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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON COVID-19**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, everyone, very important updates to go over today. And also, as we talk about challenges, we also want to talk about always all the support. We're getting, all the people who are coming forward, not just from all over around New York City, but from all over the nation to help our city in our time of need. We're dealing with a big challenge together, but we are certainly not alone. And there are so many amazing stories. People who want to help and are helping and giving their all for New York City right now. And in a few minutes, I'm going to talk about an old friend who has returned – and we are so happy he's back – coming to our aid at the moment we need it.

But first, let me talk to you about a conversation I had earlier today with the administrator for FEMA, Peter Gaynor. This is the man who the president has tasked with leading the effort nationally to ensure that the efforts to stop coronavirus are fully resourced in New York and around the country. So, he's really leading this extraordinary mobilization all over our nation. And Administrator Gainer was very, very focused, very concerned, concerned about needs in New York City. Very aware of the details of what we're facing. We had a long and detailed conversation. We went item by item related to everything we need here. Timelines, specifics about how to get the job done, and also about how important it is to protect New Yorkers in this moment. To stay ahead of this. To recognize the challenges in the next few weeks, and get the personnel, and the equipment, and the supplies in place in time. I think everyone knows, I've talked about this Sunday, April 5th as a crucial, crucial day, and I've done that for a reason. I want everyone to understand it. It's not to be alarmist, it's to focus the energies of our national government, to focus the attention of everyone who can help us, to help them understand how important it is to maximize support for New York City by this Sunday. And then in the days immediately following as we prepare for a real upsurge. But I'm happy to say that Administrator Gainer, I could not be more pleased with the conversation. The focus he showed on each and every item, and the ability we had to determine together how we would proceed to the maximum. I express my thanks to him on behalf of all 8.6 million New Yorkers for everything FEMA has done already. And we are so especially appreciative for the amazing support we've gotten with the ambulances that have arrived, the EMT's, and paramedics to help us address the challenges we're having. And I think a lot more help is on the way. So, it was a very encouraging conversation.

Now, I'm going to talk about our immediate needs, and I'm going to give you some real detail about what we need in the coming days. And then of course, I'm going to be talking about the important work that Jimmy O'Neill is going to be doing starting immediately. But let me say, as I go into the specific numbers, and you'll hear, I should say also after my report, you'll hear from

Dr. Katz. And he's going to go over some very specific updates related to Health and Hospitals, and then how we're going to be building out our hospital capacity in general, and then you'll hear from Jimmy O'Neill after that. But I want to emphasize how much effort has already been expended. It's unbelievable. If you look at what's happened over the last weeks, how many people have gathered together to provide support already. And again, the toughest weeks are ahead. But I want to tell you upfront, hundreds and hundreds of people who have worked to ensure the supplies we need have kept coming in. And I'll talk about them more as I talk about Jimmy's new role. But there are so many people at the Emergency Management Command Center in Brooklyn, folks from City Hall who are there at the command center and working remotely who have played a crucial role. Folks who work at Department of Health and Health + Hospitals in their warehouse, in their supply operations – so many people every single day are participating in getting the supplies where they are needed. We talked about huge, huge distribution that happened yesterday. This is going to be an ongoing effort and it's going to be like nothing we've ever seen in the history of the city, and a lot of people are making it happen. I want to thank all of them, and all New Yorkers should have them in their hearts, because this group, they are unsung heroes, but they're doing amazing work to protect all of us.

Now, I want to talk about, since I've put Sunday, April 5th, as that kind of demarcation line, that D-Day, by which we have to get ready this coming Sunday. Let me tell you where there is good news and we said this Sunday to prepare for the entire week of April 6th ahead. There are two types of supplies that we're now confident we will have a sufficient amount of for the week of April 6th for all hospitals in New York City, for all first responders. I want that standard to be really clear. We are all working together. Federal government, State government, City government, nonprofit organizations, charities, everyone's working together. When we think about our hospitals, we are thinking about all hospitals together. Public, voluntary, independent, we're thinking all of them. Everyone is wearing the same uniform. We're also thinking about our first responders who obviously need to get the protective gear, the PPE's when they need them. We have to make sure that supply is strong. So, we are confident based on all our projections that for next week we will have sufficient eye protection. That means the face shields, and the goggles, and sufficient surgical gloves for all those needs, for everyone who is doing this crucial work. For all our heroes who are out there protecting us. For all those healthcare workers who are at the front line. We will have enough of those two categories.

We need major resupply in some other categories. Now, I want to emphasize, I say this – we have requests out to the federal government, the state government, to private vendors, to the many, many individuals who are seeking help. So, when I tell you these numbers, it's against the backdrop of many moving parts already, many actions already, to make sure we will get the help up. My job is to tell you where we stand, and I'll constantly update you as more supplies come in. So, the need at this moment here on this day thinking ahead to Monday, we still need 3.3 million N95 masks to come in by Sunday to prepare us for the week ahead. We need 2.1 million surgical masks. We need 100,000 isolation gowns. These are big numbers, for sure, but they are reachable numbers, but we have to make sure it happens in time.

Now, those are all very, very important. But the area that I focus on all the time is ventilators. When it comes to equipment and supplies, the number one concern I have is ventilators because they keep people alive and they give our healthcare professionals an opportunity to save lives.

We have continued to get a very substantial supply of ventilators, but we still need 400 more to be in place by Sunday to prepare us for the week ahead. So, we have many, many requests out, many efforts that are underway to get those 400 in place in time. That's to be ready for Monday. In the course of next week, and again, we have requests out to the federal government, state government, many sources. In the course of next week, we will need a minimum of 2,500 to 3,000 more ventilators. Now, extraordinary efforts are underway to tap into the supply all over the country and to work to see what we can produce here in this city. But that is the number we're working with at this moment for next week. There's also an ongoing effort to get personnel. This is a growing concern as we go forward, but again, one where we see a tremendous response. So many New Yorkers have volunteered folks with medical training of all kinds. More and more volunteering to come forward and their being act on right away [inaudible]. We'll talk about the many people who have been found. Medical professionals been put under contract, who are joining us rapidly. And the requests that I've made to the White House and the Pentagon for over a thousand military medical personnel. I reemphasize that request to Administrator Gainer of FEMA earlier today as well. I'll keep you updated on that. So, many personnel needs but also a lot of personnel coming our way quickly. But we have to always remember to keep building out that ICU capacity. We need to keep using those ventilators we need, we need the personnel that go with it. And we also have to constantly think about giving some relief to the heroic folks at the front line right now in our hospitals. They need to see reinforcements come, they need a chance to get some downtime so they can finally recover from everything they've been doing and then they can get back into this battle. So, we will keep an eye constantly on that personnel situation and update you regularly.

So, the bottom line, supplies continue to come in at a very rapid rate and they go out right away to hospitals all over the city and to first responders. The speed has become remarkable. The turnaround time very, very quick, to again, all the hundreds of people and especially to that team at Emergency Management, all the folks from Emergency Management, from the agencies, from City Hall, my extraordinary colleagues who came together to create this rapid deployment plan of bringing in supplies and getting them out. I want to give you, again, profound thanks for what you've achieved, and we're going to need you even more in the weeks ahead.

Now, I decided as we built out this apparatus that we wanted to bring in additional leadership and some of the best leadership anywhere in this country, and we know him well. He led with great distinction our Police Department. I was so proud the day I named him Police Commissioner. He did an outstanding job in those years serving us, leading an organization of over 50,000 extraordinary people and keeping this city safe. I'm going to talk about the role that Jimmy O'Neill will play and it's going to connect exactly into what I've just told you already about everything we're doing to keep our hospitals strong. But I want to take a moment to express my gratitude because Jimmy's coming to aid us, because of the willingness of his company VISA and particularly its CEO Al Kelly, who is someone I've known for quite a while, who's someone who really loves New York City and cares about this place. I want to thank Al. I want to thank VISA for freeing up so much of Jimmy's time so he can do this crucial work, it's going to be a truly lifesaving. So, a profound thanks to you.

Now, that team, as I mentioned, the hundreds and hundreds of people who are moving the shipments constantly, that's been an area where we've seen tremendous strength and consistency.

What I want to see now is absolute seamlessness in terms of how supplies, equipment to go into our hospitals immediately get distributed where they're needed in the hospital to the frontline workers that we constantly are able to say exactly which hospital needs what at any given hour. I'm not talking about weeks, I'm not talking about days, I'm talking about any given hour, knowing exactly what each hospital needs. So, we can make those rapid moves those rapid shipments and ensure that within each hospital that distribution is strong and smart and of course we are being honest. We've always been honest, I know Dr. Katz will make this point as well, that as we get into supplies, we have to shepherd them. We have to make sure they're being used properly, support our health care workers with everything we've got, but also be smart about rationing what we have to make it last in this tough situation. I thought about all of those pieces and I thought about the many different kinds of hospitals and I think we've got some of the greatest hospitals in the world. Everyone knows that in this City we've got our public health system, which has really distinguished itself in this crisis and Dr. Katz's leadership and his team has been amazing. We've got independent hospitals there, they're smaller community-based hospitals and they play a crucial role in our City. But a lot of them have gone through for years — financial hardships. They often deal with folks with tremendous medical needs, but— on many, many times people that don't have insurance. So, those independent hospitals are absolutely crucial in our ability to fight this battle, and a lot of them have struggled lately no fault of their own— they've always been there for people in greatest need, but they need special help now. So, I've asked Jimmy O'Neill to develop a system for ensuring that we'll have personnel in every hospital where they're needed. To help make sure that this supply chain is seamless and constant and focused, that the supply usage is just the way it should be and any hospital that needs additional help will be able to get it to them quickly. Jimmy will assemble a team with folks from City Hall and other agencies so we can have that presence in the hospitals and it will allow us to have a much faster and more precise communication and get people what they need when they need it. So, I'm very, very appreciative. You'll hear from Jimmy in a few minutes.

And now, I want to talk to you about looking ahead, this whole month of April. I told you what we're trying to get done by Sunday, I've told you how we see next week. Next week is going to be a very difficult, intense week, and yet the preparations have been very, very strong for next week as well, we'll keep updating you on that. But here's the overall situation the alluded to it many a time, but I want to just remind all New Yorkers about this we're always going to need more of— that supply chain I talked about. We're going to need the masks and the N95s and the gloves, the gowns, all that, every single week we're going to need more of that. We're going to need the ventilators, especially in that number that we've said I've said from the very beginning, 15,000 for New York City, that number is a very specific number based on the projections we've had. That number continues to be the right number, continue, I've told the President, United States and everyone else I've spoken to in the federal government that is the true number. And the second we don't need all those ventilators we will happily share them with the rest of the country immediately. When it comes to— hospital beds, again, the goal is to take the 20,000 or so we started with the month of March with a normal compliment of hospital beds in this City that we're staffed with professionals all over our hospital system. Those 20,000 are increasingly going to become all ICU beds over the month of April. That's what our hospitals will be for more and more taking on the toughest COVID cases at the front line. We need to build out during the month of April, an amazing number of additional hotel beds 60 excuse me I said hospital beds, I should say, my apology, hospital beds and hotels would be one of the ways that we achieved

that. But hospital beds, we need to build out an additional number of 65,000 hospital beds in the City of New York by the end of April. We already have a tremendous start the 20,000 beds, as I say, they were already there. Hospitals are now adding up to 50 percent more capacity just drawing on all the space they have and Dr. Katz talked about this from the beginning of the ability of hospitals to quickly build out more beds, more space, more ICU. That number will add an additional almost 10,000 beds right there, Javits Center we've talked about, Dr. Katz will go over this, thousands of beds there, and then all the hotels will bring online increasingly. So, this is going to be an epic process through the month of April to build out that capacity but this goal is within reach. It's going to take herculean effort, but I'm confident it can be reached.

So now, as I turn to Dr. Katz, we're going to talk about where we are today on our hospital capacity, the building out process, starting with our public hospital system. This is – this growth pattern, this building out I'm talking about is literally going on 24/7 – and a profound thanks to everyone who's participating in it. So, Dr. Katz is going to give you a sense of where we stand today and how we're going to be moving forward over the coming weeks. Dr. Mitch Katz.

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals:** Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And thank you for supporting the public hospital system. It's clear in this emergency how lucky we are that New York City kept open its public hospital systems didn't allow them to close the way it happened in Philadelphia and Washington DC and Milwaukee because in this crisis we so desperately need the public system. We have 324 ICU beds that we run on under normal circumstances and a total of 4,428 beds. And while that, those are very large numbers they pale in comparison, Mr. Mayor to what you showed us we're actually going to need in this crisis. But we are prepared to meet the crisis in our immediate surge to handle it. Elmhurst Hospital, which is on the forefront of handling COVID patients, it's in an area of central Queens. Where a large number of districts depend on this hospital because there is no other hospital near it. It has already increased from 29 intensive care beds to 111 intensive care beds and, sir, that's in the matter of 10 days. I mean, these are changes that you would expect under normal circumstances, would take six months to a year to get the beds in place, to get the staff in place, to get the equipment in place. Every single one of these beds represents a courageous nurse taking care of the patients. Courageous physicians on all of the support intensive care patients need a great deal of support from pharmacy from transport, from radiology. It's a tremendous effort to take care of each intensive care unit patients and yet Elmhurst has magically gone from 29 to 111 beds. At Lincoln Hospital they've grown their ICU from 34 beds to 114 beds with 30 more coming there. And Bellevue Hospital has grown from 66 to 127, with 52 more coming.

And this is really just the beginning of what we need in order to handle this emergency. We have in order to deal with the fact that COVID-19 patients have not appeared evenly across our system as the epidemic hits different parts of our City at different moments. Also, we recognize that some areas of our City like Queens have markedly fewer hospitals, so it's not just Elmhurst Hospital, but Queens, hospital that has also been hit extremely hard by patients and very sick patients. So, in order to be able to do this we have transferred 193 non-ICU patients and 43 ICU patients from the hospitals that have been most effected and moving them to hospitals where we have had greater capacity in the last few weeks. So, we've been moving patients to Coney Island Hospital, to Jacoby, to Harlem, to Metropolitan, and the North Central Bronx have all taken patients in order to make sure that we are able to provide care for every patient who needs it.

Every hospital and I speak to them every night knows exactly what space they're next going to open during the night. We've seen a large number of patients needing intubation come in in the evening hours so we open the units often in the middle of the night in order to accommodate them. But in every case, we know what those surge wards will be it fits with the very plans that we started working on in January and February when we first saw the data coming from China. We recognize, Mr. Mayor, that while these are huge efforts, they won't meet the needs as you've outlined them to New Yorkers. So, in the short-term we're going to bring on an additional 762 intensive care beds for a total additional beds of 2,466.

And again, while these numbers are astronomical, they don't add up to the numbers that you showed New Yorkers of what's going to be needed. We intend to convert all of the hospitals into intensive care units because an intensive care patient relies tremendously on the ability of the laboratory, on the pharmacy, on equipment, radiology – you cannot create an intensive care unit, a bed in a hotel. But what we can do is turn out facilities into large intensive care units and then use the hotels and the other alternative facilities for medicine patients who do need support but don't need the same level with ICU need. This is going to require a huge influx of equipment and even more importantly of staffing. The issue is not one of spacing and we've said this right from the beginning. There are many places in New York City that would be available to create additional space. The challenge is having the staff, having the equipment, and in the case of intensive care units, having all of the other services that would be necessary in order to keep people alive. So, it's our commitment to you, Mr. Mayor, that we are going to do everything working with you and all of the great people in New York City to achieve this.

In order to reach just what we've done so far, we've added 165 physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants to the system. We deployed a thousand registered nurses; we have another thousand registered nurses coming within two weeks and we've added another 350 physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants that will be coming in the next week, but this will still, again, not be sufficient. We will need a great deal more staff than this to be able to successfully increase by the number of intensive care beds that New York City's going to need.

We're doing everything possible to support the incredibly brave nurses and physicians and support staff of every kind, who are working long hours often watching their own coworkers become ill. It creates a tremendous sense of distress to both be working hard and know that coworkers have gotten sick, but people are bravely working on. We want to do everything possible that we can to support them. We're making sure that there is COVID-19 testing available free for any of our frontline personnel - that's starting at our occupational health clinics. We've received more than \$1.6 million in donations to provide comfort items to our frontline staff. They can't take any breaks to go out to get food. That's not even in, in our rule book about how you get through these kinds of crises. So, having people give us donations so that we basically can bring in food for all the shifts of workers, people do need to eat and we are very grateful. The rooms in the hotels – many people who are working 12, 16 hours and around many, many patients with COVID do not feel comfortable returning home to their spouses and their children. So, we have provided hotel rooms so that they can go to a place where they feel they can get rest without putting their families at risk and come back the next day. We're providing taxi rides. You, sir, provided parking vouchers for people so that they can park their cars easily. Our Helping Healers Heal is extending emotional, psychological counseling to healthcare

workers in dealing with the stress; having your patients die despite the very best efforts is so distressing. This is a very fierce disease for a very small number of people. We've put up the for people who wish to donate to support your healthcare workers at [nychhc.networkforgood.com](http://nychhc.networkforgood.com) and we so much appreciate the support of all of the first responders: fire, EMS, the police, the people at the Office of Emergency Management who have been getting us supplies and keeping us going.

In terms of additional surge Mr. Mayor, would you like to speak about these facilities? Would you like me to speak about them?

**Mayor:** I'll just say broadly, and Mitch, you can talk about some of the specifics, but broadly, when you look at this list, and remember everyone, this is a series of facilities that just days ago were not outfitted to provide healthcare. So, if you go through the list, which, and, and Mitch will talk about it, but every single one of them is either a place that was doing something totally different or is something brand new in this city. Obviously the most powerful example, the most compelling example, which we all are feeling is the presence of the USNS Comfort. So, Mitch will talk to you about the specifics that we have already moving and then I'm going to talk about how we're going to turn more and more hotels into hospitals. So, you start, Mitch.

**President Katz:** Sir, I had the pleasure, the pleasure of going to Javits Center and seeing a tremendous number of staff who are willing and able to take care of patients to help us to unload our hospitals so that we can focus on the intensive care unit of intubated patients – located on the West Side of Manhattan. In phase one, a thousand medical surgical beds are currently available with another 1500 medical surgical beds to come in late April. Samaritan's Purse located in Central Park with additional support for Mount Sinai: 65 beds, 10 intensive care unit, and 55 medical surgical beds that we believe will come up in 24 to 48 hours. We were all so proud to see the Navy bring the Comfort ship located in Western Manhattan with 750 medical and surgical beds and a crew of phenomenal physicians and nurses who are prepared to take care of patients. At one of our own facilities on Roosevelt Island we were able to open up 240 medical surgical beds. We already have more than 25 patients who are being taken care of in that facility and during this week we will fill it up. We have, I know you were yesterday at the National Tennis Center located in Corona, Queens showing New Yorkers that you've prepared a facility that can take care of up to 350 medical and surgical beds. At Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in Red Hook we believe it will be possible to create up to 750 medical and surgical beds that will go up in mid-April. And then finally, we know that the hotel industry is capable of providing us with a large number of rooms. We so far have secured 10,000 beds and 20 hotels and we believe that the capacity is there. Again, staffing will be one of the things we will most work with you, Mr. Mayor, to be sure that the people in all of these facilities are fully cared for.

**Mayor:** Thank you very, very much Mitch and get ready, I'm going to come back to you on the, the way people can donate to your frontline healthcare workers so get that website ready again. But, let me first say, so, think about the amazing, amazing, fast, intense, passionate effort that's being made here to expand our hospital capacity in record time. Nothing like this has ever happened literally in the history of New York City. Let's go back to that previous slide; I want to work off of that. The, again, think of where we started. We started at the month of March; 20,000 staffed hospital beds in what everyone would say is, you know, we're the finest hospitals in the



United States of America. Take all the hospitals in New York City, take all the professionals, all the amazing talent; you know, this where so many of the doctors of tomorrow train for the whole nation. That was an amazing place to start. No one could have imagined a world in which we'd have to build out so much so quickly but now, when you think about the fact that those hospitals that with their 20,000 beds are basically adding 10,000 more within those hospitals. You look at what Mitch has reviewed on this slide before us, the thousands of beds at Javits, the USNS Comfort, like adding right there in that ship - like adding - another major hospital to New York City. All these different pieces are starting to add up and then we go to the hotels. So, the fact that, right now, the hotels we've already identified and contracted with – and I want to thank everyone in the hotel industry by the way – I want to thank the owners of the hotels, the managers of the hotels, the people that work in the hotels, the unions who represent the people in the hotels, everyone has been working shoulder to shoulder to speed this effort because it has to happen in record time. So, right now, we already have accounted for 10,000 additional beds: you take the 20,000 we started with, the 10,000 more we're adding in the hospitals themselves, look at 10,000 more already from the hotels that will be coming online soon - that's 40,000. The thousands more you see on this slide in specific locations and we're going to keep building and building. The key going forward is going to be more hotels and more big spaces. We've got obviously in the case of the Javits Center, in the case of the Billy Jean King National Tennis Center, in the case of the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, these are large spaces where you can do hundreds of beds at a time or in the case of Javits, thousands. We're going to be looking for more and more spaces like that. I know the State of New York is also doing the same, and we're all coordinated; we're dividing labor. They've got major spaces that they'll be working on. The City will be adding our own.

We've been getting tremendous cooperation from the private sector. Again, I'll tell you the day we ask someone to help fight the coronavirus and they say, no, but I have not had that day yet. So, in terms of finding the additional beds we need, we believe there is enough major venues - bigger spaces in New York City - that we can retrofit, and we can do that quickly. And we're working with folks in the construction trades, contractors, folks in real estate; they're all saying yes, they're all quickly helping us get this work done. And then those hotels, and I'm very, very sorry for what the hotel industry has been through in this crisis. A lot of people have been put in a tough, tough situation to work in our hotels – they're obviously struggling, but what it has meant at the same time is a huge number of hotels have become available to the City of New York and literally we can go in and lease an entire hotel building and we can do that dozens and dozens and dozens of times until we get to the point that we have all the beds we need. So that is the game plan. It's going to be furious and intense, but we're going to get it done and I'm so grateful to everyone that's a part of it. As I say a few more words and then we'll turn to Jimmy, I want to remind people again; if you're able to help our frontline hospital workers, these heroes have been doing so much and Mitch's folks in the public hospitals have borne the brunt they've done amazing work. Mitch, one more time, what's the website people can go to if they just want to give those direct donations, the food and the other things that will help your heroic workers get through the day, what's that website again?

**President Katz:** Thank you Mr. Mayor it's [nychhc.networkforgood.com](http://nychhc.networkforgood.com).

**Mayor:** Say it one more time.



**President Katz:** [Nychhc.networkforgood.com](http://Nychhc.networkforgood.com).

**Mayor:** All right and then to all New Yorkers and anyone in the country who wants to help New York City with equipment, with supplies, who wants to volunteer their time – reminding you anyone can call 833-NYC-0040 – 833-NYC-0040. And we are so thankful for the help. So, let me pull this all together. I think we've known for a long time that New Yorkers are the strongest, the toughest, the most resilient. And in a crisis, we show what we're made of. And it's happening again in an amazing way. I, you know, I don't have to say again what our doctors and nurses and health care workers are doing. Our first responders, they've been exemplary. Our companies, the private sector has stepped up in a huge, huge way, donating so much to help our frontline heroes. What's happening now at the Brooklyn Navy Yard as an example, it keeps coming back to me, really touches my heart. And please go see the video that we've had on my Twitter feed on this @NYCMayer. The – it's unbelievable to see a wartime factory in the Brooklyn Navy Yard making those face shields to protect our health care workers and our first responders. And there's more going on in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, we'll be talking about in the coming days. But the fact that PPEs are being built right here in New York City by hand, each piece built by hand, labor of love to help their fellow New Yorkers is so moving. So extraordinary. Everyday people who are donating food to Mitch's colleagues who are purchasing and donating masks, gloves, you name it, it's been nonstop.

So, this virus is tough. This virus is going to give us a real battle. But this virus is no match for the people of New York City. This city is strong. We will get through this, we will get through this together. We will come out the other side an even stronger city. And I mentioned that we are blessed to have help always. And I want to talk about that, but I realized I first needed to say a few words in Spanish, just to summarize.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

So, everyone, as I said, help has been pouring in from around the country. And I got some help a few weeks back from San Francisco. The second San Francisco put their shelter in place order out, I thought that that looked like the model we should follow here in New York City immediately. But I wanted to make sure it was functioning in a way that would really protect people, make sure we could get ahead of this virus and also work in terms of people's day to day lives. I needed an eye witness to tell me what was happening in San Francisco and someone I could trust to confirm that it would work here in New York City. And once I got that confirmation, I said that this was something we have to do right here. Well that eyewitness happened to be none other than our former Police Commissioner, Jimmy O'Neill, who has been based in recent months in San Francisco working for Visa. And not just every day, but it seemed like every hour, Jimmy was sending me reports, updating me, telling me what he saw, telling me what he thought would work.

And then a few days ago he reached out to me and he said that he would be coming back to New York. And he said he was ready to serve his city again in whatever capacity we needed, no matter how big or how small. And I said to Jimmy that knowing the amazing ability he brings, we need him to take on a major, major role. And we talked about all the ways he knows the city

and he knows the city so well from his 35 plus years on our police force. He's been in every hospital, he's been in every neighborhood. He knows the people of this city so deeply, cares so deeply for this city. And so, I talked to him about this vision of ensuring that not only the supplies get to the hospital, but that we could really make sure everything was being used ideally, and that we could resupply instantly whenever hospitals needed it. Needing a leader of that effort to create that network of professionals that we could work with to really make that precise and hone that. So I can tell you that Jimmy O'Neill has answered the City's call before and he's answering the call again. And it is just a great honor to welcome him back, our former Police Commissioner, and now my senior advisor, helping us wage this battle against coronavirus. Welcome back, Jimmy O'Neill.

**James P. O'Neill:** Thanks, Mr. Mayor. It's an honor to come back to New York City. First of all, I want to thank Chief Bill Scott from San Francisco PD who provided me with a lot of the intel of what was happening. And plus, I took a couple of trips into San Francisco myself and I wish the people out in the West Coast all the best. It's just a – it's the responsibility of all New Yorkers to do their part. I always felt that way and I continue to feel that way. And I want to thank Mr. Mayor, I want to thank you. I want to thank all the great people at Visa that I've been working with over the last four months and I will continue to work with. And I really want to thank the CEO Al Kelly for giving me the opportunity to do this job and to do my job at Visa. And it's important that we all come together as New Yorkers. It's one thing I saw in my time as a cop, you know, this is a resilient city. Everybody's supportive. Lately, I've just been seeing, reading, hearing about all the great work that's going on in New York City right now. And I just felt compelled to come back and offer to help and do whatever I could.

And basically, what I'm going to be doing is I'm going to be helping to manage or managing the supply chain. Supply – making sure that this is an inspection regiment. Make sure that we're sourcing, delivering, distributing, and tracking to make sure that we do our best, continue to do our best for the health care workers that are out there right now, this very minute, doing their best to save lives. And it's a system of accountability and we have to make sure that it's operating efficiently.

Just before I wrap it up and we're going to – some of that equipment is N95 masks, surgical masks, isolation gowns, face shield, goggles, all the equipment that our health care workers need. Just really, I'm truly inspired by what I've seen over the last two months. The doctors, physician's assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses all the other workers in the hospital. Now we have the military involved. Thank you to the Navy, the State police, the Port Authority police. It's, they really - these people truly are an inspiration and I'm thankful for them. And last but not least, I want to thank the men and women to the NYPD who continue to keep the city safe. And in spite of everything that's going on right now, they're out there answering radio runs, doing their best to keep people safe. And I'd like to commend Commissioner Shea, what a great job that you're doing right now. So how could you not want to help this great city and I'm going to do my best and thanks for giving me the opportunity Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much Jimmy. Your best is very, very good. So, I know with you here our health care workers are going to get even more support. And I want to thank you. It means a

lot to all of us in this city that you are back. Okay. With that we are going to turn to questions from the media. And Olivia, you're going to let me know the name and the outlet of each caller?

**Moderator:** Yeah, just have three quick programming notes at the top. The first is we're going to do one question per reporter to get to as many outlets as possible. Also, if reporters have additional questions about hospital capacities, we are going to have a technical briefing with Dr. Katz after this press conference. You can save those questions for later. And finally, Commissioner Shea's on the phone.

**Mayor:** And Olivia just to clarify that reporters who want to be a part of the technical briefing to just stay on the line after?

**Moderator:** Yes.

**Mayor:** You want to do that? Okay. And Mitch will standby when we finish the main portion of the press conference. And welcome to the call Dermot Shea. And we will go ahead now with the first question from the media.

**Moderator:** Gloria, you're up first. Gloria?

**Mayor:** And from NY1.

**Question:** Hi guys, can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes, Gloria.

**Question:** Hi Mr. Mayor. Thank you. First, I want to ask a question about Queens specifically. And I know that you have been talking about the increased cases that we are seeing there. But I wondered if - for Dr. Katz, if there's anything that you guys as health professionals have found about why there is such a concentration in Queens specifically? And I understand you mentioned today the lack of hospitals, but is there anything else to it? We have been getting some reports today about the situation at Elmhurst, specifically about the lack of ventilators. And I'm wondering if there was any detail from today that you can give us an update on, in terms of what the current status is there as it pertains to ventilators at that hospital?

**President Katz:** For the ventilators there are enough ventilators right now for Elmhurst and all of our hospitals. As the mayor has been very clear. We have enough ventilators in New York City until Sunday. Beyond that, we're waiting to get help from the federal and State governments. I think what any time people - and we've had at various times at various hospitals, people think that there aren't enough ventilators. That's because at any one area of the hospital, such as within the emergency department, they may not see all of the ventilators that are there in the hospital physically. But I check every night myself before I go to sleep. I look at how many ventilators each hospital has and I'm sure that they will have enough to get through the night. And I restock every single day. So, we are totally on top of it, but the issue that the Mayor has pointed out is that that will not go beyond Sunday when we will exhaust our supply.

In terms of why Queens. I think the clearest answer, and we've looked at this, is that Queens has about half the number of hospital beds per thousand persons, than Manhattan. And especially where Elmhurst is, there is a huge area of population that are extremely dependent on Elmhurst. It's the hospital that's closest is also a hospital that is very well regarded. Where immigrants and the uninsured feel safe to go. So that also plays a role into why people go. And then finally, although it will be a while before we fully understand all of the aspects of the epidemiology, we know that in Queens, many families because of poverty, live together in very close quarters. So that while we are practicing as a city, social distancing. You may have multiple families living in a very small apartment. And so it's easy to understand why there's a lot of transmission of COVID occurring.

**Moderator:** Henry from Bloomberg is up next. Henry?

**Question:** All right. Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes, Henry.

**Question** You know, we're coming up on some religious observances and I want to know specifically whether the City is going to exempt some groups of people, some size of groups? Is there any policy that's set forth?

**Mayor:** Henry, just to clarify, you mean – do you mean from religious gatherings?

**Question:** Yes, the Seders, the Easter services, any gatherings to observe these holidays?

**Mayor:** I appreciate the question very, very much. I mean, it's obviously a sacred time of year for so many people. And I've had this conversation in general, not about the specific holidays, but the broader issue of what's the morally right thing to do? What's the right thing to do from the perspective of faith? With some of the great faith leaders of this city, starting with Cardinal Dolan, who I have consulted with so many times over the years, but also leaders of so many other denominations and faiths, we have a very consistent process of consulting with them on many matters through the organization [inaudible] and through our Clergy Advisory Board. Henry, I have rarely heard more unity and consensus in New York City than I have on this topic. That this is a time in our history where you have to protect the lives of all New Yorkers. And that means there cannot be religious gatherings. And I know that is particularly painful at this time of year for folks who cherish their faith and look forward to these holidays and they are moments of deep, deep devotion. But what I've heard overwhelmingly from our religious leaders is they understand that traditional religious gatherings cannot occur until this crisis is over. And it certainly will not be over until we get through April and potentially well into May. And then we'll still be dealing with it, you know, for months after just thank God not on the kind of constant level of increase that we've been dealing with in recent weeks.

So no, I – look, if a family lives under the same roof already, then social distancing is a different matter entirely. Because once you're on the whole roof, the same roof with people all the time, social distancing isn't the same thing that you obviously are already in constant contact. A family, having a Seder, a family worshiping around Easter is one thing. But we are practicing

strict social distancing. And I would just be very, very careful about doing anything outside of the family unit. I don't think we want to see any kind of gathering. The idea is that at this point in our lives, we're just staying very tight with our own families and that is the safe way to observe faith and that's the safe way to go about life. So that's the guidance we're giving.

**Moderator:** Julia from the Post is up next. Julia?

**Question:** Hi, can you hear me Mr. Mayor?

**Mayor:** Yes, Julia.

**Question:** Hi. So, on playgrounds – 24 hours ago, a little over 24 hours ago, you said that there was largely compliance in terms of social distancing on playgrounds and your goal was to try to preserve as many as possible if people follow the rules. So, what changed to lead you to agree with the Governor's decision to shut them down? And what would you say to critics who claim playgrounds are the latest example of you delaying tough decisions and leaving them up to the Governor?

**Mayor:** Well, Julia, look, first of all, we're all working together. The Governor and I have agreed overwhelmingly throughout this crisis. The strategic direction is something we have constantly consulted on. Our teams talk about all the time. We've just agreed almost without exception on the major things we've had to do. There were definitely moments where there were slight differences. I mean, obviously I wanted to see shelter in place. You know, the Governor and I talked about that. We talked about closing schools and we're always trying to make sense of the different things we were seeing. We've talked about the parks issue. But in every case, it was collegial Julia, that comparing notes, our teams comparing notes. No one takes lightly these decisions. None of them are easy, none of them are or anything you wish on people. But what has been a real agreement that we're going to work together. And we talked several times last week about the playgrounds and agreed that we would, you know, try and give it a few more days. We got to Saturday, we still wanted to give it a few more days to see. But in the last 24 hours, as you know, I decided it was time to implement fines over the weekend. We've been stepping up enforcement. You know, yesterday we announced the particular playgrounds that needed to be closed. Previously we have started to take down basketball rims. But you know, the Governor got to a point where he really thought it was an abundance of caution issue, that to go ahead and move across the board in terms of the playgrounds. And I respect that and I'm going to work with him. The truth that I said is true. We did not see a lot of noncompliance. Commissioner Shea and I talked about it not only daily, multiple times a day. We didn't see a lot of noncompliance. But I do appreciate that the Governor at this point thought, you know, this is a good one to take an abundance of caution and I respect that. And, again, we're always going to seek that consensus. I hope when this crisis starts to abate, that one of the very first things we can reopen is playgrounds. But that's obviously a way in the future.

**Moderator:** Reema from Chalkbeat is up next. Reema?

**Question:** Hi Mr. Mayor. Can you hear me?



**Mayor:** Yes, Reema.

**Question:** Okay. So, as you know, the State lawmakers are trying to nail down a final budget and you know, we just got a chance to look at school aid. Looks like [inaudible] you probably know this, that New York City is set to receive nearly the same need that they received, that they have this year. Part of that, about \$717 million is from the federal stimulus package. So, you know, we're still waiting for them to vote on a final budget, but I'm - remember earlier in the year, you and Chancellor Carranza were saying that the Governor's proposal was actually still \$136 million less than what you needed. So, what I'm wondering is this budget, if passed as is, is that going to, you know, is that going to force New York City to look at layoffs or other kinds [inaudible] and tell me more about that?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Reema let me respond to - I heard your question pretty clearly. Just so you know, your line was kind of skipping in and out, but got enough of your question. What we said back in February was true, that the budget as was proposed then was going to lead to you know, the need to cut the budget for the New York City Public Schools. And I was very worried about that and commissioner - excuse me, Chancellor Carranza was as well. Obviously, the world is entirely different. That's, you know, I think about that day, I gave my testimony up in February, up in Albany, that seems like a century ago. We've all gone through so much. So, the budget as proposed, it does not shock me that the Governor felt, and apparently the Legislature apparently also feels there wasn't an ability to even keep the schools the way they were practically speaking, that we're going to take another hit here. I don't - how can anyone feel good about that? But we don't have a choice at this point. It's just the reality we're dealing with. We are going to have to make tough, tough budget decisions going forward. I have announced a \$1.3 billion initial PEG program and I've said very clearly that number will go up.

But Reema there is something very, very important that could happen in the coming weeks, well before we adopt our budget in June. And that is the fourth stimulus, which again, I spoke to Speaker Pelosi, to the Democratic leader of the Senate who was also our Senator Schumer. I spoke to Treasury Secretary Mnuchin. There's a clear understanding there's going to be another stimulus bill. And that one of the elements of that stimulus bill will be aid for localities and states. And I think that has to be money to make up for all the massive expenditures that we're putting out to protect people from coronavirus, but also all the lost revenue because we need that money back to keep basic services going in the city, to make sure that everything people depend on our police, our fire, sanitation, education, hospitals, parks that everything can keep going. Because I keep saying if we're going to have recovery, it will be because our hospitals are functioning, our city governments are functioning, our state governments are functioning. If you don't have all those things, we're not going to have recovery. And I do believe that our colleagues in Washington understand that. So I'm very, very hopeful that those resources are really going to help us out and help us avert bigger cuts before June.

**Moderator:** Katie from the Wall Street Journal's up next. Katie.

**Question:** Hey everyone. I wanted to ask if, Dr. Katz wants to weigh in, and you too Mayor de Blasio, you know, you laid out why Queens was hit so hard, but I think the stat there that's so alarming is that there are so few hospital beds. So if, Dr. Katz, do you want to talk about why

this is, I'm sure you know when you get into state funding in that, but also for the Mayor, you know, how many hospitals in Queens private but still hospitals had closed when you were at Public Advocate and the Mayor and the actions the city could have done to keep these hospitals open?

**Mayor:** Katie it's a good question, but I will also say the obvious you know, in the middle of a crisis, it is not unfair to say, you know, what could have been done way back when on issues like hospitals. I mean, you know, I felt for years and years long before I became Mayor that the city had ways it could have intervened to stop some of these closures and the state as well. But they did happen. And the issue now of course is to take everything we have and use it as well as possible and then, you know, continue to build out from there. So I would take – before turning to Mitch, I'd say, Katie, I think the meaning I would take for your question is not can we, you know, I know you're not suggesting this, but we can't go back in time and undo what was done over the course of the last 20 years. But we can learn the lesson going forward. And I think what we're seeing in this crisis is a very profound lesson to our city of what we're going to need in the future – our state, you know, what we're going to need in terms of health care in the future. In fact, this is a moment in history where we have to invest more and more in health care. We have to make sure that folks get covered – this is really – this crisis has been a powerful message to us about the need for universal health care. We're going to deepen as we recover, we're going to deepen our efforts with NYC Care and with guaranteeing health care to all New Yorkers. We need to push for universal health care around this country. This crisis is a powerful illustration of if we don't get this right, there's going to be other challenges ahead that could be even worse. And it's a real wake up call to our nation.

I've now talked to every major leader of the United States of America in the last few weeks, and we are all scrambling to find ventilators among many other items. There's no conversations that have been more powerful than with our military leaders who I think also are coming to a deeper realization of what it's going to mean to protect our national security in a different way, which is our health care security going forward. I think when we get through this crisis, this country has to reassess everything. Starting with what kind of a stockpile nationally we're going to put in place, of ventilators of, you know, equipment, supplies, how we're going to build up a national health care corps that's much, much deeper than what we have now to prepare for the future. So, I think, I think there's a lot that has to change when you get through this crisis. And I think it's a wake-up call for this city, this state and this country. Mitch?

**President Katz:** I would just add Mr. Mayor that when I first came to New York City, health care consultants told me my focus should be on closing public hospitals because there were “too many empty beds.” And I so appreciated that that was not your perspective at all. And your direction to me was to make the public system work. And that's been our focus and I can't imagine what I would be doing right now if we had closed public hospitals. That is one of the things that's saving us is that we – I'm able to expand to areas because I did have empty wards. I would also say that in order to help Queens, our first steps were okay if the patients are at Elmhurst because there aren't other hospitals in that area, then I need to send the staff to Elmhurst to take care of those patients. And whenever Elmhurst or Queens has gotten overwhelmed, we have transferred patients out and that's where the 193 non-ICU transfers and 43 ICU transfers comes from. And again, that's part of, along with checking the ventilators,



every night before I go to bed, I look at who, who is most hard hit and we determine how to level the patients across our system.

**Mayor:** Yeah. I just want to add one more thing and real thanks to Mitch – over the last few years, Mitch Katz took Health + Hospitals, which was struggling financially for years and put it on a very strong footing financially, managerially. When I came into office, that conversation about the need to potentially close hospitals was very, very active. And I remember in budget meetings, people would say, we have to think about that possibility of maybe we have to close some public hospitals or lay off frontline health care workers. And I'm proud to say that my administration and I said from day one, we're not going to do that. So, we kept every public hospital open. We employed all the health care workers we needed. We had no idea that would ever be a COVID-19 crisis. But thank God all of those people, those buildings, everything was in place and ready.

And I also have to tell people that for years, unfortunately, Health + Hospitals Corporation needed massive infusions of support from the city government through the city budget just to keep afloat, while it was being modernized and while it was being improved to be able to deal with the future. And we made that investment. Again, we had no idea what was coming up ahead. But we made that investment because it was right thing to do. And then Mitch has put this amazing organization on much stronger footing for the future. So, a long answer, Katie, but you raised a very important point. I wish over the last 20 years there had been moments where there was more foresight about protecting hospitals that we've now lost. But I can at least say from the perspective of City of New York in the last six years, we made a priority of protecting every single one of our public hospitals, every single one of our public hospitals has stayed strong and now we need them more than ever.

**Moderator:** Sean from the Daily News is up next. Sean?

**Question:** Yeah. Thank you, Mayor. I understand the sticking point on the budget in Albany has been making it “adjustable” and giving the Governor power to make cuts as he sees fit throughout the year. I just wanted to get your take on the idea of an adjustable budget and if you're concerned that would give the Governor too much power.

**Mayor:** Sean. I would just say this, we all understand it's a crisis, but it's also a democracy, and you know, the power of America, the power of New York is no matter what's thrown at us, we stay by our values. We stay by our laws. And so clearly even in a crisis, there has to be checks and balances. And it's crucial that the legislature have the kind of oversight it has traditionally had and has the ability to ensure that it agrees with what the Governor's doing. So, I understand and I respect that the Governor's going to have to make a lot of tough choices in the middle of crisis, just like I'm going to have to. So, I want him to have the freedom to make tough choices. But I also believe in those checks and balances as I always have, and we can do both at once. I don't think there's a contradiction – that balance can be struck. I think the important thing to remember is that thank God the previous stimulus bill, the second stimulus bill provided a lot of support, particularly in terms of Medicaid. Thank God the third stimulus bill provides so much support to everyday New Yorkers directly into their lives, into their wallets and real support that's going to help the state government in particular. And I am convinced there will be a fourth

stimulus. So, I think beyond just the issue of how the different branches of government work together is the fact that there could be a lot of help out there. And let's remember if you take every single dollar that New York State needs to make up its budget deficit, to make it 100 percent whole, every dollar that New York City needs to make us 100 percent whole, the federal government could achieve that in a heartbeat.

The stimulus bill went to a lot of trouble to bail out you know, bigger corporations. There's question in my mind that that next stimulus can very, very easily reach a New York City, New York State with everything we need. And it should be the same for other cities and states in need. We, you know, we all say the federal government bailed out the auto industry, once upon a time, bailed out the big banks. They can bail out America's cities and America's states, but we all need to fight for it. And by the way, I think it's going to be a bipartisan fight. I think you're going to see Republican governors, Republican mayors shoulder-to-shoulder with us Democrats fighting for it in these next weeks in Washington.

**Moderator:** Matt Chayes from Newsday is up next. Matt?

**Question:** Thanks, Olivia. Mr. Mayor, last week I asked you for the triage plan to ration care and you said "I don't think it's appropriate to start talking about. [Inaudible] called it a theoretical. You said you didn't think it's fair." Well it's no longer theoretical – NYU Langone has a plan like this, according to the Wall Street Journal. The State's had recommendations since 2015. So hospitals are making these calls, but it's behind closed doors with no public input. In Alabama and Washington, people with intellectual disabilities are a lower priority and [inaudible] for being out of ventilators. So, my question is this, is it your position that it's inappropriate, unfair for hospitals to have these plans at all? Or that it's inappropriate or unfair for the public to know what these plans say?

**Mayor:** No, I mean – look the underlying question, I obviously disagree with your wording, but the underlying question is a very powerful one. What I was saying is I think we have to be careful in this crisis. It's going to be a tough battle. And I know the media has to ask tough questions and ensure that all the concerns of the public are being aired. But I also think in an atmosphere of crisis, we have to remember that we're trying to really respect people's humanity, trying to help everyone to know all the things are being done to protect them, to help them. And be careful not to give people an impression of something that's just not the reality. And so sometimes I fear that the, you know, the questions or the representation leads people to think things are different and even worse than they are, and I'm very concerned about that.

Of course, we understand and it's not a new thing, and Dr. Katz will speak to it. There are medical ethics around what to do and really, really tough situations where tough choices have to be made. And I respect the profession to work that through. But the goal is not to talk about what to do when it's too late. The goal is to fight every minute to avoid ever having to get to that point. And that means having enough medical personnel, enough ventilators, enough beds. That's what we're focused on. And honestly, I think talking about these horrible choices and contingencies just distracts from the mission, which is to protect every life and save every life we can. If you say it in terms of – I don't know what's happening in Alabama or any place else, but if you say is government making a decision that would separate different people the way you're suggesting?

No, of course not. And I don't know what some of the private hospitals are doing about their ethical choices, but I respect that they're very professional organizations. In terms of our public hospitals, in terms of what we are doing as the City of New York. Our goal is to save every patient that can be saved, and that's the basis of this fight. You want to add?

**President Katz:** I would fully agree with that that at this moment we can be saying as a City that we have enough ventilators till Sunday and we need for ventilators to be released from the federal and state caches to keep people alive. Well, we could be saying let's focus on allocation decisions. I think it's much better to focus on getting enough ventilators so that we don't have to make an allocation decision. The state guidelines that you refer, which are thoughtful, have never been promulgated into law. So as of now, they stand as some very thoughtful guidance by a very learned group of people. But they're not applicable as law. They cannot be – you cannot make decisions based on those guidelines and say, well this is how we are governed.

**Moderator:** Sydney, from the Advance is up next. Sydney.

**Question:** Hey there, Mr. Mayor. So, you and Dr. Katz outlined your search plan for all of the public hospitals in the four boroughs, but you didn't mention any plan for Staten Island. As we know, it's the only borough without a public hospital. And from the numbers we know today for Staten Island's two private hospitals, it looks like they're operating at more than 50 percent of their combined capacity. Today, there were 458 coronavirus patients alone being treated at the two hospitals and from what we know about the two hospitals' search capacity, they can expand to a total of 829 beds. The State, Congressman Max Rose, federal government won't give us any information on when the new field hospitals are going to be opening on Staten Island, and it looks like, you know, the private hospitals will need some relief soon. Does the City have a plan in the interim to relieve Staten Island's private hospitals before the field hospitals open in the event they reach capacity before they open and who's in charge of, you know, putting together that plan? So far, nobody, no one's been able to articulate it. Is it the City? Is it the State? Is it the job of the private hospitals?

**Mayor:** Okay. I appreciate the question very much. And I think we have articulated to how this entire endeavor is proceeding. The federal government, through FEMA, is constantly providing us with support. The State government and the City government are coordinating constantly to make sure each hospital gets what they need. A massive amount of supplies is being distributed all the time to all the hospitals. I want to emphasize that again, public, voluntary, independent does not matter – all the hospitals. What we are going to do in terms of Staten Island, of course keep constantly supplying the two hospitals. I've mentioned to you there's a conversation I've had with Borough President Oddo pretty much every day over the last week, constantly monitoring what's happening, working with the State on building out capacity on Staten Island. The State's got some pieces they're working on. We're going to work on other pieces. Again, one of our focal points will be hotels. And it's just going to be a constant effort to keep building more and more capacity to protect Staten Islanders. Commissioner O'Neill in terms of using RUMC as one example of a hospital that serves a lot of Staten Islanders, a lot of people in need. We're going to make sure that they have what they need. This is the kind of thing where the team that Jimmy puts together will be present in hospitals on a regular basis to make sure that flow of supplies is exactly what they need, make sure they're being rationed out the right way to get the maximum

support for the health care workers and make sure there's always what they need for the next day. There's going to be a very dynamic process, but that's the process that our team at Emergency Management and H + H are working on every single day. That's why you've seen millions and millions of items already flowing out to the hospitals. And the exact pattern we talked to you about was not at all just about H + H – when I talked about all those hotels we're expanding, that's every single borough and public spaces as I mentioned – large public spaces, we're going to constantly find more and bring them online. And, Sydney, the amazing thing is how quickly they can be brought online. Yesterday, I was at the Billie Jean King Center – the tennis center in Queens – that's going to be open for patients as early as Tuesday. So, we're going to move rapidly and Staten Island is absolutely going to be a part of this plan

**Moderator:** Erin Durkin from Politico is up next. Erin?

**Question:** Hi there. I was just wondering, you mentioned briefly that Health + Hospitals [inaudible] going to be offering of all staff testing. I know previously the Health Department was saying this wasn't necessary for people without symptom. Can you explain why the change in policy and why it wasn't done sooner?

**Mayor:** Yeah. I'll start and then Dr. Katz will add. One, we're starting to get more testing capacity and, Erin, boy, if you look back – you know, my first press conference on coronavirus was January 24th when I called for more federal testing and the ability of the city to do its own testing. And I wish to hell the federal government had listened to us back then. But finally, we're actually starting to get a lot more testing capacity. And so, we have the capacity that we can use a different strategic way. The other thing that's true is our health care workers who are just fighting so hard and going through so much for, a number of them – they are requesting testing as something that will give them a greater sense of confidence as they do this extraordinary work. We want to accommodate them. And since we have the capacity now, Mitch thought this was a smart time to make it available for those who want it. It's not obligatory, but for those who want it. Let me have Mitch [inaudible] –

**President Katz:** I agree with all of those, but I would add another major reason that we are not encouraging the general public to go for testing if they're asymptomatic is that we want everybody to shelter in place. So, we recognize that if people are seeking a test, then they're going to be leaving their home, they're going to be going out to going to go to another health care facility, there's going to be a need to use protective equipment on the person who's doing the test. In the case of our health care workers, they are already at the hospital, which is where the tests are being done, so it no way results in more people being out and communicating in ways that could cause transmission of the virus.

**Moderator:** Yoav, from the City, is up next. Yoav?

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. Hi, Dr. Katz. I wanted to ask about something Governor Cuomo said today. He said, once you go on a ventilator, you only have a 20 percent chance of coming off. And Dr. Katz, I wanted to ask you whether you're kind of seeing the same figure on a city level and, I guess, if there's anything you can say about that. It's just, you know, we've been hearing

the ventilators are kind of our best hope and, obviously, every life is worth saving, but, I guess, what does it say that our best hope perhaps only has a 20 percent chance of succeeding?

**President Katz:** Yes. the Governor is right. In fact, the estimates that I've seen are closer to 15 percent, but the issue is that you don't know when people come in who's that 15 percent that can survive. This is a fierce virus for a very small number of people and part of when I talk to people in the hospital – part of what's so hard for them is they only see the people who are so sick on the ventilators. The reality is, again, most of us are going to be – who are exposed to COVID are going to have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. Only 20 percent of us are going to need the hospital's care. Only five percent of us are going to need to be in an ICU. Only about three to four percent of us will need to be on the ventilator. But it is true that those people who have gone on the ventilator, the chance of getting off it is only about 15 percent. We have seen successes and we celebrate – we have at Health + Hospitals had people come off the ventilator and that is so rewarding for the physicians and nurses.

**Mayor:** Yeah. And, Yoav, our goal is to – I just want to be really clear, because it's really important – sort of the mission statement – our goal is to save every life. And any life that can be saved, we will save. Mitch just made it real plain, when someone comes into that hospital, they don't have an ID badge on them saying, you know, what's going to happen to them in a week or two weeks. Our health care workers fight for every single human being, doesn't matter who they are or where they come from. So, that's how we're going to go about this. And, look, a ventilator is just – we know it, we know it can be the difference between life and death. We know there are other people who are not going to need a ventilator, but they're still going to need health care. We don't take an attitude of, you know, any way de-valuing each life. We value each life tremendously. And we're New Yorkers, so we value everyone equally. And that's why we're going to fight to get every ventilator, to get all the staffing we need, and to save every single life. And I want to never have a day where I say, you know, the help we ask for wasn't there and someone died – someone died who didn't need to die. That's the standard to me. Did everyone get saved who could be saved? Or, did anyone die who didn't need to die because the ventilator wasn't there? That's why it's so sacred to get every single one we need in time.

**Moderator:** Last two with the Mayor – Jeff Mays, from the New York Times. Jeff Mays?

**Question:** Hey, Mr. Mayor. Quick question on the playground issue, does that mean that the rest of the parks remain open? And do you plan to open up any more spaces such as streets to allow people to have more space? And finally, are you at all concerned that not making this decision shows that you are slow to make certain critical decisions during this crisis?

**Mayor:** No. Jeff, just look at the facts please, respectfully. January 24th, I started fighting to get us the testing we needed and kept throughout February for it. The day that I came to the decision it was time to close the schools, as painful as that decision was, that same night I also made the decision to close bars and restaurants, make them go to only takeout and delivery. Those decisions, closing schools, closing bars and restaurants, obviously way ahead of so much of the country. It was then shortly thereafter – and again, I give special thanks to Jimmy O'Neill who helped me think through the shelter in place issue because of what was happening in San Francisco – I called for shelter in place ahead of the vast majority of public chief executives in

this nation. So, no, I can make decisions all day long, but there's sometimes, Jeff, where the data tells me that we have an opportunity to try and strike some balance. And again, I have tremendous faith in the NYPD, and tremendous faith in Commissioner Shea, and we looked at the compliance levels in the playgrounds and we did not see a particular challenge. But, again, I understand why the State wanted to go to an abundance-of-caution stance and I accept it and want to work with the State and always be united. So very, very comfortable with that. Once I think something needs to be done, I will – I remind you of this last weekend, saying that any houses of worship still having services, we would shut down and disperse, announcing the fines for folks who were violating social distancing. Not problem in the world when I think something is justified, and we've thought about the consequences intended and unintended, I will pull the trigger every time when it's time to take the next step.

**Moderator:** Last call with the Mayor, Jennifer from the AP. Jennifer?

**Question:** Hi. Thanks for taking this. I know that [inaudible] questions about the H + H surge plan [inaudible] technical briefing and I appreciate that, but I just wanted to ask you, as the Mayor, how confident do you feel about getting [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** How confident – what?

**Question:** Do you feel about getting the number of beds that are needed?

**Mayor:** On the beds – so, Jennifer, it's a great question because it also points up the larger dynamic around the beds, which has everything that goes with the beds. So, I'll start and Mitch can elaborate. And then, again, Jimmy and I will leave and Mitch can stay on for any other technical briefing matters that journalists want to go into. But, Jennifer, the education a lot of us have received during this crisis is that all the pieces have to fit if you're going to save every life. So, the beds are one thing, the equipment's another thing, the supplies are another thing, and, most importantly, the people, the health care professionals are the crucial piece of the equation. The great, powerful truth is you can't achieve the goal without all the pieces come together. So, the beds in some ways are the easiest part of the equation. They're not hard to do in the sense of, for example, you take a hotel while you've got, you know, a building full of beds – you've got to make some modifications, you've got to build a nursing station on every floor and things like that, but it's not a ridiculously complex. It takes a lot of work quickly, but it can be done. We know how to do it. And when you're talking about a lot of supplies, they're out there, it's just getting them here in time. When you're talking about ventilators, a much tougher equation, because we all know there's just not enough in the country, but we obviously have the greatest need, we should get the most and then pass them on later. You talk about personnel, endless need for personnel, with a lot of people unfortunately out for a period of time because of the virus, with folks who need time off cause they've been working so hard. That's where I've been clear that we must have an infusion of personnel, not only from the private sector in the New York area, but also from the national level. I've had this conversation with the President, with the Defense Secretary, with the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the FEMA administrator, and I could go on and mention others as well. And I've said, we must have a national mobilization of our doctors, our nurses all over the country like we've never seen before. Something much closer to a wartime dynamic – and if not a draft, per se, something close to a draft in which every

available doctor, nurse health care worker who is needed at the front is moved there by the military to serve for the time they're needed and then moved on to the next location and the recipient city will send a lot of our health care professionals to the next place that needs them. That's how serious it is. That's how unprecedented it is. I have asked the President and all the other leaders I've mentioned to get us, starting on Sunday, 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors, 300 respiratory therapists, and that's just the first request. And the President, I talked to him and to the other leaders about calling up the military reserve across the nation. The President did that last Friday. That's the level we're at now. So, the point – I'm sorry for the long answer, but it's a very, very crucial topic. The beds, we can do. It'll take – it'll be a race against time, it'll take a lot of hard work, but I'm confident we can get there. But the bed is only as good as the supplies, the equipment, and especially the people that go with it. And that's – that's the tougher part of the equation that we need to see a lot more help, particularly from the federal level to achieve.

Mitch, do you want to add?

**President Katz:** You did it.

**Mayor:** I did – okay, Mitch has trained me well. Okay, we'll continue with the technical briefing. Thank you to everyone. And thank you, again, to Jimmy O'Neill. Welcome back. Thank you so much for all you're going to do for us.

Thanks, everyone.

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