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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. We are starting a really important week in this city. We fought hard for the freedom to vaccinate. Now we have it. Starting today we can reach New Yorkers over 75 years old, the most vulnerable people, our seniors, our elders. We can reach them today. And we can reach so many of the people who serve us, our first responders, our essential workers. It's a very exciting moment, a very important moment, a lot of work to do now. We've gotten the freedom, now we have work to do to reach each and every person ready to get vaccinated. So, we have more and more sites opening up, including our 24/7 sites. And this is very exciting because there's a lot of people ready to get the vaccine, literally all hours of the day, and we'll be able to accommodate them in all five boroughs. So, yesterday I was in the Bronx, I saw the site at Bathgate. Great people at that site doing great work to make sure people have a good experience getting vaccinated. I talked to the folks who work there, I talked to some of the folks who had come for the vaccination. Everyone said an easy process, straightforward process, very much like when you get the flu shot, nothing more fancy than that. So, we're really excited that these 24/7 sites are starting to open up and you're going to see a lot more of that going forward. Now what we said for this last week was we needed to reach 100,000 doses, we had to vaccinate 100,000 people this last week. We got there – 101,799 doses given last week in this city, about as much as have been given all, previously, in December and the first days of January. So, we are now picking up the pace intensely. And for the week starting today, the goal is 175,000 New Yorkers, 175,000 doses given this week. We feel very good about that goal. We feel very good about our goal to vaccinate a million people in the course of the month of January.

So, the sites like Bronx, the Bathgate site yesterday, the Brooklyn site, Brooklyn Army Terminal, 24/7 starting today. I should tell you that the overnight appointments for tonight, starting from midnight, we already have 100 percent booking on the appointments at those two 24/7 sites between 12:00 AM and 4:00 AM. So, you can see New Yorkers are going to take advantage of this. The city that never sleeps, people are immediately grabbing those opportunities to get vaccinated. Now more 24/7 sites are coming. Tomorrow, Tuesday, 125 Worth Street, Lower Manhattan, Department of Health headquarters. That will be open tomorrow, 24/7. Vanderbilt Clinic, Staten Island, Wednesday – starting Wednesday, 24/7. And we will be adding a larger site on Staten Island the following week at the Empire Outlets. We'll have the details on that shortly, but for Staten Islanders, starting Wednesday, 24/7, Vanderbilt Clinic, and then going to the bigger site at the Empire Outlets. This Saturday in Queens – Corona, Queens Health + Hospitals site will be the first 24/7 site. Again, you're going to see these big sites start to build

out more and more, but this is how we get started. And that's on top of all the sites that are already up and running. You're going to see sites expanding throughout the month of January and longer and longer hours at sites. So, we have a lot to do, but this will be a constant expansion. We're going to keep making sure as we do this work, that we make it faster and faster.

That was the experience we had with testing. The more we did, the faster we can make the process. That's the experience we're having already with vaccinations, but it will take time to get every site up to its maximum speed. So, we will hit that one million dose goal in the month of January. We feel very good about that and feel very good about the Biden administration focusing on more federal help for the vaccination effort. We appreciate that. Vice-president – or now President-elect Biden is absolutely correct. He's hitting – he's suggesting a really audacious goal for this country. I think that's exactly the right thing to do. He's pushing for a deeper federal role. We need that. And I support that and appreciate that, but I want to remind everyone the most important thing we need right now is for the federal government, State government, and manufacturers to help us to get the doses we need. We're accelerating. We're going to run out of doses in the next few weeks if we don't get more of a supply coming in. So, I want to be clear, it's really important people understand demand is going to be intense. This process is going to build every single day. Right now, we have doses. The problem in a few weeks is we will run out at the rate we're going to be going. We need the federal government to step up and the State government, manufacturers get us the doses we need.

Okay, now all of the sites we have are by appointment only, want to really emphasize that. Why are they by appointment only? One, we do not want long lines. Two, we want it to go smoothly so people have a time they can depend on. Three, we want to make sure that only folks who qualify are getting the vaccine. That's why the appointment process requires affirming why you are in one of those priority groups. It is not just like anyone just come on up, bang, we're going to give you a shot. No, there is a reason there has to be some information given. There's a reason there has to be some to make sure we get the right people. And again, the last thing we want to see as long lines. So, the appointment process is crucial. Now, anyone who's eligible, you can go online, new website I want to announce that is going to be even simpler to use nyc.gov/vaccinefinder, nyc.gov/vaccinefinder. You enter your address, and it gives you where the sites are closest to you and how to make a reservation. You proceed to make your reservation. Now, online obviously is great for a lot of people. You can see the map of where the sites are. You have a process of knowing what's available when. That works for a lot of people, but let's face it, the number one group we're concerned about is our elders, folks over 75 years old. Some of them are great online. Others really don't feel comfortable online. So, we need to have a phone reservation system as well. So, we're announcing that right now. And it is up and running 877-VAX-4NYC – 877-V-A-X-4NYC. So, that system is ready to receive calls, operating currently from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM each day. We'll be adding more and more staffing that will go to a 24-hour operation soon. Right now, we have 750 customer service representatives. And we'll scale that up as we go along.

Now, let's be clear, we expect a lot of demand. So, anyone who's calling that number obviously you're going to have some times when you may have to wait. We're asking people to be patient because there's going to be an immense amount of demand. Again, we'll keep adding capacity, but recognize that the first days there's going to be a lot of demand. If you don't get through immediately or the wait time is longer than you feel comfortable with, keep coming back to it. We're going to keep adding capacity. Now, we already know folks have been responding immediately even before we put the phone system up. 55,000 appointments are already booked for this week just through Saturday. So, 55,000 appointments already. And you're going to see that number move intensely in the course of this week. I want to thank everyone. A lot of folks have been working hard, building up these sites, and putting all the systems together, a lot of work to do ahead, but we know that we're going to be able to reach the folks who need this vaccine. And we're going to meet these goals. Here to tell you more about how this effort is building out our Health Commissioner, Dr. Dave Chokshi.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. I'd like to tell you a little bit about what I saw and heard during this very special weekend. At the South Bronx Educational Campus on Saturday, I saw a motivated team of Health Department staff and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers eager to welcome their first guests for vaccination. I met staff trained in checking appointments on tablets, saw markers laid down directing guests where to go, and observed tables stocked with PPE, alcohol wipes, and Sharps containers used to discard syringes. And yesterday thousands of our fellow New Yorkers poured through the doors at three high schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens and other sites across the city. These individuals saw up close what many of us will be experiencing over the coming months. They booked appointments. They presented their proof of eligibility at the door, went directly to be vaccinated, and afterwards stayed in an observation room for about 15 minutes to be monitored as well as to book a time for their second doses. They were then issued vaccine cards like this one.

I know it's a simple piece of paper, but it's one that will help us to turn the page on this pandemic. The whole process of turning a vaccine into a vaccination takes about 30 minutes. Since you need two doses that means that each of us is only an hour away from doing our part to beat back this pandemic. After one vaccination at Hillcrest High School in Queens, a medical assistant named Valeria Correa Gomez told a reporter that she took the vaccine to keep her friends and family safe. It's science, she said. I trust science. I love science. Valeria, I could not agree more.

At another vaccination site that I visited over the weekend, they told me they added Kleenex to the vaccination stations, because some people were crying tears of joy upon getting their shot. And indeed, it's hard not to get emotional as we think about what this vaccine means for our fellow New Yorkers. Today, another 50,000 appointments went online for vaccinations starting January 16th. I have a message specifically for New Yorkers 75 and older. If you have a regular provider or a hospital that you utilize for your care, reach out to them to coordinate care and see

whether they can help to connect you to a vaccination. If not, we are excited to welcome you to one of our vaccine hubs. Call us at 877-VAX-4NYC – that's V-A-X-4NYC. We do ask New Yorkers to be patient with us as this program accelerates, appointments fill up fast and demand is high. But we promise more are coming, particularly if the federal government increases our supply of vaccine. We will do our part to open more of our doors in the days ahead, but we also need others to accelerate their programs. To that end, we implore our federal partners, working with CVS and Walgreens to pick up the pace for the nursing home vaccination program. They need to be vaccinating seven days a week, including weekends. With cases rising by the day, the urgency could not be greater. And to New Yorkers who are now eligible, including health care workers, people 75 and older, educators, and first responders, go to nyc.gov/vaccinefinder to make an appointment today. This safe, free and easy vaccine is a shot in the arm for the whole city. We look forward to seeing you at one of our sites. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Dave. And I really appreciate the emotion, the energy you described from your visit. And let me tell you something, that's what I saw at the Bathgate site in the Bronx. I saw folks who were excited to be getting the vaccine and I saw really great frontline health care workers there to help people make sure they got what they needed, excited to be helping so many of their New Yorkers fight back this disease once and for all. So, a lot going on now. Look, we made real progress by getting the approval of category 1-B so we could reach folks over 75, frontline essential workers, first responders – that's great. Now, we need to keep going, reach people as deeply as possible. We also need to work on some folks and helping out some folks who have special needs. I'm thinking about our home-bound seniors. And we're going to have an update on that in the next few days, an update on how we're going to reach our home-bound seniors. That's going to be a special effort to reach people in particular need who need the vaccine. And I want to be clear to everyone, if you are over 75, please go out and get that vaccine. Again, there's a lot of appointments available and some people are going to be looking for the exact right appointment for them, and it may take a few days, obviously. But the fact is, this is available to everyone over 75, regardless of where you live or your income or your health condition – everyone over 75 is welcome to get this vaccine now. And as our health care leaders have said repeatedly, single-most vulnerable group of people, the single biggest determinant of vulnerability is that age group over 75 – 75 and over, I'm sorry – 75 and over. So, let's just get out there and get the vaccine. It's going to be a smart thing to do. When you get the vaccine you're given immediately the date for your second dose – that reservation, that appointment is made right away. It's a very straightforward process. Again, safe, effective, fast, easy. So, everyone, please, this is a great opportunity to stay safe. And for you for your loved ones, this is something we want to make sure everyone gets who's ready.

We're going to keep building this out, as said, throughout the week. There will be constant updates on new capacity as being brought on. We, as New Yorkers, are not patient people. I only ask people to be a little patient with the fact that there's only so many slots available. That number is going to keep growing. So, 175,000 doses will be given this week. And then, it's going to go more the next week, more the week after that. And we know we'll be able to over time reach all New Yorkers.

Okay, let me give you the indicators for the day. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 247 patients. Obviously, too high. Hospitalization rate 4.62 per 100,000. So, again, these numbers continue to be a lot higher than we want. And, at the same time, our hospitals are doing an absolutely outstanding job handling the situation. We're watching that all the time. Again, at this moment, based on conversations with our health care leadership yesterday, hospital system continues to do well, thank God. Current new cases, today's number 4,904 – way too high, obviously. And then, the percent – number three, percentage of New York City residents testing positive on the seven-day rolling average, 8.8 – excuse me, 8.18 – 8.18 percent – also too high. Remember, everyone, if you can get vaccinated, get vaccinated. But in the meantime, keep practicing those safety – those smart safety rules. We want everyone to keep their masks on for months, I've said it – up until June is our minimum timeframe we're talking about keeping masks on, observe social distancing, avoid indoor gatherings. All these things so we can finish this mission once and for all.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, by Dr. Long, Dr. Katz, by DoITT Commissioner Jesse Tisch, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today will go to Narmeen from PIX 11.

Question: Good morning, Mayor. Good morning to everyone on the call.

Mayor: Good morning, Narmeen. How are you doing?

Question: I'm doing well. Thank you. I want to ask you for us – I mean, a lot of the outreach or the way that are going to be setting up getting vaccines is digitally. I wonder for those who will

be struggling with digital literacy here, we're talking so much about our senior population here, folks who might not be able to understand this language wise – I know you've discussed this at length in past press conferences, but how are we addressing that today? Because we understand from some vaccination sites, even this morning, that there has been some confusion, some folks who are just showing up without making those appointments. And it clearly shows a little bit of misunderstanding of how the process works.

Mayor: A very important question, Narmeen. So, again, we want to absolutely embrace seniors or anyone who's not comfortable online and prefers to make their reservation by phone. And they can do that at 877-VAX-4NYC – 877-VAX-4NYC. And that system is up and running, but you make a really good point, there's still going to be some folks who come to a site, maybe misunderstand the day, whatever it is. We want to do our best to manage that. We want to discourage people from just showing up. We want to discourage long lines, but we want to be responsive if someone shows up and handle them the best way possible. I'm going to turn to Dr. Ted Long, because we were just discussing this issue yesterday in the Bronx. And Ted, talk about the protocol that we'll use. If someone does show up, we're going to do our best to be helpful. But again, we do not want a situation where people think that the smartest thing to do is just show up. That's not going to be a great workable system. Go ahead, Dr. Long.

Executive Director Ted Long, NYC Test and Trace Corps.: Yeah. Thank you, sir. So, if you show up to one of our sites, whether you have an appointment or not, one of the important things that we're doing is we have navigators that are going to go out there, going to talk you through whether you need to appointment or whether you have one, and they're going to help you to figure it out. That's one of the things we've learned from testing. We've been able to do 100,000 tests in New York City in a given day, and that's because we know how to work the line, we know how to help people. Right now, all of our visits or appointment based. But if you come and there is a line, you can count a navigator helping you. And if you don't have an appointment, we'll help you to make one.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Narmeen.

Question: Thank you, Mayor. And thank you, Dr. Long. My next question is on behalf of my colleague, Kala Rama, in regards to our education workers – we now know, obviously, phase 1-B includes them, but who's actually eligible in schools? We're trying to really narrow it down. There were some teachers who were saying they're remote and they don't believe that they will be prioritized, as the Chancellor has indicated, that the priority will be given to those in-person educators. So, if you can be more specific about the education workers, the breakdown as to when they can be vaccinated within those – that system in particular.

Mayor: Absolutely, Narmeen. I mean, look, we want to serve everyone. So, I want to be clear, to all our educators, all our school staff across the board, our goal over time is to vaccinate everyone. But in terms of whose first priority within that group, obviously we're concerned about the folks who are in schools, working in schools. That's the first priority. It makes sense. So, that's who we'll focus on. But the group that has been authorized, we want to support all educators, all school staff. It's really important. And recognizing the folks who want it – you know, some people are going to want the vaccine, other people are not. We want to get to folks who want the vaccine. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Andrew Siff from WNBC.

Question: Mayor, good morning. And good morning to everyone on the call. My question to you is to what degree have we learned lessons from the dispute that just concluded with the State over opening up 1-B so it can be avoided for 1-C, because I'm sure that very, very soon, you're going to be hearing from folks who have underlying health conditions, family members who take care of family members at home who are not in 1-B. And you might get some indication soon about how much of this vaccine you're actually going to use. So, how quickly could you anticipate moving to the next group of folks on this list?

Mayor: It's a really good question. And I want to say, I do feel for anyone who has a pre-existing condition and is under 75 years old. I'm concerned about them for sure. That said, I want to remind everyone, just New Yorkers over 75 is about 560,000 people. Now, we can all count. We don't have the vaccine for 560,000 people in stock right now. So – and that's before you even talk about the health care heroes, first responders, essential workers. So, the reality is – we do have to recognize the reality that until we have sufficient vaccine, we're going to have to do this in stages. But I do want us to get it as quickly as we can to the next group. They're very needy. We want to help them. And I think you said the key thing, Andrew, let's see what demand levels are. I think one of my concerns in our experience in 1-A was we kept saying to the State, we need this flexibility right now. We see what's happening on the ground, we know we're going to have a problem if we don't have this flexibility. Now, we're going to watch how 1-B plays out. We're going to watch what happens with our seniors and our essential workers and our first responders. We're going to see what level of pickup there is here. We know already in the 1-A group that a lot of health care workers actually chose to take a pass in this first round. As we've said, that number is at least in the 30 to 40 percent range based on what we're seeing. Let's see over these coming days what happens with this new category? And if we see a lot of activity, then we're going to stay in 1-B for a period of time. If we don't see activity, then we start the discussion on where to go next. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Part of the follow-up to that is one of the criticisms of your rollout and the State's rollout was that the infrastructure wasn't up and running, even though you knew for months, that

the vaccine was coming. So, knowing that there will be a 1-C and beyond that, the general population of New York City to get the vaccine, how confident are you that the infrastructure for that will be ready the moment you need it to be?

Mayor: Andrew, again, I respect questions, I respect criticisms, they help us to do our job better, but I also respect reality. The fact is, we just vaccinated 100,000 people in a week. We're going to vaccinate 175,000 this week. We're going to do a million doses in the month of January. The question is not capacity at this point. The question is, are we going to have enough vaccine? That's what's going to happen in the month of January. So, let's be clear about the fact that all these good people putting this effort together are meeting demand. The question – and I said it from the day I told you there would be a million doses in January – the question is whether the federal government, State government, the manufacturers are going to be able to keep up with the amount of capacity that we put out there. We'll keep building, that's the bottom line. So long as there are the health care workers that we need to do this work, we'll keep building out, building out, building out. We'll go to the absolute maximum. Nothing's more important than getting this vaccine to people. But my great concern right now is, will the supply be there to match the demand and to match our capacity?

Moderator: The next is Jenna DeAngelis from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mayor de Blasio.

Mayor: Good morning. How are you doing?

Question: I'm good. How are you?

Mayor: Never a dull moment, Jenna.

Question: Oh yeah, that's for sure. So, we're seeing vaccine sites open, and more coming as you announced, but how many people does the city actually have vaccines for? And when do you expect the next shipment to come?

Mayor: Right now, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi. We have been updating folks publicly on the supply we have on hand. Now, that supply keeps being reduced, obviously, as the numbers of folks vaccinated start accelerating. So, we have enough for this coming week for sure, enough to get into the next week, but if we keep accelerating the amount of shots we're giving, there's a point where we run out, unless we get a faster resupply. So we're good for this week. We're good for going into next week, but then it starts to become more of a question. Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Chokshi: That's exactly right, Mr. Mayor. We have approximately 230,000 doses on hand today in New York City. We expect to get an additional, about 100,000 doses delivered this week, generally those deliveries take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, so that gives us some modest resupply, but just as the Mayor said, because we are ramping up our operations so significantly, we are concerned about the numbers that we'll get resupplied from next week onward, and that's where we need the federal government both to be able to provide adequate supply, but also to give us those numbers far enough in advance so that we can plan it out with respect to our operations.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Jenna.

Question: And you've been talking about this throughout this news conference, but for seniors who don't have internet or technology, how will the city reach out to them so they know there's a phone number to call or that a vaccine is even available to them at this point?

Mayor: Excellent question. We're doing a big outreach effort and I would like to turn to Dr. Chokshi and then Dr. Long, because this is something we recognize, Jenna, from the beginning, it's great to have all these sites and it's great to have a phone number for people to call, but if they don't know about the phone number, it doesn't help them much. So, the way to address that is to go to all of the organizations that work with seniors to local leaders, elected officials, faith leaders, everyone who connects to seniors to get the message out that this is available. First, Dr. Chokshi then Dr. Long.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I'll just add a few details to the approach that you've described, and really my starting point on this is to think about the patients that I've taken care of who are older as well as my parents, other loved ones who are older to think about what they would need to be able to navigate to get this much needed vaccine. And so, we have to use many, many different approaches because people have different ways of accessing information and different levels of being able to connect with the resources that are available. We started with the website, we announced this phone number, 877-VAX-4NYC, today. We'll also be doing a more proactive outreach with robocalls to seniors to guide them to the places that they need to get to, including our hotline, you know, to be able to understand how to sign up for an appointment slot. But it's really important to know that even though we will be pulling out all of the stops as a city, the places that many older New Yorkers go to are the folks whom they trust, whether it's their family doctor, whether it's you know, the Meals on Wheels that they rely upon, whether it's friends or family members or caregivers. So equally we are partnering with all of those people, particularly through our colleagues at the Department for the Aging to ensure that they have the information they need to help connect seniors to resources as well. The final thing that I'll say is that we're making a concerted push with our clinical colleagues and geriatrics. These are the people who have dedicated their careers, their lives to taking care of older people, and so we're going to be leveraging that network as well.

Mayor: Thank you, Dr. Long.

Executive Director Long: Yeah, I would just add one point onto what Dr. Chokshi said, which is that one thing that unites all of our seniors together is we're all united in that we all have primary care relationships. So, we're really going out to our primary care providers and making this a community-based effort to get the word out through our trusted community health members, through our trusted doctors. That starts with both phone calls, but also being able to have our doctors armed with the right information. So, you'll talk about the importance and the safety of the vaccines. I'm a primary care doctor in the Bronx, so being at Bathgate for me yesterday, it was a little bit of an emotional experience. I have many patients 75 and above that have been eagerly waiting for the vaccine and it's my job as their doctor to educate them about it, get them to take it, and the overwhelming thought in my mind is they really – they deserve this and I'm so happy to be able to protect my patients now.

Mayor: Amen. Thank you, Dr. Long. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Sydney Pereira from Gothamist.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Sydney.

Question: Thanks for taking my question.

Mayor: How you doing today?

Question: I'm doing well today. Thank you. So, I wanted to bring up some issues with the website as well. I know you've talked a lot about digital literacy but people are bringing up - you know, local elected officials are bringing up – how there's various different websites, one with Health + Hospitals, one with the Department of Health and people are having trouble going through the lengthy questionnaires and also creating an account just to schedule an appointment. And I'm wondering if you would want to talk about any efforts to streamline the online system and to make it more simple. I know you've talked about the hotline, but is there any plans to just streamline these online systems to make it a little bit more clear on and more simple?

Mayor: Yeah, absolutely. Sydney, look, we absolutely want the simplest possible system. Folks who are going through a lot, we want them to have as easy an experience as possible making their appointments. That said there's really important information that is required by law, and we've got to get that right up front. So that's the balance point here. Unlike a situation, if we were doing something, just said anyone, everyone, come on down might be a much easier scenario, but by law we have to know certain information. We obviously have to get the fact that people fit in the priority situation that we're talking about now with 1-A and 1-B. So there are some challenges there, but what we do find as we put any system into play that we improve it as we go along based on customer feedback, so I'm certain that's going to happen here. I'm going to turn in a second to our Commissioner for the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, Commissioner Jessie Tish. But first to say, we do have now this one unified site, nyc.gov/vaccinefinder that will allow people a single point that they can go find the

sites, make the appointment, but again, we'll keep improving it as we go along. Commissioner Tisch, you want to speak to that?

Commissioner Jessica Tisch, Department of Information Technology and

Telecommunications: Sure. Just to amplify what the Mayor said, the vaccine finder is intended to aggregate each provider's locations and make that data available in one place to New Yorkers who want to look through multiple providers to see if an appointment is available. So, you can think of the vaccine finder really as a tool for information aggregation so that there's one place that they can look to see all of the providers who may have appointments available. That said each provider does manage its own schedules, its own registration, and its own appointments. So that's how the system works, that's how the vaccine finder works, puts all the data in one place.

Mayor: And Commissioner speak to the point about how we make adjustments as we go along to improve the signup process as we get customer feedback.

Commissioner Tisch: Sure, as we get – as the city gets customer feedback, we reach out to the various providers who manage their scheduling and appointments tools and we give them that feedback and ask for them to make the necessary or recommended updates to their sites.

Mayor: Excellent. Thank you. Go ahead, Sydney.

Question: Great. Great. Thank you, Commissioner and Mayor. This is a question about just following up on the Capitol Hill riots a little bit different from what I've asked about previously, but is the city looking into whether – or if – any city employee or public sector employee beyond after FDNY and NYPD took part in that day?

Mayor: Absolutely, Sydney. Any – let me just lay down the law here – any New York City employee, any part of the city government who participated in an attack on our democratic institutions, who participated in an insurrection at the capital will be terminated. Period. If we have proof that someone violently attacked our United States government, they will not be working for New York City any longer. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Juan Manuel from NY1.

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

Moderator: Good, Juan Manuel, how are you doing?

Question: Very good, thank you. Mr. Mayor, you spent the whole last week asking the Governor to give you the freedom to vaccinate. The Governor finally relented on Friday. Do you feel vindicated and any significant number of doses that the city had and went bad during those days?

Mayor: Juan Manuel, I heard from seniors all over New York City, from people who love their older loved ones that they desperately wanted to get them vaccinated. And the fight we waged last week, that was about our seniors. The fight we waged last week was to make sure our elders could be vaccinated and be safe. It was the right thing to do. The fact is when you think about them, when you think about our first responders, when you think about our essential workers, we

needed the right to vaccinate them, and by the way, people all over New York State were saying the same thing. So now that we have that right, we can see immediately that's allowing us to reach so many more people more easily. It is really, really helpful. In terms of last part of your question, Dave, you want to take that?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, sir. Thank you. Juan Manuel, thank you for the question, you know, with respect to doses of the vaccine that we're in city possession, no doses have expired or spoiled thus far. What it points to though is the importance of everyone having the flexibility and the broadening of eligibility to make sure that we can get shots in arms as quickly as possible.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Juan Manuel.

Question: And Mr. Mayor knowing what we know so far about the us Capitol assault from last week and the participation of members of police forces from all over the country. Do you think this country has a problem when it comes to police departments that might be part of that fringe group of Americans who really believe the president - President Trump – won the election, and the – something should be done to correct that?

Mayor: I would say it differently. I believe that the police departments are one thing. Some individual officers are another thing. Just to put this in perspective over the last few decades most of the violent attacks that were ideologically motivated, that targeted law enforcement officers, came from the right wing militias in this country. The danger – if you look at the whole country – the danger to law enforcement has come from an armed right wing movement, armed nationalist, white supremacist movement. So, we have to put in perspective, and I think that from everything I can see the vast majority of police leaders and police officers understand that that kind of hateful attitude, hateful ideology, is wrong and un-American. But there are some officers clearly around the country that unfortunately believe this kind of racist ideology and they should not be police officers, period. Anyone who expresses racist views shouldn't be a police officer, anyone who expresses white supremacist views, shouldn't be a police officer, anyone who encourages violence against our democratic institutions, shouldn't be a police officer. It doesn't matter what their party registration is or their general philosophical beliefs, that's not what I'm saying, I'm saying that people who harbor views that counter the essential values of this country should not be allowed to police our streets, and we're going to have to find ways to identify those people and remove them from police forces all over the country. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Yehudit from Borough Park 24 News.

Question: Hello. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, good morning. How you doing?

Question: Good. Very well. How about you?

Mayor: I am feeling good this week because we have the freedom to vaccinate.

Question: I know I'm so excited about that and previously you had mentioned prioritized neighborhoods for the vaccine, and I was wondering whether these mass vaccination sites supersede that previous idea –

Mayor: Well—

Question: Sorry.

Mayor: It's all right. Finish up. Go ahead.

Question: Well, I was just wondering if you, if you were still prioritizing the neighborhoods, there was just some confusion about what were the exact criteria in determining the prioritized neighborhoods?

Mayor: Sure. So, let's be clear on the approach we're taking is the most important way to think about it. The sites – you go online you're going to see all of the sites. Individuals make a choice, obviously to be vaccinated. The priority is about making sure the sites are where the problem was greatest, and you take an example that Bathgate site in the Bronx, right in an area that's suffered a lot during this crisis. We're going to make sure the sites really represent where the need is, but we also are going to do the outreach through community leaders, through clergy, through elected officials, grassroots organizations, to reach people in the neighborhoods that bore the brunt. Now, again, we want to reach everyone. So, you obviously report on Borough Park. Borough Park is a place that had a very tough time with the coronavirus. We want to make sure as many people in Borough Park as possible get vaccinated. So, I know you're spreading the news, but I want to, you know, and you know, I represented Borough Park in the City Council. I want to say to everyone in Borough Park, if you're over 75, go get vaccinated, and obviously we have sites in and around the community. We have a big site nearby at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in Sunset Park, go out there and get vaccinated. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, and then my second question is that before the end of the year in 2020, I was horrified to see that 118 of the 264 hate crimes committed in the city or actually perpetrated against Jews. So, that's almost 50 percent, and in the last few weeks, you remembered that many synagogues were vandalized, and at the – during the kind of beginning of the pandemic, we learned that that the NYPD had formed an Asian hate crime task force, which was the first ever task force that was dedicated to investigating crimes targeting a single race, and that there were 25 detectives who spoke a combined nine Asian languages, and I was just wondering, considering that 50 percent of the hate crimes are perpetrated against Jews, if there would ever be – and considering the antisemitic crimes of last December of 2019 – there would ever be any kind of extra police force or a hate crime task force for the large number of hate crimes that are perpetrated against Jews?

Mayor: Well, it's a very important question. Look, I think the history is the NYPD has been very, very focused on hate crimes, directed against the Jewish community, and I've been focused on it, the whole city government. We obviously had a situation last year where we had to make a very, or the year before we had to make a very strong show of force, and we had some problems, particularly in some communities in Brooklyn. I heard from a lot of community leaders, appreciation that they saw the city government, the NYPD, very forcefully addressing the crimes issue at that time, and I spoke out and gathered with community leaders in many different ways as did other members of my administration. So, I think we have a long history working with the Jewish community to stop hate crimes.

The reality in the Asian communities, as you said, in part because of multiple languages, in part because these hate crimes have really come up in a new way as a result of the coronavirus and horrible stereotypes, including some propagated by the President of the United States about the coronavirus and the Asian community, there was a need for a pinpointed effort and a new kind of effort. But we're going to keep looking at what will work. The hate crimes against the Jewish community are absolutely unacceptable. I've said repeatedly, the only way to address them as a combination of clear consequences for the perpetrators and more and more education against antisemitism, we'll keep doing those two things, but whatever combination of tools we need we're going to use them because we will not allow hate crimes against the Jewish community in this city.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Bob Hennelly from the Chief Leader.

Question: Yes. Good morning, Mayor. It's been reported there were 8,000 people present at the Capitol Hill insurrection. Do you believe everyone present deserves prosecution of and do you believe what's the mechanism by which you'll provide due process to any individual member of the civil service that may be involved?

Mayor: Look, Bob, I do believe in due process. I absolutely believe in due process. I think that the folks who went into that building – the folks that went into the Capitol threatened lives, destroyed property did not follow instructions of police officers, anyone who did any of those things does not belong in New York City public service, period. Of course, there'll be due process. But let's face it, this was an insurrection against our government. It was not a peaceful protest. This was a group of people who attacked our Congress, attacked it to disrupt the presidential vote count. I mean, this is unbelievable. It's not even close. So, anyone who participated in that, anyone who stormed that building try to disrupt the workings of government should not be allowed to serve in government, period. Go ahead, Bob.

Question: Okay. New York City as low as 300 frontline civil servants and close to 130 MTA employees to COVID. What is the city doing as an employer to study and learn about how it can help its essential workforce avoid infection for themselves and their families, particularly in light of the reality that the Trump administration's OSHA has been MIA throughout the pandemic?

Mayor: Bob, this is why I fought for the freedom to vaccinate, because the best thing we can do for our first responders and our essential workers, our public servants is to get them vaccinated and we didn't even have the right to do it last week, so now we do, thank God. Number one thing we can do is get as many of our public servants vaccinated as possible within the categories that have been approved, but we also need to take the kinds of steps that will protect people every day. I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi and Dr. Katz, because both of them have been involved in the effort to protect public workers, and whether you're talking about the right PPE or the right training, we went through hell in the spring. We lost good people who serve us. We've got to do everything we can to protect people now. Dr. Chokshi you start and then Dr. Katz.

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor, and what you said is exactly right. What we have learned over the last few months with respect to protecting the people whom we rely upon for all of our services is that we have to have multiple layers of safety and

protection. It starts with what we know each person has to do, what we call the core four of keeping one's distance, wearing your mask or face covering, washing your hands frequently, and staying home if you're sick. I know we've talked about this so many times, but actually having the diligence and the discipline to do that is a big part of what keeps our essential workers safe. But beyond that, we have to ensure that they have access to testing, which I'm very grateful that the Test and Trace Corps and other city sites have provided over the last few months, as the Mayor said, we now have a new layer of protection with access to the vaccine, which provides a safe way to get over 94 percent efficacy, that means protection from COVID-19 disease. And then finally for specific occupations, whether it's a health care worker or a transit worker, or one of the inspectors who works for me at the Health Department we ensure the right personal protective equipment to provide that final layer of protection as well.

Mayor: Go ahead.

President Katz: I would just add, in our hospitals—

Mayor: Dr. Katz, I'm sorry. Dr. Katz, go ahead.

President Katz: In our hospitals, we make it easy for all of our staff to get vaccinated. We recognize that some people said last week we're not quite ready, but we're continuing to provide information to them, and when they are ready, we will be able to vaccinate them. We're sending ambassadors, doctors and nurses who took the vaccine to talk to people who are reticent about getting vaccinated so that they have all the information and can make the right decision, and as the Mayor has talked about today, we're launching efforts throughout the city, such as vaccinating all of the officers of the Department of Corrections to make sure that we maximally protect all of our city workers. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you, Mitch. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Abu? Okay, hold on. We got a sound problem here. Hold on.

Question: Hello?

Mayor: Right. There you go, okay.

Question: Mayor, good morning, and Happy New Year from the Bangladeshi community.

Mayor: Happy New Year to you and to the entire community, Abu.

Question: Thank you so much, Mayor. Mayor, my question is, you know, since COVID-19 happened in New York City, there's a lot of reports that people are living from New York City. Do you have any idea of what is the reason? Is the reason the economy or because of COVID and why the people are living from New York City?

Mayor: Yeah, it's an important question, Abu, but I would caution everyone not to draw conclusions yet because we just don't have conclusive information. We know some people have left temporarily. We know some people have left permanently. I'm quite certain as this crisis resolves in the coming month, you're going to see people come here as they have for generations and sense opportunity and a chance to be a part of New York City. So, I think for now it's a fluid situation. I think it's really important to remember that some of the folks who left have only done it temporarily and intend to come back as things get stronger. So, it's the kind of situation we're watching carefully, but way too early to draw conclusions on, and I also focus on, you know, whatever that group is, it's several hundred thousand people that are somewhere in the mix of temporarily away, or maybe they've gone permanently, but I'm much more concerned about the 8 million plus who have been here the whole time, who are part of this city, the lifeblood of the city, the heart and soul of this city, aren't going anywhere. Those are the folks who make New York City great, and those are the folks who are going to lead the recovery of New York City. Go ahead, Abu.

Question: Thank you, and since you start the vaccination – distribution of the vaccination, there is a lot of community pharmacies, you know, instead of like, you know CVS or Walgreens or big other pharmacies, community pharmacies, like say about different communities have their own small pharmacies, would you allow them to vaccinate the people because people feel comfort to go to their own people and vaccinate?

Mayor: Really good question, Abu. I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi and we talked about this about a week ago. Yeah, we need everyone over time to be a part of this effort, and in fact, I want to thank all the neighborhood pharmacies, the independent pharmacies that play such an important role in this city that are crucial to giving health care to the people of New York City. The pharmacy I go to in my neighborhood in Brooklyn has been a lifeline for us, and I know millions of New Yorkers feel the same way. So, we do need them to be a part of this effort as it grows, as it builds. Dr. Chokshi, why don't you talk about what's up ahead with our independent pharmacies.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, sir, and thank you Abu for this very important question. You know, I live in Jackson Heights in Queens and I know how vital these neighborhood pharmacies or independent pharmacies are to providing health care for all the different populations in New York City. We have been making a concerted push over the last several weeks to ensure that independent pharmacies are part of our vaccination campaign. We do have to ensure that they are able to safely store and administer the vaccine so that none of the vaccine goes to waste. So, there are some requirements that those pharmacies have to ensure that they can follow. But the most important point is that we understand how important they are for everyday New Yorkers to be able to access vaccination, and as we continue to get more and more supply, you'll see more of those pharmacies being able to administer the vaccine.

Mayor: Excellent. Thank you, Dr. Chokshi. Everyone, as we conclude, look, very important week in this city. This is a week when we start to turn the tide against the coronavirus, because we have now the freedom to vaccinate. We have sites all over the city. You can get an appointment online. You can get an appointment by phone. Focus right now, special, intense focus on our seniors, our elders, the people we love, who need protection, we need to protect them. So, here's my plea to all New Yorkers: whoever you love, who's 75 or older, whoever it is in your life, grandmother, grandfather, father, mother, aunt, uncle, a friend, a coworker, whoever

in your life is 75 or older, let's get them vaccinated, help them to get vaccinated. There've been good questions today about some seniors are not going to be comfortable going online, help them make the reservation online, help them with the phone system. The people you love need you to help make sure that they get what they need, and they've been there for us. I'm going to say something that's real obvious, but it bears reminding at all times, everyone wouldn't be here without our seniors. We wouldn't be here without our elders. The people who made everything else possible for us, let's be there for them. So, help them, show them how easy it is to get vaccinated, help them get the answers to their questions. Let's move forward and protect those we love in New York City. Thanks, everyone.

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