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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ADAMS HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Eric Adams: Good to see you back in the room again, you know. These in person briefings were not in place and I'm happy to be back here in front of you and have an opportunity to just give you an update on some good news. And, again, we want to apologize that we have to depart soon, Stephen McDonald's event is today. I remember when he was shot when I was a police officer. I'm happy to be with the family today.

But before we get on our COVID briefing, which I believe is going to be some great news, just want to really touch on the horrific incident that took place over the weekend. Former transit cop, I know the safety and how safety matters in our transportation system. It was extremely impactful for New Yorkers, and I spoke with various communities, did a Zoom here from the office. Losing a New Yorker in that fashion, and just really doubled down on our concerns that our system must be safe, must be safe from actual crime, which we are going to do. And it must be safe from those who feel as though there's a total level of disorder in our subway system. Day one, January 1, when I took the train, I saw the homelessness, the yelling, the screaming early in the morning, crimes right outside of the platform, we know we have a job to do, we're going to do both, we're going to drive down crime and we're going to make sure New Yorkers feel safe in our subway system. And they don't feel that way now, I don't feel that way when I take the train every day, or when I'm moving throughout our transportation system. That is our battle and that is what I'm going to do as the Mayor of the City of New York.

I also want to acknowledge Dr. King's weekend, and important weekend for all of us. And it really personifies that we have so much work to do as New Yorkers to deal with the battle of ending in inequality in our city. And we are committed to do that, with the team we put together. And New Yorkers noticed that I have not said this at all. I didn't point to the previous generation, previous administration, and talk about what they did or didn't do. We hit the ground running in this city. And we stated it is our responsibility and we want the ball in our hand right now to turn our city around, not what happened under previous administrations, but right now, in this city is the Adams administration and I have an obligation to make you safe, and to deal with the inequalities that we're facing every day.

As we mourn the deaths of those in the Bronx fire, bringing in the resources, I'm proud of everyday New Yorkers, we brought in millions of dollars to help the residents. We're going to look at what went wrong there and make sure that our agencies come up with a real plan, just as

we did after the Happy Land fire that also took place in the Bronx. We can't have these tragic incidents happen in our city and we got to do everything possible to prevent that. And our hearts goes out to the families as we attended the funeral services, and really stood by the members of the Bronx as they went through this horrific period. Announced the potential new legislation with the Senator. Yesterday, Senator Gillibrand and Richard Torres, the Congressperson to look at the legislation that we also introduced here in the city when he was a City Council person. And we were thankful for the response from our entire city as we move forward in this difficult time.

We want to just give you some good news on the COVID front, that it is imperative that we show New Yorkers, that we are coming back and we're coming back stronger. Our schools are open. And I want to thank you Chancellor Banks. We were clear from the beginning, and I don't want anyone to get this mixed up. Our schools are going to remain open. We are not going to do anything that is going to stop our children from coming into schools. We say this over and over again. So please hear me New Yorkers, our schools are going to remain open. This city is moving in the right direction. New Yorkers could be-should be proud of themselves. One of our success and moving our city back to a positive place is that we have the highest tax rates in the nation. And it's because of our work, we listened to the call you told neighbors and friends, you sent a clear message that vaccinations and booster shots are successful. And this work, we just crossed the 16 million doses administered in New York City, including 2.5 million booster shots, we need to really commend everyday New Yorkers, but we have work to do. We're nowhere near where we ought to be and we want to move even further, to make sure that we get everyone boosted and vaccinated in the city. And this is going to help us get our lives back, it's going to help us open our city and do the things that we want to do get boosted and get vaccinated. And this is going to include our kids 12 and older. Let's take full advantage of modern science coming together to solve this pandemic.

But there's also more good news, thanks to the actions of New Yorkers, Omicron wave is seriously- we're managing it in a real way and Dr. Chokshi, would talk about it a little later. The level of cases in New York City, they are declining, they are declining, we know that there's work to do and that they still remained at very high level, but we're seeing a leveling off, and we're seeing a decline because of what you did. You responded accordingly to this thread. But New Yorkers, we have not won yet. We have more to do as I want to continue to say that over and over again. But let's be clear on this. We are winning. We are winning. And we are going to win because we're resilient. As I say over and over again, because we are New Yorkers. We're going to continue to monitor this closely. And now remember that hospitalization and death rates lag behind cases. So, these indicators may peak later than actual cases are being shown, but we are winning, and we're moving in the right direction, and we will continue to do the trending in the right direction. But as New Yorkers we must remain vigilant. And those are the simple things that empower us, we have to wear our masks, social distancing, washing our hands, avoiding crowded spaces without ensuring those who are there went through the proper protocol of being vaccinated, and in many cases of boosters. And we go to continue to encourage everyday New Yorkers, I'm going to say it over and over again, to be vaccinated and boosted. Because when you're getting vaccinated, it will allow us to keep our city moving forward, it will allow us to do the things we want to do. During the next few days, I'm going head to the theater and head to a restaurant just to really show the energy that let's get back out in a safe way to make sure we visit our restaurants and bring the tourism back to our

city. This is how we support our small businesses and get our economy up and operating. Your actions are making a difference New Yorkers. And these numbers have proven.

So, thanks to your hard work, we have been able to keep our schools open so far, my administration determined at day one, we were not closing our schools, while other cities closed around us. We were clear in our message we did not give parents the uncertainty that we have viewed previously. We were very clear our schools were going to remain open. And we pushed through the thoughts that the schools were going to close, and parents had a foundational understanding that their children had a place to go into morning. And I'm really proud of what the Chancellor and his team did. We made two big changes during the school year that brought about the success we believe we're witnessing now. Number one, we distributed a 4.5 million at home rapid COVID tests, and in unbelievable distribution coordination between school administrators, law enforcement, government agencies, our team here to get those tests in the hands of children. These rapid tests, which is very important, identified 25,000 additional people reported cases. This allowed us to isolate these cases, so we would not have to spread based on the data that because the child was infected in school or at school or had COVID. It did not rapidly spread throughout the classroom. So, we were able to use the science, the facts and not fear to properly deploy resources where they were needed and I'm really proud of that. And those are thousands of cases that we were able to isolate. And it prevented thousands of more people from being infected with COVID. They were allowed to protect themselves and protect the school community, while in person learning continue, while in person learning continue. Second thing, we doubled down on PCR surveillance testing. Going from 10 percent to 20 percent, doubling the CDC and New York state standards, we led the way. We did not allow the standards of the CDC and New York state to get in the way of what we thought we had to do in our school system to protect our children, we doubled them, and the success showed that we were capable of doing so. The numbers that this program showed increase in a testing works. That was what we started out with. That is what we stated, and we were successful in doing so. We're going to continue to ensure that home test kits will go to every child that needs it to make sure that they can take the proper precaution as we move forward.

And so, I'm excited about what we have accomplished. And you should be excited New Yorkers, on what we were able to accomplish. As we're watching our response to this strand, we responded. And we understood the complexity of this. I stated from the beginning, on January 1st, we had to learn to live with COVID. But to learn to be smarter, and outsmart this virus, by using modern day science, and what we can do to empower New Yorkers. We have to get our city up and operating again. Our economy depends on it and the safety of our families depends on it. We're going to make smart decisions, to make sure that we're not harmful to the future of our children and we're not harmful to the future of this city. And we're doing that. And we're prepared for this moment. This is a time when we can come together as New Yorkers and make the right choices to keep us moving and trending in the right direction.

And so, I'm going to bring on an amazing public servant who has been here with us throughout this entire journey with our team. Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And thank you again, because Omicron has proven to be the most formidable variant yet. But thanks to your leadership, New York City has risen to the challenge. We brought to bear every single tool at our disposal, vaccines, testing, high quality masks, distancing and ventilation. And Mayor Adams his six-point winter pandemic plan prioritized our most important

settings, such as hospitals and schools. Massively expanding testing in schools this month, thanks to Dr. Long and Dr. Katz, helped over 25,000 students and staff isolate more quickly, breaking chains of transmission. Meanwhile, testing and our other layered safety measures supported in person learning. Last semester, we had almost four times as many student days in person as the 2020-2021 school year, and this semester with our adjusted quarantine policies, we are on track for even more. New York City has been able to safely reopen schools, thanks to our educators and our Chancellor, even when many other large school districts could not. We did it in September despite the Delta wave and with Mayor Adams' Stay Safe Stay Open plan, we did it again this month even with Omicron.

And beyond schools, since January 1st, we've distributed nearly 1 million masks to high-risk settings such as adult care facilities, and to neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic, through our community partners and through our Health Department Action Centers. With these steps, we are on the downslope from the Omicron Summit, but we still have more work to do to reach the base. Our seven-day average of daily new cases is under 20,000. That's less than half the peak of nearly 43,000 average new cases a day earlier in January. Similarly, we are starting to see a decrease in COVID-19 hospitalizations from a total of about 6,500 patients hospitalized citywide on January 11 to about 5,800 as of Sunday according to state data.

Now let me be clear, these numbers are still very high meaning community transmitted sent remains widespread, and we will need to follow these trends closely over the coming days and weeks. I know that the Omicron wave has already affected so many families, neighbors, friends and colleagues, including some vaccinated New Yorkers who got COVID. Let's make sure this isn't a cause for confusion. If you are vaccinated, you've taken the most important step to protect yourself from severe disease. And for that, I thank you, because you also helped protect our hospitals and our health workers. Our most recent data show that unvaccinated people are over eight times more likely to be hospitalized compared to those who are vaccinated. Thankfully, our overall data show a real decline in both cases and hospitalizations and that is because New Yorkers have stepped up once again, to protect themselves and their city.

Now it's time to stay up to date. If you haven't already gotten your booster dose, please join the over 2.5 million New Yorkers who've taken that important step. I'd like to see cases and hospitalizations, plunging rather than plateauing. With vaccines, high quality masks, tests, and a little more fortitude in the face of fatigue will continue to shape our curve, beat back Omicron and save lives. Thank you, sir.

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