

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 3, 2021, 10:00 AM

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. So, every day I talk about recovery, I talk about recovery for all of us. And a recovery for all of us means helping our neighborhood small businesses. I'm going to keep saying it, everyone. We want our city back. We want our lives back. We want to enjoy everything that's great about this city. It all begins in our neighborhoods. And every single one of you can help bring back New York City by going and spending your money at a neighborhood mom and pop store, a neighborhood store where people have created something beautiful, their own way. This is why we launched the 30-day Shop Your City challenge. We want to see people as much as possible, take the dollars they are going to spend, buy local, buy from small businesses. So today, for example, do a little product placement here. The Takahachi Bakery, right near City Hall, a wonderful place. A lot of folks here at City Hall really swear by this place. The story, Hiroyuki Takahachi opened it in 2011. And it became famous for creative pastries and desserts, particularly matcha desserts, like the green tea crepe. And we'll do a live taste here. Excellent. Excellent coffee. Not just good, excellent. So, buy local, shop local, help our city come back. Now, when it comes to helping our city come back, recovery for all of us, you know, it's about the human beings of the city. It's about the people of New York. It's about bringing back our lives, our families. And we talk a lot about numbers and in some ways, numbers missed the human quality, but numbers do tell a really important story. Some numbers are so outstanding that they tell us what we have all achieved together.

First of all, the overall doses to date. We're New Yorkers, so we kind of hear things go in one ear and out the other sometimes because of the rush of life in this city. But let's dwell for a moment on this number because it's astounding. 8,373,820 doses given so far. That is in each and every case, a person, a vaccinator, someone who cares, a health care professional, taking the time to help their fellow New Yorker. That's a New Yorker coming there to be part of this extraordinary vaccination effort. That happened 8.3 million, almost 8.4 million times in just the last few months. Now more than half the population of this city has received the first dose and we know overwhelmingly, folks who get a first dose, come back and get the second. So, this is fantastic. Now, we see the other thing about numbers that is so powerful – we're seeing evidence of how much vaccination works. Today. We have set a new record. We'll go over indicators in a moment, but a new record for the lowest level of COVID since the pandemic began. Here in New York City, we have hit the lowest level of COVID today since the pandemic began, 0.81 percent and continuing to go down because people are getting vaccinated. It's stunning. It's stunning how much progress has been made.

Now let me give you these facts because I think they'll really make you feel good about what we've all done together to bring back New York City. Since January 1st of this year, new

COVID cases are down 95 percent from a high of 57 per 100,000 New Yorkers. Now down 95 percent. Positivity level down 91 percent. We were at 9.69 percent. Think about that. On January 1st, almost 10 percent positivity. Now 0.81 percent. Hospitalizations down 69 percent from that point 215 at that point. Hospitalization rate down 86 percent, from 3.99 per 100,000. Look, these are stunning figures. But again, it came down to New Yorkers making the decision to go out and get vaccinated and their fellow New Yorkers being there for them to help them. That's why it worked. And so, what are we going to do? We double down on vaccination. We go farther.

So, lots of different approaches, but one of the things that people really have been excited about is all the incentives. So, last week we talked about our New York City vaccine contest, it continues to grow. The first set of prizes, pretty amazing. Three day passes to the Governor's Ball, one-year memberships to Crunch Fitness. And that is the set of prizes that we're announcing the winners for today. This week's prize, staycation packages at New York City hotels. Everyone deserves a staycation after everything we've been through. Now, some of the folks who were winners of the first round of the prizes, we asked them just to say what it meant to get vaccinated to them. And some of their testimonials are here. I'm just going to read a few. Philip in Manhattan, says getting vaccinated means I took a step toward helping New York City and my community get back to normal. Couldn't be a clearer, more powerful statement about how each person getting vaccinated helps everyone else. Menahem in Brooklyn says I'm doing the right thing. Simple as that. Mark from Queens, who is a proud member of one of the unions that works in the entertainment sector, says I can go back to work, working on concerts, shows, and live events, IATSE Local 1 strong, I like that pride, Mark. And you're right. So many things now can come back because people are getting vaccinated. So, great prizes again, available this week. And to everyone who won the first round of prizes, really happy for you. Congratulations, go out and enjoy them. And tell your friends, tell your family, get vaccinated.

Now, I mentioned yesterday, we've seen a real powerful uptick in vaccination levels now that younger people can get vaccinated. In fact, New York City is ahead of the national average in youth vaccination. And we want to double down on that. So, we're really focused on our 12 to 17-year-olds. Starting tomorrow we're going to be bringing vaccines directly to some of our schools. It will be expanding to the schools across the five boroughs. We're going to see if this is the kind of approach that could really help us reach more and more young people. We're going to be doing more of it as we go into summer, opportunities for young people as well. And right now, we're also doing a lot of exciting, interesting things, positive things to help young people want to get vaccinated, attract them to vaccination. youth vaccination block parties – is going to be fun events out in communities for parents, for young people, giving them all the information, making it easy, making it fun, answering questions. We need to reach the youngest New Yorkers. And for the zillennial New Yorkers up to 25, we are going to meet them where they are. And a lot of times that means meeting them at a nightlife venue, a bar, someplace popular for people to gather. So, we're parking our vaccine buses at popular nightlife destinations, and they've been already in Bushwick, Astoria, and the Lower East Side, and Inwood and at the Bronx Night Market. Tonight and tomorrow they'll be in Downtown Brooklyn. They'll be in the West Village. This'll keep happening. We're sending one of our best agents, Outreach Ambassador, Dante de Blasio, making a stop on his vaccine bus tour, out there with Dr. Torian Easterling. Who has been an outstanding leader in bringing the vaccine to the grassroots. So, we're going to go where young New Yorkers are. And we're going to promote this idea in so

many ways. Some, some places are offering a shot for a shot. That's a good option, drink responsibly, of course. And Torian and Dante will be out there. Dante claims he's going to use his DJ skills to attract the zillennials to come over and get vaccinated. I want to see evidence. This kid has an amazing sense of music. I get to hear it every day, a lot range, use those DJ skills Dante, bring the people to the vaccine bus.

Alright, now so much that's working with vaccination and this is the key to our recovery. But when we say a recovery for all of us, we mean for all of us. And we're going to look back on the COVID era and what it taught us. And it was not, of course, just about a horrible disease and the pain it caused, it was about the disparities laid bare. So, recovery for all of us means not doing things the way we used to do them, doing things differently. And I always say, we got to use the R word, redistribution. We've got to ensure that resources that used to be only in the hands of the few reach, all our communities, fairly all the people who built New York City, all the working people who have made New York City work generation after generation, deserve their fair share. How does that happen? It happens in so many cases by our local government making sure there's fairness, making sure there's opportunity, using the vast resources of the City of New York to actually lift people up, who haven't had as much of a chance. Today we're going to be talking about an outstanding new leader who's being elevated in our team to take on a crucial role. It's important to say at the outset, if you're serious about redistribution, if you're serious about racial and economic justice, then put the levers of power into the hands of folks who have the lived experience and the understanding of the communities that have not gotten their fair share. Today in New York City, whether you look at our Budget Director, the head of Administrative Services, or now our Office of Contracting Services, all these key offices that actually control the flow of money are being held by people of color from our city's neighborhoods who understand the people who need a chance for fairness.

This is how you make a difference. We've had an extraordinary experience with our Task Force for Racial Inclusion and Equity. Leaders of color in this administration who have helped us to change a variety of policies, had a huge impact on our budget, made real impact right now. If we're serious about social change, let's empower people who have the know-how, who have the vision, who have the experience, who have the feeling to make it happen. So, when we talk about our Office of Contract Services, sounds to many people kind of abstract. Let me tell you what it means. It means over \$20 billion a year, over \$20 billion a year in contracting and procurement, It's a hugely important office that affects your quality of life, the services your government provides you, that makes key decisions on how money is spent, and also fosters opportunity, for example, by giving more and more Minority and Women-Owned Businesses a chance to win those contracts and create jobs in our neighborhoods.

This office was crucial, particularly during COVID, in finding a way, even when it seemed like there wasn't any way, to get us the PPE we needed, to get us the supplies and the equipment we needed. Even when the entire global supply chain was collapsing, our Office of Contract Services found a way. So, this is an important place. Today, we announce a new Chief Procurement Officer for our City, a new director for this office, the Mayor's Office of Contract and Services. He is my favorite kind of public servant. Someone who comes from this city, loves this city, wants to give back to the city and has made a life of it. Victor Olds, born and raised New Yorker from Hollis, Queens, spent most of his professional career serving the people of this

city, doing this crucial work, helped us to improve and reform our approach to contracting, helped open the door for more M/WBEs, creating new rules that actually level the playing field and create opportunity. This is an example of someone really making an impact and he will make even more now as our new Chief Procurement Officer. My pleasure to introduce to you, Victor Olds.

**Incoming Chief Procurement Officer, Mayor's Office of Contract Services:** Thank you, sir. I am humbled and honored to take up the mantle of City Chief Procurement Officer. It's a tremendous opportunity. And I'm grateful for it. As the Mayor stated, I am a born and raised New Yorker. So, I'm honored to be able to serve the city in this capacity. I've had the privilege of wearing several hats at MOCS, as the Mayor mentioned. I started out helping to build out the administration's M/WBE team. And I progressed to the role of general counsel, which I've held for several years. I am particularly proud of the work that our office did during the pandemic, really in partnership with a lot of fine people across the administration and partner agencies. I look forward to the exciting work of continuing to facilitate the City's contracting process. We will be working in lock step as we have been with the Mayor's Office of M/WBEs to ensure that we're providing opportunities to the city's Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises.

And we will continue to do everything that we can to ensure that doing business with the city is equitable, efficient, and accessible so that we can truly have that recovery for all of us. I'd like to thank my predecessor, Dan Simon, for his insight and his leadership, and also really his predecessors as well, Michael Owen and Lisette Camilo, who collectively have worked to transform MOCS into the place that it is today. I'm equally grateful for our First Deputy Ryan Murray and all of the tremendous people at MOCS who are working behind the scenes to ensure that things are moving. Again, sir, I thank you for this opportunity. I'm truly grateful for it.

**Mayor:** Victor, thank you. Congratulations to you and another great leader from Southeast Queens, Southeast Queens is happy right now. And thank you for all you've done for our city. And Victor mentioned Dan Simon. This is one of the unsung heroes of the city's fight against COVID. I talked to Dan throughout this crisis, including the really – the worst toughest times back in March and April of 2020. I remember so many conversations where we were running out of PPE, we were running out of equipment. We were trying to find it anywhere, literally anywhere in the world. And Dan was cool in the saddle, constantly finding us a new source for the help we needed, pushing hard to make sure that we got what we needed in time. People's lives were saved. Our health care heroes were protected because of the great work of Dan and so many of his colleagues in the office, including Victor. So, this is a passing of the torch but it's also beautiful continuity, a group of folks who really were there for the City of New York when we needed them, and they deserve our appreciation and praise. So, thank you so much, Dan. And congratulations, Victor.

**Chief Procurement Officer Olds:** Thank you, sir.

**Mayor:** Okay. Let's go to our indicators. And again, we like good news. We have good news. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19. Today's report is 63 patients, a new dynamic graph there on the screen. It really emphasizes the incredible progress. Confirmed positivity level, 17.46 percent. And

hospitalization rate, 0.52 per 100,000. So, this really shows you the amazing progress that we have made together. New reported cases on a seven-day average. Today's report, 221 cases. Again, you see these numbers keep going down because more and more people are getting vaccinated. Number three, here's our new record, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19. Today's report on a seven-day rolling average 0.81 percent. Let's keep driving that down further. Okay. A few words in Spanish about our vaccination effort

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

**Moderator:** Good morning. We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we are joined by incoming Chief Procurement Officer for MOCS Victor Olds, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, and Dr. Ted Long Executive Director of New York City Test and Trace. Our first question of the day goes to Shant from the Daily News.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Shant. You have the coveted lead-off space today.

**Question:** I know, I know. I will try to live up to this great honor. I'm still recovering from last night's mayoral debate. Did you catch it yourself?

**Mayor:** I did, Shant. I'm in recovery as well.

**Question:** So, yeah, wanted to ask about one of the things that came up the candidates were asked, would they seek your endorsement or would they welcome your endorsement. Andrew Yang was the only one who answered in the affirmative. Would you consider endorsing Yang? And yeah – you had perspective on him that a lot of people haven't. You saw him up close and personal on the presidential campaign. What do you think about him in general?

**Mayor:** Shant, look, I watched the debate. Sadly, I don't think it was much of a debate. I don't think it shed a lot of light and New Yorkers need a lot more information about these candidates. They need a lot clearer vision from these candidates. But I'm going to continue to watch carefully. The vast majority of New Yorkers are going to make up their decision in the last few days. If I want to say anything about any of the candidates, you know, I will come to that decision at the right moment, but I really don't want to analyze each one at this point. Go ahead, Shant.

**Question:** Okay. Fair enough. Switching gears, there's a new report in the Intercept about NYPD conduct last summer. The Intercept found the NYPD took much longer to respond to looting than to protests and took a much harder line against the looting. Were you aware of that discrepancy and I know you said a lot about it in the past, but yeah, what are your latest thoughts? Do you think the NYPD had his priorities right last summer?

**Mayor:** So, I have not seen that article. I have seen the very, very thoughtful exhaustive Department of Investigation report and the report from the Law Department. I think both of those reports really laid out very objectively and clearly the things done right, and the things done wrong and the things we have to do better. I do not believe the notion that there was that kind of discrepancy because what I certainly saw, and I was deeply involved, was the NYPD trying to deal with a vast variety of challenges simultaneously and address all of them, and notwithstanding some of the missteps and the things we have to do better. Thank God we came out of that, again, no loss of life like we saw in other parts of the country, we did not have the National Guard on our streets. We did not have police forces using rubber bullets or tear gas. You know, there are things we need to do better, but I'm also quite clear that we got through that and here we are now deep into our recovery, thank God.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Dave Evans from ABC

**Question:** Hey Mayor, how are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good, Dave, I want to give you credit for trying, trying to get a reasoned discussion going last night. You tried brother.

**Question:** Well, yeah –

**Mayor:** I could see the pain in your face at times.

**Question:** That first 20 minutes was – I'll have to admit – was pretty messy, but what I wanted to ask you about the debate is, you know, you said two or three weeks ago after the first debate that you didn't learn anything. You didn't learn anything last night?

**Mayor:** I won't say you I didn't learn anything. I would say I still don't feel we're getting a particularly compelling vision from any of these candidates, and I think the people of New York City deserve to hear a truly thoughtful vision of how we're going to move forward after the biggest crisis in our history. Look, Dave, what I heard a lot of was candidates announcing they would do bold new things that actually are things my administration is doing right now already. I heard a lot of statements that reflected a lack of information about city government and how the City of New York actually works. You know, that was not inspiring to me. So, what I would say to all of these candidates is, you know, brush up on your facts, bring us a more coherent vision. People are really trying to make a serious decision. I don't think they're being given enough yet. Go ahead, Dave.

**Question:** [Inaudible] about the – you know, Andrew Yang was the only one who said that he wanted your endorsement, but the fact that Kathryn Garcia and Maya Wiley, who used to work for you, they didn't even want it, did that hurt a little bit?

**Mayor:** Dave, it just proves they're politicians now, and that's what candidates – you know, candidates do what candidates do. And sometimes they think they're doing the smart thing or the clever thing, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I think people are going to judge everyone by who they are. Have they been consistent? Have they been people who showed that

they actually acted on a set of values over a long period of time? So, whatever they want to do as candidates that are going to do. I'm kind of used to that behavior by politicians.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Dana Rubinstein from the New York Times.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey Dana, how are you been?

**Question:** I'm all right, thank you. So, my first question is Maya Wiley's been making the argument that were not for her leadership at the CCRB, the Pantaleo decision would never have, you know, happened really. That it was languishing there before she arrived. What is your take on her time as the chair of the CCRB?

**Mayor:** I'll only speak very broadly, Dana, because I'm quite aware with this discussion going on about the campaign, that again, if I want to weigh in in any detail, I'm going to do that very thoughtfully and intentionally. Look I named Maya to lead the CCRB. I think she did good work. I think the larger truth though is the decisions made early on 2014, 2015, when she and a lot of us looking at these issues, we all deferred to the Justice Department, I wish we hadn't and I understand why we did, but I wish we hadn't. I've said very publicly that was a mistake. Unquestionably, there was going to be action in this case, that was never a question. There was always going to be action in the case. I think the central mistake for all of us was deferring to what we thought was the highest power in the land when it came to legal issues and the place that would make the most profound decisions that ultimately just punted for years and years. So, I think that's the larger truth. Go ahead, Dana.

**Question:** Thank you. And then on another note, as I'm sure you're aware, Andrew Yang is going to the Park Slope Y today too –

**Mayor:** Does he want to work out? Is he taking a break from the campaign trail?

**Question:** I think it's more that he's trying to troll you. I was curious what you think about it?

**Mayor:** You're actually the first person to tell me that. I don't think much of it. You know, that's again, that's just a politician being a politician. I'd much rather people talk about what they're going to do for New Yorkers and show they actually have some knowledge of this city and how it works. I mean, this is serious stuff, you know, again, that's why I was not impressed last night by the totality of what I saw from all the candidates. This is serious stuff. We're coming out of a pandemic. We're trying to bring back the greatest city in the world. It would be nice if people would get a little more serious, actually recognize what's already being done and not claim at some, you know, brilliant new invention they just came up with. Show they actually know the facts and present proposals that are honest about where we're going. I think that's what the people of New York City deserve.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

**Question:** Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

**Mayor:** I'm doing well, Henry, how you been?

**Question:** I'm doing well. I wanted to ask you some questions about the debate, it's been pretty much covered, but when you say that these candidates don't really know what's going on or they seem misinformed, can you give me an example or two of where you saw that?

**Mayor:** There's so many to choose from, Henry, but I would say first of all, how ironic that a former federal housing secretary doesn't know the facts about homelessness in New York City. His charges were just absolutely, numerically inaccurate. We'll be happy to show you what we've presented publicly already about a huge decline in shelter population and a really meaningful decline in street homelessness per our recent HOPE count, which you remember we released a couple of weeks ago right here. You know, the fact that one of the candidates is saying we should not spend stimulus dollars, when in fact the entire idea is to spend the stimulus dollars. That's why it's called stimulus and that we're spending all the money now, when anyone who's looked at the law understands that stimulus dollars come in different tranches over time. I mean, it's just, you know, I get pandering. I really do, but it would be nice if people would just get their facts straight and those weren't facts. Go ahead, Henry.

**Question:** All right. Thank you. Kathryn Garcia was an important member of your administration. You appointed her to several special assignments. You obviously had a lot of confidence in her ability to get the job done. Looking back on it now, and evaluating her candidacy for mayor, how would you evaluate her performance for you in the administration?

**Mayor:** Henry, a very fair question, but as I said, given that we're now getting close to the election, I'm not going to just offer stray observations about each candidate. If I feel at any point that I want to offer a specific evaluation of any candidate or a specific idea of what makes sense for the future in New York City, I'm going to do that. What I care about right now is that New York city comes back. And if I think it's important to weigh in on that, I'm going to do it, but I'm not going to do it with stray observations about individual candidates.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Katie Honan from the Wall Street Journal.

**Question:** Hey good morning, Mayor de Blasio. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Katie, how are you doing today?

**Question:** I am great. Not to beat a debate – not to relive the debate, but I am curious –

**Mayor:** Not to beat a dead debate.

**Question:** Yeah, not to beat a dead debate. My question is, you know, specifically, what are the issues that you don't see getting discussed? You know because I agree with you, and I've seen it from a lot of people. There are so many crucial issues that are just not getting, you know – I mean, at this point I don't care what people are going to pick for the second choice, you know,



but that's me, but what would you like to see the candidates talk? We have one more in-person debate left and what would you like to see them discuss?

**Mayor:** Katie, it's a very fair question. Look, I first of all I'd like to weed out all of the, you know, the presumed revelations, folks talking about things like, you know – again, facts that are just not accurate, things about the budget process that are just not accurate. Folks talking about different approaches that have been used for years as if it's some bold new proposal. I mean, I just would like to weed all that out, acknowledge that these things are actually happening already. A lot of them are happening in my administration. Some of them are happening even before my administration, actually have the maturity to say, here are the specific things I'm going to do for New York City. When I ran, I said we're going to tax the wealthy for pre-K for all our children, we're going to end the broken and unconstitutional policy of stop and frisk. I said, we're going to create affordable housing in a new way, on a high, you know, very high scale, hundreds of thousands of apartments. We've done all those things, but it – I will only say it was a campaign centered on a core set of ideas. I'm just not hearing that, and I think people are owed that. I think they're owed a clear vision of who people are and what they're going to do. I don't feel like that is coming through very clearly. I feel like we're seeing a lot of political talk and a lot of crossfire, but not an honest evocation of who people are and what they're going to do for the people in this city. Go ahead, Katie.

**Question:** And I have a fun one on it. It seems like you're in a good mood, so I'll ask it. You know, in your two terms as Mayor, we're kind of again, on the farewell tour or leading up to it, you've received a lot of nicknames for yourself. None that you chose, but you know, through the years you've had a lot of nicknames. I don't know if there's any that you thought, that you prefer, that you felt were pretty funny. I always thought “Dope from Park Slope” was pretty clever. I don't know if you have any favorite nicknames of yours, but you still owe me what's on your bucket list, but we'll start with nicknames.

**Mayor:** Yeah, I appreciate that, Katie. I'm going to give some careful thought, you know, I did not – I did not, in recent years, love Big Bird, but it does have historical resonance, okay. You know, people called me that way back when in high school and all. So, it, kind of – it brought me back. It had a certain nostalgic value. Kind of, you know, he's a positive character – he's one of the better Sesame Street characters. So that one, I wouldn't – wouldn't say it made my heart sing, but it had something good to it.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Nolan from the Post.

**Question:** Hey, good morning everybody.

**Mayor:** Hey Nolan. How have you been?

**Question:** I'm alright, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

**Mayor:** All right. All right. I'm caffeinated. I know you're a big fan, Nolan. Try the Takahashi Bakery.

**Question:** Next time.

**Mayor:** I'm doing my product placements. You're supposed to hold it close to your cheek.

**Question:** Fair enough. Mr. Mayor, you complained that you would like to see several of the candidates brush up on their facts and on their knowledge of City government. Is there any candidate who struck you as particularly clueless last night?

**Mayor:** Oh, Nolan, Nolan, Nolan. I am a highly trained professional, Nolan. I'm not falling for that question. Look, I've given some examples that were just striking to me. But I'm not, again, going to get into talking about candidates one by one. If at any point I decided that's the right thing to do, I'll do it. But what I can say is, you know, it just – and think about the debate as something that's supposed to engage people and inspire them to want to vote and to make a decision about the future of the city. It just didn't do that. That's what's sad to me. I was really happy it was in person. The moderators were trying their damndest to get people to actually address the issues. I was joking with Dave Evans before, but he looked really pain at times and I felt his pain. I think the people in New York City deserve to hear something that's actually going to inspire them and give them a sense of where we're going, and I would call upon all the candidates to step up and do that for people. We still have a long time, you know, it's a few weeks, that's an eternity in politics as you know, Nolan. So, I'd like to see more of that. Go ahead.

**Question:** Yeah. Onto the issues that were discussed at the debate, a good chunk of the debate was spent discussing issues of crime and quality of life here in the city. On the front page this morning there are pictures of graffiti, which has, you know, become significantly more rampant on the Lower East Side. You're spending a lot of money on the Cleanup Corps. When are people going to start to see the impact of it? And what do you make of the fact that so much of the debate last night was spent on the issues of crime and quality of life and what it says about your administration's handling of those issues?

**Mayor:** Nolan, look, we've all been through something very, very challenging with COVID. With, you know, global pandemic, with a perfect storm of societal dysfunction, because I keep saying, I think it's important to say when hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs, when schools were closed, houses of worship were closed, life ground to a halt – that disrupted everything. We are still, not shockingly, dealing with the impact of that. But we will come out of this. Just like we're showing across the board in this city, we're coming back, our jobs are coming back. Our schools are coming back. The life of the city is coming back. We will fight back crime as well. I think it's understandable that people are concerned. They want to talk about it.

On the question of graffiti, you're going to see a big impact from the Cleanup Corps. They're going to be out there, they're hiring up, as we speak, you're going to see a particularly strong impact going into July, August as we get ready for everything to come back off the summer. We're going to address the graffiti issue across the board, and it's one of many things we're doing to bring the city back, and we're going to be employing 10,000 New Yorkers who need a job in the process. So, City Cleanup Corps, I'm very proud of it. It's going to make a real impact.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more questions today. The next question goes to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

**Question:** Hello, Mayor, how are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Abu. How are you doing today?

**Question:** Good, thank you so much.

**Mayor:** Are you there?

**Question:** Yes. The phone came [inaudible] interrupt our conversation. Did you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes. Very good. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay, the question is – hello? Did you hear?

**Mayor:** Yeah, keep going, Abu. We're going to see if we can get this done. Just keep talking and I'll do my best to hear.

**Question:** Okay, so –

**Mayor:** I don't know this one's going to work out. People, get a hardline phone. That's my message to all New Yorkers, particularly journalists.

**Question:** Hello?

**Mayor:** Try one more time, Abu?

**Question:** Hello? Hello?

**Mayor:** Last chance.

**Question:** Hello? Hello? Hello?

**Mayor:** Abu, unless you respond and give me a question, we're going to have to move on.

**Question:** Hello? Hello? Hello?

**Mayor:** Go ahead, let's get another one. Sorry, Abu.

**Moderator:** Our last question for today goes to Robert from AM New York.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good, Robert, how you been?

**Question:** I'm very well, thank you. I just want to – we had a lot of questions about the debate. This is not going to be about that. This is a little bit different. Just goes back to the issue of crime though. Last night we had another deadly shooting in the city. There was a 29-year-old man who was gunned down in Corona, Queens. The city [inaudible] for months now, each month, and yet the shootings keep happening at an alarming rate. A lot of the candidates seeking to succeed you has suggested that the NYPD should reinstate the anti-crime units that were dissolved last year. Those units were responsible for making thousands of gun arrests a year, but they had a high frequency of negative interactions with the public. Do you think it's time for the NYPD to consider reinstating the anti-crime units with appropriate reforms made to protect the public and the cops alike?

**Mayor:** Robert, I really want to thank you for the question because – you should run for mayor because that was a much more informed, thoughtful statement than a lot of what I heard last night. You're saying it in my view exactly the right way. Yes. The unit was responsible for a lot of gun arrests and, you know, officers who really cared and went out there and did important work. Unfortunately, there were problems both with a lot of negative interactions with communities, including the kind of across-the-board negative interactions, reminiscent of the worst elements of the broken policy of stop and frisk, and too many times arrests that didn't lead to successful prosecutions. Commissioner Shea made the decision as a lifelong police professional and extremely thoughtful, intelligent analyst of policing that this was not achieving the goal, and there was a better way to these dedicated officers to get better results. And I think he was right and I think we should stick with it. Officers are out there. We saw a huge number of gun arrests in the first half of this year, but in ways that both are less alienating to communities and can lead to more effective prosecutions. Now that the courts are finally back, this is only week two, but I think we are very confident that you're going to see a high number of successful prosecutions in gun cases, a substantial number of major gang takedowns. Taking dozens and dozens of violent individuals out all at once. I think this is the better way to handle the future. Go ahead, Robert.

**Question:** Okay, and I have a follow up that's different. It just comes from a colleague of mine.

**Mayor:** Robert, I thought you were going to announce your candidacy. I gave you a perfect setup there. I don't understand. I really thought we had a moment there?

**Question:** In the words of Jerry Seinfeld, I choose not to run. That's good. That's good. So, one of my colleagues had is working on a story about remote learning and the new year coming up. So, how is the City going to incorporate some of what it learned from its experience of implementing remote learning this past year and during the pandemic to classes this fall?

**Mayor:** Robert, this is an example of something that we had to do on an emergency basis that had never been tried before anywhere near this scale, and I really want to give our educators and the whole team of DOE credit. In a matter of weeks, they went from having used remote learning, very sparsely to having to do it for every child in the school system, in the middle of a pandemic, and they actually pulled it off, and now almost half a million devices have been

distributed to kids who need it, which is one of the greatest acts of equity that we've seen in a long time in terms of closing the digital divide. So, in this painful, horrible crisis came great learning, honestly – great new innovations came out of it. It's sad that the crisis was the cause, but I appreciate that people found a way to do things. So, now we learned we can do a lot with digital learning. It doesn't come anywhere near the impact of in-person learning. We also learned that the hard way. We've got to have every child back in school in September, but we're going to use digital learning to individualize instruction so that kids on their own time can go a lot farther than they were able to go before we need to catch up. We need to close the COVID achievement gap and fundamentally believe the combination of new approaches to digital learning with the academic screening. We're going to provide to every single student to figure out exactly where they are and what they need. That's going to revolutionize our approach to education. So, you know, out of the ashes, a phoenix rises, and this is going to be an approach really helps New York City public schools move forward and bring our kids forward.

And, with that, everyone – listen, you heard at the beginning, amazing progress on vaccination and amazing progress knocking back COVID as a result. The punchline is clear if you haven't gotten vaccinated yet, go out and do it help move this city forward. You can also win some really great prizes. This is the time. Thank you, everybody.

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