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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC

Chuck Todd: Let me begin with you, Ron. I think the Mayor has some news that he may end up making very soon. So, take it away.

Ron Allen: Indeed, Chuck. Thanks very much. And thank you for joining us, Mayor de Blasio. We're here on Staten Island, one of the hot zones in New York City. So, today, the positivity rate is 2.83 percent for the city. You've said that parents should be ready for schools to close on Monday. There's a curfew essentially going in that's going to shut down nightlife, restaurants, and bars at 10:00 PM. How is it that New York has gotten to this precipice, this place that everyone is so concerned about?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Yeah. Look, Ron, we focus on the data, we focus on the science, and that is what took us out of those really, really tough times in March and April and made us one of the safest places in the country for the whole summer into the fall. But that same data and science is telling us something now, that, unfortunately, we're seeing the rates go up, we have to take additional actions to protect people. Look, some of this is fatigue, I know, but some of this is also the effect of what's happened around the country, coming here through travel. And we've got to take strong steps to fight back the second wave.

Allen: Who is it that's getting sick? Because that's – I think that's the question a lot of people have. It's a very generalized community spread. It's not nursing homes. It's not factories. It's very generalized.

Mayor: Ron, this is the key point. We have a huge test and trace operation, the biggest strongest in the country – we are not seeing very specific focal points. We're not seeing super spreader events. It is generalized, and that makes it in some ways at a particular challenge. That's why we need some of these bigger measures that hopefully can control things. This testing center in Staten Island is crucial. This is a place that's seen a sudden surge. Last month, it was Brooklyn Queens. We beat it back with a lot of testing, a lot of community outreach, a lot of masks distribution. We're doing that again now in Staten Island. And I think we can turn it around. The City's done it before, I think we can do it again.

Allen: Let me ask you about the schools now, because that's a big deal.

Mayor: Yes.

Allen: This is the biggest school system in the country and one of the few that took the bold step of opening – a million kids or so in the schools. But the positivity rate, the test rate is very low in the schools. There's no transmission happening, very little. So, why close the schools? Why not

be more surgical and close schools in places where the rates are high. This is going to cause a lot of huge inconvenience for families that that desperately need their kids in school.

Mayor: Yeah. Ron, I'm the guy who wanted those schools open and fought to get those schools open so long as we could do it safely, and we have. You're right, the testing shows very few people have tested positive in our schools. That's a great blessing. But when you see the rest of the city, unfortunately, experiencing this generalized problem, we've got to act out of an abundance of caution. We need to keep faith with parents and educators and staff. We told them if it went over three percent, out of an abundance of caution, we'd closed the schools, but, Ron, for, hopefully, only a matter of weeks, and then bring them back after we've beaten back this year.

Allen: And lastly, I heard you say earlier today that what you are really, really concerned about his travel during the holiday season, during Thanksgiving. What do you say to people who just – you know, it's a very human thing you want to be with your family. It's a huge time of the year, particularly after so much – we've all gone through so much.

Mayor: I'm going to tell him where I'm at personally. I'm not going to see some of the most beloved people in my life. I know they can't come to me. I can't go to them. This is a year unlike any other, and next year will be better. You have a vaccine now. We have a lot of things now finally breaking in our direction, but this is not the year to travel. The big X-factor for New York City and this country right now is the holidays. Will people travel or not? Will there be those big gatherings or not? We have got to err on the side of safety and health. This is not the time to travel.

Allen: And then, lastly, just looking ahead, how confident are you that with a new administration in Washington that New York and other cities are going to get the help that you've been crying out for, for so many months now – for first responders, for schools, for all these things that governors and mayors have to do and produce on every day? And have you had any really direct conversations with President-elect Biden?

Mayor: Not with the President-elect, but with Dr. Vivek Murphy, who's obviously going to be the great leader of the fight against COVID. I have total faith in him, fantastic choice by the President-elect. But it's very clear, we're going to see the national strategy to fight COVID we've been missing all these months. We're going to see a focus on testing and the focus on getting us the kind of support we need and getting a vaccine that people can believe in. I'm absolutely convinced and I'm convinced the Vice President – or, the President-elect, I should say now – will achieve the stimulus that'll help us get back on our feet – absolutely confident.

Allen: Thank you very much. I know you've got a lot on your hands. Appreciate you taking the time.

Mayor: I'm going to go see these folks here. Thank you.

Allen: Obviously, a very important day here in New York. So, we'll watch the numbers over the weekend, Chuck, and see where it goes and see if the schools, in fact, can remain open for some in-person learning into next week, but it's going to be a very close call. And, of course, tonight,

restaurants, bars, closing at 10:00 PM here and across the river in Jersey as well. It's a really critical time for this part of the country.

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