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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everyone. So, I'm going to be talking about our recovery effort constantly, a recovery for all of us, recovery has to reach every neighborhood, every New Yorker, really move us all forward together. And yesterday I had a wonderful experience in the Rockaways, Far Rockaway. The crucial, crucial moment in the development and the redevelopment of the Far Rockaways, an exciting new development, new on Beach 21st street, hundreds of affordable apartments, brand new building, beautiful building, hundreds of affordable apartments. Space for local small businesses. This is a big step. This is something that's been in the making for years, but the fact that we're topping off the building now, the fact that new development is being achieved in Far Rockaway, a community that's been hit so hard by COVID, but was hit really hard by Hurricane Sandy years before, the Rockaways often have not gotten the respect and attention they deserve. We've tried to change that in this administration with ferry service, with a lot of investment in affordable housing and economic development. But yesterday was one of those joyous moments where you saw the city starting to come back to life. And these new apartments are going to mean so much for folks from the community, for folks who need affordable housing, working people who are the backbone of New York City. So, this was something really good to see. And it is exemplary of making sure this recovery truly is for all of us. A lot of people are talking about Midtown, Manhattan. I care about Midtown, Manhattan. I want it to come back strong. But for years and years, people weren't talking about Far Rockaway and the Rockaways and Queens and you know, the other parts of the city, not just Midtown, Manhattan. We got to make this a recovery for all five boroughs. We got to make this a recovery for working people in neighborhoods. And we can.

And we talked yesterday about such important developments, our new Recovery Czar, Lorraine Grillo, the extraordinarily exciting new investments at Kennedy Airport that will reach the Southeast Queens community. This is the shape of things to come. When I talk about a recovery for all of us, you're going to be hearing constant announcements of how New York City is going to come back, come back strong, come back better. And you'll be seeing me all over the five boroughs making those announcements. It's an exciting time.

But to get to that recovery, we need to keep focusing on vaccination. Now we talked yesterday, we've really got setback for almost a whole week with the shipments being delayed because of the winter storms around the country. We now, are getting those shipments. And we're looking forward to getting the regular shipments we would have for this week. So, I'm hoping, even though we lost some time, we're going to be playing some strong catch up this week. And I'm hoping for a week where we really put up some great numbers. But remember, the whole question is always supply, supply, supply. Federal government, State government sends us the supply, gives us the flexibility, we can do so much more. We are on track – I've been asked this, and I want to affirm. We can reach five million vaccinations. We can reach five million New Yorkers fully vaccinated by June. We confirmed it yet again yesterday, went through the

numbers. So long as the supply is consistent and then starts to grow week by week. And that's what the federal government is telling us will happen. But we need to see it. We need to see it soon.

So, where are we at now? Since the beginning of our vaccination effort, 1,547,983 vaccinations given in New York City. Well over 1.5 million. That is more than the entire population of San Antonio, Texas, which is now the seventh largest city in the United States. So, if this effort keeps moving and moving, we're going to keep telling you the milestones as we hit them. And I'm looking forward to the day when we tell you five million New Yorkers have been fully vaccinated.

Now, another important milestone today, we want to talk about from our Test and Trace team. And Test and Trace has done a remarkable job. The strongest, biggest Test and Trace team in the entire United States. The model that has really proven how powerful this approach can be, stopping thousands and thousands of infections from happening by safely separating people and supporting people. Now, an exciting part of this initiative has been the Take Care initiative. Take Care is all about getting people to help they need, whether they safely separate in a hotel or in their home. Everyone involved in Take Care has done an amazing job. A special thanks to the leader of the effort, Dr. Amanda Johnson for her leadership, the whole team she's assembled. Milestone today, 10,000 New Yorkers, 10,000 have sought help in those free hotel spaces. We've talked about people who needed to get away from families, in many cases, large families, multi-generational families. They needed a chance to get over their infection away from their loved ones so they could safely separate. They could ensure that their loved ones didn't get infected. 10,000 New Yorkers have now taken advantage of that hotel initiative. They know they're safe, they're getting food, they're getting medicine. They're getting the help they need. They know their families are safe. So, kudos to everyone at Test and Trace and specifically the Take Care group for what you have achieved. And it's a reminder that even though we see some promising signs, we've got to stay vigilant. We can never be complacent when it comes to the coronavirus. I think we've had enough twists and turns to know the coronavirus is a wily enemy. So, we got to keep doing the things that work. If God forbid you are infected, follow those – that guidance from Test and Trace Corps. Make sure that you do things the right way, if you need to isolate, you need to safely separate. But for everyone, every-day reminders, the masks, now double masking, making sure that we practice those basic precautions. Getting tested regularly still makes a huge difference. New York City has been remarkable. New Yorkers have been remarkable doing these things. It's part of why we've had the ability to fight back this disease in so many ways. But we got to keep doing it.

Now, recovery – when we talk about recovery for all of us, we don't just mean jobs coming back or businesses coming back. We mean the city coming back, the life of the city, the culture of the city, our neighborhoods coming back. We mean a city for everyone. And a city where everyone is respected, a place where people want to be, and a place that can grow. And that means a lot more than just our economy. It means the kind of respect we need in this city for all New Yorkers, especially after what people have been through in this horrible last year, 2020. Now, every community suffered, but there's been a particular pain, a particular horrible challenge faced by the Asian-American community. Because on top of all the suffering from the coronavirus itself, on top of losing loved ones, losing businesses, people have had to confront horrible discrimination and hatred. From the very beginning, even before we had a single case in New York City, Asian American communities were suffering discrimination, Asian American

businesses saw their customers no longer come. It's been a very tough time for Asian communities. And let's remember something, some of the worst hatred, some of the worst discrimination, the worst language, was coming last year directly from the White House, which made matters even worse. And somehow normalized in a painful disgraceful way, negative attitudes towards Asian communities. Absolutely unacceptable. No place for that in New York City. No place for hate in New York City toward our Asian brothers and sisters. So, we know the community has been hit hard and now we see something we disdain, and we will fight back against – violent hate crimes against Asian-Americans. We're going to talk today about the measures we're taking to address that. It is absolutely unacceptable. And I will say, as we've seen this in the past directed at various communities, let's be clear if you're even thinking about committing a hate crime, if you dare to raise your hand against a member of our Asian communities, you will suffer the consequences. We have the strongest efforts in this country to fight hate crimes. The NYPD is focused like never before on finding anyone who commits a hate crime and making sure they suffer the penalties they deserve for what they've done.

We are going to have a focus everywhere in the city, particular focus in the subways with the new NYPD officers that we've sent to the subways to help make sure everyone knows that presence is there. And the NYPD is watching to protect folks and stop these horrible hate actions. We're going to be doing work more and more through our Asian Hate Crime Task Force, working closely with communities. And of course, our Office for Preventing Hate Crimes and other City agencies, our City Human Rights Commission. Everyone is working together and meeting with Asian community leaders this week on the next measures we need to take. I want you to hear from a couple of those leaders now. And hear about the efforts that they're undertaking and what the City is going to undertake together with them to stop hate dead in its tracks in New York City. First, a wonderful leader I've known for years and years, and her election was a source of tremendous pride to the Asian communities of the city. And she also fights for us in Washington. Has been a leading voice to get New York City the help we need to come out of the coronavirus era. My honor to introduce Congress Member Grace Meng.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you so much, Congress Member. First of all, congratulations that some of the actions you are calling for have now been adopted by the President of the United States. And President Biden really is setting a positive message, which is so striking to me. Just the absence of the negative, racist voice of Donald Trump in our daily discourse is beginning the process of healing. But the residue – as you indicated, the residue of that state-sponsored hatred is still very strong and we all have to do the best we can to fight it back, and we will fight it back. And the part you said about the solidarity from other communities, that was very powerful to me. I'm really glad you raised that. An attack on Asian New Yorkers is an attack on all of us. Let's be clear, we learn this so many times in history. And there's that famous, extraordinarily poignant message, that poignant passage from the Holocaust about believing if one group was being attacked, maybe it wouldn't end up affecting you. Well, guess what, what we learned from history is if one group has attacked, if one group is singled out racially, ethnically, and then you think it's just going to stop there – history tells you you're wrong. An attack on Asian Americans destroys our entire social fabric and is unacceptable. So, I really appreciate you noting that a lot of other leaders of color, members of communities of all kinds, all backgrounds have come together in solidarity with the Asian community. That means so much. And the last thing I want to say is, thank you for reminding us about history. Congress Member, when you were recounting history as country, and you said the Chinese Exclusion Act, what a statement that it

was called openly – I mean, talk about not sugarcoating – it was called the Chinese Exclusion Act. How painfully blatantly racist can it be, that something in our history was that horribly, overtly exclusionary? But that is the history we have to overcome. So, I really, really appreciate your leadership and I have faith we will get there.

And now, I want to talk about what we're doing here in the city. And the way to fight this hatred, again, is with education, is with compassion, and solidarity, as Congress Member Meng said, but it's also with consequences for those who propagate hate. I want you to hear from the leader of the Asian Hate Crimes Task Force. The NYPD put together a specific group of officers from Asian communities who speak languages and dialects from multiple communities, know the communities, listen to the communities. And I want you to hear about how this extraordinary task force is fighting hate here. To speak about it, the leader of the task force, Deputy Inspector Stewart Loo.

Deputy Inspector Stewart Loo, Asian Hate Crimes Task Force, NYPD: Good morning, I'm Stewart Loo, Commanding Officer of the Asian Hate Crime Task Force. Thank you, Mayor de Blasio for having me and bringing awareness to an issue that's been plaguing the Asian-American community for years. In light of the increase in the hate crimes against Asians that's happening not just here in New York City, not just in America, but all over the world – the NYPD has responded by creating the Asian Hate Crime Task Force. We have 25 of the best Asian-American detectives in the world, speaking 11 different languages. These detectives have the background and skillset to effectively help the Asian Americans living here in New York City. These detectives are additional resources on top of the great detective squad that were already investigating these crimes. The task force is here to help in all aspects of investigation and we are here to guarantee there's a strong appropriate response to the hate that's infecting our city. The task force consists of members that come from the community to serve the community. Once again, thank you, Mayor de Blasio, and thank you for all the leaders of every single community here in New York City, coming together and condemning the hate.

Mayor: Thank you, Inspector. And really want to thank you, what you're doing is unprecedented and powerful. And thank you, I know you've brought together an extraordinary group of officers. And the most important part is the way you're engaging the community, and listening, and showing people that whatever they're seeing and feeling, it will be acted on. And I want to bring in another guest now, but with a, a message leading into it, it is so important for people to speak up. And it's hard sometimes – we always say, in the many years we had to be worried and we continue to be worried about the fight against terrorism, if you see something, say something. Well, when it comes to hatred, if you see something, say something. Do not ever for a moment think that you shouldn't speak up. Don't think for a moment that it won't lead to action. It can and will lead to action. Don't think it's too small, because a lot of times if we find something, it leads us to other things that need to be stopped. So, we want people to come forward, not to feel any hesitation. And I know it's not easy. Any Asian New Yorker, any member of our community who has suffered discrimination and particularly acts of hate and had a sense that they were in danger because of who they are – we want to know what happened, we want to know who did this so we can find them and stop them. And it's important to hear community voices in this really challenging time. One of the strongest voices in all of New York City, working with Asian communities of all kinds all over the five boroughs. And she's here with us today, the Executive Director of the Asian American Federation, Jo-Ann Yoo.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. And Jo-Ann, that's so powerful. It is two pandemics, you're right, and that's the right way to say it. And look, everyone, Jo-Ann made a really important point – when you think about all the people out there, the health care heroes, all the people who save their fellow New Yorkers during the worst months, especially, of this pandemic – go to all the hospitals in New York City, go all around where you find first responders, essential workers, people we've depended on, you see so many Asian Americans who've been a part of that effort. They deserve our respect. We could not have gotten through this crisis without them. Think about someone who, for example, works in a hospital, saves lives. Think about a nurse who has been there through the worst pandemic and kept showing up, and then has to worry about being the victim of hatred and discrimination, maybe even violence. That's unacceptable. So, there's no place for hate in this city. I want to be really clear – no place for hate in New York City, never has been, never will be. But we have to do something about it by bringing consequences to anyone who has done wrong and support those who have suffered discrimination.

Now, a lot of people are asking what you can do. We want to encourage all New Yorkers to get involved in efforts to stop hatred against Asian communities. So, we've launched a new resource today. You can go to nyc.gov/stopasianhate. And I want encourage everyone on social media show support with #stopasianhate. We want to get this message out. If you go on the website, you find specific things that you can do, specific ways to send the right messages, specific ways to encourage people to come forward if, God forbid, they'd been the victim of an attack. Right there on the website, you can report an attack or a bias crime and learn about the efforts that are being made all over the city to encourage mutual respect and to let people know that hate is not acceptable here. So, this is an important new tool. We want to encourage everyone to get involved in the battle against hatred.

All right, let me go to a couple of things. And an important reminder today for folks in District 31 in Queens, we have a special election today for City Council. This includes neighborhoods of Arverne, Brookville, Edgemere, Far Rockaway, Laurelton, Rosedale, and Springfield Gardens. So, all those communities, you have a special election for City Council today. Polls are open until 9:00 PM. So, if you haven't voted already, get out there, make your voice heard. The City Council is going to have so much to say about the future of the city as we come back from this pandemic. So, please, get involved, make your voice heard.

Okay, let's go over indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to the New York City – to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 233 patients. Confirmed positivity level, 70.71 percent. Hospitalization rate, 4.06 per 100,000. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – today's report, 3,254 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19 – today's report, on seven-day rolling average, 7.32 percent. Let me say a few words in Spanish on the topic that's always on our mind, the vaccines.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today, we have Deputy Inspector of the Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Task Force Stewart Loo, Executive Director of the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes Deborah Lauter, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to Courtney from NY1.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Courtney. How are you doing today?

Question: I'm well, thank you. Forgive me if I missed it, but I didn't hear any stats on the number of hate crimes or anti-Asian hate crimes that have occurred in the past year, specifically, you know, since we've had COVID-19 and since the President's rhetoric. I'm curious to know if, like, let's say in 2020, it went up drastically compared to 2019.

Mayor: Yeah. Deputy Inspector Stewart Loo, I believe, we'll have that overview for you. Inspector, you want to go over the numbers?

Deputy Inspector Loo: Yes, I can handle that. So, since the pandemic, we had 28 incidents of COVID related hate crimes against Asians. The year before we had total – obviously, we didn't have the pandemic, but we had a total of three Asian – anti-Asian hate crimes the year before. Year-to-date, just for 2021, so far, we have two.

Mayor: Go ahead, Courtney.

Question: Okay. Thank you. And then, a totally unrelated topic about the mayor's race, Mr. Mayor. I know you've been asked about the people competing for your job that worked for you, but we don't know necessarily whether or not you're going to be weighing in. Are you going to make an endorsement in this race? Are you going to make endorsements in other races, like City Comptroller, or any City Council races? What do you see your involvement being when you think about the next couple of months, obviously it's coming up a lot faster than I think all of us realize.

Mayor: Well, no, I understand why you say it feels that way. To me, it's the other way around. It's about four months until the primary. And, again, Courtney, four months before the primary in 2013, I think I was in fifth place. So, I think it's really early. I'm watching all the races with real interest, because I care deeply about the future of New York City and I'll make decisions as we go along if I choose to get involved. So, you know, I might get involved in some, I might not, but that's something I'll decide as it gets closer. I think there's a lot more to needs to play out to really get the shape of things.

Moderator: As a programming note, we're also joined by Dr. Ted Long, Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps. Next, we'll go to Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah. Good morning, everyone. I guess to follow up on Courtney's question, I was wondering if – maybe Deputy Inspector Loo could elaborate on how a COVID-related hate crime is defined. Because, I mean, 28 incidents, very appalling, but is it possible that's an undercount? Can you just say how this – what the terminology is and how it's defined?

Mayor: Yeah. And I'll start and say, we are really worried about the reality of people not feeling they could or should report a hate crime. We think there's more out there. We need to know. We want to encourage people to come forward. We will protect their identities. We want to make sure that we get information so that we can stop hate crimes. So, I am worried about there being other crimes that have not been reported. Inspector, you want to speak to that?

Deputy Inspector Loo: Yes, of course. So, historically, we're talking about under reporting. I would say yes, these numbers are definitely unreported. We had an incident last year where a man was a victim of a hate crime, and when he finally reported it, he tells us this is the second time that happened to me this week. So, that's an indication that, you know, that's been happening, it's under-reported. So, what's considered a COVID-type hate crime? Well, there has to be statements made as it relates to the flu, for some sort of sickness. There has to be – the perpetrator has to make some sort of statement.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead.

Deputy Inspector Loo: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Go ahead, Inspector. You have more?

Deputy Inspector Loo: Yeah, it doesn't exclusively pertain Asians. Of course, 27 out of the 28 incidents, the victims were Asian, but you could be any race, any color, any ethnicity, as long as somebody discriminates against you because of a perceived condition, such as COVID, that would be considered COVID hate crime.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah, thanks for that. Switching gears entirely, I understand that there's a kind of a revived push in the City Council to allow non-citizen New Yorkers to vote in municipal elections. I think there's some criteria there, but I mean, the idea seems pretty self-explanatory, let them vote. Do you support that? Any other thoughts on that?

Mayor: It's – look, it's a big complex issue from my point of view. I've talked to folks over the years about it. I certainly understand why some people support the proposal, I think there are others who would say, hey, we have a process that is about how someone becomes a citizen and gets involved in a society in a different way. It's something I want to think about more for sure and thank God we're now in a very different environment because of President Biden, where I think we're going to see comprehensive immigration reform and a path to citizenship for folks who are here in this country who are undocumented and faster efforts to get people citizenship. So, I do think it's a very, very different environment now, but it's something I'll continue to take a look at. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Emma from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mayor. So, I'm wondering – I was looking at the stats in terms of the cases falling across the country and they're not falling as fast in New York. Can you talk about why the cases are still pretty high here despite being one of the worst place hit early on?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll start, and I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. Emma, you frame it right, that the most extraordinary thing to me was the sharp, sharp juxtaposition between the first few months, March, April into May and then the way June, July, August into September went where we went from unquestionably epicenter in the country to one of the safest places in the country. I think that has very much to do with the way New Yorkers handled this. I really credit everyday New Yorkers for the discipline and, you know, the mask wearing, the social distancing, listening to our health leadership. They really did. They acted on it. I went all over the city. I saw how much people were listening and acting on the guidance from our health leadership. But we also know we're a really tough place in terms of just how many people here, the density of this city, the fact that no matter how hard we're fighting, there's still a legacy of lots of poverty and lots of folks who didn't get health care for generations. So, there's challenges for sure, but I feel very good about our ability to turn it around with intensive vaccination if we can get supply. I think one of our strengths is going to be our ability to implement vaccine quickly. Again, right now we are absolutely certain we could do over half a million vaccinations a week. So, I think that's going to be one of our strengths compared to some other places in the country. But let me turn to the – now, the experts Dr. Varma then Dr. Chokshi, what would you say to Emma's question?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Great, thank you very much for the question, because this gets to, you know, a lot of the issues that the Mayor has just talked about, which is that, you know, of course we know that New York City is a more vulnerable place, density of population, historical injustice like racism and poverty. There were a couple of technical issues though that I think that are worth considering. The first is that we know from this disease and all infectious diseases that simply counting cases can be a little bit problematic as comparison figure, for reference, you know, New York City continues to perform more testing per capita than any other place really in the country of similar size and, and larger than more places do on the world. So, by definition, you're going to end up counting more cases, so that's why we also look at, you know, percent positivity. And we see also that our percent positivity has continued to decline, although maybe not as precipitous as it has in some other places, and so that gets to the issue that by case counts, I'm not sure that's always the best metric to compare us to but looking at test positivity we continue to see the same positive trends that other places have as well, and I do anticipate that will continue as we move forward.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you very much. Yes, I just wanted to add, you know, with respect to looking at the trajectory of cases we have declined, you know, compared to our peak which was in early January where we were seeing a seven-day average of over 6,000 new cases a day and so that has come down significantly, and the numbers that we're seeing in recent days are closer to where we were in early December with respect to total number of cases. We do of course want to drive down these case numbers even further, as both the Mayor and Dr. Varma have said, and we have a strategy to be able to do that which involves taking the things that we know have worked, those core public health preventative measures, strengthening them where we can, particularly, for example, with the mask guidance that the Health Department released last week and also ramping up vaccination as quickly as possible. The final thing to say is that we are keeping a close eye on the

new variants and how they may be affecting transmission and it makes all of those preventative measures that much more important.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Emma.

Question: Thanks. And then we were asking for information about how many off-duty and NYPD officers were present at the us Capitol riot in January. Can you – I mean, it's been almost two months, can you talk about why it's taken so long to get at this information and whether if there were these officers involved that gives you concerns about folks who work at NYPD?

Mayor: Yeah, Emma, I want the whole truth out immediately, but I want to be clear at this moment, I checked with the NYPD yesterday, there's no – when you say off-duty, I want to make sure everyone understands, someone who works for the NYPD now and was off-duty that day present there, we don't have any evidence of anyone at this point. There's some situations with retired officers who no longer work for the City of New York, and obviously I think anyone who was there, anyone to participate in the attack on the Capitol, including attacks that led to the death of a law enforcement officer defending the Capitol, anyone who participated needs to suffer the consequences, but we do not have any example at this point of someone who still works for the City of New York being a part of that from the police department. But I will tell you, Emma, that there's ongoing investigation being done by the FBI of everyone who was present, we're still waiting to see if there's anyone else that we don't know about yet, but as of this moment, we do not know of anyone who works for us at the PD who was present. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we'll go to Ariana from Kings County Politics.

Question: Hi, good morning.

Mayor: How are you, Ariana?

Question: I'm good. My first question, I've just [inaudible] back to the quarantine hotels. I was wondering if the city is going to plan on attracting more tourism once the COVID-19 crisis kind of fades or would you consider reusing those spaces for residential purposes or to battle the homelessness crisis?

Mayor: So, I would say this to you, Ariana, we, first of all, the immediate issue of making sure if someone needs to safely separate, they can get a hotel room for free, we're going to continue that so long as we're in the COVID. Second of all, I really do believe you're going to see a strong comeback in the city economically starting this summer, and that you're going to see tourism actually start to revive in this summer, this fall in a meaningful way, but it'll take a while to get back, of course, to its full strength. So, I think a lot of hotels will start to fill up over time, you know, for their normal business, but we generally do not think hotels are part of the solution to homelessness. What we want to do is get, of course, more and more people into permanent affordable housing, it's about I think 150,000 folks that we've been able to get permanent affordable housing for who had been homeless over the last seven years. We don't want to use hotels where we're paying by the night, we want purpose-built shelters. That's the plan I put forward three years ago and that we're acting on. So, I think that last point, you know, would

there be some effort and turn some hotels into a residential housing, some combination of affordable housing, market rate housing? Open to that, but only if that's done through the regular land use process at the local level, that's the best way to do that. Go ahead, Ariana.

Question: Okay. And my next question, does the city plan on allocating any funds towards – specifically towards Asian-Americans small business owners and restaurant owners who were directly impacted last year by discrimination had had to close their business?

Mayor: We want to make sure Ariana that all Asian-American businesses that need help are working with our Small Business Services Department. There's a lot of help we can provide right now. Look, we're trying to help all communities, but obviously if any restaurant particularly suffered from discrimination, we want to lean in and help them in every way we can, and what we're looking forward to is going farther with direct support, tax breaks and loans and other direct support for small business, particularly we can get the kind of stimulus we're hoping for. So, we'll definitely going to make an intensive effort in Asian communities to make sure the small businesses that did suffer get additional help.

Moderator: Next is Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Hello –

Question: How are you doing this morning?

Mayor: I'm doing well, Henry, how are you today?

Question: I am hanging in there. We're about to get to March, but there we go. I've got a question for you about the Recoveries Czar that you have appointed. What is her first job going to be specifically, her first task? What is she going to be – what is she doing now?

Mayor: So, Lorraine Grillo will be running a weekly war room starting this week, all Deputy Mayors, key agency heads, I'll participate, and we're going to now take the major strands that have been initiated and intensify them, really, speed them up, coordinate them, come up with a series of major announcements. Her job is to supercharge this recovery. A lot of the building blocks are there. A lot of things have been moving from months, but we got to put into higher gear, so she'll lead that war room, and she'll start making a series of announcements on additional steps in recovery over the weeks ahead.

Question: Okay, thank you. I wanted to go over some of this data. I've been visiting some senior housing sites and the common complaint is that, you know, what you've heard is that the internet is prohibitive to them, a lot of people can't get through on the internet, and they're all asking why doesn't the city just come to us? We've got, you know, 150 here, we've got 230 there, why doesn't the city just set up shop in our social room, which we can't use now because of COVID, and give us shots? So why doesn't – instead of you establishing a site and demanding that people

make appointments, why don't you bring the vaccine to people and have people line up and get a shot in the arm, and that would solve that problem?

Mayor: Okay, I understand the impulse, and I can tell you, we're certainly going to be doing some of that, but I want to caution on the just lineup, get a shot in the arm. We really have to be careful. Part of why appointments have been really important to make, Henry, is to make sure that folks are getting vaccinated who are ready to be vaccinated, making sure they qualify, of course, but also making sure there are not other reasons health-wise et. cetera, where they should not be vaccinated, making sure their questions are answered in advance. I don't want a lot of lines of people sort of starting from scratch. I don't want to have a lot of people congregating. I want what we have, and I'll have Dr. Chokshi speak to this. The efficient thing, we've seen this with Department of Health sites, where the answers are given as much as possible advance, so when people arrive, they move through quickly. We do not want long lines. We do not want people, you know, congregating. We want to help people move through quickly. That's about everyone's health and safety, but absolutely, we announced this actually a week ago, Friday, that we'll be going to – what's often called naturally occurring retirement communities – will be going into buildings that are senior buildings and setting up vaccination sites. We need a hell of a lot more supply to do that on the scale we want to, but we absolutely will be doing that as we build up more supply. I think that's an important part of the strategy. Now, so far, the centers we have, Henry – they're working nonstop, every appointment's being filled. So, clearly seniors and everyone fill up those appointments constantly, getting to them, having a good experience, but as we get supply, we want to go more and more and more grassroots, right to building lobbies, building community rooms and vaccinate people on the spot, but with an appointment process. Dr. Chokshi, you want to speak to that?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, sir. Thank you very much. Well to start, you know, put simply this is such an urgent priority for us because we know that vaccinating our older New Yorkers will save lives and prevent suffering. That's why we have really centered making sure that we're meeting seniors where they are as a core part of our overall vaccination campaign. We've done this in a number of different ways, as the Mayor has already alluded to. First, we're working with our health care partners for them to reach out to their older patients because we know many of our seniors trust their family doctors, they trust the clinics that they've been going to, they know how to navigate them and get to them, so we're working very closely with them to to actualize that part of the plan. The second thing is we have a number of transportation options that are available to bring seniors to the sites that have been set up. But the third part, which is perhaps the most important, is this idea of meeting patients where they are and that involves increasing access, bringing onsite vaccination clinics to places like the naturally occurring retirement communities that the Mayor has mentioned, but also to NYCHA developments and housing preservation and development buildings where we know they're a high concentration of seniors. So, we've already undertaken that. We've gotten great feedback about those visits and those sites, and as supply continues to ramp up, we will expand that further.

Mayor: Excellent. Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Amanda from Politico.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: I'm doing well, Amanda, how you been?

Question: I'm good. Thank you. So, I wanted to get your thoughts on Johnson and Johnson's testimony earlier this morning. They said that they're going to ship 20 million single dose vaccines by the end of March, and so I wanted to know, have you been in conversation with the feds or at the company itself about what share of those vaccines will come to New York City and how that plays into the city's overall strategy for vaccinating five million people?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll turn to Dr. Varma, but what I'm going to say upfront, we've been talking constantly with federal officials and it's been a very productive positive, conversation and very, very different from what we used to experience, but we've been wanting and pushing for more definition about specific numbers each week, each month, so we can hit our five million vaccination goal. So, certainly, I've been saying for weeks, I think Johnson and Johnson is going to be the difference maker because it's single dose, easier refrigeration standards, I think this is what will supercharge our effort. In terms of getting very precisely what we expect from New York City, I'm still waiting to hear that report, but I'm very hopeful about this new development. Dr. Varma?

Senior Advisor Varma: Yeah, just to echo what the Mayor has been saying, you know, clearly supply continues to be the single most important issue and that supply is dictated by the federal government and then, of course, by the manufacturers themselves. So, you know, we're still learning what the allocations are going to be because as you know, the J and J vaccine is just being considered this week in front of the FDA, so we're looking forward to seeing the data, both the data that's analyzed completely by J and J because all we have up until now was the press release. And second, the independent analysis that's done by the FDA. If everything falls in line with what we anticipate it will show, which is that these vaccines, even with a single dose are highly effective at preventing hospitalizations and deaths, then this is just great news. And then the next big challenge becomes the one that we've been talking about all the time, which is supply, and of course we're kind of at the whims of what the federal government is able to allocate to New York City specifically, as well as of course what the manufacturers can actually produce themselves.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Amanda.

Question: Great. Thank you, and then also this is more of an anecdotal question, but I've been seeing an increase in people not wearing masks, and I've been overhearing people saying "well, I'm vaccinated, so like, why should I be wearing a mask?" Which, you know, personally, I'm infuriated myself. I want to know what the city strategy is for implementing these public health measures as more people get vaccinated. Are there specific things that you're looking to do to, you know, educate people around their risk of transmission as we vaccinate more people?

A hundred percent a really great question. I appreciate that. Amanda, I'm going to turn to Dr. Chokshi, but let me say this. We've been projecting this one for weeks and weeks too. We want everyone to stay – first of all, June's when we want to hit five million New Yorkers fully vaccinated, and June is the earliest we would even consider changing guidance around masks. It may be that we continue that guidance for quite a while, depending on what's going on. We're

very concerned about the variants, for example, that's a big x-factor. But I think a good way for New Yorkers to think about now is for the first half of this year, from now through June, keep doing exactly what you're doing, not just wear a mask, wear two, social distancing, you know, all the precautions – get tested monthly. If you do have a case in your home, have the person safely separate. We want to keep all those precautions in place to guard against the variants, to help us consolidate our progress, to give time for this vaccination effort to catch up with the larger reality and really create a new dynamic of the city.

When we get closer to June, we'll update the guidance depending on what we're seeing, but I think it's really important for people not to let their guard down, and Dr. Chokshi will tell you that even when you're vaccinated, you know, you have to have concern for everyone around you. So, I would say anyone vaccinated, keep wearing that mask as part – and it's also just the culture. We want everyone to remember that the mask wearing culture has been part of what turned the corner for us, and we got to keep it that way until this is finally defeated. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Yes, we cannot take our foot off of the gas, right now. We remain in a position where we're concerned about the number of cases that we're seeing each day. We are concerned about the new variants as well, and we now have this valuable new weapon in our arsenal, the vaccine, but we have to think about it as something that is an additional layer of protection to all of the things that we know have already worked, and that includes mask wearing. That's why you heard in our guidance last week that we are actually doubling down on ensuring that New Yorkers are wearing masks. The most important thing remains that people wear them consistently and properly covering their nose and mouth, both indoors and outdoors. But we also suggested that two masks and higher-grade masks should become more common among New Yorkers as well, and specifically with respect to wearing your mask after you've been vaccinated, remember it takes time for immunity to build up that's one important reason, but then even after you've been fully vaccinated and have full immunity we don't know enough about the spread of the virus. Even when someone doesn't experience symptoms after they've been vaccinated and for all these reasons, it will remain important for us to keep wearing masks in the coming weeks and likely in the coming months as well.

Mayor: Hey, one more thing I want to note to everyone. I want to get Dr. Ted long into this. It's really important, again, in that same vein, don't let your guard down, that anyone who gets a positive test engages with Test and Trace Corps, if they need to safely separate, they receive the services – we talked about this milestone today, 10,000 New Yorkers who have used those free hotels to keep their families safe. But Dr. Long, remind everyone of how to connect with Test and Trace and how to get that service if they need that for their family.

Director Ted Long, NYC Test and Trace Corps.: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Mayor. Well, first and foremost, we want you to connect with us, but we also will connect with you. Right now, for Test and Trace, as we're seeing the number of cases come down, we're continuing to reach a higher proportion of every single new case than any other jurisdiction in the country. If you want to reach out to us now, for anything that you need, including a free hotel stay call 2-1-2-COVID-19, and remember, we're going to reach you as well. We're completing the interviews with almost 80 percent of every single new case across New York City. So, New Yorkers are trusting us, and we will continue to do our good work to drive cases down, but you can also call us at 2-1-2-COVID-19 anytime.

Mayor: Thank you very much, doctor.

Moderator: We have time for two more. First, we'll go to Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I wonder, how you're doing today?

Mayor: I am doing well. How do you feel Marcia?

Question: I'm good. I'm good, considering the fact that I'm hoping that the winter will be over soon.

Mayor: It will be, Marcia. I guarantee it, it will be over soon.

Question: Yeah, but when is the question. Anyway, my first question has to do with the increase in Asian hate crimes. You talked eloquently about the need for consequences. So, I wonder of the 28 cases that were reported in New York City last year, what were the consequences for those people who were involved, and what consequences should people expect going forward for perpetrating hate crimes.

Mayor: Thank you. Excellent question, and Marcia, you and I have talked about this over time. I really believe we can educate people. It's crucial. We can do all the things to show positive messaging and ideas, but we got to also have consequences when someone does something wrong. One of the challenges of course, is making sure that folks come forward to report hate crimes and folks who have evidence come forward or receive the increase from the NYPD and work with NYPD. So, we always need the evidence. We need the evidence as part of the due process system, but I want to see consequences. I think that nothing educates people more than seeing them. Let me turn to Inspector Loo, could you give us a sense and obviously not the ones that have been most recently, which are brand new, but just looking back over the last year or two, what kind of consequences have we seen for these crimes?

Deputy Inspector Loo: Thank you. So, out of the 28 incidents, we have 18 arrests, 18 out of 20, of course, we'd like to have 28 out of 28, but most of the investigation are still active. Out of the pending 28 arrests that we made there in criminal court, in their respective boroughs. So, we're working very closely with the Hate Crimes Division of the respective DA's offices to maximize those charges and bring the best investigation forward to prosecute these criminals.

Mayor: Thank you, and again, thank you, Inspector for what you and your team are doing. Go ahead, Marcia.

Question: Well, you know, given the bail reform and other things that are going on in the city, I just wonder what kinds of consequences, what kinds of punishment you can expect from the criminal justice system? I mean, are we talking about fines? Are we talking about jail time? And what kinds of things send a message to people that these hate crimes are just not acceptable?

Mayor: I agree with you entirely. The consequences have to be strong enough for people to get the message that is absolutely unacceptable. I think, depending on what we're talking about, just looking at any kind of crime sometimes it is a financial penalty that's really a big financial

penalty that makes an impact. But when you're talking about violence, obviously jail time is what makes the impact. So, it depends on the offenses, but Inspector, help us with the higher offenses. If there's an assault based on hate, if grievous injury is done to someone based on hate, or God forbid, anyone is killed based on hate, can you talk about the impact that has on consequences and on potential jail time?

Question: Of course. Okay. So, if we add the hate crimes statute, it would raise that charge by one degree. So, let's just say it's a felony E. It would become a felony D degree. When you raise that charge, you're able to, as a protocol where you can – there's a guideline where you can actually put in more and more time against the against the criminal. So, adding that hate crime charge would increase the penalty, but it's goes by case-by-case basis and borough by borough, depending on the DA. We as, NYPD and the investigating unit, we gather in the investigation, the evidence, and we presented to the DA. Ultimately, it's incumbent upon them to bring forth the consequences.

Mayor: Thank you, and I want to encourage, and I know our district attorneys care deeply about this, but I do want to encourage them to aggressively prosecute hate crimes, and obviously for everyone, just to finish the point, Marcia, we need our court system back. I know it's been really tough. I want to give a lot of credit to the folks in the court system. They've been working hard, but I renew my call that we vaccinate all court workers, all folks in district attorney's offices who are involved in cases and go into court, and we vaccinate everyone who will participate in a jury.

Now, remember, we're about to have Johnson and Johnson, which means a single dose vaccination. We can vaccinate people in advance of their jury service. They can walk in for a jury knowing they're safe. We need to do this to get – we are so far behind with jury trials, and this is really affecting the entire criminal justice system. So, I'm once again saying to the State of New York, let's put that together. We'll implement it. We'll make it happen, but let's right now agree that everyone involved in the court system needs to be vaccinated so we can restart our court system, get our trials back, make sure there are consequences for people who are found guilty. This is something we need to do immediately in the city and in the state to move us forward. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last, we'll go to Sydney from Gothamist.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my question.

Mayor: How are you, Sydney?

Question: I'm doing well. How are you?

Mayor: Good, thanks.

Question: Great. So, I wanted to ask about the program that the city hopes to implement if Johnson and Johnson vaccine is authorized for homebound seniors. Just given that review is this week, could you share with us more details on what that program would look like if Johnson and Johnson vaccine it's authorized and how quickly would the city be ready to stand up that

program for homebound seniors? And how are you getting touch, getting in touch with those, those particular older adults?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi and Dr. Long. Look, the Health Department, Health + Hospitals, everyone's going to work together. The announcement we made, you know, the three parts Dr. Chokshi talked about, the focus on the naturally [inaudible] retirement communities where we'll have the vaccination centers right there in the buildings, the effort to reach home health aides, who have such a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of homebound seniors. The aides need to be protected, that also helps protect the seniors. But the big piece we want to get to is the literally in-home vaccination of folks who cannot leave their home. That really requires a Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Long, you want to talk about how your agencies are going to help marshal the forces to do that?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, sir. I'll be happy to and thank you. This is an area that we have been actively planning for because we know how important it is for individuals who are vulnerable by virtue of being home-bound to get this additional protection from vaccination as well. We've been working with a number of different agencies and clinicians who have the experience of already taking care of people in their homes. For example, home-based primary care clinicians, as well as visiting nurses who already provide, you know, many healthcare services in people's homes. We have to join that existing infrastructure with what we learn about the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. As Dr. Varma alluded to earlier, there are still some questions about the vaccine itself with respect to storage and handling requirements which will emerge once the company submits all of the data to either Food and Drug Administration. So, once we bring those two halves together, we will be ready to very rapidly do the door to door or in-home vaccination for homebound seniors over the month – we hope in March, if everything goes according to plan with the FDA, and to do that based on the supply that we're allocated from the federal government.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Long, you want to add?

Director Long: Yeah, I think Dr. Chokshi hit all the key points. The only thing I would add is that to help us build towards that, we are continuing to expand our mobile fleet, where we are going to be bringing vaccines as we currently are today to communities and then going beyond there, and otherwise I agree with everything Dr. Chokshi said.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead, Sydney.

Question: Okay, thank you for that answer. Pivoting to the crisis of hate crimes against Asian New Yorkers, could you, Mr. Mayor, as well as Deputy Inspector Loo talk more about what the city and other agencies, as well as even the task force Deputy Inspector Loo is leading, are doing to prevent these crimes and not necessarily just respond to them with policing, and how, what, what does prevention look like for the city and how are those efforts being ramped up?

Mayor: Thank you. Very important question. Look, it's always about engaging communities, Sydney. As I said, there's been a number of conversations with leaders in the Asian-American communities with organizations that are there, the frontline. We want to support and show support. That's part of what people always say, you know, the condemnation of hatred, getting voices of leaders and people from all communities saying together, as Congressman Meng

said, the solidarity of all communities really matters here. So, it's the positive messages, always help educating communities, including what we can do to educate through our schools and foster understanding and then really encouraging people to come forward, because that makes a huge difference in our ability to stop these crimes. If people feel they can come forward, it does allow us, in some cases we've found there's one individual creating a number of crimes in the community. We gain that one individual can often end the whole phenomenon. So, it really is important to get people comfortable coming forward and knowing that they will be supported.

So, a lot of different pieces, our Office to Prevent Hate Crimes is meeting with community leaders this week on additional measures we can take. Inspector Loo, you want to add to that?

Deputy Inspector Loo: Yes, just to echo on what the Mayor said, reaching out to the community is very important. I think in terms of prevention, bringing awareness to the issue is the most important thing. I think this forum, the creation of the Asian Hate Crime Task Force, this is all part of an initiative that we're taking to make the community aware, to make mainstream media aware of what's going on. I think awareness will lead to education, education will lead to prevention, and even though the Asian Hate Crime Task Force is predominantly a reactive unit, we are doing what we can to proactively look - we're going to proactively look through social media, we're going to proactively look through the police reports to see if there's any other issues that we have missed.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much Inspector. And so, look, everyone, we know that fighting hatred starts with talking about out loud, saying how unacceptable it is, and this very discussion we're having now is part of how we address things. Saying upfront, there's no place for hate in New York City. Folks actually really respond to that and hear that and making clear that when there's an attack on Asian communities, it's an attack on all of us – it actually makes a real difference and we're going to keep doing it and we're going to stamp out hate, and this is how we recover too, and I'll conclude with this. Our recovery depends on unity. Our recovery depends on mutual respect, that amazing unity we saw in the spring, when New Yorkers of every conceivable background banded together to help each other, no one stopped to say, what's your religion and what's your race. Everyone helped each other. That's what we do. We're not going to allow hatred in the door. It's very sad again, that so much of that hatred was emanating from Washington D.C., but we're not going to let hatred in the door in New York City. And in fact, unity has always been the New York miracle, how we bring people together, literally the most diverse place on earth and create a common good. So, that's what we're going to do. Again, respect for everyone. Unity among all New Yorkers. That's the pathway to a recovery for all of us. Thank you, everybody.

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