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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. It's a beautiful Monday morning in New York City, and it is a hopeful time, because we keep moving forward with our vaccination effort. This is the key to everything in terms of our comeback, getting the maximum number of New Yorkers vaccinated. Great news over the weekend, we started a huge effort with DC 37, AFSCME – a partnership with a union who represent so many of our City workers in a focused effort. To reach City workers, we were out at Citi Field. I want to thank Steve Cohen, and the Mets – everyone in the Mets organization, great partners in the vaccination effort. DC 37, Henry Garrido, and your whole team, thank you. This is a focused effort to reach City workers, those who serve us, make sure their vaccinated. We have a dedicated hotline for members of DC 37 and specific appointments that are being reserved for them. And this is key to bring them back our full workforce so they can do all that they do for us to keep the city moving forward.

Now, as of today, this is just the folks we know about for sure, over 130,000 City employees have received a shot – 130,000. We know many more have received a vaccination that still hasn't been reported yet. We're looking forward to our City employees coming back to offices beginning on May 3rd, and we're going to have a focused effort from now until then to get the maximum number vaccinated, including, as we start folks back at their work sites, onsite vaccination efforts right there where they work. So, this is a big part of our recovery, bringing our City workforce back in full so they can serve us, help us all move forward. And this is part of what a recovery for all of us looks like – maximizing vaccination, everywhere we can, every way we can.

Now, we have good news – that, last week, we set a new record for vaccinations. This is a great number. Number of doses reported last week, 478,000. Now, if you talk about a recovery for all of us, this is exactly what we've been saying we wanted to be able to do to reach that half-million a week number. We are right on the verge of it – 478,000 vaccinations last week in New York City, and we're ready to do more. We just need the supply. It's all about supply, supply, supply. We are proving every day, we've got the capacity, we've got the demand. We've got a great team of people out there vaccinating. We've got the sites. Get us supply and we can fly.

So, here's the latest – from the beginning of the vaccination effort, we have now provided 3,840,976 vaccinations. We will be hitting 4 million this week, and this is really a fantastic progress. Special thanks to everyone at Department of Health, their hubs are now, combined, over half-a-million vaccinations they've provided alone. So, this is all moving the right direction. Supply is the key issue. We do expect a major boost in the federal supply soon, and that's going to allow us to get to whole new levels and move this thing forward. We are well on our way to our goal 5 million New Yorkers fully vaccinated by June. So, good news we're seeing just in the last few days.

Now, to make the vaccination effort work, to make sure it is fully reaching the folks who are in the greatest danger, to address the inequalities that we saw come out in the coronavirus crisis, to focus on racial equity, we're making sure that the vaccination sites more and more are getting to the grassroots, more and more sites across the five boroughs at public housing developments, in houses of worship, at community centers. You see the new sites now on your screen that we've put together that are coming online now, including senior centers, community centers, you name it, but places where people have a deep connection and where they sense that they will be taken care of, where they feel trust. Those grassroots sites are going to make all the difference both in terms of reaching many, many thousands more New Yorkers, but also ensuring that there's equity in the process. So, a lot of new sites opening up. We're very excited about that. And we're looking forward to the supply coming in to match these new sites more and more.

Now, our Asian-American communities have gone through so much. From the beginning, our Asian-American communities bore the brunt of this crisis in so many ways. Even before the worst hit New York City, we saw discrimination against Asian-Americans. We saw people avoiding Asian-American businesses, hurting their livelihood. And then we saw the coronavirus crisis last spring hit Asian-American communities very hard. Now, we see these horrible hate crimes and disgusting displays a bias. We've got a band together to stop Asian hate. We've got to support our Asian-American brothers and sisters in this moment, but we also have to recognize the challenge of COVID is still bearing down on Asian communities all over New York City. So, we are making a special effort to intensify vaccination efforts in Asian communities. Last week, a great example of this, we launched a vaccination site at the Korean Community Services Center in Northeast Queens. This is a site that does great work for the community and a site where a lot of people in the community trust and know the good people there, a site that's going to encourage people to come forward and get vaccinated. And I want to thank all of the community leaders, starting with Congress Member Grace Meng, who advocated for this site. Members of Congress, the Legislature, City Council, all pushing, let's get this site up and running. Well, now, it is up and running. Thank you for your advocacy. And Congress Member Meng believes in this site so much that she went there to get her coronavirus vaccination. And I believe we have Congress Member Grace Meng live from Korean Community Services in Queens. Congress Member, are you there?

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. And, Congress Member, thank you. You've been a great partner and you constantly stay in touch, helping us all to know what we can do that will serve the community. And thank you also for being one of the leading voices not only in the city, but in the nation, standing up to the horrible hate attacks. Thank you for your leadership. And I know because of your leadership and so many other people standing up and we're going to – we're going to move forward together in solidarity with Asian communities. So, thank you very, very much.

Congress Member Grace Meng: Thank you so much.

Mayor: Well, everyone, you know, there's an example of – you know, the more of these grassroots sites we create, the more people are going to come forward to get vaccinated, the more comfortable they're going to be. And, as the supply grows, this is so exciting to know we can get deeper and deeper to the grassroots. So, there's an example today of we know this is going to

mean thousands more people get vaccinated and we're going to keep going, building more and more at the local level.

Okay, let's go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report – it's a good one – 189 patients. Confirmed positivity is fairly high, 73.47 percent. Hospitalization rate, 3.99 per 100,000. So, kind of a mixed bag there. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – today's report, 3,641 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19 – today's a report on a seven-day rolling average, 6.19 percent.

I want to say a few words in Spanish on the vaccination effort.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media. Please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Health Commissioner Chokshi, Dr. Jay Varma, and Dr. Ted Long. With that, we'll go to James from PIX-11.

Question: And good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Thanks for taking my call.

Mayor: How are you doing, James?

Question: You know, great – as you said, it is a beautiful day in New York, despite the high winds. First, allow me to ask this – this morning, the federal government extended the eviction moratorium that was set to expire at the beginning of April through June. Can you talk about how this can affect New York tenants to allow them to stay in their homes and also how it might affect New York property owners who are still possibly not collecting rents and what the city can do for both of those entities once this moratorium runs out?

Mayor: It's an important question, James. And, look, first, I'd say – the moratorium, I'm glad it's been extended, and it should continue to be extended so long as we are still in the throes of a crisis and so many people are still not back to work. I'm really hopeful that the economy is going to move forward energetically in the course of this year. We expect hundreds of thousands of jobs to come back in New York City this year. So, I do think we're going to see change quickly. But, until we're really there, you've got thousands and thousands of people that just have – they just can't afford the rent, they just don't have an option. Obviously, I've said it many times, if you can afford to pay your rent, you should, because the folks who are trying to keep the buildings up do need the resources to do that. But if you can't pay, you can't pay, and we want to make sure people get to stay in their apartments. So, keeping the moratoriums in place long enough for folks to actually get their incomes back as crucial. What we can do is make sure that everyone gets full advantage of the different types of stimulus funding that are available. So, we're constantly working with people, whether it's tenants, or small businesses, you name it to make sure they get everything that is due to them. We can also help if there is ever a situation where someone is being wrongly evicted, they can call 3-1-1 and we can provide legal support. We're going to try and work through this, working with everyone involved. But I think the important thing is, keep people in their apartments. And one of the things I've called for on the State level

is create legislation to – create a payment plan system where tenants who want to stay long-term, you know, want to make their commitments whole, that they have a way of doing a long-term payment plan so they can pay back rent over time and not ever have to worry about losing their apartment. Go ahead, James.

Question: Thank you, Mayor. And back on the COVID front for a bit – first of all, congratulations on the number of vaccinations. But New York State – we're about to cross an unpleasant milestone, right, of 50,000 coronavirus deaths, and New York is second in the nation for highest number of coronavirus infections per capita. Can you talk about this contrast between getting more people vaccinated yet having this persistently high number, that may even be rising, of people with the virus?

Mayor: It's a real important question, James. And look, first of all, it's been such a painful experience for all New Yorkers. This is a very somber milestone as you note, for the State of New York, 50,000 New Yorkers lost. I think it's a reminder to us to take this disease very seriously. I think it's a reminder to us that this isn't over yet, to follow the data and the science, to follow the precautions that health care leaders have been consistently telling us to follow, to not loosen up the wrong way. You know, we see in some other parts of the country, once again, decisions being made that are not about data and science. We got to make sure that decisions in New York are always made about by adherence to the data and the science. So, it's painful, but we do know what we have to do from this point on. We got to get the maximum number of people vaccinated, and we got to stick to the smart guidance that the doctors have given us until we're absolutely sure we've turned the corner.

Moderator: Next is Kristen from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Kristen. How've you been?

Question: I'm good. Thank you. Wanted to just talk about the announcement you just made. You know, I noticed that Staten Island is the only borough that isn't getting a new vaccination site this week. The other four boroughs are. And the South Shore is still without a City-run vaccination site. Can Staten Island expect one?

Mayor: Absolutely. We have been working, our health team working with the Borough President and others to identify a South Shore site. We will have a South Shore site, absolutely. This is, as I've said to Kristen, supply, we are still not getting the supply we would like, but as supply continues to grow, we're going to go more and more to the grassroots. So, you can definitely expect additional sites all over the city, including Staten Island. Go ahead, Kristen.

Question: Thank you. And then on a different topic you know, there's been a rise in overdoses last year, and then so far this year on Staten Island. The number of overdoses that we've seen are similar to those back in 2016, 2017 before there was this widening use of naloxone. You know, has your administration noticed a rise in just overall city overdose numbers and is anything being done to address that during this time?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a very sad reality. I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi in a moment, Kristen. You know, we saw so many painful realities come from the coronavirus crisis as life got dislocated and a lot of people went through trauma, and a lot of people became hopeless. We saw a lot of unfortunate and painful other realities, far beyond COVID itself. And one of the things we have seen is an increase in opioid overdoses. And it's very, very troubling. We're putting a number of measures in place to address it. I do believe as the city recovers, as the life of the city goes back to something much more normal, it's going to help. But we also understand that opioids are extraordinarily dangerous and that we need to put additional measures in place. So, Dr. Chokshi, you want to talk about some of the things that we are working on now to address this?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yes, sir. Thank you so much. And we are concerned about the increase in opioid use and particularly the increase in overdoses that we're seeing around the country. This is a national phenomenon. Unfortunately, much of it driven by an increase in fentanyl in the drug supply, in the opioid supply, which leads to a higher risk of overdose. And unfortunately, New York City, you know, has not been spared from that more general trend. We have done a number of things to address this over the last several years, but are redoubling those efforts in the coming months. Starting with outreach and engagement, particularly in treatment that we know works for opioid use disorder. That's buprenorphine which helps people, you know, regain their ability to live their lives normally, as well as increasing access to naloxone, which is a life-saving treatment as has been mentioned. And finally, we do have to think about this in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing some of the underlying factors you know, that have led to an increase in drug use. So, we can't divorce the way that we're thinking about substance use disorders from everything that we have to do to support mental health as well, related to counseling and access to treatment.

Mayor: Thank you, Dave. And Kristen, just an update, just want to make sure I'm giving you the whole picture to your question about sites on Staten Island. The Ocean Breeze site went up last week, so that's going to reach more Staten Islanders. And at the Empire Outlets, we're expanding the number of doses we can provide. And that expansion will happen this week. So, we'll get you the details on that. But definitely more and more doses will be provided at Staten Island. And again, soon we will have that South Shore site as well.

Moderator: Go ahead. Next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Shant.

Question: I wanted to ask about – hey, how are you?

Mayor: Good. How are you doing?

Question: Oh, hanging in there, hanging in there. So, wanted to ask about the marijuana legislation that State leaders apparently finalized over the weekend. Some Senate Democrats said it provides what they called marijuana justice. I wanted to ask what that would mean in practice to you? And what you see is the role of the City, when it comes to a future with legal recreational marijuana and expanded access to medicinal marijuana?

Mayor: So, Shant, this is really important legislation. I'm glad this day is finally here. It's long overdue. A couple of years ago, my team and I put out a report talking about the right way to go about cannabis legalization. And in fact, to focus it on the communities that have been hardest hit by the drug laws that existed for decades. I think this legislation, Albany has achieved a lot of what we hope to see. What I want to make sure is there's a maximum focus on supporting the communities hardest hit, that bore the brunt of unfair drug laws, that really deserve the opportunity now to gain from this new business. I hope it does not become a highly corporatized business. I hope it becomes something localized, much more of a small business focus. And that's what we're going to work on. And we also want to make sure that there's as much local discretion as possible on issues like citing. That that's still up in the air, honestly. That's going to have to be worked through in the regulatory process. But huge step in the right direction. I commend the Legislature. I think this is a huge step in the right direction. And I think some of the outstanding issues we definitely have time to work on. And that's good news. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah. Thanks for that. So, in a different vein, I wanted to ask about vaccine eligibility, which is something you've obviously talked about a lot. The New York Times reported over – [inaudible] over the weekend that New York is one of the last states that hasn't yet provided a timeline for reaching universal vaccine eligibility by the May 1st deadline that the Biden administration has asked for. I wanted to ask, has your office had any communication at all with Governor Cuomo about that? And what do you make of the apparent delay that's going on?

Mayor: We've heard from the State about the specific moves they've made, like the decision to set the bar at 50 years old, for example. Have not heard a clear timeline on going to pure universal. I still think – I think President Biden's right. I think May 1st is the right time to do that so that we can really focus as much energy as possible on folks in greatest need, seniors, folks with pre-existing conditions throughout the month of April. But whatever decision the State makes we're going to work with it. What I would say is a galling omission that has to be addressed right now is the fact that we have a profound need in this city, in this state to bring our court system back. We still do not have the right to vaccinate, the freedom to vaccinate jurors. And this is something I've been talking about for months. The State should right away give New York City the freedom to vaccinate jurors who are coming to serve in trials, so that we can restart our justice system. And we've got to show people that they will be safe. And obviously all the court officers, the DAs, everyone who serves in the court system, but I'm particularly concerned that jurors are not covered. And they should be covered immediately. Because this is one of the things that would help us achieve greater safety for the city overall, to get the justice system back up and running. So, that's a piece I think should be addressed very specifically immediately. But again, whatever decision the State makes on the bigger timeline we'll be ready. You can see the capacity is growing all the time here in the city. We'll be ready either way.

Moderator: Next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mayor de Blasio. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Katie. How you been?

Question: Good, not bad.

Mayor: Did you enjoy Mr. and Mrs. Met?

Question: Yes, I did. I only say them briefly and I still don't know if they've been vaccinated. We haven't been able to find out, I don't know what eligibility mascots are in. But my first question is about a reopening plan for City workers. There've been concerns from some City workers and even union leaders like Henry Garrido, who was at the Citi Field event on Saturday, who were concerned about the plan. Mainly how offices can be safe? What's been done? What hasn't been done inside offices? And as my colleague James noted with cases rising. So, would the City consider an official telework plan or any other kind of flexible schedule for employees? I know there is not currently a teleworking plan.

Mayor: The way I would say it, Katie is we're going to take all the lessons we've learned from all the work that's happening in the City government, including the schools, and apply them to offices. So, there'll be distancing, mask wearing, cleaning, ventilation efforts. All of that will be happening, obviously a consistent effort to get people vaccinated. It's going to be a highly controlled atmosphere. And we will put limits on who, you know, how many people should be in the space at any given time. We do not have a formal telework policy. It is something that we're going to look at. But I think the crucial point is we're going to bring back people in a way that follows the rules that our health team has laid out for how to keep a workspace safe. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: Thanks. And my second is you had mentioned in your State Of The City, this Cleanup Corps, that could be funded with federal stimulus money. And I'm just curious, you know, what is the status of that? And would that kind of – some of that money go into the Sanitation budget? It seems like there's an overlap there with cleanup. Just what is the status of that Cleanup Corps?

Mayor: You are going to be hearing a lot soon about the Cleanup Corps. I'm really excited about it. And the stimulus is doing so much good for this city. This is going to be one of the things that's going to allow us to come back strong. It is a different type of work than what Sanitation does. And that's important to note. This is a lot of the things that Sanitation doesn't reach that need to be clean, need to be beautified for part of our comeback. So, this is very exciting to me. We're looking to hire 10,000 New Yorkers and we'll have more to say on this in the next few days.

Moderator: Next is Amanda from Politico.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Hey Amanda, how you been?

Question: I'm good. Thank you. I wanted to follow up on Shant's question. So, last week, Scott Stringer and Mark Levine had proposed a plan that would call on lifting the eligibility for all New Yorkers in your 33 high-impact neighborhoods, to get those people vaccinated kind of ahead of the May 1st deadline to have everyone vaccinated. And I had asked them what power does the City have? And they had said they wanted the City to back them up on this and then go

to the State. And so I was wondering if you've reviewed that plan or if you have any thoughts on trying to prioritize these neighborhoods before, you know, all New Yorkers can get vaccinated?

Mayor: I'll certainly look at that plan and I appreciate very much the spirit in which it's offered. I would only caution that we've got a huge amount of demand in the 33 neighborhoods that we have delineated as where the impact of COVID was the harshest. We're seeing constant demand. What we're seeing is seniors and folks with pre-existing conditions. So much demand right now we obviously cannot keep up with it with the supply we have. So, the point I would make is, I do want us to keep focused on those who are most vulnerable first. But this is an interesting suggestion. It's a meaningful suggestion. We're certainly going to assess it. Go ahead, Amanda.

Question: Great. Thank you. And then my second question is around vaccine passports. New York State rolled out something called an Excelsior Pass. And the idea is that it's a kind of a digital QRC code saying I got vaccinated, here it is. And I think it's supposed to help with reopening the economy. And I was curious what the City is planning with these vaccine passports, if there's any plans moving forward? I know Madison Square Garden, I think April 1st is going to say, you can show your vaccine card. And I wanted to know if there's some sort of like strategy around how these vaccine passports could work in the city?

Mayor: Yeah. I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Varma on this because obviously this is something we've looked at what's happening around the world on this. Look, there's something there that could be really helpful. We have to see how it works in practice obviously, and make sure it functions well consistently. But the notion of having a way to verify could certainly be helpful for bringing back businesses, for events. But I think it's a little too soon to see – a little too soon to say how much it can be used and how much impact it would make. I think it's a step in the right direction, but we got to give it a little time. Dr. Varma, do you want to add?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah. Thank you very much for the question. And I concur with the Mayor that there's a couple of things all combined together. First of all, I do think that we're going to have to get to a world where there's proof of vaccination required for certain activities or events, and the best way to have that proof of vaccination would be to have it digitized. It's just going to be quite simply much easier for the person who has to verify vaccination status to use a digital technology, as opposed to examining paper records. The second is those vaccination whether you call them passports or certificates, would also have to be accompanied by some way to verify testing status as well, because we know some people won't be tested and the only way to – I'm sorry, it won't be vaccinated, and so the only way to ensure that those access rights are maintained and can work for people is to also have a pathway that allows for proof of a negative test.

And so, I think that the New York State application has a tremendous number of opportunities in that regard. I think some of the challenges are that we know that those systems right now only work if you receive all of your services within New York State or within a laboratory that contributes to New York State. So, there really is a tremendous need for there to be federal standards for this. Because what we're going to know is, again, New York City thrives because it is the center of a large metropolitan area. And so, unless it can communicate with all of those other systems, it's going to take some time. So, I would say that it's definitely a step in the right direction. We are optimistic that these will become useful in the future. But we also really need

federal standards so that this can be a system that can be applied to people that come to New York City, regardless of where they come from.

Mayor: Thank you, Jay.

Moderator: Next is Andrea from WCBS.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my questions. So, my first one is what will you do with the \$4.2 billion in Campaign for Fiscal Equity aid that the Legislature is going to give you? What schools will benefit and why do you think it took so long to get this funding?

Mayor: What a good question. Thank you, Andrea. You're right about, it took so long – 15, 20 years almost, this has been a fight for fairness for New York City. And I want to give a special shout out to State Senator Robert Jackson who is one of the people who led this fight from the very beginning, Campaign for Fiscal Equity, won their fight in the court system, and then never got fairness and justice because the money that New York City was supposed to get and other cities in other parts of the state were supposed to get never really materialized. So, the fact that the Legislature is now acting on this – and we don't have all the details yet, but it's very, very exciting – it's going to be a game changer for New York City public schools. It's going to allow us to do so many of the things that we need to do long term.

Look, obviously now we're focusing on really doubling down on early childhood education. We announced the 3-K expansion. This is going to ensure that we can fill out that expansion, go to full universal 3-K in the coming years. It's going to ensure we're going to have a lot more support for kids in terms of mental health, social workers, and trained adults to help address the really profound mental health needs of our kids. It's going to just give us so many more tools to enrich the academic experience. I mean, this is absolutely amazing, and it's going to finally allow New York City public schools to reach their full potential. So, a lot to be worked through here, but I just want to thank Speaker Carl Heastie and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for continuing to keep the Campaign for Fiscal Equity front and center, and, you know, taking this bold step because it's been decades overdue, but it's a reminder, never give up the fight because eventually, you know, the right comes through and the right side wins. Go ahead, Andrea.

Question: Well, along those lines, the New York Post had an article over the weekend about the absentee rates specifically in high schools, but across the system, I guess, playing into the money situation. What would you say to parents who are really concerned that their kids are not getting a quality education this year, and will some of that money go to ensuring that they're prepared for college and the future?

Mayor: Well, that's a great example. I mean, first of all, that article over the weekend was just profoundly inaccurate and we'll get you the specific data to show exactly what's happening. We see a lot of strength in attendance because those who are committed to in-person education and they're making a very specific choice, they want to be there and they're showing up because they want the education they can get in-person. But in terms of what we can do with those resources, absolutely we'll strengthen our efforts to help kids with the next steps in their lives, whether they're going on to college or they're going on to career or other types of training. This is an area where we've made some real progress, but additional resources mean we can do so much more to

prepare kids and to help them get to that next step. And that's especially true for kids – this last couple of years have been so much dislocation. Let's face it, the kids who graduated last year or were supposed to graduate, didn't get the kind of experience they normally get. They still, a lot of them still need support. The kids this year, going through so much. This is going to allow us to supercharge efforts to connect kids to college and career.

Moderator: We have time for two more. First, we'll go to David from Telemundo.

Question: Hi. Good morning, Mayor. This is David Rodriguez from Telemundo 47.

Mayor: Good morning, David. How are you?

Question: Good, good. Happy Monday.

Mayor: Yes, thank you.

Question: During this week I know so many people are doing plans due to Holy week. At this point we have some cases, we still have to be cautious with that. I want to know which is your advice to the New Yorkers today, because we want to continue the fight against COVID-19 and, we don't want to have some more cases after this week. So, I want to see what's your reaction about that.

Mayor: Thank you, David. It's such an important question. I'm going to start, and I'm going to turn to someone with the same name, Dave Chokshi, in just a second for him to amplify as the city's doctor. But, David, you're asking such an important question. Look, everyone, we know it's Holy week. It's a very powerful, special time. Families gather, folks are looking forward to Easter. It's so important to understand, this is the last time we're going to be dealing with COVID the way we have for the last year. Every day we're making progress, but we're not there yet. It's still going to take some months to get as many people vaccinated as we need to, and really turn things around. So, during this holiday time, everyone should focus on safety. Still keep the gathering small, observe social distancing, wear a mask. Remember if you want to make sure it's a happy holiday, protect your loved ones. And if you want big gatherings again, I guarantee you'll be able to have them in just a year. So, it's just really about remembering we're still in the middle of this battle. Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And I really appreciate the way that you're framing this, and we'll just add, this is a week of reflection for so many, particularly as we continue to mark the one-year anniversaries of so much tragedy and suffering. And in order to honor that as well as what this week represents to so many people, I do hope that our advice will be taken to heart to try to prevent as much of that suffering going forward as well. Our practical advice revolves around what you've heard me talk about as the safe six – masking, maintaining a physical distance, hand-washing, staying home if you're ill, getting tested, and getting vaccinated when it's your turn. I'll just add a few notes to that that are particularly important as we continue to watch cases and the new variants with concern.

First, as the Mayor has said, outdoors is always better than indoors. So, if you do want to have some type of event or gathering, outdoors will always be safer. Similarly, places and spaces where you can wear your mask consistently and properly, those are the ones that will also help

ensure safety. And finally, smaller is better. Stay within your household as much as possible. You know, stay in groups that are in the single digits, you know, with respect to people who are getting together. And let's not forget the fact that testing has helped us ensure safety as well. So, keep getting tested this week and in the weeks to come.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead, David.

Question: Yeah, the second question, Mayor, is about – it was several weeks ago where you were explaining about the broadband, and the plan in order to make sure that the kids can have more internet in their communities. How is that plan right now? How is everything working in that area right now?

Mayor: David, this is so important and thank you for asking. Look, getting broadband access to communities that have been deprived of it, to families who have been deprived of it, is crucial. It is the gateway to educational opportunity for kids. It's the gateway to jobs for adults, and we will be doing a big expansion of broadband access in the course of this year, particularly in our public housing developments. And then we're putting out an opportunity for private companies to come in with a lot of competition to ensure there's real competition and accountability, to ensure that we build out the network over the city and reach hundreds of thousands more New Yorkers. So, this is going to be a big priority this year. We have a lot of the tools we need to make a difference, and you're going to see more and more New Yorkers getting broadband access during 2021 and beyond. This is crucial to our future and also ensuring the strong expansion of 5G in New York City. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last, we'll go to Sonia from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, following up on something you just mentioned a short time ago, the freedom to vaccinate jurors. How could that work? Obviously, vaccine doesn't take effect right away, so that would require some planning. And if that planning can't happen should a qualifier for serving on a jury right now be haven't been vaccinated.

Mayor: Look, Sonia, I think this is really about making it clear that we can have a court system that functions effectively. I mean right now so much of the courts are shut down and that's hurting all of our efforts to keep New York City safe. You're right that there is a lag time, but it's not a long time. With the Johnson & Johnson shot, you're talking about two weeks after the shot, you know, it takes full effect. And if we started to have a very specific effort to get anyone who hasn't yet been vaccinated, vaccinated, so they could serve on a jury, it would incentivize people, honestly, to serve. So, we're ready to, you know, put together the resources to make it happen. We want to work with the Office of Court Administration, but I think if you had it, it would really give people every reason to feel comfortable serving on a jury. And that's what we want right now. Go ahead, Sonia.

Question: Thank you. And any update on how well the first week back at school went for high schoolers who returned and is there any data yet as far as testing?

Mayor: Sonia, we had a great week, very smooth, tons of enthusiasm. I was out there with the Chancellor at her old school on the first day, and just incredible energy among the students and adults alike, the whole week went really well. Testing numbers we saw throughout the week,

very consistent with what we've seen previously, really great numbers. And again, one of the safest places to be in all of New York City is in our public schools. And I want to thank everyone who continues to make that the wonderful reality in our schools.

So, everyone, look, as we conclude today, I just want to emphasize for everyone, if you have not gotten vaccinated, as you could see, you heard this extraordinary number for this last week, we got very close to reaching half a million New Yorkers in one week. Going forward, we're going to be reaching even more. So, more and more people are coming forward, getting vaccinated. They're having a good experience. I talk to people all the time, including when I was at Citi Field on Saturday. And what people say consistently is the same thing. It was easy. It was fast. The folks who work at the vaccination sites are great, they're kind, they're compassionate. They make it a good experience. Please, if you have not yet been vaccinated, make a plan to get vaccinated. More and more locations are opening up all the time. More and more vaccine becoming available. It's getting easier. It's getting faster. Please do something good for yourself, for your family, for your neighborhood, for your city. Make a plan to get vaccinated. And that's how we all move forward. Thank you, everybody.

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