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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. We've got a lot to talk about today, but before we get into some important updates, I want to talk about a great New Yorker who we lost over the weekend and someone that for a lot of us was a real inspiration – First Lady Joyce Dinkins, who, if you knew her, you knew was an extraordinarily gracious and strong woman who gave her all for this city. A proud daughter of Harlem who cared so deeply for that community and its great history and culture, but she loved all of New York City. She particularly loved the of children in New York City. And, as First Lady, she focused so much of her energy on improving literacy among children. And that was truly a labor of love for her. I had the honor, as did Chirlane, of knowing Joyce Dinkins, and really appreciating the extraordinary grace that attended to everything she did. And I'll tell you, it wasn't always easy. She and Mayor Dinkins took more than their fair share of criticism and attack, but they kept going through everything. And she was, in so many ways, a strong presence that just kept everyone focused on the reasons that we all do this work and why it's important to persevere. And I can safely say, as someone who was proudly a member of the Dinkins administration, along with Chirlane, that we all knew in the administration there wouldn't have been a Dinkins administration without Joyce Dinkins, without all that she contributed. And that was a moment in history where a lot of things changed. A lot of things needed to change and New York City needed to be represented in full. And that was a crucial moment and she was one of the true contributors to all that was made possible at that time. So, we miss you Joyce, and we thank you, and this city mourns you. And to the entire Dinkins family – I spoke to Mayor Dinkins last night and he talked about his bride – he always referred to her as his bride and that she was gone now. And I know how close that bond was. So, to Mayor Dinkins and the whole family, our condolences on behalf of all the people of this city – our condolences and we stand with you. And Joyce Dinkins, rest in peace.

With that – look, we are coming off of a long weekend and it's a time that we reset and we prepare for a lot ahead. I hope everyone got a chance to get a little bit of rest and relaxation this long weekend. I can tell you, our City workers, our City agencies were hard at work this weekend as they have been throughout, protecting all of us, making sure that every effort is being expended to fight back the coronavirus. And there's been so much that's been done in recent days, the outreach efforts, the testing efforts, the enforcement, so much to make sure that we overcome the challenges we're facing now. And I'll go over a few facts with you, but I do want to let you know, there's some really encouraging news when it comes to the testing that's been done in our schools. That's a bright spot I'll talk about in a moment. But first, let's talk about the place where we're having the biggest challenge, which, of course, is in the red zone areas in Brooklyn and Queens. We're now on day-four of the pause in those areas and we are seeing some results. We've got certainly a lot of work ahead, but we are seeing some leveling off,

beginning in the communities that have been most affected. And it's really about everyone in the community participating, it's about everyone understanding that it's all of our business to fight back this disease together and that individual buy-in and participation is the single most important tool – we've learned that long ago about the coronavirus. When people decide to make a difference, it counts for so much. So, this week will be absolutely decisive. I just want everyone to understand, this is a decisive week in our battle against the coronavirus. This is the week where we can start to turn the tide in those red zone areas and contain the problem that we're seeing there. I fundamentally believe this challenge can be contained. I fundamentally believe that we can stop this problem we're seeing in Brooklyn and Queens before it grows, that we can stop it from turning into a larger second wave in New York City. There is absolutely still time to do that, but it's going to take everyone's participation. So, all those efforts we're talking about – the outreach, the education, the testing, the enforcement, that's all going to be going full bore this week. And we're continuing to work with community leaders to encourage maximum public participation – all of this effort to turn back this disease.

Now, in terms of enforcement, very robust efforts have begun and they will deepen. Over the weekend, we had over \$150,000 in fines through providing of over a hundred summonses by City agents in the red, orange and yellow zones. So, that enforcement effort will continue. But again, what we really want to emphasize is the positive – getting tested. This is the single most important part of the equation. We need folks to get tested. We are seeing an uptake in community testing. We want to encourage everyone to get tested this week. If you have not been tested recently, particularly in the red zone, orange zone and yellow zone areas, go get tested. There's lots of testing locations available. It will make a huge difference to everyone. Now, we know, as these restrictions are put in place, we know that obviously – a burden for everyone in the community. We want this to be a very brief period of time, only a matter of weeks. And many folks are feeling the effect, but particularly our small business owners. We really feel for them. And this was a tough part of the decision, obviously – I feel a lot for the small business owners who have fought through this crisis – seven long months, now into eight. And they've gone through so much, we need to help them in every way we can. At the same time, first and foremost, we have to protect everyone from this disease. So, there's a lot of questions among small business owners. How do they navigate this particular moment? And we've launched an online tool to help business owners get answers and all individuals in these zones get answers. The tool is online nyc.gov/covidzone. You can get answers there about what rules apply, where, what information you need and how you can get other answers that you need. And to give you a sense of the effort to reach out, to educate, to support small businesses, I'd like you to hear from our Small Business Services Commissioner. He is leading the way, helping small businesses through this crisis with his very dedicated team. So, let's turn now to Commissioner Jonnel Doris.

Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Small Business Services: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. As you mentioned, from the beginning of this pandemic, we've been there on the front lines with our small business owners and the communities that they serve. They are the backbone of our city, employ the most employees in the city. And, certainly, we want to make sure that small businesses come back so our city again continues the resurgence out of this crisis. Here at Small Business Services, we have been into neighborhoods. We've been speaking to our businesses, but also we've recorded a message sent it out to over 200,000 individuals and small businesses. We sent

out email communication and other types of communication to all small businesses in the red zones, the orange, and also a yellow – all the zones, to make sure that they are aware of the services that we can provide. We also met with business leaders, business improvement district leaders, merchants associations – again, trying to make sure that they have the necessary information that they need to get out of this situation and also to do it in a way that is aligned with our health experts. We've worked with the Department of Health and also the Office of Nightlife to, again, connect those businesses, who've asked for it, and for the support to connect them to the City services. We're conducting webinars in Spanish, Cantonese, English this week, again to inform our small businesses of all of the requirements, restrictions, and also the resources that we have here at SBS. We have spoken to small businesses concerning access to capital at this time, as many of them may need an infusion of cash to help and assist them. We've done that through our hotline and also to help them to navigate the lease challenges that they may have with landlord through our CLA program. Look, you are our highest priority here in the city. We want to make that you come back to our neighborhoods, continue to thrive, and we give you all the necessary information that you need.

So, before I end, I do want to say that – you know, it's important and imperative that you, as a small business owner, if you need assistance, that you do reach out to us. I was out in the Rockaways this past weekend, speaking to small business owners who've been impacted in the red zone and to hear that from them and the concerns that they have. We'll be out in Sunset Park and other places around the city where they've been impacted. But we want you to also know that you can reach us. You can reach us at nyc.gov/business, and you can also reach us at our hotline 888-SBS-4NYC. We've already had over 47,000 calls to that hotline. We will continue to monitor it, but we want to make sure that you understand that the New York City Small Business Services is here for you. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Commissioner – 888-SBS-4NYC. I want to repeat that number because it's so crucial to any small business owner. Look, if you're having challenges, and there are many obviously, right now, but, as the Commissioner said, there's lots of solutions as well. There's lots of help that Small Business Services can provide it. And you mentioned the issue with leases – they've had some real success working with small businesses to renegotiate leases with landlords, to account for the challenges of this moment. So, any small business owner out there, if you're having a problem, you don't know where to turn, turn to the Department of Small Business Services, no matter what the issue is, they will try with every tool they have to help you through this crisis.

Now, let's talk about testing again. I mentioned at the beginning that we have seen some real good news in terms of testing in schools. And this has been a very positive reality from the beginning of our experience, bringing back our public schools. Look our educators, our staff, our parents, our students, everyone should be very proud of themselves, everyone at the Department of Education, because we brought back the nation's largest school system – was not easy, but we've done it. And one of the things that's been crucial is having lots of testing available. The testing we're doing, the careful work that's being done through our situation room to watch what's happening in every one of our schools. This has made a huge difference. Now, we've started our monthly sampling in every one of our schools, and this has just begun, it's going to

grow, but we're seeing a very encouraging results and results that are consistent with what we've seen with the detailed testing efforts outside of schools. In even the hardest hit areas, we've seen very good results. We've seen good results through our situation room, but now we have a new measure, which is the beginning of this mandatory testing in every school. And this started Friday, and the first results are very encouraging. Testing took place in 56 schools, 1,751 adults and students tested, and we got only one positive test among almost those 2,000. So, that's really, really encouraging. And it says how important it is to constantly keep a lookout and constantly focused on testing. And so, in that vein – I want remind all parents, please sign and submit your testing consent for your child. Remember, the testing is quick, it's easy, it's free. It's available right there at the school or near the school. The results will be sent home to you so you'll know any time your child has been tested, what the results are. But it's good for everyone as well to keep this testing program going forward. So, families can either sign that form – paper form, or go online at mystudent.nyc.gov, your own account and sign that consent. And, obviously, we need all the adults to sign consents as well. Teachers and staff can go on to sign their consents on the DOE website at healthscreening.schools.nyc.gov. So, look, this has, from the very beginning, been the key issue, getting enough people tested and constantly acting on results. Good start in our schools – let's keep going. Let's go deeper. Everyone, please sign up right away.

Now, in terms of the concerns that families have, public school families have a lot of questions – good, important questions. We've been trying to answer them along the way. We want to give other opportunities for parents to get answers to their questions. So, tonight, from 6:30 to 7:30, a special event called NYC Office Hours. Just like your doctor has time you can go to the doctor's office, we'll do it virtually here, NYC Office Hours, with Dr. Jay Varma, who has a lot to offer in terms of information and insight. He'll be answering questions online and it can come from, obviously, parents, but also students as well about all the measures being taken to keep people safe and the concerns that people have. You can watch it on the Mayor's Office YouTube channel, Facebook, Twitter. You can submit your questions with the hashtag – #NYCofficehours. Get those questions in and Dr. Varma will give you answers.

Now, let's turn to a topic we have come back to many times the last few months, and one that is crucial for all of us, for the present and for the future of New York City – that is the census. So, very, very important to recognize that the census continues. There was an effort by the Trump administration to cut the census short by a month. That was overturned first in federal district court, then in circuit court. The ninth circuit court upheld the federal judge's decision that the Census Bureau should continue the census to October 31st. So, that's what we're working on right now, that assumption. Now, we know there may be an appeal by the Trump administration to the Supreme Court. But, in the meantime, we have the opportunity to keep going and we want to keep going. Right now, we have a 61.4 percent of all New Yorkers have self-responded. That's a very important number, because that means we keep coming up. We keep improving and we need to improve. I want to keep reminding everyone how important it is to act now. If you have not signed up for the census, act now. If someone in your family hasn't, let them know how important it is. And all you need to go do is go to my2020.census.gov, my2020.census.gov. Now, the census team has done an amazing job. Remember, the number I just went over with you, they've reached that level of response in the middle of a pandemic with all of those challenges. And I want to really thank the director, Julie Menin, and her whole team for the amazing outreach effort – and it continues. And they continue to create some good positive

competition by having battles between different neighborhoods and boroughs to see who can have the highest response rate. So, here to give you an update on the Battle of the Boroughs, and am update on what we need to do next on the census, our Census Director Julie Menin.

Director Julie Menin, NYC Census: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And I'm thrilled to be here today to announce the winner of the Battle of the Boroughs. So, we launched a competition two weeks ago to see which borough could boost its self-response rate the most. And I'm thrilled to announce, it's Brooklyn. So, Brooklyn won – over 10,700 households in Brooklyn completed the census. And since Brooklyn is the winner, all the participants that participated in Brooklyn in the contest are eligible to receive a \$200 gift certificate at their favorite local restaurant in Brooklyn. I really want to thank the United Way and the Hospitality Alliance for supporting this great contest. We wanted to support small businesses of course, during this critical time. And so that's a great way for us to do so. So as the Mayor said, we are literally days away from the end of the census. Right now, we don't know what will happen in terms of the Supreme Court and whether or not they will intervene to cut it short even more. So, we have to act as if every day is our last day to complete the census. We are at 61.4 percent, as the Mayor said, we are five points away from the national average. To put that into context in 2010, we were 14 points behind the national average. So, we've really cut the differential between the city's response rate and the nation significantly. And in a national competition, that's very important. We are also, I want to say, ahead of LA, Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, Miami, Atlanta, Dallas, just to name a few cities. So that's great for New York City, but we need to go even further. We need every New Yorker that has not completed the census to take the 10 minutes to answer these 10 questions that will affect the next 10 years of our city's future. You go to my2020census.gov. We are fighting for our fair share of \$1.5 trillion - funding for our public schools, public housing, senior centers, Medicaid, health care so much more. So please just take the 10 minutes it takes. And if you've already filled it out, please let your friends, neighbors and colleagues know. We can do this. And we are really hitting some great numbers in New York City. And we want to finish as strong as we can. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: You so much, Julie. And look everyone, first of all, to our colleagues in the media, please, if you have not reported on the census recently, please do. As Julie said, we don't know at any moment, we may find that the deadline is reimposed by the Supreme Court. So, we have a chance now to keep getting this city counted. We need people to feel that urgency. So, I want to ask everyone in the media to spread that message. It's really important as a matter of civic involvement for everyone to know how their personal participation matters. And the point that Julie made about the comparison to the rest of the country. That's not just bragging rights. That's about actual dollars in a sense. How we compare to the rest of the country, determines how much money we get, how much representation we get, it's all proportional. So if New York City continues to close that gap with the rest of the country, we maximize our opportunity to get our fair share of resources. So, everyone, please, this is a pivotal moment. We need everyone involved right away.

Okay, let me go over today's indicators for the whole city. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, that threshold is 200 patients and today's report is 59 patients with a confirmed positivity rate for COVID-19 of 24.5 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold is 550 cases. Today's report

is 520 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide who are positive for COVID-19, threshold is five percent, today's report 1.9 percent. And today's seven day rolling average indicator is 1.48 percent. And again, a reminder, everyone, please get tested. It is a really crucial moment. We need everyone in the city who has not been tested to get tested. Anyone hasn't gotten tested recently, get tested. This is so important that we see exactly what's happening in the city. So please make it a point today. It's Get Tested Tuesday. It's a good day to get tested.

Now, 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: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, by Commissioner Doris, Census Director Julie Menin, Sheriff Joe Fucito, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today, it goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: Perfect timing. A plane is going overhead, but we'll be able to ask that question momentarily.

Mayor: You sound good Andrew. We can hear you pretty well.

Question: Yeah. Mayor, I wanted to ask you said that this is a critical week in terms of the red zones and the new pause. Do you believe that you'll know that we'll know by the end of this week, if that two week minimum closure that you indicated is achievable?

Mayor: Yeah, Andrew, I think by the end of the week, we're going to have a very good idea of what's going on. If people do what we're all capable of doing, go out get tested where the mask, follow social distancing, by the end of this week, I think we're going to have a clear sense of whether this is working and whether we're in range to relax these restrictions after about two weeks. Obviously, it's a decision we'll make with the State. But that is definitely a possibility if everyone does what they need to do this week. Go ahead

Question: Question, you did indicate that there's been a leveling off. What's the statistical basis for that? What are you seeing? Is there a reduction in any of the neighborhoods, whether it's Forest Hills, Borough Park, where's the leveling off taking place?

Mayor: Yeah, so first of all, you're seeing it in the citywide indicators and you're seeing it also in the indicators as I've reviewed them with our Health team. And we've continued to review by our original construct with zip codes, just for consistency, with what we saw earlier. We're just seeing areas that were going up not going up anymore. It's not across the board. It's not perfect. We have a lot of work to do. But we're seeing a leveling off in the sense of not consistent increases and different results for different areas that encourage us because we see some starting to come down a bit.

Moderator: The next is Narmeen from PIX.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mayor.

Mayor: Good, how are you doing?

Question: I'm doing well. I'm wanting to first touch on those small businesses. I know you said there's all this help available through this hotline and I'm sure they're very thankful for that. But are there specific conversations about direct financial assistance coming from the City to help these small businesses? I know many have brought that up to us when we've been talking to them.

Mayor: No, I understand how needy they are after everything they've been through. Again, it goes back to our overall situation as a city. We're obviously in a very, very tough situation with our City budget. What we need, which would help everyone is a federal stimulus. As you've watched, those talks are on again off again. It's hard to believe there'll be one before the election. But my hope and prayer is that there will be one early in the new year. And that's where there should not only be aid to cities and states, there should be direct aid to small businesses. A much clearer and better aid program to put small businesses back on their feet so we can all move forward together. That's the best solution by far. But in the meantime, what the City is trying to do is use all the other tools at our disposal, whether it's helping small businesses renegotiate their leases or helping them tap into whatever funding streams are available out there or loan programs or anything that would help them to keep going. That's what Small Business Services is here for. Go ahead.

Question: Also wanted to ask you, you mentioned last week of other areas that were creeping up in concern for you. Does the Governor's map, color-coded map cover those areas of concern for you? I don't know if this is for you or the other Health officials on the call as well. Or are there ones that you believe might get the numbers, maybe the map get expanded to rather?

Mayor: We are watching that situation very carefully and we're going to analyze the data today and update people tomorrow based on it. The important thing to recognize here is that as we apply measures, it obviously has an impact. And we saw it before, you know, back in the end of the summer in places like Sunset Park, Soundview in the Bronx, Southeast Queens. We saw that when you go in with a lot of testing, a lot of outreach, it makes a real difference. I believe that same model ultimately is what wins the day here in addition to needing a lot of engagement of community leaders and institutions. And obviously in this case, the use of restrictions. So I'm very hopeful that we can turn the tide, but we're going to watch all the surrounding areas. And if we see any area of concern, we're going to talk about it publicly and obviously engage the State on it as well.

Moderator: The next is Sean Lee from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hi Mayor. Good morning. Hi. We've been hearing anecdotally from parents that the kind of back to school has been quite messy, including some that say they've been showing up to schools and there's been broken thermometers. You know, they haven't been able to actually take

temperatures of kids correctly. How has the City been dealing with, in addition to testing you know, concerns that from parents?

Mayor: Yeah look, in the lead up to schools opening, we heard real concerns about making sure there were enough thermometers in place and they were all functioning. We sent a lot more supply out to schools. We've really been focusing on those wall mounted thermometers when the kids come right in the door and the thermometer is right there for them to use, and no one even has to touch it. Those have been real successful. In the beginning, right before school opened, there were real concerns. I'm not hearing those so much now, honestly. I think we were able to address that overwhelmingly, but any school that's having a problem should let our situation room know and they'll make sure to get the supplies out they need. I think overwhelmingly what I've heard from parents in school communities is that people have now gotten into the habit of either filling out those health screening forms, which is really the best thing to do every morning, either online or on paper. Or the kids knowing if they don't have that form, they go straight to the thermometer when they come in the door. So I think that's been working well. I really want to give a special shout out to our School Safety agents who have really stepped up and play a crucial role when kids are coming in the door. Making sure every child has gotten their temperature checked. That's been a really helpful contribution to this effort. So thank you to all of our friends at School Safety for helping out in such a big way. Go ahead.

Moderator: Sean, do you have a second question? I think we're having some technical issues with Sean, that we can get back. The next thing – Sean, do we have you?

Question: Yeah. Sorry. no, I'm good.

Mayor: You are good? Okay. Thank you.

Moderator: The next is Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hey. Good morning everyone. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. My question involved early voting because it begins October 24th where you can go to the polls to cast your ballot. So if this shut down in the hot zones continues past the two week periods, will people be able to go to their polling places?

Mayor: Well, Juliet you, once again, you have a great question for asking the important and practical question. And that's a very good question. This is something we're going to have to sort out. We obviously have a new situation here trying to make sure there is not a resurgence. So that's something that we will talk through with our Health officials and with the Board of Elections to figure out the best way to approach it. Obviously thankfully people have more than one opportunity. They can vote by mail if that's their preference. So, we know that's a fallback and early voting is available, but then of course there's voting on Election Day itself. So, there's more than one way for people to address this depending on what we see.

Question: Okay, great. Because people have been asking us about that. So, you know, when we get that answer, that would be great. My second question involved this current pause period. When you're satisfied that the numbers are down, are you concerned that behaviors will relax and

that mask wearing will stop, large gatherings will resume? You know, people will have this whole sense that oh everything is fine, and we can just go back to our old behaviors?

Mayor: Yeah, absolutely. Juliet. I'm very concerned about that. And look, my hope and prayer here is that now that we've all been truly given an example of the dangers of letting this disease reassert, that everyone will be devoted to keeping it at bay. You've seen what's happened, unfortunately in Europe, you've seen what's happened in other parts of the United States where folks relaxed a lot and governments relaxed and unfortunately the disease reasserted, and you've got a full blown second wave. We cannot let that happen here. So I think the answer is, you know, when we get out of this immediate problem to keep intense education efforts, outreach efforts, free mask distribution, testing efforts and keep making very clear to people that there will be enforcement, particularly in terms of large gatherings. That's something we're going to have to do throughout.

Moderator: The next is Julia from the Post.

Question: How are you doing?

Mayor: Hey, Julia.

Question: So, speaking of a different kind of testing in our public schools, a lot of parents feel like there's a total lack of information from the DOE so far this year. There's still no grading policy, no attendance information, no dates for State tests for middle school or high school tests, and no decision on screened school admissions. When can parents expect some basic answers on fundamental school issues now that we're weeks into the school year?

Mayor: Yeah. Julia, fair question. I think the bottom line here is the first thing we had to do was get the nation's largest public school system up and running in a healthy, safe manner and work through very intensive logistics to make that work. We've obviously been dealing with the specific challenges lately in these zones, but now more and more attention is going to be turned to the very questions that you're raising. I think parents, again, understand we're in uncharted territory for this school year, hopefully only this school year, but we will get answers out to parents in the coming days and weeks on all those topics. And we'll make clear to them how to proceed, even though we're dealing with very, very unusual circumstances.

Question: And then also on schools, do you have a breakdown of the student to staff ratio for testing that you just gave? And we've been trying to get out of the DOE for about a week now, the response rate on consent forms. Is that something that you either have or can get us?

Mayor: I don't have either of those at my fingertips, we'll get that information as it comes in. Obviously, we want people to understand what's happening, but I'd say, understand that all of this is new. We all understand, we're trying to do things that have never been done before. We expect, in any situation like this, with every passing day, more and more people get information, they get their questions answered, and you see the level of engagement going higher and higher. So, this is all nascent. I think we're going to have a much better sense of how this is working over the next few weeks as we're able to really engage parents more deeply. Our parent

coordinators, lots of other school personnel are reaching out to parents individually. So, we'll have information, but I think it won't give us a clear picture for the next few weeks.

Moderator: The next is Yehudit from Boro Park 24 News.

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

Mayor: Good, how are you?

Question: Good. Thank God. Okay. So [inaudible] understand that preventing large gatherings is the key to breaking up the hot zone clusters, but I'm wondering what is your response as Mayor of New York City to what happened last Tuesday when Governor Cuomo first spoke to Jewish leaders and seemed to want to work with them and said that he would limit the houses of worship in the red zones to 50 percent capacity, but then a few hours later in a press conference, he kind of shocked the same Jewish leaders by sharply changing what he had said and dropped the maximum capacity to 25 percent maximum or 10 people. And so, I know you had nothing to do with this announcement, but I was just wondering as Mayor of the city and a former city Councilman for Borough Park, what is your response to the feeling of the Jewish leaders who feel kind of stabbed in the back by the surprise drastic reduction in the maximum capacity of synagogues right before our last days of our fall holidays.

Mayor: Look, I understand the concerns that community leaders have. And I understand why people are really trying to grapple with a really tough situation here. And you're right, I did represent the community and have worked very closely with the community and understand why there's so much concern. That said, look, I put forward a vision of how we could address this situation. The State – I do respect the fact the State gets to make the ultimate decisions here in this time of emergency. And we're going to work with the State's rules in a constructive way, while always talking to community leaders and working with them to try and make it work together. It's in everyone's interest to address this problem as quickly as possible so we can take these restrictions off and get life going in a more positive direction. So, I understand the concerns, but ultimately, I think we can all overcome this challenge together.

Question: Thank you. And then also I was – you know, obviously, compliance was an issue and we're all trying to get the numbers down. But yesterday Borough Park residents felt a bit [inaudible] by people from a wide variety of different agencies, giving out sometimes contradictory citations to what Governor Cuomo had said. There were – people reported seeing people from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Housing, the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Buildings, and even the Sanitation police were giving out citations. And sometimes they were giving out citations for offenses that Governor Cuomo did not sign in his executive order. For instance, that essential businesses must check customer's temperatures before admitting them into the stores. And so, we were just wondering is this bombardment of several agencies giving out mass citations kind of seemingly indiscriminately going to continue, or what is your response to that?

Mayor: I appreciate the question and what would really be helpful if you can follow up with our team here at City Hall any specific instances so we can trace them back and make sure we

understand exactly what happened and any modification that's needed. Look, I've said this for days now – I mean, remember it was two weeks ago that we said even more that we said that, you know, there was a real danger growing from the numbers, from the data that we were seeing and warning the community there was a problem, and engaging community leaders. And then it got to the point where that danger manifested, and we had to call for the restrictions which the State ultimately did. So, there's really been an effort for weeks and weeks now to engage the community and overcome this problem. I did say there'd be a lot of different City agencies out because we do need a lot of enforcement. We do need a lot of outreach and education, so you will see a variety of agencies out, but I take your question to heart. The agencies all need to be working from the same set of rules. And if there's ever any example where that didn't happen, then we have to address that.

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

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask you about the ZIP codes that were kind of areas of concern when you first identified all those neighborhoods by ZIP code. There were about 12 or so. I might've missed it earlier in the presentation, but I guess I'm wondering how those are doing, but particularly is the City and State going to get on the same page before any restrictions are imposed in those ZIP codes to decide, is this going to be done by cluster map or by ZIP code? Like, are you translating that before any restrictions are made?

Mayor: Yoav, absolutely. Look, we felt that ZIP code was a clearer, more accessible way of judging things. But, again, in this emergency, the State gets to make the ultimate decision and they felt that the color-coded zones were more effective and we're working with that. So, whatever we see – we've kept paying attention to the ZIP code data because it gives us consistency with what we had weeks ago. And we're looking at those overall trends, but whatever emerges, one, of course, we're going to work with the State's system for restrictions, and, two, any new decisions would have to be made with the State, unquestionably. Go ahead.

Question: And also, just on the daily indicators, the reported COVID-19 cases, the seven-day average, it looks like on a day when you didn't have your press conference on October 9th it was very close to the line. I mean, essentially it looks like the city is poised to hit that line of 520 that you said. I'm just wondering, does that trigger anything automatic or what is the significance of crossing that line?

Mayor: It's 550, is that number. The indicators are meant to give us a public measure that we all talk about openly, helping the people of the city to see where things are going so we all understand what to do in response. And I really want to thank our health care team and everyone who has focused – all of our folks who work to get out information and work with you in the media, the whole team at City Hall, because this has been what I really think should have been the model for the whole country, constantly putting out facts, putting out the data, letting people see for themselves and letting people know what they have to do in response to that data. Now, here we have three indicators we go over every day. And what you've seen is a little difference among the indicators, Yoav, the case numbers have gone up the most, but that's because, of course, very much intensified testing. I talked about a week before last, we had our highest

testing week ever, 250,000 tests. That's, of course, going to increase your case number by definition.

But what's interesting is the hospitalization numbers have been surprisingly stable. We're still keeping a close eye on that. And then the most important one, the positivity rate, we have seen some real concern, but also over the last week or so, we've not seen a major increase in the city positivity on the seven-day average, which is what matters the most. And that's a good sign. A lot of work to do. But I think the bottom line here is to see the three indicators in unison. If we saw something with all three of them, that really suggests a bigger challenge we have to address. In this case, what we're seeing is a challenge that we can address on a more localized manner. That's why I called for these restrictions. I think they are working. We've got a long way to go, but they're working. So, we used indicators citywide to tell us what's going on citywide. But the local indicators told us we needed immediate forceful action. And since we've applied that action, we're seeing a positive impact and some leveling off on the citywide level. And that's what we have to keep doing.

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

Question: Yeah, I enjoy being the Neil Diamond of the press conference. So, that's exciting. So, Mr. Mayor, two questions today – first one members of the press are increasingly frustrated that NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea has not been on this call since June 2nd, which is more than four months ago. Do you think he should be available to reporters more so we could ask about, for example, police response to COVID-related violence in Borough Park or the agency's failure to arrest drivers who kill and injure New Yorkers as a result of the unique circumstances of the COVID era? The NYPD press office is not nearly as responsive as your office. So, having the Commissioner here might break the log jam. You got any thoughts on that?

Mayor: First of all, at the end, you're going to explain the Neil Diamond reference because I want to understand it. But in terms of this issue, look, we have been in a different reality since COVID hit and we try to put together the group of folks that we think make sense every day. And, of course, the Commissioner has done a number of other media availabilities of different kinds. So, look, to me, the important thing, Gersh, is that we're going to try and provide the answers on how to fight the coronavirus right now, that is about a clear understanding of the health care indicators and what we all have to do. That's what we're focused on in these press conferences. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. Just so you know, the Neil Diamond reference is a reference to the Last Waltz because when the Neil Diamond comes on, everyone goes to the bathroom. But, anyway, so my second question –

Mayor: [Inaudible] –

Question: Earlier this month State Attorney General Letitia James issued a report then recommended that the NYPD get out of routine traffic stops to eliminate the disproportionate impact that those stops have on communities of color. The influential Regional Plan Association offered its support for that recommendation, as has Transportation Alternatives, and

Communities for Police Reform. So, have you seen the Attorney General's recommendation and what do you think?

Mayor: I have not seen that. I heard about it, did not see the specifics. Look, we're going to look at that, but I want to caution that there's a lot of fundamental issues that are addressed in a traffic stop done the right way, the fair way, the consistent way. If someone is doing something that poses a danger, a traffic stop is one of the tools to address that. So, I would be concerned that we – you know, we have to protect people in this city. And that's one of the tools that is used to protect people. That said it has to be done in a nondiscriminatory manner. And there's a lot more reform that needs to be done within the NYPD, there's a lot of change in the culture of the NYPD we're going to be working on these next 15 months. So, I think it's less a matter of, are traffic stops a valid policing tool. I think they are, but they need to be done better. They need to be done in a way that is consistently non-discriminatory and that's the work we need to do.

Alright, everyone, look, as we conclude today, I want to talk about tenacity for a moment. Folks in this city, every single day, show how tenacious New York City is, how strong the city is. It's amazing how people take whatever's thrown at us and turn it into something good. And you are seeing a lot of signs of New York City coming back strong. You're hearing a lot of people who are fighting back against the naysayers who like to talk about New York City never being the same again. Well, anyone that knows New York City history knows that we always come back and we come back better. I want to emphasize how we need to remain confident in ourselves as New Yorkers. There'll be plenty of people trying to put us down, but those folks also end up watching New York City come back and overcome the challenges in a way most places can't even imagine. So, right now we've got an immediate challenge, but you see New Yorkers closing ranks and rising to the occasion. Help us do that, everyone. Remember what got us past the worst of the coronavirus. Remember the strength and discipline you all showed, the devotion to social distancing, to wearing those face masks. Remember how important it is to get tested. Everyone does what we're capable of as New Yorkers. We're going to overcome this immediate problem, and we're going to continue our progress coming back. Thanks, everybody.

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