the state's role, deserves critical scrutiny at this point?

Governor Phil Murphy: Last question, please.

Reporter: Last one, with the existing contact tracing that's already in place, to what degree are you focusing on new hospital admissions? If so, what have you learned about who they are, where and how they're getting sick amid all social distancing?

Governor Phil Murphy: Could the budget shortfall get worse? Yes. I would hope, if we can responsibly take reopening steps like the one we're talking about today, that it doesn't, but it could. It could in particular if we get, either we stop complying, which I don't think will happen because New Jersey has been number one in the American class in terms of doing the right thing. Or if we have flare ups that that hit us, even having batted 1,000. But could it get worse? Yes.

Judy can talk about long-term care and their testing, but they're mandated to do this and the expectation is crystal clear. We've already said, lawmakers from both sides want to assess what's happened. I've said this from day one. This country needs to do a post-mortem and this state will do a post-mortem on this entire process and we owe it to the citizens to do that, in the same spirit as the 9.11 Commission was done, led by Governor Kean and Congressman Lee Hamilton. That's the sort of model that we would look to not just nationally, but here as well, including, obviously in long-term care. I don't have an answer on contact tracing and the new hospitalizations. Judy, anything on that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't quite understand the question about the contact tracers for new hospitalizations.

Governor Phil Murphy: Folks who are going in, in the new hospitalizations, what's the status of the contact tracing around their situation?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: All of the positive cases get reported to the local health officer. The Local Health Officers are following all of the current cases. As we increase testing, that's where we need more contact tracers, because we expect that we're going to get more positive cases.

Reporter: Do you know at this point, how and where people are getting sick?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think we gave you the chart in terms of the regions, at least.

Reporter: Where they're coming from, I mean. You know, are they people who are staying at home? Are they people who are essential workers who are amongst other people?

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't know that we know. The new hospitalizations, we don't have a crisp answer, but we probably can get that for you. We have at least broken it down geographically. You're good? Do you have any, sir? You're good. Let's go to Matt here. Hold on, Matt.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Governor and Commissioner, I'm curious, Commissioner, if you have a number of new filers and pending claims, if we have a fixed number on that? And whether or not there's any plans to do an audit or an investigation into some of the failures, or at least looking into upgrading the system? You mentioned some federal help there. Have you reached out to the feds? Is Jersey looking at that angle?

Governor, Jackson officials say that they're reopening municipal rec fields for sports as long as people don't gather in more than groups of 10 and don't play contact sports. Does that violate your order? And just lastly, a gym owner in South Jersey has gone on TV and been vocal about reopening Monday in defiance of your order. I'm curious how you react to that and just in general, folks that are still operating businesses that are non-essential and can't be opened under your order. How do you respond to that?

Governor Phil Murphy: Do you want to hit real quick the unemployment, both in terms of new filers pending and any audits?

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro Angelo: Every Thursday we release new numbers, so the numbers we released today were based on filings last week, ending on Saturday, and there were 70,000. I think the exact number was 69,689 new filers last week. As far as audits, to be honest, one of the first things I did when I came in was have a meeting about modernizing our UI system. It doesn't just mean the website, it means the whole functioning system. This is something that is a national effort. There's a group called NASWA, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies that has a regular group about this. Our Assistant Commissioner for the Income Security, Ron Marino, sits on. This is an ongoing effort by every single state in the country to upgrade and modernize their UI systems. Clearly, it's not fast enough. We clearly couldn't have seen this pandemic coming. But quite frankly, we're on this all the time. And as I said, the improvements we have made, have made things better for how we're dealing with things now. But as I said before, this is not going to be fixed nationwide, because it's a nationwide problem. This is a federal answer for this.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'd also say any post-mortem we're going to do is not just going to be a healthcare post-mortem, it's going to be a comprehensive post-mortem. Did you say Jackson was the town? I think Matt, am I right in saying if you're gathering less than 10 and you've got social distancing, that that is okay? Is that not correct?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: With respect to contact sports, Executive Order 133 gave municipalities and counties the ability to operate their parks if they so choose, but they have to still abide by the restrictions that are in that order with respect to state parks, one of which is you can't have organized or contact sports. This has been communicated to the town and we will follow up if they have any questions.

Governor Phil Murphy: I thought you said they were not doing contact sports. Yeah, but just to clarify, fewer than 10 people can be in a space as long as they're socially distancing, right?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: The administrative order issued by the colonel says that you have a stay-at-home order in place, and there's a gathering in it, up to 10 people are presumed to be in compliance unless there's evidence to the contrary. But the information we received from the town was that they were considering doing recreational sports activities, which would classify as –

Governor Phil Murphy: Let's be clear about that. If it's less than 10 and you're social distancing, particularly if you're outside, but frankly, even we said this the other day for private prayer, that's okay, as long as you've got good hygiene, you're social distancing, less than 10. Sports is not okay. And the gym owner is out of compliance, I don't know, I've heard about this person. They're out of compliance, and that's not going to be tolerated. I'll leave that to Matt and Pat and they can deal with it from there. Thank you, sir. Do you have something? I'm looking at you. Do you have something? No, ma'am? Nothing? Ma'am, how about you?

Reporter: I'm with the Atlantic City Press. One of the questions I had for the Freeholder is, how do you see the little boardwalk shops like the T-shirt shops, things like that, can they operate in that curbside service way that other non-essential businesses are allowed to operate? How do you see that playing out?

And then for the Labor Commissioner, did I understand you to say that 82,000 claims that have been withheld and you said stuck lingering because of certification response errors, that you're going to make them payable, so people can receive the payments before adjudication. But then you also said another 40,000 people

answered something wrong this week. Will that not matter anymore? Will anybody who answers something wrong, will they automatically get payments and worry about adjudicating later? Or is it just those 82,000 that'll get paid, but another 40,000 are going to be back in line with payments not being made because of this.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me make a quick comment before Len will jump in, and then Rob. The non-essential retailer reality, a T-shirt shop on the boardwalk is going to be similar to a mom-and-pop shop in a downtown street, at least for the time being. This is as of Monday morning curbside retail pickup. That'll be the case wherever that location is. Restaurants will continue to be takeout. And that's whether it's --

Reporter: These are very tiny shops and they have no doors.

Governor Phil Murphy: I understand what they are.

Reporter: They're wide open. So I'm just asking maybe if Freeholder could describe how physically that would work?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm making more the comment as a general matter. The rules of the road are the same. How they actually do it, I'll defer to Len, and he'll have very good examples of some of the shops in his community. Then we're going to go to Rob, and then we're going to take this out. Len.

Mayor Len Desiderio: Thank you, Governor First of all, we're all happy that the small shops are going to be able to open. The business owners are extremely smart. For instance, the restaurants, we had many restaurants that never before had to do take out, never did take out. They've done innovative ways of getting along these past few months, doing takeout. The shops are going to be able to do things such as deliver, so you'll be able to call them and they can deliver to you. I know it's going to be difficult. It's not going to be anything like they've ever experienced before, but we're all learning something new and we're all doing things in a different manner, just to keep going. And this is a way that they're at least going to be able to open now. And this is a first step.

But I lay it on the business owners because they have used their minds in different ways during this entire time and I go back to the restaurants who never did take out before, that are now doing it and doing it well with innovative ways of doing it. The shop owners will be able to do deliveries, be able to meet the customer. I think it'll work. It's not perfect, but it will work.

Reporter: Would sidewalk sale type set ups be legal under this? Putting merchandise out front?

Governor Phil Murphy: My guess is no, but we're going to see how it goes. I do want to echo what Len just said, the creativity. The small business owners are extraordinary. For all of its failings, thank God we're a capitalist country, because folks will figure out a way to get through this. Rob, do you want to answer the unemployment question?

Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro Angelo: Yep. Good question, Michelle. Real quick, I just want to say that my first job was on the Atlantic City Boardwalk in one of those retail shops, and then also delivering bagels overnight in Atlantic City, so I think those two jobs uniquely prepared me for this job. I won't get into the specifics, but broad sense, the 82,000, many of those are folks who've had certification question errors, and we're going to be basically doing that process week by week. I want to confirm that, because I don't know. Of the seven questions, I don't know that all seven wrong answers are going to be able to be fixed. I want to be able to get back to you with a specific answer after that, but yes, that will be fixed ongoing, but that does not take away the importance of somebody answering certification questions the right way. We'll get back to you with specifics about that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you all. I'm going to mask up as I say farewells. We covered a lot of ground today and my guess is we'll cover a lot of ground in the next couple of days. We've got at least elections, elective surgeries, pool guidance. What else is on that list? Charter fishing, potential guidance coming up. I want to thank the Freeholder and Mayor who's a great guy, a great friend and a great leader, and I want to wish you the best as you war game this weekend, and then as you kick things off a week from Friday. I'm not sure I'm going to be standing with you, but if I could find a way to do that, I would love that, if not Memorial Day, soon. Judy, to you, I meant everything I said and then some. I don't know where we would be without you. To you, Dr. Tan, and your teams, thank you so much. Rob, again to you and your squad, I know this is as tough as it gets. And, again, folks out there, we don't blame you for your frustration, but you will get what is yours

and Rob, that wouldn't happen without you, Pat, thanks to you and your squad on PPE and compliance and other matters. I know you'll be on full alert, and colleagues, as you always are in the summer. Jared, I know you and your team will be as well. Matt and Mike, I thank you.

Everybody, just keep doing what you're doing. The level of doing the right thing in this state is better than any other state in America and that shouldn't surprise us for one second. We're taking a big step. This is a big step. Of the steps we've taken up until now, I'd say county and state parks, Judy, was the biggest step we've taken. Beaches is the biggest now. And the fact, listen, as we've said this before, to your good questions, this is going to evolve over time to see how we do. Out of doors activity gives us more degrees of freedom. The indoor, the most difficult thing is indoors, sedentary, correct me if I'm wrong, with no circulation, no windows open. That's going to be the toughest nut for us to crack. But I'm thrilled that we could sign this Executive Order, great cooperation up and down the shore in our lake communities. We'll see you back here at one o'clock. God bless you all.

Governor Phil Murphy

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