

# New Jersey Senate

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December 9, 2020

The Honorable Philip D. Murphy  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

I am writing to share serious and well-reasoned concerns relayed to me by a constituent regarding COVID-19 testing and reporting practices in New Jersey.

Back in August, the [New York Times](#)<sup>i</sup> published an article on current testing practices which found that states were reporting as positive tests many instances in which the Viral Cycle Threshold count for a sample was beyond the limit for which someone would be infectious and able to spread COVID-19.

The Viral Cycle Threshold Count refers to the level of magnification it takes to pick up traces of a virus. Beyond a certain level of magnification, what is detected is merely a dead viral artifact from a previous infection that is not capable of spreading the disease to others.

[Oxford University](#)<sup>ii</sup> released a systematic review this month concluding that anything with a Viral Cycle Threshold above 30 magnifications is not infectious. Their findings are similar to what other data on the matter has shown in which any positive tests beyond 30-35 Cycle Thresholds are not infectious.

Despite this, as the Times article pointed out, many states are counting Viral Cycle Thresholds up to 37-40 magnifications as a positive COVID case, requiring the person tested and their close contacts to quarantine unnecessarily.

Dr. Andrew Bostom, an epidemiologist at [Brown University](#)<sup>iii</sup>, has tracked more than 26,000 "positive" tests among college students and not found a single hospitalization. He has echoed the concerns that overly sensitive testing is identifying people as positive who pose no risk of transmitting the virus to others.

Depending on the state, the Times reported that the false positive rate was between 45-90%. This insanity in our testing is leading to thousands of people being inhumanely forced to quarantine despite not being sick or capable of making other people sick. This is driving a lot of

the false panic that is hurting families, schools, and businesses.

Based on that new understanding, Florida has recently mandated that labs separate and report the Viral Cycle Threshold values of a positive test to provide clarity on who is actually infectious and needs to be quarantined.

I would advise the State of New Jersey to review this information and implement a similar system to minimize any additional unnecessary disruption to the lives of New Jerseyans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Doherty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Senator Michael J. Doherty  
23<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/29/health/coronavirus-testing.html>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/cid/advance-article/doi/10.1093/cid/ciaa1764/6018217>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.thecollegefix.com/bulletin-board/brown-u-epidemiologist-finds-zero-hospitalizations-from-26000-positive-covid-tests-for-college-students/>