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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY AT THE USTA
BILLIE JEAN KING NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good afternoon, everybody. Yesterday, in the midst of this crisis, we had an extraordinary moment where the USNS Comfort arrived. And boy, did it bring hope, did it bring comfort already to New Yorkers who wanted to know we were not alone, and that real help was coming. We got to see it all live. We got to feel it. Well today is another example that this city is immediately acting every single day and so many good people are helping us, preparing every day for what lies ahead. Getting ready the hospital facilities we need to protect lives and New Yorkers. Yesterday, it was the comfort basically floating right up to New York City with another full hospital – an amazing feat.

Today, it is this facility here in Queens that, right now, looks like a bunch of tennis courts. Very soon this is going to be 350 hospital beds to protect the lives of New Yorkers. And there are two ways of looking at this. If you want to say the glass is half empty, you would say these tennis courts symbolize what we're all going through right now. We'd all like to go back to the times when things are normal, and people are out here playing tennis. We all feel that. I feel that and we miss it and it's sad, but we also know that this crisis will not go on forever. It will be very intense but, thank God, it will be brief. When I look out here, I see the glass is half full, which is the fact that everyone is rising to the challenge. Everyone is contributing, each in their own way. We have people from organizations all over this city, all over the world calling literally every single hour offering help. When the folks here at a tennis center heard there was a need, they said yes immediately, and all the people who reached out to the Creek, this hospital said the same thing.

So, I'm looking forward to the day when this was going to be a place for tennis again, but in the meantime, I'm inspired by the fact that people are stepping up. And we have set a very, very high bar of what we need to create in the next few weeks in terms of hospital beds in this city. And every time I turn around, I see another person, another organization stepping up to make it happen, and that to me is inspiring, and that speaks to what New Yorkers do all the time. The attitude we have that we will overcome anything and everything. That is on display right here at this tennis center.

We have to, as New Yorkers, deal honestly with the pain we're experiencing, the grief we're experiencing, and, at the same time, keep moving forward. I've unfortunately had to liken this to a war. That's what soldiers have to do in a war. We have to find a way to mourn, but never be paralyzed, because people's lives are at stake, and we have to be there always for those we can save, those we can comfort, those we can help. But we are definitely feeling the pain of those we

have lost from our own community here in public service. And I want to particularly focus on the Department of Correction that's doing such difficult work right now. Handling a crisis that's never been seen before by any of us obviously, but with the particular conditions that exist in our correction system. I told you back on Friday that we lost an investigator, David Perez. We've now lost a young IT worker, Hunter O'Kelly Rodriguez and a beloved longtime officer of 20 years as a member of our Correction team. And we're withholding the name at the request of the family, but I know all the Correction officers, the staff, everyone at correctional health services, everyone's feeling these losses right now, and they're resolute that we have to keep fighting to protect everyone. The folks who work in our correction system, and all those who are incarcerated as well.

Now, we all know that we are racing against time right now, and I felt it is my job to really let people know how intense this battle will be. The fact is coming on fast and it will not be over in an instant. There will be weeks where we are going to have to keep fighting. And every time I've heard any projection of it's going to be over soon, don't worry about it. I always say, no, that's not the truth, and it's a danger to tell people something's going to be easier than it really will be. So, I'm telling you all it will be tough, but it will be something that we will fight through and we will survive. But it begins with a recognition of just how much we're going to need.

So again, before all this started, before the coronavirus in this city, we had about 20,000 working hospital beds in our major hospitals. Public, private, voluntary, independent, whatever phrases you want to use. All the hospitals combined had about 20,000 staffed hospital beds. We now need to in just the next weeks, triple that number. Produce three times that number. And you might say to yourself, how on earth is that possible? And when I first heard the projections, I questioned it myself. But then look at the facts. Look at how quickly a hospital can be created. Whether it is in a place like the Javits Center, or a place like this tennis center, or a hotel. We know how to make any number of buildings into a hospital in a matter of days. So, they need to say, well how does that all add up. Look, the Javits Center alone, thousands of beds will be built out there. The Comfort starts with 750, can go up to a thousand beds, there's 350 beds here, a lot of hotels, hundreds of hundreds of beds each. We're just going to keep going every single day adding and adding and adding to get to the point where we have what we need.

This facility will be crucial. The Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, it's going to be handled by the same company. They are going to set it up rapidly and we're then going to go to the next site, the next site, the next site to meet our goal. We're working with the federal government, with FEMA, with the state. We're working with the hotel industry. We're working with folks who own major facilities. Everyone is working in common cause. I have not heard someone say no yet, and that's something New Yorkers should know about and be proud of. No one. I literally have not heard anyone. We say we need your building. I've not heard anyone say no. Everyone understands what time it is. So, right here at the Billy Jean King Center, named after someone who's such a hero to so many of us. Well, I think it's very fitting. I think Billy Jean would agree that this place will be a lifesaving place. This place will not only help folks afflicted by the coronavirus, help them to survive and recover and go home, it is specifically going to help patients who come through Elmhurst hospital and can receive care here. It's going to help take the pressure off Elmhurst. We all know that for a variety of reasons, Elmhurst has been the place that is borne the

brunt and the staff at Elmhurst, the doctors and nurses, everyone that works at Elmhurst, they've done an amazing job, but we want to give them as much relief as possible.

Starting next week, this facility will be able to take people from Elmhurst, not folks who need ICU care, but other coronavirus patients. Bring them over here, relieve some of that pressure immediately. 350 beds will be here with all the staffing, the doctors, the nurses, all the staffing needed, that's what the company does that brings all this in, brings in the equipment, brings in the beds. It'll take three weeks to build out, but as I said, starting next week patients will start arriving. And I want to thank the folks who made this possible right here in terms of this amazing facility and I want to thank him, he's with us, the Chief Operating Officer of the U.S. Tennis Association Daniel Zausner. Thank you, Daniel, for partnering with the City and all of us to make this happen. Thank you and all your colleagues and you said yes and I thank you for that Billy Sullivan, CEO of SLSCO the contractor that does this work, Billy is over there, sorry, cause of distancing it's hard to see people sometimes and they'll be working with us at the Brooklyn cruise terminal as well. And, of course, our partners all the time, the Army Corps of Engineers, New York State and our own Office of Emergency Management. Thank you, Deanne, to you and your team. And special thanks to our colleagues at Department of Design and Construction of the City who do amazing work and they can do it very quick. So, thank you to Jamie Torres Springer, the First Deputy Commissioner who is definitely— Jamie, no one's going to miss you wherever you walk in that jacket. I want to thank you, you're very visible right now, very visible. And we're going to be joined in a moment from Health and Hospitals is obviously the collaboration with Elmhurst Hospital, Dr. Eric Wei, the Vice President, Chief Quality Control Officer for Health and Hospitals will be joining us and we thank them.

I want to give you some other updates real quick and then we'll turn to questions from our colleagues in the media. So, a few days ago we all heard the very tough news about the record number of calls to 911. And— the real challenge is that our first responders we're facing our paramedics and our EMTS through EMS. And we said, we're going to have to make a lot of adjustments, lot of changes to address the demand, but we would do it. Well, at that point we were hoping the cavalry was coming, but I have to say I am so moved and so appreciative to the Federal Government with how they move so quickly here and in great number. And I give all the credit in the world to FEMA and Regional Administrator Tom Von Essen who everyone knows was our Fire Commissioner and I think it's no accident that Tom is really looking out for us and he certainly understands how important EMS is to the City. So, I want to tell you that we announced this morning formally that 250 more ambulances are coming right away to New York City from FEMA from all over the country to help us address our 911 calls. 135 of those ambulances are here already, I want you to understand how unusual it is to hear something's coming, and is here immediately. This is really powerful and it shows how much the Federal Government is getting into gear now full gear to help us. We're going to have approximately 500 more EMTS and paramedics coming in from all over the country, 270 are here right now and they're going immediately into action to help our extraordinary colleagues at the Fire Department and EMS to do the work that they do. I mentioned yesterday that nurses, more and more nurses are coming in. 500 on Friday had already gotten to our hospitals I said, we do want to add another 500 this week. I'm now announcing an additional 1,000 nurses that Health and Hospitals has coming very soon through contracting they've done. So we are sounding the alarm in many places and reaching out to many friends and may colleagues to get help, but these numbers now

are going to make a huge difference. Imagine just in the last few days, adding a grand total of 2,000 nurses to help protect New Yorkers, that's just in the last few days more coming and that's going to mean lives will be saved.

Now, I'll always tell you good news, but that does not mean that the battle is over, it doesn't mean we're not going to need a lot more help. Remember, as we speak now, we have a quarter of all the coronavirus cases in the United States of America and— I've spoken several times to the President in recent days to the Defense Secretary, to the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, and numerous federal officials. I've said the same thing to all of them, this coming Sunday, April 5th is a demarcation line. This is the point at which we must be prepared for next week when we expect a huge increase in the number of cases. What I asked very clearly last week was for military medical personnel to be deployed here from the permanent military and from the reserves. I had this conversation with all of them, I've said specifically 1,000 nurses, 300 respiratory therapists, 150 doctors and I said, we need as many as possible by Sunday, April 5th and we need to know that any others are going to come shortly thereafter. I have reiterated that need and that request, and I have to say in many ways it's a demand because this is about saving lives in time and I'm waiting for an answer from the White House. And I will always give credit where credit is due the Federal Government in the last couple of weeks has shown us a much more vigorous approach and it's helping us and we are very appreciative. I thank the President, I thank all the Cabinet Officers who have been a part of this effort, especially thank FEMA, but we must have that additional personnel to be able to get through next week and the weeks right after that. So, I'm going to keep reiterating this specific request and I'm waiting for an answer from the White House. It is a reasonable request given that we're the Nation's largest City and we're the epicenter of this crisis.

Now, ventilators, which I'm going to talk about constantly we're grateful again in the last week or so, the Federal Government really stepped it up. 2,500 ventilators came into New York City, that is amazing, but we're going to need a lot more and we're going to need them soon. We're hearing that more help may be on the way shortly from the Federal Government, we're waiting for that to be confirmed, we need it. That number we put forward 15,000 as the total need remains, the total need and it is a very tight timeframe because none of us knows for sure is the worst week going to be in one week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, five weeks. We don't know when exactly it peaks, but we know April is going to be very tough and I'm trying to gird people from the possibility it will continue on into May and we're going to need those ventilators and the moment we are done with them we're going to send them wherever they're needed most in this country. Now I'm going to put out a call now to others who can help us and they're people in our communities right now and I need them to step up some have, but I need all of them to. People who are part of the normal fabric of this City, oral surgeons have ventilators for when they perform surgery, plastic surgeons have ventilators wherever they perform surgery, veterinarians, yes, veterinarians have in many cases, ventilators that we could use every single one of them. If you've got a ventilator in your office, in your operating room, we need it now it should not be sitting there doing nothing. This is a war effort everyone needs to contribute. You'll get it back when this battle is over to donate ventilators to find out how we can immediately get your ventilators where they're needed, anyone can go to nyc.gov/helpnow.

And I want to now talk to you about personal protective equipment this has been such an important topic there's deep concern all over the City, all over our healthcare system. Today our City agencies are distributing to all New York City hospitals I want to make that crystal clear, not just to our public hospitals, Health and Hospitals, but also voluntary hospitals, independent hospitals. We ensure that supplies go wherever the need is in an equitable fashion. So, this day – today – we are distributing 3 million surgical masks all over New York City to our hospitals, 800,000 N95 masks, 600,000 pairs of gloves, 120,000 face shields, 40,000 surgical gowns – this is one day. Now anyone out there who has supplies like this you can donate or has a truly reliable source for these supplies, we need them. And again, if you can donate to this effort, every bit helps. Go to nyc.gov/helpnow or you can call. Obviously, people from all over the country are helping New York City. You can call 833-NYC-0040. And thank you to all who have helped us.

I'm going to give you some other quick updates before we go to questions. An update on our jail system, the efforts that we have made directly and working with District Attorneys and the State to ensure that inmates who have the kind of medical problems that would put them in direct danger and those who could be released for other reasons as well; again with some very strict guidelines and safeguards. As of the end of yesterday, there had been 900 inmates released from our jail system. There will be more ahead. We will give you an update as soon as we know of any additional numbers.

Want to talk about construction. There's been a lot of concern, obviously. We work closely with the State to affirm that only essential construction should be allowed at this point. Non-essential non-emergency construction must end immediately. Our Department of Buildings agents are out as we speak. Yesterday we gave education and warnings; today we are starting heavy fines and closing down construction sites that are in violation. They will be not just fined; they will be closed down immediately. If Department of Buildings has any difficulty from the people at a construction site who are non-emergency, non-essential, they will call into NYPD to shut down that site immediately. There's no kidding around here. All non-essential non-emergency construction must be ended right now.

On tax lien sales, this is a really important issue for some folks -tax liens, property – it was going to be [inaudible] by Department of Finance for unpaid property taxes or water bills or other charges. We understand right now people's lives have been turned upside down. They don't have money to pay bills. We want to be fair. We want to be understanding. So, all tax lien sales are going to be postponed. They were supposed to be in the month of May. They will be postponed to August, initially.

On alternate side parking, and we all know everyone who's a New Yorker knows few issues stir the hearts of New Yorkers more than alternate side parking. Well, I'm sorry it's because of coronavirus, but let me at least give you a little good news in your day. Alternate side parking will be suspended for the next two weeks – two weeks through Tuesday, April 14th. So, leave your cars where they are. One less hassle and fewer people who have to go out of their homes to deal with it and we'll be looking after the two weeks to see what's the right thing to do at that point.

On playgrounds, I have been talking daily, in fact multiple times a day with Police Commissioner Dermot Shea and to get feedback from his enforcement efforts, obviously from Parks Department as well. Overwhelmingly, we're seeing compliance in parks and playgrounds with some real problem spots too. So, I've been very clear, if we see a problem spot that's recurrent, we are going to shut it down. I have ordered 10 playgrounds to be closed at the end of today. Those are playgrounds that have had crowding multiple times. They will be shut down. They will be locked. There will be signs put up; there will be enforcement. My goal again is to try to preserve as many as possible if people follow the rules and if people will not follow the rules, we will continue to shut them down aggressively.

Another issue has come up and it is an issue that's causing us real concern. We heard from Staten Island, from the Amazon fulfillment center, a specific charge that a worker who raised health and safety concerns, raised social distancing concerns was fired. The allegation is because he spoke up for the safety of his fellow workers, he was fired. I have ordered the City's Commission on Human Rights to investigate Amazon immediately, to determine if that's true. If so, that'd be a violation of our City Human Rights Law we would act on it immediately. I should also note that the Sheriff's Office did an inspection of the facility to ensure that social distancing is being observed and they will continue to inspect as needed.

So, I'll conclude, and, again, we're going to see a lot of things we've never seen before. I know every one of us has walked down the sidewalk and looked up ahead a whole block and it was empty and we can't remember when that ever happened. I was driving on the FDR the other day and I looked ahead, for a mile it seemed like on the FDR there was no other car on the road up ahead. We're seeing things that are just strange and in so many ways troubling to us as New Yorkers. Some of these things are going to be painful. Some of these things are going to be hard to make sense of, but some things we're going to see – like this tennis center – are to be signs of the fight back. The fact that New Yorkers don't take this crisis lying down; New Yorkers are not people who get defeated easily. So, you go all over and you see this fight back. You see a place being turned into a hospital – it wasn't a hospital. You see people providing food for their neighbors. You see people helping in so many ways. You'll see unusual things and some of them will be things we wish we'd never seen. You're also going to see things that are going to tell you that New Yorkers are not going to accept defeat. I'm very, very proud of all of you for the way you've handled this extraordinary crisis. Something we'd never experienced in our lifetimes, I hope we never do again, but I have faith in New Yorkers; I have faith in New York City. We will see this through.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, again a thank you to all our colleagues here. Everyone is doing so much work so quickly. Thank you all, thank you. The amazing teams at Emergency Management at Health + Hospitals, for all you're doing and with that, we welcome your questions.

Dave?

Question: Mayor, I know you said this location will eventually in about a week start taking non-ICU coronavirus patients.

Mayor: Correct.

Question: From Elmhurst, but is there a master plan in the city of, Oh, this person goes to Mount Sinai, this person goes to the Javits, this person goes to the Comfort. Is there a master plan or is it each doctor decides or what?

Mayor: No, that's – there actually is a master plan that's being built out as we speak in a cooperative effort between FEMA, the State and the City led by Emergency Management. So, job one Dave, is to build out the space immediately and to make sure as each spaces comes online, that there's a clear protocol. And again, I'll start and if my colleagues want to jump in at any point, just start walking toward me. I'll get out of the way because of social distancing. Stay there Deanne. So, the – but no, in fact the idea is to knit all this together into a coordinated effort, but I also want you to be clear, Dave, we have to immediately start building out the space first. Because to meet these deadlines, before you work out all the protocols of how it's going to be staffed and where the patients are going to come from, you got to get the physical part moving instantly. And that's been an extraordinary effort. But every day, more and more it's going to be started and gotten online. Ultimately, yes, you have to get the right people the right place. But remember the hospitals right now are being converted to all ICU or maximum ICU, but they still have a long way to go before they get to that point. So, while the hospitals can handle, of course other types of cases right now, what's going to happen over time? Every day it becomes -- each one becomes more and more ICU, more and more COVID related. So, it is literally a day by day evolution. Deanne, I'm moving. Okay, no step for you. I'm going to go over here. Now, I don't want to do, I'm going to go here. Okay.

Commissioner Deanne Criswell, Emergency Management: Yeah. The coordination piece is a really big piece and what we have set up is the Health Care Evacuation Coordination Center, which is going to be run out of the Javits. It's actually a system that's been in place and its run by the State that was set up for coastal storm evacuations. That's just being put in hyper mode and being able to do that for this type of an event. What they're going to do is they're putting out protocols to all of the hospitals across the New York City area on how they request patient transfers and then that coordination center will match the acuity of the patient with the acuity of the bed as these beds continue to stand up. Right now the only places that are open are the Javits Center and the Comfort and so they are matching patients to those two facilities, but as we continue to stand up facilities and depending on what level of treatment we're going to be able to give, they will match those patients with the proper space.

Question: Just while you're there. So, it is up and running?

Commissioner Criswell: It is up and running. It's over – it's located at the Javits Center.

Question: Okay and just [inaudible] Comfort and Javits?

Commissioner Criswell: Because those are the only two that are open right now to move patients to.

Question: Okay a quick a follow up. [Inaudible] there is a large set up in the parking lot of Citi Field, is that somehow - what is that?

Commissioner Criswell: Yeah, the tent was originally set up at Citi Field to support the drive through testing clinics that were going to come in from FEMA. But we, through this process, as other clinics were set up. We co-located the FEMA operations with our Health + Hospitals and so we left the tent up there for right now to determine if we needed an additional use for it. So maybe it can be used for some of our food access distribution points. So, we've been in contact with Citi Field on leaving it there for right now until we determine if we have a use for it there. So, right now, it's just staged for us to use for something that we might need because the changes or the requirements continue to change every day

Mayor: So, I want to note with real appreciation to Deanne that you know, she brings an extraordinary background to this work in Emergency Management because she started out as a firefighter. She served in the Air Force, then served at FEMA. So what is amazing is watching everyone be able to work with Deanne, military folks immediately feel comfortable with Deanne because she was in the military. Firefighters of course, she's one of them. FEMA folks from Washington, she knows all of them, including the National Administrator. So, I would really want to give credit where credit's due, not only to our team, which is great, but Deanna herself has been really one of the pivots here because she brings a wealth of experience and relationships and it's really helping New York City right now. It's not a surprise that those ambulances, for example, showed up in record time. That's a lot of her doing and Tom Von Essen's doing. Yes.

Question: Can you give us an update on Elmhurst Hospital and where that stands? What's the number of fatalities that have come through there?

Mayor: Dr Wei will join me. I just want to say to preface and then we will artfully in a ballet-like fashion go around each other. It's been a really tough time for Elmhurst but I want to note and I give Dr Mitch Katz and the whole team at Health + Hospitals and Elmhurst credit. They continually made the adjustments. We talk about how the NYPD for example, constantly make strategic adjustments through CompStat. You saw that Elmhurst. They surged doctors there, nurses there, equipment there, four times, they sent more ventilators to ensure that it could save lives. And also moved patients off to other places who could be. So, they got some of the very toughest cases in the city. And in a sudden surge. And that has a lot to do with where the hospital is and how few public hospitals are in that area for so many people. But they really dealt with a sudden onslaught very, very powerfully. With that in terms of the overall situation, Dr Wei, why don't you come over. You go that way. I'll get this way.

Vice President and Chief Quality Officer Eric Wei, Health + Hospitals: All right. So, thank you for that question and thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Health + Hospitals and Elmhurst. First and foremost, my heart breaks for all of the patients and the families who have been afflicted with this terrible, terrible virus. I've practiced emergency medicine for a long time and I'm seeing things that I could never have imagined in terms of what this virus can do to

all ages, people who are previously healthy, people with comorbidities. So, our thoughts and prayers are with everybody who's lost somebody, as well as everybody who's in the ICU and especially to our health care workers who have fallen ill. Elmhurst Hospital still continues to make all of us very proud. All the doctors, the nurses, the leadership, everybody is moving heaven and Earth to do everything they can to take on the onslaught of COVID-19 patients. And so over the past two weeks, it's gone from more than double the volume of people coming to the emergency department, to now the volumes actually down. But the people who are coming in are so much more ill and so much more critically ill, with shortness of breath and respiratory failure. And so what we're seeing is more and more ICU type patients. And so, I was just on the phone with the Emergency Department Chief, Dr. Stu Kessler to get a better picture. I speak to him every day. We have an ED action team that means that 6:00 pm every night. I've also spent a lot of time at Elmhurst myself over the past two weeks. They intubated 19 patients in the past 48 hours, 42 patients in the past four days. And that is way more than normal for an emergency department, even in a level one trauma center like Elmhurst. And so many patients are boarding, meaning they're admitted and waiting for space upstairs in the emergency department. Health + Hospitals has been acting like a system in terms of literally flattening the curve. Everybody should be familiar with that term with all the public health information about flattening the curve. What we've been doing is we've been transferring patients, both medical, surgical acuity as well as ICU acuity out of Elmhurst. Queens Hospital, Lincoln Hospital, Kings County Hospital to our other hospitals that have not been – are surging but not nearly as much as Elmhurst and others. And so, we've moved almost 200 patients in the last week and a half across the system.

But the indicators I'm looking at are flashing red. Right? The number of patients that are boarding in the emergency department, the number of patients that are filling our medical surgical units and our ICUs are surging well beyond our traditional ICU units, into step down units, to operating rooms, medical surgical units. And so, this space is exactly what we need. We need to look outside of the four walls of our hospitals and not just tents in front of our hospitals, but where they can take admitted patients. And so, the Javits Center, the Comfort are welcome reprieves. We have teams pouring over every patient in our hospitals, matching it to the inclusion and exclusion criteria to see who we can get to Javits Center, which we've sent multiple people today, as well as to the Comfort. And so, I want to thank the Mayor, OEM, the Governor, FEMA, everybody for stepping up and helping us.

Mayor: Stay there if you would, Doctor. I just want to see if there are any other questions about either Elmhurst specifically or Health + Hospitals. Anybody else have questions about that? Yes, way back.

Question: I wanted to ask, I know you said other hospitals are surging. Which in the system do you say, especially here in the borough of Queens, which is the epicenter, or the city's epicenter, could you specifically talk about Queens hospitals and, you know, the other hospitals here and how they're doing and which ones are an area of concern for HHC?

Dr. Wei: So, Queens Hospital is surging as well. They're about four or five days behind Elmhurst in terms of where they are on the curve but it's a much smaller hospital, and therefore we've been putting a huge emphasis on getting ICU patients out of Queens Hospital to Bellevue

to Harlem Hospital, to Metropolitan and North Central Bronx. So, the borough of Queens is clearly on the front edge of this pandemic. But we're seeing it in Brooklyn. We're seeing it at Kings County, Coney Island, Woodhull – are all surging as well. Jacobi in the Bronx and Lincoln in the Bronx are right there as well. So, like I said, it went from being relatively easy to flatten the curve in terms of moving and shifting the surge across the system to now it's much more difficult. But I just really want to give the credit to the H + H leadership, especially the CEOs of all these other hospitals. Every time I pick up the phone and call them and say, can you take 10 med-surg and two ICUs? They say, of course, let me figure it out on my end, but send those patients please.

Mayor: [Inaudible] please –

Question: [Inaudible] understanding about Elmhurst, at this point, is it still receiving heart attacks, broken legs, standard ER visits? Because from what we saw from the inside, there were people at Elmhurst saying, we need this to be essentially COVID triage right now, we can't deal with all these other folks. Has that been straightened out?

Dr. Wei: Yes. So, we – I was on the phone with FDNY leadership yesterday, hospital special surgery has made a generous offer to take all ortho-related EMS runs there. So, we are setting up a call with City Hall, with FDNY to figure out how to operationalize this because this is not normal operating procedures – you take, you know, within 10 minutes of where you pick a patient up. We are stabilizing traumas and immediately putting them in an ambulance if safe and transferring them to ICU elsewhere in the system. So, yes, we are doing everything we can. Memorial Sloan Kettering is offering to take our cancer patients. I mentioned special surgery for our ortho patients. We've also created capacity at Roosevelt Island Medical Center to get other patients. So, we're making space, we're making space for COVID patients and especially ICU COVID patients.

Mayor: Anything else on HHC, please –

Question: Just, is it possible that patients that have [inaudible] that are not being treated specifically for [inaudible]?

Dr. Wei: Yes. I think that was one of the initial, most surprising things for us, that some of the positive tests that were coming back were from those that we least expected. We thought travel, we thought fever, cough, right, all of these respiratory symptoms, but some people with just diarrhea and upset stomach, right? We had traumas come in, so people who got hit by cars, or got beat up on the street, and we put them into the CT scanner. You see ground glass opacities, which show pneumonia that's consistent for COVID-19. And so we're operating under the understanding that anybody could have COVID at this point, any patient that we see.

Question: [Inaudible] when they are sent away from the hospital to other facilities, including here, what kind of precautions have to be taken just because of that –

Dr. Wei: Absolutely, so droplet precautions for anybody who is a suspected, what we call a person under investigation – so they have a test pending, anybody who has a confirmed if they have – yep, that means a mask.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Dr. Wei: I mean – yep. But if they're intubated, then we take even further precautions called airborne precautions. So that's an N95 mask, that's a face shield, eye protection, gowns, gloves, a hat. And so, for both our EMS and ambulance personnel who will be transporting these patients, they will all be in personal protective equipment as well as the receiving providers at each of these facilities. And we will keep these patients in those isolation precautions.

Mayor: Anything else Health + Hospitals or Elmhurst? Okay. I'm going to go around, you go here, I'll go here. I want to switch around. Okay. Let me get other questions. Go ahead. Over here, first –

Question: On the released inmates, could you say in which agency or agencies is responsible for them and also are any staff or other resources being allocated in addition, in terms of finding them housing, supervising, and support programs.

Mayor: Yeah. So, I'll give you the broad answer and then we'll get you more follow up. There's definitely a follow-up effort between Department of Corrections, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, NYPD, and then also sometimes other agencies. Some of these folks are homeless. They're going into a hotel setting, for example. That can involve the Department of Homeless Services or sometimes Department of Health and definitely Health + Hospitals because they do correctional health. So, anyone that goes out is given a lesson in how to address any potential health concerns. They can call Correctional health anytime and get support. So, there's actually a pretty elaborate follow-up scheme, but we'll get you exactly the details of it.

Question: [Inaudible] being involved?

Mayor: I think given everything that's happening we're drawing on staff that already exists to do some new things because obviously a lot of what people were doing, a lot of those tasks are gone, and people are doing different things. Obviously, the population on Rikers now is, you know, lower than we've ever seen. It's around 4,500. Rikers and the whole correction system, I should say, is around 4,500. So that is freeing up some time and effort in Corrections that can be applied to ensuring we're doing the proper follow-up and monitoring. Yes.

Question: In your mind, and maybe we can get Danny to weigh in on this, too – can the US Open happen this year? We've already seen the Olympics postponed for an entire year, so that's a July event. We're talking about late August, early September. Can this event happen and when would that decision need to be made and what plans might exist to [inaudible]?

Mayor: Before Danny comes over and I want him to speak for himself about their plans. I'll only say, I mean, look, I think the time horizon that's of deepest concern to New York City is April, May. I think thereafter we pray that we start to come out of this, but it won't be instant. You

know, it'd be going – you'll be going up the mountain, then you come back down the mountain. It's going to take time. Remember it was weeks ago that our Health Commissioner said her best estimate was we would have a chance to return to normal around September, but that's an ever-changing reality. So, August may be a very, very much better time or we may still be fighting some of these battles we don't know yet. But for things that are coming up much sooner, I think it's very tough. By late summer, you know, we may get some good news. Come on over.

Danny Zausner: Ironically, today is March 31st and five months from today is August 31st, which is the first day of the main draw of the US Open. We still plan accordingly, but it seems so trivial in light of what's going on in the city and the state and the government right now. So we want to be as supportive as we can, we will continue to plan every single day as if the US Open is being hosted, and hopefully we'll be in a position five months from today to see players actually practicing on the courts right behind us and playing in Arthur Ashe Stadium and all the other courts on the site. But way too preliminary to be thinking about that right now.

Mayor: Yeah. From your lips to God's ears. Okay. That would be a nice, nice part of our comeback, wouldn't it? Yes.

Question: There was a report today that Rikers inmates are being offered \$6 an hour to dig mass graves on Hart Island –

Mayor: I have not heard that.

Question: [Inaudible] on the Intercept [inaudible] –

Mayor: That doesn't sound right at all. Yeah, that really doesn't sound right. We'll have someone get you all the details, but that's a – proceed with caution on that, assuming that is right. Okay. Anyone else over here? Yes, please.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah, there's – look, there's a lot going on and we have to make sure one, that families are treated with respect no matter how intense this crisis. What a painful moment for families. They need all the help and support they can get. Two, everyone's trying to make sense of a new set of ground rules. And we've – you know, it's going to take a little time to get it right, but what I can assure you is, God forbid someone lose a loved one, we want to make sure that the medical examiner gets over there quickly, we want to make sure that if involves a police matter the police get over there with proper protective gear – everyone. And we are getting help from the federal government. It's a topic, as I've said scrupulously, I don't get into the details of, but we are getting help from the federal government. More help is coming to expand on what the medical examiner does. So, I think we're going to need a little time to get it to be the way it should be, as quick and respectful as it should be. But that's what we're going to do. See if there's anything else. Yes?

Question: On Samaritan's Purse, which is opening the Central Park facility, do you have any personal concerns about their organization? Did you choose not to attend because of that?

Mayor: Well, when I heard originally, Andrew, that there was, you know, an organization that was going to help Mount Sinai address COVID-19, I thought, that's fantastic. I don't have – the fact that it was moving so quickly was something that I found positive. Then when I heard more about the organization, and particularly some of the things I read from Graham [inaudible] it was very troubling to me. And I said immediately to my team that we had to find out exactly what was happening. Was there going to be an approach that was truly consistent with the values and the laws in New York City that everyone would be served and served equally. We've received those assurances from the organization. I spoke earlier today with the CEO of the Mount Sinai system, Dr. Ken Davis, who was adamant that they will only continue their relationship with the organization if those rules are followed, that they have a written agreement, that there's going to be no discrimination whatsoever. We're going to send people over from the Mayor's Office to monitor. So, I'm very concerned to make sure this is done right. But if it is done right, of course, we need all the help we can get.

Question: I wanted to ask – I know you had mentioned that the city would be releasing more detailed data. I wanted to ask for an update on that and when it will –

Mayor: As I said – thank you for the question – I'm comfortable on the raw material that you indicated yesterday. I'm comfortable with its release. I want the Health Department to come up with an answer, if they haven't already, I guess, so Freddi will follow up today. If there's some specific concern, I want to hear it, but otherwise I think it should be released. We've given you the disclaimers and my goal is to get more accurate information that we could actually feel comfortable that in releasing it publicly you would scrub it and find it to be scrupulously consistent – that's what I want to get us to the point of. It's been, as you can imagine, very hand-to-mouth the first few weeks, getting set for this kind of onslaught. But I think soon we should be able to have much more detailed information we can put out consistently that we can have confidence in.

Question: Has [inaudible] changed for you? I know last week you were reluctant to release the data because you were concerned that it might not be accurate. Was there a shift or change to change your mind?

Mayor: The change was, I have been shown more and more information that I believe is getting to the point that it will be consistent and accurate. Early in the crisis we were dealing with very specific cases. You remember those days? It seems like a long time ago. And I was able to get very specific information that when I put through people through their paces, it came back consistently, and I said, great, that's information we can put out. Then as things intensified greatly, I saw too many things were changing every hour and I didn't feel it was right to give out information that was so quickly changing. Now, I think I'm getting a flow of information that's ready to be made public more and more. As soon as it is, we're going to put it out.

Question: Do you want to see anything more from President Trump? He's having his news conference later today. What do you want to hear from him about New York City in his news conference later?

Mayor: I've said, I've expressed my appreciation for the USNS Comfort for FEMA being here in force, for the ambulances and the first responders who have arrived, for the ventilators – this is all moving in the right direction, but this is still the calm before the storm. And so, the request I made directly to the President and other top officials in the administration for 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors, 300 respiratory therapists to arrive beginning as early as Sunday for the next particularly intense week or two. That's what I need a response to right now. That's the urgent need for New York City. And I'm going to update what we need next as soon as it becomes clear, I'm going to tell the President directly, but I need an answer to that question right now.

Okay, everybody. Thank you very much and we will see you again soon.

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