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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN

John Berman: Joining me now is the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, thank you very much for being with us and taking the time to give us an update on our city. I know New York just reported the deadliest day yet – 800 deaths. New York State had the deadliest day yet, and the country did as well. But you, along with many other public officials now, are seeing some positive signs in the battle against this pandemic. What are you seeing?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: John, we are. And I want to tell you after – you know, it's been a long battle already. It's a long battle ahead, but we do see some progress. We've thought there'd be a lot more patients who would need ventilators. That rate of increase in the number of people who came into a hospital and needed a ventilator, it's really reduced now. The number of people going to the hospital to begin with, we're seeing reduction now. Now, John, look, I want to say this to New Yorkers and anybody who's trying to deal with social distancing and shelter in place, we have to recognize the progress is because people are doing the right thing. New Yorkers are doing the right thing. To the extent we've got something going the right direction, it's because New Yorkers actually follow the guidance and they are helping everyone else make progress. But as much as we all want to get back to normal, as much as we're all feeling like we just want to get outside and socialize again, it's not that time yet. In fact, what this says, John, is the social distancing, the shelter in place is working. We've got to stick to it to make sure we really defeat the coronavirus and to absolutely be careful. It doesn't rebound back on us. So, you know, humanly we're all looking for relief. We're all looking to finally get out from under this, but it's not that time yet. The progress confirms the strategy's working. And people deserve a lot of credit, it's not easy, John, to break all the habits we have, especially as New Yorkers. We are warm, emotional people. We want to be close together. We want to, you know, celebrate things with our friends, our family. No one's been able to do that. But I think people should be really proud of the fact that these very tough efforts that people have gone through actually are starting to yield some progress.

Berman: Let me follow up on a couple of the things you just brought up. Let me talk about ventilators first, because every time we were speaking to you before, you had told us initially that this past Sunday you could get to this past Sunday, but you didn't think you'd get further. Then, it was this Monday or Tuesday, but you didn't think you can get further. Where are you now? How are you set up for ventilators right now?

Mayor: John, for the first time, we've got a little bit of breathing room. I can tell you he can get through this week. We got great help from the federal government and the State government, but also the number of people in need them finally is leveling off a little. Now, we're not out of the

woods. I mean, the other thing, John, to recognize is, you know, we could be seeing a few good days and then we don't know if it doesn't change in the days ahead. But, right now, the breathing room has allowed us to get more ventilators in, have a chance to actually prepare for whatever comes ahead. We can get through this week, for sure, but we're still not clear about what next week may bring. This is an unpredictable virus. We do know that, you know, it's – the one thing we know about it is it's unpredictable and it's ferocious. So, we cannot let our guard down, do not let the pedal off the gas. And anyone else in the country is dealing with this, John, I'd say, do not take this moment of progress as a reason to start relaxing or thinking you don't need things like shelter in place. In fact, to me it's a confirmation, strengthen our effort, because we want to defeat this thing once and for all. It's not going to be overnight, it's going to take a while, but double down – double down, because this is finally some evidence that these strategies can work.

Berman: Mayor, what can you tell us about the number of people dying at home who aren't being admitted to the hospital? Because we understand that number is very high, like 20-times the normal rate. And there is a suspicion that many of these people are dying from coronavirus.

Mayor: Yeah, I don't even think it's a suspicion anymore, John. I think the blunt truth is coronavirus is driving these very tragic deaths. I mean, come on, this is America, this is so sad that we're not talking about, you know, 10 people, 20 people – we're talking about something like 100-200 people per day. I mean, think of what this means for the families, think of the pain they're going through. There's no question that coronaviruses driving it. We never saw anything like this in normal times. We have to acknowledge that and say this is further evidence of just how destructive this disease is. And it's a reminder that, you know, we've got to keep educating people. We've got to keep supporting people. And again, don't take this disease ever lightly because the real death toll, you're right, is even higher than these horrible – I mean, the numbers we're talking about now, we surpassed the number of people who died in the World Trade Center in the last couple of days. I mean, that that would have been unimaginable. A few weeks ago, John, if I had said that to you, I think you would have said there's just no way that could ever happen. And now, somehow, we're at that point we've got to realize just how destructive this is and that's another reason to just keep our guard up.

Berman: Particularly destructive among minority communities. One of the more alarming numbers we've seen – although I have to say not surprising – is that the number of infections is disproportionately high among African-Americans and the number of deaths disproportionately high among African-Americans. What can you do about this?

Mayor: Well, John, it's African-Americans and Latinos. We've put out some data in the last few days and it's very painful to see. This disease, unfortunately, it amplifies the horrible health disparities that already exist and it does very clearly cut by income and by race and the communities that, for a long time, people have not gotten the health care they deserve and need are hitting it by this very, very hard. What can we do about it? I'm going to talk about that later today, because I think there are new approaches we can take to go out more deeply communities to prepare people to navigate this challenge. Now, look, the first thing is to make sure that the folks who do end up being hospitalized – and, obviously, the vast majority of people who need care end up in the hospital – to keep making sure they have the ventilators, the PPEs, the medical personnel. That's still job-one, to save the lives we can save in the hospitals. They're still the

front line. But I think there's more we can do in the neighborhoods to educate and support people. I'm going to put out some of those specific ideas today because we are seeing these disparities. It's documented now and it's unacceptable and we have to fight back.

Berman: In terms of – I don't want to ever use the word normal, but opening up reopening parts of the economy again. What will be the first step in that?

Mayor: Yeah. So, it's crucial to find that wet pathway, John. But here's my first caution – human life comes first, saving lives comes first. You will not have a reopened economy, you won't have normal if your hospitals aren't functioning, if you can't protect health and safety, if governments can't function locally. So, the first thing to do is make sure we do not trip a wire accidentally and cause a resurgence. We saw this in Asia. There's some examples of this, John, where they got a little too optimistic and then the disease reasserted. So, job-one is to really make sure we have entertained this to the maximum extent possible. Then I think the first steps are, you know, reopening the things that are core to our life, starting slowly but surely to create again all the things where people gather. But we're nowhere near that now. And I think the first point would be don't – you know, don't have a false dawn here. You know, don't take your foot off the gas, actually make sure this thing is contained, because they were going to rebuild, you want that strong foundation.

Berman: I'm going to let you go, but I wanted to circle back to the ventilator issue, because this has been one of your areas of major concern. And just laying this out there, at this point, you think you might have enough for good?

Mayor: No, John, absolutely not. And I'm glad you asked that. I'm saying I have enough for this week. Literally, a few days ago we were talking about how many days until we ran out, literally worrying that we were just a few days away from someone coming into a hospital unable to breathe and there was no ventilator for them. No, I'm only saying we can get through this week into next week, but this disease is ferocious and, if it were a human being, I'd say it's a very clever disease and do not underestimate it. So, we're good for this week, but the future is still unknown.

Berman: All right, Mayor Bill de Blasio, we are very appreciative of your continued time. Thanks for being with us this morning and thanks for talking about – you know, for once we get to talk about things may be moving in a positive direction.

Mayor: Amen. Amen.

Berman: Thanks, Mayor.

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