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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Good evening, I'm Errol Louis. As parts of upstate begin to reopen, here in the city, we're seeing some improvement in the number of deaths and hospitalizations and new positive cases. But even as the City begins to consider lightening the restrictions here in the five boroughs, new numbers for the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that the number of deaths here in New York City are actually much higher than we previously knew. Joining me now to talk about that and much more, joining us from inside the Blue Room at City Hall is Mayor de Blasio. Good evening, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good evening, Errol.

Louis: That is some alarming news that we got from the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I was wondering if you'd seen the report, if you've talked it over with your health experts? And or whether these over 5,200 so-called excess deaths are attributable directly or indirectly to COVID-19?

Mayor: Well, Errol, you know, there's only so much, unfortunately we're ever going to know about those who passed away in that circumstance. I think it's fair to say a number of those deaths probably had a connection to COVID-19. But in general, we're not going to have definitive evidence, you know, reaching back. The fact is, and as we know at the time when we put out not only the official certified deaths of those who have been lost to COVID-19, but we decided it was also important to talk about the probable deaths. And it was a very big number in this city where health care professionals weren't sure at the time of someone's death, but they suspected strongly it was COVID-19 related. So we put out that information in the name of transparency, I think in this case, even though we'll never have definitive information in the vast majority of these cases, as I understand it, clearly a number of them were related to COVID-19. And it should be another sobering reminder of just how hard this disease has hit this city.

Louis: This comes as you expressed some optimism today about whether or not we could see a return, not quite to normal, but maybe a little bit more in the way of public life starting in June. Where will we be about a month from now as far as you can tell from your projections?

Mayor: So Errol, you know, obviously I have taken a very conservative stance here saying we have to be careful, we have to avoid a boomerang of this disease at all costs. Everything has to be evidence based. And I'm going to stick to that. But even with that very cautious worldview, I can tell you that the daily indicators we put out that we think are the best ways of interpreting how the city is doing in the fight against the coronavirus. We've seen really strong progress, not

the optimal progress that we're waiting for, which is when all three indicators move in unison downward. Although today was a good day. It happened today, but we haven't seen that multiple days in a row yet. So that means by definition it's going to be weeks more because we need to see that pattern. But you know, I'm pleased with the overall trajectory and the fact Errol, that it relates back to what New Yorkers are doing. Because clearly it is related to New Yorkers doing the right thing and you know, staying home, doing the social distancing, putting on the face coverings. So I'm hopeful, but it's going to take us into June by any measure between the City's indicators and the State's indicators. But that might allow us at a certain point in June to at least do some piece of opening up and some easing of restrictions.

Louis: The repeated reports we're getting about this mysterious syndrome in very young children that resembles Kawasaki's. Do you have any update on the numbers and is this a new phenomenon or are we just kind of late in understanding it?

Mayor: Errol, to the best of my understanding from our health care leadership it has actually come out pretty recently only in this crisis. Remember that, you know, everyone's eyes have been on the coronavirus, particularly since the beginning of March. But I mean, the first press conference I held on it was January 24th. In that whole time it's only been in the last week or two that we have seen from our health care community these reports about this syndrome affecting our children. So something's going on. And some of our doctors have said in our press conferences that it may be related to the fact that people have gained immunity to the disease, but then the body reacts to that gaining of immunity. So it's something that might only happen in the later stages of the development of this disease. We don't know all the facts yet and we're giving it a lot of attention now. And Errol, the most important thing to say to all your viewers is what we do know so far is early detection matters. And responding quickly, any parent, family member who sees a child experiencing these symptoms, the fever, rash, vomiting, it's really important to alert a health care provider immediately. And it may be important to get that child to health care, to a health care facility very quickly because if addressed quickly, it can be contained. But if ignored or underestimated, it can be very, very dangerous. So we've got the number as of this morning was 38 cases. And it was literally something we didn't have any evidence of just a week or two ago. Now, 38 cases, some more pending that hopefully we'll know more about by tomorrow.

Louis: Have your advisory panels begun to meet Mr. Mayor? And are health professionals part of those discussions about how and when and whether to reopen parts of the economy?

Mayor: Absolutely. We've got a variety of panels we've put together Errol. Already are, and I'll talk about the health care piece in a moment, but our Fair Recovery Task Force has met several times. Our Inclusion and Equity Task Force, which is made up of officials of the City government, that's met already. Our larger business and a smaller business groupings, larger businesses met, small businesses about to meet. So a number of these sector councils are coming together, coming online quickly. We have one that's devoted to health care that brings together health care leaders from across the spectrum in this city. And that's going to be meeting in a matter of days. And certainly their input is going to be crucial, added to everything that you know, I get every day from the health care leadership of the City government. That's going to be crucial for us to understanding better what's happening with new phenomenon like the syndrome

we're discussing, but obviously most centrally, how we're going to make decisions step by step to protect New Yorkers. And make decisions about a restart that are focused first on health and safety. I want to be really clear. I very much want the economy to get going again like everyone else does, but the first question is always going to be health and safety.

Louis: Okay. Stand by Mr. Mayor, we are going to take a short break right now. We'll be back in a minute with more from Mayor de Blasio. Stay with us.

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Louis: Welcome back to NY1. I am talking with Mayor Bill de Blasio. He joins us from the Blue Room inside City Hall. And Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask you about this report over the weekend about emails that were published showing that you and some of your staff members worked with leaders to basically arrange a political deal, I guess, for lack of a better word in which in exchange for critical support in maintaining mayoral control of the public schools, there was an agreement to either delay or soft pedal a report on what was going on with a subset of yeshivas in the city. I wanted to get your reaction to that.

Mayor: Yeah, Errol, there's just nothing new there. This matter has been reviewed by the Department of Investigation. There's nothing new here, period. And, you know, we're moving forward to make sure every kid gets a good education. That's what matters. And that's what we're doing.

Louis: Well, let me ask it to you this way, Flanagan – the people you made the deal with, Flanagan is retiring, Felder has no power, he's no longer in the majority. Your term ends next year, and you know, there are a bunch of kids who still haven't gotten an answer about whether they're going to get an education that meets the legal state standards.

Mayor: Errol, I disagree with your interpretation, honestly. I've talked about this so many times, so what you're raising, there's just nothing new about. On the bigger question of how we make sure that kids get a good education – we, from the beginning, said the only way we're going to do this, given the reality of how the education system is structured, we don't get to tell private schools, religious schools exactly what to do. We have some power. The State obviously has more power the way the State Constitution works, but we've believed there was a way to get these schools to move substantially and to end up giving their kids a much better education. That is what has happened. There's been a few schools – the last time I remember checking the numbers that were four where we were still not satisfied with the level of response. And we made that very clear to the State. They have the power to take the actions, the tangible actions. But the vast majority of those schools changed curriculum, changed teacher training, did the things we asked them to do to improve their education there.

Louis: There are reports now of yeshivas operating illegally in violation of non-congregation rules that the City and State have put forward. Are they going to get any kind of scrutiny?

Mayor: Any case like that would be a very, very serious matter, Errol. I mean, we certainly have seen enforcement in all communities when we get reports of any kind of illegal gathering like

that. And an ongoing – what you're talking about would be literally a regular illegal gathering, that would be particularly unacceptable. So, I've said this before publicly, if anyone knows of a gathering like that we're not going to allow it and we'll act on it immediately. But we need specific examples. Any sites, any locations, there'll be follow-up and enforcement right away.

Louis: Changing topics to the whole question of who the cops are giving social distancing summonses to – vast racial disparities that have been decried, including by you. But I'm wondering, you know, we're so far into your second term at this point, you've got to be a little frustrated that you have to keep telling the NYPD over and over and over again not to profile citizens.

Mayor: Errol, I don't think of it as a single entity that thinks in perfect lock step. I think of it as 36,000 officers and a leadership that I think has been really, really consistent about buying into and acting on change. Remember that this NYPD leadership – and it's been consistent over the three commissioners. They've all been part of the same team from the beginning. Obviously, got rid of the broken unconstitutional use of stop-and-frisk, went to body cameras on all patrol officers, got rid of marijuana arrests. You go down the whole list, the number of arrests that have the reduction, where we're talking about 150,000 fewer arrests, I think it was last year compared to 2013. I mean a much greater reliance on communication, on neighborhood policing, on relationship building, much less reliance on arrest stops. That was the action of the NYPD leadership and it really clearly got down to the grassroots of the force or we wouldn't have seen all those changes take place. But there's 36,000 people and I'm always frustrated when any individual officer doesn't understand what right and wrong is, and obviously that horrible video from the Lower East Side, that was deeply troubling. That individual did something that makes no sense and is deeply unfair in light of what we expect from policing today in New York City. And clearly there have been consequences already. And so, I look at it that way, Errol. I think the vast majority of our officers are doing the right thing. I think there's some that still don't and that's very frustrating.

Louis: Okay. When we hear from Commissioner Shea – this is a story we saw in the Wall Street Journal, saying that they're anticipating as we begin to reopen, that there'll be an increase in crime and the NYPD has got to get ready for it. It just kind of seems like they operate in one direction when it comes to this stuff. Like right now, you know, nobody's riding the trains, street traffic is down like 70 or 80 percent, most people stay inside their homes, CompStat numbers show that there's almost no – you know, crime has dropped precipitously and still we have this kind of a lock-them-up mentality.

Mayor: No, I disagree with that because again, look at the facts. Look how much less arrest is being used. I mean we just got to be clear about this. Under the leadership that started with Bill Bratton then to Jimmy O'Neill then to Dermot Shea, it was consistently moving away, not just from stops but crucially away from arrest. And I said, you know, look at how far we've come in terms of ending mass incarceration in this city. When I came into office there were over 11,000 people in our jail system, there's now under 4,000. That's from a lot of different reforms, but crucially it is because the NYPD arrested a lot fewer people and they have to be given credit for making that decision and acting accordingly. I think what the Commissioner is saying now is if you look across – you're right, crime has gone down in so many ways, and in terms of

enforcement, even in the last ten weeks of this pandemic, the NYPD has been very light touch in enforcement overwhelmingly. There's been a few very troubling incidents, but beyond that the number of summonses has been fewer than ten a day related to enforcement of social distancing in the entire city of 8.6 million people. So, that is not over policing by any stretch. What I think the Commissioner is saying, Errol, is inevitably when life gets back to normal, you're going to see certain crime patterns like robbery and all start to pick up again. That is only unfortunately normal in human life. So, he's being mindful of that and getting ready. But this is a commissioner who believes in neighborhood policing and using different approaches and certainly using arrests a lot less than police commissioners of the past believed in.

Louis: Okay, we'll say good night for now. Thanks, Mr. Mayor. We'll see you at tomorrow's briefing.

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