

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 5, 2020, 8:30 AM
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN'S NEW DAY

Alisyn Camerota: After a worrisome spring, New York City was able to bring the coronavirus case numbers way down and flatten the curve. But now, cases are rising again. Mayor Bill de Blasio is proposing closing down schools and non-essential businesses in some parts of the city to stop this new surge. And New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio joins us now. Mr. Mayor, great to see you this morning.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Alisyn. How are you doing?

Camerota: I'm doing well. So, tell us, what was the tipping point? I mean, what got you to this point of feeling as though you're going to have to close down schools and businesses, or partially do so, in 20 different neighborhoods?

Mayor: Yeah. Well, right now, it is nine ZIP codes out of the 146 ZIP codes in New York City that we're particularly concerned about, Alisyn, and then there's another 11 we're watching very carefully. So, look, the truth is the vast majority of New York City, we continue to see what we've seen for months, thank God, low levels of transmission. For a long time, we've hovered around one percent. Now, we're still well below two percent in most of the city. We want to keep it that way. But in these nine ZIP codes we're particularly concerned about in Brooklyn and Queens, it's time – I believe fundamentally, having really looked at the data carefully and worked with our public health officials – it's time for us to rewind, to take some of the steps we took before that worked. And it's – I don't say it with anything but pain for folks in the community, you know, small business owners, folks who really want to get their lives more back to normal. But this is to make sure that this virus does not spread more deeply in those communities and threaten lives, and that does not spread to the rest of the city. So, it's a measure I think we have to take to contain the situation before it gets any worse.

Camerota: As I understand it, Governor Cuomo would have to approve this plan. Is he on board with doing this?

Mayor: We're waiting to hear the State's response to this plan. I expect to hear something in the next few hours. But the bottom line here is, this is consistent with what we've done – the City and the State together in previous situations. Remember, we all applied tough restrictions at the height of the crisis. We were the epicenter of the country and that's what got us out of it, Alisyn. You saw the discipline and the strength and resiliency of New Yorkers. It was very tough to have those restrictions on us, but then we beat back this disease and for months on end kept it low. But this new problem we're having, we got to address it head on. You know, overall, again, the City's

doing well, the economy is coming back, schools are now all open, but if we see a specific area that needs that kind of tough, specific intervention, that's something we do for the good of everybody.

Camerota: I've read that it's some yeshivas, meaning Orthodox Jewish elementary schools, that have had a problem with complying with masks and some social distancing. Is that your understanding and why aren't they getting that message?

Mayor: I think it is bigger issue across these nine ZIP codes that really have a wide range, diverse range of New Yorkers in them. We have to get people into the basic practice of wearing masks, socially distancing, really following the rules that have worked. And this city has been really disciplined. And I think it's natural over time, people get fatigued, they get a little less disciplined, but this is a wake-up call to everyone in New York City to tighten up again, to do the things that work. Look, we overcame the worst problem in the entire country in a remarkable fashion. So, I know we can do it in these nine ZIP codes, but I think this is something where people have to remember, again, those rules work and we have to be devoted to them.

Camerota: Governor Cuomo put out a statement yesterday about where his head's at with this. I'll just read it to you. He says, "local governments have not done an effective job of enforcement in these hotspot ZIP codes. New York State will be doing aggressive enforcement, starting today. The State cannot take over effective enforcement for every jurisdiction. And if a local jurisdiction cannot or will not perform effective enforcement of violating entities, notify the State and we will close all business activities in the hotspots where the local governments cannot do compliance." It sounds like the governor is implying that the City has not done a good job of enforcing the rules.

Mayor: I don't want to take that implication from it because it's just not accurate. Look, the problem we're having now, it's not just New York City. Obviously, some of the suburban counties to the north of the city are having a problem too. That's not my jurisdiction, obviously, but we know there's a problem in other parts of the state, we know it interrelates to some of the communities in Brooklyn and Queens. But look, we have four weeks and weeks been doing deep enforcement in these communities here in Brooklyn, Queens, huge amount of testing, a lot of education, a lot of mask – free masks distribution, the things that historically had worked. We had other problems earlier in the summer in other communities, Alisyn, then we went in with intensive efforts, turned them around quickly. In different parts of Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, we were able to keep things very isolated and quick turnarounds. This is a time where we've seen something different. The problem was deeper and more pervasive. So, I think it goes far beyond the question of "enforcement." I think here's a case where we need to really work deeply with communities, with community leaders, to have a bigger turnaround in the way people are handling things. And, unfortunately, the restrictions are the way to ensure that we can reset, get these rates back down again, and then hold at that lower level long-term.

Camerota: Mayor, in our final moments, we've not spoken to you since President Trump tested positive for coronavirus and checked into Walter Reed. What are your thoughts on everything that's happened since last Saturday's Amy Coney Barrett event where so many people since then appear to have tested positive?

Mayor: The first thing to say, Alisyn, you know, even with all the partisan rancor and all the challenges, some of which this president unfortunately created, he's still our president. I wish him well. I wish him a speedy recovery. It's in the interest of the nation that we somehow have some stability as we fight this disease together. But I do think the message, whether you're talking about in neighborhoods in New York City or you're talking about that event in the White House, or any place else is, we need people to remember the power of wearing the mask, practicing the social distancing, the really simple tools. And I've got to tell you, I saw it with my own eyes in the city. It was the epicenter – those simple tools are what turned it around. We need the whole country to be devoted to doing the basics. And if people are bought into it, I know the country can come back.

Camerota: Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you very much. Always great to have you.

Mayor: Thank you, Alisyn.

###