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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS THREE NEW LAWS
PROTECTING TENANTS FROM HARASSMENT**

Mayor: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon.

Today, we are taking another big step in protecting tenants from unscrupulous landlords. We are signing legislation that makes it illegal to harass tenants into accepting a buyout offer.

[Applause]

Amen.

[Applause]

There are too many cases in this city of landlords using cash offers to get rent-regulated tenants to move so the landlords can charge sky-high rents, and that will end now. Those days are over.

[Applause]

There will be real consequences for this abusive behavior – and I want to make clear, the penalties are real. Penalties in the first instance will be \$10,000 dollars per unit – per apartment. Any landlord who violates this law will be fined – first instance, a fine of \$10,000 dollars per apartment. That number goes up with any subsequent abuses.

I want to – you’re going to hear from some of my elected colleagues in just a moment. I want to thank and acknowledge some of the other folks who are here with us who have been so supportive and so helpful in this process – Kate Goldstein, the executive director of Tenants and Neighbors –

[Applause]

– got her cheering section here; Kamilla – Kamilla, I hope – I don’t know how to say your name properly –

Kamilla Sjodin: [inaudible]

Mayor: Sjo-din – I would never have guessed it – Kamilla Sjodin, associate director for housing law at NYLAG, thank you.

[Applause]

Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at the Legal Aid Society –

[Applause]

Natasia de Silva, staff attorney at Legal Services NYC Bronx.

[Applause]

And Scott Stamper, the supervising attorney for MFY Legal Services.

I want to thank all of you – everyone that I’ve just named, and all the people who work with and for you in your organizations have spent years working against this kind of abuse, protecting tenants from unscrupulous landlords. It has been, sadly, endless work, but you’ve done it well, and we’re thrilled today – I am and I know my colleagues from the City Council are – to finally be giving you some of the tools that you’ve long needed so we can fight this fight better. So thank you to all of you.

Now, let’s put this in context for a moment. The city is faced with an overall affordability crisis – I’ve talked about this a lot. This affordability crisis is becoming such a challenge for so many New Yorkers. It’s existed for years, but in many ways it’s deepening because the cost of housing keeps going up. And it would be one thing if we could say at the same time, well, don’t worry, wages and benefits are just shooting up, everything’s going to be great, everyone’s making lots and lots of money and has great, great benefits – no.

We’ve found, sadly, in too many cases the opposite. And you may have seen in the paper today a very powerful new study released, and it pointed out – this is a national study – that despite – despite falling unemployment and increased productivity all over this country, wages for low-income workers have actually fallen since the 2009 recovery began. So what kind of recovery is that when working people are actually going backwards economically, and when the cost of housing just keeps getting higher and higher? That’s what we’re facing here, and that’s why protecting the affordable housing we have, and protecting tenants from harassment is so crucial.

And we know, if any New Yorker can afford their housing, that’s the number one expense in their lives. If you want to talk about fighting income inequality, one of the best things we can do is make sure that housing is affordable, because it’s the number one expense in people’s lives.

And one of the biggest problems is when affordable housing is taken away, especially through unscrupulous means.

Now, I always say – and this is my experience – the vast majority of landlords do the right thing, follow the law, treat their tenants with respect, but there are too many unscrupulous landlords, and there are too many, as the cost of housing has gone up, have become even more aggressive in their behavior. They use any tactic they can to drive out rent-stabilized tenants just to make a

quick buck – and that means things like knocking on doors late at night, and harassing people who keep coming back to them over and over again. Some unscrupulous landlords have hired people who have a very innocuous title – Relocation Specialists – well, these are folks that are actually paid to harass tenants, to get inside their heads, to convince them they have to leave.

And remember, these buyout offers – you know, look – a tenant may look at that offer and in the first case say, wow, that's money I could use, and that's a choice the tenant has to make. If the landlord has not acted in an unscrupulous or illegal manner under this bill, the tenant has the decision to make whenever that money is dangled in front of them. But let's – let's speak the truth here. Those deals rarely work out in the tenants' favor. They always work out in the landlords' favor.

For too many tenants, that short-term money dissipates, and they're left without affordable housing for the long-term. And it's preying on people who are economically vulnerable in the first place – that's what makes it so immoral. It looks like a short-term gain, but you know what? You wake up a year later and you don't have affordable housing anymore, and you're not going to find it anymore. It's a trap.

So we care deeply about protecting each and every family, each and every tenant.

We also know there's a bigger concern for the whole city. Every time one of those rent-regulated units goes out of rent regulation, we've lost affordable housing. It's never coming back. That's why it's so important to make sure that the rules are followed and the law is respected.

Let me give you one story – this one is painfully vivid about this phenomenon. A man named Sean – he – a senior who's been living in the same rent-stabilized unit in the Upper East Side for nearly three decades – 30 years living in the same unit. Sean suffers from severe anxiety. He has other mental health challenges. He's unable to work. He's living on disability insurance. You would think the landlord would feel compassion, but no. What happened? The landlord waged a non-stop effort to harass Sean out of his apartment – knocking on Sean's door every day for months on end, even though Sean had made very clear he didn't want to take a buyout. He wanted to keep his apartment. Sean lives on a fixed income. He literally couldn't find another place to live in this city, the only place he's known.

Well, these aggressive tactics by the landlord took a toll on Sean. Imagine if you had mental health challenges to begin with and disability, and the landlord was preying on that. Sean literally felt a prisoner in his own apartment. He felt he couldn't go outside, because he might run into the landlord, and it started to make his life worse. It started to change his habits. He started to feel he couldn't even answer the door to his apartment.

It went on for about a year and then Sean contacted MFY Legal Services – and we thank them, because they put an end to the harassment of this New Yorker who didn't deserve what he got – and we want to thank everyone at MFY for standing up for Sean.

[Applause]

So there's no room in our city for these ruthless tactics. We will not tolerate them.

The laws today will ban these coercive practices.

First, Intro 682 makes it illegal for an owner to intimidate or threaten a tenant over a buyout offer.

Second, Intro 700-A makes it illegal for anyone to contact about a buyout offer without sharing critical information – and every consumer will recognize this meaning in this law. Imagine telling someone, hey, sign here and you're going to make a lot of money. Well, guess what, the tenants often don't get to see the whole contract and understand the full meaning. Under this law, the tenant has the right to refuse an offer and the right to contact an attorney. And the bill prevents residents from being pressured into taking an offer without fully understanding their rights.

Intro 757-A makes it illegal for a landlord to make a buyout offer for 180 days after a tenant has made clear in writing that they're not interested in a buyout. In other words, it stops the ability of that landlord to just keep coming back and harassing and trying to wear down a tenant once a tenant has made clear their intentions.

We want the tenants of this city to know we have your back. We are here for you and we will stand up to these unscrupulous landlords.

We're going to use every tool we have to preserve affordability, to protect tenants.

These tools that we're going to – the bills that we sign into law today, the tools they'll create, are hugely important in that fight. But it's on top of a number of other big initiatives that are helping right now – the special task force, for example, with the state attorney general – right this minute, aggressively investigating those landlords who are engaging in this abusive behavior. We've already seen some prosecuted. I guarantee you more will be prosecuted. And we want those unscrupulous landlords to understand those prosecutions include criminal prosecutions with much greater penalties.

We've increased funding for free anti-eviction legal services – that is an eight-fold increase – working closely with the City Council.

[Applause]

What we've achieved together, now, \$50 million dollars a year in anti-eviction legal services.

For the first time in the city's Rent Guidelines Board's history – almost 45 years – for the first time ever, a rent freeze that tenants deserve.

[Applause]

And we're going to talk about this a lot in the coming weeks because October 1st is when that rent freeze for one-year leases – again, 2 percent increase for two-year leases – that's for leases that come due starting October 1st, so we really want to make sure that every New Yorker in a rent-regulated apartment knows their rights to these new terms, and that the city is standing up for them.

And we are reaching out all over the city. We're doing a kind of community outreach – and I know our colleagues in the Council believe deeply in this, and they're a key part of this as well. We're knocking on doors, we're going to community meetings, we're making sure tenants know their rights, and they know that help is available to them.

And I want to make very clear – right this minute, even before this new law comes into effect, if any New Yorker believes they are being harassed by their landlord, they can call 3-1-1 right now, and we will get them free legal assistance. We will not tolerate it. So any New Yorker who feels they're being harassed can call 3-1-1 right now and get help.

We're just not going to let this problem continue to hemorrhage and undermine the city we love and people who deserve better. We're doing everything in our power to protect our tenants.

Quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I want to bring forward the sponsor of Intro 757-A, and the Speaker of the New York City Council, Melissa Mark-Viverito.

[...]

Mayor: Okay. Here's what we're going to do – first, we're going to sign the bills – I think there's broad agreement on that fact. Then we're going to come back here and do questions with the media on the topic of these bills. Then I'm going to give you an update related to Legionnaires' and we're going to take questions on that topic – and that is all we will be doing. So let's sign the bills!

[Applause]

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intros. 757-A, 682-A, and 700-A]

[...]

Mayor: Vicki, stay up here. kay. I am going to repeat – we're doing questions and answers on these bills, then I'm going to give you an update on Legionnaires'. We're going to have questions and answers on Legionnaires', then we are moving on. On these bills – yes?

Question: [inaudible] thank you, everyone, for allowing me to ask my question. My first question's going to go to the mayor, and then after our dialogue has concluded, mayor, I will ask my second question –

Mayor: You are very organized, sir.

[Laughter]

Question: I try to be. I will ask my second question to Speaker Viverito. First, I want to ask you about the penalties that you describe. From your perspective, since the fines are steep, do you think that this will deter bad behavior from the landlords? Or do you think it will still be present somewhat even with the legislation? And, if it is, what steps will you and other officials take?

Mayor: I'll start and anyone who wants to join in, please do. I think it's going to have a very major impact on stopping tenant harassment. I believe that this kind of penalty – again, \$10,000 dollars in the first instance per apartment. That goes up steeply thereafter. Those are serious penalties that I think will stop bad landlords from trying to harass tenants. But I certainly believe some bad landlords will think that they can go undetected and think that their tenants won't know about the bill or won't know that they have these rights. Our job is to get the message out in every way at the grassroots in every way we can. So, again, I emphasize that anyone who thinks they are being harassed should call 3-1-1 so we can get them help. We need to know if there's a problem. But if we do the outreach right – and I know a lot of our colleagues from advocacy groups in this room and nonprofits in this room are going to help us get the message out – I think more and more bad landlords will realize that they will be caught if they break the law.

Question: And my second question to Speaker Viverito – I want to ask you since [inaudible] is in your district. Personally for you, what does this mean and how do you feel that this legislation is becoming law?

City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito: Well, it's important. I mentioned about being here, and the kind of housing that is reflected here and provided here is one that we've got to create more of because when you see these pressures that exist. And the pressures exist because not enough of housing exists. And obviously those landlords want to maximize their profits. So I think that we are very excited of what is happening here in particular – excited about these bills – and, as the mayor said, it is all incumbent upon us in our offices, through our outreach, and the meetings that we go to to let tenants know that this is now law and that they have the protections afforded. This just continues to be an example of how aggressive we've been as a council in partnership with this administration to protect tenants. I mean, you've got to make sure that tenants really avail themselves to these protections because it's a way of maintaining their home and maintaining their presence in our neighborhoods.

Commissioner Vicki Been, Department of Housing Preservation and Development: I think it's really important to recognize that this is one tool and we've been trying to build that toolbox very, you know, aggressively. So, we've got inspectors in the field every day making sure that harassment is not occurring in the form of, you know, withdrawal of services and not repairing things. We've got an enormous number of tools that we're now adding to the toolbox. And in combination, they send a very powerful message to landlords – you will get caught, we will have a tool that can catch you, and we're on it. So, I think you have to look at the whole picture.

Question: And to follow up, if I may, on your statement Commissioner Been – what would you say to the numerous calls? Because you mentioned that before [inaudible] from landlords. How will you get them to stop with this bill?

Commissioner Been: So, we will be very aggressive in terms of – if a tenant calls 3-1-1, we will refer them to lawyers. We will refer them to the legal services organizations. We will make sure

that we are in there checking the landlord and the building. We will work with the taskforce, with the attorney general, the tenant protection unit. We will use all of those tools available to us, and we will also, you know, work hard to get the word out along with all of our partners.

Mayor: On this topic of the legislation – yes?

Question: From the 3-1-1 calls for the work that is being – outreach – door-to door. Are you seeing more cases of harassment in the past year? The list – are the numbers steady?

Mayor: I'll give you my broad view and then Vicki, or anyone else who has a sense of specific numbers on harassment – look, there's no question what I have heard from New Yorkers over years and years is that as the price of housing has gone up, and there's been more, sadly, incentive for bad landlords to harass – we're certainly seeing more and more of it. In terms of quantifying it, let me have the commissioner give you a sense of that.

Commissioner Been: So, the best evidence that we have is tenant harassment claims that are brought in court. Because when people call 3-1-1, they often say the landlord isn't fixing things or something like that. That may not actually be harassment. So, the best evidence that we have is tenant harassment claims in court, and they have gone up – for example, in Fiscal Year '08, we got 42 filed in court. In Fiscal Year '15, we had almost 800. Okay – so that's very powerful evidence.

Mayor: And that's based on – that's based on a process that's not easy for tenants. Obviously a huge number of tenants go to housing court without representation, which is something we're trying to work on – the council cares a lot about that. And so, the point is that the laws were not as strong as they are now. But we've always known there's a lot of tenants who suffered harassment, not thinking they had any other option. So, this is both about strengthening the laws, but also letting tenants know they have rights and they will be defended in a way they were not in the past. On this topic – yes?

Question: First question is just a very simple question – when do these laws take effect?

Mayor: 90 days – 90 days.

Question: So, in the meantime, people should call 3-1-1?

Mayor: They can call 3-1-1 because we have – with our colleagues in legal aid and Legal Services, et cetera – we have capacity. If someone is in fact being harassed, they potentially can get that legal help. So, anyone who thinks they're being harassed should call. We'll refer them to the legal assistance programs and they'll be evaluated.

Question: And since the public advocate is now here – and something that started when you were public advocate – is there any dovetailing of the worst landlord list as part of this toolbox that you're talking about and the plans that will be –

Public Advocate Letitia James: Thank you. As a result of the worst landlord list, our office has referred a number of complaints to the Legal Aid Society, as well as Legal Services. We have joined with them on quite a few pieces of litigation, which continue to – which are ongoing. Our

office continues to get complaints from landlords and from tenants all throughout the city of New York. And partly it has to do with the failure to provide certain benefits that they are entitled to. And our office has joined with a number of corporate firms in initiating litigation against landlords as a result of their failure to comply with the law.

Speaker Mark-Viverito: I just want to just provide clarification that although these bills – these three bills go into effect in 90 days, these bills are specific to buyout offers. There is already on the books, existing law to protect tenants against harassment, which can take shape in many different ways. So, that is available right now. So if someone does call 3-1-1 and says they're being harassed and they need access to a lawyer, well, there is already these certain tools in place that can help protect tenants.

Mayor: Okay. On this topic – on the topic of the bills and tenant harassment. Going once – going twice – we're now going to talk about Legionnaires. Let me give you an update.

Okay, we – actually, let's have Dr. Bassett and General Manager Michael Kelly of NYCHA join me. Department of health has investigated a small cluster of Legionnaires cases recently identified at the Melrose Houses – part of our public housing authority – in the South Bronx. Now, the original case was isolated and over about six months – oh, I should say March, so almost six months ago. There were two cases that developed during the outbreak while we were focused, of course, on the South Bronx, and which we have now determined to be sourced by the Opera House Hotel location. There is one case that emerged last week. Now, that case is – the timing of it does not disqualify the possibility it still may have been caused by that outbreak at the Opera House Hotel. But it also may have been caused – as we've said in many, many of these gatherings – it may have been caused by a different source because, as everyone knows, there are hundreds of Legionnaires cases in New York City each year. Most happen in isolation. Most happen, thank God, with very little consequence for the patient. So, we have this one new case that we still need more information on to be able to pinpoint whether it is caused by the previous location or something different. That patient is currently hospitalized and recovering. The previous patients all had been treated and recovered fully.

As a result of looking at the situation at Melrose Houses, we tested the water distribution system in three of the buildings. In two buildings, we found negative results. In one building, we found a positive result. Now, it was a very faint positive result, but out of an abundance of caution, we decided that in that one building, we would take additional steps. I should note at the outset, there are six more buildings in the Melrose complex. None of them have had cases associated with them, but, again, out of an abundance of caution, we have tested all six and we expect the answers back from those tests by late afternoon tomorrow.

The department of health has consulted with the Centers for Disease Control, and in the case of the building that tested positive, the plan of action was install water filters to address the situation. Those filters had to be brought in from out of state. They were ordered yesterday. They've arrived this morning. So far, about 50 percent of the filters have been installed as of just about an hour ago. The remaining will all be installed by tomorrow morning. So, what we did was, again, all of this out of an abundance of caution. We shut off hot water at that building – continued cold water. And very important to note that hot water is the context in which Legionnaires develops – Legionnaires or Legionella lives – not cold water. So, cold water continued to be available. Hot water shut off late yesterday. We'll continue – shut off until

tomorrow. Again, we expect these filters in place by the end of the morning tomorrow. At that point, hot water will be restored. We are also adding some long-term actions to ensure that bacteria is killed off for the long-term in that water system.

I want to note and I want to thank the department of health and the housing authority for very speedy action. The positive test result was received at 5 pm, yesterday. Water was shut off within 45 minutes of the result. Before 7 pm, teams were knocking on the doors of all the residents in that building, and a meeting was held with the residents last night that Dr. Bassett and General Manager Kelly attended. And then I just want to finish before your questions on this topic – two key points that we have to emphasize. One – again, this disease is not contagious and is easily treated with antibiotics. Two – this is something we really need to remember from what we’ve learned from the last few weeks – anyone who has symptoms, they need to seek treatment. Now, again, overwhelmingly, this is a disease that afflicts people who are older – generally speaking, in their 50s or older – and people who have preexisting conditions. So, anyone anywhere in New York City who has those symptoms – persistent cough and flu-like symptoms – trouble breathing – should, out of an abundance of caution, get it checked by a doctor. They should get it checked by a doctor in general. They certainly should get it checked by a doctor given what we know of Legionnaires. But people who get – and Dr. Bassett will back me up because we’ve had this conversation many times – people get treatment quickly, even if they are older and have preexisting conditions. One of the big x-factors here is getting treatment quickly. If you get treatment quickly, you’ll have a much better chance of a full and speedy recovery. So, don’t explain away a cough or flu-like symptoms. Don’t say I’ll deal with it next week. Just go to get treatment. Go to your local emergency room. Go to your doctor.

With that, we’re going to take questions on Legionnaires. Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor – this may be a question for the commissioner – now, the previous outbreak was cooling towers. In this, you’re saying is the water –

Mayor: No, we didn’t say *is*. I’m going to stop you right there because again, I want – in these matters, forgive me, I’m going to be very quick if I feel what I’m saying is not heard properly. This is in the abundance of caution category. We do not have a definitive result. We have an initial test positive that is fairly faint. There is further testing going on to be able to confirm if there is the presence, at all, of Legionnaires’ in that water system. As I said at the outset, this individual was within a timeframe where it may have been caused by the Opera House Hotel previous to its full cleaning.

Question: But it is the water distribution system that had the faint positive? So can you just describe what that is in layman’s terms? I’m assuming that’s your drinking water. And two, whether or not all of the NYCHA facilities in the entire city would get tested as a result of this faint positive?

Commissioner Mary Bassett, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yeah, so, what happened in this situation was that we had four individuals who were identified – who were residents of Melrose Houses – in the past six months, who have developed Legionnaires’ disease. The person who’s presently hospitalized was also a resident in a building in which we’ve seen someone diagnosed who we attributed to the cooling tower outbreak earlier. We used, as a general rule, anytime we have two cases arising from the same facility – the same building – in

the space of one year, that we check the water system. And we do this, as the mayor has said, out of an abundance of caution. So it was the fact that we had two cases that led us to check the water system in this building. And also, led us to identify the other two cases who are also located in one building – bringing to four the number of residents of Melrose since March who have developed Legionnaires'. We tested – the positive result was from the hot water system. As the mayor has said, the hot water system is the environment in which Legionnaires' is most likely to develop. I want to stress very strongly that the drinking water is safe. And also, to reiterate what the mayor said, this is a preliminary test result. The actions taken in 681 Cortland Avenue are from an abundance of caution. We'll have additional testing as we go forward.

Mayor: On this topic – yes?

Question: As this Legionnaires' situation was unfolding yesterday, whose idea was it to mock up a front page of the New York Post as a joke and put it out on Twitter?

Mayor: Totally different topic. We are not going to address that right now. Go ahead.

Question: One of my questions wasn't answered –

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: But the – all of the NYCHA buildings in the city – whether or not they will be tested.

Mayor: No, no. Again, there are two cases in this building, and obviously, proximity – very close proximity to the Opera House Hotel. This is a particular situation. We – I'm going to keep saying it. This is a form of pneumonia present in our city, has been present in our city for decades – about 200 cases a year. It's very important that we recognize how and when we should act based on the information we know. Also remember, from one of the previous briefings with the CDC, the vast – not the vast majority, but the clear majority of cases are related to the cooling towers. That's what's obviously been addressed by the legislation with the Council and the commissioner's order. But this is an isolated circumstance. And until we get the additional tests back early next week, we can't even tell you if in fact, there is Legionella in this building. We may come back with an ultimate negative on it. But we thought, let's go the extra mile here – get these filters in place, just make sure that we are taking the precaution. It made sense in this particular case.

Question: So, just so I'm understanding clearly – the additional tests will retest the faint positive –

Mayor: Correct.

Question: – to determine –

Mayor: It gives you more detail. It gives you more detail, and the ability to actually – one, to know is it Legionella; two, it gives you enough to see what the relationship is to the individual patient. When we get back the information on that too, we're going to be able to do more to figure out if there's any tie to the previous source as well. Go ahead, anything else? In the back first.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I know you and the health commissioner have addressed this plenty of times, but there is this concern – because of the fact that Melrose sits kind of in the heart of where the previous outbreak happened – so, this question keeps coming up again. You know, why here? Why the Bronx? So, I’m hoping you or the health commissioner could address it again.

Mayor: I’ll start and I’ll pass to Dr. Bassett. 200 cases a year have happened all over the city, and that’s happened for years and years. So, I want to separate the outbreak – which we’ve defined very, very clearly and thank God, is over, and was different from anything else we’ve seen in the history of New York City – from what we do see year in and year out, these isolated cases. Again, when we have full information, we’ll be able to say whether we think this is related to the last vestiges of the Opera House Hotel or whether, in fact, it is something distinct. But even if it were distinct, we will – as we’ve said previously, we will find additional cases, isolated cases in different parts of the city. So you could have a situation here where the previous ones were related to the Opera House Hotel, and that was particular moment in the South Bronx unlike anything we’ve seen before. And this one may be just absolutely solitary, and like the solitary cases we have elsewhere. Until we have full information, we can’t give you that final – that final conclusion.

Anyone else? Where do I see? I heard a voice – yes?

Question: So can you tell us when the last case of the disease was diagnosed at this point? Do we know that?

Mayor: I’m sorry, when you say the last case of the disease –

Question: The most recent case – the most recent diagnosis of this.

Mayor: Well, let me emphasize one thing and then turn to the commissioner. The – a person can carry this around for a period of time – and you can help people understand that – because, again, think of the symptoms – coughing, shortness of breath, flu-like symptoms. Again, I wish, after all of this public discussion, everyone who had those symptoms would just go to a doctor right away. But we know – I’ve done it, and I’m sure a lot of people in this room have done it – you say I’ll deal with it later, it’s not that bad. So someone can have it and walk around with it for quite a while – thank God, not contagious. Maybe you can explain that and answer the specific question.

Commissioner Bassett: I – I – no, I don’t think I have anything more to add to that. I think your question was, in the South Bronx, when was the last case diagnosed? And that was a week ago today.

Question: And is it conceivable – the time-frame, I believe, it was early August – [inaudible] –

Commissioner Bassett: We – yes –

Question: So that timeframe, because I know you said it could be two weeks up to before they show up, the symptoms –

Commissioner Bassett: Oh, goodness – so everybody’s learned a great deal. Yes, the incubation period can be up to 14 days.

Mayor: Right, and then you can walk around with it.

Commissioner Bassett: But – but then there’s also the problem of getting sick and not seeking care. And we saw at the beginning of this outbreak people walking around with symptoms for more than a week. That’s what we’ve worked so hard – and the people of the Bronx really rose to the occasion and responded by reducing their waiting time to, on average, two days. So we made a lot of progress. We need to keep to that. People who get flu-like symptoms – headache, cough, muscle aches, difficulty breathing – don’t take a chance. Seek medical care. We don’t want to see people coming in late. This is very treatable, but the sicker you are, the more likely you’ll have a complicated outcome.

Question: Just one more follow-up to this faint positive that we’re referring to it as – so I mean, are we in a position where it could’ve identified some sort of bacteria that is in the strain? Is that why you can’t identify this –

Mayor: So I’m going to start layman and pass the ball here. The first test you do, which is the quick turnaround test – roughly 24-hour turnaround – is not just about *Legionella*. It’s a broader look at the situation in the – I mean, you can explain it better than me. The later test is more detailed and gives you a much better picture. Why don’t you –

Commissioner Bassett: Okay. So we use as a screening test for water supply something called PCR, which tests DNA, and it can identify DNA of the most common human pathogen that’s called *Legionella pneumophila*, but it only tests the DNA. It doesn’t tell us whether the organism is alive or not. So we know that it’s – you know, that we’ve found something in the water. We have to culture it, which may take a week or more. And in order to the fingerprint that the mayor was mentioning that allows us to match up a bacteria in the patient with a bacteria in the water, we need – it may take developing a very pure culture that may take up to two weeks. So this comes later. In the case of the cooling tower outbreak, all 25 human specimens that we have fingerprinted were a match to the cooling tower at the Opera House Hotel.

Mayor: Thank you.

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