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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON
THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW**

Brian Lehrer: It's Brian Lehrer on WNYC. And now it's time for our Friday, Ask the Mayor call-in, my questions and yours for Mayor Bill de Blasio at 6-4-6-4-3-5-7-2-8-0, 6-4-6-4-3-5-7-2-8-0. Or you can tweet a question, just use the hashtag, #AskTheMayor. And good morning, Mr. Mayor. Welcome back to WNYC.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Brian. How are you doing today?

Lehrer: I'm doing great. Thank you. And we've spoken our last hour. Some of the people listening now, were listening then about the news you broke this morning about vaccines. Anybody 16 years or older can now walk in without an appointment to any City-run vaccination site. And one of the things that came up was that it's going to be confusing for some people, because the Governor announced this week that anybody 60, 6-0 years and older can walk in without an appointment to a State-run vaccination site. And people are like, I don't know what a City-run site is compared to a State-run site. So, help us out here.

Mayor: Yeah, no, look, it's a very fair concern. And I think we've all along since recognized that different levels of government aren't always doing the same exact thing. But here's what is the way through it. Anyone who wants to find a site, a City-run site, you can go to vaccinefinder.nyc.gov. If you prefer to go on the phone, 8-7-7-VAX-4NYC. The Health + Hospital sites, that's our public hospital system and Department of Health sites are the ones where you can just walk up at any age. And there's, you know, dozens and dozens of them around the city. And you know, we're encouraging more and more of the other health care providers to start to do this approach too. Because we tried it. We really got great results. We've seen great results in other parts of the country that have tried the walk-up approach. The convenience makes all the difference. And you know what? New Yorkers are going back to being the busiest people in America. There is a hell of a lot more activity now. And let's face it. New Yorkers will do things if it's easy and if it's harder, they tend not to. We want to make it really, really easy. And the City sites are going to lead the way in that.

Lehrer: Do you still think that the City can meet its goal of five million vaccinated people by June? Because one of the things that I've seen is that even as there's more accessibility, according to Health Department data, the number of people getting their first shots is declining.

Mayor: Well, let me go over the exact numbers because I do think we can get to five million. Look, we got a curve ball thrown the last few weeks with what the federal government did with

Johnson & Johnson. That was not part of our plan. It didn't help at all. But we still have two full months to go. And we finally have a situation where we have enough supply. And it's easy to get an appointment. And a lot of people were discouraged in those times where it was very hard to find an open appointment. I think this is going to be so much better. And a lot of folks who, it's not about hesitancy, it's really about convenience. They'll just come forward and say, here are the numbers. I mean, right now we've got 2.2 million fully vaccinated adults. 3.3 million if you look at folks, who've gotten at least one dose. So, you know, the folks who have gotten at least one dose overwhelmingly will get a second. I mean, right there, that puts you at about two thirds of our goal. You know, that's 3.3 million follow through, the ones who still need the second dose follow through, you're right there, about two thirds of the way to the five million goal. We've got 600 sites, it's free. It's, you know, we're doing all sorts of amazing community outreach activities today. I'm going up to the Museum of Natural History. You know, that that is now a walk-up site, get vaccinated under the whale. I mean, it's a pretty amazing experience. And we're going to do a lot of things like that, that are going to be really compelling and positive, fun. And you know, the Broadway site that we set up, it's now reached thousands of people from the theater and film and TV communities. We're going to be doing a lot more of that. And I think it's going to make a difference.

Lehrer: Before we get too far away from our previous segment with Judith Enck, the former EPA administrator for this area on plastics. She said at the end of the segment, and she said it on this show before, that the only plastics that really get recycled when you put them in your recycling are numbers one, two, and five from the City. But my understanding is that the City requires more number plastics than that to be recycled, otherwise you can get fined, or your building can get fined. But she says other than one, two, and five, they don't really go into the recycling stream. In fact, what they do is pollute the recycling stream and make it harder to actually recycle the ones, the twos and the fives. Is this an issue you're aware of?

Mayor: I haven't heard that critique. I take it seriously and I'll look into it. But I haven't heard that. I think what has happened, Brian, is that the nature of the recycling industry has been changing. And some of what worked before may not work now. And that's something we have to constantly reassess. I do believe though, at the same time, a lot of jurisdictions have encouraged, you know, the most universal approach to recycling to get people to do it and make it easy. You know, recycling rates are still not what we want them to be. And in part, because the more you have to think about it, the more you need to take up space or, you know, plan around it, the less likely everyday people, busy people, people with lots of things to worry about, are going to be thinking about recycling. So, you know, in New York City, we've – you know, you put your metal, your plastics, your glass, all together of many different kinds. In some places you put every kind of recycling, you know paper included, everything in one bin. I think those are all efforts to get people into the habit of recycling. And we still have a long way to go on that. But it's a fair question. And you know that you're asking and I'm going to go and look into it.

Lehrer: Let's take a phone call. Clint in Hamilton Heights, you're on WNYC. Hello, Clint with the Mayor.

Question: Hi, thanks for taking my question, Brian. So, Mr. Mayor, over the past week you've been, you've been speaking out about the police killings of George Floyd in Minneapolis

regarding the verdict, and Adam Toledo in Chicago. And we heard you, we saw you talking last week as well about Daunte Wright. And about Adam Toledo, you tweeted, when will this country stop killing Black and Brown people? And you said, every police officer in America must be trained to deescalate and avoid the use of deadly force. But meanwhile in our city, Kawaski Trawick was killed in his own home in the Bronx in 2019, by NYPD officers Brendan Thompson and Herbert Davis. Kawaski was cooking in his own home, when the officers opened the door – the closed door of his apartment, broke the door chain, entered without being let in, escalated the situation every step of the way, tazed Kawaski, while he was just standing still and talking. And then they fired four shots that killed him, all in 112 seconds. But this past Tuesday, the NYPD told the press that they found no wrongdoing in the killing of Kawaski Trawick and they refuse to discipline the officers responsible for his murder. So, Mr. Mayor, you talked so much about police violence across the country, but when will officers Brendan Thompson and Herbert Davis be fired for murdering Kawaski Trawick?

Lehrer: I'm going to leave it there and get an answer to your question. Mr. Mayor, do you stand by the department's finding in this case?

Mayor: You know, I'll put it this way. Brian. I want to certainly know more about this. This case is not one that honestly, I had heard a lot about previously. And I want to know more now. I don't have a reason to share Clint's analysis from what I've heard so far. But I want to be thorough. So, I'll certainly look into this and come back with more. There's – look, there's lots of oversight. There's the Civilian Complaint Review Board, there's internal oversight. There's a lot of oversight. So, I think when people suggest sometimes that it's open and shut, my experience is that many of these cases are complex and they're looked at very, very carefully. But I will happily – I think it's important to keep looking. So, I'll look at this one and come back with more.

Lehrer: ProPublica – I was going to ask you about this case anyway. ProPublica did some reporting on it. And apparently according to them, there was one more experienced officer, happened to be Black, trying to convince his colleague not to use force before Mr. Trawick was shot and killed anyway. And ProPublica quoted a former NYPD detective who said they could have waited for help. This was a mental health crisis case. The person was in his own home. They could have waited for help according to this former detective and just closed the door since department policy is to isolate and contain people in crisis. So, there's something for you to –

Mayor: Yeah. No, I'll look into it. I want to comment on that. This is a really important point. First of all, we are increasingly working with a new approach that if someone's in a mental health crisis, where there is not any evidence of violence, we are going to an approach where civilians, mental health workers, paramedics, EMTs, handle the case, not police officers. And we'll have more to say on that in the days ahead. But that's been a promising approach so far. But in the cases where there is some evidence that there may be violence, or is violence happening and police officers go to the site. We've been training thousands of officers in how to handle situations where there's a mental health element. We definitely are training officers in de-escalation. You're absolutely right, if it's a situation where there's not a threat to anyone else, the goal is to isolate the person and, if backup is needed, to wait for backup. The Department was very clear about the fact that the horrible killing of Deborah Danner a few years ago, that the

protocol was not followed by the officer involved and that officer is no longer on the force. You know, there is a protocol that says if someone can be isolated, of course, you want backup and you want to handle it carefully. I don't know all the facts of the case here we're talking about, but I do absolutely want to get those facts. But I want to affirm the point, we've been teaching de-escalation, we've been teaching limited use of firepower. Look, this police force has had – and it's really important to look at these facts – a few years ago, in New York City, we had under 30 gun discharges in an adversarial setting in a whole year by the NYPD in a city of 8.5 million people. There's been real progress in reducing the use of weaponry and that continues. So, any tragic individual case, we must follow up on and make improvements, but I want people to also understand that structurally there's been very big change in the NYPD.

Lehrer: And so, structurally, to follow up on that, you said at your news conference yesterday, that the City of New York does not have some of these tragedies we've seen in other places, but I've been getting a lot of reaction to that. And, you know, we could take calls here all day if we wanted to from people outraged at the deaths of the hands of the NYPD of various people [inaudible] we've taken calls for you about Delrawn Small this week, the \$750,000 settlement with the woman who was kept handcuffed while she was giving birth and shackled in moments after, and none of the six officers involved have been disciplined, despite the settlement, according to the NYPD's discipline database – our reporter looked it up. So, do you stand by your remark about that, sort of, this doesn't happen here?

Mayor: No, I want to be clear, Brian – I do stand by my remark, but I want to explain it, because I think this is one of the places where we actually get to have a dialogue. In the case where the officer's shackled the woman giving birth – that's just insane. There's no reason in the world that should have happened. The patrol guide was not clear on that. That's a mistake. It was fixed in July last year. So, now, it makes very, very clear that is a practice that is banned, that cannot happen in the future. If the officers were not properly instructed and the patrol ride guide wasn't right, that is the fundamental problem here. But you talked about very, very different realities there. That case, obviously, the structure was wrong. Delrawn Small, that was an off-duty officer. That's gone through a lot of due process. It's going to go through more now with the CCRB. The case that we just talked about a few minutes ago is one that, you know, I'm not convinced the narrative you just heard is the whole story, and I want to get the whole story, and then I'll be happy to speak to it more. I'm talking about the fact that there's 35,000 officers who almost never pull the trigger of a gun, and that is different than a lot of the other places we've seen in the country, and the recklessness and the lack of care with weapons that we've seen around the country. And I'm talking about the fact that every single officer has been trained in de-escalation and officers here go through extremely intense complex situations and overwhelmingly do practice de-escalation effectively. So, you will always find some things that are not good enough, I'm certain, and we have to address every one of them. And with the discipline matrix, it means more and more, more than ever, if someone has done something wrong and they did not follow the rules, they can be terminated. But I don't want to – I feel like a lot of times the questions like try to paint 35,000 people with one brush, despite extraordinary movement that's happened in de-escalation and reduced use of force. And, at a certain point, if we don't also acknowledge progress, you know, I think people almost create a [inaudible] problem here – like, they never want to acknowledge any progress and they always want to find the one thing that went wrong. And I actually want to say no, NYPD has done a lot to improve

itself. CCRB has done a lot to keep the NYPD accountable and there's been a number of reforms even in the last year and that's something we should actually embrace.

Lehrer: And just to finish this thread on the settlement with the woman who was giving birth for \$750,000, that settlement is paid and none of the six police officers involved were disciplined. Can you explain that?

Mayor: Well, I can tell you that the policy was wrong. And, Brian, I think you can relate to this. If the policy of your station was one thing and you were following the policy and, you know, then it proved that it was not the right policy – you know, you could say, well, you should have known better. Or, you can say, well, maybe the people who set the policy should have known better. This was ridiculous. It never should have been that way. The policy should have been explicitly clear. And I think it's dehumanizing to treat a woman giving birth the way that she was. But that's not, in my view, about individuals as much as a systemic problem. That systemic problem has been resolved. If we find anything more about individuals making additional choices that were wrong, of course, they will be disciplined. But this one to me was – the history was, folks who were in hospitals who were inmates or prisoners were typically kept in restraint. That was the norm for a long, long time. It should not have been, but it was.

Lehrer: Osa, in Queens. You're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Osa.

Question: Hello. Thank you for taking my call. Mr. Mayor, I am a parent of three Success Academy scholars. And on this same show in 2019, you promised me specifically that you would find us a permanent space in Southeast Queens for middle school. You give us a space – a temporary space for one year, but, in 2019, due to the pandemic, we were not able to attend school in this space. Fast forward to 2021, we are being required – well, City agencies, we're required to go back to work now in the buildings – in our respective buildings. And you have not said anything concerning the permanent space for our middle school that you promised. So, my question to you, Mr. Mayor, is where am I supposed to send my children when I do return to work as a City employee?

Mayor: So, Osa, you're right. So, I remember it about – years ago, we found a space for that time. I don't have the update on the space situation for this coming September. I know – I think I know that this is right, that Success Academy has chosen to go remote for the entire school year, this year. So, obviously, it's moot, but for September as the issue. If you'll give your information to WNYC I'll have our folks follow up with you directly and give you an update. You know, we obviously work with every charter organization either find space in a public school building where appropriate, or they get State funding and City funding to find alternative space if there's not one in a public school building. And, overwhelmingly, charter organizations have been able to find what they need. So, we'll give you an update on what's happening in the case of your school and certainly work with you and fellow parents to get this resolved.

Lehrer: And I think she raised a second issue there, as a City worker. And I know that your office has now sent out a message about the City's plans to reopen its offices in conjunction with many City office workers being required to come back, starting May 3rd. Will the City continue

to allow city workers to work from home if their children are not back in school or daycare full-time?

Mayor: Brian, where we have a really clear standard for our City workers, and I want to make that clear to you, but I want to give you some breaking news that we have updated numbers on vaccinations among City workers. At this point, we've got 146,000 City workers fully vaccinated. 180,000 of them received at least one dose. You know, the fact is, the vast majority of our workers, it's about 80 percent are actually back at their jobs, right this minute. The folks we're bringing back are in the offices, and we believe it's going to really ensure that they can do a better service to the people of the city. We just know that remote has not been as effective in so many cases as having people in person, but it will be with all the social distancing and safety measures, and often on a rotating basis – some days in the office, some days out. But no, we need people to come back. Individual supervisors will always work with folks that there's a particularly extraordinary situation, but this is, you know, one approach for all City workers. The 80 percent have been at their posts, in fact, during the worst of the pandemic, our health care heroes, first responders, obviously so many educators—

Lehrer: The people who work in the field, who are not in, in office jobs, but the specific question here is from—

Mayor: But this is a consistency point. You know, people of all incomes, people of all types of profession, and we need everyone back to serve the people, and we're treating all types of workers with the same equality and the same respect. I think that has to be remembered here.

Lehrer: But the question that we've been getting from a number of listeners, and I think Osa from Queens was asking a version of this question, is if the schools are not open for five-day-a-week classes in-person for their kids, then how could they be required to go back five days a week to their jobs?

Mayor: Again, you know, let's be clear just to make sure everyone's hearing for September Chancellor Porter and I've been 100 percent clear—

Lehrer: Well for May?

Mayor: —all kids welcomed back. No, I just want to make sure, because there's been confusion at this point, all kids back five days a week in September. Now, what we've been having is more and more schools have been moving to five days a week in fact, because of the opt-in and because of the three feet rule that the CDC approved for elementary schools in this case, a lot more schools starting Monday, will be going to five days a week right now. So, we've got a much better situation for five days a week. As I said, a lot of our city workers coming back will be only coming back certain days because of social distancing and will work with anyone to do our best to balance their needs. But there's lots of opportunities being provided. You know, whether it's five-day-a-week school, whether it's childcare opportunities, a lot has been provided, obviously for free. I'm convinced that for now through the end of June we can accommodate people, and then starting in the beginning of July, we have first time ever a summer program through our schools, open to all for free all grade levels. So, in the summer months there will be

– and those are five-day-a-week options in many cases, that will be available to all parents, and that's going to be a different part of the equation as well.

Lehrer: Mulu, in Harlem, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Mulu.

Question: Hi. Thank you, Brian, and thank you, I love your show. Thank you, Mr. Mayor also. My question, I want to make it short. I live in Harlem in an HPD building. So, now they're going to renovate the building. It was supposed to be this year, but next year because of COVID, but they gave us a layout for how it's going to look and it's going to be the same size, very small apartments we have, and there are 13 empty apartments in the building. So, that 13 empty apartments going to be bigger for the people who's going to buy, but we've been managing our buildings since the 90s, and we asked HPD, you know, to give us the same, equal size apartments for us and for the new people, but they refused. So, we are struggling with them. You know, we don't want to, you know, [inaudible] very, very small size, so, Mr. Mayor if you can help us please.

Mayor: Thanks for the call, Lulu. Please give your information to WNYC. I'll have someone talk to you today. Let's see what we can do to help here. I think the most important thing, obviously, it sounds like a little bit of a complex situation, but the important thing here is preserving affordable housing, preserving affordable buildings, and sometimes we do have to strike a balance of how that is going to be financed, how that's going to be sustainable. But we always try to figure a way to the most important thing from my point of view is you, and so many other people have affordable housing, need it for the long-term and that's always the goal we're trying to achieve. But let's figure out in your case, if we can do something to address your concern.

Lehrer: I think she wants the insiders who are there to get dibs on some of the nicer, newer renovated apartments in the building, instead of them gone to people outside. Karen on Staten Island, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello?

Question: Oh, hello, Brian. Long time listener, first time caller. Mr. Mayor, thank you so much. My name is Karen. I work for Farewelling, a New York City-based company that helps families plan a memorial service after they've lost a loved one. We're working with a family now in Staten Island who lost their son in January. They were unable to have a funeral then because of COVID. He was an avid fisherman and his favorite spot was in Gateway National Park. So they really want to have a small memorial there on his birthday weekend in May, we've contacted the Park authorities and they've denied our request due to COVID, but outdoor events are permitted all over the city and state now, and since people can even gather inside for dining at restaurants, we can't understand why in a vast outdoor public space, we can't help this grieving family having a small, personal tribute of just 20 to 30 people to honor their son. We're hoping that your team, Mr. Mayor can help us help the family by granting our permit.

Mayor: Well, thank you, Karen, and please give your information to WNYC. I definitely want to help you, and I think your case here makes a lot of sense. This family has been through so much and there's nothing worse than losing a child, and if they have a vision of how they want to remember their child and obviously, you know, celebrate his life, we should try and help them do

it, and I think you're making a really good point. So, we will work with you and the folks from the National Park Service and see if we can get this done because I do feel for the family and thank you for all you're doing to help them.

Lehrer: We have about a minute left. One more reopening question. Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer says it's time to reopen senior centers in the city that the older population is sufficiently vaccinated by now, and we know how to do safe spacing indoors, she says, enough that they can start up again. Do you agree?

Mayor: We're getting there. You know, this is something I've talked to the Health Commissioner about and talked to our Commissioner for the Aging Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, and they're working closely, and I think it's – we're getting closer. It's still overwhelmingly the most vulnerable population. We are not out of the woods on COVID. We are not out of the woods on the variance. So, I think from the Health Department point of view, they'd like a little more time and a little more progress, but I don't think it's too far off. So, more to say on it soon.

Lehrer: Alright, and to repeat the breaking news from this morning from you – all city-run vaccination sites will now be open for people without an appointment, 16 years of age and up. How can people find out again, which are the city-run sites?

Mayor: So, for the City-run sites you can go to a vaccinefinder.nyc.gov.

Lehrer: Thanks as always, Mr. Mayor. Have a good weekend and talk to you next week.

Mayor: Thanks so much, Brian.

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