

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 2021, 10:00 AM
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: All right. Good morning, everybody. So, yesterday, absolutely amazing – I was at vaccination sites in Queens, Hillcrest High School and the Police Academy in Queens. Unbelievable – people were so happy, so ready to be vaccinated. It meant so much to the folks who were waiting and hoping for this day to come. Well, now, it's here in New York City. We have won the freedom to vaccinate and we're reaching thousands and thousands of people already, our seniors over 75 and over, our first responders, our essential workers, our teachers and school staff, we're reaching them all right now. It is an incredible feeling. And what I heard in Queens was folks who were so happy to be vaccinated. They told me, particularly our elders. I met a woman who was 97-years-old, she told me what it meant to her to have that sense of security of comfort and confidence; talked to some of our first responders, our police officers about how it's going to make it so much easier for them to go out there, do their jobs, serve people, perform CPR, do all the things that saves lives. But also, they talked about how important it was to their families to know that they would be safe because they had been vaccinated. So, yesterday, a great, great day for the city, and just a beginning, so much more to come.

Now, let me tell you, what a day full of a sense of relief for people, but also a sense of hope that we are going to turn the corner once and for all on the coronavirus. Just yesterday in New York City, 26,528 doses given – 26,528 in one day. We are well on track for hitting our goal for this week of 175,000 vaccinations. And we're going to keep building every week from this point forward, it's going to grow and grow, and it's going to do so much good for New Yorkers and for ending this crisis. Now, the freedom to vaccinate is what allowed us to do this, and we're now going to take full, full advantage of that freedom and reach New Yorkers in every part of the five boroughs. I want to give you an update that in that category 1-B that we fought to have the right to use all the folks who are part of that 1-B category, New Yorkers who need the vaccine. We got an update from the State that, that now includes people who live and work in shelters – that's very important, we want to get right to work on those folks – but it also includes one part of this crucial, crucial part of our community, the folks who work in grocery stores who work with the public – supermarkets, folks who work the public. That's great. And we really are happy about that, but we want to go farther. We want to make sure that all the delivery workers who work in those stores get vaccinated. In fact, all delivery workers of all kinds should get vaccinated. They're coming in contact with so many people. They're serving us. We depend on them. They deserve the right to be vaccinated. We want the freedom to vaccinate delivery workers. We want the freedom to vaccinate folks who work in bodegas and delis. They're there, again, on the frontline, encountering so many people, making sure every neighborhood in New York City has the food it needs. They deserve the right to be vaccinated. So, we're asking the State to help us

clarify the rules of 1-B so we can reach all kinds of delivery workers, deli workers, bodega workers, and keep everyone safe.

So, that's just a quick update, but now I have some really exciting news. It is amazin' news, you might say. And it's such a welcome moment for the people of this city, particularly for the people in Queens – we are going to have a 24/7, mega-vaccination site at Citi Field. This is going to be fantastic. This is going to help so many people to get vaccinated. Now, I want to tell you, the Mets organization has stepped up to the plate to help us out. And I'm so grateful for that, I really appreciate the fact that the Mets wanted to do this. They wanted to be part of solving this problem and helping the Queens community and helping all of New York City. So, this site will be run by our City Health + Hospitals. Our professionals will be out there at Citi Field. Tremendous capacity – we'll be able to do between 5,000 and 7,000 vaccinations a day. And I want to be clear, we welcome Queens residents, we welcome all New Yorkers, we even welcome Yankees fans. There is no discrimination. So, it's going to be – obviously, it's a great site. It's an amazing place. It's easy to get to by the seven train. There's also plenty of parking for those who prefer to drive. This site will launch in the week of January 25th. So, it'll be here soon. We've got some last-minute work to do to get it ready, but it's going to be big. It's going to be a game-changer. And I want to thank everyone at the Mets organization, and that's President Sandy Alderson helped a lot to get this going – great partner. Thank you, Sandy. Thank you to everyone at the Mets. And now, we have a special guest here for our press conference, and he's someone who's generated a lot of excitement in New York City, because Mets fans are so ready for a new day for the New York Mets, but, also, I want to thank him, because he's immediately shown his commitment to the people in New York City by investing in small businesses and supporting small businesses that are really in need in Queens, and now by helping us to get this mega-vaccination site open. So, it was my pleasure to introduce the new owner of the Mets, Steve Cohen.

Steve Cohen: Thank you, Mayor. You know, when we heard about your initiative, I mean, we were just so excited to participate in this program. I mean, it's so important. You know, we know the suffering that's going on with COVID and any way the organization could help support this effort, we were going to do it. You know, we had talked about being involved in our communities and I can't think of any way that's more important than what this effort is. And so, you know, we can be reached by subways, by trains, by highway. We're the intersection of Queens. And like the Mayor said, you know, we'll vaccinated anybody in the New York area. The goal is to just the vaccine in people's arms so we can get this crisis over with and get back to living a normal life. I really would look forward to that and I think everybody else would too, so thank you, Mayor, for coming to us. We're happy to support your effort and let's get – let's look forward to one day having this crisis over with.

Mayor: Steve, I want to thank you. And first of all, I just want to say, I'm slipping into something more comfortable. I just want to say, let's go Mets.

Cohen: You're looking good there, Bill. Let's go Mets.

Mayor: Let's go Mets. Listen, Steve, thank you. And I want to tell you, you guys really – just great teamwork. You and your whole team immediately answer the call here, and I'm so

thankful. And I also want to say there's tremendous excitement in this city, because it's clear you're committed to revitalizing the Mets, both in terms of their fortunes on the playing field, but also in terms of involvement in the community. And we talked earlier and I really appreciate it, I could hear loud and clear you want the Mets to be impact players in the borough of Queens and the whole city in terms of helping people. So, I just wanted you to speak about that for a moment. I was really appreciative for what I heard from you this morning. I thought it'd be great, if you could share some of that with all New Yorkers.

Cohen: Well, you know, like I said, we're excited to be a part of the city and there's a lot more to do and we plan to do it.

Mayor: I appreciate that so much, Steve. And, Steve, one thing, since I'm sure so many Mets fans would love to talk to about this, I'll just take the moment – Francisco Lindor, amazing acquisition. I assume you're as excited as you could be about that?

Cohen: Yeah. I mean, you know, this is a difference-maker, and Carrasco is going to be also a real contributor to the Mets. And – listen, we're excited. We're so excited to land that the two of them, and hopefully this just the beginning of more good things to come.

Mayor: I am certain of it. Thank you very much for what you're doing for today.

Cohen: Thank you, Mayor. Alright. Good talking. See you.

Mayor: So, everyone, I'll resume my civilian role now. Look, this is amazing that we're going to have Citi Field, but it's just one of many, many other sites. And so, let me go over them as well. We now will have 24/7 vaccination sites, 24/7 mega sites at 125 Worth Street, Lower Manhattan – that's open today – 125 Worth Street. Tomorrow, Gotham Health Clinic, Vanderbilt Clinic, Staten Island, 24/7. Saturday, in Corona, Queens, Health + Hospitals clinic 24/7. So, we're going to be adding additional 24/7 sites. It's so important that we keep giving people the option every hour of the day and everywhere we can be. So, we have the sites in Brooklyn and the Bronx up already. We'll be adding. But, look, to make this work, we're going to need the help of the federal government, the State government, and the manufacturers to keep getting us the vaccine. I said very honestly yesterday, at the rate we're going – I mean, we did 26,000 doses yesterday. Do the math. At the rate we're going, we're going to be out in less than two weeks. We're going to be out of doses. So, we've got a huge amount of demand. We've got more and more sites all the time. We're going faster and faster. We're going to need the doses to keep this kind of effort going. So, we're going to keep calling upon federal government, State government, manufacturers to make that happen.

In the meantime, anyone who wants to get an appointment, if you're one of the eligible folks, that means 1-A, 1-B, 75 and over, first responder, essential worker, educator, school staff, grocery store workers we were talking about, and, obviously, all the folks in the medical field in 1-A, anyone can make an appointment right this minute. Go to nyc.gov/vaccinefinder – nyc.gov/vaccinefinder. And the phone reservation system up and running 877-VAX-4NYC – 877-VAX-4NYC. That system is open from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM, seven days a week. That will be going to a 24-hour reservation system by the end of the week. So, later on this week, that will

go to 24/7. Again, what's our goal? Month of January, 1 million doses, on target. Yesterday, a great day – we're on target to hit that goal.

Now, here's the thing, the sheer magnitude is so powerful here, just New Yorkers 75 and over, just that part of our community is about 560,000 people. And I truly believe the vast majority are going to want this vaccine. So, we have a lot to do. We're going to be focusing all over the city a massive outreach effort to reach them and connect them to the vaccine. We're going to do a special focus on public housing on NYCHA residents, tens of thousands of NYCHA residents are 75 and older. We're going to be reaching them. Now, to make sure we get this right, we brought together a group of leaders who focus on the needs of our elders, who focus on senior citizens and the best ways to reach and serve them. That's our 75-plus vaccine working group, and that is a group that's focused on outreach and education, connecting with seniors, helping to make sure people understand the vaccine and are ready to get it. We also, through that group, are working on a plan. We'll announce it later on this month on how we're going to reach home-bound seniors, a lot of work to do to make sure we reach them as well. That's going to take an extra effort. But, right now, we've gotten so many 75 and up New Yorkers who want the vaccine right now. We're focusing our outreach on the 27 hardest-hit neighborhoods from COVID. We're focusing on 12 major NYCHA developments with a very, very high proportion of seniors over 75. And we've got a lot of work to do, because it's great to have the sites and the phone number to sign up, but people have to know about it, understand it, be ready. So, leading the way in our outreach efforts for our seniors, and she does it with passion and true love for the seniors in New York City, our Commissioner for the Department for the Aging Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez.

Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Department for the Aging: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It is a great day for New Yorkers. It is a great day for the people over the age of 75. Think about your grandparents, your parents, the older people in your life. They've been through so much this year, living in isolation, away from you, away from the family, away from their friends, living in fear at risk that they or someone they love would be affected with this disease. And yesterday, older New Yorkers, everywhere, and the people who loved them, felt a sigh of relief. I can tell you, I am one of those. I have a 92-year-old mother. I am making sure that she gets her appointment soon. And, as a 70-year-old, I want all the 75-plus to get their vaccinations so that we can continue. For our neighbors 75 and over, the vaccine is here. Hope is here for you. Hope is here for your family. One step closer to seeing your family and friends and loved ones protected. One step closer to enjoying getting out of the house, enjoying your life without the fear of getting sick.

At DFTA, we're working around the clock to ensure New Yorkers 75-plus get the information and assistance they need to receive the vaccine. We're here to spread the word. The vaccine is safe. The vaccine is free and it's easy to get in New York City. Our provider network over 290 participant organizations are making more than 60,000 calls per week to older adults, helping those who are eligible to register for the vaccine. We are holding virtual town halls, flooding the zones with mailers, flyers, posters and with our sister agencies in the city. We are working with our network of community-based agencies to make sure particularly, as the Mayor, said in those 27 districts, that – those neighborhoods that were the hardest-hit by this pandemic, and many of them in communities of color, that is an important aspect for us too. With our partners at NYCHA, with our partners in the senior housing community, with our partners, our advocates,

the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, the Hispanic Federation, the Asian-American Pacific Islander Federation, AARP, JASA, and a whole host of other aging advocates were getting this vaccine information out. We're going to make sure that everyone who is eligible is registered and has an appointment. But most importantly, we want to let everyone know that this vaccine is safe. It is safe to have this. It is important for you, our community, and your families that we all get vaccinated. Help us do that, we are using trusted voices in our community. We need you to become a trusted voice in that community also. Help us get older adults vaccinated. This is an age-inclusive city, we want to make sure that everyone is vaccinated and we wanted to spread the word. Again, the vaccine is safe and easy to get. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Lorraine. Appreciate it. And want to thank you, and – listen, I really appreciate what you said about your mom, and I know you feel for her, and all seniors. Everyone, just like Lorraine said, she's going to make sure her mom gets vaccinated. Everyone, I wanted to tell you, when I was out there in Queens yesterday, a 97-year-old woman, Marcia, amazing woman from Southeast Queens, her son made sure she got the appointment, drove her to it, made sure that she could get everything she needed. She said it was great. She said everyone that took care of her – they saw that she needed help on the line. They got her up immediately to where she needed to be. We have navigators at these sites to make sure if someone is in any way in need of special help, that they get it. But look, for this to work, we've got to be there for the seniors in our lives. So, I'm saying to everyone, help out your family members, help out your neighbors, help out people you worship with. Whoever in your life is in that group, 75-years-old and older who wants to get this vaccine, let's go the extra mile to help them do it. Just go online with them, get on the phone, whatever works. We can make sure that folks get an appointment. And, as we're saying, more and more locations opening up all the time, longer and longer hours all the time, lots of opportunity to protect people. Please lend that helping hand to the seniors in your life.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Can I just say the number in Spanish?

Mayor: Please, Lorraine. Yes, go ahead.

[Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez speaks in Spanish]

Mayor: Beautifully said, Lorraine. I'm glad you did it. Thank you very, very much. And, again, thank you for your leadership. And to everyone at DFTA. I want to thank everyone at our Department for the Aging who's been working so hard during this pandemic to serve our seniors. Our seniors have been the hardest hit and Department for the Aging and your whole team has been there for them. Thank you so much.

Okay. Let's go over our indicators for the day. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 196 patients. It's actually below our threshold of 200, but still, of course, way too high. And the hospitalization rate, 4.60 per 100,000 – obviously, too high, lots of work to do. But as we've talked about day after day, hospitals doing a great job, they are holding well. They are serving people well. Number two, daily number of cases on a seven-day average, again, huge number today, 5,068, way above where we need to be, lots of work to do there, and the same with number three, percent of New

York City residents testing positive seven-day rolling average, 8.15 percent. Everyone, we got to just keep buckling down. The vaccine, as you heard, we reached 26,000 people yesterday. This is going fast. We're going to reach more and more people, protect more and more people. You're going to see it start to have an impact on the case numbers and the percentages over time. It's going to take weeks and weeks for us to see that, but it will happen. In the meantime, we got to stay tough and disciplined, keep following those smart rules that keep us safe. That's how we get through this. A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Now we're going to turn to our colleagues in the media. Please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q and A. We have with us today, Dr. Jay Varma, Dr. Ted Long and Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, DFTA Commissioner. With that, we'll go to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor I have to tell you I'm a Yankee fan, but I think the news about Citi Field is great.

Mayor: Juliet, I know you always report the news in an unbiased fashion, so let's give a shout-out to the New York Mets today for stepping up. We're really happy about this.

Question: Yes. Very cool. Congratulations. I think it's great. You know, I did want to ask first about yesterday, you mentioned services to get to homebound elderly. Is there any more information about that and how that would work?

Mayor: Juliet, we're really concerned and this is going to take some real work to get this right, because right now, obviously what we're doing is focusing on reaching as many people as possible in these central locations, and we got a lot of work to do to make that as effective as it can be. If someone's homebound, that creates a real challenge we have to overcome. We're working right now on those plans. We're working with Department for the Aging and the advisory group we've put together. We're going to have an announcement on that very shortly. In some cases, someone – there might be cases where an individual can be brought to a hospital or a center for vaccination, other cases. Obviously, we have to send medical staff to them, but you can imagine that's going to take a lot of very precise work but we will have a plan on that shortly. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: Okay, great. Now, also today, the AP is reporting that the Centers for Disease Control is expected to recommend opening up the vaccines to everyone older than 65 and to get them vaccines to more people by not holding back the second dose. Do you know anything more about that? And as far as accessibility, how would that work as far as the city getting more?

Mayor: Yeah. You know, Juliet very important question. We have not gotten confirmation that that's what the Centers for Disease Control are going to do, and we certainly have not gotten confirmation about the kind of supply of vaccine. We're going to have a, so I want to see as

many people vaccinated as quickly as possible, and I'm really worried about folks over 65, folks with pre-existing conditions. We want to get to them very quickly, but we have to have the doses to do it. Right now, with the current structure, and this is something a president like Biden's talked about that the federal structure is going way too slow in terms of getting vaccine to us, right now, we could run out by the end of next week. So, I definitely want to see over time the expansion of categories, but we've got to have a much bigger supply of vaccine and a much more reliable supply, if that's going to turn into something that actually reaches our seniors and people who need those shots. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next up, we have Rich from WCBS Radio

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor, everybody on the call.

Mayor: Hey, Rich, how you doing?

Question: I'm doing okay. I'm a little chilly, you know, these days. Anyway, so, the City has contracts with the Trump Organization that apparently are worth millions of dollars. And we know there apparently is some consideration to canceling those contracts. How close are you to doing that? Is there a possibility of doing that?

Mayor: We are looking at that very, very carefully and very quickly, Rich. The President incited a rebellion against the United States government, a clearly unconstitutional act, and people died. That's unforgivable. So, our legal team is right now assessing the options. And as quickly as we come to a resolution, we're going to have something to say, but yes, there are several contracts with the City of New York and they're all under review right now. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: Another question has to do with an initiative that the Governor has proposed prior to this and that is the proposal to spend, I don't know, some \$60 million in public and private funds to extend the High Line to the Moynihan train hall. Do you think the timing of that makes sense, given the fact that the city and the state are kind of going to Washington hat in hand? Wouldn't this provide some possible arguments on the other side?

Mayor: I think it's a good proposal. I don't think it creates that kind of exposure. Look, we need to bring the city back in so many ways and something I've talked about a lot is bringing back the city in an equitable fashion. I know the Governor has to but we also know that this city has to come to life again, and we want attractions that will be there for people who come to visit because we're going to get those tourists back. We're going to get that energy back, but we also want things that are great for New Yorkers who have been here the whole time, the 8 million plus people who stuck with the city the whole time, and you know, something like the High Line is a great amenity. So if it can be extended, I think it simply adds to what's great about New York City. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning everybody, and let's go Mets. My question is about accessibility to the Citi Field site and then other sites across the city. Obviously, it's accessible by the 7 train

and the Long Island Railroad, but that's not running overnight. I know you've supported the State's plan to continue stopping overnight service. I don't know if you would change that now that we have the possibility of a really accessible location, and then also, you know, I was at the Hillcrest site yesterday too, and I met a lot of seniors who had had trouble getting to Hillcrest high school. The parking is pretty bad. I don't know if there's any kind of city-wide initiatives to say let's organize buses or other transportation for people who are – who don't have as much accessibility to location sites so they can get vaccinated.

Mayor: Yeah, I'll start and I'll turn to Lorraine. Definitely, that's the kind of thing we're looking at right now. I don't have a final details to tell you, but I can tell you we're working right now on the ways to support seniors, get into these sites to make transportation options available to them. Now, remember when you put a site in a neighborhood that supporting the people who live right by the site, that's supporting folks who can get there for mass transit, supporting people who drive. The more sites, the better, by definition, the more we spread out the sites, the better. There are a huge number of people live right near that Hillcrest site. But we want to make it easy for folks. We definitely – look someplace like Citi Field's amazing because you get the advantage of the mass transit and yeah, it doesn't run 24/7 for now, but the parking is fantastic too. So, a lot of people of course, will come by car or we'll create other ways to help them get there. I am certain that Citi Field site is going to be just doing a great, great impact for the city and for the people at Queens. But Lorraine, you want to talk about some of the initial thinking on how we can help get seniors to these sites.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Thank you for the question. It's a very good question. We are, excuse me – we are right now looking at the contracts that we do have that provide transportation for older adults currently and repositioning some of those contracts so that they can be used for appointments for vaccination. We're also looking at the network of senior centers that also have vans and seeing if we can mobilize those. We are in the plans of developing a more comprehensive plan for alternate transportation for older adults, and also we're working closely with Access-A-Ride to make sure that we do that. So, once we have a fully developed plan that will be rolled out and make public. Thank you.

Mayor: Go ahead, Katie.

Question: Hey, thanks, and then my second question is just I've heard some small business owners and restaurant bar owners who obviously it's been, I guess more than a month now that they've been closed by the state, of course, but you supported that and they're just curious, what are the guidelines for when they can reopen? No one wants to be unsafe. No one wants to put people in diners, and then of course, employees of these places in danger, but I've heard some business owners who just want to know if there are any guidelines that they can – sorry, sorry, that was my nephew – if there are guidelines for when they can reopen and if so, if you've spoken to the state about it so they can actually have something to look forward to?

Mayor: Yeah, look, we've been, obviously in this experience before with the reality indoor dining having been shut, and then it started to open up. I look forward to the day when it's going to reopen. I don't think that day is too far in the future, as we're now able to distribute the vaccine. I think it's really a matter of, as I've talked about, how much vaccine we get, how

quickly and what the response is from New Yorkers. But I think since for example, restaurant owners have been through that experience before they understood when they were shut down, that the day would come and they were open again, they opened up at that 25 percent level, obviously did well with that. I think the knowledge of the kinds of things they have to do is clear. We'll go right back to that. But if there's any specific changes, we'll certainly be informing people and educating them well in advance. We want to make sure everyone is safe. That's the bottom line. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we'll go to Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today? I guess you're doing pretty well with your with your Mets cap and—

Mayor: I'm feeling good. Henry, I'm feeling good. It's like – this is a really good thing that a lot of people are going to get their vaccine to Citi Field. So, I'm excited about that. How you doing today?

Question: I'm good. I was up at Bathgate yesterday and I couldn't get a handle on how many vaccinations they intend to give up there. It was pretty quiet. It was advertised at being at the industrial site. It wasn't at the industrial site and there was no signage at the industrial site, pointing people to where the vaccination site was about two and a half blocks away, and there was no subway stop nearby, and I've just, and now I see the Worth Street is coming online. That's not particularly close to a subway stop either, although it's closer than the Bronx location. So, I'm wondering, you know, why or how are you siting these places, and what's your expectation of how many shots you can produce in a 24-hour period in a site like a Bathgate or Worth Street?

Mayor: Okay. Couple of different points that are going to be turned into Dr. Ted Long in a moment, he was with me at Bathgate on Sunday. I like to start by saying we were there with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr, we were there with the state new state assembly member who represents that immediate area, Chantel Jackson. They were extremely pleased to have the Bathgate site, and they said this was a community that really was hit hard by COVID a community that often is overlooked, and they thought it was very, very important that there was a site there to serve the Bronx community. So, I just want to say, having talked to people who live there and are connected to the community and the residents of community, they thought it made a lot of sense where it was.

In terms of your point about signage, I'll have Dr. Long up, if there's any confusion about the site, we should put up really clear, big signage about where the site is. If there's confusion about the other location, we put signage there to redirect. I'll have Dr. Long who's very efficient and effective make sure that signage is up, but Henry, the other thing I'd say is, look, you go online, you see a variety of sites. We're talking here about the initial 24 /7 sites where keep adding them. But there's so many more sites all over the city in every kind of neighborhood, and there's going to be more and more. We're going to be up to 250 sites or more by the end of the month. So, I would say each of these plays a role but just assume there's going to be a constant expansion so we can reach as many people as possible, and I can tell you the, the sites are filling up constantly.

Really the question is, can people get them, do they want it, is it working for them? Well, you know, people are voting with their feet. They're taking those appointments and the sites are filling all the time. Dr. Long.

Executive Director Ted Long, NYC Test and Trace Corps: Yeah. Thank you, sir. Henry, I appreciate the question. The first point I want to make is that we chose this site in part, because this was one of our testing sites. It was a very popular testing site, many, many people from the Bronx relied on this site to keep themselves and their families safe from COVID, and as a primary care doctor in the Bronx myself, I know my patients went this site and had a great experience, and the community identifies this particular site as a place where they can go for care related to COVID. As the Mayor said, people in the Bronx and people in New York City vote with their feet. Last night overnight, you know, from 12:00 AM to 4:00 AM all of our slots were taken by people in the Bronx because they identified this site as a site where they can come for everything is they need to keep their families safe.

So, we've been successful testing there, we're going to be successful with the vaccine there. I just want to say, this is our first 24/7 site in the Bronx. We're going to do more, but nothing will stand in our way of getting our vaccines to New Yorkers, and in particular to New Yorkers 75 and above. As a doctor, I've been waiting for the day to give my patients this vaccine and whether they want to come at 2:00 AM or 2:00 PM, nothing will stand in my way of protecting my patients in the Bronx or our way to protect New Yorkers. Now they can come overnight.

Mayor: Amen. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Okay. Thank you. My second question is to do with – how are you going to – because there's a shortage of vaccine. I ran it to several people who are coming from outside the city. One couple in particular, came from Putnam County. The city has so much of an infrastructure for delivering vaccine, other counties don't. Are you concerned that the city will become a Mecca of vaccine tourism, if you will, and people will be coming into the city to get their vaccine, and of course, that will deplete the city supply and make it more difficult for city residents to get vaccine.

Mayor: Yeah, important question Henry. In fact, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. raised this on Sunday when we were up at Bathgate absolutely a real concern, and the way to address that concern is the appointment process. Folks who live in the five boroughs, who are qualified under categories 1-A, 1-B, are, who are supposed to be getting these shots. There are obviously also people who live outside the five boroughs, but are part of our public service community. They work in our hospitals, they are police officers or firefighters, they're teachers. You know, obviously those people who serve us connect constantly with residents of the five boroughs. They also deserve the shot. But if someone is from outside, the five boroughs, is not a health care worker or a first responder or a teacher or an essential worker in New York City. They should not be getting a shot in New York City. They should be getting a shot at their local vaccination centers, whether it's Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland, Westchester, Putnam, anywhere. That's the break-up, and when you sign up, you're supposed to give a detailed enough information for us to be able to determine whether someone really qualifies to be at one of our sites. We're to be constantly screening, to make sure that that is followed. Henry it's the real world sometimes

there'll be a miss and someone will get through who shouldn't have and wasn't in one of those categories, but the rule that's been laid down is everyone gets vaccinated at one of our sites has to be in those appropriate categories, and generally speaking, the reservation process is going to catch that. We'll also make sure there's tight follow-up at the sites. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next we'll go to Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah, good morning, everyone. I wanted to follow up on Juliet's question about the sort of expected federal guidance on vaccinating people aged 65 and older. I mean, my understanding for why some states have already done that is the median age for COVID related deaths is under 75 for black and Hispanic people. So, I mean, it just given how much you've emphasized addressing disparities in the COVID outbreak, why didn't you start or why didn't you initially call for the city to make the threshold for seniors, not 75, but 65?

Mayor: For two reasons, Shant, the first is - remember I had to fight for the freedom to vaccinate those who are 75 and older. So let's be clear just a few days ago the State of New York was not even allowing me to vaccinate those in the single most vulnerable group, 75 and older. I'm glad we won that battle, but now again, 561,000 people, 75 and older, the single most vulnerable group. Why do I know that? Because our health care leadership across the board is saying this. I'm going to turn to Dr. Varma to elaborate on this. I want people to understand it. We're concerned about people over 65, over 55, we're concerned about people with preexisting conditions, all of these are areas of tremendous concern in all communities and you're right, communities of color have borne the brunt, but the single biggest determinant of vulnerability has been age and that's how we made the priority. And as I said before, until we get a much bigger supply of vaccine, we also know realistically that we're going to have a tough time just keeping up with the demand among the over 75 and the essential workers and public servants, unless we can get a much more reliable supply of vaccine. Dr. Varma, would you speak to why you and other health care leaders have really focused on this 75 and up group?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Great, thank you very much, Mr. Mayor, for the question. There is no perfect answer to this question. You know, we're in a situation where we have a limited supply and we need to maximize the utility of that. So the decision that was made regarding using 75 as a cutoff was based on the recognition that people in that age group really do have the highest rate of death. It doesn't mean that a 74-year-old is absolutely protected and that 75-year-old is not. It's just that when you make public policy at such a large scale, you have to draw a cutoff point somewhere. So, you're absolutely correct, as the Mayor has been saying as well, that the more vaccine that becomes available, we need to expand it to more and more groups because we know as you have pointed out that people in the sixties and people younger than that who have preexisting medical conditions are also a very high risk too. But I do believe that the original decision to make a cut point at 75 and also to prioritize people in long-term care facilities was the right decision at that moment. But as we get more vaccine available, we absolutely need to continue to expand that so that everybody at risk, which is really ultimately all of us, get vaccinated.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah, thanks for that. So switching gears, I wanted to ask about the warning from the FBI that armed protests are being planned in all 50 States around Joe Biden's inauguration. Can you say if the city has gotten any intel about threats here and if you and the NYPD are going to be taking extra safety steps, I guess, between now, the 20th and maybe afterwards?

Mayor: Yeah, Shant, I appreciate the question. I was asked this yesterday and I said yesterday, but I'll affirm today, no specific and tangible threats against New York City at this moment. Very close monitoring is being done by our intelligence division. As I said, they made a decision over the last year or two to really focus more and more on domestic threats, racially and ethnically motivated hate crimes, and terrorist threats that were based on white supremacy. That's where a lot of the intelligence gathering has been. We are not picking up any threats directed at New York City, but we'll be watching constantly. We'll be able to move resources very quickly if we need to. The central problem appears to be at this moment, state capitals. So, I think there's a real concern for Albany, obviously. But we'll be watching every day, every hour, and if something does emerge as a threat, I'm going to talk about it publicly, obviously, and we will move resources accordingly to meet that threat.

Moderator: Next is Reema from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Reema, how you doing?

Question: Good, good. I'm doing well. So, my first question is about vaccines, now that they're available, you know, just in terms of schools, at what point do you think it becomes possible to offer five-times-a-week in person school to everyone and you know, how will you make that decision? What sort of public health factors will you consider when making that decision?

Mayor: Yeah, that's one that would have to be made very carefully, and we would certainly want to make sure that it was the right time. Look, I remain hopeful that we are going to be able to bring a lot more kids back in the course of this current school year. Really want to see our middle school kids come back who have been waiting, but I think this will go in stages by definition. It will all come down to how much vaccine we get, how quickly we can distribute it, obviously how many people are willing to take the vaccine. You know, our educators and school staff so far, we're seeing a lot of interest in the vaccine, the more who get vaccinated, the better. So that's something we're going to be assessing constantly. I obviously want to see us push down the overall positivity level in this city. That's important but again, what we are seeing in our schools, and this is the good news, Reema, because we're testing, as you know, every single day and we're seeing great results still. Very, very few cases in our schools. Literally, our public schools are among the safest places to be in New York City right now. So that makes me hopeful, but we're going to need some time to figure out exactly what we can do. Go ahead and Reema.

Question: Okay. I'm going to switch gears here to be SHSAT which is always a popular topic of conversation, as you know, so I'm wondering this year, obviously the SHSAT is going to go on and I'm just wondering, just given your previous stance on the test, did you ask the Governor or anyone in the legislature to do a waiver for the SHSAT this year just given how in-person

instruction has been disrupted and how, you know, many kids are not actually going to buildings? And if you didn't ask for that or if you didn't talk to anyone in the legislature about that, why not?

Mayor: Reema, that's a good question. I mean, look, my views on that single test are well stated, well known. I think that there needs to be a re-examination of the way we're handling specialized high schools, because the ultimate result just isn't working and the status quo is broken. But to have that broader re-examination, there has to be a deep community process with all stakeholders to determine a better way forward. When the Department of Education looked at it this year they determined that they could make it happen. It was something they could do logistically, do safely, and that's why it proceeded to move forward. But the question of the future – the future, you know, this needs to be re-examined in a very thoughtful process to find a better way for the future. And I think if, if everyone's brought to the table together that can be achieved. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more first, we'll go to Matt from Patch. Matt from Patch.

Mayor: Matt, are you there? I'm not hearing Matt. Can you hear us? All right, you want to come back to Matt and see if we can get someone else?

Moderator: We're going to come back to Matt. We're going to go to Kristin from the Staten Island Advance?

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

Mayor: Good, Kristin, how are you?

Question: I'm good. Thanks. I wanted to talk a little about the home bound seniors you mentioned. You said that might be a possibility of sending a nurse to them for vaccinations. There are tons of other people who are home bound, those with disabilities, chronic illnesses, autoimmune disease, will they also be considered for a possible at-home vaccination program?

Mayor: Yeah, Kristin, we need to get to everyone over time, but I want to emphasize that's going to be a really important effort, but also a difficult effort. We have to be honest about this. When you're bringing thousands of people into one center, you can obviously reach so many more people more effectively, and right now we're racing against time trying to get the most people possible vaccinated. You know, we've – but we have to have plans to go to those who truly cannot get out and I want to reach as many people as possible. That's going to take a lot of labor, you know, a lot of people power to make that happen. We're working on that right now, but job one was to reach the most people in the most vulnerable category, which is 75-years-old and older, as I saw yesterday at Hillcrest High School, plenty of folks in that category were right there in the room getting vaccinated and we know there'll be so many tens of thousands more in the coming days. So yes, absolutely, all those categories of people matter, it will depend on the rules the state puts down, but we want to reach all those folks. We want to come up with an apparatus to do it, but that is definitely going to take some time. Go ahead, Kristin.

Question: Great. Thank you and I just want to go back to something you'd mentioned several weeks ago about what the city had planned to do with community-based organizations and faith leaders to help build trust in these Black and Brown communities, in these priority neighborhoods, can you tell me about what the city has done so far as far as outreach to kind of build that trust about getting vaccinated?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll start and I'd like to turn to Dr. Long and then to our Aging Commissioner, Lorraine Cortez-Vasquez, for them to add, we've really engaged already a really strong cross section of elected officials, community leaders, faith leaders, community-based organizations by asking them to help spread the word about vaccination and help people feel comfortable and help build trust. You may have noticed a couple of weeks ago we brought on a group of ministers to speak directly to the people in New York City. We're going to be doing a lot of that kind of thing on a regular basis, citywide and locally. Trusted voices are difference makers. So, you'll see that in Staten Island, you'll see that in all five boroughs. Dr. Long, why don't you talk a little bit more about how that outreach and trust-building campaign is being built?

Executive Director Long: Yeah, absolutely. I would actually say you hit the main points Mr. Mayor. From day one, trusted messengers have been our key strategy for getting the word out and building trust in both getting tested and now the vaccine. On the Test and Trace Corp side, we've worked with full – we we've contacted [inaudible] community-based organizations across New York City that have really been the backbone of guiding us about how to do outreach and working with us hand in hand to do that outreach. Today, we're actually in Staten Island working with community-based organizations in Staten Island for our Get Tested Tuesday. Moving forward we're going to continue to work with those and more community-based organizations and faith leaders to get the word out and to build the trust that we need to about the vaccine. And to be clear about it, this is the way that we need to build trust is by trusted messengers. There's no other way and we're fully committed to that.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Commissioner?

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: [Inaudible] the aging we're very forth – oops, thank you. At the Department for the Aging we're very fortunate that we have a vast network of aging providers who are trusted messengers. And so we're employing that vast network of organizations over 300 of them. But as the Mayor mentioned earlier, we have the 75 vaccines passport that we just assembled under the leadership of the Mayor which includes the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, the Asian American Pacific Islander Association, the Hispanic Federation, [inaudible] as well as Live On and that United Neighborhood Association –

Mayor: AARP –

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: AARP, of course, how - I would never forget AARP. They are trusted partners, they had – they, each of those organizations has an array of organizations that can also carry the message for us. It is very important, but there is no one like a family member who is the best trusted partner who can tell someone who is over 75 and call up and make the appointment for them. So we rely on every New Yorker, neighbor, and family member to help us become a trusted messenger.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Did we find Matt again?

Moderator: We didn't find Matt. We'll get him tomorrow. We're going to go to Kala from PIX 11.

Mayor: All right.

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

Mayor: Kala you are pinch hitting. I'm extending the metaphor here.

Question: Well, I appreciate it very much. So, I wanted to know, how do you guarantee a second dose in a timely manner? I've talked to a bunch of people who've already gotten the vaccine and they tell me when they have to get their second dose, you know, in a short amount of time. How do you get them their second dose with the shortage and then also continue with groups like 1-C in the future getting their first dose? How does that work, if you can elaborate on that?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll talk about the system, but I also think there's an honest dialogue happening around the world about what do you do when there's a short supply and how do you make a decision between first dose and second dose? Let me just say, just to give you an example already, we've gotten now 239,324, New Yorkers vaccinated. So, we're almost up at a quarter million right now, obviously today we will surpass a quarter million since this began. The overwhelming share of those folks, 216,000 are the first dose. So, you're going to see that continue that, you know, the first dose has got to be the predominant reality for a while, but the second dose is going to come into play more and more. It's three weeks later in the case that one of the vaccines, four weeks later in the case of the other. So long as we have supply, you know, we intend to obviously keep both efforts going, first dose and second dose, and people are getting a specific appointment. I'll have Dr. Long speak to that, but there is a question being asked around the world that if there is not enough supply, do you focus more on first dose because it does provide substantial protection unto itself. Dr. Long then Dr. Varma, could you speak to this?

Executive Director Long: Yeah. So, the way it works, and I agree with what the Mayor said is exactly right. So, right now, we are scheduling appointments for the second dose for anybody getting the first dose. So, what happens is you come in, you register, and we actually make the appointment for the second dose before you even get the first dose to make sure it works for you and to make sure that you have a clear plan in place. We're going to continue doing that as the Mayor said, the dialogue continues, we're going to keep scheduling appointments for the second doses for anybody coming to our sites moving forward.

Mayor: Okay and Dr. Varma, if you could just speak to the larger question and the discussion happening around the world about how to balance first and second dose?

Senior Advisor Varma: Yeah, no, this is an incredibly challenging question and I, myself, and our health team here has been considering all of the issues at the same time. Here's what we

know for sure. What we know for sure is that the two-dose vaccine strategy, either the Moderna or the Pfizer vaccine, is highly protective against getting infected. We know that during the limited period, and the limited number of patients that develop infection, during – between that first and second doses, either of those vaccines does provide some protection. I think that the consensus right now is that especially given the emergence of new strains of this virus, which so far appear to be covered by the vaccine but do present additional risk, that we absolutely stick to the strategy of making sure that every person gets two doses. Now, what may end up happening in practice, however, because of vaccine supply constraints is that some people get their vaccine delayed by a few days or a few weeks potentially in the worst case scenario. There does not appear to be any information from the clinical trials in which some people didn't receive their vaccines, for example, on that exact 21-day or 28-day mark. There doesn't seem to be any harm associated with it. In fact, we know from many vaccines around the world, that that type of strategy, which is called prime and boost, can still work and that lag time doesn't impact protection. So again, just to emphasize, we absolutely want people to get two doses. We absolutely want people to get two doses on time. There may be situations that evolve, such as those happening in UK, where people second dose does end up being delayed. If that happens, it's not harmful, but we want to make sure that that delay is as short as possible.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead, Kala.

Question: Okay. Thanks for that information. And then to sort of continue Reema's thought, I talked to a lot of educators yesterday who were getting their vaccine, everyone's super excited about it, they all have their appointments. However, the majority of them are remote learning instructors and the resounding question I had from them was, is the city, is the DOE tracking how many educators or the percent of educators getting vaccinated? And is there a percent that would reopen middle and high schools?

Mayor: Great question. And again, we are real – I'm more anxious than anyone to reopen middle school, especially, and then eventually high school and to get more and more kids back. And I've said it before, if we have a very different health care situation we're going to reevaluate everything and certainly offer an opportunity for folks to come back who previously had been doing remote, but we're not there yet. We are course watching very carefully how many of our educators and school staff are getting vaccinated, but remember, this is just the beginning of a process that's going to play out over weeks. So the answer to your question, do I want to bring back middle school first, then high school? Absolutely. Do I think we're going to be able to do big things during this school year, bring back a lot of students? I absolutely do. I'm really encouraged, but I need that supply of vaccine and I need people to want to get vaccinated. Those are the two big X factors here that will help us determine how quickly we can go.

And we'll conclude on this point. Everyone, look, we got to fight hard. We fought hard for the freedom to vaccinate. We won it. We're going to have to fight hard to make sure the federal government, state government, and manufacturers deliver us enough vaccine so we can meet the demand. But in the meantime, every one of us can help. If there's a senior 75-years or older in your life, help them to sign up for the vaccine. If you're a first responder, an educator, school staff member, essential worker, come on out, get the vaccine. Everyone who gets vaccinated takes us one step closer to beating the coronavirus. So right now, I want to make sure we use

every single dose as quickly as possible, but we're all going to have to fight together to make sure we get more and more and more doses so we can continue to keep the city safe. Thank you, everyone.

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