

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Press Office: Governor's Office**

## **Governor Murphy Reinstates Public Health Emergency to Respond to Omicron Variant of COVID-19**

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today reinstated a Public Health Emergency, effective immediately, in order to ensure that the State is able to respond to the continued threat of COVID-19 and the rapidly spreading Omicron variant. Executive Order No. 280 declares a Public Health Emergency and restates the existing State of Emergency across all 21 counties in New Jersey, allowing state agencies and departments to utilize state resources to assist the State’s healthcare system and affected communities responding to and recovering from COVID-19 cases. Executive Order No. 281 **continues** Executive Orders Nos. 111, 112, and 207, allows Executive Orders Nos. 251, 252, 253, 264, and 271 to remain in effect, and extends various regulatory actions taken by the departments in response to COVID-19.

“COVID-19 remains a significant threat to our State and we must commit every resource available to beating back the wave caused by the Omicron variant,” **said Governor Murphy**. “While we hope to return to a state of normalcy as soon as possible, the step I am taking today is a commonsense measure that will protect the safety and well-being of all New Jersey residents while allowing state government to respond to the continuing threat that COVID-19 poses to our daily lives.”

The Public Health Emergency will allow the state to continue vaccine distribution, vaccination or testing requirements in certain settings, the collection of COVID-19 data, implementation of any applicable recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prevent or limit the transmission of COVID-19, staffing and resource allocation, and other critical components of the State’s COVID-19 response. The new Public Health Emergency will allow for existing orders requiring masking in school and daycare settings to remain in effect.

Governor Murphy’s public health emergency declaration also empowers all State agencies to take all appropriate steps to continue to address the public health hazard resulting from new variants of COVID-19. Under the Emergency Health Powers Act, the Public Health Emergency will expire after 30 days, unless renewed. State COVID-19 metrics will be re-evaluated at the time of expiration to determine if an extension will be needed.

For a video message from Governor Murphy on the Public Health Emergency, [please click here](#).

For a copy of Executive Order No. 280, [please click here](#).

For a copy of Executive Order No. 281, [please click here](#).

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### **Transcript of Governor Murphy’s video message:**

For the past two years our lives have been upended by this global pandemic.

Our health care system has been stretched to the limit by variant after variant.

We’ve been forced to change the way we celebrate and gather with our families.

And the virus altered the trajectory of our economy.

As I stand here today, we are registering nearly 35,000 new cases a day. In the past two weeks alone, more than 10,000 of our fellow New Jerseyans have required hospitalization due to COVID.

And though these numbers are a stark reminder of the seriousness of this moment in our history, I have a strong sense of optimism that we are moving forward in defeating this virus.

Even today, the vast majority of our schools are open.

We have recovered 70 percent of the jobs lost due to the pandemic.

Our children are back on playgrounds, back in the gym, and back on the ice.

And the vaccines mean we have the tools necessary to finally put this virus behind us ...

The tools required to maintain our best-in-class testing infrastructure and vaccine distribution ...

The tools necessary to keep our kids safe in and out of school ...

The tools necessary to protect our hospital networks and healthcare workers...

These tools all stem from the Public Health Emergency declaration that we made at the pandemic's start, and which prepared us to carry on through its various heights.

We have come so far, and we cannot stop now.

Therefore, in consultation with the Legislature, I have taken the necessary step of re-declaring a Public Health Emergency to ensure we keep moving forward in our response against COVID – and so we can put this virus behind us.

I am certain that there are some who are going to do their best to continue to spread misinformation about what this means.

So, I want you to hear it from me.

This is what this does not mean.

It does not mean any new universal mandates or passports.

It does not mean lockdowns.

It does not mean any business restrictions or gathering limits.

It does not mean going backward from any of the progress we've made together over the past 22 months.

In fact, in your day-to-day life, this step won't have any new impact at all.

What it does mean is that we can continue moving forward with our coordinated and responsible approach to putting Omicron and COVID behind us.

It means keeping our schools, businesses, and communities open.

It means we'll be able to move vaccination and testing resources more easily to the places they need to be and to the residents who need them.

It means that right now – with record-high new cases because of Omicron and more people in our hospitals than at any point since the spring of 2020 – our hospitals and health-care system will have every tool at their disposal to ensure the best care possible for everyone who needs it.

And, critically, it will mean we continue to stand on a firm base of science and facts, and not politics and conspiracies, to keep your family and your community safe by getting ahead of Omicron and staying there.

This step means getting our state moving to a real and lasting sense of normal.

A little more than a month ago, just as we thought we had finally gotten ahead of COVID, the Omicron variant came along.

And while Omicron is doing its best to stop us in our tracks and push us back, we're not going to let it.

Look, we've been together in this fight for nearly two years. And I know you're all frustrated. I know you're tired. I know you want nothing more than to get back to normal. Well, so do I.

But together, we're going to be keep pushing forward – and together we're going to beat this thing.

So, keep doing everything you've been doing. Get vaccinated. Get boosted. Keep masking up.

And keep moving forward.

Thank you. Happy new year. And God bless you all.