

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: June 23rd, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, sorry to be a few minutes late. I came from, earlier today I had an extraordinary event between the New Jersey Reentry Corporation and the National Action Network with a new facility in Newark, New Jersey which was really, really impressive. I give a shout out and hats off to Governor Jim McGreevey on the New Jersey Reentry Corporation side, Mayor Ras Baraka, County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, and on the National Action Network side, Reverend Al Sharpton and Reverend Pastor Steffie Bartley were presiding and it was really, really special, the notion of giving folks a second chance and giving them a real second chance. So that's a long-winded way of saying I'm sorry I'm a couple minutes behind.

Joining me today, the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the State's Epidemiologist, another familiar face, Dr. Christina Tan. To my left, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples is with us as well.

So I must begin today with the announcement of the agreement our administration has reached with the Communication Workers of America that will include employee furloughs, and in which CWA employees will defer planned cost of living adjustments on wages. This agreement will provide substantial cost savings to the state and prevent employee layoffs. We have worked hard with CWA to structure these furloughs to maximize state savings, while minimizing the financial impact on our employees. We cannot hide the impact this public health emergency is having on our state finances. I thank CWA's leaders and employees for coming to the table in partnership to address this reality, while ensuring that as many New Jerseyans as possible remain gainfully employed. I've always believed that bringing people to the table and negotiating in

good faith leads to the best outcomes and in this instance, it's the best outcome for the state, our workers and our taxpayers. Because this agreement is subject to employee ratification, I will defer further comment until that vote occurs later this week.

Now moving on, as we started with yesterday, this is a week where we are positioning ourselves to enter now the latter phases of stage two of our restart. It's just a coincidence that it's a scorcher outside today, but today we are announcing that outdoor amusement parks and water parks will be able to reopen next Thursday, July 2. This includes the rides on our boardwalks. The specific guidance that operators will need to follow to better protect their customers and employees is currently being finalized and will be forthcoming. However, it should be anticipated that park attendance will be kept at first to 50% of listed capacity, and that face coverings will be required of all staff and of attendees, where they are practicable. Strict hygiene protocols should also be fully anticipated.

Rides will be configured to ensure six feet distance between groups and must be frequently sanitized. Distance markers must be placed at the line so those waiting for rides are six feet apart. And by the way, none of that should surprise anybody, right? Capacity constraints, face coverings, heightened hygiene, social distancing, those are now, you should expect, folks, those are part of the norm going forward. But with next week's July 4 holiday weekend rapidly approaching and with families rightfully looking for ways to enjoy their time off together, we wanted to make it known that yes, the rides will be in operation. But moreover, we want everyone to enjoy their time together responsibly.

Simultaneously, by the way, we will allow our playgrounds to open on July 2 as well. And tomorrow, we aim to give our timeline for the return of indoor recreation including the arcades along our boardwalks, among other sectors that we will announce. The only reason we are comfortable making these announcements this week is because social distancing and everything else you're doing, folks, is actually working. Social distancing is the only thing that has allowed us to crush the curves, I would face coverings to that, over the past three months, and what has allowed us to catch up to a virus that has no vaccine and no proven therapeutic.

And I know the last thing anyone wants is a face covering tan. I know many people think that just because the weather is hot, they can't catch the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and I know many young people think this virus isn't after them. In every case, I hate to tell you, you're wrong. Judy will talk a little bit about younger people in a few minutes.

We're also able to make these announcements because the data that we have gotten every day from the now 251 testing sites across the state has told us that we can, and by the way, no state in America tests as much per capita right now as New Jersey. But for us to keep moving forward we need to not only maintain our testing capacity, we need you to come forward to get tested. It's this simple. The more tests we record, the more data we receive. And the more data that we receive, the more informed we are as to when Judy and her team and the rest of us can make our entry into not just the latter stages of stage two, but into stage three. Especially now as we're getting back outside and among our friends and neighbors, as our restaurants and casinos prepare to reopen, and now as our amusement parks similarly get ready for their restart, knowing whether or not you are carrying the coronavirus is critical information, obviously, not just for you and your family's health, but for the broader community's health.

We talked earlier about, and we've talked for weeks and weeks and weeks about the spot positivity rate and the rate of transmission that are both key data points for us. Both of those metrics are based on our ability to test as many New Jerseyans as possible so we have good data, and so we know where there could be potential trouble spots. Tomorrow we will talk about the startup of our community contact tracing corps, and quite simply, we can't trace contacts to stop the spread of COVID-19 unless you all get tested.

Separately but relatedly, I'm also proud to announce that we have secured continued assistance from our federal partners at FEMA and the US Department of Health and Human Services for the operations of our community-based testing sites. Last Friday, I was on the phone with Admiral Giroir, who has been an extraordinary partner for us over these past number of months, and a number of other senior officials including senior White House officials, to ask for their maintained partnership with the local pharmacies that we have brought online across the state, as the operations of the Bergen Community College and PNC Bank Art Center drive-through sites begin to wrap up their operations at the end of the month, as has been scheduled. This partnership among state, federal government and our pharmacy chains, which has led to a

significant increase in community-based testing centers, and which had also been scheduled to end on June 30<sup>th</sup> will now continue through at least the end of August. I am grateful for this partnership and that it will continue.

Additionally, we are also announcing, it's hard to read this but it's a cool logo when you get a chance to look at it more closely. We're announcing the opening of a new testing site in Elizabeth from noon through 7 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday and Friday at the Mickey Walker Center. The site is being operated as a partnership between Interfaith Urgent Care led by our dear friend, Pat, Rabbi Abe Friedman and the City of Elizabeth and Union County. Testing is free and open to all, though preregistration is requested by visiting [UCNJ.org/elizabethcovidtest](https://ucnj.org/elizabethcovidtest). Alongside the many other sites statewide, whether they be operated by county or local partners, nonprofits or by our private sector partners at numerous CVS, Rite Aid and Walmart locations, there is no reason to not get tested. So please, go to the main website [covid19.nj.gov/testing](https://covid19.nj.gov/testing) and find a testing site near you and then go out and get tested.

And only because thousands of people a day are getting tested, we can report another 382 New Jerseyans have now tested positive. Our statewide total going all the way back to March 4 is now 169,734. Overall, the daily positivity or spot positivity for tests recorded on June 19<sup>th</sup> was 1.96%. Judy, that's the first time I can recall we're under 2%, maybe since the get-go.

The rate of transmission across the state is 0.81. This is a very good statewide number, but as Judy and Pat and I just discussed privately, we are seeing the rate of transmission beginning to creep back up in too many counties. There can be many reasons for this, but there is absolutely no reason for it to be because anyone becoming complacent in social distancing or from crowding around bars, restaurants en masse can lead to this. And if we see businesses refuse to comply with the common sense and lifesaving guidance that we have put in place, we will have no choice but to begin making examples out of them.

Yesterday at our hospitals, we had 1,092 folks hospitalized for COVID-19. Yesterday 48 COVID-19 patients left our hospitals, but 50 new patients were admitted. The number of patients in either critical or intensive care was 307, the number of ventilators in use was 216. Each of these metrics is a slight increase from the day before.

Now, I am fully aware that these are all slight one-day increases and we've seen these one-day increases before, and most times we've seen decreases the following day. And to be clear, nothing we see today is going to stop our progress. But what we cannot have is a one-day increase turn into a trend because people gave up on social distancing, wearing face coverings, they stopped washing their hands with soap and water. I get it, and by the way, we all get it. There is no reason to be a knucklehead. Keep your distances, wear your face coverings, be smart and courteous. The world isn't just about you, it's about all 9 million of us. Again, don't be the knucklehead who ruins it for everyone else. And the last thing any of us want to do is to put our restart on hold as they, by the way, have just done in Louisiana. So this is not abstract. This can happen. We don't want it to happen, but it can happen.

This is about keeping people healthy and saving lives, and we can't get our economy back to where it was if our hospitals fill back up with COVID-19 patients because some people mistakenly thought they were invincible. The trends have been in our favor over the past two months, and you can see that, and overwhelmingly across the past two weeks. We cannot undo this progress. This progress is why we've been able to move through stage two, but we're still a leading state in terms of hospitalizations, you can see that in the second line, and losses of life. The only way we move down this list is through the stuff we've been talking about: social distancing, wearing face coverings, washing your hands with soap and water, being responsible. If you don't feel well, especially if you have a temperature, don't go out. Stay away, and by the way, get tested.

Now turning our attention to our long-term care facilities, 46 new cases as the spread continues to trend downward, that's the good news, but we report 50 losses of life among residents and staff and those losses are part of an additional overall total of 57 new fatalities of blessed souls in our state. We now have lost a total of 12,914 of our fellow New Jerseyans to this virus. Let's recall a few of those who we have lost.

We will begin in Hillside, a community I was in a couple of weeks ago myself, and we will remember Arnold Abdullah Plant. Love that look, look at that smile, everybody. He was born and raised alongside his brothers and sisters in Newark's Seventh Avenue Projects by a mother who was the glue that held the family together.

He received the nickname Poochie in his youth, but he chose to be called Abdullah when he adopted the Islamic faith that he held close. He was known for his sense of style and great taste in music. He was also a huge sports fan, keeping up with The Nets even after they left New Jersey, and as a loyal Giants fan, had a fierce in-house football rivalry with his wife Yolanda, known as Lani, who cheered on the Dallas Cowboys.

Oh my Lord. For the past 24 years, Abdullah was a proud member of the University Hospital family. He was only 65 years old. He leaves behind his beloved wife Lani, with whom he not only shared his life of 24 years of marriage, but they also shared a birthday. He also leaves his son Sayif and two daughters, Aisha and Ribera, and his eight grandchildren. He's also survived by three sisters and five brothers, stepmother, Betty, his goddaughter, and countless nieces and nephews spanning multiple generations. He also leaves his University Hospital family and so many friends. May his memory be a source of peace to all at this difficult time. As-Salaam-Alaikum, Abdullah, and God rest your soul.

Next, we remember Elizabeth Bartolome Del Mundo of Dover. Born in Manila, in the Philippines, Elizabeth received a degree in nursing from the County College of Morris, and for the past 24-plus years served as the RN Manager at Cranes Mill at West Caldwell, and she was just 59 years old. No one is invincible, folks. We're seeing this almost every day. She embodied the selfless spirit that is found in all of our healthcare heroes, putting others first and always showing compassion and understanding. Her charity was noted in the many organizations she supported, both here in New Jersey as well as in the Philippines. Elizabeth loved spending her time doing two things, primarily: being with her family and playing games of Scrabble. And she took pleasure in her frequent travels back to visit her native Philippines.

Elizabeth leaves behind her six siblings, Arielle, Aires, Aristotle, Archimedes, Eleanor and Elma, her sister with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, and their families, which include the many nieces and nephews in whom she took such delight. Thank you always for helping others, Elizabeth, and God bless and watch over you.

And finally, we remember Benita DiFabio of Ventnor, who was 84. She had been an employee at the original Golden Nugget in Atlantic City, rising within Local 54, the union there, of course, to become a shop chairman. Public service was also a calling and she worked for the Board of Elections in Atlantic City for several years. Benita had called the Atlantic City area home since her family moved to the resort in 1942. Her childhood dream had been to become an archaeologist, but the family could not afford for her to attend college. But that did not extinguish Benita's love of learning, and she spent her lifetime reading and educating herself. She had a particular love for Shakespeare and for philosophy and religion. She also held a deep love of music and in recent years, her favorite artists was The Boss, Bruce Springsteen, whom she admired not just for his music, but also for his activism.

In 1957, Benita married the love of her life, Phil. They would spend the remaining 63 years together, and he would always say that he married Benita because she was so beautiful and so intelligent. She leaves behind Phil, with whom I had the great honor of speaking with yesterday, a proud, by the way disabled, Korean War veteran of the United States Navy, as well as the children she always put above everyone and everything else, her sons Philip and Guy, and her daughter Cecilia, who goes by Cippy, with whom I also had the great honor of speaking yesterday. Their families blessed her with three grandchildren including her grandson Dean, who lived with Benita and Phil for the past six years, with his mom Cippy, and to whom Benita was a second mom, and three great-grandchildren. She also leaves behind her sister, Rosalind and sister-in-law Grace, and many nieces and nephews, cousins and friends. A life worth honoring and remembering. God bless you and watch over you, Benita.

And just as every life we have lost is worth honoring and remembering, this is why we cannot let up in our social distancing or personal responsibility just because the sun is out. We have already lost 12,949 fellow New Jerseyans to COVID-19, nearly twice as many residents by the way, as we have lost to the flu across the past five years combined. This is about that. More than twice the number over the past five years and we've lost them all in the span of just over three months.

Let me reiterate. There is no vaccine for COVID-19. There is no cure, and there is no proven therapy. We hope to have all of those things at some point, but we have none of them now. The only thing that works is to not get it, period, full stop. This is why across our restart, we are starting with steps tailor-made to ensure social distancing. It's why across our restart, we are requiring face coverings and masks and putting strong cleaning

and hygiene protocols in place. This isn't a drill. This is a real-life battle to save lives, even as we begin restarting our economy, and everyone has a role to play. And you've been extraordinary folks, keep it up. Please keep doing what you've been doing so extraordinarily well, and please don't be a knucklehead who thinks for whatever reason you're immune, or you can't pass along the coronavirus. Be smart, as you have been. Use your common sense for the common good and let's get through this and keep moving forward together, as one New Jersey family, stronger than ever before.

Before I turn things over to Judy, I wish to acknowledge the passing of a leader in our state from non-COVID-19 causes. On Saturday, our state lost former Somerset County Assemblyman and Manville Mayor Joseph Patera. A veteran who served with the army in Korea, he was a great friend to working New Jerseyans and to organized labor, chairing the Assembly Labor Committee, by the way, for 13 years and serving as an Assistant Commissioner of Labor under a great Governor, Governor Jim Florio. He was a longtime champion for a minimum wage that delivered dignity to workers and finally saw an increase he had worked on in the Legislature signed into law in 1991 and then protected by Governor Florio. He was also active in Veterans Affairs and helped lead Manville's Memorial Day Parade. Public service course through his veins. We thank him for his decades of honorable service to his hometown and to our state and our nation. I want to give my dear friend Peg Schaefer a shout out for reminding me that Joseph had passed. He will be laid to rest on Friday. God bless you, Joe.

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. Along with increasing cases in other states, we are seeing another concerning pattern, increases among positive cases among our young people. Florida, Texas and South Carolina have seen that more individuals under the age of 30 are testing positive. Many of these individuals have not had any symptoms, so they are unaware that they are contributing to the spread of this virus. In New Jersey, we have seen an increase in the percentage of cases between the ages of 18 and 29. In April, this age group represented 12% of the cases. That has risen to 22% of the cases in June. And while we know that some of this increase can be attributed to an increase in access to testing, we are still concerned about this trend.

We are especially concerned after gatherings we saw over the weekend at the Jersey Shore and another bar in northern New Jersey. Individuals were packed together at these locations, which raises the risk of spreading COVID-19 to one another, and then on to a wider community. People of any age can get severe illness from COVID-19. More than 640 residents between the ages of 18 and 29 have been hospitalized because of complications from this virus, and there have been more than 15 deaths among this age group.

While they do represent a small percentage of cases, hospitalizations and deaths, this population can spread the virus to more vulnerable populations. So the fewer young persons who become infected, the lower risk to the older population. It certainly is a time for the younger generation to give back to everyone around them and to the older generations. We need all residents to continue to take precautions, not to just protect themselves, but to protect all of us. Social distancing, wearing a mask washing your hands, getting tested, these are lifesaving measures. We all have a responsibility to our families, our loved ones, and our community to keep up these efforts to protect our health and the health of others.

As the Governor shared, our hospitals are reporting 1,092 cases, of which 307 are in critical care. Fortunately, there are no new cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children reported, so the total remains at 44. The ages of the children affected range from 1 to 18. Six children are currently hospitalized. In New Jersey, there have been no reported deaths at this time.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54%, Black 18.4%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.6%, and other 1.7%.

At the state veterans homes, the numbers remain the same and at our state psychiatric hospitals the numbers remain the same. Our overall percent positivity is 1.96%. The northern part of the state is 1.34%, the Central part of the state 2.06%, the Southern part of the state 3.74%. That concludes my statistical report. Please continue to practice social distancing, wear a mask and other precautions that have helped drive down cases in our state. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy and get tested. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you for everything, as always. I don't know where we'd be without you, but your admonition as it relates to young people is something that I want to particularly underscore. The three of us heard on the White House call yesterday when they're looking at flare ups in other states, increasingly, and this is not to understate in any way the awful loss of life among our seniors in long-term care facilities in particular, but the flare ups of late have been skewed toward two realities: younger folks and indoors. There's very little, I think, that we're hearing that's coming outdoors. That's not to say it can't happen, but when you're looking at the flare ups, and New Jersey now is no exception in terms of both our concern and our caution about how we want to responsibly reopen things that are inside, but also today to Judy's point about young folks, no one's invincible. Thank God, the loss of life is a lot less, but there is loss of life and they are clearly positive so, folks, please, please, especially when you're indoors, do the right thing. Thank you, Judy, for that and for everything.

Pat, anything you've got overnight, and especially how's that trooper doing, who was in that awful accident yesterday?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thanks so much, good afternoon. Thanks, Gov. With regard to compliance, we had one incident at the West Hampton Post Office where a subject refused to wear a mask, got into an argument with the postal worker and subsequently looked under the plexiglass and started coughing in her direction, so generally quiet. And as far as Trooper Sierra goes, I met with him at the hospital this morning and it really, up to and including the trauma surgeons, for him to get ejected through that windshield and bounce off the right lane, really just a miracle. Today is the third anniversary of him and his class graduating from the State Police Academy 157<sup>th</sup> Class, and I was amazed and in awe to be sitting there and speaking with him and he's doing very well and appreciates everybody's prayers. Thanks, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thanks, Pat. I'm going to give him a shout this afternoon and God help us, I'll never forget that picture and the fact that you saw him alive and well today. I know he's got a long road still ahead of him. I don't want to understate that. You mentioned fireworks yesterday. We're hearing far too many anecdotal stories about just, you know, going off through the night. I just want to reiterate and you may want to reiterate as well, Pat, that folks have got – not only are they dangerous and illegal, but for other reasons, this is no way to blow off steam folks, would you see it the same way I see it?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Really, it's also a quality of life issue, whether it's in our cities or not. Those going off late at night, and even the shot spotters in the city that have them, it likens and sounds like gunfire, which is another cause for concern. So again, other than what was made legal, you know, the little snakes and the sparklers last year, they do remain illegal and I trust that we'll enforce that should we find people setting them off.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen. Thank you. I think I'm going to start over here with Dave. Before we do, Mahen, we're almost inevitably tomorrow at 1:00 p.m., right? There's no, I don't think there's any expected shift. And we're going to keep going, you know, we're not out of the woods yet. And particularly as we are opening up in so many steps, there's a strong desire for folks to hear not just from members of the press in the room, but to hear from us directly. We're going to stay at it for these dailies. Not forever, but for at least the foreseeable future because we want to make sure not only do we give the members of the press the proper access, but we give folks direct access to the decisions and sometimes deliberations, debates, discussions that we have about these issues. Again, that website is up there all the time, folks. I can't overstate how important it is, if you've got a question, to make that as your first stop, covid19.nj.gov. With that, Dave, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Hi, Governor. A couple of questions. In the states where we're seeing coronavirus spikes recently, there have been big parties and gatherings, kind of similar to what we saw down the shore a couple of days ago. But with the Fourth of July holiday coming up, if residents are planning a big bash or some kind of a summertime party, do you think it would be a good idea for them to keep track of their guests in case there's a possible flare up? Possibly a sign-in sheet or something? Would that help contact tracers? Would it help get attention paid more quickly? Also, younger folks, especially, you know, if there's a big party, they bring more people, you don't necessarily know who's coming, and all of a sudden it's a huge crowd. That's question number one.

And number two is a question from our newsroom with regard to the CWA furloughs. Is this going to be enough? Is there also going to be a hiring freeze, possibly, that you would consider? The question goes on to say, will you be taking the opportunity to look at trying to restructure the pension benefits in New Jersey? Let's get real here, there's a massive budget hole to fix. More will be needed than furloughs and elimination of pay raises. We don't know if we're going to get any federal funding, how much and so forth?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Is this from the newsroom or someone who's mad as hell and not going to take it anymore?

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** This is someone who's in the newsroom who apparently is a little mad.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let's wrap up here.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Okay, and with regard to the furloughs, will they be real? During the Corzine years people were furloughed, and then it turns out they got all the money back. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. Listen, there's no question, Dave, that indoor, intense intimacy, proximity, sedentary behavior without face coverings is a really bad fact. I'm not sure that we've got the ability to go into people's homes as they as they have their July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations and dictate the rules of the road, but I do think a couple of things, and Pat or Judy can come in, or Tina if they want to add to this. Number one, if you could do it outside, do it outside. It's literally black and white. That's not to say you're out of the woods but it's just a whole different ballgame outside.

Secondly, I do think it makes sense to keep track of people. I mean, I don't think we want to necessarily dictate that into people's house parties, but I think knowing who was there in case something, God forbid, goes off the rails or goes sideways, as Pat would say, that's not a bad thing, right?

And thirdly, I know for sure if you are inside, be smart. Be smart. Face covering, stay away from each other, and by the way, try not to be inside. Again, if you could be outside if the weather holds, being outdoors right now is a really good thing. We have the spot positivity under 2%. The RT, rate of transmission, has stayed under 1 now for weeks. We have this thing on the run, let's keep it on the run and not reignite it.

I think out of respect to the fact, Dave, to make one specific comment about the deal and then a general comment. The specific one is simply out of respect to the fact that it's not yet ratified. I had mentioned I'm not going to say any more about it, so you'll forgive me for that, and I think that's supposed to be taking place later this week.

As a general matter, I don't want people to cross wires here between why we got elected and what we were already working on before COVID-19, which was to chop through the structural deficits that we inherited: pension, structural deficit, outstanding indebtedness, healthcare costs that were getting out of control, and at the same time hurting the individual employee. We had been making enormously good progress on all of those fronts until this crisis and we intend to continue that.

I don't want to cross wires. Right now, we need the federal cash assistance. We need the ability to borrow to keep people employed, to keep our programs as strong and as full as they had been over the past couple of years. For instance, funding education, keeping educators at the point of attack, EMS, police, fire, healthcare workers, etc. And so with all due respect to whoever asked the question, yeah, do we have big structural deficits? Yes, we do. We had them before COVID-19. We were on a journey. We have a plan. We'll continue, God willing, on that plan. We need the ability to borrow, and we need the federal direct cash assistance. And those aren't either/or, those are and/both. And if we get that, we'll have, in my opinion, the latitude at least to break through the worst of this. Thank you. Sir. Aswan's got the mic. I didn't give you a proper introduction, by the way.

**Reporter:** Governor, is there any thought to ordering self-imposed quarantine on those coming to the state from the states that are seeing a spike in the virus? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I love your economy of late, I just have huge respect. Listen, I'm not sure we'll necessarily do this together but it's a topic of a fair amount of back and forth among New York, Connecticut in ourselves. My guess is we'll probably have something more to say on that. But I would say a strong urging,

if you're coming in, we can't prevent you constitutionally from coming either back into New Jersey or into New Jersey, but we can strongly ask you to consider one or both paths here, depending on where you come out on your test.

One is get tested, preferably before you get here, but get tested. At latest when you get here, right when you get here. We have an out-of-state visitor coming in and we're trying to figure out how to get that person tested either before they leave where they are now, or coming right when they get to New Jersey.

Secondly, depending on that, either a short quarantine or a longer quarantine depending on what the test comes back with. Yes, so that's another -- again, I think it's a smart, responsible thing to do. Yes for you, first and foremost, the person, to give them the peace of mind that they are either positive or God willing, they're negative. But no state in America has a spot positivity rate that I'm aware of under 2% so by definition, no matter where you're coming from, you're probably coming from a state that's got a higher hit rate right now with the virus than we have. So strong request, as strongly as we can, recommendation, please get tested, and quarantine accordingly, depending on what that test result looks like. And more on that, I think to come, maybe with a little bit more of a regional angle in the next couple of days. Thank you. You're good? Let's go back and then Matt, we'll come down to you in a sec. Start right there. Thank you.

**Reporter:** Thank you, Governor. Just one question. You speak at every briefing about the blessed souls who have been lost due to COVID-19. You also say that you speak with family members. How are these condolence calls set up? When do you do them? And has this pandemic tested your faith in God?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Oh my Lord, that's a serious question. No, it hasn't tested my faith in God, as tough as these may be. And by the way, all I'm doing is speaking to them and talking about them. The people I'm talking to have lived it. Either they've passed or they're related to someone who's passed. It's a variety of ways that they're set up. Honestly, some come to us. Some I read myself or my colleagues will read about or hear about an extraordinary situation, including the good news stories like young Colby, 21 years old last week, who has made it through this, thank God. The calls typically, they'll either happen the morning of or the day before, more often than not the day before. But I also don't want to, you know, some of those calls, by definition get made on Sundays and I want to respect people's privacy. In some cases the person has just passed. In other cases, we've learned about them and they passed a while ago, so we want to be respectful of, is there a service or is it an immediate aftermath?

Lastly, in a funny way, not funny at all, obviously but it strengthened my faith. I know that may be counterintuitive, but the lives that have been lived are extraordinary. The strength of the families and the loved ones just takes your breath away, the love that they had for these folks. While the conversations may be difficult, they're living it. I'm only having this brief interaction with them, but it's given me enormous -- some of them are tough as nails, some of them are just beyond difficult. Multiple family members, young people, even older people who have lived extraordinary lives, people who survived the Spanish Flu only to be stricken by this. I mean, there's just one story after another and every one of them is unique.

I'll conclude by saying this. We are data hogs. We are data driven. We are making these calls based on the numbers, cold bloodedly in that respect, but at the same time, I've said this before, it can never be only about the numbers. These are almost now 13,000 extraordinary lives lost. Young, middle aged, old, that have changed our state in extraordinary ways, and we must never lose sight of that. We must never lose sight of how personal this is for so many in the state. Thank you for asking that.

Matt, we're going to have you take us home here.

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** So just curious for an update on what the state is thinking about allowing hospital visitations? We've heard from at least one person who has a family member that's been in the hospital the entire time for this, so it's not just short stays.

Governor, I'm curious what your response is to the State Republican Party's requests for federal monitors for the primary election over concerns about mail-in ballots. And Governor, I know you don't want to talk about the CWA until it's a done deal, but can you at least give an estimate on cost savings?

And lastly, the COVID dashboard now includes a tab for cases in-depth by zip code, but it only shows zip codes with more than 20,000 residents, and that means that basically two-thirds of the state shows no data. I think this was asked last week, but is there any update on when the Department of Health will begin reporting full data to provide transparency on a more local level?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'll take the middle two and Judy, can you take both that one and hospitalizations? I think the cutoff of 20,000 is a privacy matter but you'll correct me. Federal monitor, I mean, that's a political talking point. That's ridiculous. That's not to say the vote by mail has been a clean shot, perfect, because we know it hasn't been. But we think we've got a really good balance between vote by mail and in-person voting. I was told Matt, Matt Platkin is with us – no, it was not by Matt, but one of our colleagues told us Kentucky's having pretty jammed up backlogs at their primary today, in-person voting. I think they did have a vote by mail provision, so I think that's a ridiculous request, not by you, but by them. But I will use the opportunity to say to folks, vote by mail. We're seeing in Kentucky where they did give you the option. You've still got a lot of people jammed in together optically and that's not a good thing for public health.

Forgive me on the CWA piece. Again, I apologize. We're going to come back to you once that's ratified in terms of the cost savings. Judy, any advice on hospital visitations or the fact is that if a community is under 20,000, that we don't have the zip code access to the data?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** First on hospital visitations, last week, Kathy Bennett, the President of New Jersey Hospitals Association, and I worked on the template for hospital visitations for opening that up, so that should be coming out soon. I can't give you an exact date but I will commit to checking on that after I leave here.

On the other situation of the 20,000 that is a privacy issue and there is a statute that speaks to that. It does not speak to the exact 20,000 so I have our privacy officer looking into it a little bit more deeply to see how much we have to suppress the numbers and give you the information that we want to give you but also protect individuals selectively, so more to come on both of them. I think that the visitation should be coming out shortly.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, I meant to ask you this yesterday, so forgive me for being a day late. Any anecdotal evidence you had on how the outdoor visitations at long-term care facilities went?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, I got some very good feedback on the long-term care facilities. In fact, this morning, I did get feedback from Sean Van Lew from the veterans homes, and it was a real welcome addition to what they've been through there.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** He was just giving me the information that the vets really were excited, not only to have visitors, but to be outside.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Amen.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** But very good. You know, a lot of the long-term care facilities said you should have given me more time to set this up, and we knew that it was a short timeframe, but we were trying to get something out for Father's Day. Our empathy for Father's Day took over our rationality of trying to give a week's time. But other than that, I've heard it went really well.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I think that's a mistake that people will be glad that you made in the long run. And by the way, it wasn't just for Sunday, right? So this is now, and facilities can catch up if they weren't able to get it organized.

And to Matt's question, you know, the folks in the long-term facilities, that's their home, that's their residence. They are there. Hospitalizations, which by the way is no less urgent, but the hope is that if you have to go there, please God, God forbid that you can get cured and you're back out on your feet. But to your point, there are some folks – there aren't many, but there are some folks, Colby was a good example of that. Sergeant Ellis was a good example. Folks who were battling this thing on ventilators for 30, 40, 60, 70 days, and the question is well taken. As I said, you'll come back after consulting with Kathy and her team.

Thank you, Judy and Tina, Pat, Jared, Matt, Mahen and the rest of the team. We'll be back again at one o'clock tomorrow. Again, please continue to do the right thing. I do think common sense, I think given how much we all know about this awful virus because of the journey we've gone through over the past 100-plus days, the question of common sense on something sometimes can be not obvious. You know, the judgment call is not necessarily a clear one on something you're dealing with, any of us are dealing with for the first time.

I think the common sense judgment call here is very clear. Outside is better than inside. Face coverings, especially when you're inside. Keep your distance, as we do every day. Again, outside but especially inside. Keep washing your hands with soap and water. I think Dave, to your question, the more information we have about the more people we come in contact with the better, without turning into a Big Brother reality, George Orwell here, but just let's do the stuff that we just know right now with this virus that's working and steer clear of the stuff where we know it is not working.

New Jersey, you've been extraordinary. No American state has stood remotely as tall as New Jersey. We just need you to continue doing just what you've been doing. We'll see you back at one o'clock tomorrow. God bless.

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