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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 9, 2020, 12:45 PM

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S ANDREA MITCHELL REPORTS**

**Andrea Mitchell:** This morning, Mayor Bill de Blasio saluted New York City residents for staying home and social distancing to help slow the spread of the coronavirus. But he also warned that there is still a long way to go. The Mayor says the City still needs greater testing capacity as the next critical step. Mayor de Blasio joins me now. Mr. Mayor, thank you very much. I know how busy you are. I can only imagine how busy you are. So thanks for taking this time with us. What are you seeing now in terms of the progress? We're talking about the flattening of the curve. Hospitalizations are down. Do you worry people are so eager to get back out that they may cause this to reignite and you know, slow down the progress that's been made?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Andrea, that's exactly the concern. What I'm telling New Yorkers is that they actually should be very proud – in this incredibly painful crisis, you know, the number of people we've lost, the lives we've lost now far surpassing what we lost on 9/11, the worst day in our history. It's been horrible and people have had to go through so much painful change and our lives feel so different just compared to weeks ago. But New Yorkers, Andrea, you know, I wanted to say from the bottom of my heart, people really have worked at it and struggled and done it. They've done the social distancing, they've done the shelter in place. There's been remarkable compliance with the rules that are in place. I've talked to my Police Commissioner Dermot Shea and he says his officers are out there all over the city and they're struck by how much people are following the rules. And if anyone makes a mistake and you know, deviates from the rules, they are being warned and they actually start complying very quickly. So, it's not perfect. But it's been a lot and that has helped us to see some progress lately. I don't want to overstate it, Andrea. We've seen some improvement on the hospitalizations, but I wouldn't really call it a drop. I would say we've just seen less increase in hospitalizations, fewer ventilators than what we expected to need are being used. These are good signs, but they're early signs. So you're exactly right. I'm trying to say to people, let's be moved by the fact that people really worked hard and this is proving that those strategies work -- shelter in place, social distancing, they work. But you cannot let up the gas. You cannot for a moment get ahead of things and sort of count your chickens before they're hatched. Or this disease will have a resurgence and we could actually be worse off.

**Mitchell:** And when you see the economic hardships that flow from this and the medical realities. The disparity in terms of the racial and ethnic disproportionate impact on people of color, this certainly emphasizes that we need to do more long term, continuing to help people who have chronic health care issues and lack of insurance coverage. But what can you do in this

crisis to help those communities from getting the disease because they then die at a higher proportion than the rest of the population?

**Mayor:** That's right, Andrea. And look, when it's all over, we're going to have to really take stock and recognize this country was not prepared. And that the absence of universal health care was particularly damning in this crisis. And if we're really going to address the disparities and if we're really going to be prepared for the future, we have to have universal health care. That's just abundantly clear now. But what do we do now? What I announced yesterday was a four point plan to address the disparities in health care right now. Focusing on our public hospitals where so many people who are lower-income go for their care, strengthening them further. I mean, we spent billions to preserve our public hospital system when it was on the verge of collapse a few years ago. Thank God we did because now it's been the backbone of saving lives, particularly in the communities that are most afflicted. So it's the public hospitals. It's going out into communities with a huge traditional advertising campaign and digital to explain all the new things we're learning about the best ways for families to handle this disease and protect themselves in many, many languages. It's going door to door. I mean, again, this goes against what we've been thinking in a time of social distancing. But if we can find enough health care workers we can spare and give them the PPEs, we actually need to get people out into communities that are lower income, that are immigrant communities. Having a direct conversation with people who need to hear from someone really right there in the community, trusted community members especially. And lastly, a very aggressive telemedicine campaign. We think a lot of people, if they could just talk to a doctor, a nurse more frequently and have the assurance they could reach someone, they could actually navigate this and be safer and take care of, say if there's one sick person in the home, know how to isolate them and support them properly. But a lot of people need coaching. They need a doctor or a nurse to talk to. We're going to make that much more widely available.

**Mitchell:** Dr. Fauci was talking today to Savannah Guthrie about testing for antibodies for those who've already suffered and been infected and recovered. Do you see this as being widespread in the city as dense and highly populated as New York City?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Andrea, you know, right now – I mean, I've already said to our health care leadership believes we're going to have over 50 percent of the people in the city ultimately will be infected by this disease. The vast majority, thank God we'll have a pretty mild experience, but so many, of course will not and will struggle with it. But we're talking about millions of people. What testing would do – so we never had testing in the beginning when it could have actually affected the whole trajectory of this crisis. We could have used the testing in the beginning. We pleaded with the federal government. It wasn't there. We're still pleading for it. It's still not here. But if we could get testing on a bigger scale, we could use that strategically to actually create a containment strategy as we move this disease back, as we push it back, to create a kind of containment strategy that we wanted in the beginning. Where you keep pushing it down and then you're able to actually trace individual cases, isolate people, if you need to give them hotel rooms or quarantines with lots of support, lots of communication. That's where we need to go. But it's going to take a lot more testing and the federal government has to step up. This has been one of their biggest Achilles heels. They have to step up. The antibody testing is helpful, I think particularly in terms of our public servants. It will, I think, help a lot of frontline health care

workers and first responders if they know they've had it already, it will give them the confidence to keep doing the heroic work they're doing. But the antibody testing doesn't take the place of the, sort of the core coronavirus testing. We need that, that basic testing on a much bigger level if we're going to really turn the corner for the long term.

**Mitchell:** Do you now have the PPE that you need for all the hospitals, including some of the hospitals who are so stressed in the boroughs?

**Mayor:** Andrea, the answer is for this week only, yes. And that doesn't include surgical gowns, which is still an area we're struggling with and we're trying to use, you know, some backup items for that. But this week we can get through with ventilators and PPEs. Next week, I'm hopeful, but we don't have everything we need yet. That's -- and this is after we've gotten a little bit of relief. We expected it to be almost day to day, just seeing if we get enough to get through a day. It reminds us we need a lot more and a lot of other parts of America will need a lot more. So we still have not seen the White House using the Defense Production Act as fully as they could. We still don't see the mobilization of the military to help get supplies out. I've talked to President Trump and look, I've tried to work with him. But I have not seen from the White House, the fuller mobilization we need to truly address this. It could be with us for months and months and in a lot of parts of the country, it's only just beginning. So, our country's still not in the state of mobilization for the actual war we're fighting right now.

**Mitchell:** Well, all of us take our hats off to all of you in New York, to the health care workers, the police, the fire, the first responders, the EMTs. It's just been an extraordinary -- so it's not seven o'clock at night, but we'll do our own clapping in New York.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Andrea. I appreciate that very much. Thank you.

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