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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC WITH ANDREA MITCHELL

Andrea Mitchell: Welcome back. As mayors and governors keep pushing for Congress to provide more federal funding for state and local governments whose budgets have been just slammed by the burden of responding to the coronavirus, White House Economic Advisor Kevin Hassett suggested this weekend that another stimulus package to help them might not be needed. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio then criticized him earlier today for that.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: *Let me tell you something, Kevin, why don't you come to New York City, why don't you go to Elmhurst Hospital, why don't you talk to our first responders, why don't you talk to the families who have lost their loved ones, or go to the ICUs where hundreds of people are still fighting for their lives?*

Mitchell: Mr. Mayor, thanks very much for joining us. Mayor Bill de Blasio, joining us from New York. Mr. Mayor, why do you think there continues to be a disconnect between the White House and what you're seeing on the streets of New York and in the hospitals?

Mayor: Andrea, I'm astounded. When I heard what Kevin Hassett said – and it sounds like Larry Kudlow saying something like it now – I mean, I don't know what they're thinking. We've seen – the worst epidemic in a hundred years in this country's history hit the nation's largest city, thousands of people have died, so many families are in pain. This city is right now at a standstill and we are trying to find our way back safely, protecting our people, and then coming back the right way. And instead of a helping hand from Washington, instead of sympathy and respect for our health care workers, our first responders, the people who've done all this to fight their way through, what does Kevin Hassett say? He says, 'Oh, maybe you guys don't need help after all'. And you know what, Andrea, if help doesn't come from Washington, because in this process, on top of all the human misery, we have lost billions and billions of dollars as our economy has shut down, all that money that would have been there to pay our first responders, pay our health care workers, all the people keep the city going, that money is drying up and we will not be able to provide the basic services that people in this city need. And we will not be able to provide the beginning of a restart if Washington turns its back on us. And that's what he's saying, that somehow maybe it's okay if they do nothing. Andrea, you know what? This administration had to do two things this whole time. They had to get us testing when we needed it. They still haven't done that. And they had to get aid to cities and states to get back on their feet. And now they seem to be equivocating even about that. And it's disgusting and it's dangerous for the future of this country. Without another stimulus for cities and states, we will not be able to restart our economy. It's as simple as that.

Mitchell: Well, what do you say to the Mitch-McConnells and others, the people in the White House, who say, well, why should we be bailing out the states, the cities that have not spent their money wisely in the past? I mean that's their argument that this is your budget, your problem, New York State's problem.

Mayor: We did not ask for the coronavirus to come here from overseas. So, first I'd say to Mitch McConnell, what are you talking about? This horrible plague affected this whole nation out of nowhere, and the fact the nation's largest city has taken it on the chin, is something he should care about instead of being disdainful. But beyond that, I'd say, here's a city that has been leading the American economy for the good of all Americans. We send a huge amount of revenue to Washington, much more than we get back. We've been helping to build the American economy. In recent years, we've had the highest level of employment in the history of the city. We've been the safest city in America, safest large city, with crime driven down to the level of the 1950s here in New York City. This city has been a success and these policies have been working and these investments have been working.

Why would he want to be disdainful towards a place that's working, and working for all of America? Why would you want to be disdainful towards these heroes who – guess what, they're public servants. They're paid for by the public sector. Those heroes, those EMTs and paramedics, the firefighters, the police officers, the doctors, the nurses in our public hospitals. He wants to leave them high and dry. I think that's un-American. I think that's unpatriotic to stab in the back the very people who fought their way through this crisis on behalf of this whole country, they deserve a lot more respect than that.

Mitchell: Now, I want to ask you about your efforts through the NYPD to prevent, obviously, restless New Yorkers who've been stuck inside on a beautiful weekend from coming out and ignoring social distancing. I believe the NYPD said yesterday there was some 46 summonses issued. What was the experience today and throughout the weekend, and you had 1,000 police officers on the streets?

Mayor: Right, Andrea, look, I want to say New Yorkers have been absolutely amazing. It's the most densely populated city in the country. You know New York so well, this is a tough place to do social distancing. It's a tough place to shelter in place because people are so used to going out, but New Yorkers have done it to a remarkable degree. There's still a few people who don't follow the rules, but they really are few. But the message I sent is, the NYPD is going to be out in every community, every part of the city certainly to help people – they're giving out face coverings, they're reminding people, they're educating people. But for folks who ignore those rules and try and gather, then we're giving summonses across the board because, you know, there's been enough chance for people to understand that the social distancing is literally about protecting people's lives. So, we didn't actually have to give a lot of summonses yesterday and that's a good sign. Today, again, there's been some places that needed extra enforcement, but most places have been fine. Most people are really getting the message.

Mitchell: I also want to ask you about – you mentioned testing, which is still lagging despite what the White House says, but also the contact tracing that you were speaking of with Governor Cuomo and Mike Bloomberg, just earlier this week, Mike Bloomberg was putting money into

this – how is this going to work, are you seeing any early results of this, or is this still being organized?

Mayor: Andrea, we're going to create something that's never been seen before in the history of this city or this whole country. During this month of May, we're going to build a huge testing and tracing apparatus. Now we have one hand tied behind our back because the federal government still has not shown up with the testing capacity we need. We're particularly concerned about laboratory capacity to process these tests. What's become clear in this crisis is this country is way too dependent on chemical agents and equipment from other countries. And we actually don't make a lot of that here anymore and we need to again, but even if the administration continues and Washington did not provide the testing, we're going to do everything we've got – everything we can with what we've got.

So, you're talking about tens of thousands of people who will be tested daily. You're talking about a tracing apparatus that anyone who is tested positive, we ask them, we interview them, who they've been close with in recent days, who they've come in contact with. We go test those folks, and anyone who needs isolation is supported. If they need to go to a hotel, we provide a hotel room. If they can't isolate with their family, and there is not the right space for that, provide them all the support they need while they isolate. We do that enough times the right way, it starts to constrict the disease, really squeeze it, and drive down the numbers even more.

Mitchell: And just very briefly, is there a message here as you look at these numbers, as hideous as this is, 240 people died in the state just this weekend – is the worst over do you think?

Mayor: I'm very hopeful the worst is over, Andrea. The one thing I talked about today is we got to be careful not to have a boomerang. We cannot let the disease reassert. So, it's really about smart, steady progress – not letting the foot off the gas too soon, but I am hopeful that the worst is behind us.

Mitchell: Alright, thanks to all of the people who work in New York City, the health care workers, but also the police, the fire, the EMTs, all the front line workers who've been doing so much. Just a big thanks to you and everyone working there in New York –

Mayor: Appreciate it very much, Andrea.

Mitchell: Thanks again – Mayor Bill de Blasio, thanks for taking time to be with us

Mayor: Thank you.

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