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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE MANHATTAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2020 ANNUAL MEETING**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Jonnel, thank you so much. And thank you for your leadership. I really want to – I've got a lot of thanking to do, I'll be very quick about it. But, Jonnel, thank you for the way you've really put Small Business Services into gear to address this crisis and, you know, what you've done helping thousands of businesses individually, and the passion you bring to it. I just want to thank you for that. And I want to thank everyone at the Manhattan Chamber for everything you're doing to sustain, to support, to energize small businesses through this hell we're going through. I am very happy to be with you because I really honor and appreciate what you're doing to help people in this moment of need and the advocacy you provide for them and the support. But it's also very good to be talking to in the days leading up to the momentous moment where the vaccine arrives in this city, which could be as early as Sunday or Monday. And today, Dr. Chokshi, our Health Commissioner laid out the plan for distributing the vaccine. We're going to do it intensely, quickly.

You're going to see a difference made really in a matter of weeks, because the good news that we also reported today is that the first dose of the vaccine has a substantial impact. The fullest impact is when people have both doses over the course of weeks, but even the first dose is – we're seeing real evidence, our health team is affirming – will really help reduce the spread of infection to anyone who gets it. And thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of people are going to get it just in the few first weeks. So, this is going to really start to change the playing field. There'll be a tough December and a tough January, I'm not going to belittle that, but with a really clear light at the end of the tunnel, and that's so encouraging.

Listen, everyone at the Chamber – Jessica Walker, Michael Kempner, thank you for your leadership. Very much appreciate all you're doing to support the communities of Manhattan and the small businesses. I want to thank everyone who's involved in the Chamber. I know a lot of folks are also involved with BIDs we have been relying on a lot, working with closely. Thank you. I believe on the Zoom is Bob Schwartz from Eneslow. And I have run for office many times, and I've always run on shoes from Eneslow. So, I want to tell you all – they work, if you're ever running for anything. This is my product placement for the day – if you're running, you will run best on Eneslow shoes. But, everyone, the approach which we've taken, just picking up from what Jonnel said, the approach has been to try to figure out any tool that we can bring to bear, whether it was obviously Open Restaurants, Open Streets; what we're doing now with Open Storefronts, which has just begun and I think there's a lot more potential there; obviously, with the Shop Your City campaign, really trying to emphasize it. I'm trying to use the bully pulpit. I want to be very clear about this – I'm trying to be polite, but I'm also trying to be firm with people. Folks, truly, I believe them when they say they love their neighborhood business and their local small business, I'm telling them to do something more than just love it, like, open

up your wallet and not just go online for big national brands or certain websites, but, you know, go and spend your money locally.

Whether you do it in person or online, shop from a local store, keep the money in the community. That's been my message constantly and I'm going to keep that message front and center. And everything that Jonnel is doing and SBS is doing, we're going to keep that front and center. You need much bigger solutions than that, but I do think it's important – there's still a lot of purchasing power in New York City, let's be very blunt. A number of people are hurting, a lot of families will not be able to afford the same holidays they would have. However, this is still a city with over 4 million people in jobs – 4 million-plus jobs in New York City right this minute. A lot of people whose professions and salaries continued unabated – whoops, we lost our camera there – I'm back, hold on – continued unabated, and, you know, there is still a lot of money that can circulate in our communities and reach our small businesses. So, I think there is still a place for moral suasion in this world and sounding that a message really matters.

We're going to keep fighting for the bigger changes, because, obviously, the number-one thing we're fighting for is a stimulus. And I think a stimulus should absolutely involve direct leave for small business. We – I think that's going to be tough to achieve perhaps in the first stimulus, the one that's being debated right now. I think there could be some, but probably limited. I think the bigger question is when President Biden comes into office with a goal of a much more substantial stimulus, how we can all work together to push for a much more real direct relief to small business to tide folks over. That's really, to me, the most promising piece of the equation. But, in the meantime, we'll do anything we can get our hands on to try and help. And, again, I think giving people hope is important and recognizing that in the course of, you know, the next three, four months you're going to see an entirely different situation because of the vaccine.

And I do think we have the prospect of – vaccine, plus a decent stimulus – of a very fast turnaround. So, that's what we're going to be fighting for. I want to thank everyone [inaudible] you guys have been there to help them. And please, if there are specific things you think we can do on a city level – we'll keep fighting on a federal level, we'll keep fighting on a State level, but if there are specific things in our grasp that you think that you – that we can do to help, please let Jonnel know. He and I are talking constantly. We want to be there for you.

And, look, a very strange holiday season, but still a holiday season where we can take stock of the good, and the way New Yorkers have looked out for each other, and all the people who have helped save lives and really all the community people who have stepped forward to save businesses and support them. There's a lot to be proud of. And I keep telling people, you know, this holiday season, change your plans. Don't do gatherings, don't travel, keep it simple, and next year we will be able to go back to all the things we love to do this time of year. Let's just get through one more battle and then it'll be over and we will defeat this thing.

So, everyone, thank you so much. Really appreciate you.

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