

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: July 6th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

07/6/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. I am 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 and another familiar face, State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan, great to have you both here. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. Jared Maples, Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness is also with us, and we hope everybody had a good and safe Fourth of July. Pat will give us a readout of what we saw around the state, not just in terms of COVID compliance, but also some general safety review of where we ended up over the weekend.

Starting today, summer camp and educational programs for our youth have been green-lighted to reopen. Outdoor graduations may be held to celebrate the Class of 2020, and NJ Transit returned to its full weekday schedule. We are continuing down our road back. However, today we are seeing a sign that we all need to take with the utmost seriousness, and which we all need to work together to reverse. Today the rate of transmission, the rate at which COVID-19 spreads from one person to another, exceeds 1.0 for the first time, I think Judy, in 10 weeks. For the last two days, our rate of transmission, or RT, has been at 1.03. This means that for every new case of COVID, we are seeing that case is leading to at least one other new case. This means increasing rate of spread statewide. This is an early warning sign that quite frankly, we need to do more.

Over the weekend, we learned of several outbreaks across our state directly tied to travel to other COVID-19 hotspots nationwide. In Hoboken, of 13 new cases reported over the weekend, 12 are directly tied to travel to known hotspots and I give a huge shout out to Mayor Ravi Bhalla and his team and the public health officials

and contact tracers in Hoboken for their swift work to help stamp out this flare up, and you can see Ravi's posts there. And that's a heavy dose of a couple of things that we've been talking about every day, which is contact tracing that allows us to track this down and test, test, test.

Elsewhere in North Jersey, several other new cases of coronavirus are tied to folks who traveled to a wedding in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. We need to be smarter and we need to work harder. Our 14-day self-quarantine advisory for those who have come through a known coronavirus hotspot is there for a reason: to prevent flare ups like the ones we are now seeing. So, please go to covid19.nj.gov/travel to learn whether you should be self-quarantining. Our requirement that face coverings be worn while indoors, and our need to wear them outside as well are there to help slow the spread of the virus. Millions of you, literally, are taking the need for self-responsibility to heart. But even so, just one selfish person can undo the hard work the rest of you all have done.

I want us to be able to deliberately and responsibly continue down our road back. I do not want to have to hit another pause on our restart because a small number of New Jerseyans are being irresponsible in spreading COVID-19, while the rest of us continue to work hard to stop it, but we all need to be traveling down this road together. We all need to be wearing face coverings, even when it's a hot day like today. COVID-19 doesn't care about the weather, it only cares about finding another person to infect. Don't be a willing host. Wear a face covering, self-quarantine if you've been to a coronavirus hotspot, and get tested. This is how we reverse this upward trend of RT, or rate of transmission, and get it back down below one. We absolutely must.

We have, by the way, so many metrics falling in our favor, but with an increasing RT, all of that work becomes jeopardized as well. So with that, let's look at overnight. Yesterday we received another 216 positive test results for a cumulative total of 173,611. The daily positivity rate was 2.14% for tests recorded on July 2 and July, for the past couple of days before that it was 2.06, 2.48, so these are good numbers. That's a good data point and we need to keep this number low, because we know it also speaks to our ability to slow the rate of spread.

Looking to our hospitals, the total number of residents hospitalized for COVID-19 yesterday was 861. Intensive Care was 187, ventilators in use 152. All three of those numbers decreased across the weekend. And as we look across the past two weeks on that right column, we see that the numbers in our hospitals have continued to steadily decrease. Here are how these daily numbers feed into the overall trends, which speak to the readiness of our healthcare systems to be able to handle new cases. But as we measure ourselves against our peers, we see the need for continued vigilance, and they also speak to the need for us all to redouble our efforts on social distancing, especially on wearing face coverings that can further help slow the rate of transmission, and especially if you've not been tested, and it is possible that you are an asymptomatic carrier of coronavirus.

Today we're reporting an additional 20 confirmed losses of lives from our New Jersey family from COVID-19. That brings the total of confirmed deaths to 13,373. The number of probable deaths increased by two to 1,856. As we do every day, let's remember three more of the New Jerseyans we have lost.

We start today in Essex County to remember Timothy Lloyd Pernel, Sr. He was born in Virginia but spent the past 59 years as part of our family, in both East Orange and in Newark. He was a quintessential preacher's son, who was also trained in the ministry and sang in the choir. But his future opened for him at Bell Labs. Brought on initially -- this is an extraordinary career, folks -- brought on initially to serve as part of the groundskeeping crew, he soon moved indoors, first as a laboratory assistant, but eventually becoming a member of the technical staff, a post usually reserved for scientists with advanced degrees, most of them with PhDs. He was self-taught in organic chemistry, advanced mathematics, physics and computer programming. He either authored or co-authored 30 journal and conference publications and his work supported more than 15 patents. He was an advocate for black employees at Bell Labs to ensure diversity in the future generations in science. All in all, he would spend 30 years at Bell Labs.

Throughout his life, faith remained a guiding light, and he passed that love of faith to his children. He is survived by his four children, Kim, Allison, Bishop, and Chris with whom I had the honor of speaking yesterday, and seven grandchildren and a beloved grand-niece. He is now reunited with his beloved wife, Marlene, and so many other members of his family. Timothy was 78 years old. May God bless and watch over him and his family.

Next up, we remember Araceli Danilewicz. Sally as she was known, was 73, bless her. Born in Manila in the Philippines, she came to the United States in 1975 and settled in Passaic, where she would live for the rest of her life. Sally worked as a medical secretary in the radiology department of Passaic General Hospital for a quarter century and after the hospital closed in 2003, she was a paraprofessional in the Passaic Public Schools, retiring in 2006. Sally was an active parishioner of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Passaic, and was either a member or founder of many social organizations across her community. She was an avid gardener, a fierce bingo competitor and a great line dancer. She leaves behind her husband of 29 years, Mirek, and her children, her son Carlo and daughter Cecile with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, her son-in-law Carmen, and granddaughter, Adrianna. Like so many, Sally was blessed to have made her American dream come true. We are blessed that she did it as a member of our family and again, may God bless and watch over her soul and her family.

Finally today, we remember Clifton's Wallace Roney III. A musical prodigy from the age of five when he set free the first notes from his father's trumpet, he attended Philadelphia's Settlement Music School, where he studied trumpet and music theory. He continued his music education at Howard University, before transferring to the Berkley School of Music in Boston. He found his way to New York, where he made his name performing alongside some of the greatest-ever jazz musicians. Miles Davis himself was a mentor and collaborator. And after Miles' passing, Wallace was one of a select group which included such jazz luminaries as Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams who came together for a Grammy Award-winning celebration of his music. That was, by the way, one of Wallace's three Grammys, and he also contributed to the soundtracks of several movies, including Love, Jones. In 2015, he was named a UN Goodwill Ambassador to Senegal, where he brought instruments to schools in the village and introduced the students to jazz music.

Wallace leaves behind his fiancé Dawn and his son Wallace Vernal Roney, a rising trumpeter on the New York jazz scene, and his daughter Barbara, and stepdaughter Layla. He also leaves behind his grandmother Roselle, as well as his brother and writing partner, a star in his own right, saxophonist Antoine Roney and his sister Crystal. I mentioned he leaves behind his grandmother. His grandmother, according to Antoine, actually raised the boys. His grandmother lives in Los Angeles. She also lost a son to COVID-19. His grandmother, by the way, is 104 years old. We thank Wallace for his many years of music, and again, may God bless his memory, his soul and watch over his family, including his grandmother.

It is for them and for every New Jerseyan we have lost that we need to redouble our efforts to get our rate of transmission back down, and to once again put ourselves in a place where the spread of COVID-19 is slowing dramatically. This thing is brutal, folks. You cannot take this for granted. Although he played at the Paper Mill Playhouse, he had no real Jersey roots, but you probably saw that actor Nick Cordero passed away yesterday at the age of 41. We just cannot -- he battled that thing for months. I think he got sick in late March. This thing is brutal. And in some cases, it hits you and it passes and you never knew you had it. And in other cases, in our case 15 or more thousand people, it crushes you. Yes, it crushes older folks more frequently. Yes, it crushes folks, as Judy reminds us, with comorbidities more frequently, but it takes out younger folks as well. We can never take anything for granted here.

So please, keep practicing your social distancing. If you've been traveling through a coronavirus hotspot, self-quarantine, please, for 14 days and go out and get tested. And most importantly, mask up. A face covering is what protects you from unknowingly spreading corona virus for others. As I was out along our shore this past weekend, I saw many residents wearing a face covering while they were on the boardwalk and walking around, but I saw many others, and far more many others who were not showing the same courtesy to their fellow beachgoers. Let's all get on the same page. Face coverings are how we show others that we care about our communities. Face coverings are how we slow the spread of COVID-19. Face coverings are how we protect the public's health and save lives.

This isn't about you. It isn't about politics. It isn't about how you think you look in the face covering. It's about us being able to continue down our road back as one New Jersey family. Let's lead the nation in this, as we have done in so many other areas.

Now, before I close, I'd like to highlight a small business that is able to stay open today because of the efforts we have put forward through the Economic Development Authority. Yesterday I had the great privilege to speak with Michelle Files, and by the way, it turns out her in-laws are friends of the family and taught CCD to

our kids. Michelle owns the bridal boutique, The Curvy Bride in Manalapan. Michelle herself lives in Freehold with her family, Michelle left a career at a Fortune 500 company to pursue her dream and open the door doors of The Curvy Bride in 2013, the first bridal shop in New Jersey that catered exclusively to plus-sized brides, and she has won multiple awards and many thousands of fans in the years since. However, COVID-19 put everything on the line.

Through the EDA small business support programs, Michelle was able to receive a loan to keep her four employees on the payroll, to pay her vendors, and to meet the rent. The Curvy Bride has not only survived, but today it is thriving, it's booming. Since reopening on June 15th, when indoor retail resumed, Michelle has been just as busy, if not busier than ever before. In fact, she told me business is so good right now, she expects being able to repay her loan early. That tells us so much about our business leaders, and Michelle and The Curvy Bride represent the tremendous spirit of New Jersey's small business community. They are, in every sense, the backbone of our state's economy. So to you Michelle and your employees, I am proud to see your success continue. I'm proud that we were able to help you keep your doors open for your employees and for your customers. And that is a good positive note for us to close on.

So before I turn things over to the woman who needs no introduction, I do want to give a shout out to Congressman and dear friend Bill Pascrell who had some heart surgery over the weekend. Word has it he's doing great, so keep Congressman Bill Pascrell in your prayers. And Bill, you're a fighter unlike any I know. You stay strong, as I know you will, and can't wait to see you again soon, back in action. Nobody fights harder or stronger on behalf of New Jersey than Congressman Bill Pascrell. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. As we see COVID-19 cases rise across the country, we are concerned about the impact to our state. As another example, in New Jersey, we had several confirmed cases and probable cases in the northern part of the state associated with a June wedding in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. That's why it is critical that residents who have traveled to states with high COVID-19 activity, and visitors from those states, follow the recommended 14-day quarantine period. This can prevent the start of an outbreak in your local communities.

If individuals need assistance in finding a safe place to quarantine, they should call the local health department in their area. Most of the counties have already identified locations where residents can stay during their quarantine period, if needed. For example, Burlington County has contracted with two hotels for rooms so that healthcare workers, first responders and local residents have a place available to separate them from their loved ones during a quarantine period. Neighboring Camden County also has hotel rooms available and has partnered with a local community-based organization to offer safe spaces to quarantine. In the City of Newark, the health department has contracted with a hotel that offers individuals who lacked stable housing a safe place to stay, and quarantine to lower the risk of transmission among this population. They are also collaborating with partners to provide wraparound services to help individuals find permanent housing. The East Orange alternate care site has bed space set aside for individuals in quarantine who don't have shelter or need a higher level of medical care not available at their local quarantine sites. All health departments are equipped to support housing needs and assistance for residents while quarantining.

Recognizing that some residents need a higher level of medical care not available in their local quarantine sites, the Department of Health has hired a medical quarantine director to assist with placing these individuals safely. We know it is an inconvenience to separate yourself from others and to stay home for 14 days, but it is vital to breaking the chain of transmission. State and local governments can assist you during quarantine. Please reach out if you need support. Again, you can call your local health department or NJ 211 to find assistance.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, the hospitals reported 861 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation. There are 187 individuals in critical care, with 81% of those individuals on ventilators. Fortunately, we have no new cases to report of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, so the total remains at 51 cases in the state. The children affected have either tested positive for active COVID-19 infection, or had antibody tests that were positive. In New Jersey, there are no deaths reported at this time. The ages of the children range from 1 to 18 and nine children are currently hospitalized.

The Governor review the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.2%, Black 18.3%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.5% and other 1.8%. At the state veterans homes, two more residents have tested positive for a total of 388 positive cases and 146 deaths of residents. At our state psychiatric hospitals, the numbers have remained the same. The daily percent positivity as of July 2nd in New Jersey is 2.14%. In the northern part of the state, it's 1.77%. In the Central part of the state, 1.66%. In the Southern part of the state, it is 5.38%. So that concludes my daily statistical report. Please, continue to practice social distancing. Wear a face covering and wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, get tested. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you for the readout but also for your leadership day in and day out and your team, Tina and the rest of the team. You know, I think, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I think it's fair to say that as we took the steps to reopen, we knew we were taking on some more risk, and that's probably a partial contributor to the increase in the rate of transmission, although the positivity rates remain very positive. But I think there's then this icing that we weren't necessarily anticipating and that's the explosions of this virus elsewhere in the country, Tina, does that make sense to you? And so you then get another increment that relates to the wedding in South Carolina or the reality that Hoboken lived through. You and I were talking about Cape May, and so we're now, really folks, we're dealing with both of those realities.

That's why on the one hand, the steps we take that are incremental in reopening, it's really important that we take them responsibly, in a measured way, that there's a method to the strategy. And then separately, we can't say enough, I assume you all are in violent agreement with me on this. If you've been to a hotspot, you've got to self-quarantine. You just have to and you've got to get tested. And so those are sort of the two realities, I think it's fair to say. So thank you, as always. Pat, we talked a lot about not just the regular compliance as it associates with COVID-19, which we'd love to get your readout, as you give us every day, but also a sense of the Fourth of July reality and the safety report coming out of that. Again, thank you for everything.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor, good afternoon. With regards to EO compliance over the holiday weekend, there was basically three incidents. One, a gym owner in Linden was cited once again for remaining open. In Burlington City, state police responded to help clear a parking lot at a restaurant which had approximately 500 people. But beyond being outside, they were actually also dancing and congregating inside which, as we know, indoor dining is not yet reopened. And in Paterson, a similar situation where a restaurant and bar several patrons inside the establishment, and that owner was cited.

To the Governor's point, with regard to the weekend, I know it mentioned public safety. In Atlantic City, most of you know there was a protest and an attempt to shut down the AC Expressway, but that was a generally peaceful protest. Six people total were arrested there. With regard to fireworks, we had, I'm sad to say we had a report a death from a gentleman in Jersey City who got struck in the neck by a firework and it killed him. We had six serious injuries from fireworks and three minor throughout the state.

With regards to traffic, sadly, I report that we had six fatal motor vehicle crashes between Friday and Sunday. The State Police alone made 74 driving while intoxicated arrests. And with regards to shootings from July 3rd to the 5th, there were nine shooting incidents with a total of 10 victims, also sad to tragically report that three of those victims succumbed to their injuries.

But to end it on somewhat of a high note, if I can, it was a jet skier who had a malfunction with her jet ski down by Barnegat Light and her family put out a missing persons report, and our aviation troopers went up and found her by Clam Island in a broken down jet ski. She had been out there a few hours and actually hoisted her to safety and flew her over to the US Coast Guard Station at Barnegat Light, where she was reunited with her family. That was certainly a positive story that I was glad to report that she was okay. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thanks, Pat. Contrary to the rumors, that was not Judy, but God bless the loss of lives and folks, I'm all for dancing. That sort of stuff, indoors, that can't happen. That can't happen. That's exactly why Arizona and Florida and Texas and other places are exploding, because they allowed congregation to happen indoors. We just can't. We're not there yet.

I think we're going to start, Aswan, over with Dustin. One, I'm breaking a little bit of news here. We're going to go to, beginning today unless you hear otherwise, and sadly given the world right now and the state of COVID in the country we may shift courses, but we're going to go to a Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule beginning today. Unless you hear otherwise, we'll do our best to keep it plus or minus at one o'clock each day, but we're going to begin that process today. We will not be with you tomorrow, we'll be with you electronically. We'll have a virtual release, Mahen, I assume each day, just as we have been doing on weekends. And unless you hear otherwise, we'll be with you at one o'clock on Wednesday. Thank you. Please.

Q&A Session

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Commissioner, you said last month that nearly all the long-term care facilities had fulfilled the requirement that they test staff and residents by the end of May. Have you gotten 100% compliance on that? Are those results reflected on the Department of Health dashboard? And is the state going to require testing on a regular basis?

Governor on Meet the Press yesterday, you said you think there should be a national mask requirement. Certainly when you're going out as well as indoors. Are you going to require people in New Jersey to wear face masks outside? And can you give more specific locations on the outbreaks?

And then did you know about or support your Chief Counsel's directive to the Health Commissioner to fire her inner circle in your office's attempt to find leaks? And what kind of message does that send to employees who may not be doing anything wrong, but are still vulnerable to punishment?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Judy, long-term care, did you hear that – was your question, Dustin, where are we on testing in long-term care facilities, please?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Last month, she said I think something like 98% have completed it, so I just wanted to check back up on that to see if there's 100% compliance, and whether that will be regular testing.

Governor Phil Murphy: Last month, you had said 98% had been tested in long-term care.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We have 100% baseline testing has been completed of residents and staff, and many, I don't have the number, but many are into retesting. The recommendation is to retest negatives and retest staff every week.

Governor Phil Murphy: On masking, I think we were the first state, Matt Platkin is with us, in America to mandate masking indoors and I'm glad we did. We're constantly assessing and reassessing the variety of the advisories and recommendations we have out there. We're looking at outside masking as we speak. I don't have any news for you today, but that is something, again, the virus just to repeat a point we make all the time, the virus is a lot less lethal outdoors than it is indoors, but that does not mean it is not lethal. And that does not mean that you can't still spread it. That's something I know that we're still looking at.

The outbreaks, I know Sussex County, Judy, was the family related to the wedding in Myrtle Beach, to the best of my –

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sussex and Morris.

Governor Phil Murphy: Sussex and Warren –

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Morris.

Governor Phil Murphy: And Hoboken, I don't know that we know the hotspots, I personally don't know the hotspots for Hoboken, Dustin, but according to Mayor Bhalla and his team, 12 of the 13 were from hotspot states. Do you have any more color on that? Yeah, I've got nothing to add on who's working and who's not working other than I don't know where we'd be without Judy, period, full stop, the best health commissioner in the country. Thank you. Brent.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon, everyone. So what would it take to require masks outdoors? You mentioned coming from other states. Are most of these new cases coming from travelers from out of state? Are we seeing rises from beaches or protests or anything else?

There are thousands of migrant workers from southern states picking blueberries in South Jersey now. They are not following the quarantine order and their employees won't allow healthcare officials onto farms to test them. Shouldn't testing be mandatory as it is in nursing homes? And if not, why?

Should a voter who is sick awaiting COVID-19 test results or who is following your quarantine directive who did not receive their vote-by-mail ballot, go to the polls and vote provisionally?

Commissioner Persichilli, have you said you would resign and is the ongoing investigation into members of your staff making it difficult to do your job?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to continue to say I've got nothing to add on that. I incorporate my prior answer by reference. What would it take, Brent? I think it's something that we're looking at real time on the masking outdoors. There is the obvious challenge that Judy and I and Pat as well have spoken to, which is you want to put something in place that you believe you've got a high likelihood of the ability to enforce. This one is more challenging than some other, either you're indoors or you're outdoors, that's fairly easy to determine, but bear with us on masking. Again, I'm proud that we were the first state in America to mandate them indoors.

I think it's a mix, Brent, in terms of the cases, in terms of a little bit, after Judy gave her report today, I commented that we knew we were taking some amount of risk reopening. But there's a further element of risk associated with hotspots that is something that we weren't planning on a month ago. I don't know that we have an exact breakdown between the two. I'll have Judy come back and address the migrant workers in one second.

I have to say this. If you're sick and you're awaiting a test, Judy, tell me where you are on this. As much as I want you to vote, I'm not wild about you're going out into a public place. I think what you should do is if that's the case, get ahold of your county clerk, literally, the minute you're hearing these words come out of my mouth, and get their advice in your county as to what to do. Hopefully still be able to get a ballot. Remember, tomorrow's election day and it has to be postmarked, as we've discussed here, at latest by tomorrow. That's the advice I'd give. Judy, anything you want to add to that, but also on migrant workers and the testing protocols there?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, we have a task force working with the FQHCs in New Jersey to test the migrant workers. We have tested about 3,900 and we are working with the farmers to try to encourage testing in all of the sites. What we don't have is the exact number of migrant workers who are in New Jersey right now, because it ramps up. We've got the blueberry migrant workers right now, but it will ramp up as the season goes on, so we're working with the Department of Agriculture for those numbers.

Governor Phil Murphy: Any different guidance on voting? Would you stay home?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: If you're sick, don't go out? You can't.

Governor Phil Murphy: So get your county clerk, get a hold of them ASAP. And by the way, we talked about migrant workers. This now feels like five lifetimes ago, but Singapore thought they had this to zero and then their seasonal workers came in, I guess it's not really seasons in Singapore, but it exploded. I think anybody who's associated with that industry, and the ag industry is a big one for us, particularly in the south, is people need to realize it's in everyone's interest. It's not, they're over there and we're over here. We're all in this together. Thank you.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: And the workers themselves have been very cooperative.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The workers.

Governor Phil Murphy: Great. Please, good afternoon.

Reporter: Good afternoon, Governor. What is your level of concern about the non-cooperation with growers and their hesitancy to have migrant workers tested on their farms? Do you support the recently proposed bill that would mandate such testing?

What kind of mask requirement do you want to see on a national level and how would it be enforced? The rate of transmission has been increasing more or less steadily ever since the state entered stage two. Do you attribute that growth to any of the decisions in opening up to stage two?

And the rate is up but the hospitalizations continue to drop. Is there anything to make of that? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. The level of concern, I think we just addressed that among the growers and the seasonal workers. It's something that, it's one of the communities that from the get go in terms of testing protocols Judy's had in her top rung in terms of vulnerable communities. I won't comment on a particular bill, but if you're in a vulnerable community, and one that we think is particularly exposed, our objective has been from moment one, to test the entirety of that community. And so, again, putting aside what the bill looks like, that's an objective. Long-term care, our corrections communities, our seasonal workers, and so on.

I think, bear with us on masking. Again, I'm proud of the fact, I'll repeat it again, that we were state number one to mandate them indoors. The virus is a lot less lethal outdoors. There's more mask wearing anecdotally than there was two weeks ago, but there's still not remotely enough outdoors, and that's something that we are, Judy and the rest of us, are looking at this. I think I've said this, I'll repeat it again and ask Judy or Tina. How much of this is related to stage two? How much of it is related to hotspots? I don't know that we know, but it's a combination. In the first part, we knew. We knew when we opened up the state again, we said this, we're taking on more risk and that's going to lead to more transmission, but we felt that was responsible and manageable. I don't know that a month ago, anyone – anyone – would have anticipated that Florida would be printing 10,000 or 11,000 positives a day, or Texas, Arizona, parts of California, etc., so I think it's a mix.

How do we feel about rate of transmission going up and yet hospitalizations are going down? I've already spoken to the first piece although Judy, she may want to weigh in. We're happy that hospitalizations are going down, that's a good thing. But remember also, if you're a newly hospitalized person, it's a little bit of a lagging indicator. The rate of transmission is a here and now, the spot positivity is a here and now. The new hospitalizations is also a here and now, but it's from somebody who, in the most likely circumstances didn't just get it yesterday and have the symptoms today that would warrant being hospitalized. It's a little bit of a lag, a modest lag. Anything you want to add to any of that? Tina, you good with that?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: That again, we don't go crazy, necessarily, on the day-to-day numbers perhaps going up or down, whether it's RT or other metrics that we take a look at. We also recognize too that even though the hospitalizations might look okay right now, we have to recognize that's also a lagging indicator as well. So again, we have to just keep on looking over time and continuing monitoring. But that said, it doesn't change what our responsibility is as far as taking that responsibility to still do the same public health management efforts with masking up, with keeping social distancing, with washing our hands. Again, we can't really control necessarily what might be coming in that we can't predict is going on. But at the same time, there are a lot of things that are within our control, that we can actually take steps to do the best we can to minimize disease.

Governor Phil Murphy: I would add one thing and I'm not trying to make news here, other than we've beaten masking to death here, and we're going to be coming back on masking. I think one thing that this leads me to, Judy, is that we're not going to be jumping the gun on a whole lot more opening up steps right now, I would think, right? So we're at where we are now, and my guess is we're going to be there for a bit. If we see these numbers, particularly the RT, go down again precipitously and the spot positivity rate stay down, that will allow us to take some steps that I don't think we feel comfortable taking today.

Tina made a very good point here. One or two days does not a trend make, so even when we define hotspot states, Judy and Tina and team are saying that it's data that's on a rolling seven-day average, particularly coming out of a holiday weekend, which may also distort numbers, etc. Thank you. Sir, do you have any?

Reporter: Yep, hang on one sec.

Governor Phil Murphy: I love your T-shirt, by the way.

Reporter: Thank you. You've said before that weekends and holidays can throw off some of the numbers. Do you believe that the numbers that came out are lagging, or indicators are suspect? How would a nationwide mask mandate happen, and should Congress be involved? And then the last question is, why have you not issued a mask mandate like the Governors in Texas and Pennsylvania?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I think we've beaten the mask point to a pulp here. Again, we are the first state in the nation to mandate masks indoors. We have a strong recommendation to wear them out of doors. We've said from day one when we started talking about masking, we want to be able to enforce things that we mandate. But again, that's something we're looking at and we'll come back to you on that.

How would it work nationwide? I mean, you need – I said this yesterday in an interview. We are right now as a nation and you know, our job is focused on New Jersey, but we can't help but be concerned now with developments elsewhere in the country, because folks are coming back to New Jersey or visiting New Jersey. We're only as strong right now, as a nation, as the weakest link. And that's no way to run the Navy, as they say. We really need some national parameters that everybody sticks to. And so I would think it could – I don't know that you need Congress for that. I'm not sure you need a law for that. But boy, we could really use that right now. In every state, no matter where you are in the nation, we expect the following parameters to be adhered to.

Your first question was are the numbers distorted or not from the weekend? I think we wait a few days, potentially, right Judy? I mean, the deaths, I hope this is right. The deaths have gone, you know, the Fourth of July we reported 25 fatalities, the 5th 23, today, 20. Boy, I hope that's a trend. But why don't you bear with us another, maybe till Wednesday and with the benefit of seeing what print tomorrow and Wednesday what that looks like. Thank you. Mike, is that you? I can't see, you changed masks on me.

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Good afternoon, Governor. Today, the Small Business Administration released the names of companies that got loans under the Paycheck Protection Program. One of the companies that you listed in 2019 on your financial disclosure, it's called Cohere Communications got a loan. It's valued from \$350,000 to \$1 million. It reported that it would retain 21 jobs if it got the loan. I was just wondering if you could talk about what your role at Cohere is. It's unclear from the disclosure, and when did that begin? Can you confirm whether those 21 jobs were saved or not? And did you play any role in the firm getting the loan? And if so, what role did you play? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I am literally walking over here or coming over here, Dan Bryan called me up and said you had raised this with him, it's the first I heard. I have an investment. I can't remember the last time I spoke with anybody associated with the company. I played no role whatsoever, but we'll come back and give you some more color, if there is any, beyond that. But as I said, the first I heard of it was indirectly from you. Thank you. Sir.

Reporter: Is it my turn again?

Governor Phil Murphy: Mike's done.

Reporter: Good afternoon.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think Mike's done. Was that it, Mike? Okay.

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: Good afternoon, everybody. Well, I was going to ask you a question, Phil Andrews from New Jersey News Network, about masks, but it seems like my colleagues had that pretty much covered. So let me move ahead to tomorrow. What are you going to be looking at as far as the primary is concerned? What do you need to see from tomorrow's primary for your decision come the fall and November? What is it you're going to be looking at?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it?

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: Yeah, I'm gonna mask up now.

Governor Phil Murphy: Mask up, exactly. I think the first point, good question, by the way, and again, I remind everybody tomorrow's Election Day. Strong preference is if you've got a ballot, to vote by mail, and postmarked by tomorrow means you get counted. Because it's a hybrid system and again, the other side of

this is we have mandated that each county have at least 50% of in-person capacity, and each municipality have at least one location.

The first part of my answer is we won't know a whole lot tomorrow, would be my guess. This is going to be something that I think will take some number of days to really give this the post-mortem that it needs. But obviously, we'll be looking at overall, we'll be looking at turnout. You know, the more people, we're huge believers is the more people who vote the better, and that's a good sign that you've got democracy going in the right direction, so turnout will be a key fact that we'll be looking at.

Secondly, I think we'll be looking, as we've discussed often here in answering questions, were there any obvious breakdowns in the system? Any, either that's physical, in-person voting breakdowns or on the other hand, breakdowns of the vote-by-mail piece of this. And I would say on that list, as it always is, we're going to be watching very closely for any shenanigans that we hear about. Any voter suppression, anybody who's trying to job the system. But it will, in fairness, I think take some time to give a full accounting for how this worked. The good news is we have time in order to make the decisions that we'll need to make for the November election, but our premise begins and ends with the fact we want as many people as possible having the ability to vote. Thank you. Sir.

Reporter: Thank you, Governor. Today we saw pictures of people not wearing masks while using NJ Transit. How is that enforced? What happens if that trend continues? Will you have to cut capacity?

Last weekend, reversing that decision on indoor dining just three days before it was set to resume, many restaurants had already hired back staff and ordered food in anticipation of indoor dining. That left some restaurant owners out thousands of dollars. How can the state make it up to those businesses that have already been hit so hard by the virus?

Governor Phil Murphy: I have not seen the pictures on NJ Transit, but if Mahen can get them or look at them, that does not make me happy. I assume it doesn't make you happy either. There's some amount of discretion given to the operators, and there are some amount of carve outs, I think, where health does not allow it, I believe under the age of two. But as a general matter, that's not a happy reality. We need folks, without question, to be masked up inside and that includes NJ Transit.

Listen, in a perfect world we're not making decisions with only three days to go. Judy and her team and our folks were on intensively last weekend, we were looking with horror as cases began to explode in other states that we've mentioned. And by the way, looking at why they were exploding. Someone asked this earlier and I realized we never address this. Judy, I don't think we've got, or Tina, we have no evidence, to repeat again, that people going to the beach, going to a park, protesting peacefully, that that's led to the increase in the rates of transmission. This is overwhelmingly, the experts will tell you, is an indoor reality.

And so we then got to Monday morning and we were horrified by what we were seeing, and so we had to put the brakes on. I have nothing but sympathy for the small business community generally and particularly in hospitality, which has been crushed. We'll do everything we can. The EDA will do everything it can, but it's another opportunity to remind folks that we need direct federal cash assistance. And a very good use of that cash assistance would be to go directly to the small hospitality folks, including the folks who had hired the team back, who had bought the meat, whatever it might be. It gives us no joy to have done that. But the alternative, I just have to -- and by the way, we were, we had been aggressive on outdoor dining, aggressive on signing laws to allow take-out, alcohol and other steps. So, you know, we have worked as best we can with the industry. But, you know, the alternative at that point was a fairly horrific potential. To be indoors, again, remember the combination of data points, indoor dining or indoor drinking. You're indoors, you've got a ventilation issue. You're in close proximity. You're sedentary. And by definition, you have to take this off in order to eat or drink, and that's a really bad set of data points.

So we will do everything we can for the industry, we have nothing but sympathy. It's been a crushing reality for restaurants, particularly the mom-and-pop operators, which is overwhelmingly the case in our state. We'll do everything we can through the EDA, but we need to be able to borrow money, we need to be able to get federal cash assistance, we need to look at revenue raisers, they have to be on the table. And part of a big reason, it's not the only reason, but a big reason, a big group that would benefit from that would be the hospitality industry.

With that, and a theme of the day here, I will mask up and say again to Judy and Tina, thank you for everything. Pat, likewise, with you in prayer. Jared, Matt, Mahen and team. We'll be back again, unless you hear otherwise, Wednesday at one o'clock. In the meantime, folks, please keep up the extraordinary work. If you've not been to a hotspot, keep doing what you've been doing. Social distance, wear a face covering, wash your hands, as Tina said, with soap and water. And if you don't feel well, don't go near other people. Get tested. We've got the testing capacity, fire away.

If you have been to a hotspot, we need you to self-quarantine. The list of states, Judy, is on our website. We'll update that on a periodic basis. But if you've been to a state that is a hotspot, self-quarantine and get tested. Quarantine and test. We need you to do that, folks. And if we do all of the above, we'll get that rate of transmission back down. We'll keep the spot positivity rates low, hospitalizations, please Lord, low as well, and we'll fight our way through this. God bless y'all. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](#)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](#)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](#)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](#)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](#)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](#)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](#)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(<http://drumthwacket.org/>\)](#)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](#)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](#)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](#)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](#)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](#)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](#)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](#)

[Photos \(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy>\)](#)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses/\)](/governor/news/addresses/)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments/\)](/governor/news/appointments/)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments/\)](/governor/news/acappointments/)

[Statements on Legislation](#)

[\(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press/\)](/governor/news/press/)

Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[TikTok \(https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?)

Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

[Privacy Notice \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

(//nj.gov/opra/)

(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

(https://tech.nj.gov/)