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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. Well, here we are. We're starting one of the most important weeks arguably in the history of this country and this city. This week where this day decisive election will happen – and we're all getting ready in so many ways. And everyone is feeling the intensity of this moment. We've been waiting a long time for the chance to express our views, make our voices heard, make our votes count. And New Yorkers have done something amazing in the course of the last days – we've seen early voting on an incredible level. You know, this was a city, a state where we fought for a long time to finally get early voting, one of the last places to get it in this country. But look at how New Yorkers have taken early voting. Look how involved people are. Look how engaged. Over 1.1 million New Yorkers have voted already in this election. This is amazing – over 1.1 million. No matter what the challenges, no matter how long the lines – and I can speak about that from personal experience – the people of this city wanted to be heard, and they went out and did the right thing, and a lot more to come tomorrow on Election Day.

So, we're going to talk about the election for sure, but, before we go into that, I want to remind us that elections ultimately are about what we value, what we care about most. And elections express what our priorities are. And in this city, there is no higher priority, nothing we value more than public education. This is one of the places where public education is most cherished and has determined the destiny of millions and millions of children, because we go out of our way to make a great public education available for all. Now, we also know that public education is a foundation of our democracy. So, it's so important that every child get the very best possible education. And we decided, for that reason, that it was worth moving mountains to reopen our schools – huge amount of effort went into it. And I want to thank all our educators and staff, all our parents, all our kids, everyone who was committed to reopening our schools in-person. What a difference it makes for a family and the child that make that choice to have in-person education. And the year is off to a strong start and a safe start. And that was job-one, to make sure our schools would be safe. And we now have lots of evidence of how extraordinarily safe they are. And I thank, again, everyone who's been a part of that.

Now, we have an opportunity for parents who want their children back in school, but had not yet chosen blended learning – they have an opt-in period. And every one of you has a chance to choose – if your child is now in all-remote learning and you want child to benefit from in-person learning, you have an opt in opportunity, starting today, going through Sunday, November 15th. And it's very simple and straightforward – anyone who wants to opt in can go to [schools.nyc.gov/returntoschool2020](https://schools.nyc.gov/returntoschool2020) and sign up. And if there's questions and concerns, please talk to your principal, talk to your parent coordinator. The DOE has lots of folks available to

answer your questions. We want to make sure that for those for whom in-person education is best and for those who have been waiting for the opportunity, that they know all about this opt-in period, get all their questions answered, and are able to take full advantage of it. So, we know the power of our educators to help our children forward. We know all the great things that happen in a school community for parents who have been waiting for that opportunity. Here it is – today through November 15th.

Okay. Now, I want to go back to where we started – this amazing experience we're having already with democracy in this city, the amazing turnout of New Yorkers, 1.1 million-plus already. But I want to remind people, there is no early voting today. The early voting period has ended. But tomorrow, of course, polls are open in this city 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM – 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM. You can find your poll site by going online. If you're not sure, you can go to [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) and get the information you need about where to vote. Now, we want people who haven't yet voted either early voting or absentee to have all the information they need to vote in-person and we want people to know that it is safe. We want people to know that when you go out there, it will be safe and secure. We also want people to know that we will not accept any effort to intimidate voters in New York City. And if you're out there at a poll site and you see election folks wearing this – this would be city volunteers outside poll sites focused on making sure that no one is intimidated, no one is harassed. The Election Observer Corps is going to be out there in force – over 500 volunteers, lawyers and city officials, people who are giving their time of themselves to make sure the election is accurate, safe, no one is intimidated, no one is harassed. Also, there'll be a lot of translation services available for folks who need that. We want to make sure everyone gets the answers to their questions and can vote effectively and safely.

Now, I want you to hear about these preparations and I want you to hear about them from someone who's really devoted herself to making sure that everyone is empowered, everyone gets the information they need, everyone gets the translation they need. This is the great work that she and her colleagues are doing at the New York City Civic Engagement Commission. And it's my honor to introduce the Chair of the Civic Engagement Commission, Dr. Sarah Sayeed.

**Chair and Executive Director Sarah Sayeed, Civic Engagement Commission:** Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. The Civic Engagement Commission is a new agency to promote civic participation and improve civic trust in New York City. We're working with our partners to make sure all eligible voters in New York City have access, knowledge, and confidence to participate fully in elections. A crucial part of this is equipping limited English proficient voters with knowledge about their rights and the voting process. Language should not be a barrier to civic participation. We're glad that BOE is doing what's mandated under the Voting Rights Act, providing interpretation in Spanish citywide, and, in some counties, Chinese, Bengali, Korean Hindi, and Punjabi. And because we live in a city that speaks 200 and more languages, we must go above and beyond this minimum. Our city's voters deserve that commitment. The City's Civic Engagement Commission is helping meet this need by providing expanded interpretation services in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Urdu, and Yiddish.

We were privileged to serve New Yorkers at 25 early voting early voting sites this past weekend, and really looking forward to serving 52 additional poll sites tomorrow. Sites are selected based

on the highest concentration of voters speaking each program language. The commission has been coordinating closely with the New York City Board of Elections on operations. Our services are complimentary and do not duplicate any service provided by the Board of Elections under the Voting Rights Act.

To spread awareness of people's rights, we also have PSA's in 12 languages to encourage the city's limited English voters to bring a friend or family member, not an employer or a union rep to serve as their interpreter. And they both just need to sign a form at the poll site. If you'd like to find out whether the commission will be offering language services at your poll site, please check [nyc.gov/wearevoters](http://nyc.gov/wearevoters). The landing page is available in 12 languages by clicking on the translate button. And we'd also love to ask you as New Yorkers to help us share our PSA's more widely. And these are also available on [nyc.gov/wearevoters](http://nyc.gov/wearevoters).

I'm going to end with this – I'm deeply encouraged and inspired that more than 1 million people turned out to vote early in New York City. And to every single voter who has not yet voted, this is our time to show the world that we are voters. Voting is a commitment to yourself, to your community and to our shared democracy. Make a plan and vote. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Sarah. And to everyone, I want to thank you. And everyone at the Civic Engagement Commission that makes such a difference to let people know how important it is to vote and to make it easy to vote. And that's what we're working on every day. Now, I want to talk about Election Day and the aftermath. Look, everyone's thinking about this deeply. Everyone's concerned. I want to start with what we have known from the past and we should be prepared for – that the election results will not necessarily be a 100 percent clear on Tuesday night. They may not even be clear on Wednesday. We've had this experience before as a nation. We've had this experience before in this city. First of all, remember, so many people voted by mail and it does take time to count those ballots. And this city, those ballots can come in after Election Day so long as they're postmarked by Election Day. So, it's natural that the count may take some time. There's tremendous concern, obviously, about everything happening out there in the country. But look, let's look at the facts – right now, we don't see any example of a voter fraud in this country, in this city on any widespread level at all. Almost no incidents of it. We know that the count historically can take time and the more mail imbalance, the more time it takes. This is something that's a part of our history, but also a part of our history is the ability to keep going and keep having orderly elections and keep having a peaceful transfer of power no matter what is happening in this country or this world. That was true, literally, in the midst of a civil war in this nation. It was true during the Great Depression. It was true during world wars. We have to remember what a strong, clear American tradition it is to have that peaceful transfer of power, to have every vote counted no matter how long it takes, and to respect the results. And, obviously, we understand that there's a right way to express views and a wrong way to express views. And, right now, we're all very troubled, seeing the President of the United States question in advance the validity of the election. We've never seen that before from a president. We've never seen a president encourage voter suppression and harassment in this kind of fashion. The American people are going to have the final say here. And like New Yorkers – over a million New Yorkers to vote early, over 95 million Americans have voted early, which is amazing and inspiring. So, we are in an unprecedented time, there's a reason people are so worried, but I want folks to know this city is prepared. I want folks to know that for those who

want to express themselves about the results, the way to do that is peacefully. That will always be honored. But the most important thing right now is to focus on the task at hand, to make sure that every single New Yorker votes, and that their right to vote is protected. And that's what this city will do.

Okay. Let's now talk about our indicators for today. Let me comment on them as we go along. So, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients – today's report is 80 patients. Again, that's a number closer to what we saw earlier, a few weeks back – and the confirmed positivity level of 16.8 percent. So, those both, in the scheme of things, are pretty good numbers for today. Now, here's the number that is causing us concern for sure – the number of cases. Number two is the new reported cases on a seven-day average threshold of 550 cases – today's report, 593. As I've said before, that is an area of concern. Some of that comes from just a lot more testing, and a lot more testing as a good thing, and I want to keep encouraging people to get tested on a very high level, but we are watching that number carefully. And the most important number, as always, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold five percent – today's report, a worrisome number, obviously, 2.08 percent. But the rolling seven-day average, a better number and more consistent with where we've been in the last few weeks, 1.81 percent. So, still that number suggests some consistency with where we've been last few weeks. We want to turn the tide now with all the outreach and the face mask wearing and the social distancing and the testing. We want to start knocking down that seven-day rolling average, but we're keeping a very close eye on the situation because we're obviously at a point where that has gone up in recent weeks and we take that very seriously.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

**Moderator:** Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. We're joined today by Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Chair and Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission, Dr. Dave Chokshi, the City's Health Commissioner, First Deputy Chancellor Donald Conyers, Senior Advisor and Council for DemocracyNYC Laura Wood, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to our first question with Juliet from 1010 WINS.

**Question:** Oh, hi. Good morning, everybody. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How is it going today?

**Mayor:** Thank you, Juliet. It's going well today. So far, so good. How are you doing?

**Question:** I'm okay. Thank you – an early voter.

**Mayor:** There you go – the best kind of voter.

**Question:** Yes. So, my question to you is, so many businesses have been boarding up and closing shop. What are your thoughts on that and what are your concerns about violence in the next couple of days here in the city?

**Mayor:** Juliet, I checked in with our Police Commissioner last night. We do not have any specific reports or specific threats at this point. Everyone, of course, is concerned about the election results and what plays out after. But I want to emphasize, at this moment, we don't see a specific challenge. We are ready for all sorts of challenges. A lot of preparation has been happening over the last few weeks and I'm meeting with City officials, PD officials today to continue that preparation. As to the stores – look, every store owner has to make their own decision. Again, we do not have a specific threat. I respect the decision of each store owner. We are not giving guidance to store owners to do that, but if that's what they choose to do, we certainly understand. Go ahead, Juliet.

**Question:** Okay. Yeah. And to follow up – given that, as you just mentioned, that there might not be any sort of definitive conclusion for the next few days, or that could go longer, how concerned are you that there could be a lot of street activity and businesses are remaining closed? And, you know, what about the safety of people who are out on the street if they need to get to work or go to business, if they're running into any of these demonstrations or protests, or acts of violence?

**Mayor:** Look Juliet, the history of this city being able to respect and accommodate peaceful protests, very long, impressive history, really, and when you think about all the things that this city is able to manage, remember what it's like every year when we have, you know, well over a hundred world leaders here for the UN General Assembly, and normal years, all the times that there are major events happening around the city. There's plenty of situations where the City of New York and the NYPD have to handle a huge, huge numbers of people. So, we are prepared.

Now, I think we shouldn't prejudge. I think we're going into something that we haven't experienced before and that's true. We're going to know a lot more though obviously on election night, a close election is one thing, a not so close election is another thing. The way the vote counts continue to go is going to tell us a lot, both, you know, the process, the timeline, what the candidates say – there's a lot of variables, but we'll be ready for anything. I think people should start with the assumption that we're all going on with our lives as always as New Yorkers and that if we need people to take any special precautions, we'll be saying it for sure. So, right now, I work from the assumption that this city, as always, will be ready.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Rich from WCBS 880.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, just to follow again on the possibility of violence with the boarded-up buildings and the demos. Is there a ban on the use of mounted units from the PD to control these demos? If that I remember something like that going on, and if so, if things get out of hand, will it continue?

**Mayor:** Rich, I think what was clear in the course of this year is the preference is not to use those units. The policy, the approach is to use them only when absolutely necessary. So, I don't

expect a situation right now where there'll be needed. But obviously we'll judge by the specifics. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay, and another topic entirely. How are the schools doing? How many schools do you know of? I mean, you may not have a handle on it, but how many schools do you know, have been closed for a couple of weeks? Is that number of mounting staying stable? How does it look?

**Mayor:** Right now, there's 21 that are closed for a two-week period. Although I remind you that number changes every day, because some come out of that period of quarantine, and others might go in. Now, remember, that's a meaningful number. I don't want to belittle for those school communities. That's a challenge and an inconvenience to say the least, but I do want to remind you that's 21 out of 1600. So, by any measure, the vast, vast majority of schools are open on any given time. When we see a situation where a school needs to be closed, we work out of an abundance of caution and, so far, that's served us really well because as we know, the schools overall have been extraordinarily safe, and so I think our cautious, you know, health and safety first approach is really working for us.

**Moderator:** Next. We have Jillian from WBAI.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Jillian, how you been?

**Question:** Well, I had the flu, which is what I've been absent so, I'm on the uptick, thankfully. I wish you a speedy recovery. I have that it wasn't so speedy, but at least it was the regular flu. So, yeah, so I wanted to start with a question along the lines of my previous question regarding the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which I'll have to get back to another time. The SoHo rezoning, this is also a landmark or protected area and a tourist attraction. Opponents say you can have an affordable housing mandate without having to upzone like other cities have done, without further destroying New York City architecture and history and inevitably causing gentrification with the seventy-five percent luxury apartment standard and thus changing the entire character of the area, and where does your relationship with Edison Properties factor into the plan, which you've said earlier this year, couldn't be done because of time constraints before your term ends next year.

**Mayor:** So, a lot of pieces there, let me try and give you a simple, straightforward answer. The – I disagree with the analysis that says SoHo is going to gentrify. I think it is extraordinarily gentrified right now, and the whole idea is to introduce affordable housing into a neighborhood that has had very, very little. When you talk about a mandate, obviously I need to know more specifically what you mean, but we've looked at all sorts of tools that actually create affordable housing and came to the conclusion that a mandatory inclusionary housing was the way to go, that we think rezonings done the right way produce a lot more affordable housing and that you can depend on it being produced compared to other strategies. So, to me, this is about taking a neighborhood that is thoroughly gentrified, that doesn't have an opportunity for folks, lower incomes to live there and creating that opportunity, and originally it wasn't clear to me whether

there would be enough support to move this quickly through the council. I now believe that there is that support and we want to get this done. Go ahead.

**Question:** Thanks. I'll have to follow up on that another time, because the second part of my question has to do with the small businesses, New York City small businesses, who are suffering immeasurably right now because of the pandemic and many won't survive or have already closed. So, why is the city even considering any way to facilitate the big box stores for liberate as the uploading currently does when they clearly don't need help? There are now two targets in the East village alone and will invariably push out the last few in independent small businesses that manage to survive.

**Mayor:** Let me just clarify Jillian, you're saying big box stores in terms of the SoHo, NoHo rezoning?

**Question:** Yeah.

**Mayor:** Yeah, look I appreciate the question. I would say, first of all, I haven't had the impression that that's a likelihood in that area, but a fair question. I think the bigger problem in that area is what we've seen in a lot of Manhattan, retail of all kinds starting to decline rapidly. This was a problem before the pandemic. I talked about in the State of the City back in the beginning of the year, this is a growing problem now. So, the notion that the restrictions in currently in SoHo NoHo really inhibit retail, and that's not good. We're losing a lot of retail. We have to address it. That's part of what's motivating this is to make sure we have a strong retail sector still in Manhattan and all the jobs that go with it. I don't believe it is a contradiction as you presented between big box stores and smaller stores right now, I think retail in general is getting undermined in much of Manhattan and we need to find ways to preserve all of it. So, I don't have the impression that plays out the way you're saying on several levels. I do know if we don't do something different we're going to see a declining retail sector and that's not good for the city.

**Moderator:** Next up is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mayor de Blasio. How are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good, Katie. How are you?

**Question:** I'm great. I'm great. My first question is in regards to the like pro-Trump parades that were around the city yesterday, I know they blocked traffic on some of the bridges and also in New Jersey, which isn't your concern. But I noticed in the video of a lot of the parades and photos, the cars had their license plates obstructed, and, you know, my understanding is that's not legal. There were plenty of police there. I don't know if there were any, I know there were arrest related to unrest against those parades, but I'm curious if you've seen these videos and have you been explained how cars can drive around New York City with both front and back plates obscured without police intervention if there wasn't?

**Mayor:** Yeah, that's a good question, Katie and I have not seen those videos. I had not heard that report before. That certainly worries me. You're right. It's not legal to obscure your license plates

and that should be addressed. I'm certain sometimes if there's multiple things happening that officers need to focus on other things first, but it should be addressed going forward. That's not something that is acceptable and, and we will certainly follow up on that. Go ahead.

**Question:** Thank you, and my second question is in relation to the uptick in COVID cases. I mean, is there any sort of from the Tests and Trace, is there any link to any action in the last couple of weeks? I don't know if it's early voting. I know it's only been a week, but is there any indication now that the uptick is related to specific events or one specific event, or is it just more of a widespread increase in the city?

**Mayor:** No, that's an important question. I'll start, and I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. Look, I think the common sense answer here is that what's happened at Brooklyn and Queens, even though it continues to get better, clearly that's where one of the multiplier effects is here. We've seen a lot more testing in the areas affected in Brooklyn and Queens. That's really, really good that obviously increased the case numbers though, the positive cases, and you know, in a case like this, the infection spread through a community, through a family, it's going to have a bigger impact than just a short term. I don't see a nexus to early voting at this point, I think it's the combination of the impact of, you know, a relatively meaningful slice of Brooklyn and Queens, and then it's also what we're seeing around the country, the larger increase and some of that, less of that than other places, but some of that manifesting through travel Dr. Varma then Dr. Chokshi.

**Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma:** Great, thank you. We have answered this, talked about this a little bit last week. So, first of all, we know that about 10 percent of our cases in the past few weeks have been related to travel. Most of that is domestic travel and some of that is international travel. Now, for the remainder of the 90 percent, we can't always track down a common source of infection, but what is common about the different settings that people report and what we find from our investigation of, of small clusters is basically the same themes that we expect and, and ties into our prevention messages any setting that is indoors, where people do not wear masks continuously, and don't always maintain six feet of distance. So, as we said before, indoor activities are more dangerous than outdoor activities and six feet of distance and wearing a mask is the best way to stay safe while indoors. So, what we've seen in clusters that have been associated with workplaces or any other type of indoor settings is those common themes. So, we just, we need to really continuously message to everybody about how important it is to adhere to those prevention measures.

**Mayor:** Dr. Chokshi.

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Thank you. I just wanted to add one, important point, which is that, specifically around voting – voting is an essential activity. It is good for our health and it's safe. Particularly when you follow our guidance, specifically around, making sure that you are wearing a mask or a face covering as usual, ensuring that you keep that six feet of distance, including when you're in a line, and minimizing your time and doors. So, for example, one thing you can do is look at your ballot ahead of time to keep the flow going through the polling site, as well as to minimize your time



there, and then of course, make sure to use good hand hygiene, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.

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

**Moderator:** Next is Reema from Chalkbeat.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

**Mayor:** Good Reema, how have you been?

**Question:** I'm good. I'm good. So, a couple of questions for you. The first one, on Friday, the Governor said schools closed in red and orange zones could reopen if students or staff return, first testing negative, and then after that, it sounds like there has to be, around of testing with a quarter of the school's population tested on a weekly basis, and then those schools could close again with a number of positive results. So, I'm wondering when is the city going to open the schools, I think it's about a couple dozen in those areas, and how will the testing plan work?

**Mayor:** Reema, really good question, and we are looking at that right now. I mean, the State rules came out late on Friday. We're obviously assessing them. They're different than what we've seen previously, but look, I think the first question here is what's going to happen with the red zones in Brooklyn. We're watching the numbers very carefully. The state's going to make that decision, but by the numbers, I think it's fair to say. You could well see some changes to those red zones in the course of this week, and that's obviously the best solution here to have those red zones turned to yellow and then the school reopening protocols, very straightforward so that we're assessing the rules, we're assessing that timeline, and then we're going to make a decision in the next couple of days about how to handle it. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay. I'm going to switch topics just slightly here. So, with the City's new opt-in policy or the window that you mentioned in your remarks earlier, we were thinking that there could be an influx of new students into the school buildings just after the holidays. So, when people might be having large family gatherings, there might be traveling and given that the infection rates are trending upward or seem to be – do the city's health experts think that it's wise to have more students coming into buildings just in that window of time?

**Mayor:** Let me start and turn to Dr. Chokshi and Dr. Varma, look, it's a very fair concern. I want to emphasize that, sort of take your question and go to the root of it. First of all, we're going to strongly urge people not to travel. It's difficult, it's painful, I hate saying it, but we're going to urge people not to travel for the holidays, to stay local and to not run the risk of people bringing back the disease, before you even discussed the schools, to the city as a whole to their families. Second, if anyone is sick, we want them to stay home. If anyone's symptomatic, we want them to stay home. If people travel someplace else and they come back, they have to observe the quarantine. So really if we do all that, right, hopefully what you're raising is not going to be a particularly large challenge. But look, I think it's time, obviously, given how safe the schools have been, and given that there are parents who definitely want an opportunity to get back into the schools with their kids, it's time to give them that opt in period, but we're going to be really

careful about everything we do in the schools continuing to hold very, very high health standards. That's what's worked for us. Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Varma?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, well I think the Mayor covered the major points here. I would just underline too, the first is that in addition to all of those layers of safety that the Mayor described that have, thus far, you know, kept children's safe, a very important one is ensuring, testing and so we have very widespread, you know, available testing in communities that everyone can take advantage of as well as the testing that we're offering in schools as well through that random sample approach. So that's the first part of it. The second thing is just to say that, you know, one thing that is often lost in this conversation is just how important school attendance is to the health of children, to the health of students, but also for the health of families. So that's why it makes it so worthy for us to take this very rigorous approach to safety, which also helps to improve the health of students and families.

**Mayor:** Dr. Varma?

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah, and I would add to all of that by saying that if we continue to see higher rates of transmission in New York City, like we are right now, it is certainly possible that more members of the school community might get infected. But what we know from our studies and our evaluation right now is that those infections are not being transmitted in the school. That is, you know, just like any New Yorker might be at higher risk potentially of getting infection, anybody needs to make sure they're taking all of the important precautions that we talk about. But what we found so far is with our rigorous protocols that, you know, we can keep people safe and make sure the school isn't the place where people are getting infected. But we just need to make sure that everybody, whether they're part of the school community or not takes all of these precautions in every setting that they're in.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Next is Reuvain from Hamodia.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Many people have called –

**Mayor:** How you doing?

**Question:** Hi. Many people have called for alternate side apartment to be suspended in red zones. The residents in these areas have been asked during this shutdown to stay home and keep their kids home from school for weeks, although the school shut down specifically is ending now, keep the businesses closed and stay home from houses of worship, how could people have been expected to go out and move the car? So, I want to know, will you suspend the alternate side parking in red zones and dismiss the tickets that were already given in these zones?

**Mayor:** Reuvain, look, this is an issue we've dealt with throughout the crisis when we suspend alternate side, obviously we do it citywide as a whole. We don't historically have a lot of experience breaking it up by different areas. Look, I'll look at the concern for sure, including the

concern about the tickets, but I'd say right now we do not have a plan to address alternate side differently than we have in the past. Go ahead.

**Question:** You recently announced the Open Storefronts Program, Councilman Deutsch has suggested that you apply it to non-essential businesses in red zones. You've mentioned repeatedly how outdoor gatherings seem to be much less of a problem than indoor gatherings, in fact, even the large protest in the summer did not seem to spread the virus because they were outdoors. So, considering how much the small business owners have been struggling, will you allow this Open Storefronts Program to extend to non-essential businesses and restaurants in red zones?

**Mayor:** Well, first of all the Open Storefronts Initiative, you know, we're going to do this for the rest of the year, see how it goes, hopefully if it goes well, it's something we can build upon. The goal here is to ensure, as you said, that businesses can be outside and can take advantage of more space, more customers, and in a safer manner. Given what has happened in the red zones, I think it's a fair question. We did not initially plan it for use in red zones per se. We planned it as a bigger initiative. It's a fair question, although again, I want to note my hope and prayer is that in the course of this week, you're going to see the red zones compress and fewer and fewer areas needing those kinds of restrictions. This is – once again, I'm happy for us to consider and come back with an answer over the next couple of days.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more, first up is Yoav from The City.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, we've written about New Yorkers who are struggling and at risk of losing their things or property that's in self storage units and the Department of Consumer Affairs has exempted the self storage sector from regulation in New York. So that means there's no cap or standards on fees, rent increases, et cetera, and also nowhere for people to complain if they think their things were wrongly auctioned off, and currently many people are at risk of losing their stuff, especially with unemployment as high as it is. So, there are some elected officials who are calling for DCA to oversee this sector and create some rules. Just wondering what you think of that idea should the industry, which is expanding and very profitable, be regulated in New York City?

**Mayor:** That's a good question you have, and I won't pretend to be an expert on it, but I'll tell you, when you say here's an industry that may not be sufficiently regulated, that concerns me a lot. Let me find out currently whether the division of labor is there between the City and State, and if it makes sense for us to take a bigger role in that. I certainly don't want to see people's belongings mistreated and people as consumers treated unfairly. So if that's something we need to do something more about, let's figure out between the City and the State who should handle that. We'll come back with an answer quickly. Go ahead.

**Question:** Thank you. On the issue of protests, you know, the investigation into how the protests in May and June were handled are still ongoing, and yet right now we're kind of seeing a resurgence and protests and certainly a fear of increased protest after the election. I'm wondering what the timeline is for those investigations, but also is it the NYPD specifically adjusting anything they did in May or June that may have been deemed problematic?

**Mayor:** The timeline – it's very, very soon, I don't have an exact day for you – but very soon a report coming back from DOI in the Law Department. I think the bigger question you're asking about the PD and making adjustments, yes, of course, there are adjustments being made. The overall effort to address an incredibly challenging experience that this whole city had in May and June, that was one thing, but what we saw that needed to be better was a clear, fast response in the instances, and they were few, but they needed to be addressed more quickly where an officer did something inappropriate. Clearly better, clearer rules and follow through on protecting legal observers, and protecting journalists, but again, needing to make sure everyone is properly registered and their identification is clear, but you know, those are areas where there needs to be improvement, and making sure that in any situation there's close coordination between the decisions of the officers on the ground with more senior leadership. So those are all areas that I think there's been a lot of work done and obviously a lot more training for officers to deal with a protest situation, a lot of that training has proceeded over the last few months. So I think there'll be a number of areas where you'll see a different approach.

**Moderator:** Last we'll go to Luis from New Yorkled.

**Question:** Hey there, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

**Mayor:** Good, how you been?

**Question:** Good, good, good. The Sheriff's Office did some amazing work in October shutting down at least eight illegal parties, bars and/or clubs, but I'm curious about the people at these gatherings. There were over 500 for the last one, nearly 441 prior and hundreds of all for all the others. Now I imagine these might qualify as super spreader events, especially considering the indoor setting circumstances. So are these citizens being reprimanded or at least identified in any way or are they just being like, oh –

**Mayor:** It's an important question, Luis, thank you. The Sheriff's Office has done an outstanding job breaking up a number of events over time. I think an important story here is that in New York City, compared to a lot of other major cities in the world, you've seen less of those events proportionally. That's the good news. I think people have taken seriously the rules a lot more here than a lot of other places, but still you need enforcement and you need consequences, and the sheriff has done that. They broke up two major parties this weekend, two major Halloween events, effectively gave a number of summonses, including some of the highest-level summonses, the \$15,000 summonses. So definitely people are being held accountable, but I think your question is a very good one, what is done to help the folks who are there know that they need to get tested, and let's see if Dr. Choksi or Dr. Varma have any information on how that follow-up is done, and that's an area we need to focus on going forward, making sure that people know if they're at that kind of event. Well, obviously, we'd like to believe they knew already they shouldn't be there, but that they get reminded how important it is to get tested after. Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Varma, you want to jump in?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, sir, just to pick up on the last point, the most important thing is for anyone who has been at a large gathering it's important to get tested immediately. That's

important because it helps us both ensure that anyone who has a positive test, who is a case is isolated so that interrupts the spread of the virus, but it also allows our contact tracing to commence and make sure that we identify contacts for, you know, for that exposure as well. But the most important thing is we have to focus on prevention. As the Mayor said, the Sheriff has done a great work in breaking these large events up but particularly as we get into the colder months, we have to ensure that we spread the word about preventing those large events and those gatherings from happening in the first place.

**Mayor:** Dr. Varma, you want to add?

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Nothing else from me.

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

**Question:** All right, thank you. With New Jersey and other neighboring states not subject to the new and old travel advisory rules, yet still with worsening COVID numbers, I'm wondering how much does that complicate things for these Sheriff's Office checkpoints and for you? I mean, on the one hand, you're trying to protect New Yorkers and fend off a second wave. And on the other hand, your hands are kind of tied. Isn't that frustrating?

**Mayor:** No, it's not actually, I appreciate the question, Luis, I'll tell you why, because we understand the interconnection of the immediate states and although their numbers have gone up, like ours have gone up, they don't bear any resemblance to other places in the country where the numbers have skyrocketed. So, I think it's fair to say, we still remain particularly concerned about travelers coming in from other parts of the country, other parts of the world, where there's just massive amounts of increase. That's a much bigger concern than some of the travel more locally. I – look, I think we're going to have to step up all of our quarantine efforts going forward especially because people – the holidays, because people are going to be indoors more because it's colder. So the key to me is that folks understand they have to be serious about quarantine and that there's going to be real consequences and we have to make that real vivid. That's the central point to me.

Okay, everyone, look, as we conclude, just want to emphasize, we're, you know, on the dawn of a new era in this country, obviously something is going to happen tomorrow that's going to frame the future of our lives, whatever it is. We are – all of us concerned about what happens tomorrow night and, in the aftermath, we have to be ready, but we also have to feel that we'll be able to manage it, whatever it is. I want to remind you that when you're looking at the great unknown as we are now, remember what history teaches us about New York City and New Yorkers, how resilient New Yorkers are, how this city more than any place, can handle whatever's thrown at us. So, yeah, there may be some challenges ahead, but we know how to handle anything and everything in this city and our people are good and our people are compassionate to each other and we will find our way through. So, we'll keep you constantly updated to what we're seeing and hearing and, and the adjustments we need to make to address these times we're in but again, I always put my faith in New Yorkers because we always find our way through. Thank you, everybody.

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