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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everybody. All of you should be very proud of how this city has handled this horrible crisis, and you should be proud of the heroism of so many in this city. I've said before, it's those who we honor so deeply, are health care workers and our first responders. It's also everyday people, who have found ways to get through, to be there for each other, to deal with these new tough rules, but find a way to make them work for the good of everyone, for the good of their own families and the good of everyone. New Yorkers have been absolutely remarkable in this crisis, and I think one of the ways that people have excelled is in a very quiet way that needs to be talked about more, and needs to be understood better, which is the way people have just been there for each other. The way people have remembered that the person they're with, a loved one, friend, a neighbor, a coworker, someone from the neighborhood that everyone's going through so much, and sometimes what's so important is just to be there for someone, just to listen to them, just to see how they're doing.

New Yorkers have always been incredibly social people. And it's true, we have tough exterior's, but behind those exteriors beat hearts of gold. That's what I've seen for decades and decades. How good, and compassionate, and kind New Yorkers are. And New Yorkers look out for each other, and we know it from our buildings where we live or our neighborhoods. So many ways New Yorkers have each other's backs, and in a crisis, it really comes through. So, just those little things, when you say someone, how are you doing? Are you okay? How are you feeling? People need that, they need that moment of empathy. They need to hear that someone's concerned. Sometimes they just need a chance to unburden themselves, all the stress they're going through. Just ask a simple question, how are you holding up? Can mean so much to someone, and I see it all the time, and I appreciate it. I appreciate all of you for having that spirit. For understanding people need that chance to be heard, and just to express what they're going through. And that compassion matters, especially when it comes to people's feelings, when it comes to their mental health, because it's still an area as a, as a society, we're still grappling with how to talk about mental health, how to act mental health. It's still an area where there's so much stigma. It shouldn't be, it's part of human life, mental health's no different than physical health. It's part of who we are as human beings, and yet that stigma still pervades in so many ways. And so just that act to asking someone how they are and inviting them to speak openly is powerful.

Now, it need not be said that it's not just a New York City reality that mental health doesn't get talked about out in the open, it's true in our whole country. And it's true that there's never been an effort in this country to actually bring this in the open and treat mental health conditions consistently. There's not a place that people know to turn. It's not the way we grew up. And then on top of it, think about that stigma and add to it a pandemic, and all that brings with it. Think

what it means for families who have lost their loved ones, pain they're going through and all they want to express and many times they don't know if it's okay to express it. Think about the senior citizens who have been isolated, how much pain there is to not be able to see your grandchildren for example, or just not get the visits you used to having from neighbors. Think of what that feels like and yet what do they do with that? Where do they turn? Think about how parents deal with this incredible anxiety of not having a paycheck and how they express that to their families. What it makes them feel.

So, all New Yorkers are dealing with these challenges and we want to make sure that there's help for everyone. I've talked yesterday about our kids, what they're going through. We want to make sure there's help for them and we're going to focus on them a lot. But I don't think I even have to say, when you think about who's gone through the most in this few months, the most trauma, the most pain, the, the things that would dredge up the deepest, sharpest feelings that somehow have to be aired and addressed. Well, that's so many of our health care workers and our first responders. And for some of them, and you've, you've heard the stories of places like Elmhurst Hospital. For some of them, the only parallel to what they've gone through is what soldiers go through in war. And there's a phrase combat stress. There's a field of combat mental health, because it's understood that soldiers go through so much, and the way to deal with any mental health reality is not to ignore it, but to take it head on, and the military understands that. I just met with some of the amazing officers from the U S army who are doing this crucial work, who have learned the lessons of what our soldiers go through in war, and have understood what they need to address it, and they're going to be helping us, and you're going to hear about that in a moment from our first lady. But that phrase, combat stress, that's a wartime term, and Chirlane and I know something about it, because both our dads served in World War II, and brought back a lot from that war. And I've spoken very openly about what my dad went through. The scars he brought back both physical and emotional, and how much it framed the rest of his life. But that phrase combat stress wasn't really known the same way back then and the support wasn't there, but now our military does provide it in a very powerful way. And I never thought we'd have to use this word in the middle of New York City civilian life, but in fact it is the right word. And we do need the help of our military to make sense of this situation. Think about what our doctors, our nurses, our health care workers have gone through, our EMT's, our paramedics. Think about the people they've had to watch pass away before their very eyes. Think about the fact that they are surrounded by this virus. And they're fighting it and they're walking towards the danger, but they also have to think about what it means for their own health, and what it might mean for their family. And what happens if they want to go home and see their family. So, they're carrying that burdens. I'm sure a lot of them sometimes feel alone. We can't let that happen. We can't let them carry that burden alone. We have to be there for them.

Now, the idea of providing access to mental health services, it's been a core notion for this administration for the last six years. That's why Thrive NYC exists, to break down the barriers and open up access to mental health. And that initiative was for all New Yorkers of all kinds, but we've also had specialized initiatives for our heroes, because we've known they've dealt with challenges before. No one could have imagined this pandemic, but they were already dealing with challenges. There's two programs I want to mention that are particularly good examples, the Health and Hospitals, the Helping Healers Heal program. And a lot of our health care workers are leaning on this right now. It's a 24/7 helpline for doctors, nurses, staff, any Health and

Hospital staff can call it 646-815-4150. And the FDNY has had a counseling services unit. It's renowned, it's gold standard for the whole nation. In fact, other cities have sought out the FDNY's guidance in how to set up a similar approach. A very poignant example and a painful one was after the Parkland shootings in Florida. Folks in Florida turned to the FDNY to know how to provide that ongoing support to first responders. And our paramedics and our EMT's have been right there at the frontline of this crisis. They need that help. And so, I want to make sure FDNY members know you can call 212-570-1693. So, these initiatives are up and running, but we need something even more in this moment of crisis, and that's where our military come in. And what they have been doing these last weeks, the military has been helping us in so many ways. I want to thank all those who have come in to help in our hospitals. The extraordinary contribution they've made to fighting back the coronavirus. Now they're going to play a crucial role in addressing the mental health challenges as well.

Now, to tell you about this extraordinary partnership with the department of defense with our armed forces, I'm going to turn to the first lady. And I'm going to say it this simply, she is devoted her time as first lady to breaking down the stigma that stands in the way of people getting the mental health services they need. She's really helped this whole city to have the right open conversation about what's going on inside all of us, and how we have to bring it out in the open and ask for help, and how help needs to be there for everyone with no stigma, no barriers. In this pandemic, she's taking that same impulse, those same lessons, and working to make sure we reach more and more New Yorkers who have gone through so much. And I want to thank her for that, and particularly for the work she is doing to bring these extraordinary military professionals in to help us further.

So now, I'll turn to our first lady, Chirlane McCray.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you Bill, for your leadership and especially for your compassion. For weeks now, all our frontline health care workers, who I think of as our soldiers of grace and mercy, have been pushed to the limit inside our hospitals. We've had battlefield conditions with triage and fear in the hallways, but when the emergency field hospitals and morgues close after the TV crews leave and the clapping stops, our soldiers, our healers go home and we have to wonder how do these healers manage their stress after seeing so much death and suffering? Their emotional state is a crisis within a crisis and an urgent mental health emergency and that's why we are working with the Department of Defense, which has brought together a force from the Navy, the Air Force and the Army. They are experts in dealing with combat stress and have a unique insight into how to help those who provide care in this kind of setting. The Department of Defense will train a thousand behavioral health staff and helping healers heal, helping healers heal, champions as trainers who will further train H+H, Greater New York Hospital Association, FDNY and EMS staff. The Department of Defense will also conduct assessments, sharing events, decompression and wellness strategies for combat stress management. This work with the Department of Defense is a critical new piece of what we are doing for all of our essential frontline workers in New York City.

So, how will we provide more support for our health care workers? Well, these DOD trauma specialists will look at individual hospitals and also the entire system. You know, every, every hospital is different. They'll want to talk to frontline leadership to get a picture of the most

pressing, mental and emotional needs and they'll add to the programs, training our team on combat stress. At first, they'll do small groups from FDNY, Health and Hospitals and private hospitals will also be trained and next we'll train more than a thousand Health and Hospitals personnel and other staff. The Department of Defense will provide a whole new higher level of trauma care for those on the frontline.

Our heroes will have the opportunity to receive an individual assessment and all of this work is already underway. We're ramping up to be fully operational in May with the program fully in place by June. This is not the time nor is it appropriate for us to hide the level of express of stress that is experienced by our nurses and doctors and medical technicians, we have to face this head on. This is not something that, that we should be secretive about and I have to say that once again, New York City is a leader in this effort. No other city has a comprehensive mental health program for health care workers at this scale and it will not be a one off, this program with the trainers and other resources will be incorporated into our health care facilities. So that even long after this pandemic is over, our health care workers will have these services, I want to thank the U.S. military, H+H, Office of Emergency Management and the New York Fire Department. The service of our frontline health care workers is beyond what anyone could have rightfully asked, they have inspired a City and a Nation, but it comes at a steep price. In recent days, we've lost John Mondello, an EMT working in the Bronx and Dr. Lorna M. Breen, an ER Medical Director at Presbyterian. Please join me for a moment of silence and their memories.

[Moment of silence is observed]

We owe these workers the world that we will enjoy after this virus is defeated and we will not forget them, we will not forget this debt. When people ask our hospital workers, what did you do during the great pandemic of 2020? We want them to say with pride, I showed up, I did my best, I saved lives because my community supported me. I was able to take care of myself while taking care of others and I stayed healthy in mind, body, and spirit.

Mayor: Thank you, Chirlane. That's a beautiful sentiment and it's exactly the spirit we have to bring to everything we do to support our heroes and this incredible initiative with the U.S. military is going to help us do it. And remember every single one of you, every time you say thank you to a health care worker, our first responder, every time you applaud them, every time you ask them if they're doing okay, there's anything they need that helps so much, but what our military is going to do is going to be outstanding because we've seen they bring a special ability and their presence, as I said, in our hospitals, not only their skills, but that extraordinary confidence it gives everyone to see them present has been really, really crucial to get them through this crisis. So, so thankful to everyone who's brought together this new initiative to address the combat stress that's the reality for so many here.

Now, there's another important new approach we're going to take to protect our heroes and it is to give them more information about what they've experienced during this pandemic. I want to talk to you about testing and what we've talked about before is the coronavirus test, it's called a PCR test, and that is the test that answers the most immediate question at this exact moment. Are you infected with the coronavirus? That's the test that is crucial to so much of what we're going to do going forward as the test I wish we had had a lot more of when we needed it earlier on. But

there's another test that really will provide a lot of help and support as well and that's the antibody testing and I'm going to talk to you about a new initiative that will reach so many of our health care workers and first responders and I'm going to tell you why this is so important and the sweep of what we're going to do here. I'm also going to give a few qualifications cause it's important to recognize what we know and what we don't know when it comes to antibody testing. But here is what we do understand that a particularly good antibody tests, there's many different kinds, but the ones that are most accurate and effective give you a clear indication of whether you have been infected by the coronavirus previously and they give you some real confidence because here's what we can say anyone who has been infected and came through, obviously I had the ability to beat this disease knowing if you've been exposed to it is powerful information.

Our health care workers and our first responders who are dealing with folks who might be infected, it is going to give them additional confidence to know if they've been previously exposed. Think about what it takes every day to get up and say, I'm going to go where the COVID-19 is, where I know it is the folks go into the hospitals, the emergency rooms, the ICU, the paramedics, the EMTs, all the folks who know they're going to where the danger is. They're of course thinking of their families, their own families too, so having a sense of whether you've been exposed previously is very important and giving the best answer we can brings a lot of value. On top of that, we are seeing really impressive results with treatments based on plasma that needs to come from those who have already been exposed. So, there's a growing hope that when you identify people who have been exposed, you're identifying folks who can then give blood that then allows for the treatment of more people who are sick help save lives. And we know one thing about our health care workers are first responders they are doing this work because they care so much about saving lives and helping other people. So, knowing that they could be amongst those who give blood that saves other lives, is entirely consistent with everything they've devoted their lives to. And then there's the fact that we're going to get information that can help us fight this disease, we all understand the entire global medical community is still trying to understand the coronavirus, figure out the best ways to fight back. One day there will be a vaccine, one day there will be a cure, but the more information we gather, the more likelihood we get to that day sooner.

So, antibody testing brings a lot to the table and our goal is to reach a lot of people who would like to take advantage of on a voluntary basis, of course. But I'm talking about our health care workers, I'm talking about our police officers, our firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, Correction officers, so many who would like to have this opportunity and now it will be provided for all who want it. So, thinking about our health care workers, thinking about our first responders; we are initiating a plan to reach 150,000 of our heroes and give them this antibody testing to give them that knowledge and that peace of mind and to ensure that they are also helping us take the next step in fighting this disease. We have agreed to a partnership with the federal government, with the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control and more details will be announced in the next few days, but the plan is to begin as early as next week to offer the tests in hospitals, at fire houses, at police precincts, at correction facilities, wherever our health care workers and our first responders are to make the tests readily available. Again, this will be provided for free. The federal government is covering the cost and it will be provided to all who want to take advantage of this test. Now I mentioned that I'm going to say

the antibody tests - no one is claiming it is perfect. It does not tell you the best of I understand from all of our health care leadership and from listening to Dr. Fauci and others, it does not tell you if you're entirely immune in the sense we all think of that word. When we hear the word immune, we think you just can't possibly get something again. There is not yet confidence that having been exposed to the coronavirus once means you can never get it again. Now, common sense tells us if you're exposed once and you made it through, you're in very good stead; you're in a very good situation to make it through again if you ever were exposed again, but we don't know for sure if anyone can contract this disease the second time. The good news is honestly, there's not a lot of evidence that people have, but we don't know for sure. So that's a limitation that we have to be clear about and it's also important that even folks who get a positive result do not think that means that they can let down their guard. I'm not saying people would think they're invincible, but they have to be really clear that they still are dangerous because we're dealing with an unknown disease. We're dealing with so many questions. So, for health care workers and first responders, they would still continue in their work to wear the PPEs just as they were previously. And we still need to practice the same concepts of social distancing and we still have to be watchful for symptoms even if someone has tested positive. But again, it's not a perfect test, but it does give real information. It is helpful, tells you something very important and its part of solving this bigger puzzle of the Coronavirus and fighting it back. So, this again, more details to be announced, but a wonderful step forward and a huge initiative. The goal is to reach 150,000 of our heroes.

Now, let me talk about another effort to protect people and this is now about how we protect some of the very most vulnerable in New York City – homeless New Yorkers. And again, the compassion I talked about earlier; New Yorkers feel tremendous compassion for folks whose lives in some way came unraveled and they ended up on the street or they ended up in shelter. So, a few weeks ago I told you we had a goal of having 6,000 homeless in hotels rather than congregate shelters to make sure that people were safe and that goal has been reached and now we are going to go farther. This week we will move an additional 1,000 homeless individuals from congregate shelters to hotel facilities. The priority will be on folks in those larger congregate shelters that are having more trouble with social distancing. There's going to be a constant effort to evaluate all shelters and wherever there are social distancing problems continue to take people out of the shelters into hotels. One thousand this week, we are prepared to do a thousand more each week going forward as the need indicates, because we want to make sure people are safe and again, there are real reasons for people to be in shelters who need the services and shelter. So, for some people that actually can be much, much better to stay in the shelter setting, but we've got to make sure there's enough space. We've got to make sure that we strike that balance. We're also going to provide additional medical oversight; our Health + Hospitals team is going to work with the Department of Homeless Services to bring additional medical oversight to all homeless services sites. The goal is to constantly be vigilant for anything that might pose a danger to homeless New Yorkers and starting this week we will begin a program of testing homeless individuals at homeless services sites. Of course, anyone who tests positive will be isolated. This initiative will begin this week and expand over the next couple of weeks. The goal is to reach across the entire shelter system by the middle of May.

All right, a few more things before we turn to our colleagues in the media and we've talked about some, some serious and somber topics. But now let's turn to something I think people are going

to be happy to hear about. And you know, look, when our lives changed so profoundly over the last weeks, it's almost been impossible to take stock of all the things that are different and the things we miss and the things we need that we can't have right now. And some of those things are going to take a while longer, but there are other things that we can start to bring back if only online for now, later in person. But there are some things that we need to make available to people online that could really change their lives for the better. And we know there are a lot of folks in the weeks leading up to this crisis who were planning on doing something absolutely beautiful, they were planning on getting married and Chirlane and I are coming up on our anniversary on May 14th – 26 years. And we know what a beautiful reality marriage is, what it means to people, how it frames their whole lives and yet folks haven't been able to get married in these last weeks. So, the good news is we're going to have a very, very good new visitor in our city. Cupid is coming to New York City; Project Cupid will allow couples to get married online and this will start later on next week and it will be available in 11 different languages. And this is a great team effort and we want to thank Speaker Johnson and the City Council, want to thank the City Clerk's Office and our colleagues at DOITT, our information technology department who all put their minds together in a spirit of love and said, how do we figure this out? How do we get back in the marriage business and help people who are ready to tie the knot do so online? So again, not this week, but late next week, this'll start up and information will be available at nyc.gov/cupid and I want you to know this is such a great example of New Yorkers saying, you know what, even in the face of a pandemic, we're not going to let it change us and we're not going to let a pandemic stand in the way of love. We're going to let people get married and go forward with their lives and look to the better days ahead.

Okay, let's now talk about what we talk about every single day, which is the daily indicators. So, as I go into them, I can say we've had a good day, not a perfect day, but a good day and we got to keep pushing and we got to keep doing better. So, the first indicator unfortunately is up. The daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19 went up from 112 to 136, but the other indicators going in the right direction. Daily number of people in ICUs in our public hospitals for suspected COVID-19 - down from 745 to 734. Percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 citywide – down from 27 percent to 23 percent. Public health lab tests – down from 56 percent to 29 percent. That's great. So, progress like most days we've seen progress, but not what we still need fully to get everything going down in the same direction. Now, we're going to talk I am certain about the challenges of maintaining social distance. I can tell you we have to stick to it and yes, we're about to have warmer weather and yes, everyone's going a little stir crazy, but we have to stick to it because every time you see these indicators going the right direction, that's because of the work you've been doing. But if we loosen up these indicators, we'll start to go in the wrong direction. Now unless there's someone out there that wants to delay the restart and wants to see this horrible crisis continue, I think we can all agree we got to buckle down and beat this disease. And every time you're socially distanced, every time you stay home, you're helping to fight back the disease and save lives. We got to stick with it.

I'll just close before saying a few words in Spanish and then we'll open to our colleagues in the media; that you know, we're going to be spending a long time trying to figure out everything that happened here in terms of the human impact over these last months and certainly the months ahead and the mental health piece of this is in some ways probably going to be the hardest to make sense of. As we always say, it's different than the physical reality or the physical scars; the

mental scars take longer to uncover and process and make sense of. But so many people are dealing with these challenges in one way or another. The bottom line, as you heard from the announcement today, whether you're one of our heroes, whether you're an everyday New Yorker, practicing social distancing, whether you're a parent trying to support your kids, whoever you are, you're not alone and we're going to be there for you and 24 hours a day, seven days a week, multiple languages, and for free. Anyone who needs help can call 888-NYCWELL and get a trained counselor and get that support. Lots of people are doing that and it's helping them through. I want to invite anyone who needs that help to take advantage of it. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media and again, always remember giving the name and the outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Hi all. Just a reminder that we have First Lady McCray and Police Commissioner Shea here in person, and on the phone we have Fire Commissioner Negro, Health Commissioner Barbot, Social Services Commissioner Banks, and Vice President and Chief Quality Officer for NYC Health + Hospitals, Dr. Wei. With that, I will start with Ashley from the New York Times.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor and everyone on the phone. I wanted to ask a two-part question. One, there was some suggestion by the shul that this – that the funeral in Brooklyn that was broken up last night had been coordinated with the police somehow. I'm wondering, Mr. Mayor if you could tell us if you were aware of those plans? And then for Commissioner Shea, can you tell us in detail about any contact that or plans that the NYPD may have made pertaining to this individual's funeral, and also answer, you know, are there others planned and how do you plan to deal with this in the future if there are other deaths in the Orthodox community?

Mayor: Ashley, I'll start and I'll turn to the Commissioner. I heard about this situation. I believe it was somewhere around the 6:30 to 7:00 pm. I was very concerned when I heard there might be a large gathering. The Commissioner will talk about how the NYPD approached it. But I have to say again, I understand that when people are going through mourning, they're in real pain, but we have to understand what it means to hold a large gathering in New York City today. It means unfortunately that people who go to that gathering, some will be sick with this disease. That's just a fact. We know this. Some will spread the disease to others. People as a result will die. So I have a long deep relationship with the Orthodox Jewish community. A lot of personal relationships, a lot of people I know and respect. I have a lot of love for the community. The notion that people would gather in large numbers and even if they don't mean to, would spread a disease that will kill other members of the community, is just unacceptable to me.

So we have to do something different and we have to break out of whatever we thought was normal in the past because these are not normal times. So we're not going to be allowing these kinds of gatherings in any community. This was by far the largest community - the largest gathering in any community of New York City of any kind that I had heard of or seen directly or on video since the beginning of this crisis and it's just not allowable. So we have to change this

reality. We will work closely with the community to do it, but we have to change this reality. Commissioner?

Police Commissioner Dermot Shea: Yeah. Mr. Mayor, I think you hit the nail on the head. Before we get into the specifics of yesterday's incident, what troubles me most is as a department, as a city, we've been through a lot already and members that have gotten sick, members that have given their life, whether it's in the health field, certainly in the police department, make no mistake, this large gathering such as this is putting members of my department at risk and it cannot happen and it will not happen and it's going to be met with very stern as it was last night, immediately being broken up and stern consequences. What we know about yesterday's incident was at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon, we learned of the passing, unfortunately, of a prominent rabbi from the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Immediately within minutes, members of the local precinct were in contact with clergy liaisons and members of the Jewish community in terms of what to expect at that location.

Plans were put in place, a detail was put in place, unfortunately, when you look back at some of the past incidents, there's been a lot of work done throughout New York City with every faith and people again have been overly – overwhelmingly compliant. But there has been a couple of incidents that were not so. So contingency plans were put into place, a number of offices with detailed in the unlikely event that large numbers came and we thought that that was a possibility. But absolutely, I think we've been pretty consistent, Mr. Mayor, for what seems like a longer time, but probably months now that there are to be no gatherings in New York City such as what we saw last night. So within – as the time unfolded last night, there was probably several thousand people that that came in and around that location on Bedford Avenue, additional offices. I was in conversations with members of the upper echelon of the NYPD. Additional offices were called in and in pretty short time, that crowd was dispersed and a number, I think the final tally I saw was 12 summonses were issued for a variety of offenses. Certainly social distancing and then including some for a refusal to disperse.

But I want to end where I started with this, what happened last night simply cannot happen and we need all New Yorkers - all New Yorkers have come together during this crisis, but they need to do it more than ever and we need community leaders to stand beside us. We cannot have people unnecessarily being exposed to a disease that is having catastrophic effects on our membership and really New Yorkers as a whole.

Moderator: Next we have Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Mr. Mayor, good morning, my question has to do with how you are going to assess the different levels of risk involved in human activity. For example, why can't people play tennis? Why can't you regulate the amount of people who will be visiting or who could visit city pools when it's 98 degrees in the summer or regulate the traffic going into city beaches and give people maybe a ticket or a rain check for another date, if they can't go to the pool that day and regulate the time period and the amount of use at that pool because we're facing what happened last night is almost like a release of a valve. There's going to be a level frustration in this city, that will be very difficult. I think, maybe I'm wrong, but it will be very difficult to manage the

expectations and the needs of this population. I mean, am I wrong? What is your response to my question?

Mayor: Well, Henry, I think you said a couple of different things. I think the issues you raised obviously are being felt all over New York City, but again, I want to say a large gathering, this is a different issue – when you talk about pools or beaches or tennis, you're talking about what individuals do. This – what we saw last night was absolutely unacceptable and would be unacceptable in any and all communities. It was a large gathering. Again, tragically thousands of people. The amount of danger created by that kind of gathering is inestimable. The fact that people will die because of it just goes against everyone's values. I want to separate that kind of thing from the question you're asking, which I think is a fair and important question about what can we do for everyday people, individual people from all parts of our community as we try to over time work our way back to normal.

So I'd say as the first rule is there'll be no large gatherings of any kind anywhere and anyone who equates a small number of people around, you know, a blanket in a park with what we saw last night is entirely missing the point. We are talking about thousands of people in close proximity in one site. We will never, ever allow something like that to go unchecked anywhere. Now, if you say, okay, people are understandably yearning to get outside and the weather's going to get warm, we're working on this all the time and we're going to have announcements on this soon how we're going to address the warm weather. We've worked with the City Council on one piece of it, which is to try and open up more space in certain key areas with enforcement.

But when you talk about pools, beaches, tennis courts, each thing's going to be looked at individually, there's the whole different piece of the equation, which we've talked about, which is what can we afford to open, and that's going to be all about what happens with the stimulus in Washington, whether we even have money to open some of these things, and that's a big question, Mark, right now. But then beyond is the question of what will keep people safe? The most important question, what will protect people's health and safety? And places where a lot of people might congregate create a real danger. We have to know we can manage them properly and there could be proper enforcement and that the time is right. So the indicators will tell us when we can start opening up and we're going to do it very carefully, methodically, and each thing you mentioned will be looked at in turn when the time is right, but only when the time is right.

Moderator: Next we have Marcia from CBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

Mayor: Good morning, Marcia, how are you?

Question: I need to ask you about what happened in Williamsburg because a number of leaders in the Jewish community are quite upset that the members of that community were singled out when there's been violations of social distancing in many places. Number one, they're asking for an apology. And number two, they're inferring that the fact that you're singling out a Jewish community could add to the number of anti-Semitic incidents that happen in this city. So I

wondering if you will apologize if you feel bad about singling them out? Also related to social distancing, wondering if the NYPD will repurpose some staff like crossing guards who are not being used to help with social distancing? And on an unrelated topic about medical examiners, are you thinking about the possibility of directing the medical examiners to extend the hours on weekdays, maybe to midnight and possibly staying open on weekends?

Mayor: Marcia, respect all those questions, our team will follow up with you on the medical examiner because again, I'm asking everyone in the interest of fairness, all your colleagues have been doing two questions up front, one or two and we're going stick to that rule. So I will speak to your question and the Commissioner can speak to the crossing guard question.

I spoke last night out of passion. I could not believe my eyes, Marcia. It was deeply, deeply distressing. Again, this is a community I love. This is a community I have spent a lot of time working with closely and if you saw anger and frustration, you're right. I spoke out of real distress that people's lives were in danger before my eyes and I was not going to tolerate it. So I regret if the way I said it in any way gave people a feeling of being treated the wrong way. That was not my intention. It was said with love, but it was tough love. It was anger and frustration and what I saw, no, Marcia, it's not happened other places. Let's be honest, this kind of gathering has happened in only a few places and it cannot continue. It's endangering the lives of people in the community.

So to all those, and I understand politicians, everyone has said, oh look, you know, this is like people gathering the park. No, it's not like people gathering the park. It was thousands of people. Can we just have an honest conversation here? It was not acceptable. We will not tolerate it. I also will not tolerate any anti-Semitism ever. And for decades I've made it my business to stand up for the Jewish community and people know that. Won't tolerate anti-Semitism, won't allow it to grow in the city, we fought it back many times. My message was to all communities and that was written in black and white, but it was also to be clear that what I saw I had not seen anywhere else and I was trying to be honest about the fact that there's a problem that people have to come to grips with and deal with or else people in the community will die, and that's not something to get somehow shunted aside. I understand the power of words, obviously. But I'm not going to let that power, that concern about words overcome the value of human life. We're here to protect human beings and people were put in danger last night. Members of the Jewish community were putting each other in danger. They were putting our police officers in danger.

Now, if I see it in any other community, I'll call that out equally. So again, if in my passion and in my emotion, I said something that in any way was hurtful, I'm sorry about that. That was not my intention, but I also want to be clear, I have no regrets about calling out this danger and saying we're going to deal with it very, very aggressively. Commissioner, do you want to speak to the crossing guard issue?

Commissioner Shea: Sure. And if I may – I mean, just to echo the Mayor's comments on last night. There were thousands of people crammed onto one block. And when you look at everything that we are going through as a city, we live in an imperfect world and we, you know - my department certainly, I have seen instances of not social distancing. But I could tell you Marcia, that as you know, there were two funerals last weekend from members of the NYPD.

We would normally have probably tens of thousands of people at that funeral. We had a handful. People have to be accountable for their own actions regardless of what neighborhood, ethnicity, where they come from. We cannot have what we had last night. We will not tolerate it. We are going to break it up immediately. And really, you cannot even go to that event. That's what it comes down to.

Regarding the crossing guards, you know, we've been hit hard throughout the department. We have really positive news. We are still praying for a number of members that are in the hospitals. But we're on the road back, thank God, in terms of our sick rates. One of the things that we are still watching closely is who is at work, who is essential across many titles. And when we look at crossing guards, I think it's well known. You tend to have people that are a little bit older. So we are very cautious of how we use those crossing guards in what capacity and people in terms of age, prior medical conditions and the situations we put them in. Of course, we're looking at any and all employees of the NYPD, how to get the most out of what we use. We've worked with other city agencies in terms of lending some of our expertise to other city agencies. And we would not be against continuing to do that. But we're also going to do it in a smart manner that really watches out for everyone's safety.

Moderator: Next we have Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning everyone. I wanted to follow up with the question that many of my colleagues – the one thing that I can get some clarity from the Commissioner on is, you know, the NYPD's involvement with the organization of last night's funeral. So former City Councilman David Greenfield said, I guess that this was allowed. He, you know, he tweeted again, some information that, you know, this was organized with the NYPD's approval. I don't know if they knew that if you, if your department knew there would be so many people who showed up, but questions on that and more details on that? When these summonses were issued, was it after the Mayor came and asked for it to be broken up or did it happen before? And just for the Mayor, you know, there have been multiple reports, the Governor has cited these reports of funerals and I even drove by a large funeral once on the BQE a few weeks ago. So why were you so shocked that this was the case? Because it seemed to have been a consistent problem?

Mayor: No, Katie, I'll start and pass to the Commissioner. Again respectfully. I'm not – you're, saying I was shocked this was a case. That's not what I'm saying. I've been talking about this issue previously that we won't tolerate – I even said we wouldn't tolerate it. Again, I really want you guys to take the fact that we constantly are briefing you and respect that we're trying to give you a lot of information. And you're all intelligent people. You've heard in great detail, telling people they cannot gather, from all religious communities, in their houses of worship. That's been going on for weeks. Telling people they can't even do services in a living room because that's going to endanger lives. We've been talking about all of these dangers and the fact that we're not going to tolerate them. And we are going to enforce. And we've talked about funerals before as well. That's why I'm so angry. That we have given plenty of warnings, worked with community leaders to ensure they gave the warnings. And they have by the way, overwhelmingly. Let me make sure this is crystal clear. I've said it many times, but I know there are many in this town who love to create confusion and division. So let me try one more time. I want to thank the Jewish community leadership. I want to thank the rabbinical leadership who

have consistently said people should not gather for religious services or anything else because it will endanger their own community. I have seen total unity. And I appreciate that unity. And so it's up to everyone in every community to respect these voices of their City government, of the leaders of their communities. There's been clarity across the board. What is so frustrating to me is after all those messages were so clear that so many people would still choose to gather. I understand that they lost someone very dear and important to them, but this is still a pandemic. People's lives are put in danger when people gather. So what is shocking to me is that after all the warnings, something of this size would happen. And that's where I'm making very clear, unapologetically that the next gathering will be met by summonses and arrests. Period. No more warnings. And that's true in every community, equal opportunity, New York City. If you gather, I'm not talking again about a few friends hang out in the corner. I'm saying if you have a large gathering, hundreds of people, thousands of people that we're not even going to have a discussion. It's just we're going immediately to summons. And if we have to use the arrest, we'll use arrest. Go ahead, Commissioner.

Commissioner Shea: Yeah, Katie and I think I touched on it before. We've been in constant contact with leaders of different communities throughout New York City of different faiths. Just last week I could tell you members of the Muslim community, members of the Jewish community, I spoke to the Cardinal just this week. This is what we do. And in terms of social distancing, probably not a day goes by that myself and the Mayor don't talk about whether it's social distancing in parks, whether it's the sick rate of our employees, whether it's testing that came up earlier today, mental health yesterday, and certainly funerals and religious events comes up. I don't know of anyone in New York City that doesn't know what's going on, two months into this. I think from the Mayor's executive orders, from the Governor's executive orders, from watching the news every night, everyone knows what is acceptable and what is not. And conversations between members of the NYPD and leaders who, by the way, members of the Jewish community, extremely helpful in navigating circumstances with this over the last two months, because there have been a couple incidents. But planning for what shouldn't happen is in no way having a conversation regarding, you should not equate that with having a conversation regarding condoning a particular event. That event last night never should have happened. It better not happen again. It can't. It is, again – we can talk about this until the cows come home. It doesn't get any crystal clearer than this for me. You are putting my cops' lives at risk and it's unacceptable.

Moderator: Next we have Julia from the Post.

Question: Hi, good morning to everyone. I have two questions. One for you, Mr. Mayor and one for Ms. McCray. For you, you addressed the homeless and the shelters, but I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about your plan for the homeless in the subways? I see that the MTA worked with the NYPD last night to get some people off the trains, but it seems unsustainable to do that night after night? So what's the long term plan?

And then for Ms. McCray, I'm wondering if she can just list her specific credentials for co-chairing the racial inequity task force and the mental health program for frontline workers, given that critics, including Councilman Reynoso has called the first appointment cronyism and nepotism?

Mayor: Well, let me speak to the homeless issue and then I'd like to preface on the question of the commission since I'm the person who decided how to approach that internal task force I should say. And I'll certainly turn to Chirlane then. On the homeless, I had a conversation yesterday with Sarah Feinberg of the MTA to emphasize that we are ready immediately, to implement a plan in those ten terminal stations that I talked to you about in detail yesterday. And this is something Commissioner Shea and Commissioner Banks and others we all gathered together to discuss and have real faith this will be a game changer. But to be a game changer, we have to disrupt business as usual, which means we have to close those stations in the late night hours, 12 midnight to 5:00 am. Replace the service with a shuttle bus for anyone who needs to get on that line outbound. And they'll still be able to use it just like you use a shuttle bus when there's maintenance or anything else. So it won't disrupt service for people that need service. But it will allow for deep cleaning of the stations. And will allow for the NYPD and our outreach workers to engage people in a much more effective manner. And it will change the pattern that Julia, has existed for decades in this city. Where a homeless individual could ride a subway line back and forth and back and forth. And that's something that's just not right. We need to address that. What we are seeing here is a real problem, but it's not because something fundamentally changed compared to all the previous decades. It's that there are very few people riding the subways. There are much – there's much less service. And so the homeless individuals who have been there all along are obviously standing out more. But it's also a clarion call to help them, to do more to get them out of the subways, off the streets, into long term shelter, into affordable housing.

And I feel for all the riders who are distressed. It's painful to watch. It's unpleasant to watch. It's unsettling to watch. We don't want anyone to go through it. But this City has been dealing with this issue for decades. We've got to do things differently. That's why we came up with the Journey Home approach. That's why we came up with HOME-STAT. And these things are working. But this is a new approach, NYPD feels strongly this is the X factor to end that habit of an individual, just being able to stay on that train or maybe only get off briefly and get right back on and go the whole other way on the line. We're not – we're kidding ourselves if we think we can get a different result by doing the same thing over and over again for years and years and years. So I talked to Sarah Feinberg, I said, we're ready to do this. We're ready to cover the cost. All we need is the MTA's support. We have good conversation. We're waiting for an answer. And we could get going immediately.

And in terms of sustainability, this is a sustainable plan for sure. The HOME-STAT initiative has brought thousands of homeless folks off the street permanently. The Journey Home initiative will transform the reality of homelessness on the streets of this city, I don't have a doubt in my mind. And if we can get the support of the MTA, we'll put in all the people power. We'll pay the cost to get homeless folks out of the subway in a whole new way. It won't be perfect, but it will be a game changer. It's absolutely sustainable, but we need the MTA to say yes, so please ask the MTA today if they will support this plan. Allow us to pay for it and get going with it so we can really change the reality for not only the homeless but for all the strap hangers who suffer with this problem.

To the question of the internal taskforce on equity and inclusion. We have a disparity crisis in this city. We had it before. It's been made sharper and in some ways even worse by this disease. My goal with the internal task force, which came out of a variety of conversations among members of this administration, was to ensure that all city agencies maximally address disparity. There's been great work over the last six years. There's more that can and should be done. To ensure that happens it was crucial to make sure that the leaders of this task force would be the people who had the strongest understanding of the issue and the greatest vision about how to address the problem and carried the weight to ensure that all city agencies would follow through on the work of the task force. Your idea with all due respect, Julia, of what is a qualification? Well, you have the right to your opinion. I'll tell you what a qualification is. A qualification in my view is who has the weight gravitas? Who has the intellect, who has the vision, who has the standing in this administration? Because this is an internal task force.

Well, this whole administration was created and we talked about it long before you happened to be a reporter here, the way we did our transition, the way we chose our team, the way we've continued to build our team. The person who's been the architect with me has been our First Lady. And I've said many times she's my closest advisor and my partner in everything I do. So who better to co-chair an internal task force to make sure that the government is addressing these issues than her? Deputy Mayor Thompson has devoted his entire life to issues of inclusion and equity. And I also am announcing that we're adding a third co-chair, Deputy Mayor Raul Perea-Henze, who brings a wealth of experience and obviously has expertise in some of the issues and agencies reporting to him in some of the areas where there's been greatest concern about disparity. But I'll turn to Chirlane and forgive my long intro by saying I know who will get the job done and she will get the job done. Chirlane?

First Lady McCray: Julia, I would remind you that the primary task of this body is to listen, to gather information and to make recommendations. It is not a decision-making body. It is a position that requires the ability to listen well, to convene and be able to gather information. I'm a volunteer. I'm certainly well-placed within this administration to take on this work. And I have a very committed approach to this work. I've been a mental health champion from the beginning of this administration. And I have been praised by leaders of national organizations around the country. I think that if you want to know more about my qualifications that you should talk to my team and we will let you know all of the things that I have done that would merit such a position and more. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next we have Anna from the Daily News.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. Two questions. One, given the budgetary issues that the City is facing, are you guys going to move forward with the BQX project? And also, I'm just curious if the First Lady is going to have to give you a haircut at some point. You're looking a little – your hair's looking a little long these days. So I'm just curious if that's in your future?

Mayor: I want to give Anna credit. You're – you know, we knew this day would come where a journalist would ask the question. Yes, this has been a topic at home and Chirlane is a long –

Anna, you may have seen some of my pictures from my younger years when I first met Chirlane and my hair was at least as long as this. And so she's a fan of the longer hair. But yes, it's getting a little, a little much. So we're going to have to figure out a new approach to hair management. The longer hair's day I think has is coming to an end.

But on the question – a very good and important question about the budget. You know, something like the BQX which we had just begun a whole phase of environmental impact review. It's going to be looked at now with all the other major capital initiatives. We talked yesterday about some things that have been absolutely essential, like the affordable housing program, which is being, you know, some pieces of it are being delayed because of the reality of this crisis and our budget reality. So, we're certainly going to look at the BQX and make decisions, thinking about those same realities. I don't want to give you a firm answer today. It will be discussed in the budget process and be part of what we say around the budget in June. But it's a very good example of the kind of thing that now has to be thought of very differently simply for the budget ramifications alone. Now, that was going to be obviously an initiative that could only work with very substantial federal funding. But to the extent there was any City exposure, it has to be considered now as part of our budget process.

Moderator: Next we have Steve from Westwood One News.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. Thanks again for taking our questions every day and giving us ample opportunity to get responses from you. We really appreciate this. Quick question about a major recreation space in Southern Brooklyn. The Gateway National Recreation area has been a really important release valve for people in Brooklyn and Queens who want to get outside, who want to be out there recreating with their families while maintaining significant social distancing and not having to worry about being close to others. But the MTA has decided to park idle buses because they're using fewer buses at the Floyd Bennett Field facility. And as a result of the entire facility, which had been used for weeks now for safe recreation is now close to the public. It's also cut off 400 people from their community gardens at a time when many New Yorkers are having trouble putting food on their tables. And those 400 people rely on the food that they're growing in those community gardens to feed themselves. I'm just wondering, it seems like the MTA and the Parks Department reached this agreement without the knowledge of City Hall. I'm wondering if that's the case? And if there's anything being done to try to find an alternative such as the Riis Beach parking lot, which is completely unused right now or any other facilities to park these buses? And then one other question about the beaches. Considering that we have people social distancing –

Mayor: Steve, you there? Steve? Well we got, we got part one. I guess if we can get him back, we can do the second part. I'll start answering and you'll let me know if you, if you bring him back. Steve thank you for your comment at the beginning. I want to say, I think for everyone – is Steve back or not? I'm hearing some feedback there. You good? Steve?

Question: Yeah.

Mayor: Okay. There you go. We heard you start to talk about beaches and then lost you.

Question: As a second question, the beach issue was just, you know, it seems like social distancing as it's maintained in Central Park and Prospect Park could also be maintained on many of our 14 miles of City beaches over the summer? Some of them maybe, perhaps not. I'm wondering if that's being considered for approved recreation over the summer?

Mayor: Okay. So, Steve, thank you for the questions. And I want to say thank you for your kind comment about what I've tried to do, my team's tried to do here, which is to constantly make information available and take questions from all of you that would help the people in New York City get a better sense of what's going on. And obviously, you know, answer important and tough questions that the public deserves answers to. So, thank you. I want to thank everyone in the media because this has been, you know, an extraordinary situation where we're doing this so often. And I think the people of this city have appreciated that this dialogue happens so regularly. So thank you to all.

To your two questions. So, I'm not happy with what I'm hearing about, it doesn't make sense to me. Steve, what I don't understand is exactly who all the parties to this were. Obviously, the MTA, my understanding is that situation is controlled, that space is controlled by the United States Parks Service. I don't know enough about what city agencies involvement was or wasn't. I'll get down to the bottom of that today and we can give you more of an answer later. But I can tell you I don't like what I'm seeing for the very reasons you outlined. That we want people to have access to recreation for just the amount of time they need each day. And obviously with social distancing, but people do need access to that recreation, people do need access to community gardens, again following those rules. And I don't understand. It's not anything negative to MTA. I just don't why with so much less service going on, it would be necessary to knock out, you know, those opportunities for everyday people. You know, I have to believe there are other alternatives. So, we're happy to work with MTA on other alternatives. But we'll come back to you today on that.

On the beaches. I think we're starting with the notion that first of all we don't know what the next few months bring. The normal time we would have opened the beaches would have been a matter of weeks from now on Memorial Day. That was inconceivable from everything that we have been experiencing. Because remember, how do most people get to the beaches? They get on the subways, they get in buses, they drive their cars and then a bunch of people congregate. That was not something we could possibly imagine for the near term. We are still fighting day to day to beat back this disease. You've been watching indicators, Steve, we've been making some progress but we're still not to the kind of progress we need. So that's why we knew we could not start the beach season anywhere near like normal. As I've said, we're open to later on in the summer where we may get an opportunity. I think your point is well taken. If we get to something, if we get to a point where we could start to open up, how would we do it and how would we do it smartly? I think it's fair to say I could see a scenario where we would do social distancing and limits on the number of people, but I also want to urge people to recognize that won't be easy. That's a lot to enforce, it comes with real problems and potential dangers. So that one would be a high bar from my point of view. We'd have to be really certain we were turning a corner on the disease, really certain we could do it the right way, and that we could enforce it properly. But it's a perfectly fair idea and something we're going to look at as one of the options,

but that's not happening overnight. That's something that would be down the road when we've had a lot more progress beating back this disease.

Moderator: Next we have Christina from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi, Mayor. Thanks for taking my question. There's obviously, and rightfully, a lot of focus on mental health right now. I'm just wondering if we can expect a specific plan for teachers and students who are also dealing with a lot right now with the shift to remote learning.

Mayor: Yeah. Christina, the – absolutely, yes. The Chancellor mentioned this originally a couple of weeks ago and I tried to amplify yesterday how much we're focused and concerned about the mental health needs of our kids. I've spoken with the First Lady about it. The First Lady and the Chancellor are working together to take a lot of the initiatives that have been created through Thrive and apply them in the coming months with our kids remotely, but also to start the planning for September. We understand that September is going to be a challenge in terms of mental health for our kids that's absolutely unprecedented and we're going to have to do a lot in every school to support kids who have honestly been traumatized. So, you're going to in the not too distant future hear the specific plans to address mental health needs of kids over the next few months. And then as we get closer to the opening of school, definitely a plan is going to be put out on mental health services in all schools for September. And the First Lady and the Chancellor will be working on that together. And the First lady is going to add –

First Lady McCray: Yes. You should know that the mental health services that are provided to our young people are continuing, that teachers are being trained in social emotional learning, which of course deals with the children's emotional needs so that they are able to continue working with children online to a certain extent. In the fall we hope to have a more expanded program because we know that so many of our young people are going to come back in distress, but we haven't stopped doing anything that we're already doing. We're doing what we can virtually, training the teachers, bringing them up to speed so that they will be ready in September.

Mayor: Alright. Thank you.

Moderator: Next we have Melissa from News 4.

Mayor: Melissa? I don't know if we have Melissa – are you there, Melissa?

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: How are you doing?

Question: Sorry, I was checking on my daughter in school.

Mayor: That's important. You had your priorities right.

Question: Walked away at the wrong moment, so thank you. We've been reporting that a few children hospitalized here in the city appear to be experiencing some of the same inflammatory symptoms that British officials warned about over last weekend. Some of the children have tested positive for COVID-19 while others have tested negative. But we're wondering what you're seeing, big picture. Your Health Department says since the inflammatory symptoms are not required to be reported to City health officials, they can't say exactly how many children are experiencing these serious side effects right now. Is this something you'd want your Health Department to be tracking? What else do you know about this, if anything?

Mayor: Thank you for the question. Look, I'm concerned because, you know, Melissa, we've talked about from the beginning, we're dealing with the great unknown here, and I think we have to be vigilant all the time to any new development that might give us a warning of something bigger because obviously the entire mission here is to save lives and particularly precious is saving the lives of our kids. So, I'm concerned about it. I don't pretend to have expertise on the exact reality, but I'm very concerned. And I think we've got to figure out how to understand it better and if it is something to be tracked. Let me turn to Dr. Barbot and I know we have Dr. Eric Wei who's the Vice President of Health + Hospitals. I want to see if either of them would like to speak to this issue.

Commissioner Barbot: So, Mr. Mayor, I will say that – I'll start with what we've been saying for a while. Every day we learn more and more about how this virus behaves, both from a public health point of view as well as from a clinical point of view. And, you know, recently we have been talking about the way in which coronavirus can affect the heart and the cardiovascular system. To date, we have not heard of ways in which the coronavirus has been affecting children's cardiovascular system. We do have regular ongoing calls with infectious disease specialists throughout the city. We have webinars with them. Additionally, we meet on a regular basis through webinar with doctors and leaders in the intensive care units of all of the hospitals, and we have not seen this to date. I've also been in communication with our Medical Examiner. She has not noticed this in cases that she has seen. But we are in contact with our academic partners to ensure that if this is a trend that's being seen through our clinical partners that we work collaboratively to understand it better. We are always paying attention to what seems to be emerging not only from the worldwide literature but also what we're experiencing here in New York City.

Mayor: Dr. Wei, anything you'd like to add?

Vice President and Chief Quality Officer Eric Wei, Health + Hospitals: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, similar to Dr. Barbot, I am not aware of this being a trend in New York City Health + Hospitals. I think that was one of the things that we were most, kind of, I guess appreciative of and being a father of two toddlers, three and five and a baby who is seven months old – you know, being scared for our children is it – the virus seems to not affect our young patients nearly as much as the older and those with comorbidities. But as Dr. Barbot mentioned, we are paying attention through our Pediatrics Council, our Critical Care Councils, our Emergency Department Councils, and we are not seeing a lot of children testing positive for COVID or getting very ill or ending up in our pediatric ICUs from COVID. But we are aware of the news and the literature

that's ever-changing out there about inflammatory changes, Kawasaki disease, and we're paying very close attention to that and also listening to our science and our experts.

Moderator: Last two for today. Next is Matt Chase from Newsday.

Question: Hey, thanks for taking my question. I appreciate it. For the Police Commissioner, regarding gatherings, what exactly will you be doing differently going forward from what you did last night? How will your summons and arrest policy be different from what you did last night? And to what extent has the procedure changed for handling arrestees and folks getting summons physically since the coronavirus? And for Dr. Barbot, can you explain an epidemiology, the difference between absence of evidence and evidence of absence?

Mayor: Okay, Dr. Barbot, why don't you take that first, since that sounds like a question I would certainly not have the answer to. So, why don't you take that one and then we'll turn it to the Commissioner?

Commissioner Barbot: You know, that's a really good question. And when we say that there is absence of evidence, it means that there are not a good amount of studies that have documented evidence one way or another, what the particular finding in question or that particular question in question may be. So, that's an absence of findings. And then the other part of your question, if you could restate it.

Mayor: Do we have Matt still there?

Question: Sure. Can you hear me okay?

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: I was wondering if you can explain evidence of absence.

Commissioner Barbot: Evidence of absence, meaning that scientific studies were done, clinical studies were done, observations, etcetera, and confirmed that there is, no current association with the particular question in mind. Now, that's not to say that future studies may not find a finding. But that's what that means.

Mayor: Okay. Commissioner Shea.

Commissioner Shea: So, what I'll say about the gatherings – we're two months into this pandemic at this point and when you look at how we, as a police department, have policed. I am biased, but I think we've done a good job of balancing and using discretion and working with New Yorkers from one end of the city to another. In terms of whether it's in parks, whether it's at religious gatherings, whether it's outside housing developments, or whether it's on the street lining up to buy groceries. I think we've gone into it with an appreciation of this is tough for everyone and we've got to get through this together. And we've empowered our offices for years now to use discretion. And I think that that has come through in this. By-and-large you've seen New Yorkers cooperate. You've seen incidents pop up.

Certainly, we've had an increase in 3-1-1 calls. I view that as a good thing that people are letting us know what's going on and taking interest in their city and it is their city. Overall, we've seen really few, when you think of the tens and hundreds of thousands at this point, interactions across this city in a variety of circumstances. Arrests are the far extreme, there have been some summons, it's really not a lot and usually it's been a mutual cooperation. But here's the only thing that's changed. We are beyond, at this point, asking people to comply. We cannot have, for the third time, what we had last night. And that is irrespective of any religion, any race, any part of this city. It is simply putting you at risk. It is putting your families at risk. It is putting the critical workers at risk that are already risking their lives, saying goodbye to their children and going into the unknown in emergency rooms across the city every day. And it's certainly, for the last time, putting my cops at risk. And what you should take away from that is how really unnecessary it is. We grieved this weekend for two fallen detectives, but we did not come out. We did it from our home by-and-large. And there is no reason that anyone in this city cannot do the same in this unprecedented time.

Moderator: Last question for today, Debralee from Manhattan Times and Bronx Free Press.

Question: Hey, good morning everyone.

Mayor: Good morning.

Question: I wanted to follow up on the conversation that's being had around testing and how the capacity for it continues to ramp up both on the city and the state level, to the extent that we're talking about expanding testing at NYCHA sites, at independent pharmacies, and the like. In doing so, can you speak to whether in fact the guidance on residents seeking out testing has changed, has more testing, in fact, then led to a conversation about inviting residents in the effort to both test and trace and identify the illness [inaudible] continues to progress. In fact, are we saying to residents, are we changing the guidance and saying, if you're asymptomatic, potentially you should still seek out testing to be certain? And then in light of that, are we looking at a prelude essentially to what's already happened in Chile, and we've heard Dr. Fauci discuss, which are essentially coronavirus certification or some kind of identification that speaks to whether you've tested positive and what that will mean? And then finally, when we talk about this testing and tracing policy, what concerns does the city have about how this will affect undocumented immigrants who are already concerned about, you know, the big brother quality of some of these programs, and in fact the disincentives to come out and get tested because there is this follow-through in a way that potentially might be invasive and they would worry, might well lead to dire consequences.

Mayor: So, Debralee, appreciate it. Let me work through these questions quickly and our medical colleagues, they might want to jump in as well, but let me take the first stab. For undocumented folks – look, this is a city that has gone out of its way to show absolute and total respect for all human beings who live here regardless of documentation status. I think that's something that's deeply understood in immigrant communities that we do not ask documentation status when we provide services, especially things like health care. NYPD does not ask documentation status, we go out of a way to make sure that records are not kept, that would be

problematic. People have been told who are undocumented in this crisis, you know, we want to make sure you get food and you get medical care just like everybody else. So – and obviously the initiative that we created with the Open Society Foundation is to provide direct support to undocumented folks who don't have a livelihood, is exceptional and says the level of commitment this city has to all human beings.

So, my hope is when it comes to something as important as knowing if you have a disease that obviously can be life threatening to you and your family, that that is more important than anything else. Folks who have come here, have come here overwhelmingly to try and better the lives of their families often from very, very difficult and even tragic situations where they came from. So, I would like to believe that notwithstanding the fears, there would be – the first impulse is if someone needed testing, they would get testing, and know that it would be kept confidential by the City of New York because we keep everything confidential. In terms of your larger questions, has the guidance changed, in a sense, yes. But in another way, I wouldn't say all the way. It's changed in the sense that we once had almost no testing in the city.

And then we had to try to use the little bit we had to focus on the sickest patients and the health care personnel and the first responders. And now we're able only in the last few weeks to open it up to broader communities. So, that's definitely a change. Our message to people is that getting tested is important particularly if you are most vulnerable, older, and/or have preexisting conditions. So, that's been consistent. But what will change, for sure, much, deeply – much more deeply in the next few weeks is when we go to a huge test-and-trace approach. Then we're saying to tens of thousands, ultimately hundreds of thousands, of New Yorkers, we want to maximize testing, and then we want to test to anyone that if you're positive, if you test positive, we want to test the people that you had close contact with.

So, the guidance is changing, but it's going to change a lot more. I think on the question of certificates that's something we have to think about for the future. It has been used as a tool in one way or another. A certificate or something that's an online registry has been used in different places. I think it's certainly a commendable idea, but we have not made any conclusions on that. It would have to be done in a smart way. There's lots of things we'd have to think about legally – privacy, other issues. But it's certainly on the table as something we're looking at – how you support a really broad gauge testing system and how you get us back to normal with the information that testing system provides. So, those are some answers – doctors, anything you want to add?

Commissioner Barbot: Yes, Mr. Mayor. I will add that it's important to tease apart the two tests that we're talking about because I think all too often antibody tests get lumped in with testing for the actual infection. And so, it's important for us to tease that apart. With regards to testing for infection, the guidance remains in terms of wanting to make sure that individuals who have chronic underlying illnesses that put them at greater risk for bad outcomes are prioritized for testing. But then as the availability for testing increases, we want to then test more individuals. In addition to that, we are doing everything we can to maximize the number of ways in which we increase access to testing. And so recently we announced that we are moving forward H + H and then we, through the public health lab, will also do nasal swabs instead of nasopharyngeal swabs, putting less of a strain on PPE. So that's how that testing arm has evolved.

When we talk about testing for antibodies, we have to be very clear that there is no science that tells us that there is durable protection or immunity if someone tests positive for those antibodies. And so, we want to be very careful not to give false hope for people because there's no correlation with immunity. And in fact, there have been some preliminary studies that indicate that people can be potentially reinfected with COVID-19 in the same season. And so, we're waiting for more studies to be done to tell us whether those findings are corroborated or not. I think where antibodies may be helpful for us in the future is to give us a better understanding in the next season – if people who have antibodies for this season get reinfected next season, then we'll have a better understanding of what those antibodies really mean and whether or not they are protective and if they are protective how long they last.

Mayor: Dr. Wei, anything you'd like to add?

Dr. Wei: Thanks, Mr. Mayor. Yeah. Now I would just reinforce what Dr. Barbot said. The antibody tests, I think there's benefits even to our health care workers in terms of the psychological safety of knowing that I've been exposed and I wasn't one of the ones who ended up on a ventilator in the ICU. But we don't know how much immunity, and so we don't want people to relax their social distancing or their PPE usage. And then on the undocumented immigrants comment, I mean, that really resonates with Health + Hospitals with the Mayor's administration. It is part of our ethos. It is in our mission statement. The two most important words are without exception, we want to help New Yorkers live their healthiest lives. Without exception, we don't ask. I, as a doctor, don't care about your immigration status, I care about your health. And if that health is at risk because of COVID-19, I want you to get a test and I want to provide you the appropriate treatments and results. And so, I don't want anyone to think that at Health + Hospitals, we will be asking immigration status because we don't. We care about your health.

Mayor: Nicely said, doctor. Thank you. And let me conclude by us going back to where we started – the extraordinary work, the heroic work so many health care workers have done, so many first responders have done over these weeks. Unprecedented, unimaginable what so many have gone through and that no one could have foreseen. And yet the heroism has been so clear and so sharp. I want to thank the First Lady, I want to thank our Police Commissioner. The idea that we will all support our health care workers and our first responders in every way is absolutely crucial. So, it's of course everything that's been done up to now to give them protection, to get those PPEs, the personal protective equipment, and that effort is going to be ongoing and we're going to deepen that effort. All we have done to try to support them and thank them, but now going deeper with testing, going deeper with mental health support – we need to be there for them through this whole crisis and then beyond. And this is a good example – when they say that phrase, we'll leave no stone unturned, that's what we're talking about when it comes to supporting the heroes of this fight. There's a lot they need. There's a lot we have to give to them to support them. And everyone recognize, every time you say thank you to one of these heroes, every time you offer to help them in ways big and small, all those wonderful people have come out to applaud at seven o'clock at night, all the people who have brought food and support to hospitals and to our EMTs and paramedics and all of our first responders, every bit of it helps. And we're going to be there for them because they have certainly been there for all of us.

Thank you, everybody.

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