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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN**

**Jim Acosta:** Concern over spikes in coronavirus cases tied to school re-openings has some officials rethinking their plans. And joining us now, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, to talk about that very important subject. A lot of parents are focused on this Mayor de Blasio. And this morning, you announced the delay of students returning to school. What do you hope that these extra 10 days that were announced today – what will that accomplish?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, Jim, we're full speed ahead in New York City. We agreed with our labor unions who represent the folks in our school system to hold back for that 10-day period so we could have some extra preparation in place both educationally and in terms of the health preparations, but everyone is actually unified, including our labor unions and our teachers that we need to move forward with in-person education in New York City. We're the largest school system in the country, and we've put literally the strictest health standards anywhere in the country in place – the gold standard, taking from different health approaches around the world and combining them into a very, very rigorous approach. And that's why our teachers and our school staff and our parents are ready to come back.

**Acosta:** And why though did it take the threat of a strike, though, to get this plan in place?

**Mayor:** Jim, first of all, strikes are not legal by public employees in New York State. The real goal here was to make sure that everyone felt unified that we could do things the right way. So, we're going to have some extra preparation time for our educators. We're going to start instruction a few days later. But, look, here's the bottom line – this is why I feel very good about our situation – we're going to have a facemask on every adult and child, we have social distancing, something like 10 kids to a classroom will be the norm, cleaning constantly – so many measures in place, in addition to regular testing, that we feel confident this is going to work. And, right now, the vast majority of our parents have indicated they want their kids to experience in-person learning again.

**Acosta:** And are you ruling out any kind of further delays? This is this is going to happen 10 days from now?

**Mayor:** Yes, it's going to happen. We have, again, the agreement with all the key labor unions. We have the PPE and the cleaning supplies in place already. We're doing the final run-throughs on the buildings. We're ready. And most especially our parents – this has been really interesting, Jim – we gave parents the opportunity to opt out if they wanted to and do all remote, the vast majority said no, remote doesn't work as well as in-person learning, particularly for kids who

have the greatest needs. And what we found in so many of our communities, particularly less privileged, less advantaged communities is they really knew that the kids being back in school meant not just teaching, it meant physical health support, mental health support, nutrition programs – parents want their kids to experience that again.

**Acosta:** But, Mayor de Blasio, you aren't testing teachers and students before school starts, isn't that right? Wouldn't that be the safest thing to do?

**Mayor:** Interestingly, Jim, we looked all around the world at the school systems that had the best success coming back and what we found was the combination of these other factors – the face masks, the social distancing, the cleaning – much more important. What we are doing is providing free testing to any and all students and teachers – anyone who wants it, it's free, it's non-stop. And then we'll formally be doing it every month once school begins. And we find a lot of people are taking us up on that and we think this is the best way to handle it. Remember, this city has a very low infection rate right now. We're the envy of this country. We were the worst at one point, the epicenter – from worst to first, we're now in a very good position.

**Acosta:** Could you be risking though, Mayor de Blasio? Could you be risking that? As you're seeing across the country, these colleges and universities are bringing students back to class, you're seeing thousands of infections around the country. Could you be running the risk of a similar situation happening in New York City?

**Mayor:** We think about this all the time, Jim, and here's the answer. First of all, infection rate has continued to stay low. Second, the precautions were taking – when I say gold standard, I mean it. A lot of places that have come back are not requiring masks. In fact, a lot of countries in the world have done well have not required masks, have not had only 10 kids in a classroom, for example. We're layering all these health precautions on top of each other. We think it's going to allow us to keep coming back – our schools, our economy – but it's by being very rigorous and constantly watching the data. If the data changes, if we go above three percent infection, then we would stop our school system at that point, but we're nowhere near there, thank God, right now.

**Acosta:** All right, Mayor Bill de Blasio. We're hoping that it all works out well for everybody up there in New York City. Thanks for joining us tonight, we appreciate it.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Jim.

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