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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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MEDIA CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Well, today, we're going to talk in just a moment about what we need to do to keep coming back as a city, and the single biggest piece of that equation is reopening our schools. That's going to have such an impact on the lives of families of 1.1 million school children and it's going to have impact in so many ways – not just the education of those children, the ability for them to keep growing and developing, but also for parents who need to get back to work, for folks who need their livelihood back. There's so much we need to do and we have to do it the right way. And we're going to talk today about ways we can further support families as we come back and as we reopen our schools.

But first, I want to talk about very powerful moment yesterday in the Bronx. We had an important moment, for many reasons. One, painting the Black Lives Matter mural in the Bronx for the first time; two, the bill signing – six important pieces of legislation, all aimed at reform, all aimed at changing the reality of the city for the better, at improving the relationship between our police and our communities, creating accountability, creating transparency, creating the new reality we need to live in. This was a very moving and powerful moment and it was based on the hard work of so many people in communities all over the city over years to bring us to this day. And I said yesterday that change comes from the grassroots up and the six pieces of legislation that I signed yesterday represent that. I want to commend and thank all the activists, all the community members who not only were with us yesterday, but we're part of these movements over years. I want to thank the City Council. And I want to refer to something that Council Member Vanessa Gibson said. And she has a really powerful vantage point. She was there at the ceremony yesterday because she was a sponsor of two of the six pieces legislation. She was there because it's her district in the Bronx, right near Yankee stadium. She was there because she also used to be the chair of the Public Safety Committee in the City Council. And when she spoke, she spoke passionately about the need for change, but she also spoke about the balance we have to strike – the balance, every day, continuing reform while continuing to work to make it a safer city. Those things do not contradict. And too often, I think, in the public dialogue, there are those who only look at one piece or another – only talk about the imperative of public safety or only talking about the imperative of reform. We need both. Safety and fairness need to walk hand in hand. I've been saying that since 2013, and that is what has animated a series of changes we have made in policing in New York City, and we will make more. But, remember, as we speak right now, a lot of communities are feeling the profound challenge of crime and violence. They are fighting back. You saw it yesterday, right here, what good people in Bed-Stuy are doing to fight back? I was in East Harlem the other day – a wonderful community [inaudible] people taking back their community in Harlem last Saturday night. You see community members who want justice and want safety. And think those two things must go together. And that is the future of this city. So, yesterday represented a step in that direction.

Now, to really have both justice and safety, we need to have our criminal justice system function again. So, I'm imploring everyone at the Office of Court Administration – please, we need our court system to run again. We need it to be open next month as fully as humanly possible. Yes, we need to take every precaution for the folks who serve on juries, for the folks that work in the court system, but we cannot keep this city safe if we don't have a functioning court system. It has been too many months already. The city is coming back strong. We're obviously showing we can remain healthy, but we owe it to our communities and we owe it to our police officers to restart the court system as vigorously as possible and as quickly as possible. So, please hear our plea, because that's how we will keep our communities safe.

Now, back to the point about reopening schools and providing support for our children, our families, our parents. Look, we know, because we have one of the biggest surveys that's ever been conducted in this city – 400,000 people responded – parents from all over the city, every corner of this city, 75 percent said we want schools open and we want our kids to go to school in September. And we've talked about how we'll do it, for now, with a blended learning approach, with a typical child goes two or three days a week to school in the classroom. But so many parents have also said that they can't make it work if they don't get more childcare. We have been working at – since we saw the results of that survey and we obviously knew this was an imperative, we've been trying to find every way to create new childcare and to build it from scratch, honestly, because we're having to create something that didn't exist before on this scale to accommodate a new need and a new reality. We initially said, how much could we do? And we thought maybe we could do 50,000 childcare seats. And then we realized with a blended format, that actually turns into a hundred thousand families that can be served. We're going to use every conceivable space, community centers, libraries, cultural organizations, whatever we can find in communities. We're going to have one approach for early childhood, another approach for K-to-eight. And the goal will be to start by serving 100,000 kids and giving those families, those parents that balance in their life, that relief, that support, but then we aim to go farther. Now, we've got a little under two months until school begins. We've got a lot to do and nothing like this has ever been attempted on this timeframe, but we're going to find a way to do this and hopefully much more.

Here to talk about it is the woman who has led the charge in so many ways. I want to thank her, because in her role, she doesn't get the credit she deserves, and she's a very modest human being, but she's actually been one of the most central figures in our fight against the coronavirus as our Budget Director, keeping this city able to function and pay the bills and make sure services are provided to the people of this city, including food for every New Yorker who needs it and all the additional expenses around the coronavirus. She helped lead the way and expanding our testing capacity and now is helping to lead the way on the expansion of childcare. She used to be a Deputy Commissioner at the Administration for Children's Services, so it's something she knows well. I want to thank her for her extraordinary work and invite to speak our budget director, Director of OMB, Melanie Hartzog.

Can we hear you? Start again, Melanie, and make sure you're un-muted. We don't hear you yet. Technology – there you go.

Director Melanie Hartzog, Office of Management and Budget: Thank you, sir. So, just be very quick about this. Our plan is designed to provide full supervised coverage on a child's remote days. We're building out a program, as the Mayor mentioned, to serve a 100,000 children,

including preschoolers and school-age children – that is kindergarten through eighth grade. First space is critical. We'll be exploring all viable space options to accommodate children and youth, looking at both public and private locations that meet our program's needs. Second, is programming and staffing. We'll be seeking to expand our contracted early childhood portfolio as well as community programs and our afterschool providers that are under contract with the Department for Youth and Community Development. Programs will follow the Department of Health and Mental Health's guidance, which is based on New York State requirements of 15 children per room. We want to ensure that both staff and children participating are safe and therefore we will provide funding within the programming for PPE. We are framing these remote days, as the Mayor mentioned, as learning labs, partnering with libraries and cultural institutions to provide care and programming. And it will include activities like arts, recreation, tutoring, local field trips, where possible, and, of course, social and emotional supports. And finally, we will have some availability by the start of the school year, we are building it, as a Mayor said, as we're going with capacity increasing on a rolling basis.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Melanie. Thank you to you and your whole team for all the hard work you've put in. And this is going to take a lot of creativity and a lot of effort, but, again, right now, we can say that 100,000 kids will benefit, more than we had before, and that's really important, and we're going to keep building on that all the time. So, a lot to do, but we will be incessant about creating opportunities for families so that those who do choose to have their child go back to school will have all the support possible.

With that, I'm going to turn to our indicators. And again, a good day because of your hard work, everyone. Number one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 – today's report, 65. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals ICUs, threshold 375 – today's report, 332. And, once again, most importantly, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19 – and, again, emphasizing, this is now based on about 40,000 tests a day and growing – so, we're getting the biggest sample we've ever gotten in the history of New York City in this crisis – threshold, 15 percent – today's report, again, two percent, a very good number. A few words in Spanish –

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

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q&A. As a reminder, we're also joined today by OMB Director Melanie Hartzog, and DDC and SCA Commissioner Lorraine Grillo, and also Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. My first question has to do with phase four reopening. You alluded to yesterday being in deliberations with the Governor. It's scheduled to start on Monday, that's four days away. So, what can you tell us about phase four and will it include any indoor spaces, like museums?

Mayor: So, appreciate the question, Andrew. It's so important. The – what I'll tell you is this, we're still working out the final plans with the State. The State is feeling cautious. The City's feeling cautious. We really want to get this right in light of what we're seeing around the country. I want to emphasize – this is the X-factor now – to see so many other states going in the wrong direction is causing us a lot of care and how we approach this decision. So, we'll have more to

say on it as early as later today or tomorrow, but I'll give you what I think makes sense as the basic outline. I think the separation here is between outdoor and indoor. I think the outdoor activities can proceed, do make sense. Of course, we need distancing. Of course, we need face coverings. But when you think about the things that are outdoors that are part of a phase four – obviously, the sports events without audiences, those are already approved. Think about the zoo. Think about the botanical gardens. Think about outdoor film and TV production. The outdoor elements I feel good about and confident about so long as we are clear about the standards and, of course, everything needs oversight and enforcement. The indoor is causing me pause. The indoor should proceed only with tremendous caution and very strict rules. If there's going to be more indoor, it has to be when we are certain it will work and with, you know, really distinct rules about how many people can participate and what precautions. And there can't be a slippery slope there, because, as we've seen, indoor is the challenge and we have to be really tight about it. So, I think there's a substantial elements of phase four that can move ahead. Others, we have to be very careful about and deliberate about. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: My second question is on behalf of my colleague, Melissa Russo. The question is, why have you been silent on the protest on the Brooklyn Bridge yesterday? Specifically, what it appears from the video is that protestors attacked high ranking members of the Police Department. There were police officers injured, and unless we're wrong, you haven't said anything about it yet. Is that acceptable? And what do you have to say about it?

Mayor: I'm saying it now. It's absolutely unacceptable. And I've said that many times, there's no situation in which it's acceptable to attack a police officer, period. I talked to Terry Monahan after I heard that he was there. Thank God, he's okay. No, it's just not acceptable. And here's – what is the reality, anyone who does that will suffer the consequences. So, we've said this now for months. I've said it very clearly, peaceful protest is honored in New York City – always has been. There is no acceptable, violent protest. Any violent protest will be stopped and there'll be consequences for anyone involved. And anyone, anywhere, whether in protest or anything else who assaults a police officer, it's unacceptable and they will suffer the consequences.

Moderator: The next is Courtney Gross from NY1.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I hope you're doing well.

Mayor: How are you?

Question: I'm good, as good as one can be under the circumstances.

Mayor: Amen.

Question: Two questions. The first, on the childcare – I mean, you say you have 100,000 slots, or preparing for a 100,000 slots, will those 100,000 slots be available by the time school starts and how much space do you actually need? And then I have another topic.

Mayor: Sure. Let me – the answer is yes and the goal is to have it all online. Look, we know we're dealing with the great unknown here, Courtney, but the goal is to have everything ready for September. We'll roll in as much as we can and keep going from that goal on. Both Melanie Hartzog and Lorraine Grillo have been doing extraordinary work. Lorraine has, and everyone at

School Construction Authority constantly does miracles in terms of finding space and converting space rapidly. So, this is the dream team. If these two are on the job, I have tremendous confidence it will happen. Melanie, Lorraine, you want to say anything other – anything other about the specifics of what we're doing for September?

President and CEO Lorraine Grillo, School Construction Authority: Sure, happy to. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yep.

President Grillo: Okay. Yes, our teams are on the ground dealing with, as you said earlier, sir, not-for-profits libraries, business communities, business groups, individuals. We are everywhere throughout this city and we will find space. And in addition, while I have you on the – I do want to put out the website to anybody who has existing space. It's www.nycsca.org/realestate/sites. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Courtney?

Question: Yes. The second question is, you know, once again, we don't have anyone from the NYPD on this call today. When was the last time you met in person with the Police Commissioner. And, you know, we haven't seen you two together – excuse me – for quite some time. Are you still confident – I know you've been asked this before, but are you still confident at this moment in his leadership?

Mayor: Yes. Tuesday.

Moderator: The next question is for Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, everyone. Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask you about a video that my colleague Rosie Goldensohn got, it shows a police officer at the end of May, trying to remove a homeless person from the subways [inaudible] for taking up two seats. In the course of removing him, one officer punches a homeless person in the head with these just very aggressive punches. The individual is later pepper sprayed and arrested. I'm wondering if he saw the video and if you could share your thoughts on it. I'm also wondering if you know if the officer in question is still on the streets? And, if you don't know, should he be?

Mayor: Yoav, a very good question. I have not seen the video. I'll make sure I do. Can get you an update on both what has been determined from that incident and what the status of the officer is, but I don't have that in front of me now. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. I wanted to ask something about that ULURP announcement. Vicki Been has said that one of the key criteria for which projects are going to move forward is an emphasis on economic and racial equality. And I'm just wondering if you can say more about that, is that how you're going to prioritize which projects move forward?

Mayor: Look, as always, the City Planning Commission looks at a number of factors and what's best for the future of New York City. I have long believed that City planning should not just look at abstract planning principles, but practical realities that matter to New Yorkers, like affordable

housing and job creation. But yes, of course, everything we're doing in the government right now is about addressing disparity and inequality and using the tools of government in every way possible to help communities that have been, for so long, left out and the bore the brunt of this crisis. So, that will certainly be a factor of what we do, going forward.

Moderator: Next is James Ford from PIX.

Question: Yeah. Hi, good morning.

Mayor: How are you doing?

Question: So far so good, thanks for asking. Initially, I was going to ask about that that video of the police officers with this allegedly homeless person. I heard your answer. Nonetheless, the fact that the video does exist and that people observed this incident – I mean, can you just respond to the fact that it happened at all?

Mayor: James, it's a very fair question, but I want to emphasize the first thing to understand is the whole story. And we don't always get the whole story from a brief video clip. Sometimes we get a lot and what we need to know, other times there's a lot more to it. So, it's never right to comment until there's been an actual investigation. This one, I just don't know the status of the investigation, but I'll make sure we get it to you. We take every incident seriously, as you've seen. Again, I emphasize, the vast majority, our office of our officers do their job properly. Anyone who does not, you have seen the discipline process is speeding up now and the suspensions you saw in the last few weeks are evidence of it. So, we'll get a full review of what happened here. We'll be public about it. If further action is needed, we'll be public about that as well. Go ahead, James.

Question: Just a quick follow-up for my colleague, Nicole Johnson. The March across the Brooklyn Bridge yesterday ended up also being joined by the Sergeants Benevolent Association and Blue Lives Matter. Can you comment about that, noting your history, particularly with the SBA?

Mayor: Look, I don't know everything about the march. My understanding is that was started by community people who are concerned to make sure their community is safe, and I respect that greatly. And that's what I talked about in the opening today, we have to keep communities safe, get community and police work in together and address the need to constantly reform the NYPD. We can do all of that at once. But the SBA has only practice division, they foment hatred, they don't try and help us move forward. I have been fighting with them for years and they have been fighting with our police leadership for years. They attacked Jimmy O'Neill viciously. They've attacked Dermot Shea. They don't try to create anything good. They only try and tear down, which is why I have no respect for the leadership of the SBA.

Question: The next is Jake Offenhartz from Gothamist.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Can I ask about the 1,300 New Yorkers who are still facing criminal charges for violating the curfew, which you later rescinded. Many of them were physically detained by the police and had their freedom taken away for hours. Should these

people still continue to face criminal summons for violating the curfew? Should the DA's toss the charges? And what do you think is fair here?

Mayor: I think it depends on the offense, respectfully. A lot of times it's not just one thing. And I don't want to tell the DA's how to do their job, and I can tell you it's case by case. So, it really is up to them to evaluate each one.

Question: In the case of people being arrested for violating the curfew, specifically. You know, we watched this happen over and over again – people were out at 8:30 or 9:30, they were arrested and charged with specifically violating your curfew. Should those cases –

Mayor: I just don't – I respect you and I respect your reporting, but I don't agree with the frame of the question. It's just too simplistic to say that's the whole story. So, we had the curfew for a purpose, because we saw too much violence of different kinds and we had to end the violence and we did end the violence. And now, adjudicating what should have in each case depends on the specifics of the case. That's just all there is to it.

Moderator: The next is Abu from BanglaPatrika.

Question: Hello. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Abu. How are you?

Question: Good, thank you so much. I have a quick question. Number one, you know, it's been a long time – the New York City Department of Finance parking [inaudible] or parking [inaudible] we have a lot of tickets. They are not even some – some people they're not even able to pay. What is your solution to them?

Mayor: It's a good question, Abu. And I don't know enough about what's happening right now with parking violations. So, we'll get you an answer later today. Look, obviously, a lot of agencies had to change what they were doing or restrict what they were doing because of the coronavirus. We're trying to bring back as many functions as much as possible while making sure we're fair to folks in the meantime who might've been affected. So, we'll get you an update on that. I don't know the specifics. Go ahead.

Question: And then there's a guy who was born in Bangladesh, killed the day before yesterday brutally in Manhattan [inaudible]. Do you have any update of this? You know, who is the killer or what is the update of the case?

Mayor: Yeah. Abu, again, I apologize, I do not. It's obviously a horrible tragedy when we lose someone and my condolences to your community. I don't have an update, but we'll get you one in the next few hours for sure.

Moderator: We have time for two more today. The next is Steve Burns from WCBS 880.

Question: Thanks. Good to be with you, Mr. Mayor. Wanted to first ask about daycare, the announcement here it seems like you're hoping to have most of the capacity available when it's needed by September, but not sure about it yet. So, I wanted to see if there are any plans – what

the plans are for a selection process, application process, who may get first dibs – just how that's all going to be decided.

Mayor: Yeah, great question, Steve. I'll start, and then Melanie and Lorraine can add. Look, we are creating this rapidly. It was very important to get a sense of how many parents wanted their kids back, and until we had that, we didn't have enough information to really test demand. We got that information in the last couple of weeks. We now realize there's huge demand. We're building capacity rapidly. It is amazing the creativity you're seeing with the leadership of Melanie Hartzog and Lorraine Grillo, the number of locations they're finding, the way they're thinking about quickly converting those and having those ready. So, I have a lot of faith in our ability to hit that 100,000 mark and then keep going. As to applications, et cetera, that's some stuff we still have to work through, but, again, Lorraine or Melanie, you want to speak to that when we're going to have the next steps in the process?

Director Hartzog: Sure, I can start, and Lorraine can jump in. Just in terms of how we'll actually stand up the capacity through community-based organizations, our goal is, as I mentioned leveraging our existing contracted providers, and so we're, there is outreach happening as we speak today to each of these kind of base organizations asking them if they have additional capacity and if they do, we will amend their contracts quickly to be able to provide that additional capacity, if need be get licensed quickly with our partners at Department of Health and do any outfitting of the space that's necessary, thanks to the leadership of Lorraine. And Lorraine, if you'd like to add a little bit more to that.

Commissioner Grillo: Thank you, Mel. Actually, you've really said it all. We are we all working throughout the city. There is no one specific place we're concentrating on. We're concentrating in all five boroughs. So hopefully we will be able to find adequate space in every single borough.

Mayor: Right, so Steve really broad-based approach, and we want to keep building that capacity. Again, Lorraine's point about – we need anyone who has space that might work for childcare to let us know of their willingness to work with us or Lorraine, what is that email or website they can go to?

Commissioner Grillo: Yes, sir. Can you hear me?

Moderator: Yes.

Commissioner Grillo: Hello?

Mayor: Yes.

Commissioner Grillo: It is: www.nycsca.org/realestate/sites.

Mayor: There you go. So please, to our colleagues in the media, if you could spread that around, because we want to make sure that everyone who wants to help us build up this childcare capacity gets involved quickly, and I think there's a lot of people who have sites, who have property who actually would like the opportunity to do good for the city and obviously bring in some revenue at the same time. Did you have a follow-up, Steve?

Question: Yeah, just real quick. On a second topic, the MTA has said it may run out of emergency funding by the end of the month. I know its funding isn't necessarily your jurisdiction, but is the city working on any contingency plans should the MTA need to institute some cuts? And they said those cuts could be massive on a scale we haven't seen before. Is there anything the city has in mind to mitigate that should it happen?

Mayor: It's a great question, Steve. It is not our jurisdiction. You're right, but we care deeply. I care deeply about what happens with the MTA. It affects all 8.6 million people I represent. This has to be solved with federal stimulus money. There is the hope and prayer to that will happen in the next few weeks. I'm still far from certain about that, but that's the only solution that will really, really work. I've been fighting for it. I am having conversations with federal officials today to try and continue to push the stimulus effort. But I have confidence. The state will do everything it can to come up with the best possible alternatives if the MTA gets into that kind of trouble, but we don't have those resources at this point. So, this is about both the state doing all it can to be creative under the circumstances and us fighting like everything. We got to get something done in Washington for the help we deserve and need.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: How are you guys doing today? I really appreciate you taking the call.

Mayor: Hey Gersh, how are you?

Question: I'm good. Two quick questions, Mr. Mayor. First, today, Bike New York demanded major reforms of the NYPD saying that that department "has not been on board with efforts by the DOT and other parts of city government to make New York City safe and welcoming for bike riding." Now, their list of recommendations include getting the NYPD out of traffic enforcement, getting officers out of their squad cars so they can interact with their communities, and also getting cops out of bike and bus lanes. Do you have a comment on the group's assertion that the NYPD is failing to be a good Vision Zero partner?

Mayor: Oh, I disagree – Gersh, you already know my answer. I have said from day one, from the moment Bill Bratton made a speech about Vision Zero. I think even before he became our first Police Commissioner in this administration, that NYPD has been essential to Vision Zero. They believe in it. They've put a huge amount of energy into it. We all have to do better. If you say, is there more to do? Yeah, but I don't doubt for a moment the commitment of the NYPD and I just see these things differently than some of the advocates do. Traffic enforcement, I think does belong in the NYPD. Yeah, there's no question we can do better at continuing to clear bike lanes. I want us to do that. We've talked before about needing to be conscientious about getting police vehicles out of bike lanes, unless it's an emergency, we got more to do on that. There's no question there's things to do better, but if the question is commitment and understanding that Vision Zero is crucial to saving lives, I know it's absolutely there. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. My second question is actually also related to the cops. Earlier today in this press conference, you spoke about the unacceptable behavior of a small number of protesters who have allegedly violent conduct towards cops, but as you know, yesterday, you had the New York Times put out a story with scores of video, some of them not seen by the public before

showing egregious police misconduct against protesters, the kind of behavior you have said before is isolated, but the Times reports suggests that they are not, and I don't think you've commented on the Times' investigation. So, could you do that?

Mayor: Yeah. We're going to review that very carefully. I don't know the exact reality of how many of those videos have been seen before or not, either by the public or by the NYPD, but there's anything that has not been seen before it will be evaluated immediately. We intend there to be a fast, clear disciplinary process, but it's also an objective process that figures out where discipline is needed and where in other cases it may not be. So, look, I don't accept any situation where a police officer does not follow the rules of their profession. We need our police officers to be constantly aware of a high standard that they are held to and to stick to it. I truly believe the vast majority do. But for those who do not, there has to be a clear process investigation and follow through in terms of discipline. I've said that a lot of times, and we've shown it again. No one's ever happy when a police officer has to be suspended, but Commissioner Shea has made very clear that when he sees evidence, he's going to act and act resolutely and he's actually done it faster than I've seen any other Police Commissioner do it, and we're going to keep increasing and improving the speed of that process.

Okay. Everybody, as we conclude, look, that's why I make a point about the big announcement today in terms of childcare, because it's a big announcement because of the big impact it means for the people of this city, for the lives of everyday people, and I keep bringing things back to the lives of people in every neighborhood, the city, the people I serve, the people whose lives I've really gotten to know, and I know this is the kind of thing that truly matters. Parents who have been struggling for months to somehow find a way to keep their livelihood while educating their children, or God forbid, they've lost their livelihoods, still trying to do the best they can by their children, but worried to death about how they're going to pay the bills. Ah, we've got to do better. We altogether fought back this disease in an extraordinary manner. We got to keep doing that, but we got to give more ability to parents who need to get back to work that capacity, and the childcare will make all the difference in the world, and here's where the can-do spirit of the city comes in. In the last few weeks, as I said, it became clear, a surprising number of parents wanted their kids back in school and we needed to do something about it. This team here at City Hall immediately said, we will do it. We can do it. You heard from Melanie Hartzog and Lorraine Grillo, they and their teams have had an extraordinary spirit, no sense that there is a barrier, just the ability to get things done. This is a classic New York City attitude. We will make things happen no matter what. So, we're telling you today, this day in July, that there'll be childcare for 100,000 kids, and we aim to go farther. That families will get that childcare regardless of ability to pay, and that we will make sure that every parent who needs help, that we're going to constantly look for every option to help them, because in New York City, we don't stop. We keep creating, we keep fighting back this crisis. Thank you everybody.

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