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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC

Mika Brzezinski: Joining us now, the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. Mayor, thank you very much for joining us this morning. We're talking about leadership, but at this point give us an update on where New York City stands in fighting this virus and how workers on the front lines are faring.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Mika, what a story of heroism. These health care workers, first responders who have fought through this for the last two months – and you know what, there was a point in the beginning of April where it looked like our hospital system was on the verge of being overwhelmed by the number of cases, but they bent but they never broke. You know, they had to deal with an extraordinary surge of coronavirus cases, but they held the line. And there's an amazing story here of resilience. And to the point that both of you were just making, you know, this should be something that the nation looks to and says, look at these heroic people and look at this heroic city and how do we all help ourselves forward? But the president now, every time he opens his mouth, it's not about the people who have done the heroic work or about the families that are suffering right now.

It is always just about him or some new effort to divide us. Who talks about red states and blue states in the middle of a pandemic. It's just an unbelievable reality when in fact in a patriotic way of thinking, you look to the places that have done heroic things on behalf of the whole nation. And I certainly think the people of this city have done that. They fought back this disease. By the way, the restraint, the discipline New Yorkers have shown staying indoors, social distancing, face coverings. This is not a place where that is easy to do and yet people have done it to a remarkable degree. So, I wish our president would celebrate the heroism of the American people and the strength of the American people, and then focus singularly on how to get everyone back on their feet, not rush forward despite the health dangers, but talk about how to get cities, states back on our feet the right way. And talk about the people, not about himself.

Willie Geist: Mayor de Blasio, Willie Geist. Good to see you this morning. As you pointed out in your press briefing yesterday, there were some encouraging numbers on all those kind of benchmark statistics that you've been looking at for a couple of months now. There was one very disturbing number though, which is that in New York State we learned that 1,700 more unreported deaths were now reported from inside nursing homes. I know they all weren't in New York City, but many of them were. Do you think the order that was issued by the Governor to allow patients with coronavirus to leave hospitals and to go back into their nursing homes was a bad idea?

Mayor: Willie, the whole question is always where can a senior citizen get the best support, the best care? And sometimes that, of course, is a hospital and sometimes it is a place where they are known and where they can be supported by people who actually have a relationship with them. I don't think it's black and white. I think we're all trying to figure out how to work together to support the nursing homes better. But I'll tell you that I think this whole crisis has put a point on the fact that going forward, nursing homes are going to need a lot more support. We don't – we're not done with this disease. This is what may be the first of several waves, and our seniors and our nursing homes are vulnerable. I think the whole approach to health care now has to be reevaluated because what we've seen in this crisis is how vulnerable the entire country was, particularly seniors. But here's a country – we didn't really, as a nation, have a plan for how to address nursing homes, but even more foundationally, we didn't have the supplies, we didn't have the equipment, we didn't have the personnel we needed where we needed it. This is a real wake-up call and certainly it speaks powerfully to why we need a more universal approach to health care, which if we had had it, I think would have been one of the ways to beat back this disease. Universal health care and universal testing would have been the ways to stop this thing. And other countries that did more of either or both did a hell of a lot better. So, I'm hoping while we try and fight through this moment that there's going to be some real reflection on the bigger changes we're going to need in this country to stop these kinds of things in the future.

Geist: Well, I'm sure there'll be those conversations but the here and now, as you look at going forward now and you say improving conditions for seniors in nursing homes, would it be a good idea to no longer send elderly patients who've tested positive for coronavirus or suspected to have coronavirus, would it be a good idea to not send them back into their nursing homes where they then expose other vulnerable people?

Mayor: Willie, again, if the better care in that individual case is a hospital, of course, that should be the go-to option, but there's going to be times where the nursing home is the place that can better care if it's set up that way. But remember a lot of these are for-profit organizations. I think there's going to be a lot of questions about whether they put their residents first or whether they put profit first. But I don't like what's happening in the nursing homes. I want to see change. But I think in terms of each individual, it's a case by case, you got to figure out what's right for each senior.

Brzezinski: So, Mayor, I know you've worked hard with the Governor and with health experts and there is an understanding about how this virus spreads and how it works. Given that that understanding has been established, when and how will New York City reopen?

Mayor: So, Mika, the only way we reopen is if we have actual evidence that things have changed profoundly. Now, there has been great progress in the last few weeks. I'm really hopeful that we've turned the corner. But we publish everyday health care indicators to show the people of this city exactly where we're going. They've been good. They have not been everything we need yet to take the next big steps in reopening. Now the other piece that's obvious is if we're going to reopen, we have to be able to provide basic services in this city. Right now, that will not be possible without federal help. We have been thrown back on our heels, so many lives lost, so much disruption to everything in this city, and on top of that, you know, my job is to provide police services, fire services, sanitation, health care, all the things that we've been doing in this

crisis, we are running out of money and the federal government is the only place we can get the support.

There's discussion of a new stimulus, but right in the middle of that, last night, President Trump says, well, it should include relief for wealthy people. He starts talking about the capital gains tax, for God's sakes, not struggling firefighters and EMTs and paramedics and health care workers. He once again is defaulting to how we can take care of his rich friends. This stimulus has to happen and it has to be about supporting working people and it has to be about getting cities and states back on our feet because if we don't have those resources, if we can't provide basic services, we can't recover. It's as simple as that. You can't restart if you can't run your city or you can't run your state.

Brzezinski: Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you very much for joining us here on Morning Joe.

Mayor: Thank you.

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