

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** August 19, 2020, 10:00 AM

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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, good morning, everybody. New Yorkers have been nothing short of heroic in fighting back against the coronavirus. In fact, when you think about what you have done in the last few months, people all over this country look at and they honestly are amazed, and I think it is a statement on the ability of this city, the ability of the people, the city to do extraordinary things. Now we have so many challenges that this crisis has brought forward, but that same spirit of doing what others may see as impossible or very, very challenging, we New Yorkers take on challenges all the time and we overcome them. So I want to talk to you today about the challenge we're seeing and it's been made so stark by the coronavirus. The challenge of disparity, the challenge of income inequality, it has come up so sharply in the course of these last few months, but it's something we've been grappling with for a long time, and this needs to be a moment when we resolve to make more fundamental changes. The coronavirus itself and the economic crisis that's come with, it has hit so hard in communities of color. It's hit immigrants so hard. It's hit small businesses so hard. We have so much work to do to create something better and fairer, and that's what we're going to do. We are committed to a just and fair recovery. So today in a moment, we're going to talk about a very important piece of that recovery, a very important piece of an effort to do things differently, and it is exciting because it has to do with a brand new approach to supporting businesses in the Black community and providing the support they need to really come back stronger than ever.

So we're going to go over that in just a moment, but first I need to give you an update about the situation, a couple of neighborhoods in Brooklyn, and this goes back to everything that we are doing with the Test and Trace Corps, everything we're doing when we identify a problem, how we address it rapidly, another thing that New York City is doing on a level unlike any other city in America, we now have the capacity through Test and Trace, when we see a problem to address it fast and with a lot of energy, a lot of personnel, a lot of impact. So last week I alerted everyone to the situation in Sunset Park. I was out in Sunset Park, Brooklyn yesterday [inaudible] Tuesday, and I was out there with a lot of volunteers. Some of whom you see here reaching out to people, telling them how important it is to get tested. And this outreach effort has been going on for a while, but intensely over the last week. Now what the Health Department saw in the last week or more was an uptick in the number of COVID-19 cases. The outreach effort meant to get ahead of that, to instantly ensure that more and more people got tested, that we found where there were specific problems and address them, obviously, by making sure people safely separated and the situation was contained. The increased testing gave us more information, more data to work with, more contacts to follow up on.

What we know so far, thank God, limited community spread and not a cluster situation in a Sunset Park, and we'll talk more about that – I also want to mention a situation in Borough Park, Brooklyn, that we're focused on as well, because we've seen an uptick in just in the last few days and particularly a group of 16 cases that came out recently that we see as an early warning sign. Again, we want to be always acting out of an abundance of caution, and we saw this in the Sunset Park situation by assuming there might be a problem getting in there fast with a lot of energy, a lot of personnel, it makes a lot of difference. So we're taking the same approach with Borough Park. Some of these 16 cases are linked to a recent wedding, a large wedding, in fact in the community. So, we are working immediately to galvanize community leaders, to work with Test and Trace Corps, had a good call last night with a group of community leaders from Borough Park. They certainly understand the urgency of situation. We want to get the message out that people need to be tested, that people need to wear face coverings, that we need to avoid those large gatherings that can cause a bigger problem. We're also mobilizing a large response, mask distribution to houses of worship, engaging community organizations, whatever it's going to take, helping people understand that if they do test positive, they can safely separate and get a lot of support to do it. And anyone who's concerned that if they test positive, what's going to happen next, we want them to know that there'll be a lot of support for them to get through what really is in the end, a brief period of separation, and we're going to have community members and community organizations that are going to play a big part in that.

So, again, overall New York City is doing so well and you'll hear today's indicators are pretty extraordinary as an evidence of what all of you have achieved, but we've got to stay vigilant about the basics, the social distancing, the face coverings, obviously avoiding large gatherings. This is really important that we take seriously that reality because that will help us stop the spread of this disease. Now I want you to get an update on all of these kinds of outreach efforts because they're so crucial to our success and I want you to hear from the Chief Equity Officer of Test and Trace, she was with me in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, yesterday and did a great job engaging residents directly. I want introduce to you again, Annabel Palma.

**Chief Equity Officer Annabel Palma, Test and Trace Corps:** Thanks Mr. Mayor and I'm here to share that our massive efforts to connect to the Sunset Park community and to New Yorkers as a whole continues. We have knocked on over 9,000 doors, made live and robo-calls, we've handed out PPE, we have we have handed out flyers, connected to community residents, and we will continue to do all in our power to deliver the resources necessary to the Sunset Park community to fight against COVID-19. We've extended our rapid testing, deployed our mobile units, had success getting people tested in Sunset Park, and this has proven to be great progress between our point of care and mobile testing. We have tested over 6,500 New Yorkers to date with this effort, and over 1,700 New Yorkers are from Sunset Park. We started to see that effort pay off. Most recent data shows the percentage in positivity in the 11220 zip code stands today at 4.2 percent. This means our efforts are working. We are finding positive cases, monitoring them, and asking them and helping them to safely separate. Together we can prevent a second wave of COVID-19 in New York City.

This administration has a strong and committed responsibility to keep New Yorkers safe, but we cannot do it without you. We need your help. Please get tested. We have come far – too far to go through what we went through in the beginning of this pandemic, we owe it to our loved ones,

we owe to our communities, we especially owe it to our first responders who were crucial in getting us through the most difficult times. And it seems that it was long ago that our hospitals were busting at the scenes with, with patients coming in with COVID-19, and I'm not trying to sound any alarms, as you heard the Mayor, we are doing great, but we need to continue to work together. It is up to us to make sure that we don't let our guards down. We need New Yorkers to continue to get testing. We, you know, we cannot stress enough the importance of face covering, of wearing a mask. This will continue to save lives. We know it's hot out there. We know it's uncomfortable, but again, it is so necessary to make sure we keep ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities protected. COVID-19 is still real and it's a real threat. We want to let Sunset Park know you've been doing a great job at coming to our sites are getting tested and we encourage you to continue to make sure to tell your loved ones, your neighbors, to where our mobile sites are, where our testing sites are, and for them to continue to get the testing.

[Chief Equity Officer Palma speaks in Spanish]

Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Annabel and what I saw with Annabel directly and other members of the Test and Trace Team was really intensely engaging people and folks have a lot of questions and it was really important for people to hear, hey, testing is quick, it's easy, it's free. There was a wonderful testing tent right there in the middle of the park itself, in the middle of Sunset Park, and a great team out there, you know, right in the middle of the community where people normally go, they created a testing center there to make it easy for people, and we're going to be doing a lot more of that. So thank you to you and everyone at Test and Trace.

Okay, I'm going to go back where I started that again, this is not just a health care crisis. It's an economic crisis. It's a disparity crisis. And we are dealing with challenges that we haven't seen literally since the Great Depression in this country or this city, but the disparities are now being talked about rightfully in the bluntest possible terms and this fight against income inequality, this has been exactly what this administration has been focused on for the last seven years, but when it comes to the Black community, listen to this fact, it is a deeply troubling one, first of all, in this epidemic Black businesses, twice as likely to close for good as white businesses. But you also have to think about the racial wealth gap at its foundation, and listen to this fact, here in a city that's about – has about 22 percent African American population. So, about 22 percent of all New Yorkers are people of African descent, but only two percent of New York City businesses are owned by members of the Black community. Something's wrong with that picture to say the least. We need to do things differently. And our Department of Small Business Services is leading the way and they've put together a roadmap to help advance Black entrepreneurship in New York City. This is something that you don't just say, okay, the private sector is going to take care of this. No, the public sector needs to get involved to do the most we can to help Black businesses move forward, especially with the challenges going on now. So, Small Business Services launched Black Entrepreneurship NYC last year. The simplification of that phrase is BE NYC – 1,500 Black business owners and community leaders and academic leaders came together to put together a vision of what would actually work on the ground for community businesses. And the idea is to do something profound, to start to close the racial wealth gap. Now, what do we do?

Well, we know there's three big areas of concern that came out of this process, obviously, access to capital and trying to right the wrongs of the past where that capital was not available to Black entrepreneurs. Marketing, helping businesses, smaller and bigger, to have more access to the digital marketplace and more connection to new sources of revenue like government contracts that obviously connects to everything we've been doing with the M/WBE program of the city, minority and women-owned businesses. And then mentoring, getting folks who have been successful and have great networks to share that success, share those networks with up and coming businesses. So, the BE NYC partners have come together with a number of leading New York City businesses to do this work. I want to mention a few and thank them in the process. Ernst & Young will be providing free one-on-one consulting to businesses to work on their business plans. Goldman Sachs will be providing access to affordable financing. Mastercard will help business owners to set up virtual storefronts. Major, major firms committing to this effort in a tangible way. And very importantly, a new BE NYC accelerator at the Brooklyn Navy Yard – a \$3 million effort to provide the space and the support and the knowhow to help these businesses to move forward rapidly in one location where all that help is there to energize the efforts of entrepreneurs.

I want to thank so many people who have worked hard on this. Everyone at Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris, and his team. Also, the folks in the City Council who were devoted to this mission – Speaker Corey Johnson, Council Member Steve Levin, and especially Council Member Laurie Cumbo. She proudly represents the Brooklyn Navy Yard. She has been one of the strongest voices in the Council for the empowerment of Black businesses and for the support that the City needs to provide to help Black businesses move forward. And she joins us here today. Council Member Cumbo – are you there? I can't hear you, maybe on mute. Well, she hopefully will be joining us here today.

**Council Member Laurie Cumbo:** Good morning.

**Mayor:** There we go. Technology is working.

**Council Member Cumbo:** Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yep.

**Council Member Cumbo:** Good morning, Mayor de Blasio. And so good to see you as well as my colleague and friend Annabel Palma. It's so wonderful to see you all. And I just want to thank you for your efforts with COVID and really the stamina that you have put forward to make sure that we get through this safely. So, I thank you for that. This is really a very important issue that has been impacting our community. As we know today, this month is National Black Business month. And we know as a result of COVID, 80 percent of M/WBEs that shared revenue information lost a median of \$38,000 between the month of March and May 2020, 35 percent of M/WBE's have not been able to operate during COVID-19, and 30 percent of M/WBEs reported that they will only be able to operate for one month or less, and 85 percent of M/WBEs reported that they will not be able to operate for more than six months. So, we understand the challenges. But when we look at New York City, New York City has one of the

largest populations of Black people outside of Africa and Brazil. We are the metropolis of Black people, of the diaspora, and it's critical that in answering the call to the Black Lives Matter, the Black Lives Matter movement was so critical in terms of recognizing the importance of our lives, but also of our dreams, our aspirations, our mind, our vision, our ideas.

It's important that we become a major part – if we are, as people of color, almost 60 percent of New York City's population, it's critical that the business that the City does improves and matches with the level of diversity that is reflective of the City of New York. So, I am super excited about this. The Navy Yard is an incredible partner, one of the greatest job producers in New York City, and will continue to be so, but Brooklyn, New York, and New York City specifically, needs to be a pathway and a gateway for Black-owned business to be designed, flourish, and to grow all across the City of New York. So, I am proud that it's in my district. I'm proud that it's in Brooklyn. I'm proud that this is going to be for Black people and people of the African diaspora. This is going to be a critical opportunity for us to be a major part of the growth and the development of the City of New York. Thank you so much, Mayor de Blasio. I want to thank Jonnel Doris for all of his work. And I want to thank everyone at the Navy Yard for their incredible leadership in making this possible as well as Speaker Corey Johnson and Council Member Steve Levin, my partners in putting this together, and the capital resources of investment that's going to change the City of New York. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Council Member, thank you for your extraordinarily energetic efforts as always. I've known you a long time and you bring energy to everything you do, and thank you for helping to secure the funding for the great work going on at the Navy Yard. Everyone, this report is going to be a tremendously important roadmap for how we move forward. And this dovetails perfectly with the bigger work being done inside this administration, by the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, literally bringing together all the agencies of the City government, led by people of color in the City government, to make real changes now, to redistribute, right now, resources towards the communities that have been hardest hit. This work is crucial and it's going to keep building. Now, we've heard the vision from the government side. I think it's really important obviously to hear what this means to an entrepreneur. And one of the folks who's going to be creating those new jobs, who's going to be building those businesses up further and further – and remember the investments we make mean that communities start to thrive more and more, people get jobs within the community, more and more people get opportunity, more and more people then can create their own businesses and employ more people from the community. That is the vision. One of the folks who has been on the leading edge of this, a member of the BE NYC cabinet advisors, and she is a founder of a venture capital firm that supports women of color with the excellent name WOCstar. She'll tell you all about it. A pleasure to introduce Gayle Jennings O'Byrne, Gayle –

**Gayle Jennings O'Byrne:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And thank you, Commissioner Doris for allowing me to be part of the BE NYC cabinet. After a 20-year career on Wall Street and technology, I left Wall Street because I saw that investing in women was smart, profitable business. We are women who invest in women. My investment fund, WOCstar Fund, invests in the rock stars of technology, women of color and diverse inclusive teams. Each day we are training, coaching, and building with amazing companies that are innovating for the new normal that we all will be living in, how we work, how we live, how we dwell, how we educate, and

how we innovate health care. But for too long investors in institutions like banks and pension funds that invest the hard earned savings of frontline workers have ignored women's startups and Black funds like ours. Our community is building products and services that help teachers, that help the police force, and other frontline workers. Yet at the same time, they're being blocked from investing in their own wellbeing. We're filling that void and we're stepping in where traditional sources of finance and support have shut us out. We help women of color grow their businesses and be successful. And we hope others will act differently and join us in their success like this administration.

COVID's had a huge impact on me and my business community, but imagine the impact business can have on New York City. This initiative will help us rebuild and unlock the potential of thousands of Black business owners. You have given a voice and literally a seat at the table to Black business. The solutions and the path forward are in the Black community. And a side note, I'm a witness to when the lockdown happened, New York did not lock down. Days after we were all called to stay home, the folks at SBS approved our certification to be an M/WBE business. It's clear that the access to capital and the resources can't be left solely in the hands of Wall Street or Silicon Valley. Only one percent of capital is getting to my community, yet, 30 percent better profits and outcomes, something's wrong. The public sector can be a great partner. I've seen it firsthand the innovative partnership of this administration. The WOCstar Fund was chosen by New York City's Economic Development Corp to be part of a \$30 million WE Venture program, a major city and a new Black investment fund teaming up to co-invest in the city's startup community – groundbreaking. And now you're launching initiatives to support Black businesses. Once again, you are leading a new form of public-private partnership that all cities should adopt. So, on behalf of my company, my team, and the BE NYC community and cabinet, congratulations, Mayor and Commissioner Doris, thank you for being an ally.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much. Well, Gayle, first of all, congratulations on everything you have created and taking all of your skills and talents and experience and doing something that will really bring so many other people into economic opportunity. But I want to dwell – you could hear the passion in Gayle's voice. You could hear how urgent it is to right this wrong and get capital available for businesses that have so much to offer, but have been shut out. So, I think it's wonderful that the public sector will be playing a bigger role. And I think it creates some healthy competition. If our colleagues in the private sector want to reaffirm their commitment to equality, they can put their money where the mouth is and some companies are stepping up and we appreciate that. But right now, we're going to prove the public sector is going to help spark this kind of investment, this kind of fairness. And I welcome the private sector to live in the same spirit and really help businesses of color, particularly women of color businesses move forward. We've got the roadmap for you. All you got to do is come and join the effort. So, thank you again, Gayle, for all you've done. Thank you to everyone in this effort.

And now I'm going to do something we do every day, but it's not going to be like every day, because not only do we have the new indicators we talked about yesterday, but you're going to see something that is striking in terms of indicator number three, but let me go over them in order. First of all, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold 200 today's report 64 patients. But again, we're now telling you

the number that have actually been confirmed positive for COVID in the most recent day of testing, that number is just 8.7 percent. That is very good.

Now, number two, the new second indicator, new reported the cases on a seven-day average basis, threshold of 550 cases, today's report 320. Number three, percentage of the people testing positive citywide for COVID-19. Again, we have moved the threshold now from 15percent to five percent, as we continue to tighten up, we continue to fight back this disease. We now told you we're doing everything down to the decimal points so you can see more specifically what's happening with the testing. The number I'm showing you here today is the lowest number we have had since this crisis began. This is the lowest infection rate in New York City since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis. Today's number is 0.24 percent. This is extraordinary. Now, we all know every day can vary. We all know there's no single perfect measure, but the fact that with expanded testing and more and more outreach all the time, you now see a number as low as 0.24 percent for the New York City infection rate. This is striking and this should be a clarion call to all of us to double down and go farther because the more we can do to beat back this virus, the more we can bring back this city. So, congratulations to all of you, because this is your achievement. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we 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 Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Chief Equity Officer of the Test and Trace Corps Annabel Palma, and Senior Advisor. Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Erin from Politico.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. A couple of questions. First of all, could you tell us a little more and maybe the health experts, a little more about the situation in Borough Park. I heard you mentioned 16 cases, but is there an overall number of cases, number of tests, positive rate that's gone up and there's been a theory out there that that neighborhood might have some herd immunity. So, does this kind of knock that down?

**Mayor:** I'll start as the layman and I'll turn to Dr. Varma. Look, again, I met with community leaders last night to talk about this. First of all, it's a great question, Erin – and I don't think we have any evidence of herd immunity anywhere in New York City. I think that is – we're nowhere near that point from what we know. And I understand that something has gotten around out there and, sort of, folk wisdom in many communities, but I want to note that we don't have proof of that, and we should just work out of an abundance of caution, not rest on that laurel, if you will. Second, the number of cases we've seen, you know, an uptick that's noticeable and there is a nexus to one particular event that we're looking at carefully and doing the disease detective work on through test and trace – that's what's causing the particular concern, an event that was larger than it should have been and one that we're following up on right now. And hopefully we'll find there was not a substantial spread, but this is why we do the test and trace work, to get ahead of something like this. Dr. Varma?

**Senior Advisor Jay Varma:** So, I think it's important to understand that there's a difference between, sort of, immunity and what people, you know, what was commonly referred to as herd immunity. You know, immunity means that if you've been infected, you might be protected from infection, either partially or completely for some time, a few months, a few years. We're learning more and, you know, the latest information from CDC is that most people who have an infection are protected in some way for up to three months after that initial infection. The problem is, we don't know how much protection people have after that and whether that means they're fully protected or not. So, I think, you know, what we're seeing in the situation in the neighborhoods where we see higher infection rates is that, you know, everybody should still consider themselves potentially at risk of infection. It's just safest to plan that way. If we learn and discover in the future that people with a prior infection are fully protected for a lifetime, that would be wonderful, but we really need to plan around what we consider to be the most credible, you know, scenario right now, which is that people who have been recently infected are probably very likely protected for up to three months. But anything beyond that time, we just simply don't know.

**Mayor:** Jay, speak to the larger question of herd immunity in the context of New York City or any of our neighborhoods, because I know we've all talked about this quite a bit. Could you sort of give the definitive answer on whether herd immunity could exist in New York City right now?

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah. So, this concept of herd immunity is that once you reach a certain level of immunity across the entire population, that you may get individual isolated infections, but you won't get outbreaks, because if I get sick and I cough on somebody else, or I cough on three people, if two out of three of them are immune, then this infection just won't continue to spread anymore. What we have from our antibody survey is that somewhere between 25 to 30 percent of New Yorkers broadly across the entire population of New Yorkers have demonstrated some prior infection with this virus. You know, they have an antibody test that indicates that almost certainly they were infected at some point – that is not a level of antibody coverage that we currently think would mean people are fully protected. There's a lot of discussion going on about, well, is the antibody testing that will indicate protection? Are there other measures that you need to use? But from our perspective, the only way to continue to keep infections low, like we have right now, is to focus on all the things we're doing, face coverings, social distancing, limits on gatherings, good hygiene. And it may very well be that there is some percentage of the population that is currently immune that's also helping keep our infection rates low, but I don't think we should be complacent and rest upon that until we know more.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Erin.

**Question:** Okay. And on a different topic, there's another member of your administration, Kathryn Garcia, potentially getting into the race for mayor. Just wonder what you would think of her as a candidate?

**Mayor:** So, Kathryn spoke to me some months ago and said that something she might consider, and to the best of my understanding, she has not made a final decision. I mean, look, she's been an outstanding commissioner, obviously, and done great work not only a sanitation, but on



addressing the food crisis now and the issues around eradicating lead poisoning in the city. So, I really appreciate the great work she's done. Again, do not know if it's something she is going to move forward with, but all I know is that something she's considering and she's a very worthy person. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next is Gloria from NY1.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask you first a question on the 9/11 tribute memorial, sort of, back and forth that we have been seeing in the last couple of days. I don't believe you have spoken about it. So, I guess, first, I just wanted to get you to weigh in on what's been going on here now that we know the ceremonies back on. Did you know that they were going to cancel? And now that there's a second memorial that's going to happen, you know, why haven't you been involved, it seems, in this in this process?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Gloria, first of all, that whole process, the decision is not something that involves City Hall at all. Literally, no one from the 9/11 Memorial reached out to me, no one consulted with us, they went and did what they did. And I know their intentions were good. They were trying to address this crisis and really focus on health and an abundance of caution. I think what they did was a mistake, initially, because it's such an important moment for the families who lost loved ones, for so many people who want to remember on that day. And the notion of keeping people safe is obviously crucial, but I think what would have been smarter is what they ultimately decided to do, which is basically to keep the same ceremony, keep the same very moving tribute in light – adjust, make a few health modifications and distancing modifications like we do with so many other things. So, to me, I think it's now been resolved more sensibly. But, no, I want to be clear, some people thought that I had something to do with it, my office had something to do it. We were not consulted in the least. If we had been, I would have told them stick to the original plan, but, you know, let's do some health and safety modifications.

**Question:** In regards to the announcement that you are making today, the Black-owned business plan, I just want to clarify, was this – the specific plan you said was released previously? So, it sounded to me like at the end there you were sort of calling out to these bigger businesses to come in and get involved, sort of challenging – challenging them to step up. But what are you doing to make sure that they come in, since it sounds to me like this is a plan that, or a report that the City had put together before the crisis?

**Mayor:** And to say the least, and I think Gayle would agree with me – the crisis in terms of Black-owned businesses, the crisis existed long before the coronavirus. That figure that I shared with you, 22 percent of all New Yorkers are African-American and only two percent of businesses are owned by Black people. Something is profoundly wrong there and it has to do with 400 years of injustice, obviously, but we've got to fundamentally change the rules of the game and that is not going to happen within the private sector, although the private sector can and should do a lot more. It's going to happen with government intervention to start to right the wrongs. This was a really smart effort to engage with entrepreneurs and to engage with private sector partners who want to be part of the solution. It was started back in the fall to address, again, an ongoing crisis of generations. But the real issue here is I am challenging the business community. A lot of people are expressing real concern as a result of the Black Lives Matter

moment and I admire that they're expressing their concern, but I'd be much more appreciative if they would change that concern into investment, take the words and turn them into deeds and invest in Black-owned businesses. Let me see if Commissioner Doris wants to add.

**Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Small Business Services:** Yeah, certainly. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I think what you said is absolutely right, in this new era where we are now the City cannot do it by itself, the private sector cannot do it by itself. We've got to come together and really work on one of our core principles around collaboration. And so, yes, you know, Goldman Sachs, MasterCard, Ernst & Young, and other partners out there, we are working with them to make sure that this need and this gap has actually filled. So, we do agree, certainly, would call in on all of the private sector. We do that in the report and say that we've got to do things differently. We cannot allow Black businesses to fail at twice as much as white businesses. We cannot allow them to walk into places where they can get financial support and be declined more than any other group. I think this is the opportunity. This is the moment for us to do more for our Black businesses and make sure that they have the opportunity that everyone else has. And that's what this report does. That's what this initiative is about.

**Moderator:** The next is Aaron Cooper from CNN.

**Question:** Hi, thank you very much. I just wanted to ask about people moving out of New York City permanently. We've talked to some that have left and some others that are considering it or thinking about it. Do you have any estimate on how many people the city could lose? And how bad is this going to hurt? And then additionally, some of the people we've talked to have been blaming your administration for making the quality of life worse, including increasing crime or homelessness. How do you respond to those kinds of concerns?

**Mayor:** Sure. Aaron, look, first of all, this is something this whole crisis has now played out over six months. It is way too soon to know what the long-term impact will be. It's understandable that some people have the means to do so when elsewhere. The vast, vast majority of New Yorkers were here and the vast, vast majority of New Yorkers are going to remain here. And now, Aaron, we are one of the safest places in the whole country when it comes to the coronavirus, as you heard today, 0.24 percent infection level. We've got a lot of work to do to keep it that way, but I think everyone with eyes to see can see how strongly New York City has come back in terms of health care. And you can see that the economy is starting to come back, but we have a long way to go. The things that make New York City great are going to continue to attract people here and keep people here, there's no question. So, we do not have a specific estimate because I think it would be a fool's errand to try and estimate now something that you can't really understand until we see the bigger playout of how we address this disease, ultimately, with the vaccine and how we bring the economy back, what kind of stimulus we have, what happens in the election in 76 days? All these factors I think will determine. To the other point, I think it's just politics, honestly. As recently as February, Aaron, we had the most jobs in the history of New York City – 4.6 million jobs. We had driven down crime to levels that we had not seen since the 1950s. Our school system was showing greater success than it ever had in its history. That was February this year and those are the policies of my administration. What we got hit with was an absolute perfect storm, a health care crisis, an economic crisis, a budget

crisis, a social justice crisis, a crime uptick all at once and all interrelated. But this too shall pass, and when it does the strength of New York City will come to the fore again. Go ahead.

**Question:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Aaron, do you have second question?

**Question:** No, I'm great. Thank you very much.

**Moderator:** Thank you.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

**Question:** Hi. Good morning, Mayor de Blasio. I wanted to go back to the small cluster you were noticing in Borough Park. You mentioned that some of the stuff –

**Mayor:** Katie, just to be very careful. My apologies, the term cluster is a really a weighted one. We're seeing, again, some cases – we're seeing more cases, but we certainly do not want to call it a cluster yet. We don't have that evidence.

**Question:** My apologies, the uptick or the 16 cases – and you mentioned that some of those 16 cases can be trace to a large wedding in the community. My understanding is that large weddings are not allowed. I know we saw this at the beginning of the pandemic, where there were still in certain communities in the city funerals and other large gathering. So, will there be disciplinary action? Is there an investigation into those large wedding to see whose it was and will be, you know, any kind of action against that large wedding, which I was under, the impression is not allowed?

**Mayor:** You're absolutely right. The rule now is that – I think I'm up-to-date on this – that gatherings can be in a gathering hall, catering hall, for example, up to 50 percent capacity, but no more than 50 people. And from what we're hearing, this was certainly substantially more than that. That's just not allowed. We're going to figure out what to do to address the situation retrospectively, but I'm really honestly much more concerned about the going forward right now. We've got to identify the folks who were at that wedding and follow up to make sure if there was any spread it's contained. And that's why we do test and trace. It's as simple as, if someone might be infected, get them tested; if they are, safely separate them; make sure it doesn't spread any further. You do that fast enough, effectively enough, you really contain the spread. So, that's the goal here, but we are doubling down, starting today, through the Health Department with catering halls to let them know that those standards must be kept. We'll certainly be doing inspections. We're working with community leaders, who I think could have been extraordinary allies in this whole effort of trying to keep people safe. Dr. Dave Chokshi was on the call I did last night with community leaders. He's going to direct the Health Department to do the follow-up with these catering halls and I believe that that follow-up will be felt very clearly. Go ahead.

**Question:** And my second question has to do with small businesses. I know this initiative discuss this morning focuses on a particular subset of, you know, small businesses. But when I speak to small business owners, they were really struggling and it has to do with the real financial issues. So, I've asked this before, but with the Commissioner on, the Small Business Services Commissioner, what can be done for businesses that need help financially paying rent, paying insurance. You know, today it's pouring rain, there's a thunderstorm, restaurants are not going to make any money today beyond takeout. So, that's a big hit to them. So, if you could outline a little bit, for all business owners, those who are still struggling to stay afloat in the city, what is being done particularly on the financial end?

**Mayor:** Yeah. And I'll start and I'll pass to Commissioner Doris. Look, it's a very, very fair question, but I also think New Yorkers, especially small business owners appreciate real and blunt answers. So, here's the truth. The federal government made a meaningful effort to help small business. I don't think it was necessarily structured ideally. I don't think a lot of smaller businesses of color benefit as much as they should have, but at least there was a meaningful effort in previous stimulus. There should have been and still needs to be a much bigger effort to help small business in a new stimulus that should be happening honestly right now, and that should be everything from rental assistance for small businesses, to a variety of other direct support to keep them going. That is where the money is. The State is in great fiscal distress. The City's in great fiscal distress. We're not going to be able to do a major financial effort. It's just the truth. What we can do and haven't tried to do is find any way we can to facilitate businesses opening up, providing them PPEs, providing them any opportunity to get going again, and providing direct legal help, help dealing with landlords. There's a variety of specific – obviously, we did some grants and loans early on, but that money has been exhausted. But I want to emphasize, as I turned to the Commissioner, any small business and struggling to be speaking with Small Business Services, because, in a number of cases, they've been able to find solutions to help businesses tied over. And the last thing I'll say before the Commissioner is, I think, this is the point again, Katie – if the stimulus efforts keep failing now we could easily be in a situation where there's a very, very different reality in Washington in a few months. And then I think a very different and bigger kind of stimulus. And that certainly could be an opportunity to help small business on a much bigger scale. Go ahead, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Doris:** Thanks so much. And you're absolutely right. You know, this situation is in need of a federal response and certainly what the federal government was able to provide with the PPP loan program also did not hit communities really that are targeted and hurt even more so by the COVID crisis. As it pertains to small business services, you know, we're here to help all small businesses. We've been doing it throughout the crisis – 30,000 plus calls to our hotline where we assist those businesses in finding financial assistance and support. We've already connected over 4,000 businesses [inaudible] \$78 million in support for their businesses and we will continue to do so. We have 40 lenders that we work with as well to assist our small businesses during this time. Look, if you're a small business out there and you're struggling, our hotline is 888-SBS-4NYC – 30,000 businesses we've already assisted on that hotline. We will continue to assist them. And we want to make sure that you have what you need. But we have to say it again – you know, the crisis is in need of a federal stimulus. We need federal support. Our small businesses in this city cannot make it without the federal government stepping in on the

financial side and helping them. We'll do all we can, but, as the Mayor said, we need the federal government to step up.

**Moderator:** The next is Dana from the New York Times.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hi Dana, how are you?

**Question:** The City had a story yesterday about the size of the First Lady's staff and how six of her staffers are listed on the books of other agencies. Can you speak to the propriety of that?

**Mayor:** Sure. I think that article didn't take into account the work that's being done. So this work is about the needs of the people of this city, especially in this crisis. What First Lady has focused on now, mental health as always, but the mental health crisis is now much deeper because of the coronavirus. Across the whole city, particularly in communities of color, particularly for children. And it's very, very important that we provide a lot of support to young people as we go into the new school year. So that's one of the things that's been working on -- that she's been working on intensely. But also, as the co-chair of the internal task force, this extraordinary taskforce of leaders of color within this administration, the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity that has been moving big policy changes literally with the purpose of redistributing resources to communities that are most effective, 27 neighborhoods most deeply affected. That work spans almost every City agency. So, people are working with her constantly who are parts of other agencies because the work involves agencies all through the City government.

**Question:** Thank you. And secondarily, as far as the potential for 22,000 layoffs, have you determined whether that those potential layoffs will in any way impact your or the First Lady's staff?

**Mayor:** Oh, unquestionably, there will be layoffs at City Hall. There's no question about it. For my staff, her staff, everyone, there's going to be layoffs. There's going to be a huge fiscal impact on every agency of the City government. And again, our job is to work together to try and avert it because last thing we want to do in the middle of an economic crisis is lay off a bunch of people and not provide as much service. And you think about all of our agencies, what that would mean for the city, how it would set us back. So, you know, I don't have a lot of hope right now for a stimulus. We'll keep fighting for one before the point that layoffs would happen. Maybe, you know, there'll be a surprise here, a good surprise from Washington. But I think the more likely possibility is to avert layoffs are to focus on long term borrowing in Albany, where I think there's more and more recognition that long-term borrowing is a necessary solution. And obviously working with labor to find savings. And a lot of our labor partners are working with us intensely on that.

**Moderator:** The next is Shant from the Daily News.

**Question:** Yeah. Good morning, everyone. I was wondering if you and Dr. Varma could clarify the use of the term cluster? For what it's worth, you know, during the conversation this morning,

did Google coronavirus cluster definition. And one of the first things that comes up is a paper on the CDC website that says we defined a cluster as greater than, or equal to five cases. So I don't know if this definition, if there's a universal definition, if it's a case by case, can you just speak to that place?

**Mayor:** Sure. It's a great question, Shant. I'll start as the layman and Dr. Varma will be your expert. I just want to say at the beginning, one of the things I've noticed throughout the coronavirus crisis and I think Dr. Varma will affirm this. We've talked about it many times is, there's not the kind of ideal consistent national, international definitions here that we would like in many ways, because people, the medical community, the scientific community still doesn't fully understand the coronavirus. And there's very different interpretations in different places. But I want to say here just on a common sense level, a cluster is when we have a bigger and more sustained problem. Remember testing is such a valuable, crucial part of the equation, but it's always somewhat arbitrary because it depends on who got tested on any given day. And that's not ubiquitous. That's not, you know, we don't have a situation as you've seen in the few places, where there's been near universal testing. There is a certain arbitrariness. What we look for is do we see a sustained problem? And particularly, do we see a problem that relates to a specific source that is a bigger problem. Not, you know, a few cases, but something more bigger and more sustained. And that thank God so far is not what we're seeing in the case of Sunset Park. What we're seeing in case of Sunset Park to date is more isolated to individual households where the spread was just within the household, not in the larger community. So that's my preface. Now, Dr. Varma, you can give a more erudite answer.

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah. I think the answer is that different groups in different public health agencies use these terms differently. I think as the Mayor has noted, really what we try to use the term cluster when we're referring both to a specific number of cases that we think is concerning, combined with a link to some specific events or exposure that they have in common. So what we're seeing in, for example, in Sunset Park and what we've been seeing, for example, in Borough Park is an increase in the number of cases above what we would expect. But we can't link it right now to a single common exposure.

**Question:** Got it. So [inaudible] a bit to baseball. Al Sharpton is calling for the Mets to be sold to J.Lo and A-Rod saying the sale represents a significant opportunity for Major League Baseball to take a strong public stand in favor of racial equity. Would you join Reverend Al on that call?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I would actually. And I'll tell you something Shant, you know, something about my baseball history. So I don't come into this as someone instantly connected to A-Rod to say the least, but I respect him. I mean, he's one of the greatest players of all time, obviously. I think it's true that all of our sports, including Major League Baseball have to do a better job encouraging ownership by people of color, leadership positions for people of color, more people of color managers. This is a profound problem in baseball and in all American sports. I think you – the way you change that is one team at a time. So if a very important franchise like the New York Mets ended up being led by a people of color ownership group, I actually think that would be very good for the baseball and very good for this country. And I also want to say, I admire A-Rod's achievements, and I'm glad he's working on this, but I want to speak about Jennifer Lopez. I mean, this is a true New York City icon. She, you know – I'm astounded when you think about

what she's achieved. And talk about someone who just came from the grassroots humble origins in the Bronx has reached the highest heights on sheer hard work. And still remembers where she came from and is very devoted to New York City and the Bronx. I would like to see more team owners who are truly devoted to their communities. So yeah, I actually think it would be good for New York City and good for baseball.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more today. The next is Julia Marsh from the Post.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'm just following up on that earlier question about the First Lady's staff. Could you address why at least six of the 14 members were not officially listed as some of her staff members and were deputized from other agencies? It seems like that was an enough an effort to make it seem like she had a smaller team than she actually does?

**Mayor:** Again, the nature of her work, Julia is I want to put this in perspective -- the First Lady does the work she does every single day for the people of this city. She loves this city. She wants to help people. She doesn't get paid a dime. She believes that addressing the mental health crisis is one of the most profound missions that we need to address here in the city. It's gone, swept under the rug for so many years. She, I think really deserves tremendous credit for bringing the issues of mental health to the fore. But from the beginning, the idea was it had to be work done in every single agency. There are mental health issues that every agency of the City government needs to address. And I mean, you can list it immediately. The Department of Education, police, Correction, Social Services, Homeless Services, Health Department, Health + Hospitals, it's really across the whole administration. And then when you talk about the task force, that has literally every agency. Has representation of leaders of color from veritably, every agency with the common purpose of moving and changing policies right now. That's a lot of work that has to move very quickly and it's work that reaches into every agency. So, it makes sense that people who are parts of other agencies are part of that work. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay. And then one more on that. She had a senior advisor who was hired at \$150,000 a year in April, which is after you announced the hiring freeze. So, was there a carve out made for her staff?

**Mayor:** The whole idea here is that we have been moving a couple of pieces, obviously directly related to this crisis. The internal task force was created in the context of the coronavirus crisis. The mental health work is being expanded as a result of the coronavirus crisis. So, it's different from Test and Trace Corps, but I'll give the obvious parallel. An area where there is not a hiring freeze is the Test and Trace Corps, an area where there's not a hiring freeze as anything related to what the Department of Health or Health + Hospitals are doing as part of the coronavirus response. That's where we make an obvious exception because of what we're dealing with right now.

**Moderator:** Last question for today is Yoav from The City.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. just one follow up question on the First Lady staffing. The issue isn't that people who are employed by City agencies are contributing work toward Mrs. McCray's portfolio. It's a matter of people who work for her full time, who are dedicated solely to her

portfolio being placed in agency payrolls and therefore not being included in her office's head count. So, you know, what we're asking here is why there isn't greater transparency regarding the First Lady staffing levels?

**Mayor:** You can ask it any different way. I'll keep saying the same thing. The portfolio reaches across all agencies and has to do with issues that are foundational to addressing the crisis we're facing. It is exactly what it is. People from different agencies working in common cause to address this crisis. And as I said, everybody in this government needs to understand that this is the priority and that's where we're going to put our energy. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay, I'm going to move to another issue on the gyms and the indoor fitness centers. I've been speaking to people in those industries and they're wondering what the metrics need to look like in order for you to be comfortable to open them up? Because as things stand there's just a message from City Hall that it's a dynamic situation. We're going to keep an eye on things, but in their minds that the city has really done everything it can, the people of the city. Today's 0.24 percent positive rate is a good example. So, are there specific metrics that the coronavirus numbers need to meet in order for you to decide to open them up? Or what more needs to be done by the industry to make you comfortable?

**Mayor:** I appreciate the question. I want to make sure there's not a misunderstanding here because I spoke to this on NY1 on Monday evening. You know, the Governor, the State has put out a vision. I haven't seen the final wording of the executive order, but certainly the press conference, excuse me, the press release gave a lot of the details. And to the credit of the State, we had a lot of conversation between the City and State on this. They deferred to the City on a number of key decisions. But the bottom line was you could open them on August 24th or September 2nd. We said September 2nd for the obvious reasons of the inspections. That this is exactly when we're in the middle of doing a huge number of Department of Health inspections with childcare centers and schools That's our priority right now. So we're choosing the later date and we're certainly going to continue to prioritize childcare centers and schools for inspection. And then as those are completed, turn the attention of the department over to the gyms. So with a variety of restrictions in place from the State, and we will have our own restrictions, they will be opening up. But we want to do it in a very careful, safe manner. Because you know, this is one of the areas where if we don't get it right, we could see a resurgence. So we're working out of an abundance of caution.

Okay. So, everyone, as I close up today, I just want to say this – you know, I gave you a number earlier today, 0.24 percent and that number will change tomorrow and the next day and the next day. No one ever should rest on a laurel, read too much into one indicator. But just even to see the possibility that we could get that low, that all this hard work is paying off. Because remember, if you keep fighting that disease back, getting that number lower and lower, then more and more can open up and people can live better and better. And we can really restart New York City fully. This is an example of what New Yorkers do. New Yorkers are the greatest comeback artists in the history of the world. New Yorkers always come back. We have been down so many times before and counted out so many times before. But New Yorkers always come back, but we will not come back the same. We don't want to come back the same. And that's what's crucial here. The values of this city, historic values, and the values that are being



expressed right now, the deep desire and the rightful desire for change. We are not going to repeat the inequalities of the past. That's just the bottom line here. You can come back and do better. You can come back without simply replacing the same reality that wasn't working well enough. So, this is what I want to emphasize – what New York has done the last few months is going to be written in the history books as one of the most extraordinary examples of a whole people coming together in common cause. Now let's continue that work in the name of fairness and equality. Let's continue that work in the name of ensuring that every community gets the same opportunity that is in New York city value. Thank you, everyone.

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