

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: December 2nd, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon. I am joined by the guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. Another very familiar face to my right, the state's epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Thank you both for being here. Jared Maples, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security Preparedness, Chief Counsel Parimal Garg, cast of thousands. The Health Commissioner, the woman who needs no introduction, Judy Persichilli, is still working remotely, but I know she's watching, so we send our very best. We had a good call with her a short while ago.

Here's some really good news. I want to extend our very best wishes to our chief policy advisor Dr. Zakiya Smith-Ellis and her husband Thomas on the birth of their baby girl Zoe Sadie Ellis, this morning I think at about 1:45. Zoe means life in the original Greek, and Sadie is not only a family name that is being passed on but is also the name of the first African American to earn a PhD in economics and the first black woman to earn a law degree at the University of Pennsylvania, by the way Zakiya's alma mater, and her name was Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander. Everybody's healthy. They're doing fine. We send them our best wishes. Welcome to our New Jersey family young Zoe Sadie Ellis.

Next, as was announced yesterday, the commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, Catherine McCabe, will be retiring next month. Suffice it to say, New Jersey would not be back among the vanguard of states in the areas of environmental protection, environmental justice, and fighting climate change without Catherine's extraordinary leadership. She still has a bunch of weeks left on the job, so we're not saying goodbye quite yet, and I look forward to our continued partnership until her final day on January 15th and beyond.

Now, with a heavy heart, I must acknowledge the tragic passing of state police recruit Lucas Homeijer. He was just 27 years old and a member of the 161st state police academy class. I know Pat will have much more to say about this tremendous young man and his family who Pat has known for a long time, but our deepest condolences are with recruit Homeijer's family and friends and his academy classmates. I spoke with his mom Denise this morning. I reached out and left a message for his dad Don. You can only imagine what that is like to lose a lad, so please keep this guy Luke in your prayers.

Finally, before we get to today's details, I mentioned on Monday that we wanted to take a deeper dive into our pandemic modeling today, but I think we're going to wait until Judy is back with us to do that, so we hope you'll bear with us for a little while longer. As the calendar tells us, we're now in December. On Friday, we will reach nine months since our first confirmed in-state case of coronavirus. Our first meetings about this virus and its potential to impact our state were in the middle of last January, so this virus has been a part of life for those of us up here for almost – and many more I might add – for almost a full year. All of us feared for and prepared for the worst, and yet it is still safe to say the worst has been worse than we had imagined.

We have registered an unfathomable 346,206 cases, and this pandemic is not even close to being over yet as we are reporting another 4,350 cases today. What's more, this virus continues to spread with a current statewide transmission rate of 1.08, and the positivity rate for all of Saturday's recorded PCR tests was 13.68%. I say PCR tests because that's where we've got the hard data. Our hope is at some point to be able to fold in antigen testing into these reports as well. Now our rate of transmission of 1.08 is the lowest it's been since September 16th, but it still means that each new case is leading to more than one other new case. This virus is still spreading.

Since the beginning of October, each of these metrics that I've just gone through has made it clear that the second wave would not be any easier than the first, but as we discussed on Monday, even more than these numbers, the numbers at our hospitals tell us how this virus is moving. In other words, there's no question about what's your testing like today versus what it was like eight or nine months ago. What's the denominator? We know what the numerator is. That's not relevant when it comes to hospitalizations. Those are hard cases. They're either COVID-19 confirmed or they're persons under investigation awaiting the pending results of this test.

That's because, again, there is a direct cause and effect relationship between the increasing number of cases and the increase in the number of patients in our hospitals. That much is not up for debate. It is simple math. When you compare – forget the denominator. When you look at the total number of cases that we see play out every day, you can almost tell where the hospitalizations are going to take us, and the numbers overnight tell us just that. Our hospitals – and by the way, we have 71 hospitals up and down our state – were treating a total of 3,287 patients, including 599 of whom were in the intensive care unit and 354 of whom required a ventilator. Now the good news, 367 persons were discharged yesterday, but another 507 COVID-positive residents were right there to fill those beds and were admitted. Sadly, and again, this is apples to oranges, not yet confirmed, our hospitals reported 51 fatalities from COVID overnight. Again, these are not yet confirmed.

As we discussed on Monday, the increasing numbers from our hospitals are the ones, again as I said a minute ago, which we are watching most closely. It really comes down to this. The fewer people in the hospital, the less stress and strain on our doctors and nurses, on our EMTs and other medical professionals and the lesser chance that one of them will contract this virus and have to take themselves off the field and leave their colleagues to pick up even more of the load. Let's also keep in mind that we're still weeks away from the first doses of a vaccine being ready for distribution to our healthcare workers and months away, realistically, from a vaccine being readily available for public distribution. Again, the news is really good, but it's not a light switch that we can flip tomorrow.

Everyone wants to know when this is going to be over – believe me, we join you in that – and when they can put their masks in a drawer and feel freer to gather again with family and friends. These numbers tell us the answer at least for now not anytime soon. All we have for now are the tools that allowed us to crush the curve in the spring: social distancing, face masks, good hand hygiene, and basic commonsense and personal responsibility. If you don't feel well, take yourself off the field. If you know you've been exposed, off the field. Wait a few days – as Tina would want me to say – to allow to make sure that the virus has had that time to incubate and go get tested. We have that capacity.

When I say all that, do the right thing, do the smart thing, commonsense, personal responsibility, take a look at this. There we go. Are you kidding me? This is the outdoor bar at Portobello in the Bergen County borough of Oakland last Wednesday evening. Now, I'm trying hard. Pat, can you help me out here? I'm trying hard to find a mask anywhere in that crowd, and there certainly isn't any effort to socially distance, and the entire concept of personal responsibility is completely absent. The police chief to his credit also said, Pat, that this happened not just Wednesday, but – I believe you're going to verify this is in a few minutes – it happened again on Saturday. They have cited the bar's owners for noncompliance as well as charges for maintaining a nuisance. Oakland mayor and friend Linda Schwager and the members of the borough council and other municipal officials worked quickly to send a message by revoking Portobello's outdoor dining permits after 4pm for the next 30 days so a scene like this won't be easily repeated. This comes at great pain to Dan Bryan who had his junior prom there many years ago. Good work by all. I reached out to Linda this morning to thank her for that swift action.

Across the state – let me say this – the overwhelming number of restaurant owners are playing by the rules and doing the right things. They're doing all that they can to keep their businesses open while also doing the things they need to do to protect their employees and patrons from the virus. Outlier owners who think the rules apply to others but not to them and who don't support the values of their communities give the good and hardworking restaurateurs – again of which there are thousands across our state – a black eye. I'll speak for Tammy, myself, our kids. We make a point to go out and visit restaurants as often as we can to support them and also enjoy a taste of Jersey. We have, after all, among the best restaurants anywhere in America.

These neighborhood restaurants, in fact, are the backbones of their local economies, and we will continue to support them in any way we can, individually but also as a state, but we will not tolerate knucklehead behavior like this that puts people at risk. By the way, this probably should go without saying, if you were at Portobello last week either Wednesday or Saturday, you should go get a COVID test. Tina, you'd want me to say that as well, and if you recognize someone in the photo, please tell them to go out and get tested. The last thing we need is for someone here to have contracted this virus which they in turn either could get sick or spread to their family or friends.

It is for this reason that we are also now formally changing our advisory regarding travel. First and foremost – and this is the most important point – no one should be traveling out of state for anything beyond that which is essential for your daily life, commuting to work or seeking medical treatment, for example. We understand that New Jerseyans may need to travel into neighboring states, such as New York and Pennsylvania, for shopping, worship, or similar daily or transient activities, but if you do travel outside our immediate region or if you are coming into New Jersey from another state, we strongly encourage you to observe a 14-day self-quarantine period and at the right point get tested. There are very few exceptions to this advisory including front-line healthcare workers, members of law enforcement, and active duty military personnel traveling to New Jersey on orders or directives, for example. Otherwise, we're asking everyone to simply not travel unless it is for essential – an essential purpose.

We can never forget that behind every one of the numbers that we report each day is a human face, including those of the more than 17,000 New Jerseyans who have died because of this virus either confirmed or probable. Today we are adding with the heaviest of hearts 56 more names to the rolls of those whose deaths are now confirmed to have been from COVID-19 complications. That confirmed total is now, as you can see, 15,309, and the number of probable deaths has been revised to 1,836. If you need a reason to fight through this pandemic fatigue – and you've got fatigue. So do we. We get it, but you've got to keep fighting or to keep masking up or continuing maintain social distances or to not crowd around a bar or in this season, when we want nothing more than to be together to feel good in politely declining an invitation to an upcoming indoor holiday party, let me give you, if I can, three reasons more.

Reason number one is this blessed soul, Theresa Wright. Terry was a long-time resident of Newton in Sussex County, and a beloved former kindergarten teacher who spent 30 years in the classroom. She was 93 years old when COVID-19 took her away from her family. Terry was both a scholar and a musician. She earned a full ride scholarship to Douglas College at Rutgers University, and she was also a compassionate and kind soul. She and her late husband Jack raised seven children including a special son Ted who was born with Down Syndrome and to whom Terry was a devoted caretaker – caregiver, rather. Only three of her children survive her today. Daughters Pegeen, who I had the great honor of speaking with on – yesterday, and she's up in

Belmont, Massachusetts – her daughter Colleen and son Patrick along with seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. I spoke to Pegeen. “Pat,” I said, “it’s hard to believe your dad’s no longer here and four of your siblings are no longer here.” She said, “We have lived the Irish tragedy.” God bless Terry and watch over her soul, her family.

Next up we have Belleville’s Cindy Dianella, great smile. Cindy was just 58 years old when COVID-19 took her. A graduate of Bloomfield High, class of 1980, she earned degrees from Lyons Institute in Essex County College that helped her gain a job in the IT profession at a time when many women weren’t yet there. For the past 27 years, she was a help desk supervisor for ASCO Power Technologies in Florham Park. Away from her desk, Cindy volunteered as a volleyball coach for the fourth through eighth graders at St. John Kanty’s church in Clifton, and she relished being with her family and friends and proudly wore the mantle as the fun aunt to her nieces and nephews. Cindy leaves behind her sisters Judy, Karen, and Denise, and I had the great honor of speaking with Denise on Monday, and their families, including those beloved nieces and nephews to whom she was the fun aunt: Scott, Candee, Ginger, Brittini, and Eddie, as well as five great grand nieces and nephews. God bless her and watch over her.

Reason number three, folks, is Rosalie Dilemme. Rosalie called North Arlington home for the past 42 years. She passed away at age 81 one week ago, the day before Thanksgiving, and her funeral was literally on Monday. Rosalie worked as a receptionist at Key Handling in Moonachie before retiring in 2001 to focus on what really mattered: having fun with her family and friends. They remember her as the center of every party and family gathering, and I know her joyous spirit was especially missed last Thursday on Thanksgiving. She is survived – Rosalie is survived by her husband of 63 years – you can see him right there in the middle – Peter and by her children Tina, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, Peter, jr., Marianne, and Christopher, and by her four grandchildren, Nicholas, AnnaRose, Giana, and Giulia, and her future granddaughter Daniella. She also leaves behind her four siblings, and by the way, her kids are a little bit – mostly still in Jersey in North Arlington and Kearny and Carlstadt, but she’s got a child also out in Palm Springs, California.

May God bless each of these three tremendous women and their memories, and may he bless those they left behind, Rosalie, and God bless you and watch over you. Those are three of the more than 17,000 reasons to wear a mask, social distance, wash your hands with soap and water, use commonsense. We don’t need to keep adding more reasons. When you let your guard down, you invite this virus in, but if we all do our part, we can slow the spread of this virus to keep it out of more homes and save an untold number of lives.

Switching gears, if I may, one of the greatest challenges of the past ten months has been ensuring that our kids’ educations will be able to safely and responsibly continue. We’ve gone at this issue on several fronts. The Department of Education in partnership with county and local school officials has worked hard to ensure that protocols are in place to protect the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff as well as that of our larger educational communities. As I’ve said many times before, number one, this is not a normal school year. Number two, the big principles are safety, high quality education, and equity. Thirdly, the stress is high, and we get it, and we have to do nothing but respect it and have sympathy for it with our educators, with our parents, with our students, with our administrators and teams.

The fact that there are positive cases impacting our school communities is not news. We knew as we entered the school year that students, faculty, or staff would contract coronavirus. We’re not happy about it. We take every case deadly seriously, but we knew as we predicted that that would happen. That has happened, but mostly through out of school activities. In other words, something happened outside that brought the case inside, and we know that because we’ve got now many examples of districts that went on remote because of in-school transmission, were all remote, were about to go back into school, and they had a handful of transmissions that, by definition, could not have been in the four walls inside of the school.

Overall, we have confidence that the protocols that are in place to protect against in-school transmissions are working as designed and as intended – again, not stress free by any means but working as intended. Our paramount concern has been to ensure these cases are identified quickly and that the avenues for in-school spread are closed. This plan has so far proven itself successful as the number of in-school transmission cases has continued to track far below anything we had anticipated. Again, we take each and every one of these cases deadly seriously, and yours truly and all of us would be – would like to be batting a thousand, but it is well within our expectations.

Over the past week, as we update every week, a total of four new in-school outbreaks were confirmed with a total of 16 subsequent new cases of coronavirus infection related to those four outbreaks. Since the beginning of the school year, we've recorded 70 total outbreaks directly linked to in-school transmission and a total of 285 cumulative cases. Separately, the majority of our schools continue to remain open to in-person instruction in one form or another. Eighty-nine are currently fully open for in-person instruction. Four hundred and thirty-eight, as you can see, offering a hybrid of in-person and remote instruction that has some students in school buildings at some point in the day, and it's typically an A and a B and in some cases, C cohort with a particularly focus on special ed kids. As the number of cases has increased statewide and some areas have become hotspots, we have seen an increase in the number of schools moving to all remote learning. That number is now at 246. Another 38 districts – and that's about where it's been – are operating with a mix of either all remote, in-person, or hybrid learning across their various buildings. And we ask districts to remain vigilant in reporting changes to their plans to their executive county superintendents.

But as I've noted before and most recently on Monday, we cannot view our schools as a monolith like New York City, and I think that's a blessing for us in New Jersey. And we continue to work closely with individual districts to ensure that the decisions made are those that work for them in their educational and broader communities. And again, hats off to everybody associated with education right now because this is far from a normal school year.

And relatedly, for those schools that remain either all remote or hybrid, the Department of Education has updated the statistics, tracking our efforts to close the digital divide, and those numbers are available online at [nj.gov/education](https://nj.gov/education). The total number of students who currently lack either the proper device or connectivity for remote learning is now at 33,851. That's down from an estimated 231,000 over the summer and down 2% from last week. This has been real progress but as I've said 330,851 is 330,851 too many, and I think the numbers may have been somewhat distorted from last week because it was a three-day week. I hope we'll see better progress next week.

And those districts that still have unfulfilled needs, site – mostly supply chain or delivery delays is the reasons for their students not having everything that they need. The department continues its work directly to ensure the best use of resources, the accurate reporting of data and effective communication between and among districts and students and families at the local level. We continue to work diligently to close the remaining gap.

We also work – continue to work diligently through our friends of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to close the gap in support that our small businesses need. As we had noted before, the EDA has now assisted 30,000 businesses and organizations through its suite of assistance programs and each and every one is a vital part of our economy.

Let me talk about one of them. Let's see. This is first up, First Tee Jersey Shore, a Point Pleasant-based youth development and golf organization run by the woman on the left there, Tara Kelly. I had the great honor of speaking with Tara on Monday. First Tee's uses – First Tee uses golf to provide character and values-building programs and while they provide programs and opportunities for all kids of the Jersey Shore, Tara's real focus is on reaching children and families under-represented in the sport of golf. Check them out, [firstteejerseyshore.org](https://firstteejerseyshore.org), [firstteejerseyshore.org](https://firstteejerseyshore.org). They've got ten locations in Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Now through her partnership with the EDA, Tara secured a grant that allowed them to retain staff and provide programs for 600 kids over the past year. So to Tara and the entire First Tee Jersey Shore team, thank you for all that you do to help inspire the next generation, and I hope 2021 is a far better and another successful year.

A couple of sad notes before I turn things over to Tina. First up, this is Somerset County Sheriff's officer Ahmed Mackey. Ahmed died a few days ago. His memorial will be tomorrow. We send condolences and prayers to his family, to Sheriff Darren Russo, a good friend of Pat's, and the whole team in Somerset County Sheriff's Department. God bless Ahmed.

And then finally for today, we've lost another New Jersey hero. This is Dr. Kelliann Leli, Captain, the United States Air Force. Captain Leli died last Friday following a non-combat related accident while on deployment at Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates. Captain Leli was a native of Sayreville and her parents, Frank and Patricia Seaman, still live in the Parlin section where they raised their daughter and her siblings, Brian, Danielle, and Janet. Kelliann will be buried in California where she was based out of and where she and

her husband, Air Force Captain Jimmy Leli, lived. I spoke with Frank and Patricia, her parents, as well as Brian and I believe her sisters were also there as well as sister-in-law and her parents. You can only imagine how they are reacting to this. God bless them all. Her mom said she was – she may've been in California or deployed in the United Arab Emirates, but she was a Jersey girl. So Captain Leli, Kelliann, we thank you for your service to our nation. I will be honored to sign an executive order later to lower our flags up and down the state to half staff tomorrow in her honor and memory. God bless you.

That is all for today. Please allow me to hand the briefing over, again, to a very familiar face, the woman to my right, Dr. Christina Tan.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. I will go through the department's daily report. As the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 3, 287 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation last evening. There are 599 individuals in critical care. Fifty-nine percent of those critical care patients are on ventilators. Fortunately, there have been no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 62 total cases in the state and no deaths reported at this time.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race, ethnicity is as follows: white, 54.2%; black, 17.9%; Hispanic, 20.2%; Asian, 5.4%, other, 2.2%. At the state veteran homes, the numbers remain the same, a cumulative total of 407 cases among residents across these facilities. At our state psychiatric hospitals, the numbers have also remained the same: 263 cases among residents across the four hospitals.

Regarding the daily percent positivity as of November 28<sup>th</sup>, statewide, our daily percent positivity for November 28<sup>th</sup> is 13.7%. In the north region, it's 15.3%; central region, 12.8%; and the south region, 12.3%. So that concludes this daily report. Stay safe. Please continue to mask up. Social distance. Stay home when you're sick, and download the COVID Alert New Jersey app.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Well done, Tina. Thank you for that and for everything. Good to have you here immediately to the right here, although we miss Judy. Thank you very much for that. Pat, it's a tough few days for the state police family, obviously, for blessed Luke's loss of life and his family and would love to get your thoughts on that young special fellow and also any other – anything else you got on compliance or other less weighty matters. Bless you and bless all the team.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. With regard to compliance, the Governor did highlight the two that have been reported to the ROC. Both of them were Portobello's Restaurant. They were cited both on last Wednesday and Saturday for both maintaining a nuisance as well as executive order violations. As you can see in the photo, no facial coverings, no social distancing, and well over the capacity.

With regard to Luke, certainly our condolences go out to his family, dad, Don, mom, Denise. Don't a retired trooper who I've known for a long time. His uncle, Luke's uncle, is also a retired trooper, so he grew up in a state police family. One of the hardest things I've ever had to go through personally as a trooper and just as a dad, too. And I know those instructors treat those – although it's tough training, treat each and every one of those recruits like their own kids. As you can imagine, in an incident like this, there is a thorough review being done of the incident. With regards to Luke, Luke just had a life of service, even though it was short. He was an Eagle Scout giving back to his community. He's one of the few attendees of our Trooper Youth Week. When he was 17 years old, he went to the state police academy and for Trooper Youth Week, and then ultimately went into the 161<sup>st</sup> class, which is a pretty rare accomplishment. So I just ask one, that you give the family some space as we are, as well, that you pray for his family, that you pray for his class who is still in there and their families who have their loved ones still going through our training and ask a special prayer for the instructors as well. I have no doubt that Luke Homeijer would've made a phenomenal Jersey trooper. Thank you, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Pat. How was the – how are his classmates holding up?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan:** His classmates, I had the opportunity to speak to them Sunday morning, and they are – since they have not gone home, so they're together every single day of the week since – for the last five weeks. In that short time, you create a bond in there, and they are certainly

devastated as you can well imagine, but I trust that they will continue through their training with Luke in their hearts and a driving force behind everything that they do. I told them whether it's a push-up, whether it's a jumping jack, whether it's a mile and a half run, if they do it with Luke in mind, I have no doubt that in March, they will raise their right hand and take the oath to become Jersey troopers.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I look forward to being there with you and with them. I don't want to speak out of school here, but I believe you said to me the other day – I guess it was Monday afternoon – this is not a regular event. This is never – is it fair to say this has never happened?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan:** I do not recall it happening, Governor. I don't want to go on the record as saying it never happened, but I would say the amount of – I think with the amount of training and bouts that we've had in the past 100 years that to my knowledge, I've not been a part of it. So very – an anomaly to say the least, a tragedy for sure, and our prayers out to Luke and his family.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** To you and everybody in the state police family, especially in that class, especially his family, we are here for you.

We were together Monday afternoon, which gets to a less weighty but important observation. We'll start over here, Aswan, is that we had, I thought, another good call on vaccines on Monday afternoon with the current administration's team led by the Vice-President, who was a – engagement that we had and I thought it was a good – yet another good day to point – we have a long way to go. There's enormous complexity. The fact that a lot of Tina's colleagues on the eighth floor are working remotely and others is another complicating factor. So the news is really good. It's real and it's good. There's still a lot of execution before us. You take a four-star Army general, Gus Perna, New Jersey's own, and you put him in charge of the distribution aspects of this – I don't know about you, but I look up at that screen, I feel like John Wayne is up there and feel like you know what? We're going to figure this out. But it is not absent an enormous amount of complexities, everything from standing up mask sites to the priorities that are obviously – that we've talked a lot about, who gets what when. But this is upon us.

Pfizer's batch will come in first assuming that they get the emergency use authorization from the FDA and the independent panels that assess this. Moderna will likely come a week – literally a week later. Those are the first two up to bat, and our plan, as we've said many times, is to begin where you'd want us to begin, with healthcare workers, essential front-line workers, vulnerable populations, and expand out from there. I've said this on a number of occasions. What is a realistic time-frame to think we've got access to everybody in the state that wants it, and we want everyone to want it? If the government in Washington and all the independent health folks, the private sector players, and we all say it's safe and efficacious, we need everybody to jump in there and get it. I'm sticking with April/May, so you combine the – Tina, I'm practicing without a license here, but the epidemiological curve of this wave with the availability of a vaccine, including in waves, and then hopefully coming out with better weather and we can do more of our life back outside as we have been able to do from May through October. We're in a different place, a far different and far better place. Probably not normal-normal but a new normal that we can much more easily live with and get our arms around.

We will continue to be on this rhythm of loss, Dan Brian. I assume he's here somewhere. There's Dan – Monday, Wednesday, Friday, unless you hear otherwise, and I right now have no reason to believe Friday will be anything other than 1 o'clock here, and we'll communicate electronically and otherwise between now and then as we need to.

Dustin, good afternoon.

**Reporter:** Good afternoon. Oop.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Dustin's back there, yeah. We love Matt, but we're going to start with Dustin. You guys should exchange Christmas cards.

Q&A Session

**Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record:** Yeah. Sorry, Matt. On the vaccines, now that a CDC panel has moved nursing home residents to the top of the vaccine list, will New Jersey do the same considering half the death toll has come from nursing home residents or will healthcare workers still be first? Is it true that the public

site listing hospital diversions is being shut down? If so, what's the reasoning behind that? Do you have any information on an apparent outbreak among staff at Palisades Hospital and can you share details? Do you think it's in the public interest to share information on hospital outbreaks, especially among staff? Last, there's apparently some confusion on the new indoor limits when it comes to catering venues. They can have a 25% capacity or up to 150 people if it's a religious activity or a wedding, but ceremonies held separately from weddings have to limit the gatherings to 10. Can you just make sense of this because it sounds like you can have a big wedding but a small reception depending on the venue? Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. I'm going to ask Parimal to jump in on the last question in a second. Tina, unless you've got any new wrinkle on the priority on the distribution, I think we are where we are and I think what we're probably going to do – this is a big week for us to really cross a lot of Ts and dot a lot of Is on vaccine distribution, so I think I'd like to come back to you, Dustin, when we've got a fuller assessment, and there's a lot going on on that front right now.

I'm not aware of anything that we're trying to not disclose on hospital diversions unless you are, Tina. I'm not aware, so can we follow up with you on that, because we've been pretty – more than pretty up front about that over the past nine months, so I have no reason to think we should otherwise. I've got no inside – insight on Palisades, but Dan, will you help me follow up on that as we did the other day on Ocean Medical Center?

Do I think we should share information on hospital outbreaks? Yes, I think people should know that. I don't know why we wouldn't want to do that. We do it with schools and so there's no impetus, at least on my part – I'm not aware on anyone's part – that would suggest otherwise.

Parimal, indoor catering, ceremony versus reception, any color you got on any of the above?

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** So the exception that allows wedding ceremonies to be at 25% capacity up to 150 people, that only applies to the ceremony. If the reception was separate from the ceremony, then it would fall under the general indoor gatherings limit of 10 people.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. You good? Okay, we'll follow up on the list. Now we'll come down to Matt, who's been on deck here. Matt?

**Reporter:** Good afternoon. Is Ocean Medical Center participating in contact tracing for the outbreak that sickened at least 100 employees, and is the state involved in this investigation given the size? Has the Department of Health given any guidance to hospitals about how often its employees should be tested? If not, does the department have any thoughts on this? I'm sorry if I missed this, but how many of the total hospitalizations are confirmed COVID versus PUIs? Does the updated CDC guidelines on the length of quarantine mean you'll adjust and effectively lower the indoor sports ban for up to four weeks given the updated guidance? Is seven to ten days depending on testing? And lastly, just following up with Dustin's question, and I understand what Chief Counsel's saying, but we've heard from a number of folks that say it affects many businesses because they're left out of – they have this large space but they're left out of these abilities to hold these events even though they're essentially the same exact thing, so is there any intention for – would you look at revising this rule?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. From the top, actually I just was back and forth with Bob Garrett because Ocean Medical Center is a Hackensack/Meridian member, and I won't go through all of the details, but he – I don't want to quote him necessarily but to say he's happy – he said that he's happy to say that our out-of-work team members are down by 20% and they would continue to remain vigilant and use the resources of their network to transfer patients when necessary and move staff when necessary.

But I think you asked about contact tracing. The answer is yes. I don't have any color on the specifics of it unless you do, Tina, but the answer's yes. There's no reason why – I mean, I said this a couple of times. I've said schools are second only, I think, to hospitals or healthcare settings in terms of our ability to contact trace. We'll come back to you, though. Dan, will you come back if any more color on that?

DOH, how often tested for hospitals? I don't have that off the top of my head. Do you, Tina? We'll come back to you on that.

COVID versus PUIs, I – as I said the number today, I realize that today – I'm not sure why only today – we did break out the number, but we will come back to you on that. It has been overwhelmingly, so I'm going to predict, Matt, without knowing the number, we have 3,287 in total in hospitals. I'm going to guess the confirmed are somewhere – because this is what it's been lately – plus or minus 3,000, but we will come back to you and give you an answer.

I don't anticipate changing the indoor sports. I assume you mean the window until January 2<sup>nd</sup>? I don't anticipate that will change and I hope if it does, I'm wrong and it gets to a happier place.

Parimal, I'm not sure I've got any – I think maybe we should follow up. If there are – I have not heard this and folks in that business have not been bashful about coming to me, so – but I'm not – that does not mean that their concerns are not real, so perhaps we could follow up on that and if there is something that we're missing that particularly isolates them in a way that we don't intend, we're happy to revisit, but we need to understand a little bit more what that is. So we owe a couple of answers here.

Let's go back up to Alex and then down to Nikita, if that's okay. Alex, good afternoon.

**Alex Napoliello, NJ.com:** Good afternoon. Just following up with Dr. Tan on Ocean Medical Center, we've been hearing that the outbreak started outside the hospital and then somehow was brought in. Can you comment on that? How did this outbreak happen? How did 100 folks become infected? I wanted to follow up with the Governor on an answer you gave to Dustin talking about who's against sharing this kind of data. Well, there's a Bill A4129 up in the Assembly that would require healthcare workers or healthcare facilities to report coronavirus disease data, and the Senate has passed it. The Assembly hasn't acted on it. I wanted to know if you're going to urge Assembly Speaker Coughlin to act on that.

For Colonel Callahan, of course condolences to you and all the state police. I'd like to ask you, is the recruit class continuing, or has it been briefly put on hold? Will you be classifying this as an in-the-line-of-duty death? And can you give us a little bit more on what happened? We've been told it's an active counter-measure boxing drill. Can you just sort of explain it? Is it sparring? Is it in the ring? And what did happen?

And lastly, just to go back to the Governor, your changes to the quarantine, or lack thereof, list, I'd just like a clear definition of transient travel. Is it any travel that is just less than a day between any state, or is it only those four states that have been mentioned before, Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut, and New Jersey? And this advisory's been changed so often. First, it was the map that you had sent out every week. Then that was thrown away. Then it's this. Are you concerned about the confusion that's being caused by constantly changing the metrics by which you expect people coming into the state to quarantine?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Ocean Medical Center, we've – I've heard the same thing We're trying to get to the bottom of this. I don't know if you have any more to add on that but we'll come back to you on that.

No comment on any bill that is being baked in the legislation other than we're big on the transparency side. So if this bill supports the notion of transparency and full reporting as a conceptual matter without speaking specifically about the bill, I will – as a conceptual matter, I like leaning on the side of transparency.

Pat, I can anticipate you're not going to want to get into what happened, but I believe you may want to comment about the recruiting class continuing, which obviously with very heavy hearts it will do, right?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan:** That's correct. Yes, I won't comment on the review and investigation itself, Alex, but the class is still moving forward seven days a week. I believe there's 172 recruits in there. And as far as your question with regard to line-of-duty death, unlike other academies, we do not swear our recruits in at the front-end, so they're not technically enlisted or sworn in. It's uncharted water for me personally and professionally and we will look into how this will be categorized given the nature of Luke's passing.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** God bless him. Don't be mad at me; I'm going to argue a little bit with the premise of your last question that there's confusion; there's no confusion. We've been saying for six or eight weeks don't travel, period. When we started doing this quarantine with New York and Connecticut, we had beaten the back of the curve down and other states were just experiencing the front-end of the first wave. And so it was and remains our sole objective to protect public health either from folks who are Jerseyans who have traveled out or visitors who are coming in. That's been the spirit of this from day one and that continues to be. When the

list of states gets up to 46 – as you know, the denominator is 50 and you take us out, so therefore the denominator is 49; that leaves three – it's kind of – so we've been saying, I think since September at this point, just don't travel.

In terms of the transient and essential business carve-outs of this and particularly the transient, which I think was your specific question, it's overwhelmingly to our neighbors but if there's a legitimate reason to go to – I'm going to pick Connecticut, and you need to do that to and fro within a given day, clearly that's okay. But the overwhelming amount of travel that's transient is to New York or Pennsylvania. It's across the Hudson or the Delaware I don't know what the number is, but my guess is that's 95-plus percent of the transient same-day travel. And there'll be a modest amount to Delaware, which we obviously border, and then a modest amount, I would think, to other states. But the spirit of this is you're going for a reason that's real and you're in and out the same day overwhelmingly to our neighbors. Thank you.

Nikita?

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Hi, Governor. So these are going to be off-topic for the most part.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Shocked.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** I'm glad. First off, so I asked you this back in February but in two or three months, party organizations are going to start backing candidates. Are you going to seek organizational lines for your reelection bid? Secondly, I know that Commissioner McCabe is leading the administration. Are you going to have conversations with your Cabinet members saying essentially listen, you can get out now or stay with us for the next four or five years, however long left you –

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Kind of a Hotel California kind of question.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** And then I remember back during the primaries, I asked whether you would support your reelection campaign stop unionizing. I want to know if you've had any additional thoughts on that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Reelection campaign...

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Unionizing.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yep.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** And then I don't know if you've seen what Congressman Pascrell has been saying the past few days, but he called for Rudy Giuliani and I think a couple dozen other Trump attorneys to be disbarred and then some Republicans in the House said that he should be censured over that, and then he put out a press release mocking them. So I'm just wondering if you think any part of that saga was inappropriate from either side?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Is that it? These are certainly off-topic as you promised. On organizational lines, no – the only thing I've declared is that I'm running again and I'm enthusiastically doing so, incredibly honored and humbled to hold this position and I'm going to seek reelection. Beyond that, no other details.

Catherine McCabe is a star and we're going to miss her. She has a very particular family-drive reason, but she is a superstar. And I can't speak for the entire Cabinet or team, but we've kept – I think compared to almost any other administration that I know of, almost three years in, we've overwhelmingly kept the team in place, and I'm incredibly proud of that.

Not opposed to unionizing. I've again, no – our team right now is extremely small and it is exclusively on things like fundraising and compliance, but I'm a big union guy. I believe as union goes so goes the middle class in our state and our country.

I spoke to Congressman Pascrell yesterday, who I love. Listen, you got bills saying someone should be disbarred. I literally mean that over here, you've got people saying that others should pay with their lives. I heard the President's attorney, I believe, say that this guy, Krebs, who did nothing but to say it was a full and fair election and I heard Bannon a couple weeks ago talking about Chris Wray, and they're talking about people's lives, literally life and death stuff, bills talking about whether or not they continue to deserve their professional credentials. I'm all in with – as I usually am on this one with Congressman Pascrell.

Give us one sec. Thank you for those.

**Reporter:** Hello, Governor, I just have one for Dr. Tan. Given that the holiday was almost a week ago, does the Department of Health see any particular indications in the testing or other data or in conversations of any increased spread as a results of Thanksgiving?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Tina, you should jump in but I think it's too early, right?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, usually – we do expect that given the volume of travel over the holiday weekend that there might be concern for spikes, but as the Governor said, it's too early. The incubation period, remember, is about 14 days, so we have to wait for a little bit before we start seeing any sort of spikes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Tina, thank you for that. We'll go to Dave and then Elise, we'll see is on. Dave, good afternoon.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Hi, Governor. Just following up on the last question, the – if we do wind up seeing a big spike in the next week or two, how might this affect the upcoming Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Year holiday season with gatherings, religious services, celebrations, etc.? Are you concerned about this? What possible options do we have to try and stop another potential big spike, and what about people traveling for Christmas? Why do you think that schools have been so effective at stopping, apparently, the transmission of COVID? What are they doing well? Is contact tracing working more effectively in schools than in other situations? Can the schools, do you think, Governor, serve as a model for perhaps other situations in the state? Or is it possible that the lack of cases in schools may be because there's a lot of asymptomatic cases with kids that just don't even know that they're carrying this virus? And final question, we're seeing a lot of bad behavior in some retail outlet situations where they don't seem to be worrying about capacity limits or they're not counting people going in and out of the stores. I know Trader Joe's – I don't mean to single anybody out but they're one of the great ones. They keep a very sharp eye on this. They let you in; they let you out. They're very good about it. Is the limit still 50% of capacity in these essential businesses and with more people out and about for shopping now, this seems like it's almost reached a hysterical state on the weekends. Is there concern about the lax policies that some of these stores seem to have? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Dave. I mean, on the first one, yes, and all options are on the table. In other words, if we see a big spike coming out of Thanksgiving, which I suspect, Tina, we would probably begin to see sometime over the next five to seven days, I would think, just doing the math, that will be of significant concern, and we're going to have to revisit where we are. And we're hoping that's not the case, but we're already at big numbers right now. There's no denying that. And Christmas travel, I mean, we're asking folks – this stinks, right? You're asking – this is Grinch times five. Don't travel. You got to stay six weeks away from Santa. Santa's got to wear a face covering; you've got to wear a face covering. When you have your dinner at home, make sure it's single digits. All of that stinks, but unfortunately, that's the reality we're in, and I believe completely this is not the reality we're in next year. I really believe that. But we've got no option right now and again, it's not fun for anybody. It isn't fun for us; it isn't fun for anybody hearing it.

I think schools have done an extraordinary job and all of the parties who were associated with it deserve credit. I mentioned this; I haven't said it in a while. I've been inside and toured a handful both public and private, in fact two public and one Catholic, and in every case, it was exactly as you'd want it: one-way stairs, one-way halls, no use of lockers, Plexiglas, temperature check, hand sanitizers at the doors, staggered meal periods, just really – I think the set-up, the base what's inside the four walls, other than I think a healthcare setting like a hospital, it's as good as we've got, and I think that's a big part of it. And again, huge shout-out to educators. This is incredibly stressful to moms and dads, to administrators, kids, just incredibly impressive. Again, there is – my bigger concern is someone does something outside and brings it into the school. And that is a bigger concern, frankly, because it's – you're on your own out there. I'll get to retail in a second

Is it possible you've got asymptomatic kids and they're wearing – by the way, you're wearing face coverings in school buildings, which is another thing, as opposed to a restaurant. Again, hats off to the overwhelming amount of restaurateurs who are doing the right thing but by definition, you've got to take the thing off to eat or drink. You don't have to in a school setting. That's been another really big positive. So an asymptomatic kid with a face covering and social distancing is working. You've got a bunch of things working for you in that setting and again, hats off to everybody.

If you know – by the way, Trader Joe's is a good example, you're saying. I want to make sure I say that so hats off to Trader Joe's for doing the right thing. They deserve a shout-out. And if you're aware specifically of some other folks who are not compliant, we'd love to have a private conversation afterward. But folks, the capacity, Parimal, have not changed in retail, right? The rules of the road in retail is what they've been, including you got to have a face covering if you're going on in the inside. So there's capacity restrictions, face coverings, and again, the overwhelming amount of retailers have done the right thing with one-way aisles, socially distanced spacing of when you're at the cash register, no contact in a lot of cases, Plexiglas, all the stuff that you'd want. But nothing's changed, and you make a fair point, and I'll leave it at this: it is the holiday season. The demand to go into a store is up relative to where it would've been a few months ago. It's pretty clear – and this cuts both ways – a lot of folks are shopping online. If you look at the Black Friday readout, you had an enormous amount of online activity and retail in-person presence was down significantly. And again, that's another reason I hope we don't see a season like this ever again because some of those in-person retailers can afford that because they've got their own online activities. A lot of the mom-and-pop shops do not have that luxury and for them, we have a particular hope that this is as fast as we can behind us. Thank you.

Elise, please fire away.

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Hi, good afternoon. First couple of questions are from Daniel Munoz from NJ Biz. Lawmakers yesterday said they're opposed to new tax increases for next year's budget. Are you planning to introduce any? Also, do you agree with the CDC's assessment that quarantines should be shortened to seven to ten days? Do you plan any policy or messaging changes relative to that? And my question, is there any sign that these small gatherings are abating and even if you were inclined to enforce the gathering limits in private homes, does New Jersey or does any state, for that matter, have the personnel on hand to put themselves at risk to hand out summonses and to adjudicate cases? Do you feel, in a sense, helpless to enforce common sense behavior? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** The beginning of that third question was are small gatherings abating, did you say?

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Yes, do you have any evidence of that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'm not speaking specifically to the discussion in the Legislature about tax increases specific to the budget, but I want to reiterate I don't wake up every morning with an impulse to either borrow money or to raise taxes. So our default is to find smart ways to get through this crisis. And I want to continue to do that, and I want to make sure people still believe this is an extraordinary state. This is the number one state in America to raise a family, the number one healthcare system, number one education system. Our location is second-to-none. Our talent is second-to-none. I want to make sure that people feel they get good value for living in this state, that what they pay in to get all of what I've just said and the quality of life and everything else is a fair balance and a fair deal for every family in this state.

I certainly am not qualified to comment on the CDC's consideration of reducing the quarantine period but Tina, any comments you've got on that?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Our Communicable Disease Service is in the process of reviewing these updated guidance. It was just posted. There's a lot of information to digest right now.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I would just say having – as a layperson, reading what they've put out, it seemed reasonable. Probably gives us – if we end up going that route, it gives us a few more degrees of freedom in terms of our own maneuvering and what we're asking people to do. But I think we'll wait til Ed Lifshitz and his team come back and gives us the final word.

I don't feel helpless by any means. The evidence is anecdotal, but Pat, you tell me if you disagree with this. There's no amount of law enforcement in New Jersey or in any state in America that can effectively get inside everybody's living room and ensure 100% compliance; there just isn't. So we do our best. The anecdotal evidence on Thanksgiving was good, Elise? I look at that Portobello Restaurant and my jaw drops because it's obviously not everybody doing the right thing. We are left with as much enforcement as we can realistically apply. We're left with the bully pulpit. We're left with the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Jon Bon Jovi, Jon Stewart, icons reminding folks where a darn mask. I won't quote their exact campaign, which I think is brilliant, by the

way. And I thank the three of them individually and so many others who continue to step up for this state. So I think most people get it. I really do believe that. Unfortunately, not everybody gets it and there's no amount – Pat, you should weigh in here. There's no amount of law enforcement that can ensure 100% compliance.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan:** I don't know if I could add anything.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Remind me – remind everybody again how many communities where you all have the direct –

**State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan:** We have 89 full-service law enforcement of 89 municipalities, and although mostly rural, to your point, Governor, to try and enforce small gatherings in private homes is a tall order.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's hard. I mean, we had – a few weeks ago, you and I were – there was a Rutgers football watch party. I believe it was in New Brunswick, and they were making a ton of noise. They attracted just what they probably didn't want, which they attracted law enforcement attention and the party got broken up. I mean, that sort of stuff – listen, I'm – there's an NFL – if anyone wants to know how crazy the world is, there's an NFL game on today, I believe at 3:40, which is – that doesn't happen on Wednesdays, but this is not a normal year, and I'm just begging people as I mask up, hang in there. Just stay with us. Stay in the fight. This is only literally a matter of a handful of months right now. When we're talking about a safe vaccine that has a 90-something percent hit rate, Tina, not one but two of them beginning to have availability this month and then that rolls out in waves in the next number of months. When we talk about light at the end of the tunnel, this is real. And so what we need right now is we need a bridge from today until that better day, which is not that far forward.

I applaud – by the way, I wanted to say this earlier, so I want to ask forgiveness for my colleagues here. I applaud everybody in Washington who are doing everything they can to try to get a federal stimulus deal done, which we so desperately need. So I applaud everybody on both sides of the aisle, including folks in our delegation who are doing everything they can to get something done. But this is not a 900-something million dollar moment or billion dollar moment. This is a three-plus trillion dollar moment. That's what we need and we need it now. If you're unemployed, you need it right now. You needed it three months ago. If you're a restaurant, you need it right now, a small business. If you're a state government or a county government or a local government and you're trying to keep firefighters, law enforcement, educators, healthcare workers, EMS folks employed at the point of attack to deliver the services that our residents so desperately need in this dire hour of need, we need it now. And it has to be big.

I've said this many times and again, I applaud everybody trying to do the right thing here, but this is a much bigger moment. We need to meet this moment with an equal action and I have said this so many times. History will not be unkind to us if we overshoot. It will be devastating and it will be paid for in human suffering if we undershoot. Thanks, everybody. God bless.

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