

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: ...like the Nets. Amazing season – number-one rated on offense in the NBA. Kyrie Irving, historic season. But the biggest victory for the Nets is yet to come. The Nets are stepping up for Brooklyn, for the whole City of New York. The Nets are now going to be joining the battle against COVID with a mobile vaccination site right outside Barclays Center. This is going to be another extraordinary effort to get people vaccinated and make everyone safe. Now, here's the deal – go there, get vaccinated, enter a lottery for playoff tickets. So, go there as soon as it's up and running – we're going to have the details later on today – go get vaccinated, entered the lottery, you have a chance to playoff tickets. And I'm going to tell you something, the Nets are going to be in the playoffs for a long time, all the way until the end. So, you're going to have multiple chances to win playoff tickets when you get vaccinated at that site.

But wait, there's more. The Nets and the whole NBA to their great credit are focused on social justice, are focused on attacking the disparities that we learned during the COVID crisis. They're focused on equality. So, they're going to focus on people who live in the neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID – the 33 neighborhoods identified by our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity. And if you've already been vaccinated and you live in one of those neighborhoods, you can enter a contest also to win playoff tickets. This is going to be amazing – an amazing opportunity to see one of the greatest teams in a long time, a team that's going to bring glory to Brooklyn and New York City. Here to tell you more about it, and I want to thank him for his leadership, and for caring so much to make this extraordinary opportunity available – the CEO of the Brooklyn Nets, John Abbamondi.

[...]

Mayor: Hey, John, thank you so much. This is really a wonderful offer you guys are putting forward. It shows a lot of concern for the people of Brooklyn and New York City. And this is exactly what we need. We need to excite people about fighting back COVID, about getting vaccinated. This is the kind of offer that's going to make all the difference. So, thank you, for joining with us and let's go Nets. Good things ahead. Let's go Nets. Thank you, brother.

Now, this new vaccination effort with the Brooklyn Nets, it's going to bring a lot of people in. So many other things we're doing are going to bring a lot of other people in, but it's already happening. We're seeing some really extraordinary things. First of all, the 12- to 15-year-olds, that was just approved days ago. We have already in New York City had 20,000 12- to 15-year-olds vaccinated. The demand was there. The focus was there, parents, kids ready to get vaccinated – 20,000 already. That number is going to keep climbing regularly. Now, here's the overall number and it has jumped up too – as of today, 7,628,062 doses administered from day

one. Well over 7.5 million vaccinations and climbing every hour. So, we're going to keep throwing out there great offers, great opportunities, great incentives. But this one is very special. So, if you're a Nets fan, this is your moment. Get vaccinated, get in the game.

All right. Now, recovery – this is what it's all about, a recovery for all of us. If we're going to have recovery for all of us, it means it has to reach every part in New York City, has to reach folks who have gotten their fair share and folks who historically have not gotten their fair share. And that means changing the approach, not accepting the status quo, changing the laws, changing our policies to help every-day New Yorkers. It means supporting businesses owned by people of color. It means supporting businesses owned by women. It means guaranteeing jobs for people and underserved communities. This is how we make a change. We need help from our colleagues in Albany. We need help from the State Legislature to bring social and economic justice to New York City. Today, we're talking about crucial legislation to give more opportunity to minority- and women-owned business and to create jobs in communities by guaranteeing the jobs will be created for neighborhood residents when development happens. These are the epitome of common-sense ideas to respond to this moment.

These are two ideas that were put together, and promoted, and a campaign was organized by our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity here in this administration. And we have a historic moment with community hiring. We have the ability to guarantee that residents who have lower incomes, who have had less opportunity, residents who live in public housing get first opportunities when there's development in their area. So, here's a chance to turn development into something that truly brings a public benefit. With M/WBE's – minority- and women-owned businesses – the M/WBE Opportunity Expansion Act – here is a piece of legislation that makes it much easier to get opportunity to those who haven't gotten their fair share. It empowers us as the City of New York to do this work. And I use the R-word – redistribution. It's time to do some redistribution to reach people who haven't gotten what they deserve, and this is the moment in history to do it, but we need the State Legislature to help us get it done.

When we have the right tools, millions, then tens of millions, then hundreds of millions, then billions of dollars flow into local communities into the hands of people of color and it makes all the difference. You're going to hear today why this is so important from some very special guests. First, leading the way as the Chair on the Subcommittee on Oversight of Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses, she has been absolutely outstanding leader in Albany and across the State of New York, making change to empower businesses that deserve so much opportunity. My pleasure to introduce Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Assembly Member. And I share your enthusiasm and I appreciate your energy. And I also want to say Happy Haitian Flag Day to you and to all members of our extraordinary Haitian community here in this city. Thank you for joining us. And, look, so many people feel strongly about this opportunity to right the wrongs of the past and to actually move social and economic justice. One of them you're going to hear from now, she has been a trailblazer, but the best kind of trailblazer. As she succeeded in a business environment that was often very tough and unwelcoming, she turned around and welcomed into that environment folks

who have been left out. And she served as a mentor, she served as an inspiration – she helped people-of-color-owned businesses, women-owned businesses to recognize their full potential and to connect to the resources they deserve. So, someone who's really walked the walk. My pleasure to introduce the President and CEO of Armand Corporation, Barbara Armand Kushner.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much. And, Barbara, listen, first of all, congratulations on your success. You really have been an extraordinary example to so many people. And when someone shows it can be done, a lot of other people follow. And this is the beauty of investing in M/WBE's, you build a whole new generation of entrepreneurs who then hire from within the community. So, Barbara, you've done that with tremendous success. Thank you. And thank you for being such a crucial leader in the effort to fight COVID. Those centers that you helped put together were crucial to the strategy. So, another example of a great New Yorker, helping us overcome COVID. And today's good news, showing that we are continuing to beat back COVID – you'll hear about that in a few minutes in the indicators.

All right. Now, community hiring – so important. This is something that we've needed for a long time, but could never get, but this is now the year to do it. Let's make sure that development actually benefits the community. I want you to hear about a new report on what this would mean. And the lead author of this report is pretty legendary in this town as having been a voice for economic justice, dare I say, long before it was fashionable. James Parrott, for a long, long time has said, look, there are just profound inequalities and they have to be addressed with new government policies. I think things that used to say didn't get the attention they deserve, but they're being heard loud and clear now. And here's an opportunity to do something about it with this community hiring legislation. He is the Director of Economic and Fiscal Policy at the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School. My pleasure introduced James Parrot.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, James. And, James, thank you for bringing to bear your knowledge, your analysis to help people understand how important this is. And James made a crucial point – here's a comeback, we have to make sure it's a comeback that reaches the people who need it the most. And this is the way to do it, with policies that actually focus on helping New York City residents, especially those who didn't have opportunity. So, James, has given you the overview and the numbers and the analysis and the history. Let me give you now an example of what it means for one New Yorker, and a New Yorker who experienced challenges, but persevered because there was opportunity. And we've got to keep building that opportunity and connecting it to folks who need it. From the New York City District Council of Carpenters, my pleasure to introduce Sinade Wadsworth.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you, Sinade. Thank you. I love the way you ended. This is what justice looks like. That's exactly right. And success is what you look like, and I think it's so important for people to see success stories. You got knocked down, you got back up, but you're right, there

were opportunities that were there for you. Not everyone has been offered those opportunities. This community hiring legislation will change that, make it much more likely that good folks like you have a chance to succeed. So, congratulations on all you have done, and I really appreciate you joining us today.

All right now let's go to indicators as promised. Good news again, and this is because New Yorkers worked so hard and went out and got vaccinated. So, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report 91 patients confirmed positivity level of 21.74 percent. Hospitalization rate, look at this, zero – 0.98 per 100,000. This has been really extraordinary. Look at that continued downward slope. That is fantastic. All right, number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report, 590 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing city-wide positive for COVID-19, another extraordinary number on a seven-day rolling average, 1.47 percent and going down. So, vaccination works, go on over, you'll soon have the opportunity right outside of the Barclays Center and you'll have a great opportunity to win tickets in the process. So, everyone please let's all go out there and get vaccinated. All right, a few words in Spanish, and I want to go back specifically on the topic of supporting women and people of color owned businesses.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Good morning. We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we are joined by Magalie Austin, Senior Advisor and Director of the Mayor's Office of MWBEs, Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, Dr. Jay Varma, Senior Advisor for Public Health, and Dr. Mitch Katz, President and CEO of New York City Health + Hospitals. Our first question goes to James Ford of PIX-11

Question: And good morning, Mr. Mayor, and to everyone on the call. Happy to be the first today.

Mayor: You are leadoff hitter again, James. How are you feeling today?

Question: Great. It's a beautiful day in New York. Every day I'm in New York is a beautiful day, but today is particularly beautiful. Thank you. Hope you're well.

Mayor: Indeed.

Question: All right. The question is this. As we all know, tomorrow the State ends up adopting the new CDC guidelines for masking that are – which includes no mask required indoors or outdoors, unless there are certain exceptions. One of those exceptions, according to the State, is wear required by local rules or regulations. My question is, is it possible that the city might end up having a mask mandate that's different than the State? In other words, the city could still require masks to be worn, say indoors. Might that be a possibility, sir?

Mayor: So, James, let me do some overview and I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi. The – look, first of all, CDC guidance focuses on people who have been vaccinated. If you're vaccinated, you win freedom. It's as simple as that. And the CDC guidance basically says as more and more people become vaccinated, there's more and more opportunities for that freedom. But it still is very clear about the difference between the outdoor and indoor and certain types of facilities, for example, special care should be taken in health care facilities, schools, congregate settings, mass transit. And again, it also recognizes that if you're in a setting that combines vaccinated people and unvaccinated people, you've got to exercise caution. And I think that's what a lot of people are going to do. They're going to keep wearing masks any time that they feel it's appropriate. I think a lot of different institutions will make their own decisions on what makes sense. But ultimately, as I turned to Dr. Choksi, I will say what he always says, we're going to watch the data. We are seeing great information now, all directly correlated to the level of vaccination. We want people to keep getting vaccinated. We want to keep pushing those numbers down and that will say keep going and offering more freedom, and if we see something else though, we'll make adjustments. Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor, and I'll start just by reiterating some of the points that you've made. First, our starting point is that the CDC guidance is based on sound science for fully vaccinated people. But as the Mayor has said, the issue is in the real-world application of the guidance, because you will have mixing of vaccinated and unvaccinated people. If this happens outdoors, it is low risk and masking, and other precautions can be relaxed. But if it happens indoors, my worry is primarily about the spread of the virus among unvaccinated people, this includes children as well as people for whom immunity from vaccination has not fully kicked in. So, I do recommend continued mask use in many indoor settings until even more people are vaccinated. And personally, while I am fully vaccinated, I'll be keeping my mask on indoors in almost all settings. And when I put it on, I'll be thinking of the sense of community and the social norms, particularly around masking and distancing, that helped us get to this very hopeful stage of the pandemic.

Mayor: Thank you, doctor. Go ahead, James.

Question: Thanks very much. So, then just so we're clear, what is your advice to New Yorkers who might be confused as to whether or not they can wear masks, indoors or outdoors, even if they're vaccinated?

Mayor: So, I'll start, again I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi. Indoors in those settings I mentioned, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, congregate facilities, mass transit, keep wearing a mask. Outdoors, much more ability to have the freedom to not wear a mask, but common sense, if you're in a very crowded circumstance, a mask makes sense. If you know you're around a lot of unvaccinated people, a mask makes sense. I think the one situation, if you're outdoors and you're around fully vaccinated people, or you've got a lot of space, of course, that's where you have maximum freedom, but people should exercise good judgment as they have throughout this crisis, and if they think they're in a situation where they're closer to people or there's unvaccinated people present, it's always smarter just to – out of abundance of caution – to wear a mask. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, sir. And just picking up where you left off, once again, you know, we should keep in mind that although this has been publicly discussed as mask guidance from the CDC, it's really guidance for people who are fully vaccinated. And the key point from it is that if you are fully vaccinated, remember that's at least 14 days after your final dose of one of the COVID-19 vaccines, it means just about every activity is safer. But what we're emphasizing is, you know, as we're still in a stage where more and more people need to get vaccinated in the areas where we are congregating together, particularly indoors, masking and distancing, those public health precautions that got us to where we are right now will remain important for just a bit longer.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we have Steve Burns from WCBS 880.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Steve, how you been?

Question: I am doing well. One of the first, again I hate to go back to it, but I think we need to on policing in the subways, it seemed there was yet another disagreement develop last night when everyone came to the understanding that the 250 officers you announced yesterday will only be there during rush hours. An MTA spokesperson called this smoke and mirrors, irresponsible, and I'm sure there'll be questions about why officers are going in the high ridership periods when it seemed as crime is at its worst during the low ridership period. So how would you respond to those notions?

Mayor: It's the largest police force in the subways and over 25 years, that's my response. You know, the MTA has had vacancies in their police force for now a year and a half that they haven't filled. Why don't they take care of their own house? Why don't they fill those vacancies and shift officers to the subways where the vast majority of the riders are? We have continued to put additional resources into keeping the subways safe, including when most people are there, and I think that makes a lot of sense, but we'll do all sorts of smart things, it's what the NYPD always does. Precision policing means moving resources where they're needed when they're needed, and I trust the security professionals at the NYPD to make those judgments. But we keep focusing with precision policing, with investments of additional officers, largest police force in the subways in 25 years. How about the MTA pull its own weight and join us and help us rather than just criticize? Go ahead.

Question: All right. And on a different topic, kind of similar to the, to the line of questioning James was getting at, it seems like tomorrow is maybe the biggest chapter yet in our reopening given that the mask rules will be changing drastically, capacity rules will be changing drastically, it seems from here on out, the ball is really in, you know, businesses court to make the rules and enforce the rules, how concerned are you that you may get, A, disputes or just different kinds of interpretations among businesses or businesses that may just not be interested in enforcing these rules at all, given the dangers that could come about if they do decide to make some kind of

move and there may be some conflict. And how does this change things, the dynamic of rule enforcement going forward here?

Mayor: Steve, it's a fair question, but respectfully, I think it's a very much a glass half empty question. I'm going to give you a glass half full response. We have reached a point where people can finally have more freedom and let's be clear, people can finally have more freedom because they earned it by going out and getting vaccinated to a remarkable extent, 7.6 million vaccinations in a matter of months. And that is why people now have the ability to live differently, live better, and the CDC has affirmed it. Every institution will set its own rules and anyone who participates will understand those rules. So, I think actually after everything we've been through in the city, I think people will be understanding that if a certain business or a cultural institution, whatever it may be, wants to act out of abundance of caution, that's their right and that's the rules of engagement. And again, remember the CDC rules talk about the power of being vaccinated and the freedom that comes with it. But if you're not yet vaccinated, or if you're in a group of people that is a mix of vaccinated unvaccinated, you still have to take precautions, and I think every day New Yorkers would understand that.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Andrew Siff from NBC New York.

Question: Mayor, good morning. I would like to start with a change of pace if I might. What is your view of Andrew Giuliani entering the governor's race?

Mayor: Oh, Andrew Siff, you are devilish. I don't know Andrew Giuliani. I don't want to hold the sins of the father against the son. Although the son just got through working for a president who supported an insurrection against the United States. So, that doesn't say much a positive. Look, I think with all due respect to him, this state is not going to smile upon anyone who was a Donald Trump supporter or aide, and I think that's the bottom line. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Shifting back to vaccination, for a long time you talked about the goal of getting five million New Yorkers fully vaccinated, you recently said by the end of June, I'm pretty sure in the beginning you said by June, but regardless of when it's supposed to be, is that goal still as relevant given that herd immunity is not being discussed in the same terms by the CDC nationwide, and also given that we're reopening anyway, regardless of that goal. And sort of part of that, are you – you talked at the outset each day of the seven million plus vaccinations, but I haven't heard the update about the pace towards five million fully vaccinated.

Mayor: Sure. So, I'll just try and pull that together simply. We're now almost two thirds to the five million goal in terms of fully vaccinated. We're about 80 percent to the five million goal if you're talking about people who got one shot already, but again, remembering in New York City, that's almost a guarantee of a second shot. 95 percent are coming back and getting that second shot. So, we're continuing to work on that goal. It got harder after all the ups and downs with Johnson & Johnson, obviously. But we're continuing to work on the goal and we're coming up with new and better and more creative ways to focus people on vaccination, and I mean, even just look at the last 24 hours, we had a real uptick in the numbers. People keep showing up. The vaccination for the 12 to 15-year-olds has opened up a whole new world of folks who are going to get vaccinated. So, the bottom line is we're just going to keep going, and every additional

vaccinated New Yorker takes us closer to more freedom and just, you can see it, the vaccination numbers go up, the COVID numbers go down. We're just going to stick with it.

Moderator: Next, we have Julia Marsh from the Post.

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

Mayor: Good, Julia, how are you doing?

Question: Good. I have a couple of questions on this topic. The first is for Dr. Chokshi, who mentioned that he's going to continue wearing a mask and doors, even though he's fully vaccinated, and he said, I guess, indoors anywhere, not just in crowded settings. Dr. Chokshi, could you address some of the confusion that might create among people who, you know, are supposed to think that this gives them more freedom and they don't have to wear the masks if they're around fully vaccinated people, and you know, we've been told time and again, to listen to the scientists and the CDC scientists are telling us it's okay to go maskless indoors, you know, if we're fully vaccinated and not in a very crowded setting?

Mayor: I'm just going to hand it to Dr. Chokshi with a comment. I really think, first of all, I believe in freedom, which means if an individual thinks it's a good idea to keep a mask on, they have that right, and I believe that there's – abundance of caution is really smart if you're going to constantly be in settings combining vaccinated and unvaccinated people. So, I think what Dr. Chokshi said made a lot of sense. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, that's right, and thank you, Julia, for the opportunity to clarify. Certainly, you know, when I'm indoors and as you can see right now, you know, not in a shared space or in my own household or with a small group of other individuals whom I know to be fully vaccinated I do feel comfortable to you know, to forego masking and distancing in those environments. But what we're talking about is really shared indoor spaces, particularly, you know, public indoor spaces, which characterize so much of how people in New York City interact with one another, and for those – you know, as a doctor, I have to keep in mind people who are the most vulnerable, people who remain unvaccinated in some cases, because they're not yet eligible for vaccination, such as children as well as people for whom immunity hasn't fully kicked in, and so what we're saying is until even more people get vaccinated across New York City, it does make sense for us to keep up some of the norms that we've established around masking in those shared indoor spaces.

Mayor: Go ahead, Julia.

Question: And I appreciate – so, I appreciate the update on the 20,000 12 to 15-year-olds who've now been vaccinated. That's great news, but I was also chatting with the Councilman Mark Levine who's the Chair of the Council's Health Committee, and he says that the rate is actually tilt still too slow for that group, and he's offered a solution, which is doing vaccinations in schools. So, I'd like a response to that, whether or not you're considering it, or think it's a good idea?

Mayor: I think it's worth a look for sure. You know, we just got the approval and obviously the fastest way, and the easiest way was to take advantage of the existing centers that were up and running and in a lot of different neighborhoods, but, you know, it's worth looking at any and all approaches that would be helpful. I think, you know, really respect the Council Member a lot. I'd say the first few days are, are too early, a sample size to talk about the overall trajectory. I'm very pleased with 20,000 kids in just a few days' time with something brand new. So, I actually think that number is going to grow steadily but sure, we're going to look at, as always, different options of what's the best way to reach people.

Moderator: Next, we have Bob Hennelly from Chief Leader.

Question: Yes, Mr. Mayor. I was wondering, the City of New York of course is an employer, and so we know that we've been through this traumatic event. You often make mention of the hundreds of civil servants that have died. In question about this mask guidance. There's been some concern by unions that the CDC's announced it really didn't take into effect some of the occupational concerns. And I'm thinking even among the Police Department, we see vaccination rates below 50 percent. It's slow throughout the civil service actually, and I'm now wondering if could you give us some guidance – will this be required mask wearing or city offices – where civil servants have to interface with the public and in back-office operations? Can you give us a sense of – because this, this is going to be confusing. You can imagine that you've spent all this time developing a certain kind of discipline and focus. How are you going to deal with these cross messages?

Mayor: Look, I think it can be done, Bob. Compared to the problems we used to have. I would much rather have this problem, honestly. You know, Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Varma, Dr. Katz, and I said for months, we expected folks to be wearing masks and taking the precautions through June. But the progress has come earlier than predicted, and that's a really good thing. 7.6 million vaccinations – that's huge and it's had a profound impact, but I think the abundance of caution point still holds here when it comes to that, exactly what you were pointing out. Any kind of interaction where it's a vaccinated person and a non-vaccinated person, or you don't know if the other person's vaccine or not – it's better to be cautious. So, in the city workplaces where city workers will come in contact with the public, of course, we're going to continue to use masks. That's different than when you have, as the CDC talks about fully vaccinated people in outdoor settings where there's space, where they're around other fully vaccinated people. Those are all the good situations where there's more freedom, but if you're a public servant, you're coming in contact with people all day long, of course, some are going to be unvaccinated. It's better to wear the mask out of an abundance of caution. Go ahead, Bob.

Question: Yep. When I visited City Hall, I guess it was on May 4th you had a welcome banner sign near there. Weren't a lot of people in the City Council side was dark. There were, I think there was one other reporter. I did encounter some from DCAS who showed me the things that the administration wants us to read when you reenter the workplace. The individual clicked like with a people counter after my orientation to City Hall, are you guys keeping numbers? And, and can you update us about how that's going, because I know you have many different settings that you're trying to get the workforce back into?

Mayor: Yeah, it's gone very smoothly. I'll have the team follow up on any numbers or specifics, but it's gone very smoothly. What we found is that the health and safety precautions were put together very well by the agencies and a lot of good feedback of people, happy to be back in a workplace, happy to be back together, see their friends, see their colleagues, the energy, you know, I think it's gone very smoothly, and I look forward to just continued steps towards getting the city back to normal.

Moderator: Next, we have Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'm trying to make sense of the use of incentives such as Nets merchandise, and potentially tickets to get people to get vaccinated, and I guess I wanted to ask, have you had any reservations about the idea of offering rewards to people to do what they should arguably doing like on their own in the first place?

Mayor: No, Shant –

Question: I mean, is there any –

Mayor: Go ahead. What were you saying?

Question: Well, what makes you think that that tactic works?

Mayor: I think it's humanity. It's – I don't have any hesitation about it. A lot of folks have been a little on the fence, give them a positive incentive. A lot of organizations, you know, the Nets have come forward. They want to help Yankees, Mets want to help, Shake Shack wants to help, lots of organizations, cultural institutions. I think it makes all the sense in the world, and that's what encourages people and helps everyone be safer. That's just a good thing. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah. So, thanks for that, and I guess also going back to the new deployment of officers to subways, I mean, that came a few days after you had very harsh words for the Governor and the MTA saying that had been fear mongering. So, should, how should we interpret your, your deployment of the additional officers? Are you saying the Governor and the MTA, had a point? That your initial criticism was wrong? Just any thoughts in that vein?

Mayor: No, they've been fear mongering and they continue to fear-monger, very evidently to try and distract from the Governor's problems. It's not rocket science. I don't know people who run an organization and tell people all the time, there's something wrong. You know, do something about it, MTA. Go higher up those officers that you said you'd do a year and a half ago and get them out there to help the NYPD. It's not difficult. Just do it. And then remind people all the good that's happening in the subway. People are coming back all the time to the subways and the more people come back, the safer they'll be. It's as simple as that.

Moderator: Next, we have Dana Rubinstein and that'll be two questions left for today.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Dana. How you been?

Question: I'm okay. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good.

Question: Just to circle back, I was a little bit confused about – by your response to Andrew Siff regarding whether or not the City would meet the five million fully vaccinated New Yorkers by end of June goal. Your response seemed to suggest some doubt about whether you will meet that goal. Will you, do you think you'll meet it?

Mayor: It is still – look, Dana, it's a great question. What I've been trying to say is we continue to make progress. We're continuing to hold to that goal because that's how you make progress. We got a real curveball by the combined problems with Johnson & Johnson. Up until that point, I loved the momentum that we had and the whole country had. That threw everything off, but we're still in mathematical range to achieve it. I'm going to keep pushing and everyone's going to keep pushing. So, right now we've got, again, we're two thirds of the way to the goal almost in terms of fully vaccinated right now, and then almost 80 percent of the goal in terms of one dose, and basically if someone gets a first dose, they will get a second dose and they have time in the next six weeks to do that. That's obviously well within the timeframe that you're supposed to get your second dose. So, that makes me very hopeful that we still have a shot at this goal. We've got the 12 to 15-year-olds now who, I think you're going to see a lot of them, a lot of their families wanting them to get vaccinated, so it still can be done, but it got a lot tougher. You know, clearly after the Johnson & Johnson problems and we'll know more, you know, I think when we get to the end of May, we'll get a pretty good look at what we think the trajectory will be for the rest of June. Go ahead, Dana.

Question: Thank you for that. On another entirely different note, if – I'm curious if the Governor's race next year comes down to Andrew Giuliani versus Andrew Cuomo or Lee Zeldin versus Andrew Cuomo, who will you vote for?

Mayor: We are not going to talk about theoreticals today. Look, obviously I'm a Democrat and I'm a progressive, and the Republican party today is deeply troubling, and the folks you mentioned are strong supporters of Donald Trump, but it's just way too soon. I have been very clear that I think the Governor should no longer be an office. So, 2022 is a long way away. We'll make sense of it as it gets closer.

Moderator: Our last question of today goes to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Question: Hello, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Abu. How are you doing?

Question: Good. I'm always last. That's the blessing.

Mayor: It's a special position of honor. You get to wrap everything up.

Question: Yes. So, my question is, as everybody is mentioning about the Governor race, are you going to run for Governor?

Mayor: I am focused on this work right here every minute, every hour, Abu. I think you see in these briefings, this is a passion to bring this city back and that's what I'm going to do. That's all I'm focused on. Go ahead, Abu?

Question: And then same question, as you mentioned about the welcoming and the city is coming to normal and welcoming the visitors and the other people, what is the preparation that, you know, if it's – normally a lot of visitors and you know, people are coming from abroad and other places, what kind of preparation of New York City to welcome them?

Mayor: Look, I think the whole opening up we're seeing now the cultural activities that are already happening, but they're going to be amazing the summer. There's going to be a huge amount of cultural activity. There's going to be outdoor activity in particular, the Open Restaurants, the Open Streets. I think it's a perfect time to come visit New York City, and I think a lot of people who might've visited other parts of the world or other parts of the country, are going to feel a lot more comfortable coming in New York City. We need to meet them and make the best of it, welcoming people in every way, and we want them back. We want them to keep coming back, and we're also going to provide vaccination for folks who come in from somewhere else need vaccination. That's another great positive benefit we'll offer here.

So, look, I'll finish this answer and I'll wrap it all together. I think what you're seeing is extraordinary. This comeback is ahead of schedule. It's absolutely amazing. You know, again, the number of vaccinations, beyond anything we could have imagined by this point. The indicators better every single day the activity levels out there extraordinary, which means also a lot of jobs are coming back and you're already seeing tourism. I – if you'd said to me, would you see tourism coming back in May? I would have said, there's no way that was possible, but it's happening as we speak, we're all seeing it. We're all experiencing it. So, I feel very, very good about what this summer will bring and it's something that all New Yorkers should be proud of. You earned it by going out there and getting vaccinated. Now for the rest of you who haven't, help us take that next big step forward, go out and get vaccinated. Thank you, everyone.

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