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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. I hope you all got to see President Biden's speech last night. Absolutely extraordinary, honest, filled with empathy, and filled with direction for the future. I really appreciate President Biden's leadership because he's giving us clear goals, being honest about the challenges we face, but he's giving us a sense of direction that we didn't have last year so often, and now we're getting, and that's tremendously helpful. And obviously the huge news that the President signed the stimulus, the single biggest shot in the arm for the American people since the New Deal. And this is going to change everything. This is going to make recovery possible. This is the bottom line. Stimulus equals recovery. Now it's here. Tremendous, tremendous moment. We also, here in New York City, we're hearing loud and clear the President's vision of how we move forward, how we speed the process of vaccinating our people, reopening our economy, bringing ourselves forward. I agree entirely with the President that we need to move aggressively. Obviously, what we're missing is the supply. We need the vaccine – supply, supply, supply. I'll keep saying it, but the President put forward an extraordinary goal, and one I agree with – May 1st to open up vaccination to everyone. I think that's exactly the right thing to do. That's going to help us to have, you know, the best approach to vaccination when all adults know that they are eligible. So, we're ready to go, but we need the supply. Now as to what's happened to date, again progress keeps being made, not as much as we could make if we had more supply, but still great, great results. Since the beginning of this process, beginning of the vaccination effort, 2,636,645 vaccinations have been given in New York City. We really look forward to that number jumping up a lot more when we get an even bigger supply.

Now, other news yesterday, I'm not so happy about. The State of New York announced an end of the quarantine requirement for travelers as of April 1st. I don't know if that's the State's idea of an April Fool's joke, but it's absolutely the wrong thing to do. It's reckless. It doesn't help us with our recovery. Look, if you say someone is vaccinated, they can fly, they can visit, of course. But if someone's not vaccinated, what's so hard about following the same process that has been

followed to date. This is what our health care leaders believe makes sense. Go through the normal testing process, and if you need the quarantine, you need the quarantine. That's what keeps us all safe. So, I think that decision by the State is reckless. I think it should be re-evaluated because we're making progress. Let's not undermine it, especially at a time where we're worried about the variants that are out there.

Okay, now I want to turn to a very big, important topic, and I want to talk about what I always talk about, our recovery and our recovery for all of us. A recovery for all of us is not just about economics. It's not just about jobs. It's not just about stimulus. It is about all our communities. It is about creating a better city, not just replacing the status quo of the past. It means a city where everyone is respected and heard. And when it comes to being heard, something remarkable has happened in these last months. And today you're going to hear from the authors of this remarkable effort. Over the last month in this city, nearly a hundred meetings and public hearings have been held as part of our process to reform the NYPD, to reform the relationship between police and community. This is one of the most extraordinary efforts to hear all stakeholders and to hear the voices of the public that I've ever seen. You're going to hear from Commissioner Shea, who believed deeply in this process and participated deeply. You're going to hear from three great leaders, three great community leaders who in their own rights run very important organizations but gave of themselves an immense amount of time and energy to go hear the voices of the people and then take their voices, take their ideas, and craft them into a sprawling reform package, transcended reform package. And this is what we're presenting today, the second part of the reform proposal for the NYPD, more to come in the days ahead. But this is a signature moment and it really is based on an intensive and devoted effort to hear the voices of the people.

Part one of our report came out last week with 36 proposals for police reform. Part two, released today, has 28 more important proposals for making the NYPD more effective, more responsive, more sensitive to communities, for drawing communities and NYPD closer, for changing some things that haven't worked as well, and addressing the inequities of the past, and laying a path forward. Five key themes are at the core of this report and the community leaders who played such an important role, really focused on ensuring these five themes pervaded everything we did.

Number one, decriminalizing poverty, ending that painful reality we've known for so long. What has often been called the school-to-prison pipeline, that reality of folks being born poor, lacking opportunity, finding many, many challenges in life materially, and then on top of it ending up involved in the criminal justice system, magnifying their challenges, magnifying the inequality and unfairness, and limiting their lives' potential. That must be overcome. It's going to be immensely challenging work. It's going to take not just the NYPD, but every part of City government, but we commit ourselves further to that work in this report.

Number two, recognition of historical and modern-day racialized policing in New York City. This gets to the heart of acknowledging history and being committed to overcoming what history has left us and recognizing the structural racism that still exists, systematically undoing it.

Number three, transparency and accountability to the people of New York City. We have found time and time again, more transparency leads to more trust, more accountability leads to more trust, more trust leads to an actual ability of the NYPD and communities to work together for the good of all, to keep everyone safe. In this report with these proposals, we deepen transparency and accountability.

Number four, community representation and partnership. This is what neighborhood policing is all about. But we have more to do, making sure that the NYPD reflects the city in every way, hears the city, works in partnership with the people of the city, the organizations that represent our communities in new and stronger ways. This is the essence of policing that is sustainable and works and is believed in by communities. This principle pervades this report.

Number five, a diverse, resilient, and supported NYPD. This really emphasizes the fact that community buy-in makes all things possible. When people see an NYPD that reflects their community and its composition, that hears their community and makes adjustments and changes based on community concerns, that is resilient in the sense that it grows and moves with the times and new understandings. That becomes NYPD that has the active support of communities. That is how you keep everyone safe.

Let me talk about five specific proposals that you'll see in this report, which is obviously available publicly today. Number one, we're deepening our early intervention efforts to identify officers who have particular problems and challenges that must be addressed. This in some cases means an officer needs retraining. In other cases, it means an officer who, for a period of time, should not be doing duty on our streets, and for whom there needs to be a deeper reevaluation. For some officers that may mean the recognition that perhaps they do not belong on the police force. This is not the majority of our officers by any stretch of the imagination. The vast majority of our officers do their job conscientiously and well. But as in every field, every profession, there are some people who either struggle, or don't belong. Our early intervention efforts will be deepened to identify those who need extra help or need a different approach, and to make sure that their work is not in any way, endangering the people of this city.

Number two, we're calling upon the State of New York to help us to address an outstanding problem. Look, again, let's go to the big picture. The big picture is the vast majority of our officers do their job well, and thank God, there are very few instances in which an officer is found to have done something profoundly wrong that led to the death or lasting serious grievous injury of a New Yorker. But in those very few tragic cases, consequences are crucial. We're calling upon the State of New York to pass a law that allows, in those cases where there has been due process and an officer is found to have inappropriately acted leading to the death or long grievous injury of a New Yorker, that in those cases that officer would not have the ability to enjoy a pension, that we want to make sure the State joins us and can only be achieved by State law. If the State will join us in this effort and pass a law that would allow for the forfeiting of pensions in those instances.

Number three, the promotion process. The NYPD has been doing really extraordinary work in recent years to change the approach to promotion, to make sure the police leadership looks more and more like the people in New York City, to make sure that talented officers have opportunity

and officers that may have some problems or limitations are identified. But we want to formalize that process further. We want it to be more transparent. We want the public to understand it better. How the good work that officers do is weighed, their service record, their accomplishments, their engagement with the community and the value they put as leaders on engaging communities, and hearing and acting on community feedback, and, of course, their full disciplinary record, all of these elements have to be considered. They are considered in a promotion process, but we want to do it more formally, more clearly and transparently going forward.

Number four, important change that we're proposing today to further ensure that the NYPD looks like New York City. And in fact, it is made up more and more of residents of New York City. Look, today's NYPD is a very different police force than even ten or 20 years ago. It is much more representative in its leadership ranks and among rank-and-file, but we need to go further. So, currently we provide a five-point preference for New York City residents in the application process to become an NYPD officer. We will now double that to a 10-point preference, and this will greatly advantage New York City residents who want to serve this city on the NYPD.

Fifth, we're going to be forming a large effort, an intense effort, working with our new Schools Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter and our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, that's leaders of color in all City government agencies. This extraordinary group of leaders is going to work together on a major initiative to end the school-to-prison pipeline, to systematically review all elements of City policy – and this goes far beyond the NYPD – all elements of City policy that might be contributing to – wrongly contributing, inadvertently contributing to that reality, that pipeline, and also all of the available tools we have and that we can call upon the State and federal government to bring to bear, to end the reality of that pipeline once and for all. This is very difficult work. If anyone's thinking right now, that's work that's going to take a lot of effort and a long time, you are right. But we've got to begin now because it must be undone. It must be changed, and we're committed to doing that.

So, that is an overview of some of the key principles in today's report. And some of the proposals that I think are most important for New Yorkers to hear, and I think will make the biggest change in the way we police our city and bring police and community together. I want to turn to the Commissioner with this, I appreciate Commissioner Shea put himself, heart and soul, into the process of listening to New Yorkers about what they were experiencing with their interactions with NYPD, what changes they foresaw, what they thought would work, and he heard them. And he also has recognized a history that must be overcome. He gave a very powerful speech two weeks ago at the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce, talked about the history of the NYPD, not just the noble history, the heroic history, but the troubled history as well and the structural racism that existed in the past and still must be overcome. It was an honest speech, and it reflected his heart and people received it as such. He's further issued a letter today as part of this report that I think speaks powerfully to that recognition and it's historic and important. So, I want to thank the Commissioner for what he's saying. I want to thank him for what he's doing and want to thank him for listening to the people of this city. And with that, I'd like to welcome the Commissioner to speak about this report.

**Police Commissioner Dermot Shea:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, I think all of us, all New Yorkers, know the difficult year that we've had. And when you came out of last spring and June, one of the things that resonated to me many times was, what do we do now and how do we move forward as a city? So, I just briefly want to thank everyone, all New Yorkers, first and foremost, that took part in this process. The Mayor mentioned, we've held close to a hundred meetings. We've had periods where we are soliciting information from New Yorkers on where we are, what works, what doesn't work, and most importantly, how do we move together as one city. So, to all New Yorkers that took part in this process, I say, thank you. I also want to thank the members of the NYPD that behind the scenes were a part of this reform initiative and continue to be, and it has been an immense amount of work. And I will not name you and single you out, but you know who you are, and thank you for your efforts here that are continuing. This reform over the last seven-plus years has been a steady pace, I would say, but this opportunity that presents itself now, I think, is critical and most important. And this reform package is a piece of it, but rest assured it doesn't end here. It's going to continue. And lastly, to three specific people who I will name, Jennifer Jones Austin, Wes Moore, Arva Rice who probably about six months ago, give or take, I reached out to and had a conversation with and asked them to take a chance on the NYPD, to come forward and work with us to be co-sponsors on this initiative. And much of what we worked together, alongside each other, is the fabric of this reform plan that you see now. We heard a lot from New Yorkers across New York City. We heard good, we heard sometimes bad, and, most importantly, we asked the questions and we listened about what do you want? So, to Jennifer, to Wes, to Arva thank you for the work. I think I stayed true to my word when I said, take a chance and come in on the ground floor and have a chance to affect policy. And that work does not end, it continues, but a sincere thank you. So, Mr. Mayor, back to you.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, Commissioner. And I want to just say to our three colleagues – we were talking earlier some of us about the immense amount of time and energy – I don't know if the public could possibly imagine what it's like for folks who do so much work already to try and help other people, and that's the three people you're going to hear from in a moment, but then found, you know, an immense amount of additional time to work on this reform effort and listen patiently and intently to the voices of New Yorkers. It's not easy to balance everything in life, but it was a labor of love, and it's had a huge impact. So, I want to turn to each of them, starting with Jennifer Jones Austin, who we have worked together on so many initiatives, including this very week – earlier this week on the effort to end solitary confinement in the city, through her leadership of the Board of Corrections. Again, I don't know where she finds the time, but I'm very glad she did. This effort, Jennifer, has been extraordinary, and I want to thank you and welcome your comments.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Jennifer. And we've been working together for years and I know you'll be there the whole way through and in the extraordinary work to come. Thank you. I want to turn to Wes Moore, and I want to say, I've gotten to know Wes over recent years through his extraordinary leadership of the Robinhood Foundation. He has done transformative work there, has recognized that if we're going to address issues of poverty and injustice, we have to do things a very different way, and he's challenged everyone to do those things differently and then put real support behind it. And I know this is something he is passionate about, believing that change

can happen and then doing the hard work to make it happen. Wes, we welcome your comments on this report.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Wes. And, Wes, you said many powerful things, but I want to just cling to one that I particularly appreciate – truth is a prerequisite to progress. This report has a lot of straightforward, clear truth in it, and it aims high. I liked what you said also in the beginning, there's a lot of practical, right now, elements, and there's aspirational elements. I'd also say, even if it's going to take tremendous effort, we have to make fundamental change. And I really thank you for the way you framed that and thank you for your extraordinary efforts.

All right. Now, I want to turn to the three – we've had three great leaders in this effort. I want to turn to the third, and she has a long history in the city of fostering economic justice, economic opportunity. One of the things you see in this report is it recognizes the interplay of policing with economic and social factors of how all these issues have to be addressed systematically. And her voice comes through loud and clear in those ideas that are put forward in this report. My pleasure to introduce the CEO of the New York City Urban League Arva Rice.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Arva. And, Arva, I really appreciate and I could tell in our discussions that you really listened with empathy to those voices, including, as you said, in some really painful conversations, but hearing people's pain and turning it into action and turning into progress is noble work. So, thank you so much for your contribution today and everything that will happen in the weeks and months ahead.

Everyone, it's worth looking at this report. It is available now online [nyc.gov/pollicereform](https://nyc.gov/pollicereform). A lot of work – again, a lot of work went into it. It speaks volumes. So, I urge everyone to look at it. If you have comments, again, there's a public comment period open. And we are ready to proceed to put these ideas, these proposals into action. So, I want to be very clear. The things in this report that can be acted on immediately will be acted on by the City of New York and the NYPD. The elements that require State legislation, we'll be working to get done in this legislative session over these next very few months. But this is a sea-change moment and we need everyone involved in making it come to life.

Okay. Just going to go over our daily indicators, as we do in all of our gatherings each morning. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 208 patients. We have a low confirmed positivity rate today, that's good, but, again, there are sometimes daily fluctuations in the data – 37.73 percent. Hospitalization rate, 3.76 per 100,000. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – today's report, 3,039 cases. Number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19 – today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 6.31 percent.

Just going to say a few words in Spanish on the topic of the police reforms.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we turn to our colleagues in the media. And please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

**Moderator:** We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Commissioner Shea, by Jennifer Jones Austin, Arva Rice, Wes Moore, Dr. Chokshi, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Juliet Papa from 1010 WINS.

**Question:** Oh, hi. Good morning, all. My first question goes to Commissioner Shea. Commissioner, you've participated in the town halls for many months and with residents in different neighborhoods for sit-downs, what was your main takeaway from those meetings?

**Commissioner Shea:** Thanks, Juliet. People want to be heard. People had a lot of frustration. This is the main – and, you know, I could go on – you know, I heard, as I said, in my opening statement, we heard good, bad, and everything in between. We heard from people that, you know, are concerned and want more police, but they absolutely want to be policed fairly, and they want to be respected. If – the one statement I would categorize everything as, they wanted to be heard and they had things to say, and we listened, we went out to them. We had people joining via Facebook, and then we had public comment periods that are going to continue with this second report to hear from the public again. So, accountability, Juliet, was when I think that arbiter nailed it there, they know that police have a tough job, but when police make mistakes, there's is absolutely a feeling, particularly in some neighborhoods, that police won't be held accountable. And, you know, I think that's a larger debate, at times I would disagree with it, but you cannot ignore the emotions that are out there, and you also can't ignore that if that many people are saying it, you better look in the mirror and say, what can we do better? And I think that, you know, a lot of elements of this reform plan are reflected in that, you know, we're proud of what we do. We're proud that we've reformed continuously and look across the country to be the best police department in the world and I think we are, but that doesn't mean we're done, and that doesn't mean that was perfect, and that doesn't mean we have haven't made mistakes either. So, you know, they wanted to be heard and the accountability and trust were really key themes that we heard over and over and over again.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead, Juliet.

**Question:** Okay and I guess to follow up on this report, I – you know, we just got it, so I haven't had a chance to look at it thoroughly, but I'd like to know what role does personal accountability and responsibility play in this as far as New Yorkers are concerned, as far as, you know, respecting laws and civility? How was that addressed in this report?

**Mayor:** Oh, I think, Juliet, it pervades this report in every sense because look, everybody has responsibility to each other. If there's one thing we've learned during this COVID crisis is were in this together. So, of course, everyone has to respect the law and everyone has to work as a member of a community. But I think what the report says is folks also want to be treated equally. They want to be treated with respect, and they want to know that if someone in government does something wrong, if a law enforcement officer does something wrong, that they're going to be

held accountable, just like a member of the public would be. And they want to know if they're held accountable, will they be treated the same way for their actions as a civilian depending on the color of their skin, will they see the same result as someone of a different color or someone from a different neighborhood? This is really about respect and fairness. I think that is strong and clear throughout this report. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next, the next is Andrew Siff from WNBC.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor. Good morning. Good morning to everyone on the call. Mayor within the last few minutes several members of the New York Congressional delegation, including Congressman Nadler have called on the Governor to resign. You have not used that word this week, are you prepared to do so this morning? And if so, doesn't that deprive the Governor of due process under the law?

**Mayor:** No, Andrew, the Governor has been depriving the people of the truth. The Governor and his team have been trying to cover up the truth. I mean, we've gotten report after report of purposeful efforts to cover up the facts that the public deserves. We saw it with the nursing homes. We saw it with the Tappan Zee Bridge. We're now seeing it with horrendous efforts by staffers to silence women who are trying to speak their truth, and do you think for a moment they were just making that up? I suspect they'd gotten an instruction to do so. So, look, unfortunately, what we're seeing here is a pattern of cover up and a pattern of lies. It is unacceptable. The Governor must resign. He can no longer do the job. Go ahead, Andrew.

**Question:** On the subject of vaccines, based on the president's instruction from last night, that all American adults be eligible by May 1st, which seems to move the timeline up. You'll recall I asked about this earlier in the week. How do you make that happen in terms of supply versus eligibility? And could it even happen before May 1st?

**Mayor:** Look when you asked, I think it was you, Andrew, asked the question what our health care team and I responded was we thought that open eligibility would be May or June. So, it's really, thankfully not that different. I'd say I think May 1st is a great time to open it up. I think the president's right. It will make things on one level simpler because everyone will know they're eligible and of course the State was holding us back from being able to vaccinate anyone at any site, that's been overcome now, thank God, but another example of why we need local control. But the bottom line here is, if we have the supply, we keep moving forward, and if on May 1st we're able to vaccinate everyone, we'll make it work. We're ready to do that right now, but we need the supply. We cannot reach our potential if we don't get a hell of a lot more supply. Again, every week we're short about 150,000 to 200,000 doses. We need that addressed. We need the state to give us our fair share. We need the federal government and the manufacturers to speed the distribution, and then we can absolutely get the job done.

**Moderator:** The next is James Ford from PIX-11.

**Question:** Hey, good morning. Happy Friday.

**Mayor:** Happy Friday, James. How are you?

**Question:** Not bad. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor, and hello to everyone on the call. You would call the Governor's suspension of the quarantine order a possible April fool's joke, if I got that right? That it could be harmful to New York City residents and needs to be reconsidered. Will you just elaborate on why it could be harmful to the residents of the city and how you want it to be reconsidered or do you actually want it to be fully reversed, even though it seems like a done deal?

**Mayor:** I don't think anything in Albany is a done deal right now. I think a lot of things are changing rapidly in Albany and anything could be reversed that was done wrong. I'm going to turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. I mean, we were all surprised, in fact, shocked when we heard this. It makes no sense to relax such a fundamental standard when we're still fighting this war and we got the variants on top of that. So, let me have the doctors do the talking, Dr. Varma?

**Senior Advisor Jay Varma:** Sure. Thank you very much for the question. You know, we feel really strongly that, you know, we need every weapon on our side to fight back against the coronavirus. As we keep reporting, the virus is using evolution on its side to develop new variants, new ways to be more infectious. So, we need all of the tools that we have available to us, and one of the tools that we know work is testing and tracing, and the reason these quarantine rules are beneficial to us is that they serve as a really critical reminder to people who are traveling to other places around the country, around the world, that they need to be tested before they get on a plane. They need to be tested after they get off that plane and are at home and they need to stay isolated until they're confirmed that they haven't acquired COVID during that time. Throughout this epidemic, we've seen the travel associated cases have represented anywhere from five to ten percent of all of the cases that we see here in New York City. That may not seem like a lot, but as we know with this disease, even one case can lead to an outbreak and spread. So, we need really everything on our side at this point as we continue in this sort of tense fight that we have right now with the virus.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Dr. Chokshi?

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Yes, sir. Thank you. I will just add briefly that the reason that it's particularly important, you know, to maintain travel quarantine, we just have to look around the world and around the country to see the cases, you know, do continue to be a problem in other jurisdictions as well. You know, there are major COVID-19 outbreaks occurring in parts of Europe, in parts of South America, and there are, you know, greater proportions of certain variants seen in other parts of the United States, as well as around the world as well. So, this has been a critical tool in our fight, as Dr. Varma has mentioned, and now is just the time for us to be recommitting and redoubling our efforts when that the idea that we could turn the corner on the pandemic is finally in our sight.

**Mayor:** Amen. Go ahead, James.

**Question:** Thanks very much. The State Assembly Speaker has now begun this process that could lead to Governor Cuomo's impeachment. Look, you've made it clear how you feel about the need for the Governor to resign. How do you feel about possible impeachment, please?

**Mayor:** James, look, the Governor should do the right thing and recognize that he just can't do the job any longer. He's lost the faith of his fellow leaders around the State and I think he's increasingly losing the faith of the people, and unfortunately this is because of his own actions and the actions that he directed his team to do. But if he tries to persist in the role, then the impeachment process I believe we'll resolve it that way. In the meantime, the work of government's going to keep going forward. You know, we are here every single day doing our work. The State Legislature is doing its work very effectively on a host of issues. We're going to keep moving forward no matter what. But I think he should do something that's decent after these many, many indecent revelations and simply resign.

**Moderator:** The next is Emily from NY 1.

**Question:** Good morning, Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Shea. A question on the residency requirements or lack thereof for the NYPD. What precludes the city from requiring that all new hires being New York City residents now?

**Mayor:** So, Emily, that is a matter of State law, in addition to policy matters, remember something like that has to be dealt with on a bigger level. We have to be clear about the fact that over the years there's been more and more recognition that for working people, including so many of our public servants, it's very hard to afford this city, and that's a fundamental challenge. But a way that we can address our desire to have more and more New York City residents on the police force, a way we can do it productively and immediately, is to double the points given for preference for New York City residents. That's something that's going to be a big difference maker and I'll bring more and more city residents onto the force. Go ahead, Emily.

**Question:** In addition to the very need for more supply when it comes to the COVID vaccine, what else does the city need to carry out President Biden's edict, for lack of a better word, that that all adults have access beginning in May.

**Mayor:** That's really it. It's the supply, Emily. We've got the locations, in fact, we're adding more locations, we've got the vaccinators, we're building up our Vaccine for All Corps. We're ready right now to be doing over a half a million vaccines a week. I think that number is going to climb higher. I think when we get the full supply we deserve. We're going to go well beyond a half million vaccinations a week. Just one thing missing, supply, supply, supply, we get the supply, we'll be able to handle it even with every adult being eligible.

**Moderator:** The next is Allan Villafaña from Telemundo.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. de Blasio, how are you?

**Mayor:** I'm doing well. How are you?

**Question:** Very good. Thank you so much. Well, last night President Biden said that every American must help to put and to this pandemic. Last week a Doctor Fauci said that the new corona variant [inaudible] in the Washington Heights area. Do you have a message here for the residents in this area, especially Latinos?

**Mayor:** My message is that we are all in this together. We do all need to participate in defeating the virus. The president spoke passionately and earnestly. Every single one of us has to keep doing the smart things, not one but two masks whenever possible, and the social distancing, and realizing not to let our guard down. But we also, it's our obligation as the city to ensure that vaccination and testing is provided with special emphasis in the communities hardest hit by COVID like Washington Heights. And so, we will be expanding vaccination efforts in Washington Heights as part of what we're going to do in the weeks ahead as we get more supply of the vaccine. Dr. Chokshi, if you want to add, feel free.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Thank you, sir. I'll just add briefly. You know, we know that Latino New Yorkers in many ways have born so much suffering and the brunt of this pandemic over the last few months. And so, the message that I would add to the Mayors is that this is such an important time for us to ensure that we take all of the public health precautions that we know work, masking, distancing, hand washing, staying home when you're ill, getting tested and getting vaccinated when it's your turn. This is our chance, you know, particularly for those communities Washington Heights, but more broadly, you know, across all of New York City for us to take matters into our own hands so that we can finally recover and get back to a semblance of a normal life.

**Mayor:** Amen. Go ahead.

**Question:** Do you have a plan for when and where there will be new vaccination centers when more vaccines have reached the city?

**Mayor:** Yes.

**Question:** Is there a plan ready?

**Mayor:** Well, the way we are doing it is continuing to add sites as we're getting more and more vaccine. We're looking for any place where there may be a greater need in terms of the geography. So, Washington Heights and Inwood, for example, I'll let Dr. Chokshi speak to this, but we literally had a conference call the other day, and one of the places we were talking about is Washington Heights and Inwood as an area where we need additional locations. But the good news is we found it. We can put a location together very quickly now. The Department of Health and Health + Hospitals have gotten very expert at doing this. We have the staffing. We know how to do it. So, when we see an area that needs more intensive vaccination effort, we will add additional locations as we get supply. Dr. Chokshi, do you want to speak to specifically Washington Heights and Inwood?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, sir. Thank you so much. Yes, Washington Heights and Inwood is an area that we're very actively looking at with respect to, you know, city runs sites that will

supplement some of the infrastructure that's already there, particularly pharmacies and community clinics that are already vaccinating in that area. So, stay tuned for more about, you know, when and exactly where those sites will be. But it will be part of a broader strategy, you know, just in the last week, we've also opened up sites in Co-Op City in the Bronx, as well as in Bedford-Stuyvesant to serve the local populations there as well. We're going to continue doing more of this with respect to city sites, but also partnering with those community health centers, independent pharmacies, and the other places that we know people already trust in their neighborhoods.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

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

**Question:** Hey there, Mr. Mayor. Good morning.

**Mayor:** Morning, Michael. How you been?

**Question:** I'm doing all right. I'm doing all right. So, I want to ask you about questions about the police reform package you're talking about today. I was wondering if you could drill down a bit into, you know, what the report says about the decriminalizing poverty, you know what I mean? This is something we've known about for a long time that, you know, in poor neighborhoods you have higher incarceration rates. I mean, so how do you change that? I – you know, what policies, you know, mentioned policies that you're going to look at to possibly change the – can you talk about some of the policies, perhaps the City's already identified, that you're looking at a changing at this point?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'll start. I'd like to bring Jennifer Jones Austin, and Arva Rice into this because they have committed so much of their life and work to this fundamental question. But Michael, I'd say is this, some of what we've been doing over these last seven years is a foundation. If you get kids a better education from their earliest years, like pre-K and 3-K, that's part of breaking this cycle. If you get families affordable housing, that's part of breaking this cycle. If you create opportunities for higher wages and better benefits, like guaranteed health care like we have in this city now, that's part of breaking the cycle. When, in my view, if you're going to break the school to prison pipeline or the criminalization of poverty, you have to begin by just concentrating everything you've got at ending poverty to begin with. I think another piece of it is the path we've been on with constantly reducing arrest, reducing summonses, reducing incarceration, and obviously even before that reducing stop and frisk.

So, the direction has to be deepened all the time and I think the next steps, a lot of it revolves around our schools, our Schools Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter is passionate on this topic about the role that education can play in breaking the cycle of poverty. Our taskforce on racial inclusion equity is ready to look at every agency's practices to see how we can both address poverty and also be more responsive if anyone is involved in the criminal justice system and that's one of the things, and I'll turn to Jennifer and Arva because this is one of the key points, god forbid someone does have involved with the criminal justice system. What happens next is often the game changer. We made a decision years ago, that folks who were in our city jails

should not just at the end of their time in jail shouldn't just be sent out with no support, they should get while in jail, training, and education, we greatly expanded at compared to what the previous administration had did. We added counseling and support for future planning for folks what they're going to do after incarceration. And we added a transitional job element, so that anyone who came out of incarceration had a job and was able to therefore advance themselves looking for their next permanent job. These are kinds of things that help to break that cycle, but let me let the experts speak, Jennifer and Arva. Jennifer first.

**Chief Executive Officer Jennifer Jones Austin, Federation of Protestant Welfare**

**Agencies:** Thank you. I greatly appreciate this question because it centers on the crux of the matter. You know, we have in our, in our society at large, and not just speaking about New York City, but across the nation, so many individuals who have been involved one way or another with the system. We have young persons who grew up in in poverty became homeless, became known to the foster care system, and then find themselves incarcerated. We have people who have mental health challenges that become involved with the justice system. And very often it's because the systems that are there to support them have not really been set up and structured and supported in a way that can really help meet their needs. I lead an organization FPWA, that works with better than 200 nonprofit human service and faith-based organizations across the City of New York. And just a few years ago, I [inaudible] leaders of these organizations. And I asked them how many of you have worked with you know, like worked to address justice involvement and justice issues. And very few leaders raised their hands, but then when I presented them with the data that shows how great is the correlation between poverty and race and justice involvement in the communities in which they work, they begin to think about it and appreciated that many of the individuals and the families with whom they work are justice involved. Either directly as persons who have gone through the justice system or as parents of persons who've been justice involved, partners or persons who are justice involved, children of people who've been justice involved. And the harms that attend and keep people from getting ahead, they persist. When a child is a child of an incarcerated parent, that child experiences trauma on an everyday basis that across our society goes unaddressed. And so, what we're seeking to do is to break that cycle by centering on what more can be done by the community-based organizations, faith-based institutions that are working with these individuals and their families? What more can be done to make sure that the resources are there to prevent this from happening generation after generation after generation? And then additionally, centering on actual policing practices that you know, perhaps unintentionally really disadvantage and put poor people in the eye of the police as persons that, you know, have to be policed for you know, like disproportionately and for unnecessary reasons. We're going to look at and then bring it into the disparities that persist in everything from how communities are policed, to what happens with summonses, warnings, arrest rate for similar or the same offenses, or you know, not offenses, but what appear to be. So, it has to be comprehensive. We've got to engage agency by agency. And realize it's not honestly just a policing issue. To end this practice we have to look as a city, at all of the systems and how they bring about or perpetuate this cycle of criminalizing poverty.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Arva. Would you like to add?

**President and CEO Arva Rice, New York Urban League:** Yes, Jennifer, my dear friend and colleague has spoken to this issue wonderfully and well as she always does. So, I'm just going to

add one brief statistic to the comments that she's made. And that is that in the New York Urban League State of Black New York report, which we recently released, one of the statistics that really sobered me was the fact that African Americans and Latinos make up 17 percent of the population of New York State, where we make up 92 percent of the population of our prison system. And so, as long as we have those numbers, those stats there that are in place, all the things that Jennifer just spoke about in terms of criminalizing our young people, we're not sitting in the basements of suburban houses doing whatever it is that we do. We're standing out on street corners. And as a result, we are constantly interacting with the police and it leads to negative results. And so this work is so important in order that we stop criminalizing poverty and that we can change those statistics.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much. Go ahead, Michael.

**Question:** That's it. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more for today. The next is Caroline from Gothamist.

**Question:** Hi, thank you. Thank you so much. So, first of all, I have a question related to police accountability. The NYPD disciplinary database that was released a few days ago has some serious gaps in it. It focuses mainly on cases in which an officer was found or pled guilty to department charges. And excludes pending cases, and you know, charges brought before 2014, cases in which an officer wasn't disciplined. So, I'm wondering is the City going to fill in these gaps? And why is this information being left out?

**Mayor:** Caroline, absolutely more is coming. It's a big release. There are legalities, excuse me, that have to be followed in terms of, for example, redacting names of complainants. But the release is going to continue over the coming days. We want to keep going back farther in time. We're going to be releasing information about substantiated cases involving all active duty officers going back to the beginning of their service. So, this is just the beginning of what will be a larger release. Go ahead.

**Question:** Thank you. I also was interested in the fact that you know, talking about these recommendations and the report that's coming out, you were saying that there's a focus on acknowledging mistakes of the past. I'm wondering if you're willing to right now acknowledge some of the mistakes that people have called attention to in policing protests for race racial justice last spring and summer? There was an investigation into human rights violations in one of the protests. People have called out kettling and other tactics, the use of the SRG. You know, we're about to go into another warm season. We're going to see a resurgence of protests. So, I'm wondering if you can acknowledge the mistakes of the past and talk about how protest policing will be different this summer?

**Mayor:** Oh, absolutely. Caroline, it's going to be very different. I spoke very personally about the mistakes made and I took responsibility for my role as leader, need to do better. I think the Department of Investigation report was very fair and identified a series of areas where I have to

do better, the department has to do better. And we are doing that right now. We've been implementing those recommendations aggressively. We agree with them. Kettling, for example, it's something that never should have happened. Never should happen again, period. And we've been very clear over the last few months that that is not an acceptable approach, will not happen in the future. So, I think we learned some very powerful and painful lessons from last year. And I think the work will be very different. Policing will be very different. You're seeing it already in demonstrations around the city. We have a real focus on our Community Affairs officers being the focal point of how NYPD handles protests, much more limited role, if any role for SRG. And I think the work of reform that has been going on since last summer, the local level, at the State level, at the national level is being felt. And people see a response to the many, many strong, peaceful protests out there calling for change. They see an honest response and today's report is that, exactly that. It is part of that honest response. And I think people recognize when their government is listening and acting. And it does change, you know, the way folks approach things, if they feel they're being heard. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Last question from today goes to Henry from Bloomberg.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, how are you doing this Friday morning?

**Mayor:** It's Friday morning. Happy Friday, Henry. It's been a very long week, but here in New York City, we keep moving forward, my friend. How are you doing?

**Question:** Doing good. It's the weekend, watch a little baseball. Can't get better than that.

**Mayor:** Amen.

**Question:** But let me ask you a couple of difficult questions, if you will. It's not going to come as any surprise to you, but we have a story out about the inequities in delivering vaccine. If you're on the Upper East Side, you've got a great chance. If you're in Harlem, not so much. This, you know. But in our reporting, we found many people in communities of color or heavily immigrant communities where residents or Council members or Assembly members, people who have deep ties in the community say the City is invisible despite your efforts. They don't see anything in multi-languages. They don't think they're not seeing leafleting. They're not seeing these canvassers that you're talking about. And they all point to this invisibility as part of the problem in getting more participation in these neighborhoods. What do you say to them?

**Mayor:** I always listen, Henry. I'll say something, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi as well. I always listen to critiques and if people say we're not seeing enough outreach, then we have to do more outreach. I'm not even going to contest. I'm not going to tell someone that they saw – you know, they saw something they didn't see, right? But I would say to you, the numbers are speaking for themselves. Over 2.6 million of vaccinations as of today. The fact is we do see steady progress in reducing inequity. We are seeing that all over the city. The places where we are setting up additional sites, focusing on communities of color and immigrant communities, those appointments are being filled nonstop. There's no lack of people who want the appointments, they are filling up and it's creating more equity. Certainly, the door-to-door efforts have helped immensely, signing up people, particularly seniors, right there at the door. I've been to the sites.

So, I've seen two of my own eyes. I saw what I saw in Red Hook at Red Hook Houses. I saw what I saw in Nostrand Houses in Southern Brooklyn. I saw what I saw at Co-Op City. It's obviously happening. But if we need to do more outreach, we simply will in as many languages as it takes. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Thank you, sir. And I'll start just with a brief recap of the outreach efforts that we have done acknowledging that much work remains and we remain so committed to our equity goals in the vaccination campaign. But on any given day, we have about 300 canvassers out doing door-knocking and getting the word out about vaccination. We've had over 1,250 events since the beginning of our Vaccine For All campaign, town halls, small gatherings with neighborhood organizations and with elected officials as well. We've now knocked on thousands of doors thus far. We've passed out hundreds of thousands of leaflets really targeting both our task force neighborhoods as well as seniors. And we've made millions of phone calls you know, to people also targeting those same demographics. Particularly with seniors as the Mayor has mentioned, we really focused on our NYCHA houses, as well as the naturally occurring retirement communities in partnership with the Department for the Aging. So, these are some of the efforts that are underway. We aim for this to continue to grow, particularly as supply increases because we want to reach into every corner, every neighborhood because we believe so urgently, that getting people vaccinated will save lives.

**Mayor:** Amen. Go ahead, Henry.

**Question:** I don't want to dwell on this too much, but the numbers do speak for themselves. You've got a 41 percent rate of participation on the Upper East Side. It's about 11 percent in Central Harlem. So, I don't doubt the sincerity and the vigor with which you are approaching this thing, but as of March 9th, those are the numbers. And it would appear from those numbers that even more has to be done, as you say. But let me go on to another question about the issue of the day.

**Mayor:** Henry, let me hold you up a second. I've got to say, I know your comment was sincere and I'm going to certainly recognize your next question. But I just have to say, really respecting you are very thorough and concerned, but I'm going to say, please be objective. There is a intensive difference in many communities on, at this point, still trust levels and hesitancy levels. I think we've made real progress, but no one's saying that gap has been closed. So, it is not just about where the sites are. The sites that the City has set up are overwhelmingly in communities of color, in those 33 communities where the need and the danger is greatest. So, the physical reality is the sites are there. The people hired to do the vaccinating come from the communities. That's crucial. The outreach efforts are multiple language, there's door to door, all of that needs more. But let's also be clear that we see real differences between communities demographically, and I'd say possibly the single biggest indicator has been income, of who's ready, willing, and able to take the vaccine versus who still is hesitating. That's been true up until recently. I think it's starting to change. But we – you look at those composite figures, you can't leave that piece out of the equation. All right. With that said, go on to your second question.

**Question:** Well, I need to follow up what you just said because I agree completely with it. The data shows it, we've poured over the data. If you have a car, if you've got more income, more

mobility, all of those things, all of those things are true, but yet I don't think it's fair to these people, these immigrants and these poor people or minority people to say it's all about distrust and you know, confusion –

**Mayor:** Henry, move to your next question because I did not say confusion. It's people's choices, choices, brother. People are making choices and respect the fact that some people are ready and some are not. And our job is to educate and make the vaccine available. And that's what we're doing. But look, what we 100 percent agree on is a hell of a lot more to do. And the thing that will help us the most is supply, honestly. So, we can create a lot more momentum.

**Question:** But I need to push back in this respect, which is that a lot of these people in the community, when they hear you talk this way, they think that what you're blaming them for not participating. And they're saying, no, there are institutional or structural problems with the delivery of this vaccine or the outreach, that's not reaching these people. That it's not just hesitation.

**Mayor:** Henry, in the interest of time, I know you have another question. I have immense respect for the communities we're serving. And this is why we are doing a huge outreach effort, multiple languages, why we're putting the vaccination centers where we are. And people are making their own choices and we have to keep doing better and we will. Absolute and total respect. And no, I'm not in the least suggesting there's something wrong with someone who is hesitant. We're going to overcome it, but we need the supply to do it. Go ahead, Henry asked your second.

**Question:** All right. The second question is really, you know, it's about these plans for the police and the findings of this report. And really one of the things that got you elected in the first place, and that set you apart from the other candidates in 2013, is that you recognized these problems in the police department in 2013. And now it's 2021, and believe me, I realized the difficulty and the complexity of dealing with these problems. But it's now 2021 and what in this report really is new, or couldn't have been written in 2013, or particularly after Mr. Garner died in 2014?

**Mayor:** Look, the bottom line is there are a host of changes that come from everything that we all have learned as a city over these last seven years. The – if you said, you know, go back over decades and say there's unfairness and disparity, absolutely right. That's what I talked about when I talked about a tale of two cities. But what we've learned over time is the depth of it, what we've learned over time is the ways that we have to address it. Some of which we didn't understand as well, I certainly didn't understand as well. And it's important that by bringing in the voices of community, by bringing the voices of folks who have devoted their lives to fighting poverty and injustice, more and more solutions have become clear. And I would say, and I would say both from what I've tried to do with our administration here at City Hall, also what Commissioner Shea and his predecessors have tried to do. There was a through line here from ending stop-and-frisk, instituting neighborhood policing, retraining the entire police force in de-escalation, then implicit bias training, body cameras on all our officers, reducing arrests, reducing summons, reducing incarceration. There's been a very clear through line. But we also learned how much more we had to do. So, I think these new plans are going to create a lot more transparency. They're going to ensure that if God forbid, there is something that goes wrong, the

consequences are clearer. They're going to ensure that both, if an officer has a problem it's addressed, but also officers who do engage communities energetically and effectively are seen and rewarded in terms of promotion. The fact that we're going to have another tool now to increase the number of New York City residents in the police force, which is good for all of us. The fact that we're going at the issue of poverty and decriminalization of poverty head on. This has been something we've learned year by year, that we have to go deeper and deeper to the root causes. And we have to be blunt and honest about the history of structural racism. And by putting it out there, start to change it. So, there's a lot of powerful material in this report. And I'll end on that.

Everyone, please take a look at this. It's an extraordinary work, go to [nyc.gov/policereform](https://nyc.gov/policereform). And recognize this, it's a transformative moment. We don't get these every day in history. It's a time where people are asking the right questions and are open to entirely different solutions. We need to fully engage this moment. We can do extraordinary things. We are the generation that gets to make these changes in these reforms. And this report shows so much that will really, really help to improve the relationship between police and community help to create justice, help to make us all safer. And that's the work we'll be doing in the days and weeks and months ahead. That's what a recovery for all of us looks like. Thank you, everyone.

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