

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: March 26th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Two days in a row, punctuality – we’ve got that going for us. Good afternoon, everybody. Lots of ground to cover, good afternoon.

Joined as usual by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of Health Judy – careful there, Dave, into your sleeve – Commissioner of Health Judy Persichilli, State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan; to her right State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan; to my left, among many others of my team including the Director of the Department of Homeland Security Jared Maples who’s with us today.

The speakers will be just Judy and myself, but both Pat and Christina are here to answer any questions that we can’t crack the back of, and we’ll be joined by other team members who will also augment as needed.

A couple of things – we just came from a video conference call with President Trump and Vice President Pence and several members of their cabinet and advisors – Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, Ambassador Deborah Birx who is a Special Advisor to the White House on the coronavirus reality. I thought it was a productive call. Among other things, it is, while we’re a big nation and our needs and challenges vary depending on where we are, there’s a lot of commonality when you’re on with Governors. And you feel some amount of comfort as a result of that.

And there’s no question that New Jersey, not necessarily for all the right reasons, is on the minds of the President and the Vice President and their teams. Not only did I speak with them but New Jersey came up a number of different times, and you will see why by example as I speak the following.

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Since we met yesterday, we have received 2492 new positive coronavirus test results. That pushes our statewide total to 6876. Again, 2492 new to a total of 6876 in total. And Judy would want me to remind everybody that this includes of the positive tests, 436 that come from our mass testing sites – Bergen Community College and PNC Bank Arts Center.

And we have the very sad duty to report that another 19 New Jerseyans have now lost their lives and have died from COVID-19 related complications. And this brings our total number of lost lives to 81 precious human beings. Every single one of them was an invaluable member, a precious member of our New Jersey family and we mourn them both individually and as one family.

The loss of every single one of these residents is why we all need to do what we're doing, especially to practice social distancing. Coronavirus does not spread on its own; it spreads person to person. The more you stay home and the less we absolutely need you in our response efforts, the slower the spread and the flatter the curve gets. And this isn't a one-day or a two-day thing either. Coronavirus can take up to two weeks, some suggesting possibly longer – I'm practicing without a license there – but at least two weeks to incubate.

So, it's going to take several weeks at least for us to begin seeing a real impact in the social distancing measures that we put in place. And remember a couple things. We have warned folks, we've told you these numbers are going up. Sadly, the number of lost lives is going up. Our job is to fight fiercely with unlimited resources to save as many of those lives as possible.

But the number that's really spiking now into the thousands are the positive test results. That's partly, as we've said all along, partly due to some amount of community spread and partly due to the fact that we've opened our testing regimes up, up and down the state dramatically. Weequahic Park for instance opened today in Essex County, so that's an Essex County-sponsored testing site. We've been telling you over the course of the past couple of weeks pending test site openings. You're seeing some of this. And again, the silver lining is the more data we have the better the experts can manage the virus and also predict where it is that we're headed.

On a related note, I spoke earlier today with a friend, a fellow former member – I'm a former member of the diplomatic community – to South Korean Ambassador, Ambassador Lee and we spoke about a couple things. First, that nation stands as an example of how aggressive social distancing policies can truly help in our getting out ahead and then staying out ahead of coronavirus. I also assured him that the Korean population, which is exploding in New Jersey, especially in places like Bergen County, that that was a community that we hold dear and that we would stand with them, even in the face of any bad behavior of blaming one community or another. And I'll come back to that in a few minutes. It was a productive conversation.

So everyone, please, please, please continue to follow our stay at home directive. Please think of others across our state, let alone within your own family whose lives may depend on you doing the right thing and the smart thing. Don't think that because you feel fine after a few days or even five or six or seven days that it's safe to resume your previous, normal lifestyle. It is not.

I'm aware that some school districts, on a separate matter, have already begun advising families as to when they anticipate reopening. Let me be perfectly clear on this – that decision rests with yours truly. We will not be prepared to revisit the closure until at least April 17th at the very earliest. The decision to reopen will be based on careful discussion with our public health and safety experts and with our educators and districts, and will be guided by the facts on the ground.

Again, we will not revisit this question until at least April 17. I appreciate, believe me, that everyone is anxious to get back. I've got four kids who are doing distance learning right now at home, but we will not do this piecemeal. We will do this together. I meant to say this earlier by the way, but I'll come back to that in a moment.

Separately – I'm bouncing around here, forgive me. I have an announcement regarding the testing sites, which I referred to a minute ago, the mass testing sites at Bergen Community College and at the PNC Bank Arts Center. On this Saturday, and Pat Callahan will correct me if I get this wrong, March 28th, these sites, both of them, will be accepting symptomatic healthcare workers and first responders – police, fire and EMS – only. By the way, check that image out. Unbelievable. That says it all about the healthcare workers and the first responders who are laying it all on the line.

Again, this Saturday March 28th, both the Bergen Community College as well as at the PNC Bank Arts Center, only symptomatic healthcare workers and first responders – police, fire and EMS. The general public will not be able to access these sites on Saturday.

And then, starting this Sunday, March 29th, these sites will move to a new schedule. This new schedule will be posted to our one-stop reference site at www.covid19.nj.gov (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>), www.covid19.nj.gov (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>). Each day they are open, these sites will collect 500 samples – again, we remind you, symptomatic people only going. We are taking this extraordinary step to preserve the health and safety of the tremendous women and men working at these sites.

And then, starting not this Saturday but the Saturday after, April 4th, and every Saturday to follow, the PNC Bank Arts Center site will be dedicated only to symptomatic healthcare workers and first responders, by the way with valid credentials only. So, let me just step back and make sure everybody got that.

This Saturday, the 28th, both Bergen Community College and PNC Bank Arts Center, only symptomatic healthcare workers and first responders. Then, beginning next Saturday, April 4th and every Saturday, PNC Bank Arts Center only will be dedicated to symptomatic healthcare workers and first responders. For the days both in between those Saturdays and after April 4th we'll

go to a new schedule, likely Pat on and off I think, fair to say? Monday one will be open, the other will come back on Tuesday, we'll go back on Wednesday, etc.

And again, this is a very manpower-intensive operation, Judy, and there's a lot of healthcare workers in addition to State Police, county, local police, National Guard. And we've got to preserve our assets and our most precious assets are our people. I thank both the Attorney General Gurbir Grewal and Col. Pat Callahan for their efforts to ensure our frontline responders are protected.

Separate – again, we're bouncing around here. I am pleased to report that my request for a major disaster declaration request to FEMA has been approved by the President; meaning, we will now have access to greater essential federal support to help our residents through this emergency. It means we can lift some remaining bureaucratic barriers to assistance as well and be able to augment our response even more efficiently. And again, this is unrelated to the passage in the Senate and hopefully tomorrow by the House and then signed by the President of the \$2 trillion plus economic package.

I spent a considerable amount of time on this one yesterday with Vice President Pence, last night with FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor and others, making our case for this declaration. And I thank the administration, the President, the Vice President and especially FEMA for hearing our pleas and responding. And I also want to thank the tremendous work of the team, Attorney General Grewal, Col. Callahan, Director Maples, Dan Kelly in my office and their teams in getting this done.

Additionally, we have been for its passage, and we are now working around the clock with our federal delegation and our own teams to get a full accounting of what and how much is in the federal stimulus bill for our state and for our families. And as I said yesterday, it's a very good step in the right direction. Let's not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. But I also want to reiterate what I said yesterday – we will undoubtedly need more assistance. I'm not going to stop pushing for that in any respect.

This bill is but a first step in the right direction, a big step but a first step. And we will certainly need billions more and I'll keep working with my fellow Governors and our respective delegations. I want to give a particular shoutout to our Senators Bob Menendez – he and I just exchanged notes a few minutes ago; he was real time in the cockpit on this one; Corey Booker. I had a particularly important relationship in terms of on the House side with Bonnie Watson Coleman who is New Jersey's sole representative on the Appropriations Committee. I had a good conversation last night with Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin. My plea is, the more flexibility this bill provides states, particularly for the state stabilization fund, the better we're all going to be.

Again, I'm going to keep moving around here. I apologize, Judy, I'm keeping you waiting but these are all important preambles to your presentation. We got a real, not unexpected but we got a real gut punch this morning as a nation and a state with the release of the federal unemployment numbers. More than 3.3 million Americans filing for unemployment benefits last week. In New Jersey, 155,000 workers filed for unemployment. That's 16x the number that filed the week before. This makes federal assistance to backstop our state unemployment system even more critical.

It's also a reason why I signed legislation yesterday to expand our Temporary Disability Insurance and Family Leave Insurance programs, to provide more workers with access to paid leave benefits during public health emergencies. I thank Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter and their colleagues for leading this change.

And as it also pertains to federal support, we are continuing to move aggressively to buildout our hospital capacity as we outlined yesterday. And to that, I have continued my push with the federal government for the supplies that we will need from the National Strategic Stockpile; and these are the so-called personal protective equipment. And we reiterated our ask, and I'll give you a couple of datapoints of what's on that list: 4.5 million N95 masks and 2500 ventilators and frankly everything in between – masks, gowns, gloves, etc.

Regarding PPE, we have created an online form through which businesses and non-hospital healthcare facilities in possession of PPE not required for the provision of critical healthcare services, whereby that form you can submit information about their inventory. Per Executive Order 109 which I signed on Monday, this information must be submitted by 5:00 PM tomorrow. That form is available at www.covid19.nj.gov/ppereport (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov/ppereport>). Again, www.covid19.nj.gov/ppereport (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov/ppereport>).

And I want to give Col. Callahan a big shoutout here. For anyone who has PPE they wish to donate they can reach out to us at www.covid19.nj.gov/ppedonations (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov/ppedonations>), that's again www.covid19.nj.gov/ppedonations (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov/ppedonations>) or ppedonations@njsp.org (<mailto:ppedonations@njsp.org>). Did I get that right? How many emails do we have, do you know?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: 750.

Governor Phil Murphy: 750. So, two days ago I said 350, then it was yesterday 450 or 500; today, 750 and we need it. And I've also given shoutouts to our corporate partners over the past few weeks who have really stepped up. L'Oréal, one of the iconic French companies has stepped up in a big way to provide hand sanitizer which we absolutely need.

Again, bouncing around, forgive me. Earlier today, as a part of our main street stimulus focus, the Economic Development Authority Board practiced social distancing and met via conference call to approve an initial \$75 million program to help stabilize the many small businesses who are the most vulnerable of our employers among the economic shockwaves in this

emergency. Overall, this program will be able to provide direct financial assistance and support for, we believe between 3000 and 5000 small businesses.

And it bears repeating, the majority of New Jerseyans work for small businesses. So, this isn't just about supporting our small- and mid-sized business owners, which it is; it's also about supporting the men and women who work for them. Our recovery begins with our small businesses.

In particular, the EDA's approach is built around a number of pillars and different buckets, and among them, they include a \$5 million emergency grant program that will provide direct, near-term cash assistance to the smallest and most vulnerable of our businesses; \$10 million in 0% interest loans for small- and medium-sized enterprises who need direct financial support; greater support for private sector lenders, in particular community-based lenders; direct financial support for entrepreneurs and other early-stage firms that cannot access traditional banking resources due to this emergency. These are just a few of the things on the EDA's list. Any business or organization wanting more information should visit www.cv.business.nj.gov (<http://www.cv.business.nj.gov>), www.cv.business.nj.gov (<http://www.cv.business.nj.gov>).

And to all members of our state's – I mentioned this a minute ago – our state's corporate, philanthropic and banking communities, I continue to ask for your help in ensuring our small businesses stay on their feet – not just the equipment and resources that you've donated, but to really stand behind and stand firmly with our small businesses. I urge you to reach out to the EDA today for ways that you can be a part of our response and recovery and long-term success.

I know the EDA under the leadership of CEO Tim Sullivan and Board Chair Kevin Quinn will continue to look for ways to bring even more resources to our small business community as this emergency continues. I also thank Joe Kelly and his team in our front office Economic Development squad for their work in putting this program together.

I mentioned this a few times now, the jobs portal created for New Jerseyans whose jobs were cut because of this emergency but who still want to work and want to join our tremendous frontline response team by working at one of our essential employers remains accessible through our one-stop site www.covid19.nj.gov (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>). The number of job postings on this site has grown at a pace that I don't think anyone could have expected.

As of today, more than 35,000 job openings are being posted by more than 300 essential employers – 35,000 jobs across 300 employers. Since we put it online Monday, which is only a few days ago, the jobs portal has been accessed by 230,000 job seekers. So again, I urge every resident willing to step up to be a part of our frontline workforce to visit www.covid19.nj.gov (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>) to look at the list of available jobs and to apply for one. And I encourage employers to continue to connect with us through the site to have your openings posted.

This shows the very best of New Jersey. We know from the response that tens of thousands of our residents want to keep working, in fact hundreds of thousands, and want to be a part of our response; and that our business community is also stepping up in a big way. This is just one example of how we're going to get through this together and emerge stronger than ever before.

Another example is by simply living our New Jersey values, even in this time of social distancing. I cannot say in any stronger possible terms how important it is that we pull through this together as one great, diverse New Jersey family. Our diversity is one of if not our greatest source of strength. Our diversity of cultures and religions is one of our hallmarks as a state. We take enormous pride in that.

So, I take great offense as do the overwhelming amount of our residents when a small group of people do things like going on social media to scapegoat others who worship differently or who look differently from them for what we're experiencing right now. In particular, I mentioned earlier our Asian brothers and sisters; especially I just mentioned earlier in my remarks our Korean community, which is one of our most cherished as well as one of the fastest-growing.

I was on last night with leadership of the Jewish community in this state and people taking a couple of examples of noncompliant behavior... We had very little of this overnight, right Pat? One incident we think we had. But a couple of folks who sponsored gatherings in Lakewood, in a community that is enormous and the fastest-growing community in our state, where the overwhelming percentage of folks are doing exactly the right thing, including among its leaders. But folks are using a couple of examples like that to extrapolate and start blaming and vilifying communities, in this case our Jewish brothers and sisters.

By the way, I get the news overnight every day from Germany, and a very small minority, far right, anti-Semitic group of folks there are doing the same thing, vilifying the Jewish community there as well. So, regardless of how you worship, regardless of your ethnicity, race, who you love, your gender, we are one family.

We rise and fall as one family. That's a reality in a peaceful time. We're at war right now. We need each other more than ever before. And any amount of scapegoating or any other bullying or vilification of communities, one community or another, is completely... It's normally completely and utterly unacceptable; it's even more so today. And I repeat, there is a special place in hell for the very small minority that do that.

And again, doing that is not only wrong in a moral and ethical sense, it's just simply wrong based on any fact basis you can possibly find. Every community in New Jersey is taking its role in this emergency with the utmost seriousness and gravity. I've spoken with countless community and faith leaders who continue to tell the people around them that now is no time for

business as usual. It's also no time to panic and it also is a time to come together as never before. And we are one family, period, and we will get through this as one family.

Our New Jersey values are the glue that holds this family together and it's what will define our response and our resilience. So, to everyone in New Jersey, keep doing the things you're doing to protect this family. And I'll repeat as I've said before, unequivocally we will get through this – not unscathed as we've already seen with the loss of life.

But we will get through this, assuming each one of us, each of the 9 million of us in our family does their part – hangs together; that this is a war, and we accept that we win wars when we don't panic but we get smart, aggressive, proactive. We don't turn on each other, we come together, we show courage. We are doing that, we will do that and we will win this war as we have won so many before. Thank 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. Good afternoon, everyone.

We continue to see our older population and individual with underlying conditions to be more severely impacted by COVID-19 illness. As I've said before, we know our long-term care facilities are particularly at risk because of the populations that they serve. In early March, we held a conference call with these facilities to review important prevention and preparedness activities. In addition, on March 13th the Department required that these facilities restrict visitors and screen all staff for respiratory virus symptoms.

However, we are still seeing more of our long-term facilities being impacted. Right now, there are 43 of our 375 long-term care facilities with at least one resident being reported as positive for COVID-19. As you know, the impact of COVID-19 has been severe at St. Joseph's in Woodbridge and it necessitated the transfer of those residents to another facility.

At this time, we have confirmed at least 24 COVID-19 cases among the St. Joseph's residents, and we have also confirmed that five staff members tested positive as well. That is out of a total staff/resident complement of 78. There have been three deaths among those residents. More residents and staff are symptomatic, so we made the assumption that residents and staff of St. Joseph's had all been exposed to COVID-19. Because of this situation, it was vital that immediate public health actions were taken to ensure that the staff and the residents were safe, and that the residents got the care that they needed. I want to thank the New Jersey EMS Taskforce and the county who helped with the transfer of those patients.

I also want to report that today, the New Jersey Department of Corrections has three new confirmed employee cases of COVID-19 involving officers. That I reported on yesterday so now they have a total of four. One impacted officer operates out of Central Reception, an assignment facility, while the other two officers work out of the adult diagnostic treatment center. The New Jersey Department of Corrections has notified all individuals who came in contact with the impacted employees and is requiring the contacts to self-quarantine for 14 days. And the confirmed employees did not come in contact with any of the inmates. And none of the inmates thus far have been tested positive for COVID-19.

As the Governor mentioned, and unfortunately we're reporting 2492 new cases for a total of 6876 cases in New Jersey. And sadly, 19 new deaths have been reported. Three of those deaths were associated with a long-term care facility. Those fatalities are from the following counties: 4 in Essex, 3 in Bergen, 3 in Middlesex, 2 in Burlington, 2 in Monmouth, 2 in Morris, 1 in Ocean, 1 in Passaic, and 1 in Somerset.

The county breakdown of new cases is as follows: for the cases that we were able to confirm a county, Atlantic has 2, Bergen 357, Burlington 16, Camden 13, Cape May 2, Cumberland 1, Essex 203, Gloucester 10, Hudson 158, Hunterdon 9, Mercer 28, Middlesex 183, Monmouth 179, Morris 64, Ocean 144, Passaic 133, Salem 1, Somerset 35, Sussex 20, Union 147, and Warren 12. And we are still collecting more details on 755 cases, so of course these county amounts will change.

In anticipation of the surge and the need for particularly hospital critical care beds, we are initiating a Department of Health Executive Order to name our Level I Trauma-Designated hospitals as the coordinating entities for their regions to include surge monitoring, critical care bed utilization, consultants to the field hospitals, and liaison with the Department of Health Advisory Group that will be headed by Dr. Eddy Bresnitz.

In a call yesterday with Kevin O'Dowd, the CEO of Cooper University Hospital, Amy Mansue, the Senior Vice President of Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health System, and Dr. Sharif Elnahal, the CEO of University Hospital we outlined the responsibilities and the processes for their collaborating roles. We're encouraging all hospitals and healthcare providers to work together in their regions to ensure that all of the residents of New Jersey that need care get the care that they require.

Our expectation is that the need for critical beds is being felt now and prior to what we would call the actual surge of all cases requiring hospitalization since the significantly symptomatic cases or symptomatic individuals are entering our hospitals at a faster rate. This will require all hospitals to focus on their plans to increase their critical care bed complement now. We're still struggling as the Governor said with supplies for PPE and particularly, at this point in time, ventilators. I certainly want to thank Kevin O'Dowd, Amy Mansue and Dr. Elnahal for their willingness to support this effort in their collaborating roles.

We all need to continue to work together to reduce the risk of exposure in our state. We know that following the Governor's social distancing measures is a sacrifice; we know it's a hardship. In this age of social media, we urge you to maintain your sense of community. Stay in touch with each other. Reach out to your elderly relatives and reach out to your elderly neighbors.

Take care of your pets. You're doing your part to protect not only your own health but also to protect the residents of New Jersey, and for that we are thankful. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. Negatives, do you have any negatives? You had begun to give us some negative tests relative to positive. Do you have any of that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I do.

Governor Phil Murphy: While you do that, I want to mention on my VTC with the President and the Vice President, I was also back and forth this morning with the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. Happy birthday, Speaker Pelosi.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: As of the data from this morning, of the seven laboratories that are sending us their full COVID-19 results – and it represents 90% of total test results that we receive – there were over 19,364 tests performed, of which 6137 tested positive for an overall positivity rate of 31.7%.

Governor Phil Murphy: That's a little bit higher than it was, so it was 27%, 29%, 13%.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Mm-hmm.

Governor Phil Murphy: And in fairness, we've talked about sadly the death rate. We have certainty sadly on the numerator; we don't have certainty on the denominator. It's a mistake, I think, for folks to just take the total number of precious lives that we've lost and divide it by positive tests. Because we know there's a lot more people who want to get tested and the denominator is by any measure larger than the number of positive tests we have. So, that's a conclusion that we're not drawing and we don't think you should draw, is that fair to say?

Also, I make it my business to just tell you the top five counties in total cases. Bergen continues to be far and away, 1206, about double Essex which is 609; then Middlesex 505, Monmouth 501, Hudson at 441. Then, in the interest of full disclosure, Union is right behind Hudson at 432.

I think you said this but Kevin O'Dowd on behalf of Cooper, Amy Mansue on behalf of RWJ, and Sharif on behalf of University Hospital – that's the south, central, north coordinating principal contacts. Thank you for that.

With that, I think we'll start with some questions.

Q&A Session:

John Mooney, NJ Spotlight: Thank you. I have a set of questions of my own and then, if I may, some from the folks at the Enquirer. What is the Health Department doing right now to track the number of nurses who are ill and hospitalized? We're hearing horror stories of nurses on ventilators as well as doctors, to track the numbers of them; to make sure you're monitoring staffing levels and keeping hospitals fully functioning? And then, with that, if someone in a workplace tests positive what is the advice right now to notify the employees, particularly in healthcare settings? Are there changes? We're hearing that it's not level across different types of jobs and workplace environments. Is there a standard for telling people you're working with if someone has tested positive? What specifically is the Department of Health doing now on developing guidelines for doctors on the use of ventilators if there is a shortage as expected – who gets them, who doesn't? And then, are there guidelines being developed right now for triaging of patients as well? And then, any update if we can get on the status of the number of ventilators coming in from the Stockpile?

Governor Phil Murphy: So, just on the last point, the most recent ask from us – I think I mentioned this – is 2500 ventilators from the Strategic Stockpile. That was an updated number along with, I think I said 4.5 million N95 masks. I think most of these, Judy, are going to be in your and Dr. Tan's neck of the woods, so please jump in.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I want to start with perhaps the most difficult question to answer, and be responsive to, and that is the one what happens if we don't have enough ventilators to take care of the patients that we have? We're working with the Medical Society of New Jersey. Dr. Bresnitz is putting together and Advisory Committee of which they will participate. And one of the items that we will be addressing together are the bioethical considerations of the availability of particularly life-saving modalities like ventilators. That is, I would have to say, one of the more difficult issues that we will be discussing.

As far as healthcare workers, we keep a tally of the healthcare workers along with the rest of the positive cases. If we are not notified that a healthcare worker is – and we have not been, by the way – a healthcare worker is on a ventilator I don't have that information. That's handled locally by the hospitals. We do get notified if there is a healthcare worker that expires as a result of COVID-19 and we get that notification directly from the CEOs of that hospital. And we were notified early today of one; I have no information on that as yet. It was a part-time worker in the northern part of the state.

And monitoring staffing levels, every hospital puts in a staffing plan and we monitor that plan on a regular basis during good times. We have waived all of the staffing ratio requirements to allow the hospitals to move their staff where the need is most, where the acuity is the highest. And part of the coordinating responsibilities of the Level I's will be to work in concert with all of the hospitals in their region to make sure that the residents of New Jersey get the care they need based on their acuity as it's presented.

Governor Phil Murphy: ...the modalities and tradeoffs and bioethical considerations which just sort of haunts you when you hear those words, right, when you hear that sort of notion.

Let me just remind everybody – please check out the curve behind us. It's the reason why we're doing what we're doing, to do everything we can to head off that sort of discussion. We have to obviously hope for the best but plan for the worst and that's what I think you're hearing. But this social distancing, this aggressive set of steps we have taken – unlike frankly at this point almost any other American state – it's not just an abstract exercise.

This is literally to keep the curve as flat as possible and below the capacity of the healthcare system, including all the equipment associated with it, and including, by the way, the healthy workforce God willing that is associated with it, to head off, to stave off – hopefully forever but certainly for as long as possible – the sorts of tradeoffs, the awful tradeoffs that Judy refers to. If we don't do this, that red curve – sadly, we'll live that reality of those bioethical tradeoffs which none of us want to have to go through. We would be remiss, we'd be abrogating our responsibilities to not plan for that and we are.

But at the same time, folks, when you're listening and you're wondering why am I still at home? Why is my nonessential business still shut? Why do I have to keep washing my hands or keeping six feet away from people? There is a reason. It is a big reason. We want to be on the battlefield saving every single life we can, keeping the number of folks who are ill to as small a number as humanly possible. And we can't do it alone. We need you all to continue doing what you're doing. Thank you.

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: Question for the Commissioner, if I may, and then for you, Governor, as well as the Colonel. Commissioner, can you give us an update on the efforts? I think you referred to it, or maybe the Governor did as a call to action for retired nurses to come back, retired doctors, healthcare workers. I know some Rutgers Nursing students were going to be helping the local health workers in the different counties and so forth. If you can give us an update on how those efforts are going? And if there's a concern about hospitals running out of doctors and nurses. And then, Governor and Colonel, if you could just flesh out the point which I think is really important that you stressed, Governor, that we did have a couple incidents in Lakewood but this has nothing to do with anybody's religion, although some idiots may be blaming certain people; and the fact that this is not going to be tolerated.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so if it's okay let's start with Judy on the Medical Corps and the call to arms.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yesterday I think the Governor shared with you that at the ROIC we have all of our coordinating centralized functions, and individuals from the Department of Health have been redeployed to the ROIC. And there's a group whose primary responsibility is to bring together the staffing agencies and the staffing corps. I expect by close of business tomorrow you'll be seeing on social media a lot of advertising and a call to action to start listing by county the volunteers that we are looking for, and that will be all centralized along with PPE at the ROIC.

Can I just talk a little bit about ventilators, because we put in a request for 2300. We have about 2000 critical care beds in New Jersey. We need 2000 more and we should have ventilators ratio to critical care bed 1:1. So, you can do the math. We have about 2000 ventilators in inventory; we need about 2300 more to have some put aside.

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: Are doctors responding? Are nurses responding to this call?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're getting a very high... I don't have the exact number. When we first put out the call through the Nursing Association it was about 460 nurses within 24 hours had responded. I don't have the actual number now.

Governor Phil Murphy: So, I would love to piggyback off of that, and you've heard us talk about the Medical Corps and the call to arms, the ppedonations@njsp.org (mailto:ppedonations@njsp.org) which is exploding, the corporate community that has come out and just stood up at exactly the moment we needed them. And I'm going to add to that list overwhelmingly I'm happy to say, overwhelmingly compliant behavior.

I think we had up and down the state last night, Pat, one incident, and Pat can give you any more color on this. And so, I would just say thank you. That wasn't the case a week ago and it certainly wasn't the case two weeks ago but the key is, it's got to stay this way for a whole number of weeks. I want to remind everybody that we're not in a sprint here. We're not going to know by the weekend whether or not we won this thing. This is a marathon. You know, wars take a long time and this is going to be no exception. But for the most part, and we've been particularly sensitive to this. The Colonel, the Attorney General, the 21 County Prosecutors, Assistant Prosecutors, Matt Platkin our Chief Counsel is at the back of the hall. This is something we're really focused on.

And it so happened that a couple of the noncompliant folks happened to be in Lakewood – there's been two or three examples there, by the way not shocking given how big Lakewood is and has become. But I was on with Rabbi Kotler last night, a dear friend and he went through and he basically said, "Listen, we are... Let me just give you an example of a food delivery that we've converted to compliance in that community." And as you rightfully point out in your question, Dave, there's always going to be somebody out there that's going to connect some dots that have no right being connected and start blaming whole communities. And the default sadly, more often than not over the centuries of history has been that sooner or later, the Jewish community in one form or another gets put into the sights. And that's what's happening.

Again, it's a very small number of folks who are just, you know, hellbent on blaming somebody. And again, back to the good news is other than for all of our diversity, we are one family. And I think that's incredibly impressive, that we rise and fall as one family particularly given our diversity. But the more specific and good news with your question – and we're going to monitor this, and if we think it slips you'll be hearing from us. But the behavior is overwhelmingly compliant. Pat?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. And I know I've been asked a few times since the executive orders have been issued and ramped up. Since we started tracking there's been 13 total incidents of which resulted in six disorderly persons offenses. Three of those were indictable and that's spread across ten of our 21 counties.

And to the point with regards to tolerance – I guess to say 'tolerating' it sounds like we're putting up with each other. I think we saw a rise in biased incidences, I know we saw a rise in biased incidences long before this started, at least a few months before this started. And that was a combination of both one, they were happening, and two, the amount of messaging we were doing about reporting it. It's almost similar to our positive tests going up when you kind of put out that information. So, disheartening and I know from the Attorney General to the Director of the Division of Civil Rights that it will not be tolerated and it will be prosecuted. And we'll, certainly to the Governor's point, use this as an opportunity to really get together and not tolerate it – not one day, not one minute in this state.

Governor Phil Murphy: This is extraordinary. By the way, Jared has chaired the Interfaith Advisory Council now for years and that's got 3000-something members to it, and that's been a huge weapon. And it's too early to declare victory on the point I'm about to make, and this is not related to the virus – it's way too early to declare victory on that. There is a, it's kind of an out-of-body... We're all staying away from each other. I come in by myself, I leave by myself – look at the way you're all sitting, look at your configurations in your work at home, the companies you work for, the way we separate ourselves even inside of houses.

There's at the same time an incredible beginning to feel like we're all coming together, and that has an incredible feel to it. And we have to keep that. We have to be incredibly self-disciplined about our own behavior, everything from washing with soap all the way up to not going out and leaving home unless you absolutely have to. But ironically at the same time, we're sort of coalescing on the lack of noncompliant behavior. And I hope it continues, although that's not the case all over America.

We're on the call with the President a couple of hours ago. Pat hands Judy and me a story out of Kentucky where they're having Corona parties. Let me just say this unequivocally – anybody who has a Corona party in this state, we will crash your party and you will pay a big price for that. And the good news is so far, so good. Thank you, Dan.

Reporter: This is a series of questions for the medical team here. Our viewers are asking, if you're exposed and survive the coronavirus, can you be re-infected with it later? And then, following up on that, one of our viewers specifically is asking they are experiencing shortness of breath and a cough but no fever. Are they amongst the group that should be getting tested? At what point should someone consider themselves potentially infected and get tested?

Governor Phil Murphy: Do they have a fever you said, or no fever?

Reporter: No fever.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, Judy or Christina? I can guarantee Pat and I aren't going to have acceptable answers.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: So, for the first question related to if you were infected and the possibility of... I think your question relates to immunity subsequently. Right now, we still don't have a lot of information specific to SARS-COVI 2, that's the virus that cause COVID-19. But we do have a lot of information on other coronaviruses such as the coronavirus that causes MERS, another similar severe respiratory illness that has impacted certain parts of the world. And it is thought that, based on the MERS data, that there might be some level of immunity that's conferred onto individuals who are initially infected. But again, we're still in the process of gathering those data.

And with regard to the question about when should you be concerned about your health and when should you consider getting tested, that's a decision that you make also in conjunction with your healthcare provider. We always encourage, and this is something that we always encourage year round, that if you're concerned about your health contact your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider is going to know the specifics about your own individual state of health. We don't know specifics about, for example, an individual's underlying health conditions and such.

We do know that there's community spread here in New Jersey, and particularly we're seeing areas of more intense activity – for example, in Bergen and Monmouth Counties. And with that information, we know that individuals that come into communities where there's a lot of widespread community transmission, they're going to be at increased risk for potentially getting infected.

Governor Phil Murphy: If I added to the question and said that the person had shortness of breath, cough and a fever, would that qualify someone for going to either Bergen Community College or PNC Bank Arts Center to get tested?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Those symptoms are suggestive of COVID-19 illness and certainly would fall within the constellation of symptoms that would get you tested.

Governor Phil Murphy: By the way, this is... Again, I'm practicing without a license. We keep a thermometer on the kitchen counter and we just regularly go through and rotate and use it, sterilize it in between usage.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Governor, some readers have been asking us this. Governor Cuomo has a 90-day relief for mortgages in New York. Senate President Steven Sweeney has asked for a similar measure here in the state. All you've announced so far is regarding evictions and foreclosures. The question is, what do you think about a similar mortgage relief measure here in New Jersey? Hospital-related, a couple things – the New Jersey Hospital Association says it's provided the Department of Health with hospital occupancy levels. Will you share this information? If not, why not? Also, Commissioner, do you think all existing hospital resources will be expended before the popup hospitals start receiving patients? And just to clarify, did you say how many healthcare workers have tested positive?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to take the first one and then throw it open to the folks to my right, and obviously Pat can come in here. The popup hospitals, I will say this, the so-called field hospitals are moving along at quite a pace. So, I'll let Judy answer in terms of where she sees that relative to capacity. We're looking very much at mortgage relief as well as potential renter relief. We've been in touch with banks literally, Matt Platkin's with me, last night and today we're continuing that. I'd be very surprised if we don't end up in a good place on this, and I would say that's the... By the way, that's going to be led by the nation, the money-center banks that have a national footprint. I can't promise you when or exactly what it looks like in terms of where we land, but my gut tells me this is going to become more of the norm than not. I'd love to think also that we could work with our state-chartered bank as part of that as well and I'm less definitive in terms of the path forward for renter's relief. But we are focused on that piece as well.

Judy, I think you've got the balance of these.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. I get overall occupancy levels. I've asked NJHA to do a survey and feed into us on a regular basis overall occupancy of medical/surgical, critical care capacity and critical care occupancy. 45 of 71 hospitals reported that yesterday. I don't have it with me. We need 71 hospitals to report and there's absolutely no reason not to share that. You should now, particularly what's going on in your county hospitals.

I did not say how many healthcare workers tested positive because I don't have that information.

The popups, particularly the one at The Meadowlands will be up before we expect a significant surge. But I do want you to know that we're very concerned about critical care right now. So, there may be beds in the hospital but we really have a critical care crunch right now, so we'll be working with our hospitals in that regard.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Just following up, but do you think that currently – and the answer might be that you just don't know because all 71 hospitals aren't reporting. But do you think, is there any expectation that our hospitals will exceed their level of what they can care for before the popups?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I hope not. Our goal is to get the popups up before that occurs.

Governor Phil Murphy: Only in New Jersey could we call a hospital that has 250 beds a popup, right? These things are... Thank you for that. Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. Three questions: is there any assurance that New Jersey will get its full ask of ventilators and when do you expect them to arrive? Any thoughts on expanding the tax filing deadline in New Jersey? And regarding the bioethical considerations that you mentioned earlier, do you expect to issue guidelines to hospitals about who gets a vent, who doesn't get a vent, ranking patients according to comorbidities and age and likelihood of recovery?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll jump in on the first two; Judy, do you want to take the bioethical piece of this? Is that okay with you? No assurances, so I don't want to overstate the case in terms of the ventilators. We are not the only place in the world looking for ventilators right now and it has been much discussed in the press. My fellow Governors and the President himself have spoke to this in our video call just now. We're out there, you know, we're all out there tripping over each other. So, no assurances but God knows we need them and we're not just relying on the federal stockpile. We're turning over every stone.

Nothing new, Elise, on the tax filing deadline. We'll overwhelmingly almost certainly move it. We're just trying to figure out where to land on that. There are a number of moving parts associated with it. Matt will correct me if he sees this differently but knowing what's in the federal bill and knowing that it's actually been signed into law gives us a little bit firmer footing to look at what the next sort of 30 days look like. Then, we'll come back to you on that.

And with that, Judy, can I ask you to come back again with the bioethical consideration?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. First I want to say that we're doing everything we can to possibly not get into that situation. We've surveyed all of our ambulatory surgery centers; they're stopping their elective procedures. We've asked them to not only give us their PPE but give us their anesthesia ventilators which can easily be converted to ventilators that we can use in ICUs. So, we have over 1000 by the way ASCs in the state, so we're doing absolutely everything. The bioethical decision making model I have not seen it. It was done by a subcommittee at the Medical Society and through discussion, significant discussion among the medical professionals. When we come together in our advisory group that is one of the first items for us to look at but I do want to make sure that everyone understands that we're doing everything possible to make sure that we do not get into that situation. But if we do, we will be prepared.

Governor Phil Murphy: I just want to underscore the last point. I can't say it better than Judy did. We are on the battlefield every day, not leaving... We're America. We don't leave people behind. We're doing everything humanly possible to head this off before we get to that sort of discussion. But we would be remiss and abrogating our responsibilities if we didn't have that

discussion and be prepared for the worst-case scenario. Thank you, Nikita?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: So, I'll apologize in advance because I have somewhat of an obscene amount of questions. But first, I want to ask have we been told by election officials a decision on whether or not they'll be able to hold the June primary by... All VBMs, they need that decision by early next week if they're going to be able to do it. Do you have a timeline on that or any updates? And then, on the budget, so I know that Senate President Steve Sweeney wanted \$1 billion in new pension contributions. Is that still possible given the emerging fiscal issues the state is probably going to face? And then, on marijuana, can the state wait for the referendum to legalize or do we need those revenues now and do you have any intention to push marijuana legalization in the short term? And then, finally, on the millionaire's tax do you think that it's more important for the legislature to support it now and would you seek a higher top-line tax rate than you previously sought? One more but this one's less important – so, I know that there's some NJ residents who only live in the state part of the year, and as such are official residents of other states like Florida for example. Given that these people have Florida IDs, would they be able to get tested for COVID at some of our state's testing centers?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. I'm going to tackle the first four and I'll let my colleagues noodle on question number five. We haven't made a decision about the June 2nd primary. I know that it's a decision we need to make sooner than later. We deliberately, as you know by now, moved the March and April elections to May 12th alongside the nonpartisan elections that are taking place that day; and we also, as you know, went full vote by mail for those elections. We have not made a decision on June 2nd.

On the budget, too early to tell and I'm not just saying that because... By the way, Steve did want more money in the pension fund and by the way, so did we. We put it in, in our budget. It's too early to tell and part of the reason, we had a good meeting with the leadership the other night – I think I mentioned that. Part of the next-step process we all agreed on is we needed to know what the federal numbers, the federal reality looked like. So, we're now starting to digest that. I think Matt and George Helmy are leading our first call tonight, assuming the House votes on this tomorrow, then that's the overwhelming assumption of exactly what this means for us. But we're not there yet.

Marijuana, I haven't really talked about it. I wish we already had it frankly, because it would be a source of revenue – putting aside the social injustices which would have been addressed. We're late to it, mostly for social justices but could we use the revenue right now? Yes. But I don't think we've had any discussions, I know I haven't about moving it forward.

And lastly, on the millionaire's tax I would just say this – I think what we're going through screams out to me at least that reliable, recurring revenue is the most important revenue you can have, that you know will consistently be there. And our revenues are getting crushed right now, not surprisingly, which is why this federal bill is so important to us. And it's probably not the last as I've mentioned already. It's not the last amount of support we're going to need. But I think taxes, like the millionaire's tax at a minimum become more relevant as opposed to less relevant. I haven't thought through a different rate.

Fourth question: what if I have a Florida driver's license and I want to get tested? I think I've said many times you've got to be a Jersey, you've got to have a Jersey ID but what's your...

State Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I think most people that split their year probably are still in Florida from my perspective. I don't know what most of the, what we call snowbirds do. But I would think to the Governor's point, you would have a New Jersey identification or driver's license. And although we can't speak to it yet, I would defer to the Commissioner – not to lob her another question – but I'm not too sure how far into April the testing goes. That's something that we analyze day in and day out with regards to that question for the future. Do we do testing until May or what does that look like? So, it's probably almost a moot point frankly, but I would think the New Jersey driver's license or ID would be the best way to get into one of those sites.

Governor Phil Murphy: Before Judy jumps in, they haven't exactly rolled the red carpet out for us in Florida to put it mildly. But Pat brings a point up that we've been bringing up, and I'd love to turn it to Judy to see if she has anything, and then we're going to quickly spin back and get back to work back at the office.

You know, in a world with limited raw materials of the actual material that you give your specimen and get it processed with, the constraining factor – I think I said this, and Matt asked this question yesterday or the day before. The constraining factor was testing. It's really not the constraining factor now. The commercial labs are scaling up and they can do a lot more than we're giving them right now, but there is constraint on that material. There's constraint on PPE, protective equipment for our healthcare workers and there's a limited amount of healthcare workers, State Police men and women, National Guard.

At a certain point – I previewed this – we're going to have a fork in the road – I think Pat was referring to that, between the value of testing more – absent innovation... And by the way, in a perfect world we would test everyone. So, that's part of the reason I was on the phone with the Ambassador of South Korea. No one's arguing that in a perfect world that's not a good idea. The point is, if you've got limited material and limited manpower how do you spread that and deploy it between testing and care?

I said the big footnote is there appears to be an enormous amount of potential, maybe even at the cusp of inventions to test wherein this becomes mass market. You can do a nose swab at home and get it back overnight, something like that; or 45-minute turnarounds. If any of that turns out to be true disregard what I just said, because then we'll be able to take virtually everything over here and put it toward care. Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think we are going to come to a point where we're going to say the use of PPE is much better in a certain direction, and the use of the individuals – 'cause a lot of the individuals who are doing the testing are people who could be taking care of patients maybe in a field hospital. We're watching it every day. We are literally watching it every day and as the numbers grow, grow, grow we're going to need help in the hospital. But I assume, Dr. Tan...

Governor Phil Murphy: Keep going, and then Dr. Tan turns to her right – who do we have down there? I can't see.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I just want to make sure that symptomatic people know that they should be calling their healthcare provider, and if they need a test because they're symptomatic they should get it no matter where we are.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: I would agree with that comment, and again, just to add on a comment from a little bit earlier. Sometimes some individuals with weakened immune systems can't mount their fever, so it goes back to making sure if there are concerns and there's a need for testing contact your healthcare provider because you might be absent the fever; you might have other respiratory symptoms but there's enough concern that you should consider getting tested.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, practicing without a license, there's several buckets of people who should be thinking about getting testing. One are symptomatic people, right, per our earlier discussion and question. There's clearly a focus on long-term care facilities, right? We've seen that. I even said this morning I thought the number of facilities where we had positive tests was in the high teens and Judy corrected me – it was in the high teens yesterday, it's now 43 today, 40-something. And the third category, Dr. Tan, are people who have adjacent healthcare challenges – as we've said, diabetes, respiratory, cardio, etc. So, you good?

Okay, Elise? You're good? Matt?

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Governor and Commissioner, a quick clarification. The healthcare worker who you said passed away, is that the first known death of a healthcare worker? And can you also expand again, I know you've talked about this, about how we are concerned about healthcare workers contracting this. And also real quick, Colonel, have there been any first responder deaths from the coronavirus that we know of?

Governor Phil Murphy: The answer to that is no, right?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Murphy: The answer to that is no but I know of two law enforcement officers that have been in serious conditions at this juncture.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: On the healthcare worker I referenced, I literally got that call as I was coming over here. It's a part-time worker up at a hospital in north Jersey, and I believe that's the first healthcare worker. The person worked, I believe in environmental services, so they worked in a hospital night shift every other weekend, something like that. So, I was just collecting information but I believe it's our first.

And you've heard me say this before and the Governor is always emphasizing this – the safety of healthcare workers, first responders, being able to get them the PPE that they need to be able to take care of the patients that they want to take care of, it's paramount. We can't emphasize that enough.

Governor Phil Murphy: Heroism. That's the word, right, it's just extraordinary the work that's being done, A.) by healthcare workers and B.) by first responders, including going in and breaking things up. Thankfully we haven't had many of those but they're at the frontlines. Dave?

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: Quick question, Governor, has there been any discussion with the White House about possibly moving patients from one state to another if things get really tight in terms of not having enough hospital capacity to handle the cases? And Commissioner, have you had any discussions with other Health Commissioners in other states about that?

Governor Phil Murphy: In the first instance I've not been associated with any conversations. We have had conversations, Judy and I have had them and others, about moving patients from one critical care facility to another in New Jersey to, as Judy said, our north-central-south strategy to sort of reallocate our resources in a coherent way. I'm not aware of any cross-state, are you?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, I speak weekly with the Commissioners from Pennsylvania and New York, and they're very short conversations by the way because everybody's so busy. We've not talked about transfers although, I do have to say that for the real quaternary types of services which we may not have capacity, we could go to Philadelphia or New York if they did. But that would be limited to very, very few individuals that require bypassing their lungs to be able to save... It's a life-saving, it's called [FMO], it's a life-saving modality. We do have capacity in this state, I doubt that we would run out of that capacity but we would go anywhere for the appropriate patient if that's what they needed.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, that's an example of what we're talking about. We will lay it all out to try to save lives, and there's no price that's too much to try to save a life in our state right now. John?

John Mooney, NJ Spotlight: You've told us about corporations and people donating PPE and stories of a mill in Paterson making masks. Is anyone making ventilators that you know of in New Jersey? Have you reached out to anyone to possibly start jumpstarting that process? And I have questions about the flatten the curve.

Governor Phil Murphy: So, we have had a number of conversations both with folks in Jersey and around the country and around the world. The more common one, my colleagues will agree with this, I get about ten emails a day, "I know a guy in China who's got a warehouse with 5 million N95s. If you only do X you'll get Y." I don't know off the top of my head, John, on ventilators. Are you aware?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, I don't know anybody in New Jersey but I know that they have, there are some vendors who have determined that with the placement of a valve, anesthesia machines can be turned into ventilators. But I don't know. I passed that on to our centralized procurement center.

Governor Phil Murphy: That actually also came out of the White House. We, again, remember – we've got some places that are no longer up and running and there are certainly possibilities for PPE generally and ventilators specifically. I'm thinking of schools that may have equipment, which is less likely ventilators but medical outpatient facilities that would be doing elective surgeries – which, effective tomorrow night, we're disbanding till further notice – is another source. And if I have any more color on that we'll come back to you. One more if you could.

John Mooney, NJ Spotlight: On the curve, you've been showing us this chart for a couple weeks now. There are no numbers on it. What is the number of cases that hits healthcare system capacity and how close are we to that number?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think we're going to have Judy, tell me, course correct me if you disagree. I think we're going to try to address this in some at least general terms tomorrow. Is that accurate still?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: That's accurate. The modeling changes every day. We needed to drop in the statistics from today to make it a more realistic picture. So, I expect that tomorrow we'll be able to go over that with all of you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm promising tomorrow. It'll be around tomorrow we think, right, in the next day or two?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, all. I'm channeling a little bit of Winston Churchill at the moment. I don't want people to be in any way deflated but I want to be honest with folks because there's a lot of conversations about opening up the economy and society. And I'll be the happiest guy in New Jersey, maybe in America, possibly the world if in a few weeks from now we thought we could start opening the thing up again. So, I don't want anyone to think that we're looking for reasons to keep you in your house. But I would be remiss if I did not say we're not putting on an April 17th date at the earliest that you'll hear from us on school re-openings lightly.

And I mentioned channeling Churchill. I think he said something to the effect of, "This is not the beginning of the end, and in fact it may not be the end of the beginning." This is a marathon and we have got to accept that. And the order of events, channeling the input from the folks to my right, and all the data and science and facts and medical and health inputs that Pat and all of us get, is unequivocally we have to break the back of that curve. It has to be meaningfully on the downside before we could even think of reopening. And again, if it's sooner than I think it is or that we think it is, we'll be the happiest people you've ever met.

But that's the order, and I for one, based on everything I've read and seen and all the inputs I've got is if we reverse that, if we transpose that order somehow – if we begin to open up as a step before we know that we have, we're convinced that we've broken the back of that curve and we've broken the spirit and the back of the virus, we will be throwing gasoline on the fire is my concern; and that this will get a lot worse and that the curve unfortunately will look a lot more red than it is blue.

And so again, I don't want to deflate people but I do know this – if we continue what we have embarked upon, particularly the past five days, we're off, New Jersey, to a really good start. Let's continue, let's stay at it. Accept that it's a marathon; we're not going to break into the sunlight on Saturday. Keep doing what we've been doing. Stay at home. Don't go out unless you have to. Don't go out unless you're a part of the fight against the virus. Do the little things even at home – disinfect your surfaces, wash your hands with soap and water, don't touch your face, cough and sneeze into your sleeve, stay away from everybody else, keep six feet from everybody else.

Keep doing that stuff. We will be your partner, I promise you. It will not be for not. You will look back on this, I know this – if we stay to it, folks, if we stay together, if we keep at it we will all look back and say, "Man, that's an experience that we'll never forget," good or bad or otherwise. "But boy, because we did that good things came after that." I'm completely convinced that's the mission that we've signed up for.

And again, there is no price that is too high for us to pay to save every single life we can possibly save in this state. God rest the 81 lives we've lost. Our job collectively, our job all of us, including those watching – the 9 million of us in this great state – is to continue to band together, not divide one against the other but one family fighting this with great courage, with great work ethic, being smart. And by doing that we keep the number of those lost souls as low as possible, we keep that curve as flat as possible. We take the pressure off the healthcare system. We break the back of that virus and then we can begin to get back on our feet. And we will. Unequivocally we will do all of the above.

Tomorrow, 2:00, same time, same station. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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