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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Look, we are going to go through a tough few weeks here in New York City. I want to start with just that obvious truth. We have come so far in the course of these last months, we're dealing with a real challenge now in some parts of our city, and it's going to take hard work to overcome it. And there's a lot of questions that need answers and a lot we have to work through, but I do know for sure New Yorkers have the strength and the wherewithal to overcome this challenge. And, again, the way we do it is with unity, the way we do it is with understanding we're all in this together. We are all going to have to work to get through this challenge to make sure that New York City does not experience what so many other parts of this country have experienced when they had a full-blown second wave of the coronavirus. What we're seeing right now in much of Europe, deeply troubling – full-blown second wave. It can be stopped. We need to stop it together. And that means speaking in a unified voice, respecting each other, working with each other to get done. It won't be easy. There will be things we have to work through. There will be things we're going to have to figure out. That is the truth whenever you're dealing with a crisis. But we can overcome this challenge. The data and the science make very, very clear, we can stop this challenge from turning into a full-blown second wave, and we must – we must. Our businesses have been coming back now, our schools are back. We need to protect this progress all over New York City, and the way to do that is to focus on the areas having a challenge, work with them, support them, work together and overcome it.

So, yesterday, I went over the basic plan of how we're going to begin the pauses and the other activities in the new zones that were determined by the State of New York. And this goes into effect today. I want to go over some of the basics here of how this is being approached. We're going to keep getting people answers as we go along. We want to try and make this as clear as possible and as quick as possible. This is a turnaround that, if we do it right, could only take a few weeks. If we don't do it right, it could go a lot longer. So, let's work together to get it right. Now, there's a lot of questions out there, obviously, and our job is to help people understand the specifics as much as possible. So, let's go over the basics again. The State of New York determined a plan based on three color coded zones, red, orange, and yellow. The red zone is a full pause zone – that means all schools public and non-public are shut down, non-essential businesses are closed, no indoor or outdoor gatherings. Now, the orange zone is a “warning zone.” That means schools are closed, public and non-public, but most businesses can operate but with certain restrictions. The yellow zone is what is called by the State the cautionary zone, and that a situation where those areas are being watched, we're working on it, we want to make sure they do not end up with more challenges. Businesses are open, schools are in session, but there'll be a mandated COVID testing in the schools regularly and a lot of activity out in the communities to provide people education, and support, and free masks, and, obviously, enforcement. Now, the pause period begins today and in effect for a minimum of 14 days, we're going to work with the State at that point to reassess where we stand, if we need to go longer.

Again, I've asked the doctors this repeatedly, can this be overcome in 14 days? Yes, with extraordinary effort, it can be, with consistent effort it can be. If we don't have that extraordinary effort, it might go longer, and none of us wants to see that happen. We're going to continue to remind people, it is ultimately all about each and every one of you. So, folks in the red zone in particular – red zones, orange and yellow as well, it is so much about what you do – it's wearing masks, it's social distancing, it's all the basics that are going to help us come back and we need each and every one of you to be a part of it.

Now, how were these zones determined? They're determined by the data. They're determined by the facts. They're determined by the test results. People have commented on this, but I want to go back to what the doctors tell us. I want to go back to the science. This is based on sheer numbers and facts. And these areas are examples within New York City of the extraordinary diversity that makes up the city. Brooklyn, Queens, two of the most diverse places on earth – a number of areas of Brooklyn, Queens affected. What they all have in common is the numbers told us it was time for real restrictions to turn the tide, and that's what the State and the City fully agree on. Now, how do you know what zone you're in? This is a very fair question. People need answers – where you live, where you work, where you go to school, which zone is it in? So, we've created a new online tool for people to know their status and which zone they're in. The new zone finder online is now live – you can go to [nyc.gov/covidzone](https://nyc.gov/covidzone), and you simply enter in your personal address, your home address, for example, or your business address, your school address, and it will tell you what is happening at that address, what specific restrictions are in place, what closures are in effect. This was put together really quickly with information we received from the State, so we had to quickly act to make it clear and available to all New Yorkers. And I want to thank everyone at our IT Department, DoITT. I want to thank everyone at Department of Health and at the Office of Operations for their extraordinary work. Congratulations to all of you putting together this so quickly so all New Yorkers could get this clarity.

Now, clearly, we need to do a lot of outreach and we need to get out there and explain to people what's going on. So, there'll be a lot of outreach in communities. We want to make sure that even with the challenges we're facing and the valid questions people are going to have, that we get out there in force to help people know what's going on, answer questions, resolve challenges. Look, the goal here is that everyone follows the rules for their zone. As always, when we have to bring consequences to bear, we will. The first thing we want to achieve is compliance. If we get compliance there do not have to be forced closures, there do not have to be fines and penalties. But if we don't get compliance, then those consequences will happen very, very quickly.

Now, let's talk about school closures. This is a key component of this plan. So, on Tuesday, we closed 108 public school sites in coordination with the State, now closing additional 61 public school sites today. They've been – the families have been alerted as of last night, 61 public school sites, and, again, for a two-week period. The school sites that were closed previously will remain closed for that two-week period. Even if they don't end up under the new state rules, if they don't end up being in the red or orange zone, we're still keeping them closed, because based on our data, it was the right thing to do. So, we'll continue that for two weeks. And, again, same rules will apply to public and non-public schools. After two weeks, there'll be a full evaluation. So, the earliest we could talk about – and I emphasize the word earliest – for the schools that closed on Tuesday, the earliest they could come back is Wednesday, October 21st. But, obviously, we'll be talking about it in advance of that to tell people what direction things are

going in, if it looks like a reopening could happen earlier or that will be further delayed. In the meantime, of course, all kids will have remote learning.

Now, testing – obviously, such a crucial piece of this. So, let's talk about testing in schools. For weeks now, we've been preparing for the medical monitoring that will be happening in every single New York City public school. That will be happening monthly. I want to make very, very clear – all staff, all students, we need full participation. It is a requirement of being part of the in-person school community. So, we're sending out additional guidance to parents to make that very clear. And we have sent out the forms to parents, both online and in paper, to sign up to get their children tested. This is good for everyone to know what's going on in each school. And, of course, every family will get the test results. You saw the great video the other day, how easy it is now, these tests are very quick, very easy. They're free. They're at the schools. We're sending out the information, again, urging all parents to sign that consent form, get it back immediately. Lots of parents now are responding. I want to thank all of you. We need everyone to respond. This medical monitoring, the surveying begins tomorrow, Friday, in some schools, and then it will grow out over the coming weeks.

Now, families, of course, have questions. We want to answer the questions. We want to listen to any concern a parent has and answer it. If they need to talk to medical personnel, connect them to medical personnel. We want to make it easy and clear. We're happy to have that conversation, whatever language a parent speaks. So, our job is to make sure the parents really understand why it's important and get their questions answered. And to help parents know that we want to answer their questions and to help give them clarity about this approach, we've put together a new video featuring our very own Health Commissioner. And I like to remind people, he is not only our Health Commissioner, he is a parent himself and his wife happens to be an assistant principal in our schools. So, he knows a whole lot about our schools and kids. So, here's the new video featuring our Health Commissioner, Dr. Dave Chokshi.

[Video plays in background]

Well, I really appreciate Dr. Chokshi making that video and making it so clear. And he is the City's doctor. So, I think for all parents to hear directly from him is so important. And, look, this is for the regular testing, we'll be doing every month, every school within the Department of Education. And the State will be putting out their plan as well for a different approach. And that is the weekly testing for the schools in the yellow zone that the State determined. So, those schools that fall within those yellow zones, we'll have weekly testing. It's a different effort entirely from what we just described, the ongoing monthly in every school, all over the city. The weekly testing just in the yellow zone schools will begin next Friday, not this Friday, next Friday, the 16th. And that is going to be another crucial approach to help us know exactly what's going on and how to address things best. So, again, it all comes down to testing. And I want to keep emphasizing this for all New Yorkers – remember, remember the single biggest challenge we had in March, in April was lack of testing. In fact, we now know what we didn't know in March, that the virus had already spread widely in February. We couldn't know it because there was no testing in the amount we needed in New York City. We didn't have the ability to provide our own tests to people. There's plenty of time to talk about that history in the future. But what we do know is, where there is a lot of testing, it helps our health leadership to pinpoint the response to act quickly. The more people participate in testing, the more impact we can have. So, this is why as we have added more and more testing over the months, it directly correlated with

our ability to turn around the situation and all those months where we've kept the positivity level for this virus so low. We need more and more testing than ever. And, in fact, even amidst the challenges we're facing now, some good news, that last week we conducted the highest number of tests since this crisis began. Last week in New York City, the most tests given to New Yorkers since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis – 250,000 tests for the whole city. We need to keep going. We need to keep making sure more and more people in every neighborhood participate in testing. Now, the good news is, the turnaround time for the results has now become the shortest we've ever seen. For citywide average turnaround, including for urgent care facilities, we're now at around a two-day turnaround. With results on average for test taken at Health + Hospitals facilities and Health Department facilities, meaning all public facilities, that turnaround is down on average to one day. So, that's a great improvement. So, everyone, testing, testing, testing – if you have not been tested, get tested. If you haven't been tested in a while, get tested. If you're living in one of the areas most affected, get tested. And if you need to know where, go to [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://nyc.gov/covidtest) or call 212-COVID19 to find those locations.

Now, let's talk about another crucial piece of fighting back against this danger of a second wave. And what we're seeing in these areas, we need, of course, in addition to clarifying rules and educating people and providing masks, we obviously need enforcement. So, we had teams out in the red and orange zone areas, 2,000 inspections yesterday, 36 summonses, 7,000 inspections since last week that led to 104 violations being given. Now, again, where we need to shut something down, we will. We've done that even before the State's declaration, we've shut down the stores when needed, we've shut down schools, both public, and non-public when needed. Wherever we need to, we will. And the rules now and the restrictions are even more clear. We're not looking to do anything painful for people. We know this is tough. We want everyone to work together and cooperate. We know for small business owners, particularly, it's going to be a really tough time, but we have to follow these rules and we will enforce them.

Now, before we go to our daily indicators, just an important note on another topic, but this is a deadline I want to make sure everyone is aware of, because so much is happening nowadays, but, obviously, one of the most important things will determine so much of our future is the election in 26 days. And, in fact, the deadline for registering to vote is right upon us now. So, with everything else going on, if you have not registered to vote and you want to participate in this election this Friday is your last chance. You have just today and tomorrow to get registered if you are not already registered. And, again, the election, of course, is November 3rd, but early voting begins as early as October 24th. So, it's right around the corner. Three ways to register to vote if you're not registered – in-person or online through Department of Motor Vehicles. And, reminder, if you do it online, you print out the application and you have to get that application postmarked by tomorrow, October 9th, when you mail it in. You can also download a registration form at [vote.nyc](https://vote.nyc). Or, of course, you can register in-person at any local Board of Elections Office or any City agency with voter registration forms. So, the bottom line is – literally, the most important election of our lifetimes. Everyone's voice should be heard. Register to vote by tomorrow so you can be a part of it.

Okay, let's go over the daily indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, that threshold is 200 patients – today's report, 89 patients with a confirmed positivity level for COVID of 22.7 percent. Two, the new reported seven-day average for new cases, and that threshold is 550 cases – today's report, 526. And three, percentage of people tested positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold five percent – today's

report is 0.33 percent. And on the seven-day rolling average, today's number for the seven-day rolling average is 1.56 percent.

Let me say a few words in Spanish, but just before I do want to make sure people know that we're not having a press conference tomorrow and we'll resume next week. Monday is, in fact, a City holiday. So, the next scheduled press conference will be for Tuesday.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

**Moderator:** Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. Today with us we have Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps. Dr. Ted Long, Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma, Jeff Thamkittikasem, Director of the Mayor's Office for Operations, and Laura Wood, Senior Counsel and Advisor to DemocracyNYC. With that, we'll go to Gloria from NY1.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I want to ask you about the events that have taken place over the last two nights, specifically, if you think that was what's been, you know, failed communication, prevention strategy that has been coming out of your office and the Governor's office about these clusters is in some ways to blame for what we have been seeing in the last two nights? And just to, you know, respectfully, Mr. Mayor, I just want to ask, you know, what's going on here? You have what seems to be like a mob of people last night, attacking a journalist, a bystander the previous night, seemingly zero action from the police. They're not in this press conference today. How are you getting a hold of this situation?

**Mayor:** Gloria, first of all, I saw the video of the attack on Jacob Kornbluh – absolutely unacceptable. Disgusting, really. I mean, here's a journalist – you know, a journalist who really cares about doing the work of informing people what's going on and here's a mob of people attacking them. It's just unacceptable. There need to be consequences for that. The situation here, overall, is a very difficult one, because we're having to tell many communities of people that after the success we've had as a city, in some communities, we're going to have to turn back to where we were in the spring. No one wants to hear it. I understand, but we have to do it. The City and State are united on this. I do expect a clearer response, going forward. I think there were some issues, yesterday, honestly, in terms of both the NYPD's and the approach of the City's legal team, understanding the State guidance and getting it right once and for all – that has to be corrected. We need a much clearer approach and I expect that to be corrected today before anything that happens this evening.

**Question:** Thank you. I wanted to – there seems to be some confusion on the schools as well and I just want to make sure I'm understanding this right. You said all of these schools, even if they are in the orange or yellow zones, they're also closed, not necessarily just the ones that are in the red zone?

**Mayor:** No, it's an important point. I appreciate the question, Gloria. We've delineated based on the State guidance the schools that need to close in the red and orange zones. I want to clarify – again, I put forward a proposal on Sunday, what I believed was the right thing. Obviously, it became the basis for what the State did, but the State had a different way of approaching the specific geography, naming it, etcetera. In the red and orange zones, those schools close for at least two weeks. We have alerted any school that hadn't already been closed, was alerted yesterday they needed to be closed today. Now, there are some schools that were in our original list of closures because our data, then based on ZIP codes, said it was important to close the schools in those areas to protect against a resurgence. We're going to keep those schools closed too, because the City believes fundamentally those schools have to be closed as part of the overall strategy. Generally, of course, there's a huge amount of overlap between the ZIP code strategy we put forward and the zone strategy the State ultimately chose, but where a school was previously told to close, it will keep closed for the two weeks starting now and then we will – or starting, I'm sorry, starting today, to close – and then we will assess at that point whether it makes sense to reopen them.

**Moderator:** Next up is Jen from the AP.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Jen. How are you doing?

**Question:** Okay. My first question is about nursing homes. Given what happened in spring here and elsewhere in the State, is there any talk at this point of beginning to institute restrictions on visitation or take other steps specific to nursing house?

**Mayor:** Yeah, that's a great question, Jen. Obviously, we've seen – and I'll let the doctors speak to this – that the nursing homes have been one of the most sensitive, if not the most sensitive part of this whole crisis from the beginning. So, we're going to look to the State for guidance on that. The State regulates nursing, obviously. The State is determining these rules. We will work with them in every way. We tried through the worst of the crisis to support nursing homes with PPE and any other support we could give and we'll continue that. But in terms of restrictions, that's a decision the State has to make. We have to be really, really careful with our seniors living in nursing homes and the people who work there. So, Dr. Varma, would you like to – or, Dr. Choksi, would you like to add to that?

If Dr. Varma, you're on mute if you're speaking.

**Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma:** Got it. Yeah – no, I'll make a one or two quick points and then maybe pass it over to Commissioner Chokshi. You're absolutely correct that our nursing homes are a critical place where we need to strengthen our prevention measures always and maintain them as much as possible. For reference, there has been continuous and ongoing testing going on in the nursing homes not just of the residents, but also of the staff that work there. And so, our nursing homes have been a continuous place where we've been working to strengthen and improve surveillance and testing throughout. At this point, the nursing homes do not appear to be a contributing factor at all to the resurgence that we're seeing in various parts of Brooklyn and parts of Queens. But if, of course, it remains an area in which we are continuously communicating and working closely on.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Jen.

**Question:** I think – I guess my second one would be –

**Mayor:** I'm sorry, Dr. Chokshi. I apologize. I jumped too quick, Jen. Dr. Chokshi, do you want to add?

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** No, sir. Mr. Mayor, I think you guys covered that at once. Thank you.

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

**Question:** Okay, great. I guess thinking about the objections to the new restrictions in some of the places where they're being implemented, do you worry about citywide whether there's a level of fatigue after the spring - it is going to make it really hard to persuade anyone to go through it again? And if so, what do you do about it?

**Mayor:** I would say no, if the question is, do I think we can beat this back and do I think all New Yorkers will be a part of beating it back? I'm absolutely convinced we can beat it back and the vast majority of New Yorkers will participate, they've done it before. The vast majority of New Yorkers are continuing to follow these rules, even as things got better. So, no question in my mind after everything we went through and also just the toughness of New Yorkers, the fact that people in New York City do think communally, people in New York City do think about their neighbors, they do think about something bigger than just themselves, we've seen it in crisis after crisis. So I'm very confident we can beat this back but at the same time, of course, there's going to be some fatigue, and of course it gets harder to do this with every month. And, in some ways, it does lead people to let their guard down a little bit, and that always leads to the potential of the disease coming back into our lives. But what's very different here than other places that are seeing these widespread resurgences, I think that we've had particular devotion to the data and the science here. We talk about every day, we put it out very publicly. There's a wide level of understanding amongst New Yorkers. New Yorkers never really let down their guard and continued to be cautious and continued to follow the rules overwhelmingly. So, of course, there's some fatigue, but not the kind of fatigue that has to lead to a resurgence. We're sounding the alarm and I believe the vast majority of New Yorkers are going to hear it and act on it. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Next up, we'll go to Marcia from WCBS.

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

**Mayor:** Good Marcia. How are you?

**Question;** I'm great. I have a question for you. It has to do with what appears to be different levels of policing, depending on where the demonstration was. For example, two weeks ago in Washington Square Park, there was a heavy police presence, police in riot gear on bikes, a lot of arrests, but the last two nights in Borough Park there's been very few police officers present. The picture shows a little less police presence or gentler or decision to deal with the community that

way, no arrest either night, and I wonder why there appears to be a difference in the response to – in Borough Park compared to previous demonstrations?

**Mayor:** Well, I would say, first of all, Marcia, I want to say – the framework of what I've seen with my own eyes now for months. The vast majority of demonstrations in the city of all persuasions all across the political spectrum over the last six months or more have been peaceful, and the NYPD has had a presence, but has stayed back, and of course, let peaceful protest continue. That's been the norm for decades in the city. That's how it's been the vast majority of times. Anytime, unfortunately, where there has been violence towards individuals, towards property, of course, violence towards police officers, unacceptable, all of that unacceptable, there's been more response. What we have here is something where we absolutely must have consistency of response. We have to ensure that all communities are treated the same way.

I think we had a difference last night than the night before. The night before was something that was not expected in terms of a crowd and there was very limited police presence. Last night, my understanding is there was much more police presence, but as I said earlier this morning, we need to get very clear. We're in a different situation now it's the first time we had the re-imposition of restrictions since this crisis began, that comes with additional legal tools for the NYPD, the lawyers all have to get on the same page, the NYPD has to get on the same page with the lawyers, and I expect from tonight on a much clearer approach to enforcement. It's crucial all New Yorkers understand that everyone's going to be treated the same, in fact, where there's restrictions in place, the bar goes up, meaning it's going to be even more important to ensure that people are safe and the NYPD intervenes whenever there's a problem. Go ahead.

**Question:** But Mr. Mayor, people are saying that there hasn't been an evenhanded approach, that there was a lot of violence in the last two days, you saw fires, you saw people assaulted, no arrests, and the video that we have shows a very light police presence compared to numbers of other situations where there's been a heavy police presence. And I guess the question also is what's going to happen tonight? What – we know the rules are now in effect, if it means that you can only have 10 people in a synagogue and there's no mass demonstrations. So when – if there's a demonstration tonight, what are you instructing the police to do? And what do you say to people who say that there is an uneven response?

**Mayor:** Again, Marcia, I disagree with you on the level of presence based on the reports I received that there was much more police presence last night than the night before, but what I think is absolutely right, is we need a very, very clear message to all the communities affected and to the people in New York City about how tonight is going to be handled. Again, instructing the NYPD and the Law Department and the legal experts on this to get together, come up with a single clear standard, put it out publicly today, so everyone knows exactly what will happen. We must have consistency in our approach to these issues in every part of the city and that's what we'll do.

**Moderator:** Next up we have Michael from the Daily News.

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

**Mayor:** Good, Michael, how are you?



**Question:** I'm good. So, I got a couple of questions. The first one has to do again with the situation we saw last night in Borough Park over the last couple of nights, and so I wanted to ask you why haven't any arrests been made in this attack that was caught on tape? And just to piggyback on that you know, there've been charges that the response in Borough Park has been anti-Semitic at which, you know, doesn't seem to be borne out by the facts, but I'm wondering what you think of those kind of criticisms that this kind of charge of anti-Semitism has been as being lobbed at the city?

**Mayor:** That trying to save lives, Michael, we're trying to save everybody's lives in every community. We're trying to protect people from a virus that took the lives of tens of thousands of New Yorkers, and that shut down this whole city. This is only about the data and the science, and we're applying it evenly to all communities with respect, with understanding, there's been dialogue for weeks and weeks with community leaders, engaging them, warning them of the danger, trying to get everyone involved to help address it, and overwhelmingly people have gotten involved, have worked together, and I expect that the vast majority of people will keep working together to overcome this. Go ahead.

**Question:** The second question is unrelated to the first, but you know, on more than one occasion during these press conferences, you said you know, and I understand why that you know, that the Press Office or that your team will get back to reporters on things, and there was a question we asked yesterday and I appreciate you taking my questions today on your call for an investigation into this ballot issue with this printer. We still haven't received an answer on that. And I guess on a related note, you know, the family of Donald Speight which I wrote about and asked about a week or two back, they said they never heard from you guys on that issue, and I'm wondering if you could update us on those two things –

**Mayor:** On the second one, I remember your question and I instructed people to follow through and I want to confirm exactly what happened. I can't do that right this minute, but we will do that today because we want to make sure we follow up on all these things. On the question of the Board of Elections, in fact, we had a discussion immediately after the press conference based on your question to clarify once and for all if this is something that the city could proceed on, or because the State regulates the Board of Elections, whether it would have to be referred to the State Board of Elections or whatever state investigatory body. That was supposed to be resolved yesterday, so Bill Neidhardt is here in the room, and if he has an answer, he's going to hand me a note and I will announce it to you before we leave today, or else he'll get it to you. But we do I believe have that answer now and can get it to you in a moment.

**Moderator:** Next up, we have Ari from The Forward.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey, Ari. How are you doing?

**Question:** I'm been doing all right, thank you. I want to ask about this question of legal issues between the city's legal team and the Police Department. I've been watching your press conferences and the rules seem fairly clear. So, what are the issues between as you described it, the city lawyers and the NYPD? What is not being communicated or what needs to be communicated, what needs to be determined?

**Mayor:** Ari, it's a fair question. I'm not going to get too far into the weeds, but I'll just give you the overview point. I do understand we've had a situation where we have gone through different phases of this crisis. For the last month, we had a sustained period, three, four months where things were pretty stable and the question of how protests should be handled again across the political spectrum. We've seen every kind of protest, what we saw on Staten Island over the weekend, to what we've seen in Washington Square Park, whatever you name it, we've seen the whole spectrum and what those rules of engagement were in a period of time when we were in a much better situation with the coronavirus, but still obviously dealing with all the normal questions of health and safety and order and what are the right rules of engagement?

Now, we have something new. We have specific zones delineated not just by the city, but by the State of New York in response to a health emergency. I think there still needs to be clarity about what that empowers the NYPD to do, not only vis-a-vis various specific things in these rules like stores, for example, but specifically on the topic of protest. I do understand there's a nuance there. Again, I think that should have been resolved yesterday. It needs to be resolved today. So, my clear instruction that I've sent out through my team is NYPD, Law Department, everyone else pertinent, same page. If we need any consultation with the State, do it now, announce it this afternoon exactly how things are going to go down, apply those rules consistently, let the people see that consistency across any and all communities. Go ahead, Ari.

**Question:** Thank you. I also wanted to ask about something you mentioned as well earlier about trying to communicate the rules about the new restrictions to the affected communities, especially to the Orthodox communities. There's a lot of widespread frustration of these communities with the restrictions, there's a lot of skepticism about the state testing results. There's a widespread assumption that the community has heard immunity. What is the plan other than speaking to community leaders to communicate the science and the necessity of these restrictions, or is it – or are you leaving it to the community leaders to try and make that case for the importance of the restrictions?

**Mayor:** Well let me say this the – first of all, there is no herd immunity. We've been over this, but I think it's really important to say, and I want a Dr. Chokshi to speak after me about that. Second of all, the tests are absolutely crucial. They tell us a lot, this whole assumption that somehow the tests are faulty, just isn't true. The test tells us what we need to do to be able to protect people and that's been true throughout this whole crisis. We have deeply engaged community leaders. I know Dr. Katz is not with us now, but he has led the way in conversations with so many community leaders over weeks now, giving them answers and yes, depending, particularly on committee leaders to turn around and reach their constituents, that they are the known and trusted voices in their community. We want them to help get the word out, but obviously the Health Department, H + H, Test and Trace, everyone's been out there on the ground in multiple languages, spreading the word directly, and we constantly try to answer people's questions and the best answers come, of course, from the health care professionals, both the city health care leadership, but also we've engaged a lot of community health care providers, doctors, and nurses, and other health care providers in the communities, of the communities, to speak out as well and educate people directly at the grassroots. Dr. Chokshi you want to add?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, sir. Thank you. And thanks for the question, which allows us to – yes, reinforce some of the facts for the situation. Number one is there is no herd immunity in any

of the neighborhoods where we're most concerned or any other neighborhood in New York City. This is so important to ensure that people understand that unfortunately the coronavirus continues to be very infectious, continues to spread and so we have to take the precautions that we are embarking upon. Number two is that we know from multiple different types of data that there has been an increase in cases, there has been an increase in the proportion of tests coming back positive in the areas that we are most concerned, particularly in the red and orange zones in the State designation. And that's why, you know, we have been communicating those results over the last few days, but also the last few weeks as we started to see uptakes in those numbers that had us very concerned.

With respect to outreach, I'll just add one thing to what the Mayor said, which is to emphasize that beyond all of the outreach that has been done to community leaders and faith leaders and leaders of private schools and other core institutions in these communities, we have worked very hard in partnership with the trusted clinicians, the health care providers who have been taking care of people in these neighborhoods. And what we hear from them is along with us, you know, a growing sense of concern and alarm, because they know what will happen if we don't get this growth in cases under control, like all of us who have been doctors over the last few months, we've seen so much suffering and tragedy, and this is our chance to try to prevent as much of it as possible. So, we've done that in a way that communicates our guidance, you know, our public health evidence, as well as our clinical guidance. We do webinars with health care providers. We also work with them to ensure that testing is as accessible and available as possible. And so, for example, the Test and Trace Corp. has delivered testing machines to those trusted providers so that patients who are coming to them are also able to get tested as rapidly and as expansively as possible.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, doctor. I just want to take us one step back to the questions that Michael was asking a moment ago. Two updates for everyone, but Michael specifically for you, one on the Board of Elections vendor question, we have referred that matter to the City Department of Investigation. We've also confirmed that Attorney General Letitia James is aware of the situation as well. On the issue of the city worker that needed more help navigating the benefits, the city has reached out, but let's do a confirmation through you, Michael, that we are connecting with the right person and make sure that connection happens today because we do want to make sure that that's addressed. Okay, go ahead.

**Moderator:** Next step is Chris from Gothamist.

**Question:** Morning, Mr. Mayor, first question for you is what are the city's contact tracers seeing in these hotspots ZIP codes in these areas? How many people testing positive or responding to the contact tracers? And has the city pinpointed exactly where the virus is spreading? Is it in schools, is it in large indoor events? Is it in – what specifically is it causing the spreads?

**Mayor:** Let me – Chris, I appreciate the questions. I'll turn to Dr. Long to describe the specific efforts of Test and Trace Corps, and what they're experiencing, and then Dr. Varma, Dr. Chokshi can join in on the bigger point. I just say, as the layman here in the crowd, I don't think it's as simple as everything's coming from one place or another. I think we are seeing obviously with the number of areas of Brooklyn and Queens effected, something that transcends the narrow reality. For example, you know, at various times we've seen a situation where maybe there was a

specific school or a specific event that was an area of concern. We've talked about that in the past, this is something much bigger and it's not just New York City. It is throughout the metropolitan area, and there's been obviously an interplay between Brooklyn and Queens with areas of Nassau, Orange County, Rockland County, even New Jersey. So, this one, I think, is a bigger reality and we have to address it very aggressively and quickly to ensure that it is contained. So, Dr. Long first, followed by Dr. Varma, and Dr. Chokshi.

**Executive Director Ted Long, Test and Trace Corps.:** Thank you, sir. So, in terms of contact tracing, what we're seeing a lot of transmission among close contacts and among household members. In particular, in terms of the results we've seen when we add to the actual tracing is we've, we have contracts with 39 community based organizations to get the word out about what we're doing, why it's important and how working together will suppress the coronavirus if we do this together with our communities. That's resulted in – 80 percent of people, when we call them, are picking up the phone, we're reaching 80 percent. Across the rest of New York City, we're reaching a higher number, 90 percent. So, we have a little bit more work to do there with our communities. But interestingly, among the communities of concern that we're referring to here, we called in every single day, every case that we talked to, everybody we knew was diagnosed with coronavirus, and they actually are more compliant, meaning they confirm more often for us, 98 percent of the time – all cases confirm for us that they are isolating appropriately at home, are not going out there risking transmitting the virus to others. So, we have a bright spot there that our communities, when we're able to get through to them, they do understand the concern here. Our CBOs are educating them about why this is important and that we can work together.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Dr. Varma, Dr. Varma, are you on mute? This is a running joke here. Do we have him or not?

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Can you hear me now?

**Mayor:** There you go.

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Okay. Yeah, just a few additional points, because I think this is a very critical question. You know, in addition to the data that the Ted reported about the contact tracers, I think another trend that we're seeing is that the proportion of people that are reporting that they recently traveled as a risk factor has declined over the past few weeks, and this is an implication then that we're getting more transmission locally here in New York City, as opposed to imported, and then related to that, also the proportion that don't actually recall any specific factor that might have caused their transmission such as having a known contact or, or having been to a recent gathering has also increased slightly, and those two things are what has led us to be concerned about both local transmission, as well as specifically in these areas, what we call widespread transmission when there are enough ways in which you can get affected that it's difficult for people to recognize what the specific factor is, and that's what really triggers our need to do these much more aggressive community measures.

**Mayor:** Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Chokshi: No, sir. Nothing to add.

**Mayor:** Okay, go ahead, Chris.

**Question:** Okay, thank you, and my second question is about, I know that you said that the NYPD is working out differences in policing, different of protests across the city, and making sure that they are adhering to guidelines, but what's happened over the past few nights is violent, and our reporter was out there last night, the night before – this is violence happening against individuals in sight of the NYPD, and so I'm wondering, have you spoken directly to Commissioner Shea about this? Did you talk to him last night? Did you talk to him this morning? And do you think it's acceptable that these actions are happening in view of the Police Department and nothing is being done about it?

**Mayor:** No, obviously I don't. So, Chris, I spoke to Commissioner Shea multiple times yesterday. I spoke to First Deputy Mayor Fuller this morning. There is something here that needs to be fixed right away, and that's why I'm being abundantly clear. It will be fixed today and made public. Violence is unacceptable, regardless of who commits it, it's unacceptable. What I saw – the attack on Jacob Kornbluh was unacceptable and there clearly need to be consequences for the people involved, and I don't know why that hasn't happened already and it needs to happen. So, we will get this right. I understand it's a very complex situation, again, under a new set of rules, but we still need to get it real clear, real public to everyone. So, everyone knows to expect, and that will happen today. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Next up is Reuvain from Hamodia, and these are our last two questions.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'd just like to ask you about the protest gatherings – mass gatherings are illegal now, but during the summer you said that you would give an exception to the rule against gatherings for protest. Those, of course, were anti-police protests – these are against the government restriction. So, I just wanted to know if the same rule applies that gatherings for purposes of political protests are allowed?

**Mayor:** Again, Reuvain, fair question. What we've had throughout is a difficult balance that the NYPD and the City of New York tried to strike between the health care realities and the American right to protest, the constitutional right to protest, and we have dealt with that in different periods of this crisis, and we've seen different realities throughout.

We are now in a new situation. We're in a situation where we have state-mandated restrictions in particular areas to stop a resurgence, and that resurgence, if it is not stopped, will overtake the whole city and lead to across the board set of restrictions on all of New York City. This is something we have not confronted before. We need to get very, very clear on the legal issues once and for all in light of this reality, and again, be very public about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in light of this new reality. Go ahead.

**Question:** I'd like ask you in the red zones. I believe the houses of worship, but limited to 25 percent of capacity or 10 people, whichever is fewer. Now, there are houses of worship that have a capacity of 50 people, and there are those that have the capacity of many hundreds. How does it make sense to limit, you know, a house of worship that has hundreds and hundreds of people in occupancy to just 10 people?

**Mayor:** Again, look, the state is determining these rules and they are doing it. I'm certain from a perspective of an abundance of caution, because we have an immediate urgent challenge that I

remind you if addressed aggressively by everyone, not just government, by people in the community could be resolved in a matter of weeks, and then the restrictions could be lifted. So, I will let the State speak for itself about how it determined these rules, but I want to affirm the underlying understanding that I have on the State's approach, which I agree with, which is we need to quickly work together to stop this from becoming a bigger problem for all communities, and that can be done in a matter of weeks. So, to be rigorous to stop it now is smart policy – it's the sane approach to protect people's lives.

**Moderator:** Our last question will go to Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

**Question:** It's good to see you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** How are you doing Henry?

**Question:** I'm doing well. I hope you are too.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Question:** The seven-day rolling average of new cases is approaching 550. It's now at 526, the line graph is going up. What happens if the new reported cases hit 550 or exceed it?

**Mayor:** Yeah, let me give again, I'll be the layman who offers the simplest explanation and then Dr. Varma, Dr. Chokshi can jump in. You see three measures now that we're talking about regularly, that we really have resolved are the clearest, most helpful, and obviously there's some real difference in the measures at this point. We thank God we know there could be some big challenges ahead, obviously in terms of hospitalization, but right now it remains overall low. The case numbers have gone up a lot, but that is also due Henry to a lot more testing than we've ever had. As I announced – a quarter million tests last week, we've never gotten to that level before in the daily percent positive. Obviously the most compelling number is the seven-day rolling average on a daily positivity. That's at 1.56 percent today for the whole city. We want that to go down for sure, but compared to so much of this country and compared to much of the, that would be considered, you know, an outstandingly low percentage.

So, overall, I think we are very clear about our direction, our ability to keep things in check. But what we do know is certain areas of city need deep restrictions to ensure that we don't have a bigger problem. So, I would say if it was not such a localized problem, we'd be having a different discussion. If all of these indicators were moving in unison, we'd be having a different discussion, but right now we know the thing we need to know, which is where's the problem. What do we have to do about it? And that's what we're acting on. Dr. Varma?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Allow me to start Mr. Mayor. This is Dr. Chokshi.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi, and thank you for the question Henry. Yes. we are watching the indicator with respect to newly reported cases very closely, and as you've observed, it has gone up in recent days. As the Mayor said, this is primarily due to what's happening in the areas that we are most concerned about, and that we have been communicating about – anywhere from about 25 to 30 percent of the of the cases in the entire city are concentrated within those areas of greatest concern, and so that represents what's happening with the citywide numbers as a whole.

I'll say each indicator tells us something a bit different. This one in particular, the newly reported cases, is a way that we can see the overall level of infection, but then we have to match it up as a Mayor was saying to what's happening with test positivity, but also with our understanding of what's happening geographically, and so that's, what has, you know, painting that whole picture through the different indicators is what's led us to taking the actions that we're taking the localized restrictions in the areas of greatest concern, ramping up all of our testing citywide, continuing to watch the other indicators, not just in those areas of greatest concern but also in other neighborhoods, citywide as well.

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

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah, I would just briefly note that, you know, the reason we originally settled on these milestones and the threshold was because we wanted to use them like warning lights – you know, signals that would tell us that we needed to take stronger action, and I think the important aspect here to understand is that we actually took action and very strong action, even before these warning lights flash, because for all the reasons that you've heard from the Mayor and from the Commissioner we really focused and identified early on that this was largely being driven in one geographic area, and that's what led us to take our actions.

**Mayor:** Good. Go ahead, Henry.

**Question:** My other question has to do with access to the city data. For more than a month, I've been trying to get the data on seven-day average infection rates and new cases by ZIP code. This is obviously data that the city has, and yet you don't release it on request, nor do you post it on your website. It would be very helpful and transparent for the people of New York to know, ZIP code by ZIP code, what the seven-day infection rate is, and what the level of new cases is on a seven-day rolling average, you have the data, why wouldn't you share it with me and the rest of the public?

**Mayor:** All right, let me start and turn to Dr. Chokshi. Henry, look again, we put out data constantly to the people of this city, and I want to thank our health care team. They've done immense work from early in this crisis to put out lots of information. This was one of the first places in America to identify and acknowledge the disparities we were seeing in the impact of the coronavirus and to talk about things like the reality of those we lost, who probably died from the coronavirus, even though other measures were saying that they weren't officially people who had died of coronavirus. I think the Health Department has been outstanding about going the extra mile for transparency. So, I really do feel we've put out a lot of data and consistently are putting out data by ZIP code and broken out clearly. On that specific question. Dr. Chokshi, could you speak to that?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, sir, and thank you for the question Henry, and thank you for your interest in our data. We strive to be the most transparent jurisdiction certainly in the entire country, if not the entire world, with respect to the data that we are sharing with the public. That's why we have cases, hospitalizations, deaths, you know, by geography, by age, cumulatively as well as over a more recent period as well. We were the first jurisdiction to have shared our antibody test results as well, but allow me to take your specific question, which is how do we think about sharing recent neighborhood level data? And you know, one of the things that we have been sharing, particularly as we've been more concerned in these specific

neighborhoods is 14-day averages. Just one, you know, small technical note – because some of the numbers are so small. We think it's a better measure of what's happening to look at 14-day averages rather than a seven-day averages, although they tell us different things. The final thing that I'll say is that we are in the process of making additional updates to our website, which will have more refined versions of a recent data at the neighborhood level, and you can expect that in the coming day.

**Mayor:** Dave, would you please do a follow-up with Henry just to make sure that everyone's communicating on exactly what he's asking for and if that is part what you're going to be able to do in the next few days, and let's obviously announce it when that data is ready.

Okay. Everyone, look, I'll conclude with a point about what we all have to do here together. We all have to work in common cause, and we all have to lead by example. This is a reality where we have a threat, we have a challenge. We've had them before in the city. We've overcome them – many different kinds of challenges. But what is clear, time and time again, is when people get united to fight a problem, we are able to fight that problem back. We are able to overcome it and people have to show that they are all in the battle together. So every time you put on a mask, you are joining in common cause with your fellow New Yorker, every time you practice social distancing, every time you use hand sanitizer, all these basics really matter, and we owe it to each other, and this is a place where every kind of person in the world joins together, and with shocking harmony, I always talk about the fact that if you put this mix of people, almost any place else in the world, that it might not be the great success story New York City always has been, but here we make it work, and not only in good times, here we come together to overcome challenge after challenge – people gathered together across all backgrounds after 9/11 or after Sandy or all the challenges we faced. So, here is a time for unity and a sense of common cause and everyone who participates helps everyone else. We do that, we will stop this problem we're having – we'll stop it before it spreads, and we'll protect this city. Thank you, everybody.

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