

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 19th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Before I get to the daily numbers, a couple of couple of announcements and updates. We had a good -- Judy, Pat, myself, the First Lady -- and the handful of us had a good, I thought, video conference with the White House yesterday, which had a particular focus on mental health and the implications to mental health from this pandemic crisis. Good discussion, good exchange. I also should say that while it wasn't the purpose for the call, Tony Fauci was in the room on the other end, and I thought was, he's usually expressing, Judy, big words of caution, and I felt his comments about the early returns on the vaccine which had been reported yesterday were actually pretty upbeat, relative to his normal demeanor, so that, to me, was a big takeaway.

I also organized a call for, I think about 16 Democratic governors and Speaker Pelosi to go through her HEROES Act, which includes a huge slug of direct federal cash assistance for states and counties and municipalities, in addition to other elements that we have endorsed. In fact, we may have been among the first to endorse things like a two-year moratorium and lifting of the SALT cap on property taxes. That conversation lasted an hour. The Speaker laid out the sort of principles of the Heroes Act. We spoke as well about Senator Menendez's very significant bill in the Senate with Senator Cassidy. He's picked up some cosponsors over the past number of days on the Republican side of the aisle, which is, I think, a positive development. But it was a really good conversation, I want to thank my fellow Governors and I want to thank the Speaker, especially. So those are a couple of good conversations that we had, after we were together last.

As we've been discussing over the past couple of weeks, our ability to get on and stay on our road back relies heavily upon having an expanded and accessible program of testing. I know Judy's going to speak to the demand side of testing in her remarks. This means that we not only will grow our internal programs, but also

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that we will need partners in the private sector as well. To help meet this demand, Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, along with the Division of Consumer Affairs, has authorized the more than 18,000 licensed pharmacists in New Jersey to administer FDA approved or authorized COVID-19 tests to their customers. Moreover, the Division's order for these tests to be given without a prescription and removes the requirement that pharmacists enter into explicit collaborative practice agreements with a physician.

Across our state, there are more than 2,200 pharmacies, both chain, by the way, and independent. These pharmacies are run by professionals who have a deep well of trust and a strong connection with their broader communities. These are the places where customers and residents may feel most comfortable to receive a COVID-19 test, in a place they trust, from a pharmacist they know.

On a related, importantly related note, we can follow up on our prior announcement of the plans by CVS to provide COVID-19 testing at their stores. As our administration continues to rapidly expand testing sites statewide, I am pleased to announce that CVS has notified us that they are set to offer self-swab tests at a minimum of 50 New Jersey locations by the end of this month. And the end of this month, by the way, is only about 11 days from now. This is another important step forward as we continue to build testing capacity in our state. We hope to formally announce, with CVS, the locations of the first stores to come online in this program, and we thank CVS for their partnership in, and support of, our effort to get ourselves on the road back. We are working with a number of partners to bring more sites up throughout the state. More announcements will be forthcoming on that front.

Also, the Department of Health, along with the Division of Consumer Affairs, and Judy previewed this yesterday in her remarks, has issued now binding guidance that will allow for the resumption of elective and non-urgent medical and dental procedures beginning next Tuesday, one week from today. As Judy has pointed out, this guidance covers a number of areas for safeguarding both patients and providers. This includes prioritization of procedures, heightened sanitation and disinfection standards, ensuring that patients are scheduled in a way that minimizes interpersonal contact, and ensuring social distancing in the lead up to the procedure and the wearing of face coverings or masks during certain procedures, among other required steps, including heightened protections for procedures that involve direct contact with the eyes or mouth. I am pleased with this guidance, I know Judy is more than pleased, and we are confident that our medical and dental professionals will be able to get back to tending to their patients in a safe way.

And finally, a quick note that we are issuing an administrative order today to allow for in-person sales at car and motorcycle dealerships, in addition to bicycle shops, that will be effective at 6:00 a.m. tomorrow. We know this is an important step for dealerships and for people who need access to transportation, and it is unquestionably another step forward on our road back.

With these announcements out of the way, let's turn to the overnight numbers. Yesterday, we received an additional 1,055 positive test results for a current statewide total of 149,013. As you can see from this chart, the curve continues to move in the right direction overall, and we must remain mindful that because of the way test results come in, we will continue to have up and down days, so these trend lines are our most accurate depiction of these numbers.

The daily positivity or spot positivity rate for the tests, now this is tests that were taken as of Friday, May 15, remains at 12%. And moreover, this positivity rate is largely reflected across each region of the state. South Jersey remains a few ticks higher than the rest of the state as is expected, but the fact that all of our regions are in the same area continues to be a good sign. The map that we have been regularly turning to puts this into a slightly different perspective. Cumberland County had been the only county below the 30-day rate of doubling, but today Hunterdon County is at exactly 30 days, so everyone watching from Hunterdon County, please bear down a little bit more and redouble your efforts. So a slight regression, but still largely a map that looks a lot better than it did a few weeks ago.

This is one that I want to focus on for a couple of minutes. Looking to our long-term care facilities, you can see the total number of positive cases of 28,312, the rate of new cases has decreased from its peak and we continue to throw everything but the kitchen sink, and maybe including that, at long-term care facilities to push this curve even lower.

The next one is the one I want to spend a minute on. Here are the numbers of lab-confirmed deaths associated with our long-term care facilities, which shows a decrease from the peak. And a note that starting today, we are showing only the numbers of lab-confirmed deaths, as this will give us our best representation of what is happening within our long-term care facilities, in comparison to the statewide number that we report. Ed, I'm going to practice without a license, but perhaps either in answer to a question or in our remarks, you may want to weigh in on this. So the number was about 1,400 fatalities higher as of yesterday. That's information, by the way, that will continue to be very – I shouldn't say happy, these folks are gone. There's no question that they're gone. And there's no question that long-term care facilities have been an extraordinary challenging reality, not just in New Jersey, but around the country.

We were not reporting these, as it turns out, apples to apples. So the other 1,400 that are not any longer in this chart were not confirmed, lab-confirmed, COVID-19 fatalities. The number that we report, our statewide number which I'll report in a moment, is lab confirmed, are lab-confirmed fatalities. And so we don't want to any longer give you an apples-to-oranges number. If there's information that you want, or that we've got about those other 1,400 blessed souls, we're more than, as I say, more than happy does not express it accurately, because we're not happy about any of this, but we are able to give you a window into that.

Another point I would want to make is that from now many weeks, if anything, numbers, revisions are going to go up, not down, over time. And again, I'm practicing without a license, but maybe Ed can comment on this. Ed, do you want to jump in right now, in fact, and comment a little bit as to the rationale as to why we are where we are?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Once again, it always seems like counting deaths should be a very simple thing. If a person dies, you know they died, you know they related to COVID, you know they're in a nursing home, you should be able to put these things together and accurately report out those numbers. What happened with this outbreak was this. We had a large number of facilities that got overwhelmed very quickly. There was this huge number of cases, unfortunately a lot of deaths. And that very quickly overwhelmed not only the facilities and their ability to respond, but also their ability to report out accurately what was happening in them, as well as the locals and the department's ability to follow up on that information to try to get the most accurate information as possible.

As it is now, we're following over 500 of these outbreaks on an ongoing basis and it is extremely difficult to continue to get as accurate information as we can. What we've done in the last week to two weeks and presenting now is we've changed the way that we're getting the information from these facilities. We try to make it easier and more clear as to what we're asking as far as inputting into a survey that we get every day from them. While these are still reported by the facilities themselves, meaning these are not deaths that the Department of Health has verified actually has happened, they are being reported by the facilities and they're reporting more clearly into different categories, which makes it easier for us to go ahead and present exactly what's happening in the facilities as far as deaths and residents. It also allows us the ability to separate out the deaths by staff, for example, which used to be lumped together in one category. So certainly, as you become comfortable and confident in the numbers, we can share those numbers and be happy to answer any questions about it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, thank you. So far in the past two days this week, we've changed our nomenclature on two different numbers, one of which is really good news. It's unvarnished good news. When you take the serology tests out of the, do you have COVID-19 as of last Thursday or Friday? And those are the numbers that are informing our reopening strategies, versus you may have had it at some point over the past three months, that knocks the relevant positivity rate down to 12%. That's real and that's really helpful and it's a positive step in the right direction. This is, those folks that are no longer on that graph are gone. Let there be no doubt about it. There's 1,400 folks who had passed in addition to this number, which are not yet lab confirmed, and we don't in any way, shape or form marginalize the loss of life. But we want to make sure that we are apples to apples, and so the numerator of 4,295 blessed souls is now synched up with the total number of deaths that we're reporting every day. Ed, thank you for that insight.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated decreased yesterday to 3,481. Field medical stations reported 44 patients. This is a breakdown of hospitalizations across regions, again, continues to go in the right direction. Here are total hospitalizations for every 100,000 residents, to give you some sense of the per capita reality across regions. The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care fell to

977. This is the first time that number has fallen below 1,000, Judy, in a long time. Ventilator use decreased by another 30 yesterday to 789, and I can't emphasize enough how important the hospitalization, ICU and ventilator numbers are to our thinking about the road back. They are perhaps the most vital data points we received.

There were 173 new COVID-19 hospitalizations yesterday and, at the same time, 161 live patients left our hospitals. Here are the admittance and discharge numbers from yesterday, broken down by region. Again, as Judy has warned us, this was traveling from North, Central to South, but you can see, even the North is not yet out of the woods, higher density of population but also higher numbers, both incoming and outgoing. I know I say this practically every day, but I repeat it because it's true. These numbers aren't happening by accident. They're happening because you all out there have made them happen. The only surefire cure available right now for COVID-19 is to not get it. And that means maintaining social distancing, wearing a face covering of some sort, practicing safe hygiene.

So the reason why these numbers keep falling and why we're able practically every day to make another announcement about our road back, is because you are making them fall. Keep it up. This is no time for anyone to be spiking any footballs or patting anyone on the back. Both things that wouldn't comport with social distancing, by the way, anyway, but it is a time for us to double down. The more these numbers drop, the more confidence we will have that we are ready to move from stage 1 to stage 2 of our restart, and we can begin planning for more business reopenings.

We purposely have not married ourselves to dates because we don't want to give any false hope. We've purposely married ourselves, however, to the data, so when we make an announcement, we know it can stick. Let's look quickly at these graphs that we've been showing you more recently. The metrics in our hospitals are down significantly since the peak. Every major thing that we're watching has gone in the right direction. Across the board, the key numbers are down by half, if not far more than half. This has been a steady progression across the past few weeks. You could see this as by day, of the past 14 days, and seeing these trends are critical.

Again, a green light means a day when the numbers decreased relative to the day before, and we've had a lot of green lights lately. We could see this by region. And again, Judy and I spoke to this yesterday. And again, there are spikes up and down, which is why we look at rolling averages of either three days or seven days. This is on the actual day. The new hospitalizations numbers are things that we're still looking at. Those are, the red balls, there's a fair amount of them in the upper left. While there's general overall really good progress in that chart, there are still folks coming into the hospital. Here we can see ourselves relative to our neighboring states, if you can flip to the next chart. This is New Jersey. Again, we've been showing you this. This is per capita. New cases, patients in the hospital, new deaths per 100,000 residents in each case, and we're still at or near the top, unfortunately, of density of this reality of any American state. Just remember, everybody keep it up, because you're the biggest reason why we've made the progress that we've made, and you're the biggest reason why that chart will ultimately get into a much better condition. Remember that public health creates economic health, and that data determines dates. Only you all out there, and you've been extraordinary by the way, only you all out there can make that happen.

Today, with a very heavy heart, we report another 162 blessed souls we've lost from COVID-19 related complications, and with this our statewide total stands at 10,586. And again, that is the total number, and again, those are lab-confirmed fatalities, which is why we have wanted to make sure we've got the apples-to-apples comparison of these blessed souls who we've lost, whether in long-term care facilities or elsewhere.

As we do every day, let's remember some of these blessed lives. We begin today by remembering Donnie Nickelson Barret, and that's Donnie on the left, who gave 33 years of her professional life to the people of Essex County, as part of the team at the Essex County Prosecutor's Office. The majority of that time, by the way, as a clerical supervisor in the Special Victims Unit. I had a very poignant exchange overnight with Essex County Prosecutor Ted Stevens about Donnie, who was quite an individual. She was known to many simply as Ms. Donnie, the undisputed matriarch of the office with a tremendous laugh and the power of unconditional love, who helped raise generations of assistant prosecutors, investigative staff, and clerical workers. The Essex County Special Victims Unit is located within the Winona's House Child Advocacy Center, and she was just as revered by that staff as well.

With her, no one was a stranger. Everyone received a warm smile, and everyone got a birthday card. But only the true lucky got a nickname from Ms. Donnie. Fittingly, she was born on, you can't make this up, Valentine's Day, just 58 years ago. Importantly, Ms. Donnie was a woman of faith, who lived her faith every day and was a Deaconess at Newark's Shiloh Baptist Church. In fact, I spoke to Shiloh's pastor this morning, Pastor Malachia Brantley, and we each commiserated about how special Donnie was. She leaves behind her beloved husband right there with her, also a Deacon, Michael Douglas Barret, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, and their children Viundra and Vaughn, and her sister Gloria. And Ms. Donnie is now reunited with another son Greg, who she had lost, but who she has now found. May God bless her, and all those who loved her and worked alongside of her. She was a tremendous presence in the lives of many, and I know her memory will remain with them all. God bless you, Ms. Donnie.

Next, let's go to Kearny in Hudson County, for Paul and Delores, otherwise known to all as Liz McCurrie. They were each 91 years old, and had been married for more than 60 of those years, and they each passed from COVID-19 within days of each other, Liz three days before Paul. Paul looks like he could have played James Bond in his youth, by the way, with that tuxedo. Paul was born and raised in Kearny and served in the United States Navy from 1954 to 1958. Upon returning home, he also returned to school and graduated from the Rutgers School of Law. He would serve in a number of capacities in his hometown, town attorney and zoning board attorney among them. And from 1962 to 1964, he was elected to represent Hudson County in the General Assembly. He was a past president of both the Hudson County Bar Association and the West Hudson Bar Association, as well as a former trustee of the Hudson County Bar Foundation Scholarship Committee. His law career would span a half-century.

Liz, who's on the left there and again, what an incredibly handsome couple, was also born in Kearny to a single mom who worked hard through the Great Depression to provide for her daughter. She moved frequently as a child, but it was as a student at Bloomfield High School that she made a group of friends with whom she would remain close for the remainder of her life. Liz would become deeply involved in Kearny civic life in her own right. She was a longtime representative from Kearny on the Hudson County Democratic Committee, and also was a member of the Father Washington Club, the Friends of Aaron, the Women's Club of Arlington, and a social member of the Arlington Players Club.

But Paul and Dolores found their true calling with each other. They met through mutual friends while Paul was a young attorney and Liz was a secretary at Prudential in Newark. Their daughter, Susan, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, by the way, a Kearny Councilwoman and a leader in her own right, recounts how they loved to dance together. As Susan said, and I quote Susan, "They were always a couple, always together and it is difficult to picture one without the other." Sadly, they remain a couple in their passing. They leave behind not only Susan, but their sons Thomas and Steven McCurrie, Steven's wife, Margaret, and their grandson Patrick. They also leave countless friends. Thomas, by the way, is in Los Angeles, I learned. Why did he go to Los Angeles? His mom was a huge fan of movie musicals, and he went to Los Angeles, where he is a screenwriter. I could not help but ask what mom's favorite movie musical was. It's one of mine, Stanley Donen, Gene's Kelly's Singing In The Rain.

And I also want to give a shout out to young Patrick, who wondered when he heard of the passing of his beloved grandparents, whether or not I and we would speak about his Grammy and his Pappy, and I hope you're watching Patrick, because we're doing just that. Susan recounted that one of her dad's favorite expressions was one he picked up in the Navy. And you would say this when things just didn't go according to plan, and it was quote, "Well, let's just press on." And so, we will press on with Paul and Liz in our thoughts and prayers. May God bless them both and their beloved family.

Three more tremendous members of our family lost to COVID-19. For them and for everyone we've lost, our flags remain at half-staff, while their families cannot fully gather in mourning, we as a state can ensure that these lives are not and never forgotten. But even as we mourn, we know that there are other stories, truly New Jersey stories that are just beginning. These are the stories of hope for our future and the stories that tell us in very clear terms that we're going to get through this and come out stronger than ever before. And I would like, with your blessing, to close with one of them.

Please meet Jaclyn Hockenjos and Sebastian or Sebbby Cina, Jr. Saturday was to be the freehold couple's wedding day, but obviously the celebration they had planned could not go on, so they made other plans. They turned what was to be a celebration of their love into a celebration of support for their community called With

This Ring, You'll Be Fed, asking friends and family to donate food for Fulfill New Jersey, run by our good friend, Kim Gordano, which helps ensure that families in Monmouth and Ocean Counties have food for their tables. And on Saturday, what would have been wedding day, local police escorted more than 50 cars past Jaclyn and Sebby's house, where they collected food and other donations as well as, I'm sure, many well wishes.

I had the honor of speaking separately to each of Jaclyn and Sebby this morning. They have set a new wedding date, it's October 10. It will be at Shadow Brook in Shrewsbury near me, and they've asked me to invite the entire state. No, that's not true. Judy, that's not true. But they have set a new date in October, but they will continue to accept donations right up until they tie the knot. So to each of them, we cannot thank you enough. And to all of you out there, I thank you all for continuing to do what you're doing. Let's beat this thing, let's beat this thing together. God bless them and God bless you all. 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. Well, the first step in containing COVID-19 is testing. It will help us determine the spread of the disease. It will help us save lives. It will help us determine the needs of our contact tracing, and it will help us determine needs for bed spaces for isolation or quarantine. Right now, there are more than 140 locations in the state where in which you can get tested. We are prioritizing testing for vulnerable populations and seasonal farmworkers and the frontline populations such as healthcare workers and first responders, and also individuals in densely populated cities. Testing is vital to slowing the spread of COVID-19, because if we are able to identify positive cases quickly, we can trace contacts and take the necessary public health actions to protect everyone. I want to encourage our healthcare workers, first responders, and all vulnerable populations to get tested. Although you may not have symptoms, it is possible to have the virus and spread it to others, including people you love the most.

Additionally, if an individual was exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should get tested, even if they do not have symptoms. We are working with partners to make testing easier to access. With our federally qualified health centers, we are exploring the use of mobile vans to reach homeless and underserved residents. Several cities have stood up, either drive through or walk up testing centers. The Department of Health plans to work with Elizabeth, Trenton, Camden, Patterson, Atlantic City and Newark to increase the testing in their cities. If you think you were exposed, please ensure you get tested. visit covid19.nj.gov or call 211 to find a testing location near you.

As the Governor shared last evening, our hospitals reported 3,481 hospitalizations, with 977 individuals in critical care. This is the first time our critical care number has dropped below 1,000 since the beginning of April. 81% of those critical care patients are on ventilators. Today we are reporting 12 cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. There are no deaths reported. The ages of the children affected range from 3 to 18. Nine out of 12 have tested positive for COVID-19, and three are currently still hospitalized.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths today. Today we are reporting the confirmation of a death of a 22-year-old. We are still gathering information and more details. I do not have an indication of underlying conditions at this point in time. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 53.5%, Black 18.5%, Hispanic 19.2%, Asian 5.5%, and other 3.4%. At the state veterans homes, among a census of 658, we are reporting that 381 residents have tested positive and a total of 142 deaths have occurred.

Our state psychiatric hospitals are reporting the same statistics as yesterday, with a total of 13 patient deaths. The Daily percent positivity as of the date of May 15 for New Jersey overall was 12%. In the Northern part of the state it was 10%, the Central part of the state 11%, and the South 20%. That concludes my statistical report. As always, stay connected, stay safe, and stay healthy. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, I want to say something about you in a second, but a couple of quick comments. The positivity rate in the south being a little bit higher doesn't surprise us because of the migration and the relative time on the ground. Secondly, just to repeat, we haven't said this in a while, but 79.4% of the fatalities are folks who are 65 years and older. We still have one blessed fatality under the age of 18. That is the four-year-old that Judy reported a short while ago, and we have 45 out of the 10,586 who are

in the range of 18 to 29. And so that's, I think Judy and I felt strongly in our call earlier today that when somebody, that's becoming an unusual reality, when someone in that age range passes, we want to make sure folks hear about that.

Again, I cannot thank Judy enough for extraordinary leadership in the most challenging of circumstances, as good as it gets, not just in this state, but in any state in America. To you and your extraordinary team, Judy, I thank you not just publicly, privately, and not just this day, but every day. With that, let's turn it over to Colonel Pat Callahan for any update on compliance, gym matters, other infrastructure, PPE, etc. Thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon, everybody. With regard to last night's compliance, in Hillsborough, a gym owner was cited for an EO violation. In Aberdeen, police responded to a domestic violence call, and while resisting arrest, the subject spit on the officers. In Irvington, a clothing store owner was cited as a non-essential store being open. In Belmar, two gym owners were cited for EO violations for having the gym open. In Jackson, police responded to a store where a subject was refusing to put a mask on. Ultimately, they tried to arrest him, wrestled him, he was charged with resisting and while being processed at headquarters spit on the officer and told him that he was COVID positive. And in Paterson, four subjects were cited having failed to disperse at a large gathering. I do know that the gym owner in Belmar was cited again today. The Belmar police department and Camden County Prosecutor's Office are looking into whether additional charges against the patrons are going to be filed. But beyond that, Governor, as Paul would say, pressing on.

Governor Phil Murphy: I love that. I love that, let's quote Paul. Marthelle, we're going to start here but just give us a second. Dan, where are you? I've lost Dan Bryan. Dan, tomorrow, unless we hear otherwise, one o'clock? I think we're going to do Friday, out of respect for Memorial Day weekend, we'll probably do it a little bit earlier. And Thursday is always subject to a potential White House VTC. So Matt Platkin has joined us. Matt, good to have you here. So you saw what we did with car sales, that's effective tomorrow morning. You just should assume that we are constantly wargaming a whole range of decisions. Just know that's the case. I get asked morning, noon and night about nonessential retail, about dining, about graduations. Again, I repeat what I said yesterday. If there's hope out there that in some form, folks at some point in the future, not crazy distant future, can gather for graduations, if you've got that hope, I have that hope as well. We get asked about faith all the time, rightfully, by the way, across all faiths. As I said, or non-essential retail. The car, motorcycle, bike reality, that's a model that we look at that may have some legs for other types of venues, to be determined.

I just want to make sure everybody knows that we are constantly wargaming this, but inside, lacking in ventilation, sedentary and close proximity, those are really hard nuts to crack. I want to get a haircut as much as the next guy, but you're in very close proximity and you're sitting there. I want to open up dining as much as the next guy on the inside, but you're sitting there, in close proximity. It's a challenge indoors with faith. It's part of the reason why we have, and non-essential retail has a little bit of a leg up, only because you're moving, you know, if you can manage capacity and you can keep people moving, you're not sitting in the same place for two hours in proximity. That's got an attribute that is more on the positive side. It's also why we continue, and this is all with Judy's and Ed's and their colleagues, they're the most important checkpoint on any of this. It's also the reason why we have leaned heavily toward outdoor activities. So you should assume that other steps to come, the sooner the list of the steps that will be sooner than later, will more than likely have some outdoor element to them. Something where we know that we've got ventilation, we can social distance, we can manage capacity. So that's the sort of mindset, just to give you a little bit of a sense of that.

I'm not sitting here to say that every day we're going to have news to break. We may or may not, but if the curves keep going in the right direction and Judy gives us her stamp of approval, her holy water with Ed and their colleagues, we'll continue to try to take those steps as responsibly and as quickly as we think we can.

With that, let's start with Elise. Good afternoon. Marthelle is on the mic. Marthelle, Have you missed a day? A couple, maybe a couple. We're in the 60s at this point, so you've missed very few. Elise.

Q&A Session

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. Two questions. One is, in the past couple of days, you've been referring to serology tests, and I'm not clear on how that's different from any other test, and if it's a better indicator or not.

Also with regard to the Belmar gym, it seems that the gym is getting more lenience than perhaps some other businesses. I recall that some bars in Northwestern New Jersey were open, they were given a warning and when they continued to operate, they were shut down. Some of them are facing a loss of their liquor license. Why is there a different approach with this gym?

Governor Phil Murphy: Good to have you. Elise, by the way, you haven't missed many of these?

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Very few.

Governor Phil Murphy: Very few. You and Marthelle are neck and neck here, I think. So I'm going to, on the first question, turn things over pretty quickly to Ed, but here's the differences, I look at it, Elise. Serology tests test whether or not you do or have had this. Assuming they get to be reliable, and they become of utility, that's very powerful for a whole set of things, realities in the future, but they don't do a whole lot for me to know, to answer the question, how many people right now have this as of Friday? As of, Friday was the 15th, right? So we just reported we know exactly what the positivity rate is as of Friday, for people who have it on Friday. So what we did is we separated out what I call the movie of your life versus the snapshot of your life.

I don't know that we're treating them any differently in the sense that I know that obviously the county prosecutors and the local law enforcement are the first line of attack. But on that one, I'll go to Ed first and then maybe come back to Matt or Pat to deal with this. We're not there on gyms, let me just be unequivocal about that. If we were there, we'd be telling you. It's indoors, it's a lot of physical activity, close proximity, not necessarily sedentary, but you are, by definition, in the same milieu for a period of time, and we're concerned about it. I don't want to be equivocating on that point. Ed, please.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Serology has the same root as serum, serum means coming as one of the parts of blood. So serology are blood tests that are looking for antibodies. Antibodies are the response of your body to an infection. So if you have an infection such as COVID, you should begin producing antibodies which show up in your serum, which is what a serology is, and there are different antibodies that it can be looking for. As the Governor was saying, these are the best tests to have a sense about whether people in general have had this in the past, and they're not perfect, which is why we don't recommend that people go out individually to get them done to see if they've had it and to see if they might be immune, which is really what people want to know, in general. But they are a good way for us to know, as far as the broader population goes, whether they had it in the past.

As you mentioned also, though, if I had COVID last week or last month or three months ago, my serology will likely be positive for any of those cases. It doesn't tell me what's happening now. To know what's happening now, I have to actually look for the virus itself, and that's the more familiar swabs or the split tests that people are used to, that looks for the actual virus.

Governor Phil Murphy: I mean, Ed, again, I'm practicing without a license, but the serology tests will be, for instance, really helpful for us in the bigger scheme of things to assess how many people ultimately were infected, the extent to which we got what they call herd immunity. What it doesn't do, it doesn't tell us, at the point of attack, what next step we could take, you know, on Monday. Knowing exactly what the positivity rate is in the here and now is very powerful for that near-term, tactical step. Matt, do you want to talk about compliance across different counties and different realities? Are you good?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: I think I'm good. I think the Governor addressed it and Colonel, if you have anything you want to add. This is a matter for local law enforcement, so they're going to make their own independent determinations as to how to handle the situation and deescalate as appropriate. But the business itself is being held to the same standards as has been held to every business that's subject to the Executive Orders that the Governor has issued across the state.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I would just add that I think back over the past few months, I think of the furniture store owners cited multiple times, the barber shops, the massage parlors, that gym in Belmar was opened for the second day in a row and he's been charged twice. I think it's been fairly

even-handed across the board, Elise.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Ashley, nice to see you. Marthelle is going to come in here.

Reporter: Hi. Does the state have guidance on how pharmacies can separate people getting COVID tests from others just picking up a prescription? And does that ability determine whether they will offer tests? And when will we know the locations of the pharmacies like the CVS you were talking about?

Certain outdoor recreational activities can resume this Friday. Will you guys soon have guidance for kids' sports teams or leagues or high school sports? Will they be allowed, and if so, with what rules in place?

For the Governor, do you plan on going to the beach or have a day at the shore? And if so, when?

And for the Commissioner, how many of the long-term care facilities have submitted updated outbreak prevention plans, as the deadline is today? And will these be posted publicly? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: On your first question, I don't know that this is the case for all, but I do believe it's the case for all of the CVS locations that it's a drive-through. I don't know that that's true for all of pharmacies, we're gonna have to get back to you in terms of the cohorting between someone just going in to buy shampoo or pick up a prescription.

Locations on CVS, at least the first ones we're going to know within the next number of days. They have committed to getting 50 locations up and running, I believe by the end of May, which is a week from Sunday, but the first batch will be sooner than later. We've got no update for you on sports. I'm speaking to the Commissioner of the NFL this afternoon. This is an issue, a challenge, at all levels of sports. I want to remind everybody that the NFL is still trying to figure it out. There's no major league baseball right now. There's no major league soccer. There's no women's NWSL, there's no hockey, there's no NBA, in addition to high school rec and other sports. This is at all levels.

I'm hoping to get to the beach. I've just checked the weather report. It's not terribly hospitable, but my intention would be to be somewhere on the shore this weekend. And I've also promised that either immediately at the kickoff of summer, or soon thereafter, I'd get to one of our great lakes and I will be money good on that. But I can't promise you on the shore or the timing on lakes. Judy, over to you. Do you have a sense of how many have submitted their updated plans?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: As of noon today, we're tracking, it looks like, I think 602 facilities, 492 have submitted their attestations and they have till the end of today. We have plans to call every organization that has not responded between close of business today and tomorrow morning. But we were quite pleased with the response that we've gotten to date.

Governor Phil Murphy: Will the plans be made public?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: This is the attestation that they have a plan. They can make the plan public, it's their plan.

Governor Phil Murphy: Dan, can you remind me to follow up on the cohorting and the pharmacy question?

Reporter: So they're just submitting, like a letter that says that we have a plan? They're not submitting the plans to you?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: They are attesting, it's an attestation that they have updated their plans, that their plans include their testing protocols, and that they will be completing those protocols on schedule.

Governor Phil Murphy: Which is by –

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: End of May.

Governor Phil Murphy: May 26, I believe. Do you have any, please? Hold on one sec.

Reporter, News 12 New Jersey: News 12 New Jersey viewer Sue from Metuchen reached out to us saying that she was able to get through on the phone to unemployment today. Apparently, she's been having a hard time getting through, but she did get through today and her question was, she asked about the extension.

And the person that she spoke to on the phone told her she had no information about when or if that extension may be happening, as far as the 13-week extension from the CARES Act. Any thoughts on that?

Governor Phil Murphy: Anything else or is that it?

Reporter, News 12 New Jersey: No, that was it.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. I don't. Could someone follow up, literally directly with Sue if we get her details, and follow up with her? Is that all right? Dan, will you help me out? Thank you. Again, a lot of these are very tailor made, very specific to the individuals and I don't want to make a blanket statement. I know they're chopping through, the Commissioner on Thursday said that the department was on track to clear 140,000 claims off its backlog this week, and based on everything I know, that's in process. We won't get a new set of numbers released until Thursday, which is the norm as for unemployment, not just in New Jersey, but nationally. Thank you. Good afternoon.

Reporter: Good afternoon. The Morris County Chamber of Commerce has established a task force for reopening New Jersey's businesses. It consists of industrial hygienists, toxicologists, and other industry and governmental occupational health professionals from New Jersey and Wisconsin. They've developed and approved rankings of risk factors and they claim that, "We can control the risk of exposure to the virus sufficiently to allow us to restart the economy and get our citizens back to work." Governor, what's your response to this claim?

And Commissioner, you spoke of working with Elizabeth, Trenton, Camden, Paterson, Atlantic City and Newark to increase testing in those cities. What does that look like in practice? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the first one, I've not seen the plan. The Morris County Chamber of Commerce has a really robust and vibrant chamber. I've had the honor of speaking with them, and its leadership is really good. I don't have specifics as to their plan. I'd be very happy, and I know our team would be very happy to get to get a look at it. As was announced here, we've got a commission which is sort of advising us at a strategic level. In fact, we've got a full commission call tomorrow afternoon. And then we've got, I think, nine subcouncils with very specific remits on the economy. I think that's basically what, at least as you've described it, that's basically the sort of, we're trying to manage risk here as well. And so I applaud them for their efforts but I would also remind them that there's one binding set of rules of the road, and it's ours. That has been the case and that will be the case. So we move as one state, we don't move, as good as their plan might be and by the way, maybe we'll learn something from it, by the way. I'm always looking to learn more and make whatever we're doing as efficacious and responsible as possible. But again, we move based on the state guidance and that'll continue to be the case. Judy, do you want to hit the question about the urban communities and exactly what that may look like?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. Between today and tomorrow, I will be speaking with the mayors and the health officers of those cities. I just finished, before I came here, with the mayor of Trenton and asking them how many people have you test, how big is your population, how many people have you tested? What are your testing goals? What obstacles are you seeing? Do you have test supplies? And what type of tests are you doing, and how can we support you? And we may be bringing in a third party vendor to help with that.

And just from my conversation with the Trenton mayor, we need to be able to be more mobile, move testing closer to the people who need it, particularly those that are living in high rise apartment buildings, that perhaps cannot get to either a walkthrough or a drive-through. So it's going to be a combination, but we really do plan on doing these first six, and then moving on to other cities that may need our help.

Governor Phil Murphy: You know, one thing that occurs to me, Dan, we may want to, tomorrow, just to Judy's point, remind everybody. Because the testing capacity, this is night and day with where we were in early March. So we had enormous demand and as a country, and certainly that included here, very limited supply and capacity. We have now cobbled it together such that we're among the most-tested states in America and our capacity is now exceeding, as a general population matter, the demand by a meaningful amount right now. That's what Judy spoke to earlier, and it's only going to continue to exacerbate when CVS drops 50 stores online. We've got another big retailer that we're working with that we're close to announcing.

I think it's worthwhile, you and I talked to a hierarchy of the priorities of the testing. And the big urban communities are right in the thick of that. So just to remind folks, maybe tomorrow we can bring this chart and pull it up. It's vulnerable communities, long-term care, prison population, developmental disability homes, etc. It's the frontline healthcare and other first responders. It's the big urban communities, you know, whether it's using an outside vendor, mobile resources, etc., to get out those populations. And then obviously, it's the general population, both symptomatic and asymptomatic. If it's okay with you, maybe tomorrow we can bring that chart back up with us. Thank you. Dave, over to you.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Hi, Governor, thank you. So yesterday, you were talking about the three stages. We're in stage 1 now and then we get to the new normal and then we'll be waiting for a vaccine and effective medications. If there's a vaccine that's created for COVID-19, along with possibly effective medications being developed, why would we have a new normal? Why wouldn't it just be a normal? Influenza may not be as deadly, but it's sickens hundreds of thousands of people a year, tens of thousands die, but society still functions normally. Do you envision stage 3 lasting for possibly, I don't know, years?

And second and final question, we have received many, many questions about this, emails, calls, etc. from parents, and it's on graduation. And their argument now is you're talking about opening the beaches on Friday, six feet apart. Thousands of people on every beach, in many, many towns. Why can't we have the football field for graduation, six feet apart, far fewer people, police would be watching it to make sure social distancing and so forth. A day at the beach is just that, a day at the beach. It's relaxation. Graduation, as we've discussed, a life moment. You can hand a kid a diploma, or not even have to hand a kid a diploma. What's the difference between that and waiting in line to get a slice of pizza at the beach? Many have argued that it's not fair and there's no logic.

Governor Phil Murphy: So on the second one, I'm going to leave out the fact, check your weather forecast for the weekend, there won't be thousands, I'm afraid, at the beach. It doesn't get out of the 60s and it's a fair amount of rain. But I would just say to the parents and to the seniors in particular, you've also got a reality of middle school kids here and potentially elementary school as well. But the big one are high school seniors. I was asked yesterday, do they have a right to have hope that we could still find a way, and they do have a right to have hope but I would add to that, bear with us. We're trying to figure this one out, and I hope sooner than later.

Secondly, do you have the stages? Can you fire that up, Dan, right now? That was quick. This is to your first question. Listen, I'm going to defer to Judy and Ed, and one part of this is this is COVID-19, this is coronavirus in this particular reality, but I think one of the lessons I hope that we all learn here is that this isn't the only pandemic concern that humankind should have, right? This either itself could come back or something else like it could come back. We are firmly in stage 1, and you can see the sorts of things, and these are representative steps below, and we've taken all of those. Again, I've already, I think, pointed you to the fact that we'll be able to, you know, we're wargaming a whole lot of stuff in stage 2.

I think the point I made yesterday, and again, I'd ask Judy and Ed if they've got a disagreement with this, is that 9/11 changed some things permanently. And I think this is going to change some things permanently. I'll quote Tony Fauci, who's our new guy we all look up to, and he said, and this is from a few weeks ago, I don't know that we'll ever be shaking hands again. You know, it's still hard. I'm not saying never again, but pack in 75,000 or 80,000 people sandwiched like this beside each other at some sort of an event. I mean, that's going to be hard to get to that.

Now, your question presupposes a vaccine, in which case that sort of takes you to a different place, without question. But I think there's going to be certain habits, the basic stuff that we're not going to shake anytime soon. That's a personal opinion. That doesn't mean necessarily it's mandated. It doesn't mean it's predicated that you can't also have therapeutics that can come in and treat this, in the absence of a vaccine. But I think just again, just as 9/11 changed life, in some ways forever, I think this has that reality as well. Would you add or disagree with any of that?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: As I said at the very first one of these, I would not disagree with my boss's boss, but even if I was, I still wouldn't.

Governor Phil Murphy: Everyone else does.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Well, we're not going to talk about Singing In The Rain and what that says about – sorry. When it comes down to it, one of the other things I've said is that reasonable people can also disagree on exactly, what is it worth to get what sort of return? We do that all the time in life. You've mentioned flu. Yes, we've accepted as a nation that 30,000 to 50,000 or so people are going to die every year from the flu. We certainly have not accepted as a nation that 30,000 to 50,000 or even 300 to 500 people would die every year from terrorist attacks. So we've accepted different risks and rewards and different steps that we have to take to meet that level.

Exactly what will be the level that society as a whole will move towards going future? What freedoms will be given up in order to minimize the risk of death? I can't answer that. But clearly, those are the questions that should be raised and should be talked about.

Governor Phil Murphy: I will say this, Dave. This is probably an obvious point, I'll use long-term care as an example. That reality has changed, in my humble opinion, forever. There's a reality around long-term care. I don't know whether it's testing, I don't know whether it's visitation. I don't know whether it's testing of staff, the heroic staff that go in there every day. The reality around long-term care, I believe, will never be the same. That doesn't mean we can't get to a place that we could all work with, but vulnerable populations, we're going to be in a different place, as distinct from what's a boardwalk going to look like? Do you have a quick one? Real quick.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Just a point of clarification if I could, Governor. Are you suggesting that even if we have the vaccine and effective medications, the new normal is going to be no hand shaking, no gathering in large –

Governor Phil Murphy: No, I'm using that as an example. I'm using that as an example. The psyche, not just the rules of the road, but the psyche, I think of all of us has changed, and I think it's changed in a way, I'm not sure I know all the ways, permanently. And again, Callahan and Murphy appreciate the green mask. I was trying to say that to you earlier. Brent, how are you?

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Good. I'll tick these off quickly. How do car sales help people if they can't register their cars at DMVs? Your spokesman said last week there would be testing in group homes for people with developmental disabilities. Where are you on those plans? Many readers who had been receiving the extra \$600 benefit said they didn't get the payment this week, though they did get their regular benefit. Is there a problem with the \$600 payments?

So will people have to social distance and wear a mask until there is a vaccine? Is there still an 8:00 p.m. curfew in place? And can people visit family members in person? And last one, if there's no vaccine by Labor Day, does that mean schools should prepare for some sort of hybrid, in-person, online or split schedule approach? Shouldn't they get some guidance now so schools and parents can start preparing?

Governor Phil Murphy: You sure that's all? You don't have a PowerPoint you want to go through, or? Car sales and the DMV, Matt, please.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: This has been going on with online sales, where you can pick up after you purchase it online. It's the same process they can register. I can take the 8:00 p.m. too, Gov, if you'd like. There is no and has never been an 8:00 p.m. curfew. If you've been abiding by one, Brent, I'm sorry.

Governor Phil Murphy: That was advice, don't go out after 8:00 p.m., it was never a curfew.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Is that still in place, though?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think it's in place, frankly, we're still stay at home 24 hours a day, if you can. The \$600 payment, who didn't get it, I don't have any insights on that. Can we come back to you on that? Brent, is that right? We'll come back to you. There won't be, I'm going to go out on a limb. There won't be a vaccine by the time we go back to school, so we can take that off the table. And if I'm wrong, I'll be the happiest guy in New Jersey, maybe in America. We are, as we speak, the Department of Ed, Department of Health, all related areas are working on, again, wargaming through what back to school looks like. And that is something that I think you're going to, you should assume this is within the next number of weeks that we're going to have guidance. Assuming we go back, this is what it's going to look like. And again, I hope sooner than that, Dave, to your question on graduations from this school year.

Your question, do I think we've got social distancing, including masks, social distancing, washing hands with soap and water, in the absence of a vaccine? Is that your question? I think the answer is yes. I think this is going to be, this is a good example of, this is the reality. We're not mandating you wear a mask, but we are strongly encouraging you to do that, and staying, you know, apart from people. Again, one guy's opinion, I think that's the new norm. Developmental disability homes, Judy.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We are plotting right now, throughout the state, the location of all of our group homes, developmental disability homes, mental health group homes, and we have a testing group that meets at 8:30 every morning and our goal is to develop a plan to actually go from home to home to home, and there's a lot of them. But we definitely have to hit every single one.

Governor Phil Murphy: I meant to say something earlier Judy on race and ethnicity, as you go through it. You're convening a call tomorrow, I believe, that I'm going to be on for at least part of it. That's something that continues to be of concern. I know, to us and to all of us and I think we're trying to find, you know, we're trying to give the crispest, best when we put give you a data, we want to give you the data that we think makes the point. I think you and I both think we can make that point. It's not a good point, by the way, but we can make it stronger in a more impactful way. Please.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: If I could, just so you know the magnitude of the process. We have 1,925 developmentally disabled group homes, 418 mental health group homes, and we're also working with DCF to get an indication of how many facilities we need to visit for, under Children and Families. The magnitude of it is great, but we will have a plan for them.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. I'm going to mask up as I say a few final words, if that's all right. Thank you all, Judy and Ed. Thank you, Pat, Jared, Matt, Marthelle, Dan, the rest of the team. Thank you. Again, we'll be back here, unless you hear otherwise, at one o'clock tomorrow. Thursday is TBD. I can say right now, I think we're going to shoot Friday for 11:00 a.m., assuming we can get the data, which I know puts a little bit more pressure on Judy and her team but given it's in respect to the Memorial Day weekend. Folks, keep doing what you're doing. You've been extraordinary. We talk disproportionately. It's like the press, you have every right to write what you write, and we need a vibrant press. But sometimes when I read the paper, I think there's a disconnect between what the reality is that's one guy's opinion, but put that aside, we make the same mistake because we talk about the outliers and give them probably a lot more heft and weight than they deserve.

The point is that overwhelmingly you all, by the millions, have been doing the right things and we want to continue to take steps. Again, if it's an outdoor-related activity, where we can have some management of capacity and social distancing, you should assume those are high on our list of considerations and again, the most important holy water is going to come from my right as to whether or not we can do whatever the steps we take responsibly. But because of what you've done, folks, we're able to consider right now a pretty long list of potential steps over a period of time, measured between days and weeks. Some are harder than others. We've already described the hard ones are inside, lack of ventilation, sedentary, that's hard. That's not going to be tomorrow but we are chopping through this and we'll take the steps as fast as we can responsibly take them, but not so fast that we in some way risk a reignition of a health concern. So thank you all. God bless you all. We'll see you tomorrow.

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