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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Look, we have a couple of tough weeks ahead – two, three, four weeks that are going to be really tough in this city as we fight back against a new threat. And we've got a lot of material to cover today, but I want to start with the most important point – we all have to work together. We are all in this together. This city was the epicenter of this crisis in the United States of America. We fought back together. People stood shoulder to shoulder. You think about our health care heroes, you think about our first responders, they served everyone, they came from every part of the city. Everyone worked together to overcome this. So, now, we're going into a tough stretch. We have a new challenge. It is a challenge we can and will overcome. But I guarantee you, there will be people who try to divide us in this moment of challenge. There will be people who try to create disunity when, in fact, we need unity. Don't let them do it. What we need now is voices of all communities to come together and say, this is all of us – one New York City, fighting this fight together for the good of all. Let's support each other. Let's work with each other. Let's listen to each other and overcome this challenge.

So, look, the next few weeks are going to be critical. We have the opportunity here to keep this outbreak small, to address it, to stop it, to turn it around. It's up to all of us. And that's why on Sunday, I proposed a very rigorous plan to address the outbreaks we were seeing in certain parts of Brooklyn and Queens. I put it out there publicly, because we needed immediate action. The State of New York took that plan, they used it as a basis for their decisions. They made some important modifications, which we'll talk about today. But the bottom line is that concept that I put forward, that we need to address this rigorously and quickly, and the faster we address it all together, the faster we can stop this problem and get back on the right track, that is the basis of what we are working on now. Now, it will not be easy. I'm not here to tell you – when I say two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, I'm not here to tell you it'll be easy. It will take hard work and discipline. And, certainly, there will be sacrifice. And I feel for anyone in the communities affected whose livelihood is going to be put on hold – that's a huge problem. And I do feel tremendous empathy for the small business owners whose businesses will be shut for a period of time. I feel empathy for all the parents who want their kids in school. But, again, let's realize, if we act quickly and decisively, we can overcome this for all of us, for the whole city. And what are we being governed by? The facts, the science, the data tell us what's happening, and we act on it. That is the one thing that has worked in this country and all around the world. So, we stop this outbreak dead in its tracks for the good of all New York City. And, remember, we need to do it to save lives. The farther the coronavirus spreads again, the more vulnerable people will be reached. We cannot let that happen.

Now, I understand that there are people who disagree with this plan. And it is a democracy and we appreciate there's always going to be disagreements. But it's crucial that those who disagree still respect the fact that the State and City have made a decision for the health and safety of all. People have and will protest, and we understand that there is a place for peaceful protest, but the NYPD will not tolerate people doing harm to others. There'll be no tolerance for assaults, for damage to property, for setting fires – anything like that is unacceptable. And when the NYPD makes clear to anybody that they need to act in a way that's appropriate, given the challenge we're facing, you must adhere to the instructions of the NYPD. If you don't, as in every other situation in this city, there will be consequences. The NYPD will give people warnings, will make the ground rules clear, but people have to follow those ground rules, or else, again, consequences come next.

Now, for us to overcome this, we're going to have to do some things we haven't done before. So, we are dealing now with a new approach – the zones that the State has put forward. And this is based on the information that our Health Department derived, which, originally, we proposed in the form of ZIP codes. The State has come up with a new model, and I'll go over that now, and we're going to act quickly to implement this with the State. Now, again, this was based on the facts that developed over many days, the data. And what the State has put forward is cluster areas, color-coded. Southern Brooklyn is one; two, in Queens – one in the Forest Hills-Rego Park area, another in Far Rockaway area – designations red, orange, and yellow. We'll go over this. I know the Governor will be speaking to it in more detail later as well. I want to note that the State maps do not include two areas that we remain concerned about – Crown Heights and Williamsburg, in Brooklyn. So, our Health Department continues to monitor those situations very closely. We have seen, unfortunately, the aggressive spread of COVID in those neighborhoods. We're going to keep working in those areas with the community, with all of our tools to make sure that we keep the situation contained in those parts of the city. And we're going to continue to discuss Crown Heights and Williamsburg with the State to make sure that we're taking every precaution to stop the spread of COVID in Brooklyn and Queens.

Now, the red zones – the idea of the red zones, these are the areas with the biggest problem. And it is crucial in those areas that non-essential businesses be closed. This is very much like what we experienced back in March, April, the worst of this, when we had to reduce the level of activity greatly. In that case, it was the whole city. In this case, it's in particular areas. The closures will continue for a minimum of 14 days. And this is the concept the State has put forward. What I originally proposed was a 14-day way out of a specific designation, or a 28-day. The State is starting with a 14-day measure and a reevaluation after 14 days. And the State has made very clear they're adding additional penalties for individuals that do not adhere to these new requirements and the City and State together will be enforcing those penalties. So, for example, on mass gatherings, the fines for mass gatherings in violation of State rules will be up to \$15,000 a day. The fines for not wearing face coverings or not maintaining social distancing can be as high as \$1,000 a day. So, these are additional tools. Again, no one wants to see anyone fined if it can be avoided, but it is a very serious situation and people need to adhere to the new rules. The faster we address this challenge, the shorter the shutdown will be. And we've got to keep that in mind – for everyone who feels that the shutdown will be harmful or difficult for their life, remember, we can overcome this quickly if we work together. This can only be a matter of weeks. And then, we have to continue to learn from this experience to practice the social distancing, wear the face masks, do all of the things that will ensure this never happens again in New York City.

Okay. Now, back on the topic of the red pause zone. So, red, defined as an area with three percent positivity over a seven-day average, and the geographic boundary depends on the density of cases. So, in the red zone, all schools would be closed. In this case, they already are – all public

and non-public schools. As of tomorrow morning, Thursday morning, all non-essential businesses in the red zones will be closed as well. Mass gatherings will be prohibited. Restaurants will revert to a takeout-only status and houses of worship will be allowed to have 25 percent maximum occupancy and a maximum of 10 people inside. That's the red zone. Now, the orange zone is being treated as a warning. If red means a pause, a full pause, orange zone under the State rules will be a warning zone. And it basically comprises about a five-block radius around the red zone. As of Thursday morning, schools in the orange zone will be closed as well. So, again, as of tomorrow morning, schools that fall within those orange zones, both public and non-public, will be closed. In addition, high-risk businesses, including gyms, will be closed. Gatherings in the orange zone must be 10 people or less, whether they're indoor or outdoor. Restaurants will be for outdoor dining only in the orange – excuse me – in the orange zone, maximum four people at a table. Houses of worship will be allowed to be at 33 percent capacity with a maximum of 25 people inside. Finally, the yellow zone is a cautionary zone. It means an area of where we're seeing a challenge, but, thank God, not as deep a challenge as other areas where we hope to be able to turn it around with the cooperation and involvement of the people of those communities. We see more cases, but we believe with the right approach we can stop the yellow zones from turning into orange or red zones. The schools in the yellow zones will remain open – public and non-public will remain open in the yellow zones, but will be subject to mandatory weekly COVID testing. All businesses remain open, but we urge caution and we ask business owners to be very scrupulous about people wearing masks in their businesses, practicing social distancing, not letting too many people into the business, if there's a line, socially distancing the line – all the things we learned back in the spring. Gatherings in yellow zone must be 25 people maximum, whether indoor or outdoor. Indoor and outdoor dining permitted, maximum four people at a table. And houses of worship will be allowed to have up to 50 percent capacity in the yellow zones. Now, people obviously want to get as much detail as possible. We're getting information constantly from the State, updating it. We'll get it out to the people. We're going to create an online tool to let people know by typing in their address exactly what zone they're in – we'll announce when that is up. We're going to be doing an outreach effort, education effort, full force of the City government will be out there in communities affected. We want people to know – obviously, a particular focus on the red zones and then the orange zones – what's going on. We immediately will have 1,200 personnel on the ground today in addition to the State enforcement teams. We'll keep increasing that number as needed. We are bringing in canvassers as part of the Test and Trace Corps. to go out and provide information to communities and focus on business corridors. Department of Transportation is reaching out to all the participants in Open Restaurants in the red and orange zones to update them. Small Business Services and the Nightlife Office will be reaching local chambers of commerce, community groups, business improvement districts to update them. The NYPD and Department of Transportation will put up electronic signage to announce the new restrictions at key intersections in the affected areas. Also, New York City office of management – emergency management, excuse me, we'll be taking action, doing robocalls to all households in the red and orange zones, regarding the restrictions, and, of course, where to get tested. We're going to keep reminding people how important it is to get tested so we get a real look at what's happening and hopefully start to see the turnaround in these communities. So, robocalls to all affected households, robocalls to affect the businesses, and houses of worship. We'll be sending out text updates to everyone signed up for NotifyNYC and anyone who wants those updates should sign up for regular information. And this will take a lot of education and outreach, but also a lot of enforcement. We'll be working closely with the State. We'll increase the number of inspectors because of the number of areas we need to reach. Obviously, the Police Department will be playing crucial role here. And all of the closures have to be addressed, the gatherings have to be addressed, masks wearing – we'll be working on all these fronts. But, obviously, given that we have now for weeks been warning of this potential, we hope and believe the vast majority of residents of these communities will join us in addressing the problem, will follow these rules, as people have all over New York City and will help us overcome this challenge quickly.

Now, we're concentrating testing in these areas. We've performed over 10,000-plus tests in the last week in these zones. And we'll be expanding testing capacity in the red and orange zones – so important that people get tested. I want to emphasize we have to get the maximum number of people tested in the red and orange zones. It is free. I'm going to keep saying that – it is free. It is safe. It is quick. There are locations all over. This is one of the ways that we speed ourselves out of this challenge, is to make sure we're getting a clear look at what's happening. The more people get tested, the better. So, please, in these areas and throughout New York City, please get tested. Go to nyc.gov/covidtest for locations, or call 212-COVID-19, and you'll get locations. There are locations all over the city, 200-plus locations, specialized testing going on in the key communities, always free, always quick, easy. You will get results quickly and we can help move all of us forward with this testing.

Let me go over today's indicators. And this, again, is now for the whole City of New York. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, the threshold is 200 patients – today's report, 79 patients with a positivity rate confirmed at 23.7 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, the threshold is 550 cases – today's report is 512. Number three, of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold five percent – today's report is 1.39 percent citywide. And the seven-day rolling average citywide, today's report is 1.74 percent. So, again, many, many parts of the city continued to do well, but we all have to work together to keep it that way.

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: Good morning all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Katz, Dr. Chokshi and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Andrew, Andrew? We're not hearing you well. I don't know if you can – Andrew, can you hear me? You're coming in really cut up. Can you hear me?

Question: Can you hear me?

Moderator: Can you start over with the question please?

Question: Yeah, good morning to you as well. To what degree are you aware of all the protests that took place in Borough Park and other communities last night and regardless of the protests themselves, what do you say to members and leaders of the Orthodox community who believe that these lines are unfairly singling their communities out, that this isn't about a general spread it's about their communities specifically?

Mayor: I'll take them in the reverse order. This is about protecting everyone's lives, Andrew. This is about all New Yorkers, and when you look at the communities in Brooklyn and Queens, it's lots of different kinds of people. Remember, we're talking about two of the most diverse places on earth, Brooklyn and Queens. So, within these areas are many kinds of people and we want to protect everyone. This is based on data and science. I'll let Dr. Chokshi talk about that in a moment. But on the other question, I'm aware of the protest that occurred. I spoke to Commissioner Shea and his team this morning. Again, very clear that we are dealing with a health emergency. The State has laid down very clear rules. Everyone must follow those rules. The NYPD will be enforcing those rules. We want to be respectful, but I want to be very clear when the NYPD issues an instruction, as with any other situation in the city or any other protest, if the NYPD issues an instruction, people must follow the instruction. If they don't follow the instruction, then they are liable for whatever consequences occur. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi about why these specific areas.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Well, as we've said over the last few weeks and months, we will go to where the data takes us with respect to where we're worried about spread of the coronavirus. It's why we went to Tremont in the Bronx in July. That's why we went to Sunset Park in August, and it's why we've been communicating about the areas of concern across Brooklyn and Queens that we have over the last few days and weeks. We are concerned as you know based on two major indicators that we follow. The first is when we see a rapid increase in cases in a particular area, and then the second is the percentage of tests coming back positive, and those are the things that we look at on a day-to-day basis, quantitatively matching it up with the areas where we're concerned.

Mayor: Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: With the maps themselves, are they going to be finalized today? Will they be searchable by address? One of the things we're hearing from people is you might have a street where a business on one side of the street has to close, and on the other side of the street, doesn't have to close. There's a lot of confusion out there about whether people are in red, orange or yellow. So, how soon will people be able to punch in an address to determine exactly which zone they land in?

Mayor: Yeah, we're working on that right now with the State to get it a hundred percent clear. What the Health Department here originally proposed was zip codes, because even though it was not perfect, it was still a clear methodology. The State has come up with a different approach. We're working with the State to get very clear the exact boundaries, and then put that online and make it searchable by address. Again, enforcement will start tomorrow. When we send out agencies to do enforcement, we're going to alert business owners. If they are in one of the zones that requires closure or modification, we'll alert them, and we'll obviously give them the chance to immediately act on it. If a business owner refuses, they would be liable for penalties. But I think what everyone wants to do here is comply with these rules to make sure that everyone is safe, and I think the vast, vast majority of business owners throughout this crisis have complied with rules once they understood them. So, we'll get that information out as we get clarity from the State and then in the enforcement effort, there'll be a huge education effort to let people know which zone they're in and obviously give them an immediate chance to abide by the rules. We don't want to penalize it unless we have to. What we'll penalize is where people openly attempt to defy rules.

Moderator: The next is Emma Fitzsimmons from the New York Times.

Mayor: Emma?

Question: Hi, good morning, Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, how are you?

Question: I'm good. Thanks for taking my question. Can you talk about the Governor's restrictions on houses of worship? Are they necessary, do you think they hold up in court?

Mayor: Yeah, I do think both – I think they are necessary and they do hold up in court. They're based on facts, data that's been looked at very carefully. We warned people well over a week ago that we were entering into a dangerous situation. We need to do this for the good of everyone.

Now, I want to emphasize, Emma, in the spring leaders in all communities, all faiths and I commented many times on this – really admirable efforts by faith leaders across the spectrum telling their own congregants how important it was to stay home, turning to other types of approaches for worship and really respecting the fact that this was about the health and safety of the communities they represent. I expect we'll see that again, that the vast majority of leaders will want to be part of the solution for the health and safety of their own communities. So, we know that we've got to get out of this and we've got to get out of it quickly. No one wants to see a full resurgence, a second wave in New York City. If we get a second wave, then a lot more will be shut down for a lot longer. No one wants to see that. So, I think the Governor's plan is the right one and we will work with the State to enforce it. Go ahead, Emma.

Question: Thanks, and a non-COVID question really quickly. Can you talk about the announcement today regarding rezoning SoHo? I've already gotten an email thing that the plan would create super-luxury housing in out of scale high rises. So, there's already some criticism brewing. Can you talk about why the rezonings is important to you and about some of that criticism?

Mayor: Well, as I've said over the last few weeks, the rezonings that we will emphasize the ones sponsored by the City of New York. There's 15 months left in this administration. There's important work to do in terms of development that actually produces for communities and for the good of all, not just for a few developers. So, again, a private application is one thing, but a publicly sponsored rezoning is a different one. We're moving forward with Governor's Island. That is going to be crucial to the future of the city, as what we hope will be the global focus, the global headquarters for addressing climate change. We're moving ahead with the Gowanus area in Brooklyn, an area where we can produce a lot of

affordable housing and protect jobs. In SoHo NoHo, you're talking about an area that has very little affordable housing. We have an opportunity here to create affordable housing, to bring to an area that has been upper income, a greater mix of New Yorkers, and to create more balance, which is something I believe in fundamentally. We have an opportunity to help ensure that there will be jobs in the community in terms of retail, which is an area that has really been struggling throughout New York City, and we need clear rules to help retail stores survive. So, this is a rezoning that's been proposed to really create substantial community benefit, and there's a lot of support on the ground for the idea that there needs to be affordable housing in every community, including those that are upper income. They also need to have affordable housing in those communities, and that's what this will achieve.

Moderator: The next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah, good morning, Mr. Mayor. I know you said that assaults will not be tolerated while people are protesting the new restrictions. I wanted to ask about a specific incident reported last night in which a photographer was said to have been beaten unconscious by a crowd. Are you aware of that specific incident? And yeah, just any additional thoughts on preventing the situation from spiraling out of control?

Mayor: Yeah, Shant, I am aware of the incident. I spoke to the Police Commissioner about it earlier today. Look, just – assault is not going to be accepted. Assault on anyone ever, and I want to make very clear to everyone, even folks who disagree with these new rules to get us out of this crisis: respect the laws, respect the specific instructions of the NYPD and if anyone doesn't there will be consequences. So, if anyone commits an act of assault, of course there'll be consequences for those who are found to have perpetrated that act. But I think what people have to understand here is this is a very, very sensitive moment for the future of all of New York City. If we right now respect these new rules and quickly work together, we can overcome this problem in a matter of weeks, and then communities can go back to where we were just weeks ago, which was actually very good compared to what we experienced in the spring and was the beginning of our restart. We want to keep that restart going, but we need everyone to be a part of it, and that's what I'm going to keep reminding people of. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah, thanks for that. Switching gears a bit. I wanted to follow up on some remarks and being on the Brian Lehrer show last week. I recall you said regarding faulty ballots that were sent to Brooklyn, you said the vendor who sent those ballots out should be investigated. Can you say if this is the City is pursuing an investigation itself and/or has your administration requested state or federal authorities to launch an investigation?

Mayor: I will get the latest, Shant, for on what might be undertaken. This area where I have to check with the Law Department on what the follow-up has been and whether this is an area that's appropriate for Department of Investigation to look at the city level or whether it requires state action, because it's regulated – the Board of Elections is regulated by the State, not the City, but we will get you an update on that today.

Moderator: The next is Rich Lamb from WCBS 880.

Question: Hi there, Mr. Mayor and everybody on the call. Mr. Mayor, so crowds are burning masks in the street. It seems like a clear message and a possible threat to public health. Now are you, I know that you have said there'll be consequences, but are you prepared to hand out tickets here? Are you prepared to make arrests? This seems like a very serious thing.

Mayor: Yeah, I appreciate the question, Rich. Clearly again we have to get everyone to understand the seriousness of these new rules. So, we're going to be enforcing across the board. If a business is open where it should not be, there'll be told to close immediately. If there is resistance, the business will be shut down and there'll be penalties. If people refuse to wear masks, there'll be penalties. Across the board, this is what we're going to have to do. We understand the frustrations that people are feeling because no one wants to see us have to go back towards the restrictions that we had in the spring, but unfortunately they are necessary and they're necessary here, in Brooklyn and Queens, and as you saw yesterday, they're necessary in other parts of the state as well. We have to stop this problem from growing. We have to stop a resurgence of this disease. We've seen – right now in Europe is unfortunately the most painful example of how they let their guard down, and now they're seeing full blown, resurgence, full second wave in a lot of European countries. We can't let that happen here. So, we will enforce and I would urge everyone to understand is follow these rules for your own good, for your family's good, for your community's good. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: Okay, Mr. Mayor. So the, the Mayor's new system – the Governor's new color coded system, red, orange, and yellow seems extraordinarily confusing and sort of adds an element of confusion, it would appear to try to enforce this stuff, and I'm just wondering whether you think the Governor is usurping your authority as Mayor? I mean, do you think he secretly wants to be Mayor of New York City?

Mayor: This moment in history, Rich, I wouldn't urge anyone to want to be Mayor of New York City. It is a very, very challenging moment, but I'll tell you something again I have absolute faith in the people of New York City that we're going to overcome this. We overcame something much tougher in the spring and we're going to overcome this as well, but we have to work together. We have to ignore those voices of division. We have to really unify here to get this done. The Governor under the law has a right to make these decisions, I said at Sunday, we proposed a plan of action. That plan was the basis of what the State decided, not only for here, but for other parts of the state as well. I think it's important that the State acted and I'm glad the State acted. The – I thought that the ZIP codes were clearer, they weren't perfect, we admitted it, but they were clearer, but we're going to work with this specific model. And you know, we'll get out there and we'll explain to people the color coding, we'll get out there and explain the map. We're working on the final details with the State. But the bottom line is they have a right to decide. They decided, that's what matters, and we're going to go out there and work with the State to implement it.

Moderator: The next is Matt Chayes from News Day.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Matt. How you doing?

Question: I'm doing all right. I have two questions. The first is can you detail your plan if you have one to check whether houses of worship in the zones aren't secretly being attended in defiance of the rules?

Mayor: Well, Matt, obviously these are new rules now, we're going to go out there, make sure everyone understands them and then go and enforce. You will remember, Matt, back in the spring, again, we had an outstanding cooperation in all faith communities, and you'll remember there was a point where the vast majority of houses of worship in fact had fully shut down. We're not even talking about, you know, small groups, we're talking about people had shut down entirely across the board, and then there were a few houses of worship in different faiths, but very few, that tried to open up and do services anyway, no matter how bad the situation was in the city, they tried to defy the rules. We sent out enforcement to those who had a worship to shut them down. So we have history of doing this across different faiths, but it was rare because the vast majority of faith leaders understood that they needed to follow the rules, and I expect that again. I think you'll see overwhelmingly adherence to these rules. Go ahead.

Question: On a different topic, you said this morning a couple minutes ago that there would be consequences for arson assault, battery, et cetera. Why were there no arrests last night? And do you think the NYPD made the right call in not arresting people who were burning things, attacking people, et cetera?

Mayor: Yeah. Again first of all, the NYPD in every situation works with the specific reality of specific facts. Clearly when the NYPD sees something that they believe is worthy of a summons or arrest they proceed to do so, and that will be the reality going forward. I haven't spoken to the Commissioner about every detail of what happened last night, but I did speak to him about the approach that will happen going forward, and it's quite clear if large numbers of people are gathering, there will be a large police response, there will be ample information, education. People will be told very clearly how they need to comport themselves. NYPD will give clear instructions, and if people don't follow those instructions, there will be consequences.

Moderator: The next is Julia Marsh from The Post.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, hope you're well. Just following up on that, I mean, you know, again, you've said that there's no tolerance for setting fires or harm to others. There's video after video of fires in the streets, of a man being beaten unconscious for advocating wearing a mask, of that journalist getting harassed. I mean, what kind of message does it send about following the rules if there were no consequences last night and does this lack of action by the NYPD invite the Governor to take over enforcement?

Mayor: No, to the last question, Julia, of course not. NYPD is the finest, strongest police force in the United States of America. They can enforce on this situation. They've dealt with much, much tougher situations, I assure you. This is an emerging new reality. Obviously it's important to make adjustments to any new reality. The individual who's assaulted, if charges are pressed, there will be consequences for perpetrators once they're identified as in any other assault and certainly going forward, if anyone's assaulted, the perpetrators will be held accountable. If anyone sets a fire that will be grounds for consequences, you will see it very clearly. Go ahead.

Question: How is this an emerging new reality if you're supposed to be, have been wearing masks for months, and you're never supposed to set fires in the street? And I wonder if the Sheriff's Office is still taking the lead on these enforcement issues or is it the police now?

Mayor: We're going to be using all agencies because of the magnitude of the area we have to cover. Sheriff's Office, Office of Special Enforcement, other agencies did an outstanding job when we were dealing with pinpoint realities. We're now dealing with a large geography. Obviously there'll be involved, NYPD will be involved. What is different is new rules and people reacting to new rules. That is a new reality and we're going to address it very forthrightly. Commissioner is very clear that there will be consequences for anyone that does not follow NYPD instructions or anyone who breaks the law. It will be quite visible and clear.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I might not be that great to talk, but hopefully you can hear me.

Mayor: Yeah, no, we can hear you. Okay.

Question: Okay. I wanted to ask about the – you said last week that the – I'm sorry, you said last week that the NYPD wrongly arrested legal observers at the June 4th Bronx protest. I'm just wondering, when did you learn of those arrests? And I guess what have you done to get to the bottom of why it was allowed to happen –

Mayor: Yoav, what I've what I said was a broader point, that anytime there are legal observers, that they are clearly certified as legal observers, they should not be arrested unless they overtly break a law, obviously, but that the role of legal observers is really important. I said it as someone who has protested myself and the NYPD should not be arresting them simply because they're present at a demonstration. That was a broader point, in terms of the specific situation that's being looked at from back months ago in the Bronx, that is what we are looking at. The full investigation is being done independently by the Department of Investigation, working with the Law Department, the results of that investigation will be coming shortly. That's going to be what I will acknowledge as the most thorough evaluation of what happened, and then we'll act accordingly from that information on any changes we need to make. Go ahead, Yoav.

Question: Right. But, the right for legal observers to do their jobs, that's long established policy, not only that, they had specific approval from your office to defy the curfew. So –

Mayor: And the question I got was where would they be treated as essential workers? And I said, yes, they needed to be treated the same way they had a legitimate role to play.

Question: Right, I guess my point is it should have been totally obvious to the NYPD that there was no reason to arrest these people based on long precedent and a specific approval from the Mayor's Office. So my question is, why are you waiting for an investigation that's already taken four months? You can easily ask Commissioner Shea if you, if you were [inaudible] find out why this happened [inaudible].

Mayor: Yoav, I've spoken to this before. I'll just reiterate. What I made very clear at the time is that should not happen again, that legal observers, certified legal observers, must be respected during protest, period, and that that should not be deviated from, unless there's an exceptional situation. For example, God forbid, a legal observer committed a separate crime. I'm not going to deal with this piecemeal. I want the full facts on everything that happened and then we will determine the consequences and any changes that need to be made. But again, the policy, as I said at the time, and I reiterated the other day on WNYC, the policy has to be abundantly clear. Certified legal observers, have a right to be at protest. They should not be interfered with. They have a job to do, that job should be respected. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Erin from Politico.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. The Governor said yesterday that he is going to require 400 city personnel to work for his task force to do this enforcement. I know you said the other day that you didn't think that approach was legal, at this point are you going to be providing those personnel? And, and if so, are they NYPD or who they going to be, and how is this approach going to work?

Mayor: They were NYPD yesterday. They'll be NYPD today. There'll be NYPD tomorrow. What our personnel worked for the City of New York, but we'll work in cooperation with the State. We share common goals with the State. The State has put forward a plan. We're going to work with that plan. We're going to support that plan, but all our personnel work for the City of New York. It's clear as that. Go ahead, Erin.

Question: Alright, thank you. And then secondly, I mean, you said you expected the houses of worship to overwhelmingly follow these rules, but I mean, based on what we saw overnight, as well as many of the statements from, you know, leaders, elected leaders, religious leaders, and others, there seems to be some pretty open defiance of this plan. So, I mean, is there any basis for your belief that there will be compliance and is there a particular plan for, you know, enforcement of – I know you spoke to it with respect to protest, but what about with respect to houses of worship?

Mayor: Erin, I'm going by a couple of things. First of all, there's been a lot of communication over the last few weeks with community leaders and I want to very intensely separate leaders, faith leaders, of all different faiths from political leaders who sometimes have a political agenda. It's just an obvious reality. If you say to me over years in public service, do I see a difference between clergy and politicians? Of course, clergy tend to be very responsible. They think about the big picture. They think about the health and wellbeing of their congregants. We saw extraordinary, extraordinary agreement among the clergy of all faiths in the spring, working together to ensure that people were safe, even though it meant something that all of them did not like doing one bit, which meant closing their houses of worship. Here we're talking about houses of worship still open, but with restrictions. I have never seen a situation where a clergy did not work with local government to protect people's health and safety. I've seen plenty of situations where politicians and people with other agendas said what they wanted to say for their own needs. But I really want to say our faith leaders have distinguished themselves time and again, as being very responsible, very mindful and wanting to work with local and State authorities. I don't expect that to change here. Maybe there'll be a few, but overwhelmingly I expect a lot of agreement that we all have to work together to solve this problem.

And let me conclude on that point everyone, look again, this will be tough. It's really important for people to understand, we're going through a tough time now in certain parts of the city, we're all going to work together to overcome that challenge. We are not going to let it overtake New York City. We still have time and we certainly have the wherewithal to stop a second wave from hitting New York City, but everyone has to take it seriously. Everyone has to work together. Everyone has to be committed and disciplined, and if you hear voices of division, if you hear coronavirus denialists, if you hear people out for their own agenda and trying to hurt everyone else, stand up to them. We have to stay unified to overcome this challenge. So I have a lot of faith in the people of New York City. I have a lot of faith that the great majority, the vast majority of New Yorkers want to do this right. Why do I have that faith? Because time and time again New Yorkers have shown how much they actually care about each other, how much they'll stand up for each other, how much they'll do the right thing to protect New York City, and we're going to do it again. Thank you, everybody.

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