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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 18, 2020, 8:15 AM

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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON HOT 97

Ebro Darden: It's Ebro in the Morning. It's time to get serious, though. We're about to get a COVID update. Let's give it up one time – we have Mayor Bill de Blasio on the line. Round of applause.

[Applause]

How you doing, Bill?

Laura Stylez: Good morning.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, good morning. You know what? We're all in this fight together, that's what I got to say.

Darden: Well, you know, you were in a precarious situation last week. A lot of pressure from parents to shut down New York City schools, etcetera, etcetera. But it's not quite that easy. A lot of people didn't have – I noticed in the media, people weren't really being responsible with the reporting of how many systems had to get aligned before you could make that call. And then people were mad that you didn't give them enough notice after you made the call.

Mayor: Yeah. And look, it was a horrible choice to make to begin with because you're talking about one million kids who aren't going to be able to go to school.

Darden: That's right.

Mayor: And there's no online learning in the world that can make up for being in school. But it's also – Ebro, it really was – some people, you know, have plenty of options for their kids and it wasn't an issue. There's a lot of people in the city who had no other option for their child. A lot of – particularly single parents, who it was going to create tremendous problems for. And then there's issues like kids who – that's where they get their food each day.

Darden: We reported on that every day, reminding the audience, there's a hundred and some thousand kids in the city that literally have no food if they don't go to school.

Mayor: So, there's many factors. And it was just a very tough, painful decision. But once I got to the point of feeling like there was no choice in terms of fighting this disease, you know the minute I believed that that was our only option, that's when I told parents and we made all the moves to set up the business learning and provide food in other ways. But we had to get all that ready too. It was, look very, very unsatisfying to say the least because there was no good option –

Darden: It was almost a lose-lose scenario in many ways, but it's the right thing.

Mayor: It's the right thing. And I want to say, the Department of Education – the folks who work there, they're doing an amazing job turning on a dime. They're going to be trying to – and I believe they will succeed – achieve something that's never been done in the history of New York City, have, you know, an online learning system for a million kids from like out of nowhere, zero to 60, setting that up for this coming Monday. And it's an amazing endeavor. It won't be perfect at first, but they are absolutely devoted to keeping kids educated the best we can, helping high school seniors to graduate on time. It's going to be a huge, huge undertaking. And listen, to all of the parents and aunties and uncles and grandparents, anyone who's listening, you know, help our educators by working

with the children in your life, to really figure out how to be effective with that online learning because we want kids to keep learning. Ebro, I've been honest about the fact that we're saying we want to come back April 20. We do want to come back April 20, but we could easily lose the whole school year [inaudible] –

Darden: And I think that's the most uncomfortable part for many people, which is living in a world where you literally don't know what the future plan is. But this is a new – I've been saying it's kind of a new normal, and we may get back to our old normal –

Stylez: We hope.

Darden: But for the foreseeable future, people need to get their brain programmed and accept this new reality the best way they can. And stop trying to hold your breath and wait for things to come to – we're only on, this is day three.

Stylez: I know, I know. Mayor, what are we doing about the families who don't have access to wifi, who can't afford it? And how are all these kids – how are they going to get computers or tablets?

Mayor: Laura, it's a great question and let me just say first, coming into this answer, the new normal point. Yeah. Everyone, we got to be real. This is going to fundamentally change all of our lives for months. It's just a question of how many months and everyone needs to help each other and everyone needs to make really, really profound adjustments. It's not going to be anything like normal. And I don't know, I think in our time, in our history, you know, recent generations, we haven't had to do anything like this. Our ancestors had to do things like this a lot, unfortunately. They went through wars and depressions and all that. People all over the world right now who are migrating from country to country to avoid violence. There's plenty of people in the world who have dealt with this kind of disruption, even worse. But for Americans today, it's a really, really unsettling reality. For all of us in New York, it's a shock. So, I think the more you guys can say to people, 'hey, we've left normal way behind now, we all have to get to a new place together.' It's very helpful.

But on the point, Laura, you're raising, what the Department of Education is doing, and a lot of tech companies and you know communications companies are working with them on this, is putting tablets and every conceivable – whatever kind of devices we can get in the hands of kids over these next days so that kids who don't have them, you know, will be lent them by the Department of Education. The problem is connectivity because a lot of kids, you know, that's great if you got the device but you don't have service.

Darden: Wi-Fi, that's right.

Stylez: That's right.

Mayor: And the places you might've gone if your school wasn't open, you know, a lot of those places are shutting down or have shut down. It's not a perfect scenario. That's part of why when I made this decision, I was trying to say to people, you know, I was really, really clear about how much we were going to lose in terms of the education of our children. Because even a best distance learning – you know so much for distance learning, if you don't have internet.

Darden: But de Blaz – the people we hear from and that show up to the town halls and community boards and the people who write the stories in the newspapers and perpetuate this idea that you could have just shut down the schools and made that call quick, they have access to wifi, they have access to the resources.

Stylez: Of course.

Darden: They're not – what we're seeing right now when we hear these things are not people that are in touch with the hundreds of thousands of kids and families in this city that do not have, they don't care about them, they're not worried about them, and then they're not trying to find solutions for them. So –

Mayor: Ebro – they don't understand. At minimum, they don't understand. And what I have found [inaudible] talk about the tale of two cities, you know, when I ran for mayor, I talked about this. There are many people who have

loud voices, important voices in this city. A lot of people who are interpreting what's going on in media. I'm not saying they don't care, I'm saying they don't understand because they don't live it.

Darden: Well, you're nicer than me.

Mayor: But I think it's important –

Darden: That's why you're the mayor.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Different values, different judgment perhaps. But the underlying point is equally powerful. It's literally like a tale of two cities. And there's so many people I talk to who cannot conceive of the fact that there are millions of people in this city who don't have the basics that more middle class or upper middle-class people take for granted. You know, we talk about everything that we've been talking about over the years now, paid sick leave and paid vacation time and things like do you have internet service, do you have a, you know, laptop or a device? You know, it's literally like there are people in this town, that they cannot conceive that other people don't have it. But the problem is there are millions of people who are living this life without a lot of these things. There are millions of people who are used to having to do without and other people can't conceive of doing without.

And the conversation almost proceeds on two different tracks. So, as the person who has to make a decision for 8.6 million people, I am thinking about those who have and those who do not have and if that's tough, tough balance to strike. And as we go forward, I want to just take you into the next step, you know, we're talking about whether something like shelter in place might happen here. Here's the challenge if you go with shelter in place. There are many people right now who have no money.

Darden: That's right.

Mayor: People right now have lost their livelihood and they don't have – I mean any one of us who has ever had, you know, only double digits in our bank accounts, for those who have only had, you know, days of reserves in terms of money and don't know what you're going to do when the money runs out. You know, right now you've got folks already, so many folks out of work, already so many folks that are using up what little money they have. You go into a shelter in place, the problem is going to be how people are going to pay for food, how are they going to pay for medicine. Now I'm someone who thinks we have to take shelter in place very seriously as an option because this disease is bearing down on us –

Darden: Well, what I feel like when I hear you bring up shelter in place is you're trying to get people's minds prepared for the concept. But then yesterday Cuomo was on what his brother on CNN and was pushing in the other direction, like he's the one that makes the final call. So what kind of – I mean, at least the media is playing you guys as you're arguing again, what's the truth?

Mayor: No, I don't accept that. No. First of all, throughout this entire situation, weeks and weeks, the State and the City have been very well coordinated. I think the Governor has handled the situation, the State's handled situation right? We've agreed on all the big decisions. So, I don't accept that. What I was trying to do is exactly what you said, you know, mentally, emotionally, humanly prepare people for something that well might be happening soon. It's a decision that can only be made with the State and that's fine. I'm very comfortable with that and it's something we're all going to be talking through, but I want people to start to get it into their mind because one of the things I want to quote a wise person, our First Lady – Chirlane said to me the other day, remember that people need to get acclimated to new things, they need time to get used to things, that's just human, and to give people a heads up that this is starting to happen around America. And this could well be where we end up, but to also be honest, that if we can't make up for and sort of find a way to compensate for the reality of folks who have no money for food, no money for medicines who may not, you know, have a place to turn when they need those prescription meds, we've got to put all those structures in place immediately if there's any possibility of shelter in place because it alters the whole pattern of things.

You have a lot more people who don't have work, obviously. And I think the thing that's being missed in this conversation nationally is that the amount of dislocations, human dislocation right now, the fact that people's lives economically are falling apart. I think it's going to be comparable not to the Great Recession, but the only thing we'll be able to compare it to is the Great Depression. And that's painful, but it's also instructive. What did the government do during the Great Depression? It did the New Deal. It went deep, deep, deep into people's lives, put a huge amount of money in people's pockets.

Darden: And that's what Trump and his team were kind of proposing yesterday, is that there's going to be a stimulus in the next 14 days where Americans will start receiving money.

Mayor: And they need to do it on a huge level, not \$1,000 once, because that's not going to go very far for a whole lot of folks.

Stylez: Yeah. Because it's different from state to state and I'm just worried about the people who cannot pay rent. What happens when New Yorkers cannot pay the rent?

Mayor: Exactly. And although we have real progress, I want – this is important on stopping eviction. We said to everyone living in public housing, everyone living in the affordable housing we sponsor, are no more evictions. The court system has said for the time being they're shutting them down in general, there's going to be no more evictions. The real estate board said for the next, I think it was three months, that'd be no more evictions. Obviously you should pay the rent if you can. If you can't pay the rent, you know, we can figure out – people can figure out how to pay it later on. But so long as we stop evictions, that means that people can have the security of staying in their apartment. But that's great if we get that taken care of, what about food? What about medicines? You know, what about everything else? And that's what we have to figure out how to –

Darden: Now has ConEd suspended billing people? Because I know PSE&G and Atlantic City Electric or whatever it's called down there in Jersey, has said they're not billing people for the next, I think, 60 days.

Mayor: I don't know about ConEd, but what I do know is a lot of utilities are ensuring they will not cut people off for non-payment. We'll get the –

Darden: Well that's what I mean – cut people off for nonpayment. The billing will still happen and they'll figure out a way to charge you later.

Mayor: Correct. I mean that's what we're doing, you know, on water, on the – certainly the city in terms of water. What I think most utilities are doing – and they should do it obviously, if any of them are listening, they should do it – you cannot take away the basics from people. So yes, ConEd has – I just confirmed – ConEd has suspended service shutoff.

Darden: Got it. Now my next question and the reason I wanted to have you on today, I'm going to have Governor Phil Murphy on next, and we're going to have the Mayor of Jersey City, Steven Fulop on – I wanted to get a grade from you on how New York City is handling the curfew after you implemented it yesterday –

Mayor: Not a curfew. Hold on. We've done to –

Darden: Or what is it called? A 10:00 pm –

Mayor: I want to be careful that there's not a misunderstanding. Jersey is doing certain things but New York City, what we have right now, we have obviously the ban on people dining out but you can still do delivery and you could still do pickup. That's in place. Obviously, we've gotten a lot of telecommuting and telling people they should telecommute. A lot of our public workforce is now telecommuting, a lot of our private sector is now telecommuting. We've got a lot of measures. We told people, stay home when you don't need to be outside, but we have not gone to the level yet of the things that are a potential undermine emergency declaration, which would be things like curfew, things like travel restrictions. We're not there yet. And again, we're obviously trying to coordinate closely with the State.

Darden: And so the ban is mostly on restaurants but gyms are closed also. So any gathering space, larger than 50 people.

Mayor: Theaters, movies, there's all sorts of things. And the fact is, you know, that we have to keep people from congregating in large numbers and we have to have social distancing. And I think that's – you know, just to make it very real and human, you know, right now – and I know a lot of people still need to work, they need a livelihood, but we're asking people, you know, if there's any way, some people can work from home, other people can't work from home. If you have no choice, we still want to really practice the social distancing, stay, you know, three to six feet away from people as much as you humanly can. All the basic hygiene stuff, you know, washing your hands all the time, hand sanitizer, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, all of that. But the option for anyone who can stay home, you should stay home to the maximum.

It doesn't mean you can't get some exercise outside or run or walk or whatever, but you still want social distancing, whatever you do. And here's the other thing, Ebro, I talked to Dr. Fauci a couple of days ago, and this is one of the only people on the national level who is keeping it together for our country. And by the way, Brooklyn and proud, Dr. Fauci. He grew up in Brooklyn and you can hear it in his voice.

So, he said, look, you know, if you got one of those pre-existing conditions, which is cancer, diabetes, lung disease, serious lung disease, serious heart disease, or an immunity challenge, you know, your immune system is compromised, you should – especially if you're over 50 – you just need to avoid contact with people, the maximum extent possible and don't even think about going near anyone who's sick. So you know, grandma or grandpa wants to see their grandchild, but their grandchild has the sniffles, don't even think about it.

Darden: Don't even think about it.

Mayor: That's dangerous. It's dangerous because the people were losing – so let's be clear about coronavirus. 80 percent of people will feel very little. Most healthy people under 50 will feel very little. But if you have those – one of the five major users or more than one, you're in danger. If you're over 50 and you have one of those five major diseases, you're in particular danger. That's pretty much the vast majority of people we're losing. Dr. Fauci said for those folks, you just want to absolutely minimize human contact to the best you can, call people on the phone, FaceTime, whatever. He also said, if you're over 70 and you're healthy, it's still smart to take those precautions because folks over 70 certainly, even if they're healthy, they're going to be more vulnerable than younger folks by definition.

Darden: Now, Mayor, you've made sure and made it clear there is not a curfew, but I have a question, do people have to be inside by 10:00 pm? What are the rules on this?

Mayor: That would be a curfew and we do not have a curfew.

Darden: Okay.

Mayor: And different places are doing different things. And I'm not familiar with everything that Jersey's doing, but New York City is not doing that. New York State's not doing that today, but Ebro, the other thing is – and I really urge people to do it, the text option and everything else. So three places – you know, Ebro, I imagine you heard the rumor a few days ago that Manhattan was being quarantined and the bridges were being shut. I mean, people had all sorts of stuff out there.

Darden: That's right.

Mayor: Don't buy, you know, 'my friend texted me and said, this is going on.' No, there's actually places you can turn for information. 3-1-1 – 24/7 you can call 3-1-1 in multiple languages and get the facts or if you need help, you can call them, and they'll tell you where to get help.

If you want to get details on what's going on, you can go online, nyc.gov/coronavirus – and then if you want updates sent to you, you simply text the word COVID, C-O-V-I-D to 692-692. I'll say it again – C-O-V-I-D to 692-692. You will get constant texts sent to you with the latest accurate information from our Emergency Management office. If

you want it in Espanol, you can pick C-O-V-I-D-E-S-P to 692-692 and get those updates. Believe what is the official information, not the rumor-mill or everyone's going to really get bad information and get misled.

Darden: There you go. Mayor Bill de Blasio. Thank you for your time today. You see what happened to your Patriots, man? The era is done. The era is over, man.

Mayor: I don't understand it.

Darden: Tom Brady has left the building. All good things come to an end, Mayor. Your Patriots are a wrap out here. Finish it. Close it up. Close up shop.

Mayor: This too shall pass, brother.

[Laughter]

Darden: Get out of here, bro.

[Laughter]

Mayor Bill de Blasio –

Stylez: Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor: Take care.

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