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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES PLAN TO VACCINATE
HOMEBOUND SENIORS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. Everyone, this is really exciting what I just saw here. Here at Nostrand Houses, this great community center, great effort being made to reach seniors, to reach community residents who need to be vaccinated. This is all about equity. This is about a recovery for all of us in the city, that means everyone gets a fair chance to be vaccinated – we reach as many people as possible. So, I want to give credit where credit is due. There are folks wearing these Test and Trace – beautiful, stylish Test and Trace sweatshirts, and hoodies, and all. Everyone from Test and Trace who's out here, talking to people, communicating, answering questions, helping folks to get vaccinated – real special thanks to all of you. You're doing such important work. And I want to thank everyone. You're going to hear from the Resident Association President in a moment. I want to thank her for her great work. But to thank the folks in this center, really appreciate – I got wonderful tour and I saw just real devotion to helping people. The folks getting vaccinated were really comfortable. They said to me, they really felt well taken care of. They got answers to the questions. It went really smoothly and it encouraged them to want to spread the word.

And this is great work and it's happening because so many folks have gotten together to make it happen. This is part of the larger equity effort that our Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity has created to make sure that we fight disparity in vaccination. A deep thanks to the First Deputy Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer of the Department of Health, Dr. Torian Easterling, and the Executive Director of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity, who's also the Executive Vice President for Community Engagement at NYCHA, Sideya Sherman. Thank you to both of you for your leadership. And also, for the great work here on the ground, Chris Keeley, the Chief Operating Officer at Test and Trace, thank you.

I'm going to tell you two very quick vignettes – in there, talking to residents who came to get vaccinated – a man named Gamal, he's in his 50s. He said, this is the first time he has been vaccinated in his entire life. He said he never felt comfortable getting vaccinated, but as he understood what a threat COVID was to him and his family, he understood how important it was. He got informed. He got comfortable. First vaccination of his life happened today.

Second story is by a woman named Eva – wonderful woman who was born in North Carolina, came to New York City when she was 19 years old, has lived in Nostrand Houses for 51 years. And I said to her, do you feel good about getting vaccinated? She said, yes, but I could hear there's a little bit hesitation. I said, well, tell me what else are you feeling? She said, well, I wasn't sure at first – I wasn't sure if I should get vaccinated, but my 95-year-old sister just got vaccinated, and she said it was okay, so now I'm doing it too. 95-five-year-old sister got vaccinated – I've been saying for weeks now, the most powerful impact will come from word of

mouth, from family, friends, neighbors, people who you worship with. When they get vaccinated, it's going to give you confidence in getting vaccinated.

So, we need to do more and more of this. We need the supply. We need the federal government to get us more supply directly to New York City. We need the State government to make things simpler and more flexible so we can reach more people, because the more we do, the more people will want it. So, today, is really a great example, seeing the seniors here who are excited and ready to get vaccinated. But now, let's talk about a new announcement, because there's a lot of seniors who can't get here, they can't get to a community center. They're homebound. There's a lot of our loved ones, our elders who can't leave their apartment. They need help too. There's a lot of seniors who could get vaccinated if it's in their building, but they can't go farther than that. So, we have created a new plan to reach homebound seniors. And we have to do this urgently, we cannot leave any of our seniors behind. And our homebound seniors are amongst the most vulnerable people in New York City, so it's going to be harder to reach them, but we will reach them.

Three new key initiatives – first, at retirement communities, right there in the buildings, we can reach folks who can only stay in their immediate development. They can't get any farther, they're not able to go any farther, we'll reach them right there. So, we're starting a brand-new vaccination clinic program at retirement communities right in their buildings. Two sites will open next week at the Warbasse Cares Program here in Brooklyn and Coney Island and the Morningside Retirement and Health Services Program in Morningside Heights in Manhattan. These will be the beginning of a much bigger effort to reach homebound seniors in their own buildings.

Second, we're focusing on those who provide care for homebound seniors who are with them. So much today, there are home health aides who they need and depend on – we need to make sure they're healthy too to protect the seniors who have to stay at home. Over the course of a month, we will vaccinate 25,000 home health aides who are the lifeline for our homebound seniors – that will protect the seniors and the aides alike. And then, as soon as we have the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, that's just a few weeks, we're going to start a specific initiative to have medical personnel go to the apartments of homebound seniors. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is an easier vaccine. It does not require as much refrigeration and it's one shot only. That'll be a blessing – one shot only. When that vaccine arrives, we're going to take a part of that allotment and devoted specifically to homebound seniors, have nurses and other medical professionals go apartment by apartment to those who cannot even leave their apartment and make sure they are safe.

So, this is a brand-new initiative. It's going to make a big impact on seniors who need help and family members who care for them and fear for them. This is going to bring a sigh of relief to so many families.

Let me say a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

We look forward to leaving this pandemic in the rearview mirror, part of our past. And we will get there. Now, want you to hear from just one more person before we take a few questions. She

does amazing work as a leader of the Nostrand Houses Tenant Association. She hears the concerns of the residents. She acts on them. She's a trusted leader. I've known her for a long time and respect her work greatly. My pleasure to introduce to you, Barbara McFadden.

[...]

Mayor: Has anyone ever told you, you are fabulous?

[Laughter]

I like self-confidence, don't you like that? Be proud. Be proud. Thank you for all you have done and we're going to do more together. Okay. Let's take a few questions. Gloria?

Question: I wanted to ask you, could you get a little bit into the specifics of this site that you visited? I understand there's vaccinations happening right now. What does the supply picture look like? And is there any, I know there are requirements, but is it only for people who are in this immediate area? What's the –

Mayor: I'll start and then Torian, [inaudible], whoever wants to jump in on specifics. So, when we do these sites in public housing, the focus is on public housing residents. So, I was just talking to folks who do the check-in and they say, they ask to confirm if someone is a public housing resident, because we – if we're going to fight disparity and inequality, that means focusing on NYCHA. So that is the focus here, obviously, people from this development in particular. In terms of the number of doses and all?

First Deputy Commissioner Torian Easterling, Department of Health and Mental

Hygiene: Great question. So, I just want to, you know, acknowledge the work of New York City Test and Trace, a lot of work that they've already done this week, going door-to-door, knocking on – to reach out to our seniors. So yes, this is for seniors who are living in NYCHA developments. We're doing 80 appointments per day for the next four days. We have 300 doses this week, at this site. But we have six sites that are operating this week. And we're going to be continuing to do outreach and continuing into next week to make sure that we're reaching our seniors, making sure that they're getting vaccinated.

Question: Can I just ask how it's working in terms of seniors who need – making the appointments since we understand that it's something that not all seniors are able to do through the website, if they're not able to navigate the technology on their own. How are appointments being handled for this kind of site? And also, for the ones that will eventually open up at these centers specifically for seniors.

First Deputy Commissioner Easterling; Yeah. So, that's happening in a number of different ways. So, the fabulous staff that you're seeing in addition to Ms. Barbara, fabulous staff that you're seeing behind us, they're going door-to-door and they're actually entering names into the appointment system. And so, they're taking the onus onto the staff to really make sure that we're scheduling them. They're getting their times, making sure they know what materials they need to bring downstairs when they're getting vaccinated. And this is the same operation that we're using at the future sites as well as we stand them up.

Mayor: Yeah. Thank you, Torian. This is a real important point about sort of demystifying the process, making it simpler. A lot of the outreach folks are working with seniors to go through the application process, address their concerns, help them through it. That's more and more as we're doing this, we're finding people do need that helping hand. And I know all our Test and Trace colleagues do that. They go through the application, if they have to sit there with someone and fill it out with them or, you know, go online, get on the phone, they'll do that. But this kind of initiative in NYCHA developments, we want to make this a lot bigger, but we need supply. Who else? Anyone else from media?

Question: Do you have any off? Off topic?

Mayor: Sure.

Question: The Governor just announced an 11 pm curfew starting Sunday? Do you have thoughts on that for New York City?

Mayor: Look, everything – well, I'll say this. One, everything is based on data and science. That's what we have to use as the decision-making factor. I've been very concerned about the variants that we're seeing around the world, and obviously we're seeing more of here in the city. So, actions like that, if they're based in data and science, there'll be necessary sometimes. I need to get the full details on what the State is intending because a lot of times we get initial announcement and then when we have to see what it really means. So, I have to get that briefing before I can give you more. But the notion that sometimes we're going to have to take those kinds of measures. I'm open to that when it's grounded in the data and the science. Go ahead.

Question: And also, the report that the Governor had been misrepresenting the nursing homes. Do you have any reaction to those reports?

Mayor: I'm really troubled by it. Look, these are our seniors. These are people who were suffering, families scared to death for them. And we lost so many seniors. We need a full accounting of what happened. We need to know everything that happened, why it happened, everyone who was a part of it. And we need to make sure it never happens again. Anything else? Okay. Thank you.

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