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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. We've got a lot to talk about right here in New York City, but I've got to spend a moment on what's happening in Washington. I'm sure a lot of you saw, the President – President Trump's attempt at a concession speech. It wasn't much of a concession and it wasn't overly believable. It looked like a hostage video. But, look, you know, I don't think this is him recognizing eternal truths and the error of his ways. I think that this was him being banned on Twitter and realizing if he wanted to remain at all relevant, he had to actually act like a President of the United States and do what all presidents down through our history would have done and done the decent thing and acknowledged he lost and had to transfer power. It's one of most fundamental ideas of American democracy, a peaceful transition of power, except that was working all the way until 2021 and Donald Trump. And now, for the first time, we've seen a president try to destroy that process. The very process that the American Revolution led to, Donald Trump, trying to destroy the Constitutional process, trying to destroy our democratic system. Look, there is no other solution but impeachment at this point. Vice-President Pence has had an opportunity to implement the 25th Amendment. He's chosen not to. History will judge him for that. But I agree with Chuck Schumer. I spoke to Chuck Schumer about this last night. I thank him for his leadership. He's right, start impeachment proceedings immediately. Donald Trump is a danger to this country. He needs to be removed. Again, thank God, Chuck Schumer will be our Senate Majority Leader. That's so important for this city and for this country and I thank him for his leadership right now. But here's why he's right – Donald Trump needs to be removed before he pardons every person in sight, everyone who has done everything wrong in this country, everyone who's committed treason, he can pardon anybody and everybody, that has to be stopped, let alone the many other kinds of damage and danger he poses to this country.

We also need a full reckoning of what happened at the Capitol. The fact that several key figures are resigning doesn't tell us anything, honestly. Someone gave the order to not provide security. And, again, you know, you could say, oh, oversight, mistake, competence – I don't buy that. This is too obvious that this was going to be a crucial, dangerous moment and there needed to be a huge security presence. Someone decided not to do that, or some group of people decided not to do that. Who gave the order? Who were the decision-makers? It goes a lot farther than the people who have resigned. We need a full investigation of that. We need answers.

Finally, in the midst of all this deeply troubling news, some good news. I want to thank all the leaders of the media and all the reporters who chose not to keep giving Donald Trump a platform in recent weeks, who cut him off, or didn't even bother to show his attempts to undermine democracy. And, obviously, to the folks at the social media companies who deprived him of his social media platforms, this is a profound moment when the folks we depend on to protect the freedom of information actually stand up and say we're not going to aid and abet someone who's trying to destroy American democracy. Talk about the emperor has no clothes, or that scene from

the Wizard of Oz – don't look behind the curtain. The minute Donald Trump was deprived of Twitter, he suddenly did not have the same power, the same voice. He didn't have that supersized ability to undermine democracy. I want to thank leaders of the media, leaders of the social media companies for doing what you did – folks at the TV networks, cable, everyone who decided enough was enough. Don't let this guy have a platform. You did something very important. And again, the lessons of history – what we saw in Washington a few days ago was exactly reminiscent of how fascism and Nazi-ism took over much of Europe in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s. The exact same horrible appeals to race, the same nationalism, the same sense of being aggrieved played out in an incredibly dangerous fashion. But what didn't happen back then was those who had the ability to say, we will deprive these fascists of their platform, they didn't act in time. And lo and behold, horrible things happen. Millions of lives were lost. Here, we had actual leaders coming up and saying – stepping up, saying, we're not going to give fascism a platform and actually stopping its momentum. And that's a very important day for America. So, thank you to all who made the right decision.

All right, right back here in New York City. No matter what the hell is going on in Washington, and we continue to work every day and we've got a lot of work to do. And look, I'm going to talk again about the need to vaccinate New Yorkers over 75, our seniors, our elders, those we love who are in danger – the single most vulnerable population right this minute in New York City and the State of New York will not allow us to vaccinate them. This is really dangerous. If we can't vaccinate the people who are most danger, we're going to lose lives we did not need to lose. Let's change that now. How about all those people who serve us too? All the first responders, all the people who are essential workers we depend on – let's vaccinate them right now. We have been reaching out, and you heard from Dr. Katz yesterday, the day before, talking about the extensive efforts to reach out to health care workers some of whom absolutely want this vaccine – and we're going to keep making it available constantly – but there's also a lot of folks in category 1-A that had previously been approved who chose not to get the vaccine, or, even when it's available, they're saying, oh, not now, or I'm busy, or whatever. Let's be clear, access to the vaccine keeps growing. But many people within category 1-A are not choosing to take advantage of that access. So, that's fine. That's their right. But then why on earth would we not open up category 1-B? Why would we not help seniors who are the most vulnerable, even more vulnerable than so many of the folks in category 1-A? Let's focus on our seniors and let's focus on the people who save our lives every day and protect us and serve us – all those first responders and essential workers.

Now, here's the thing that bothers me so deeply. Right this minute, we have 270,000 doses that we could be giving right now to New Yorkers over 75. You might ask, how many New Yorkers are over 75 years old who need this protection? About 560,000 people – 560,000 New Yorkers over 75. Well, over half-a-million right now who need this help – right now. And I believe, based on everything we've seen, this will be the category of people who want the vaccine the most. You're not going to see the same hesitancy you may have seen with younger folks or folks who have been working in the midst of this disease for months and months, and, as Dr. Katz described, may feel that they're pretty well protected as is. The folks who are most vulnerable are over 75. We know this, every one of our doctors has said it. This is the single most vulnerable category. This has been proven nationally, internationally. They have the most need and the most desire for the vaccine. They won't wait. We've got literally twice as many New Yorkers over 75 as the amount of vaccine we have in stocked right this minute. And yet we are not allowed by State law to give a single shot to a single New Yorker over 75. I guarantee you, if these standards

are changed by the State, we are going to run through those 270,000 – excuse me, 270,000 doses very, very quickly. Again, we are given approval by the State, we will run through those 270,000 doses very quickly, because we will have so many seniors who need them, so many first responders and essential workers who need them and want them. And that's the crucial point, who actually wants to step up and get the vaccine. The freedom to vaccinate – the freedom to vaccinate, this is what it's all about. And you're seeing this all over the State of New York – we're seeing county executives, public health officials all over the State in New York, saying please give us the freedom to vaccinate. There was a painful story in the Albany Times Union yesterday about county health officials having to throw away a vaccine, because they're not legally allowed to give it to the next category of people. It just makes no sense. So, let's fix this now.

Now, let's talk about the other most vulnerable category – single most vulnerable category of New Yorkers, not just over 75, folks in nursing homes. We know this – we know about the horrible tragedy we saw in the spring in our nursing homes. Everyone agrees, nothing's more important than vaccinating nursing home residents. That was supposed to be a federal responsibility under the original plan. Guess what? I know this won't shock a lot of you, the federal government isn't getting the job done. Dr. Chokshi talked about this days ago. It was supposed to happen through a federal initiative, working with CVS, Walgreens. It hasn't happened the way it needs to. The State said they're going to step in. That's great. We need action for the most vulnerable people who are in the nursing homes. Here's the numbers, according to the City Department of Health at this moment – in New York city, there's about 100,000 people overall either living in nursing homes or working in nursing homes. All of them are supposed to be highest priority. Right now, only 16,000 or so have been vaccinated – 16,000. There's an allotment of doses specifically for that population. That's about 54,000 through that original federal program. They're not being given out. Now, granted, maybe some people who live or work in nursing homes who don't want the shot right now, or there may be some people that you can't find a family member to authorize it for a senior who isn't making their own medical decisions. I'm sure there's some good reasons in some cases, but what we know is this is the most vulnerable population. And if total pool of 100,000 people with 54,000 doses available, only 16,000 have been done, something's wrong. Federal government, State government need to step up and move that piece of the equation because those are the single most vulnerable people in New York City.

So, we can make all this happen if we actually listen to the health care leaders who are talking about what it's going to take to make things happen on the ground. And this is the reality also, there's a difference between the theory and what actually happens on ground. There's a difference between what you originally think and what you find in practice. But, to be fair, even the federal government – CDC, Dr. Fauci from the beginning said that categories could overlap. You might have 1-A and 1-B going simultaneously, that you have to recognize that if there's not enough demand to logistically move the vaccine ideally, then move on to the next category. And the more people get it, the more people will be encouraged to get it. There is no reason to hold us back. There's no reason to stop the right to vaccinate. The freedom to vaccinate makes sense. That flexibility makes sense. And even the federal standards point in that direction, they have from day-one. Okay. We're just going to go out there, even with the constraints we have, even with the fact that we're only working within category 1-A – and even some of those folks within 1-A were just approved in the last few days – we're still going to do everything we can to get people to these sites, starting with the efforts we talked about yesterday, how you can go online,

you can sign up for 125-plus sites. There's going to be 160 – 160, excuse me, sites by the end of the week. But I want to focus on the sites, the mass vaccination sites, the mega sites that'll be open Sunday – Brooklyn Army Terminal and Bathgate in the Bronx. These sites, 24-seven, anyone can go to those with a reservation any hour of the day. Again, the City vaccine hubs, the Department of Health hubs also at Brooklyn, Bushwick Educational Campus; at Queens, Hillcrest High School; Bronx, South Bronx Educational Campus. We need a big push this weekend. We're doing pretty well this week. We're hitting our goals so far as of the end of Thursday. We want a big weekend. We want all those folks in category 1-A who have not been vaccinated and are willing – come on in, we can vaccinate you. Let's do this right now. But we also want to prepare for all of the folks who should be vaccinated – the seniors over 75, the essential workers, the first responders. Even though we're not allowed by State law yet, we want to be ready. So, on Monday, we're going to have five new sites up in anticipation of approval of phase 1-B. All over the State, people are asking for the freedom to vaccinate. I've got to believe at some point the State of New York's going to hear us. So, we're going to be ready on Monday with sites specifically for City workers to help our frontline essential workers, to help firefighters, police officers, Correction officers, to help essential workers we depend on. And these sites will be one in each borough, again, with a focus on City workers, essential workers, folks who will be authorized. We hope by then for category 1-B in the Bronx at Taft High School; in Brooklyn, at Wingate High School; in Manhattan, at Brandeis High School; Queens, John's Adam – John Adams High School; and in Staten Island at Susan Wagner High School.

So, again, these sites specialized helping us really protect the folks who have been protecting us. Again, we are moving, adding sites, speeding up delivery. We are on track for our goals – 1 million doses in the month of January, 250 sites citywide in the month of January. Want to thank everyone who's helping to build this up, in a particular, a thanks today to everyone at SOMOS, an amazing network of community-based health care providers. They have played a crucial role in all of our efforts, our testing efforts in communities and schools, they're going to play a big role in our vaccination efforts. They're going to be helping to staff the sites in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan focused on our central workers and City workers. Want to say thanks to Dr. Ramon Tallaj, and Dr. Henry Chen of SOMOS – two great leaders. Thank you for all you've done throughout this crisis. And thanks to your whole team – it's about a 2,500 primary care doctors and their teams all over neighborhoods in New York City. So, thanks to everyone at SOMOS, and we're going to need you once again. And I want to urge everyone who works in the SOMOS network, you're obviously qualified under 1-A. Let's get all of you vaccinated this weekend as well while you're helping so many other people.

Okay. Now, I mentioned the five sites, opening Monday in anticipation of approval of 1-B. And those sites, some run by SOMOS, two sites will be staffed by the Fire Department of New York City in Staten Island and Queens. Once again, the Fire Department, stepping up, helping to make sure that City workers are protected, obviously starting with the incredible first responders at the Fire Department. I want to thank the Fire Department for the role they're going to play. And I want to turn now, I want you to hear about why this is so important from our Fire Commissioner Dan Nigro.

Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. You know, right after 9/11, almost 20 years ago, the department started with [inaudible] exercises to prepare us for certain emergencies. And at those exercises, we've been vaccinating our members against the flu. So, we've been doing vaccinations for quite a long time, and anticipating the vaccines release, we

started planting early to vaccinate our own medical providers, and we began December 23rd at three locations in the Fire Department vaccinating our EMTs and paramedics and our CFR-D firefighters. It's been very efficient. It's going extremely well. And we are very happy to continue that process as part of this larger plan to begin vaccinating our fellow City workers. This department is ready, willing, and able to start on Monday. And we're hopeful that more and more of our fellow New Yorkers can receive the vaccine, and it'll help us end this terrible plague. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner. Again, thank you to you and your leadership and all of the men and women at the FDNY. Everyone has done an outstanding job throughout this horrible crisis. We want to protect the men and women who serve us. So, this is really going to help us. Thank you for your leadership in making this happen. Everyone, again, it's simple. Anyone in category 1-A, we want you to get vaccinated. If you're not ready, that's your choice, but if you are ready, we want to make it easy. It is fast. It is free. It is safe. It is effective. All you have to do, go to nyc.gov/vaccinelocations, nyc.gov/vaccinelocations. Yesterday, Dr. Chokshi went over exactly how easy it is to sign up sites all over the city. Please, if you're hearing this now and you are in category 1-A, you are one of the people authorized to be vaccinated, go online right now, sign up. Let's get you vaccinated this weekend.

Okay, today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19. Today's report, 256 patients. Too high, but again, hospitals doing well. I am watching very carefully, daily conversations with our hospital leadership. We are concerned we're going to watch this number constantly. We're going to watch the staffing levels constantly. So far, hospitals doing very well, but we are very, very focused, especially with the concern about the new variant. Hospitalization rate, again, too high, 4.33 per 100,000. Number two, daily number of cases – I'm sorry, daily new cases for COVID-19, seven-day average, 3,960. Way too high. And the current percentage of New York City residents testing positive, seven-day rolling average, 9.38 percent. Again, too high. The answer is keep doing all the smart things that protect us, that the Health Department has been telling us for months and months, but go get vaccinated if you're allowed now, and let's all push to get our seniors vaccinated. That's really going to be the most crucial piece of protecting our seniors, their lives, and it's also going to help us protect our hospital system because the folks who have needed the most care are those seniors over 75. Let's get them vaccinated, keep them home, keep them safe. That's going to help everyone. Okay, 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 journalist.

Moderator: We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Commissioner Nigro, by Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Katz, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Rich Lamb from WCBS 880.

Question: Hi there to everybody on the call. Mr. Mayor, if the State is living in some alternate reality about these vaccinations, have you and the others you mentioned, county executives and health officials, have you thought about going public and just getting together with either a petition or a news conference or something to just go head-to-head about this?

Mayor: It's a very important question, Rich, and unfortunately, I think you framed it exactly right. There is some kind of alternate reality going on here because the facts on the ground couldn't be clear. When you've got county executives, upstate, downstate, Democrat, Republican you know, folks who never agree on anything, agreeing all with one voice, give us the freedom to vaccinate. That's got to tell you something. Everyone's out there making their voice heard. I think we have to just keep doing more and more and asking the public to join us and demand the freedom to vaccinate, demand that we help our seniors over 75, demand that we help our first responders and essential workers. So, Rich, I think everyone is raising their voice and we'll all work to do that more and more going forward because we've got to get this done. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: Another topic, Mr. Mayor. You know, the Wall Street Journal says the best case is that Trump ought to resign. The president promises an orderly transition on January 20th. Do you believe him? And Mr. Mayor, you describe the next two weeks – you said, if I have the quote, right is, it's as tense as it gets. What are your darkest thoughts? What do you think could transpire in that time?

Mayor: Rich, I appreciate the question. One, no, I don't believe anything Donald Trump says in the sense of he gives a speech saying he's going to peacefully transfer power. I don't believe that. Nothing in the way he has comported himself over the years and decades suggests he would do anything respectful and peaceful. This is a guy who just incited violence, but it wasn't just this week, he incited violence. He has been stoking white supremacist forces for years. He has been encouraging people to believe that elections are not free and fair. I mean, come on. So, I don't think anyone should for a moment think that that speech the other day is reassuring. I'm not reassured. What are my darkest, deepest fears? I was reminded by one of the commentators the other day because I – remember, I was young, but I was very focused on this stuff. I remember those weeks before President Nixon resigned, and what we now know is President Nixon was drugged up and often drunk during that time, and that his senior aides had to ensure that he would not use nuclear weapons in that state. Luckily, at that time in history, there were serious senior public servants who took matters into their own hands to stop a president who was out of control from doing something dangerous. This president has serious delusional problems but unfortunately the people in positions of power in too many cases are enablers, not true public servants. So, I'm deeply worried. Obviously, the saber rattling toward Iran is one of the immediate and troubling examples. So, I think Senator Schumer is a hundred percent right, Rich. In this atmosphere, impeachment has to happen immediately. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Michael, how you doing?

Question: All right. So, a couple of questions on the vaccines. You know, other states like New Jersey are providing it to police now. What are you hearing from, you know, folks in the NYPD about where this is going since, you know, your announcement Wednesday and yesterday, things have been in flux since then?

Mayor: I'm hearing tremendous frustration from police officers and leaders. I'm hearing tremendous frustration from seniors and folks who represent the interest of seniors. Everyone's beside themselves. Michael, no one understands why we're being held back from vaccinating people who are ready, willing, and able. Again, if we had a world where everyone in category 1-A, every second, the category got approved, people were lining up, they were energized, they're ready. That's one thing. We know a lot of people are choosing not to get vaccinated in category 1-A, and there's others who are still waiting and we want to do everything we can to reach them. But by the way, the group that needs it the most is that group in the nursing homes and the federal government and state governments still haven't gotten that done. That's the number one focus they should be focused on. Why don't they get that done and give us the freedom to vaccinate so we can go reach all the rest of the folks over 75, over half-a-million New Yorkers, reach our first responders, reach our essential workers. We're ready to do that right now. So, what am I hearing? I'm hearing tremendous frustration and anger from folks who want to get vaccinated and are being told by the State of New York they're not allowed to be vaccinated. Go ahead, Michael.

Question: So, the second question has to do with your, you know, some of the rationale you shared yesterday, as far as your announcement Wednesday you know, about how the police were qualified to receive vaccines, you know, the 25,000 you referred to on Wednesday, because of you know, they provide CPR was one of the reasons included on that list. So, if that rationale applies, wouldn't have firefighters and teachers have been kind of included in that bucket as well as folks in Cuomo's administration that suggested?

Mayor: Michael –

Question: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible] guys, I guess –

Mayor: Say it again.

Question: So, why not – like when you made the announcement Wednesday, why not include like the firefighters and teachers instead of just having it be the police?

Mayor: Again, we got standards from the State. We put them up on the screen the other day. We got standards from the State. They made immediately clear to us that folks who on a very regular basis are called upon to provide CPR, to provide Narcan to stop an overdose, clearly qualified under the definition the State put forward. We looked at that and said, okay, we've already done EMS folks, EMTs, paramedics, who else qualifies? Clearly patrol officers in the NYPD qualify. This is something they do all the time. So, we said, great, let's go do them. Then we got a directive from the State – no, you're not allowed to provide the vaccine to NYPD officers. Listen, I'm going to say it again, Michael, really clearly. The State of New York said New York City is not allowed to provide the vaccine to NYPD officers even though they do provide CPR, they do provide Narcan, they put themselves on the line in very frontline ways to save lives. They're not allowed to be vaccinated. So, that just makes no sense whatsoever. The definitions, we put them

up on the screen because they're almost identical and yet we got a specific directive telling us we couldn't do it. Go ahead, Michael.

Moderator: The next is Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everybody on the call. So, to follow up with that, you mentioned yesterday that you were going to check in with the Law Department. So [inaudible] just from continuing or moving along and ahead and starting to vaccinate the elderly and the police officers, is there a fine attached to violating the law? Or could you deal with a legal challenge to this?

Mayor: Well, Juliet, we would like to solve this amicably in the spirit of helping our seniors and helping our first responders and helping our central workers. We're only asking for the freedom to vaccinate. I like to believe as more and more voices all over the city, all over the state are saying in chorus, give us the freedom to vaccinate that the State's going to get the message. So, we're still going to hold out hope that they'll do the right thing here. But what's not going to work is if they keep telling us we can't vaccinate when people are ready, willing, and able. So, for now, again, we're trying to get a breakthrough here, we're trying to use reason, we're trying to use facts, and certainly the people are speaking. They want us to have the freedom to vaccinate. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: Okay. My other question would be – I was wondering, do you think commissioner to be here on the call with you given what's happened in Washington, given that we have an inauguration approaching, given that, you know, there had been some demonstrations here in the city last night, you do have Trump properties here in New York. What's the security plan for New York and what do you tell New Yorkers about safety?

Mayor: Juliet, obviously, what happened in Washington was horrifying, but again, it would have been a hundred percent avoided with a proper security plan. I was asked the other day and I said, there's no way in hell that would have happened in New York City because I would have provided leadership and the NYPD would have provided leadership and the NYPD would have had a plan and the NYPD would have had a substantial number of officers out. And it never would have happened. Since I mentioned this the other day, when I was asked about the status of operations – we have not seen a high level of activity, Juliet. There are no specific threats that we're addressing right now. We've seen scattered demonstrations, nothing out of the ordinary. We don't see any major activity by pro-Trump supporters of the kind who went into the Capitol. So, right now we have a good situation. We're going to watch it constantly. And if we get to a point where there's something that needs, you know, more attention and we need to make public, of course we will, but we're not saying anything like that right now.

Moderator: The next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask you about a pilot program, a public safety pilot that happened in the 7-3 Precinct in Brooklyn last month. Over a two-block stretch with a history of crime, the police withdrew from their regular posts and violence interrupter groups moved in for about 50 hours over one week. I'm just curious what you know about the pilot, what the preliminary results were, and can we expect to see more such pilots around the city?

Mayor: Absolutely, Yoav. I think it's a great idea. I'm a firm believer, total believer in the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System. In the last few years, we have tripled the funding for Cure Violence. It has been extraordinarily effective and more and more the NYPD has come to understand the meaning and the impact of the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System. They do a different role than what the NYPD does, but community-based solutions are the best solutions. A lot of times the best opportunity to foster safety comes from community members addressing community problems themselves. So, I think what happened there was a great experiment. I expect we'll be doing more of that for sure. And I think this is how we make deeper inroads in terms of ensuring the safety of neighborhoods by maximizing community leadership to solve problems. Go ahead.

Question: Just on the same issue, I just want to assure a lot of folks who spoke about this pilot credited the new commanding officer there, Terrell Anderson. And I'm just wondering, did this have the full support of the NYPD? There hasn't been much kind of public you know, press releases about it. We couldn't get any information from the NYPD. Does this have the full support of the PD?

Mayor: It has my full support and that's all that matters. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Reuvain from Hamodia.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I just wanted to ask you, last week you mentioned that you'd be taking another look at the neighborhoods that are considered hardest hit and are getting vaccine priority. I'm just wondering when you will reveal the new list and if you share the exact data that's going to be used in determining the new list?

Mayor: Yeah. When we have that – we're obviously dealing with a lot of things at once, but we're certainly going to look at all the latest data, update as needed. Clearly let's talk Reuvain about folks over 75. And certainly, I know Hamodia and I know all the people who read Hamodia, communities that I have the honor of serving starting in the City Council. We want to make sure that in places like Borough Park that I served or Kensington, where there's lots of folks over 75, including Holocaust survivors over 75, they need the vaccine now, right now. We get the authorization from the State we're going to have, obviously I said, we're going to have 160 locations by the end of this week. And anyone who wants to sign up can sign up. So, I want to serve them. I know if we're given that freedom, we're going to be able to reach lots of people who are ready, willing, and able to take the vaccine. Go ahead Reuvain.

Question: Staying on the subject of the elderly. Is there any plan for those who are disabled, whether they're elderly or not, and can't leave their homes to have vaccines brought to their homes? I know that there's an issue with the freezer. These vaccines can't be for too long out of the freezer. I don't know if there are freezer trucks or whatever, but does the City have any plan to vaccinate people who can't leave their home unless they go in an ambulance?

Mayor: Very important question. I appreciate you asking it. I'm going to turn to Dr. Katz and then Dr. Chokshi to comment about the planning they're doing. Obviously, a lot of people to reach in a lot of different ways but we want to figure a way to reach everyone according to their own needs, especially those over 75. Dr. Katz then Dr. Chokshi.

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And thank you so much for speaking for our patients who are over 75. It's a daily request that I get from patients that I see in my practice at Gouverneur who want to know, when are we getting vaccinated? We are stuck in our apartments. We are afraid to go out. We know that 75 and older people have a very high mortality to this disease. It's a very different equation and feeling for my elderly patients then it is for younger people who recognize that there's a balance of risk that they feel that they would be able if they got sick to get over it. My patients who are 75 and older don't have that sense at all. They have the sense that if they were to get this illness, they would die. And the epidemiology supports that they are much more likely to die. We recognize that there are people who are homebound. And we, Health + Hospitals has a home health care agency. And once we are allowed to go about caring for and giving vaccination to the 75 and older, we will utilize our home care agency and other home care aides. The vaccine, especially the Moderna vaccine, does not have the same requirements for the super freezer. We can imagine a scenario where we take up single vials in order to be able to give it to a patient and respect all of the rules about how long the medicine can be out of the refrigerator. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. The only thing that I want to add is to highlight that the way that we want to expand access to vaccination starting with the flexibility that both the Mayor and Dr. Katz have described, will also become very physical and tangible as we expand out access points. So, making it so that we have additional access points that are conveniently located in people's neighborhoods, whether it's the community clinic or the pharmacy so that people are able to easily walk toward it. But then to your question, also making sure that there are solutions for people who may find it difficult to walk and ensuring that we use the right transportation services to help them if they're able to walk a little bit. But then finally getting to that last mile, we know that there are some people who are homebound, particularly some elderly people who are truly homebound for whom we will have to bring the vaccine to them. We are planning for that. There are complicated logistics because of the specifics of the vaccines and making sure that they stay stable and good during that transport process. But we have planned for that.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Nolan from the Post.

Question: Good morning everybody.

Mayor: Good morning Nolan. How you doing?

Question: I'm hanging in there. How are you?

Mayor: Good, man.

Question: If we could go back to vaccines just quickly for a second. You've promised that you want to be distributing 400,000 vaccines a week across the city by the end of the month. The Governor says the entire state will be only getting 300,000 doses of vaccine per week. So, if

you're promising 400,000 a week, promising just 300,000 a week across the entire state, how do you distribute 400,000 vaccines in a city when the State's only getting 300,000 doses?

Mayor: The number is just too low and we have to fight for the supply we need Nolan. I said this – the day I said it was still in 2020 at that time. I said, we're going to do a million doses in January, but we need federal support, State support, and manufacturer support. Here's the bottom line. New York City has more ability to vaccinate than a lot of other places in the country. It's not a shock. It's obvious, a massive infrastructure here. We're being held back right now by State rules, but we have a huge infrastructure. The federal government, State government, the manufacturers should all together say, okay, if there's a place that could vaccinate a lot more people, get them more supply. Other places in the country it's going slower because they just don't have as much infrastructure. We feel for them. I want to see everyone everywhere, vaccinated for everyone's good. But if we have the ability to keep moving, keep building up, get us as much vaccine as we can use. It's in everyone's interest. I believe President-elect Joe Biden understands this. He has been calling out the fact that the Trump administration has been moving too slow. I believe when he takes over and in just days, he's going to push the entire apparatus to get the vaccine to where it can actually be used. So, we're standing by those numbers. If the vaccine's there, we're going to be able to make it work. Go ahead.

Question: The second piece of it is you were talking about the City's logistical prowess. You promised at various points that there would be a 24/7 vaccination spot in each borough. But days after making that promise and promising that those places would be open in just a few days, your administration's only cited spots in two boroughs. Why hasn't – why wasn't this logistical work done beforehand? And what does it say about the preparations?

Mayor: Okay. Let's go over the logistical prowess of New York City. Our hospitals held when we were the epicenter of this crisis. We then became one of the safest places in the United States of America. We created PPE and ventilators, built them from scratch, created our own lab to process, test results. When we couldn't get enough from the marketplace, we created it. We created the biggest Test and Trace Corps in the country from scratch, ensuring that thousands and thousands of people didn't get infected. We opened the nation's largest school system when the vast majority of cities in this country didn't even dare to open. And our schools are the safest places in New York City. So, I feel very good about the logistical prowess of New York City. We have two mega sites open on Sunday, the Bronx and Brooklyn. The following week, the other three boroughs will have at least one mega site. We're going to keep building that out. But, right now, all of that pales in comparison to the fact that we don't have the right to vaccinate people over 75 or first responders or essential workers. Give us that right, you'll see plenty of logistical capacity played out and people getting the vaccine who need it and want it.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Kristen Dalton from the Staten Island Advance.

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

Mayor: Good. How are you doing?

Question: I'm good. Thank you. I just had a question you know, about the Staten Island location you know, for the mass vaccination hub, mass vaccination site, rather. Two of the hubs that were

already announced, the appointments booked up you know, before we were even able to publish a story about it. So, do you have any idea when you're going to be announcing a Staten Island location for the mass vaccination site? And what is the holdup?

Mayor: We're going to have sites, 24/7 sites, mega sites in every borough next week. We're going to make the announcement in a very, very brief timeframe here, as soon as everything is solidified. And we want people to be able to take advantage of it. But remember, Kristin right now only folks in that 1-A category by State law are allowed to go. Now still, there's a lot of Staten Islanders who would qualify and hopefully a lot of them will take advantage of it. But what we really need is to combine those mega sites, and there will be one in Staten Island in a matter of days, with the authorization to vaccinate seniors over 75, first responders, essential workers. That's when we can really use those mega sites 24/7. And have a huge number of people really served quickly. That's what we aspire to do. But that announcement is coming very shortly. Go ahead.

Question: Sure. And just you know, the hubs that have been announced so far and the sites are all primarily on the North Shore. And I know that you're looking you know, to focus on priority neighborhoods first, but is there any plan to expand maybe to the Mid Island or the South Shore section?

Mayor: Yes, of course. We need sites all over Staten Island all over the five boroughs. So, remember we started this week with about 125 sites. We're going up to around 160 sites by the end of the week. But in the course of January, we're going up to 250 sites. Absolutely Mid Island, South Shore will be included. We want to make vaccination as easy as possible for as many Staten Islanders as possible. But again, right now we're all dressed up with nowhere to go. We have sites that can't be used the way they should be, because we don't have authorization from the State to serve seniors or first responders or essential workers. So, we'll keep putting up the sites all over the city. But we need the right and the freedom to vaccinate.

Moderator: Last question for today, it goes to Dave Colon from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, what's up Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Hey, Dave. How have you been?

Question: Oh, great. I also wanted to talk about the vaccines because you're getting this 24/7 vaccination effort out, which is great. We all love that. But we do need to get people to the vaccination sites. And even though we all love the bus, there was this big NY1 story last month about how health care workers, early morning commute is twice as long on a bus as it was on a subway. So, I'm just wondering when are you, maybe one of your MTA board members you appointed, are going to start asking the Governor to restore overnight subway service so that health care workers can get to vaccination sites, vaccine getters can go get poked in the arm?

Mayor: Dave, that's a really important question. Seriously. I appreciate it because this is a discussion that is worthy. I'll tell you where I'm at. I think the effort to make it possible for people to return to the subways because they believed in the cleanliness and the healthiness of the subways, that late night cleaning has been a real success. This is something where the State and City really were on the same page, worked together. It's been a success. There's more to do.

We're still in the thick of the COVID crisis. I would not end that policy. Now there's a day where obviously in the future, we need to go back to 24-hour service, but not now. We need those, that cleaning regimen in place. What I would say is the 24/7 system works obviously for lots and lots of people in lots of different ways. We're going to have a lot of demand. There's no question in my mind. But I think in the end we got to keep our subways a place that people are comfortable being as part of our recovery. And I would stick with the current plan. It's up to the State, but I would stick with the current plan. Go ahead, Dave.

Question: And then there was one other public transportation thing because you did make a pledge to the people in New York, to a lesser extent the City Press Corps that you'd get around on public transportation for a week, at least? So just curious when it's going to happen, what's the status of that is?

Mayor: Yeah, no, I want to do that and I want to do that quickly. As you can see, there's been a lot going on, but I definitely want to do it. And again, what I said is there's going to be a week where I'm going to put a lot of time in my travels into subways. I'm looking forward to that. And when we do it, we're going to do it very publicly because I want people to have confidence in the subway. So, we'll figure out that date and we'll announce it and welcome you to join us.

Okay. Everybody, look, I'll conclude very simply. Think about the people in your life. Just think about the people in your life. Do you know someone over 75? I bet the vast majority of the answers, of course, yes. Maybe a grandparent, maybe an aunt or uncle, maybe mom or dad. Do you know someone in your life that you love and respect who's over 75? Is there someone you're worried about right now? I am. Almost everyone I know knows someone we're worried about because they're older. And they need our help. The State of New York needs to help them right now. State of New York is not allowing us to vaccinate those folks. It just doesn't make sense. They're the most vulnerable people in New York City. Let's help them. With the freedom to vaccinate we could literally, in a matter of days, reach thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of seniors. And then they would know they're safe. You would know they're safe. There's nothing more important. So, let's get the freedom of vaccination, let's get what we need. Let's get the freedom to vaccinate so we can move forward and fight back the coronavirus once and for all. Thank you, everybody.

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