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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning everybody. New Yorkers have achieved so much together over the last few months. It's been really tough. It's been painful in so many ways, but what people have done in the city, it's been amazing. It's as if everyone is on one big team together, 8 million people all pulling in the same direction. And it's been -- all the tough things people were asked to do, shelter in place, social distancing, face coverings, folks have done it. And with a remarkable spirit, a can-do spirit. And that is why we have driven back this disease day after day after day. That's why the whole country is looking at New York City and saying, how did they possibly do it? And we had the secret ingredient, New Yorkers. That spirit, that sense of teamwork, discipline, strength, the can-do spirit, New York City is known for, the unity that people have shown in this crisis. That is what we are going to bring to our next big opportunity to move forward. And that's reopening our schools.

Yesterday, Chancellor Carranza and I were out in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. We went to New Bridges Elementary School. I saw inspiring things there. Here's a school in the community, here's a school of and by and for the community. You see there, the work that's being done right now to prepare this school weeks and weeks before school begins, all of the health and safety measures being put in place. The team there, the custodial services team, the administration, everyone was working together for a common cause. And the principal, Kevyn Bowles, he's known as Mr. B to the folks in the school community. He said amazing things. You see him right there. He said he has been running previously one of our regional enrichment centers. These were the centers set up for the kids of essential workers in the middle of the crisis, March, April, May. He said in his center, people worked together. Kids did wear their mask consistently. There was distancing. There was cleaning. He said there was not a single new COVID case in that center. And were talking about during the worst weeks of this crisis. And then one of his colleagues, Mya Wilson, who is the culture coordinator for the school. She's someone who loves the kids, loves the community. She's been working all summer. And Mr. B said, you know, a lot of these members of the team, they wouldn't normally work all summer. They've chosen to do this. So I turned to Mya, I said, Mya, you gave up your summer to do this work, to get ready for kids to come back to school. I said, why, why did you make that sacrifice? She said, the simplest answer, the most powerful answer. She said, because our families are worth it. Our families are worth it.

That is a spirit, the Chancellor and I, everybody at the DOE is bringing to this endeavor. We work for the parents and the kids of New York City. And we owe it to them to get it right. And we will. So everyone is working together to make sure the PPEs are in place. The signage, the cleaning, the disinfecting, you name it. That work is going on literally every single day. And I want to commend all the public servants who are doing this work. And if you see the folks in your community who are getting schools ready, thank them. Whether it's a principal, a teacher,

someone from custodial services, someone from School Construction Authority, unsung heroes in this effort, thank them. They're public servants who are doing exactly what every one of us would want them to do. They're showing up and they're getting things done for our kids. That is what is going to move us forward. And I saw the dedication of our educators throughout this crisis. I know people choose that profession because I love kids. And here's going to be a moment to bring back our schools and address what everyone's been through. It's been tough. We've talked before about the trauma that kids have gone through. It's been tough for so many kids. And being at home with their families and their communities they haven't had the support they normally get in school. They haven't had the mentors, they haven't had the guidance. They haven't had the educators helping them stay on track. And a lot of them haven't been able to see their friends and we need to help our kids begin the pathway to life coming back to normal. We need to support them. They've already lost so much. We need to be there for them and help them move forward. And we can, because this city has really fought back this disease and that's what matters. That's the foundation of all things.

So, what today we're doing is making very clear to parents, to students, to educators, to staff. That this effort to get schools ready is moving forward every single day. We're throwing everything we got at it. And here is a pledge, putting this out today, Back to School Pledge. And it's a detailed list of all the things that are being done in every single school to get our schools ready. So every parent, every New Yorker can see exactly what is being done and the level of comprehensive effort, layer upon layer to make sure we will have the safest school year ever. Because there's never been this much investment in all the health and safety measures. And as I've said before, it's going to be tough. And we have to recognize there'll be a lot of imperfections and a lot of transitions. But we also have to aspire to greatness because we need to help our kids get back on track after everything they've been through. And I have absolute faith in the greatness of New York City public schools.

So a couple of things you'll see when you look at this pledge. Every school will have all the personal protective equipment needed, of course, for free. All the hand sanitizer needed for every classroom, all the masks. We want kids to come to school wearing face coverings, but they'll be there for free for any kid who doesn't have it every single day. In every public school building, there'll be a full time nurse. Every school will be cleaned every day after school. And during the day in many ways as well. And the electrostatic cleaning, this is the cutting-edge technology to address the coronavirus. Every school will have it. So, we are going to work in a spirit of trust and unity to get this done. And the person who leading the way and with tremendous positive energy and spirit as always, is our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I want to echo your sentiments on Mr. B and New Bridges yesterday for a moment. What an incredible experience, it was to see a true professional and his team in action, preparing for the school year with optimism and energy and ready to welcome students back. What they showed us yesterday is what every parent deserves to see, deserves to hear and understand from their school. What is it that's happening in our schools? What is moving beyond just the plan on paper, but to actually implementing what it looks like in the school? What PPE and cleaning supplies are available? We saw that yesterday. How will desks be organized, maintaining social distancing? We saw that yesterday. What are the new rules to keep us safe? We heard about them yesterday. And that's our pledge to the families in New York City, to make sure that they know what this year will be like, not in the abstract, but the firm details.

We're a few weeks away from the first day of school and PPE deliveries are happening every day, as we speak. Families are getting their schedules and schools are organizing their classrooms. We saw the PPE deliveries yesterday at New Bridges. And that's going to continue to happen every single day. I know how overwhelming this may feel, but I want to reiterate something that the Mayor has said. And that I also have said, that if it's not safe, we won't reopen. I know how overwhelming it is. And so much will be different this year, but so much will also be the same. That a child's school is a safe place, a welcoming place, a place to learn and to grow. Schools will be in session five days a week, no matter where the students are, whether they're in person or they're remote learning. Our vision for the fall is a safe, strong, and supportive vision for every one of our students. And to families. I'm going to ask you, please, as partners start preparing our children now for what this new fall will look like. Wearing a mask, social distancing, making sure that they know their supplies are their supplies, understanding that just because they can't hug the other children doesn't mean that they're not friends. It just means they're looking out for them as they're looking out for each other. So again, more information will be coming. And our back to school pledge is our commitment to what we have promised for a safe, secure, healthy start to the school year.

Mayor: Thank you, Richard so much. Look, everybody, you hear the heart in the voice of our Chancellor. One of the things I said when I became Mayor is that we would have chancellors who were educators. And Chancellor Carranza has been a teacher and a principal and the superintendent all the way up to the chancellor of the biggest school system in the country. He also is a parent and he thinks like a parent. So, I want to be clear. I think like a parent every single day as well. We are going to make sure these schools are safe and ready. And if we don't think they're safe and ready, they won't be open. But right now, look what you see. Tremendous preparation and the health situation in the city continues to get better because of your hard work. So we're going to move forward together on the countdown to the opening of our schools.

There's another important countdown I want to talk about today. And this one is worth so much to the city. We got to pay attention, now only 41 days left to the census deadline. Everybody, we got work to do in New York City. And the good news is it is simple to fill out the census. This is not a heavy lift. Just takes a little bit of time, a little bit of focus. You can do something great for New York City. People are always asking me, what can I do? How can I help? Here's something every single person can do. One person could do it for their whole household. But right now the New York City census response rate is 56.2 percent. So we're a little over halfway there. Now I want to be clear. Imagine for a moment, this was the end of the process today. And we were only at 56.2 percent. Well, that would suggest we get about half the representation we deserve in Washington. That would suggest we get about half the funding we deserve for education, for transportation, for affordable housing from Washington. I don't think there's any New Yorker who wants half a loaf and wants to lose our fair share. So let's be clear. We have work to do. And everyone's a part of it.

Now, we're going all out. September 30 is our deadline. We're going to throw everything we got at it, at the grassroots. But I want to make a clear statement today. The census, this is part of literally – it's in the U.S. Constitution. This is something that happens every ten years. It is the law. It must happen and we need to honor it. So I want to talk about our census workers who are going out into apartment buildings all over the city. And we're hearing some reports that they are being denied access and that's not appropriate. And that's not what we're going to allow in this

city. If a property manager, a building owner, a co-op or condo board, if anyone doesn't allow the census personnel in, and that means we are not going to get our fair share of funding or representation. That's absolutely unacceptable. So we have been in touch officially with the Real Estate Board of New York, with the association of co-ops, with the condo boards of this city. And we're putting this notice up around the city and at buildings that need to see it reminding them that the census is the law, and we must give access to census workers so they can complete this vital mission.

Okay, now that outreach, I talked about, it is deepening and deepening, every corner of the city. I've been out there with these great outreach workers. I'm looking forward to going out again, to see the work they do in the community. But they're also coming up with smart new ways to create more energy and more focus on the census. And one of the new things you're about to hear about, I love this. It is the Census Subway Series, a competition between neighborhoods in different boroughs to see who can do the best at responding to the census. And just like a real subway series, there are actually prizes involved. So here for you to hear about this and all the outreach effort being undertaken to get New York City counted, the New York City Census 2020 Field Director, Kathleen Daniel.

Field Director Kathleen Daniel, New York City Census 2020: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning. So, this wouldn't be New York City without a Subway Series. And we are neighborhood proud around this city. So, we're pitting Jamaica, Queens in the County of Queens against Canarsie, Brooklyn. Let's see who gets to keep their crown. We'll see who does the census the most and as the highest spike in numbers between Queens and Brooklyn. That's Jamaica and Canarsie. So, let's get it done everyone. So in this coming week, go online to my2020census.gov or pick up the phone, dial 8-4-4-3-3-0-2-0-2-0 and get the census done. We're watching, we're looking at these numbers every single day, and we will see who maintains their ground between the royal boroughs. Also, we're asking elected officials, call your church, call your family, your friends, call your neighbors, even the ones you don't talk to every day and tell them to do the census. We need everyone to pitch in. But for Jamaica and Canarsie again, the world is watching you and we want to see who can get the most completes for the census. So go my2020census.gov and get it done today.

We have some very interesting competitions for you. We are kicking off the NYC Counts contest series. So you can go to nyc.gov/censuscontest and read all the rules. You can read all about it. And let me tell you about them because these prizes are great. We've extended the Seamless competition. So if you go online and do the census, take a screenshot of what you've done technically your receipt for doing the census, and you can be entered to win a \$1,000 gift card from Seamless. No, you won't have to cook for a couple of nights. So please go online and get the census done. There are also some other tremendous competitions. We have 25 New Yorkers are going to win a membership to MoMA, the Museum of Modern Art, as well as a membership to MoMA PS1. So please go online and get it done. And then 100 New Yorkers are going to win a \$50 voucher for Lyft, as well as an annual membership for Citi Bike. So you can take the car when you need to, and then you can get your exercise and start peddling. And you can do it for free on Citi Bike if you enter the competition. So go to nyc.gov/censuscontest, read all about it, and then go online to my2020census.gov or pick up the phone and call 8-4-4-3-3-0-2-0-2-0 because you count. Everybody counts and we need all of New York City to get involved and get the census done.

[Field Director Daniel speaks in Haitian Creole]

Mayor: *Merci beaucoup*, Kathleen. I got the [inaudible] piece. That means a really good, really good gift. Right? Beautiful gift. As you could hear Kathleen's passion and energy is just as clear in English as it is in Haitian Creole. No notes whatsoever. You did them both beautifully. But what Kathleen is talking about is so important, everyone getting counted. But this is also fun that there's a subway series, and I love that you call them the royal boroughs. Okay. Brooklyn, Queens, this is your moment. Jamaica versus Canarsie. That's a very strong matchup. Everybody, here's a chance to do something great for New York City, something great for your community. And there's some really great prizes. So, thank you so much, Kathleen.

Mayor: Now, we have an extraordinary outreach effort on the Census. So, you heard it's being done in many languages, in many communities in many ways. We want to reach everyone, and we've had a great, great partner in this work, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials – NALEO – they've been really fantastic here and around the country and sparking tremendous outreach efforts. And the Latino community must be counted. There've been too many voices over the last few years in this country, trying to count out Latinos, trying to, in so many ways, denigrate this community that is so much of the future of New York City and America. And we will not allow that we will fight back. And the way to fight back is to get counted. So, here to hear about the outreach efforts en Español, Juan Rosa, Northeast Director of Civic Engagement NALEO.

[...]

Juan and Kathleen, thank you both for the incredible work that you're doing. And, everyone, this is so important. I'll I say one more thing, this is for 10 whole years – a decade, the Census happens once a decade. And the results, when it's final, it's final, and then we live with the results. We want to live with really good results from New York City. We want to get our fair share of funding. We want to get our fair representation in Washington. Let's do this together. Let's make the impact we need to right now to protect the future of this city.

All right, let's talk about our indicators. Okay. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold 200 patients – today's report, 77, and the confirmed positive rate is just over nine percent. Number two, new reported cases, seven-day average, threshold, 550 cases – today's report, 305. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19 threshold, five percent – today's report, 0.88 percent. Another very good strong day.

Now, a few words in Spanish –

Before we turn to the media, just a programming note that we will not be having a press conference tomorrow, but we will be back Monday morning as usual. And now, please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Hi, all we will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Chancellor Richard Carranza; Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi; Kathleen Daniel, Census 2020 Field Director; and Juan Rosa, Northeast Director of Civic Engagement for the National

Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. First up, we're going to have Andrew Siff from WNBC.

Question: Good morning, everyone. Mayor, I was wondering when you held up that pledge this morning, who's your intended audience? You have said repeatedly that the vast majority of parents want in-person learning. Are you trying to convince teachers who were afraid to come back to work? Who are you – who do you feel that you need to make the case to at this point with 21 days to go?

Mayor: Yeah. Andrew, look, I think the parents of the city, the kids in the city have already spoken. We survey them. We gave them an opportunity with a lot of outreach to decide if they would prefer all remote learning and we have vast majorities who have spoken. And I will tell you as a parent, parents think all summer about what is going to take to go back to school the right way. They're very, very aware and they've made their choice and we owe it to them to get it right. So, first of all, the message is to everyone we work for – the parents, this city, the kids of this city. A lot of parents and kids have heard some of the things that we're doing on health and safety, but we wanted to pull it together all in one clear place. We wanted to make clear to all parents, to all kids, to everyone in this city how specific and serious our commitment is. And this is for every single school. So, what do you see on this page is going to tell you a lot about the approach. It's also important – of course, I want everyone else, I want our educators, our staff, I want everyone to see the same exact information and to understand that the Chancellor and I are making our decisions based on health and safety and we're putting it here in really clear terms. So, this is for everyone. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Council Member Brad Lander, and some parents and other groups today are planning to really step up their call for as much outdoor learning as possible. I know you've talked about weather worries with regard to this topic, but have you and the Chancellor taken any proactive steps to set up any outdoor space for learning anywhere?

Mayor: Sure. Look, I think for all the elected officials, parents, everyone has been saying let's maximize outdoors – we agree. We'll have a lot more to say about this in the next few days. And yes, we are helping and supporting schools that want to go in that direction. But we're going to talk about the way to approach it citywide. But the weather is still the weather, Andrew. I want to be clear, there's a lot we can do without doors and there's some things we can't do and we always need a fallback for any outdoor option because of weather. But yeah, we're going to work with every school community to maximize outdoor use.

Moderator: Next up, we have Henry from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: Good, Henry. How are you?

Question: I'm good. My question has to do with the enforcement of these checkpoints. Apparently there haven't been any fines or violations of this enhanced quarantine effort. Why do you think that is?

Mayor: I think it's like so many other things. It's a great question, Henry. So many times we start an enforcement effort with education and giving people a chance to get acclimated. And, you know, really, especially in a crisis like this, we do believe a lot of people understand this is literally life and death to get this right and it's about stopping this disease. So, there's a high level of motivation out there for people to get this right. But I think the education has now happened. The procedures are now in place to do a lot more enforcement and we're now going to be in a position if we need to give fines, we will. I don't want to give anyone a fine, but, if we have to, you'll start to see fines. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. It's just surprising that with all of these people who are being stopped no one would be a find or no one would be found in violation. My second question goes back to what I asked yesterday, which is why can't the City give us a seven-day rolling average ZIP code by ZIP code of where the infection rates are locally, hyper-locally?

Mayor: Yeah. And I'll let our Health Commissioner, Dave Chokshi, speak to that. Again, I think Dave said that that is what we are doing or are going to be doing. We want – I mean, it's very important for people to see the information. And the seven-day average, I appreciate you that out – one of the things we want to emphasize is the seven-day average is a clearer way of understanding things. And we're trying to do that in a lot of things, including the new case numbers and the way we're looking at that three percent threshold around schools. Go ahead, Dave, speak to that ZIP code by ZIP code – the information we'll be putting up online.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, sir. And thank you for the good question. We do have ZIP code by ZIP code data for the last four weeks – the most recent four weeks, broken down by week. That includes not just the infection rate but also our testing rates and some other information. So, the different ways of slicing the data are important because they help us answer questions. And together with the indicators that the Mayor reports out on every day, we have a good, comprehensive picture of what's happening with the coronavirus in New York City.

Mayor: Good. So, Dave, you think you should follow up – and your team to make sure Henry gets that information he's looking for. Go ahead.

Commissioner Chokshi: I'd be happy to.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next step, we have Luis from New York [inaudible] –

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Luis. How are you?

Question: Pretty good. The other day you said your executive order would be part of a series of stepped up actions. Any chance you could elaborate on what those might be? Can you give us a hint if you can't tell us outright what they are?

Mayor: There's more coming, for sure. Look, I think it refers back to the question Andrew said – I mean, we now need to go into the phase of greater enforcement when it comes to – Luis, I want to make sure we're saying the same thing, you're talking about quarantine, right?

Question: Yes, sir.

Mayor: Yeah, that – again, it was a brand new thing. When the State made this decision, that was absolutely the right decision to say we have a series of states around this country that are, unfortunately, really in trouble when it comes to the coronavirus. We have to have people quarantined if they come from those states or our own people go out and visit those states. That's the right thing. And we've all been putting in place the mechanism from scratch to create a viable quarantine structure. And our Test and Trace Corps has done really, really extensive work – obviously, a presence between state and city at airports, train stations, bus stations. We're working with the hotel industry as part of the executive order – many more pieces coming – you know, the checkpoints – but there will be more enforcement and we're going to deepen the effort to get every part of the private sector that works with people traveling to be a part of this and to help us on the front end to make sure that people are signing up those forms. Look, the best of all worlds is for someone to have filled out that form before they even come through the border into the five boroughs. So, that's what we're moving towards, but we'll have a lot more to say on that in the next few days.

Question: Thank you for that answer. That same day, Dr. Varma stated that 15 to 20 percent of all cases in New York City occurred in people who traveled outside of New York City. Might be to be available about these people? I mean, regarding their mode of transportation, where their travel was for business or other purposes or these families or individuals, anything along those lines?

Mayor: Yeah. That's a great question. So, first of all, we'd be happy to give you some of the data we have so far. I'll have the team follow up. It's initial data, obviously, this is still very new and it's imperfect data because we're still perfecting the ways to track each and every person who comes here. But I think a couple of things – and Dave will join in. I think you're not seeing obviously a huge amount of tourist travel or business travel compared to what there used to be. I think a lot of his family-related travel. I think a lot of it, more than we would have expected, was New Yorkers going out to see family elsewhere and coming back. And obviously, more car travel than would have been the case in the past. But we'll get you more details on that, going forward. I do want to emphasize that, you know, in a funny way, as New Yorkers, we might think a little differently. If you go and visit someone in South Carolina or Texas or Florida, you might think a little differently than if it was a resident of one of those states visiting here. But there's really functionally no difference. If you have spent time in one of those states, you have to quarantine. If you don't want to quarantine, honestly, don't go visit those states – it's pretty straightforward – in the middle of this crisis. Dave, do you want to add on what we're seeing.

Commissioner Chokshi: Sir, I think you covered it. I don't have anything to add.

Mayor: Alright, thank you.

Moderator: Next up we have Marla from WCBS radio.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about the FDNY, EMS potential layoffs. It drew a scathing response from the union who warned a longer 9/11 emergency response times. We just got off the phone with the union president who says they are having trouble with response times now, and with a possible second wave of coronavirus coming, the response times will be even worse. Is it – do you have to lay people off in this very vital of the sector of the city?

Mayor: Marla. It's a really important question. So, let me – I want to take a moment to frame this. We don't want to lay off anyone. Let's start at the beginning, we don't want to lay off a single City worker because City workers do such important work for their fellow New Yorkers and because we don't want to see another person unemployed in a city that has had so much unemployment last few months. I don't want to see this happen. I have told all New Yorkers that we're getting to a point where we're starting to run out of options. We all hoped and prayed for a federal stimulus. We haven't seen it. The federal stimulus could save the day here. We should keep fighting for it. The State could do so much to give us the borrowing authority – long-term borrowing would solve this instantly. And I continue to appeal to the State and we're having conversations with State leaders on point constantly. The unions have been good partners. We're looking for savings. The union you spoke to and every other union can help us find alternative savings so we don't have to do layoffs. There's many ways to solve this, but if we don't get one of those solutions, we must find a billion dollars. We have, unfortunately, a clock running – October 1st is when layoffs will happen. The approximate number is 22,000. Every agency is going to be offered different options. If they have other ways of saving money, we want to hear them, because we're looking for every way to avert off. But what we can't do is act like we have money when we don't have it. So, my job is, of course, to protect everyone in the city, we're going to make our decisions with that in mind, but we also have to deal with a reality that is really painful and try to find one of these other solutions so we can avert these layoffs.

Question: And my second question is directed toward Chancellor Carranza. You warned of 9,000 layoffs at the DOE if the State decides to hold aid to schools and say this is game over for in classroom learning. Can you expand upon that and tell us a little bit about game over?

Chancellor Carranza: So, as the Mayor has talked about there – we are in a fiscal crisis and no one wants anyone laid off, as we look to come back to in-person learning, especially with less children in each classroom, which requires more staff. Obviously, any potential layoffs would impact our ability to do that in-person. Again, this is not something that we want. This is not something that we should even be dealing with at this time. And as the Mayor has said, there are other ways of dealing with this particular dilemma. That being said, it's also very important that we're very transparent with our parents, with our community about the challenges that would be imposed upon the school system if we had to make cuts of this magnitude. So, I just don't think it defies credibility to say that, you know, a significant impact, financial impact would not impact what we do in terms of in-person learning.

Mayor: Yeah. Marla, one other point. I really want – I think everyone really hates to think about layoffs. I hate to think about layoffs, but I need people to understand a layoff is a pretty permanent action. I mean, it's, you know, could you one day hire people back? Yeah, but let's be clear. Our fiscal situation is bad now, and it probably gets worse next year. So, as we strive for stimulus funding, for long term borrowing authority from Albany, for the unions to work with us to find alternative savings, I need everyone to understand it's not a furlough. We got to be clear.

A layoff is a permanent action, and you're talking, having thousands and thousands of fewer employees in a lot of agencies. It will change the nature of the City for the long term. And that's why we want to work so hard to avert it.

Moderator: Next up we have Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Gersh, how's it going?

Question: I mean, it's hard to tell, every day is the same. Anyway, over the weekend –

Mayor: Gersh, that was a deep observation.

Question: [Inaudible] very deep. I wake up and go to bed, and every day is the same. Anyway, over the weekend, NY1 reported that some Surface Transportation Committee members are disappointed by your response to their recommendations. Now, in the past, you have told us that you are in fact considering some of their recommendations, including HOV lanes and taking traffic enforcement away from the NYPD etcetera. But what's the next step going forward, Mayor? Are any significant changes just something you'll recommend to your successor or are we going to see some major action in your remaining months?

Mayor: Gersh, I give you credit for consistency. You've asked that question several times. I've answered it several times. So, I'm going to answer it again. There needs to be consistency in looking at the facts, in my view. I'm someone who believed we needed to continue to add more alternatives in this city. We have greatly expanded Select Bus Service. We have now added the busways, which is a brand new thing and something I think is going to have a big impact. We announced, obviously, last year, what we were doing on 14th Street. That's now permanent. Now we announced more busways, I think that's a really exciting, positive addition. What we've done to expand Citi Bike. What we've done with NYC Ferry. This, to me, is the beginning of a lot of other things that we need to do and where you and I, I think, would agree energetically, is that the future New York City is not about the automobile. It's about mass transit and lots of transportation alternatives. So, that's the direction we're moving. And, yes, I'm a big believer in HOV lanes. And that's something we're looking at right now. So, everyone – we appreciate the advice from everyone, but we already are there in terms of wanting more and more alternatives, more and more options. And we're going to be working on them for the next 500 days nonstop. Go ahead.

Question: Or let me ask a specific follow up then. One of the recommendations is to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists on the Queensboro Bridge, which the Department of Transportation says it can't do because it would need a security fence. Now this week, two members of the City Council have told Streetsblog, they'll pay for that security fence out of their discretionary capital money. So, will you accept that money, build the fence, and double the pedestrian and cycling space on that vital span?

Mayor: I want to look at that situation for sure. I think where we have options to create more alternatives. That's what we want to do. I don't know enough about the mechanics of the Queensboro Bridge and the other things we're trying to do to keep the bridge working well, but

I'll bring it up with our Transportation Commissioner and we'll have an answer for you going forward.

Moderator: Next up we have Kala from PIX11.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my question. It's about ventilation. I've had so many teachers and principals reach out to me about the ventilation and concerns within their building. I know that you address this every day, but they specifically want to know, will reports of what is fixed in each school and the classrooms specifically that are not usable be made public? And if so, when will that be?

Mayor: Yeah. Kala, great question. Am I saying your name right? Kala?

Question: Kala, like California.

Mayor: Okay, Kala. Thank you. Yeah, I think that's your – the concern you're raising is right on. And the answer is exactly that, yes. What we're going to be doing is giving a constant scorecard and update about each school. And a lot of work has happened over the summer to get the schools ready. And now it's time to start showing people the results of that work. Interesting thing, Kala, is some of it is more advanced and technological. Some of it's really old school – opening up windows, some school classrooms had windows that were sealed shut. We're opening them up because what the doctors tell us is fresh air is actually one of the very best ways to fight the coronavirus. Just get as much, in the nicer weather, obviously – get as much air into the classroom naturally. But yeah, we're going to update on the ventilation systems, filters being changed, all that school by school.

And you'll see in this pledge, Richard and I feel strongly we've said it to the team, if there's a classroom that for some reason the ventilation situation's not right, we've got to take that classroom offline until it can be fixed. If there's a building, we thought wasn't up to snuff, we'll hold that building back and find an alternative space. Now, I think that would be a rarity, honestly, where a whole building would have that kind of challenge. But if we find that, we will address it. But, Kala, one more point, three weeks. I know everyone's understandably anxious, but when folks are working nonstop and a lot of teams out there working on these issues, three weeks is actually a long time to get a lot of stuff resolved. There's always, before every school year, a big intense push to opening day. But yes, we're going to display publicly the status of each school. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. And then, of course, I think we all need something to look forward to. What can you tell us about Halloween in the city, the Macy's Parade which is my favorite, and, of course, the tree at 30 Rock?

Mayor: Great question. I share your love for the Macy's Parade. It's pretty amazing. I think everything is going to be different is the simple answer. Each one is taking, you know, going to have different versions of what they do. We'll get you more details. I think some is going to be virtual. It might be some small in-person pieces, spread out pieces. It's not going to look at all, of course, like what we are used to. But the important thing is that traditions will be kept in some way. I mean, remember what happened with, for example, Macy's and the fireworks on July 4th. It was different, but it still maintained the tradition, it still meant a lot to people. The same with

graduations in the schools, the beautiful virtual graduation that was telecast with so many people participating as a labor of love for our kids and families. So, yeah, you're going to see versions of those events, but nothing like what we're used to. Let's all work together to make sure they come back strong next year.

Moderator: We're going to approach our last two, starting with Paul from Staten Island Advance.

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

Mayor: Yeah, Paul, how are you?

Question: I'm well, Sir, how are you?

Mayor: Good.

Question: I'm asking about restaurants specifically regarding a letter from a State Senator Andrew Lanza and Rep. Max Rose. They're asking for the Governor to essentially consider Staten Island separate from the city regarding indoor dining. They point to concerns about your own leadership. I just wanted to see if you'd like to respond and if you're in favor of considering Staten Island separate.

Mayor: Hey, you know, Paul, it wouldn't be New York City if people weren't criticizing their mayor. So, it's part of life around here. Staten Island is part of the five boroughs, part of the city. We're all connected. We're all dealing with the same challenge. The State and the City have had a lot of unity on these issues. A lot of caution, a lot of care about how we do things. You heard the other day, Dr. Varma talk about the history around the world, including right now in Hong Kong, where they just shut down bars and restaurants. Hong Kong had been, you know, successful, in the scheme of things, in fighting back the coronavirus but now they're seeing a problem because it's one of the places where you have indoor dining, indoor bars. It's one of the places that's most sensitive in the whole equation.

So, I think every piece of this, you know – the whole city is going to be treated as one. I believe the State has always seen it that way as well. And it's about health and safety first. Now, all the people in the restaurant industry who understandably are concerned, for all the people that depend on those jobs and we want them to have those jobs, look, from the very beginning, takeout and delivery have kept going. We added outdoor dining, which almost 10,000 restaurants have taken advantage of. In fact, more are taking advantage of it all the time. That will be coming back next year. So, all the investments that a restaurant is putting this year, they'll be able to carry through to next year. We are working all the time to see if there's things we can do to provide more relief. The best thing we can do is actually fight back the disease. If we kept pushing back the disease that would open the door. So, it's a little bit of chicken and egg. You take too many chances, you move too fast, you make the wrong decisions, the disease comes back then you're, of course, not going to have indoor dining. So, I think the cautious strategic approach is actually the best way to get to indoor dining again one day. But, you know, all of us are in this together. Go ahead, Paul.

Question: And just to follow up on that regarding, again, indoor dining, do you have a timetable? I mean, we've been in phase three since early July. Is there any sort of date you're looking at where a decision might be made on this?

Mayor: No, we've been really clear and I'll have Dr. Chokshi chime in as well. We are looking at it all the time because we know it means so much to everyday New Yorkers and particularly the folks that depend on it for their jobs, but we have to see a lot more improvement in fighting this virus before we could consider it because it's literally one of the most sensitive pieces of the whole equation. So, no, there's not a timeline, but we're always asking ourselves the question, what would it take and can we get to that point? Dr. Chokshi, do you want to add?

Commissioner Chokshi: Mr. Mayor, I would just add, you know, as you said, I have a lot of sympathy for, you know, for the challenges here. I think about some of my own patients whom I've cared for at Bellevue who are restaurant workers. So, I understand that. But at the same time, the health and safety of those very same people as well as all of the rest of New York City are paramount in our approach. And we have seen, you know, in many places around the world, how indoor dining has been tied to outbreaks and in some places resurgences as well. So, it's an area where we have to be careful in weighing the different factors.

Moderator: For our last question, we'll go to Steve from Westwood One News.

Mayor: Hey, Steve. We've got a – we have a tech problem. Let's try that again. Steve, can you hear us? No, we cannot hear you, Steve.

Moderator: Next up, we'll go to Amy Zimmer from Chalkbeat.

Mayor: Amy.

Question: Hi, thanks for taking my questions. So, Mr. Mayor, you started this presser by talking about the regional enrichment centers. And, you know, we heard that they were serving maybe 20 students or 80 students at a time, and schools will be serving hundreds and hundreds at a given time. And you mentioned the educator who volunteered to be there. So, that's another key difference. So, obviously, educators, a lot of them do want to go back in September, but a lot of them are afraid to go back. You know, they might live with high risk relatives, for instance, and they don't want to be there. So, I'm just wondering if it's fair to make the comparison between what's been happening with the – at the rec and the school reopenings and how scalable the experience of the rec centers are.

Mayor: Yeah, Amy, I appreciate a question. I get the point. I was making a very specific point that what the principal said was, you know, first of all, you're talking about the height of the crisis. We are so much healthier now than we were in March, April, May. And you're talking about the kids of essential workers who are out at the front line, the health care workers, the grocery workers, you know, first responders. And his point was, first of all, no one in the school got sick, which said a lot. And second that they were able to consistently get kids to wear masks and to distance. So, you know, a lot of the talk out there has been, 'oh, can you get kids to follow these rules?' And here's a guy who was doing it for months. He said, you know what, even with younger kids, yes, you can. He is an educator. He said, of course, when we constantly are

teaching kids the right kind of behavior, we can get them to wear masks. So, it was just a clear statement about what educators can achieve.

But, look, to the bigger point, and I'll offer, and then, of course, if the Chancellor wants to chime in, public servants are public servants. You know, first of all, as I said, educators chose the profession because they love kids and they care about kids and they know kids are suffering right now. They need support. They need what educators can give them. They need what positive adult role models and counselors and folks who give them mental health support. They need that desperately. It cannot be done the same way remotely, even slightly. We may be talking about a vaccine in, you know, five months, six months, seven months. We may be talking about the whole school year we don't have a vaccine. Imagine kids going another full year without the best quality education that can only be provided in person and the support that educators and school staff give. I'm very worried about that, what that would mean for them, for the kids and for the future of the city. So, now it's time to say, you know, public servants rise to the occasion and answer the call. Our transit workers did, our first responders did, our health care workers did, grocery workers did. Public servants, show up and serve people. That's what our constituents depend on. That's what parents and kids believe we are here to do, and certainly taxpayers as well. So, it's a moment to be there for our families. I really echo what Mya said at the school, our families are worth it. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: I wouldn't add anything, Sir.

Mayor: Okay, thank you. Go ahead, Amy.

Question: Okay. So, for the next question, it's for the Chancellor. Last night at the PEP meeting, you said that delaying the start of school sounds like good practice but that the State could withhold money from the City for not holding the mandated 180 days of instruction. So, it's our understanding from [inaudible] guidance that districts can request a waiver for this requirement. And we just wanted to know, has New York City requested a waiver or is it considering to do so then the City could delay the start of school?

Chancellor Carranza: So yes, last night, what I was talking about is that the more time we have with educators and to practice the safety protocols, to set up classrooms, that's always good practice. That was really the context of my comments. We are in conversations with the State Education Department. I've also been meeting with the other superintendents of the big five school districts in New York State. And we're also collaborating around what that's going to look like. So, there are active conversations about what that could be but again nothing definitive yet. We'll have more to say as soon as we have some more definitive information.

Mayor: Okay, as we wrap up today, everyone, I just want to finish where I began. Extraordinary unity, teamwork, spirit, sense of purpose has pervaded this city over the last six months and that's why we have made the progress we've made on health care. We're going to bring that same indomitable spirit, that New York spirit to the work of opening our schools safely, opening our schools in a way that really supports our kids and families. That's what we're all going to do together. And I have a lot of faith in our educators. I have a lot of faith in our school staff. They know how important it is to be there for our families. In the end, think about it, when we support our kids, when we really give them what they deserve, we build the future of the city. There's been so much talk in the last months, rightfully, about the disparities that have been clear in this

crisis. One of the best ways to fight those disparities is to keep uplifting and supporting the children who go to our public schools. If we're going to change New York City for the better. We're going to create a more fair and equal city, it starts in our public schools. So, we are doing the work to be ready and to be ready safely in September. Thank you, everybody.

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