

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. Today, we're going to talk about, first and foremost, our situation and fighting COVID in this city and the work our health team is doing, working with folks at the community level all over the city. And what we're seeing – we'll go over the indicators in a little bit, but what we're seeing, thankfully, is some leveling off, certainly in the city overall, some leveling off in the communities that have been most affected. So far, the overall picture is steady and that is good news. We need to see more progress, obviously, in the zones of greatest concern. We need to keep an eye on other neighborhoods, surrounding areas, make sure that the situation is contained. But what we're seeing overall, in terms of the city indicators, suggest that we are making some progress. Now as I've said, this is a decisive week, truly decisive. We have to stop a second wave from hitting New York City and we have the power to do it, but everyone has to be a part of this. And so, everyone, a reminder of how important your own role is in this. And a reminder that the City will be out in force in the areas most affected making sure that we are supporting people who are trying to do the right thing, and folks who are not doing the right thing, of course, there will be enforcement. But we have a chance this week to turn the tide and we all have to do that together.

So, let's talk about what we have found, always, was crucial to the equation and that's testing. From the very beginning, we knew that testing was everything in terms of fighting back this disease and those basics like wearing a mask, like washing your hands, all the basic things. So, we're going to go out there in these coming days and emphasize to all New Yorkers how important it is to do these basic things, to get tested, and to follow those core – that core advice our health leaders have been giving us now for months. Now, one of the things we'll be doing is a new campaign, and we'll be getting information out across the city, reminding people, for example, how important it is to wear a mask indoors on a regular basis. Now, look, unless you're with people who live under the same roof with, it's really important to wear that mask regularly. If you go to work, if you go to a store, if you are any place with people you don't live with, wear that mask, it makes a huge difference. It's the simplest tool. It's made such a difference for this city. So, we're going to remind people, especially with colder weather coming on, more indoor activity, that people cannot let the guard down, need to keep that mask as a central part of our strategy. That plus social distancing plus testing will be the key to stopping this threat of a second wave and moving us forward.

Now, again, testing will be crucial. We're going to continue to remind people how important it is to get tested, how many places you can get tested, how crucial testing is to stopping a second wave. Testing is what allows us to know what's really going on and where to put our energy and how to stop a problem when we see it. Our Test and Trace Corps is out in force, and you're going

to see new guidance from our Health Department and our Test and Trace Corps about when to get tested, because we've had this question many times from folks. A little bit of a lack of clarity about when to get tested and how often to get tested. So, we're going to go out with a full bore public information campaign to get it right. And here's the bottom line. The bottom line is get tested as frequently as appropriate. We're going to go over the guidelines here. They're going to be available, but it's really important to recognize testing as central to the strategy. So, for example, if you are someone really at the frontline of protecting the city, a health care worker, a first responder, an essential worker definitely get tested at least once a month, if not more often. Teachers and school staff, at least once a month, if not more often.

Now, what about folks who need to get tested immediately? The guidance we're putting out makes it clear, if you have symptoms of COVID-19 get tested right away. If you live or work in an area with an increased positivity level, increased transmission of COVID-19, get tested right away. And we are seeing people listening to that guidance in the red and orange and yellow zones and more and more people getting tested. If you live in one of those areas, go out and get tested. It will make a huge difference. If you had close contact with someone who has had COVID-19 recently, get tested. If you have been at a large gathering, get tested. These are really simple indicators, simple reminders of when it's important to get tested. If you're coming back from one of the states with a high level of COVID-19, well, first of all, you need to quarantine for 14 days, that's the State law, but also you need to get tested once you get back here. All of this will help us. All of this will help us turn the tide and stay safe and then get even safer so we can open up more, and finally get past this disease once and for all. So, everyone, the bottom line is get tested. It's safe, it's fast, it's easy, it's free. Go to nyc.gov/covidtest for locations or call 212-COVID19, or you can text 'COVID TEST' to 855-48 to find the free testing locations near you.

Okay, now a big moment coming up for the city. We are now under three weeks until the election, millions of New Yorkers anxious to make our voices heard. So, I want to remind people as we get closer and closer, that if you are going to vote by mail, you have to request an absentee ballot. So, time is getting a little short here. The deadline to request an absentee ballot is October 27th. But we're urging people to ask for it as quickly as possible to make sure you get it smoothly. And then once you have that absentee ballot, it needs to be postmarked by the day of the election, or you can drop it off at any of the election sites, early voting sites or election sites, by November 3rd. So, really important – again, if you need an absentee ballot, apply for it right now. Now, we want to help everyone to participate. Some people want to do it with absentee ballots, some people want to go on Election Day, but there's a lot of people who want to take advantage of in-person early voting. And this is obviously a new thing in this city and state and a very good thing. Something a lot of us have worked for, for many, many years. It's finally here. So, early in-person voting begins on Saturday, October 24th. So, just 10 days away. And obviously if you want to vote in person, the early voting gives you a great chance to do that with fewer people, less crowding. It's quicker. If you need a ride to get to an early polling site, we've got a nice opportunity here, a partnership between the City of New York and the taxi hailing app, Curb. And we want to thank everyone at Curb for being a part of this. This partnership is to help people get to their poll sites if they need to take a taxi. And Curb is offering \$5 off for the first 5,000 people going out to vote for early voting, who participate. All you got to do is download the Curb app and use the code VOTEEARLY between October 24th and November 1st. So, we want to make it easier for people in every way possible to vote.

Now, meanwhile, another huge, huge issue for the City of New York is the census. For days now, we haven't been clear when the final day would be. Unfortunately, now we have a decision from the U. S. Supreme court. I don't think it's a fair decision. I think with so much that's happened with this pandemic, with so much need to get the truth out about the people of this city and this country and count everyone, it made no sense to cut the count short. It made no sense that the president took a full month off the census process. It does not make sense the Supreme Court is siding with him. But they have and the deadline they have set is tomorrow, Thursday, October 15th. So, everyone, last chance. This is literally the last chance. If you haven't filled out the census, do it now. This can make a huge difference for the city. We've been over it a lot of times, the billions of dollars that are at stake depending on how well New Yorkers do it, responding to the census. The amount of representation in the Congress, so much at stake, for something that takes so little of your time and energy. So, please, if you haven't filled out the census, go to my2020census.gov or call 8-4-4, I'm sorry, what's the phone number – 844-330-2020. I had the wrong one down here. 844-330-2020, and you can immediately get any guidance you need, but it's 10 minutes to fill out the census. It will make a huge difference. You got today, and tomorrow is the last day.

Okay, now let's go over to daily indicators. This is for, again, the whole City of New York. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold of 200 patients. Today's report is 76 patients, with a confirmed positivity rate for COVID-19 at 25.3 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold is 550 cases. Today's report is 512. Number three, percent of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold is five percent. Today's report, 1.13 percent. And today's seven-day rolling average, 1.46 percent. So, there you see some leveling off, some good news, but we've got a lot of work to do to keep it that way and then make it much, much better. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Good morning, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Test and Trace Executive Director Dr. Ted Long, Democracy NYC Senior Advisor Laura Wood, Census Director Julie Menin, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Dave Evans from WABC.

Question: Hey, Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah, Dave, how you doing?

Question: It's a miracle. I'm using my personal phone. It only took me seven months to figure that out. You know –

Mayor: [Inaudible] we've been needing this all along. It sounds clear as a bell.

Question: Amazing. Hey, let me ask you, I know you can't really get into it, but we've all reported so much in the last 24 hours about Fausto, and about the disagreement that you all had, or at least you wanted to have a disagreement with him and kind of wanted to call them on the carpet about not returning your calls. Could you tell us your understanding of why Fausto is leaving and if you're trying to keep him in the department?

Mayor: Look, I think Chief Fausto Pichardo has done a fantastic job and I've felt that throughout, and I've said it many times. I want him to obviously have the opportunity to speak for himself, but I will only say I spoke to him last night several times, I spoke to him this morning. I'm very clear from those conversations this was a personal decision – a decision based on personal and family factors. He's a very devoted family man. This was something that he felt was important to do for his own family. We have rarely disagreed in these months, working very closely together in very, very tough times. So, he's someone I hold in high regard. We all tried to see if there was a way to convince him to stay, but it was a personal decision. Go ahead, Dave.

Question: Well, my other question then, what do you respond to the accusation that you were meddling in the chain of command?

Mayor: Well, that's just not accurate. I have a close working relationship with a lot of the key leaders of the Police Department. We've been working shoulder to shoulder through so much, we've all talked constantly. And this was true way before the pandemic, going back years. It's an ensemble of leaders, I've worked with all of them closely. This is something that is obviously a personal decision and a family decision. So, I think there's been – honestly, the information that's put out there just isn't accurate, doesn't tell the story. And again, I spoke to him this morning. He made very clear to me, this was a personal and family decision. And, again, most importantly he'll speak for himself on it.

Moderator: The next is Brigid Bergin from WNYC.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. My first question, I guess I'll start by following up on part of Dave's question there – you know, you have 14 and a half months left in your administration, two more high ranking people Chief Pichardo and Liz Glazer are departing, and that's after several other high-level departures this summer. I'm just wondering how do these departures impact your ability to deliver for New Yorkers and how are you trying to keep your team members engaged, going forward?

Mayor: Listen, Brigid, everyone's incredibly engaged. I mean, this is a team that has, for a lot of them, been here for seven straight years through so much, but especially the last seven, eight months, and are incredibly devoted people, working really, really hard. You're going to see after people have been with a team two years, four years, six years, seven years, you're going to see some people move on to other opportunities. You're certainly going to see some people move on depending on the results of this election, that is absolutely normal and understood, or some people who are trying to make sure that they have opportunities going forward after the 15 months of this administration. But what we have is a very deep bench, a lot of very talented people. Every time where there's a move or a transition, a departure, or someone moves to a

different job within the administration, there's a deep bench to draw on. We've got plenty of talent that we can slot into the roles that we need and keep things moving forward. I don't have any doubt about that. Go ahead, Brigid.

Question: And in terms of the election, Commissioner Shea has alerted police officers to be ready for mass demonstrations in the days leading up and then potentially afterwards. How are you being briefed on this? And to what extent will officers approach compare to the heavy-handed tactics they use the summer, like the pepper spray and kenneling?

Mayor: Look, Brigid, again, I want to go back to the overall reality. We believe in respecting peaceful protest. Overwhelmingly, what we had this summer was peaceful protest, and this fall. Overwhelmingly, what we've seen is peaceful protest by New Yorkers of all different viewpoints, the NYPD respecting it, working with it, facilitating and respecting protests of all kinds. We've had a few situations where protesters were violent and that had to be addressed. We had a few situations where officers didn't do the right thing and that is being addressed as well. But the overall picture, you know, very rarely was pepper spray used, very rarely were there types of approaches that were anything but accompanying peaceful protest. And I think in the aftermath of the election –look, a lot of us are worried about our democracy and are worried that the election results should be honored, whatever they are, and as some people may not want to honor those results. We do expect it could be a difficult time, but the message to the NYPD that the Commissioner's given, that I've given, and that I expect to see followed is to respect peaceful protest, but protect people against any effort, wherever it comes, from towards violence, because that's exactly what we need the NYPD to do – to step in if anyone is attempting violence.

Moderator: The next is Marcia Kramer from WCBS.

Question: Mr. Mayor, going back to Chief Pichardo, are you saying that you'd never had a disagreement with him about not returning your calls and that you didn't tell him you want him to go to a house party in the Bronx to see what was going on?

Mayor: That's just not accurate. There was one thing I needed to talk through with him where I think there was some miscommunication, but he and I have talked dozens and dozens of times and had no problem communicating and working through things. Again, I understand the rumor mill and I understand that people like to take small facts and exaggerate them into big stories. The bottom line here is, he's making a personal decision. It is unusual, obviously, someone who had a very bright future ahead, but he's making a decision for family reasons. Someone doesn't make a decision of this magnitude unless there's something very big motivating it. And I really – we talked, I'm not going to go into details about it, just to say we talked at length about what he was feeling about his personal needs, the things he needed to focus on, and I respect that. And that's obviously why I made the decision.

Question: But Mr. Mayor, you have a situation where you're losing the highest-ranking member – the highest-ranking Hispanic member of the NYPD. What kind of a loss is it for you and for the City in terms of diversity and the kind of police department you're trying to create.

Mayor: Look, he's a very talented, capable guy with a, you know, I think, a tremendous future, and I obviously wish he would stay. And I know the Commissioner does as well. But, again, if there's any place with a deep bench, it's the NYPD. There's a lot more leaders coming up and there's a really substantial number of leaders of color and women leaders coming up within the NYPD. You've seen promotions and new roles recently and I think we're excited about the leadership that is coming up. So, of course, it's a loss, but it's a loss we will deal with by bringing up more talented folks and they will have their opportunity to shine. And there's just a lot of good people who will be the future of the NYPD and the future of this city.

Moderator: The next is Bob Hennelly from the Chief Leader.

Question: Good morning, everyone.

Mayor: Hey, Bob. How are you doing? How's it going?

Question: Thank you. Good, good, good. I just wanted to ask you, early on, just a few weeks ago [inaudible] he had mentioned that he had asked you to hold off on layoffs until after the election. It would appear as a practical matter that a 30-day notice would, given now, would certainly put us past the election. Can we tell the civil service and our readers at The Chief that, that, that notice won't go out between now and the election? I mean, do you have any sense of it? Can you comment on the status of this?

Mayor: Now, Bob, it's an important question. Look, this obviously connects to the news from Friday about the arbitrator's decision and then the follow-up agreement we reached with the UFT. You're talking about \$450 million that came off of this fiscal year's budget, that provides us a lot of relief, that gives us some breathing room to now continue to work with labor and other unions on other savings, to continue to work obviously for a stimulus in Washington and for long-term borrowing in Albany. So, we do have a little more time now, the fact that we've, you know, enabled to put together \$450 million. And I want to emphasize, I feel for every educator, every UFT member who obviously – people have done so much to get our schools going, so much to help our kids, but we really got into a spot here where we didn't have resources and we needed to find some way to address it. The arbitrator had the right to make the decision. Then we work together beyond that to come up with a bigger vision, going forward. That gives us some relief. So, we are not out of the woods, Bob, by any stretch of imagination. We don't know what the election results going to be. We need to find more savings from labor, but in terms of any immediate action, we have some breathing room now. Go ahead, Bob.

Question: Awesome. There is concern that, assuming the best case from the standpoint of the union is that Mr. Biden wins, that we could be in a prolonged period of time where his winning is not the same thing as, say, assuming office and the Democrats getting control and sending aid to New York City and New York State. So, there's a growing movement in progressive circles for the suspension of the rebate of the stock transfer tax. As, you know, for many years, the State of New York, going back to 1981, has refunded that money incredibly to the same Wall Street interests that had been getting fabulously rich throughout our national tribulation. Would you consider that this is something that needs to be revisited right now?

Mayor: Yeah. Bob, look, I think at this point – you framed it very accurately – the rich had been getting richer during this COVID crisis. It's shocking how many New Yorkers, how many Americans don't have a job, are struggling to make ends meet while folks who are doing very well are doing even better. If ever there was a time in history to right that wrong and make sure that was true progressive taxation, it's now. So, I think we need to increase taxes on the wealthy across the board. This is something I'm going to fight for in Albany, for sure. It is time for higher taxes on millionaires and billionaires. I think absolutely the stock transfer tax has to be reassessed now because it's unbelievable that, you know, there's threats of layoffs to tens of thousands of working people and the very fabric of this city and people who don't have a job and don't have enough for the basics in life, and somehow we're not acting in the most obvious way to demand more of those who are doing very well. We've got to solve that. So, I know a lot of legislators in Albany want to see progressive taxation. I'm going to work with them. I think this is the right time to get it done.

Moderator: The next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Going back to the situation in the COVID hotspots. I know you said that the picture is steady, but can you just give some more detail? Is the idea that the infection rate is plateauing? Is it going down? And can you, or maybe Dr. Varma give some specific numbers on what the infection rates are on the nine or so ZIP codes? Thanks.

Mayor: Thank you, Shant. I don't know if Dr. Varma has it all as fingertips. I'll turn to him in a moment, but I can say this much to you, I've been evaluating it regularly with our health care team – the overall city situation, you see the indicators like everyone, clearly there's been some good leveling off, particularly on the seven-day rolling average for positivity. In terms of the zones, which we originally looked at in terms of ZIP codes, the State came up with the zone system. What we're seeing there is a number of them have started to move in the right direction. Some have not, some are breaking even, some are even still going up, but when you composite of them, I would say it adds up to some leveling off. And, obviously, the effects of more and more wearing masks, social distancing, people are honoring more of these rules. We need more compliance, enforcement is helping, more testing is helping. We certainly are seeing more and more people from community coming out and getting tested, I think that's a big piece of this. So, what I would say is, leveling off as the right phrase – more to do. But when you add those areas together, we see pretty consistently that, thank God, they're generally not getting worse. And that's what matters right now, the first step to turning the tide. Go ahead, Dr. Varma.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Great. Thank you for the question. Yeah, we'll have to get back to you about the specific test positivity rate. I can – we've been looking at it recently, I just don't have today's numbers in front of me. I would definitely echo what the Mayor has said. There are basically a couple of different measures that we look at to assess the state of the epidemic. The first is the number of cases that are being diagnosed. And what we saw is, you know, a fairly sharp peak over the last several weeks that has, as a Mayor has said, leveled off at this point. And that's also in the context of a very dramatic increase in the total number of tests that are performed. Dr. Ted Long, who's on here, can discuss about the tremendous efforts at the Test and Trace Corps. has done to get testing pretty much available anywhere you stumble around the streets in those neighborhoods and available to lots of people. So, a leveling off in the total

number of cases diagnosed, despite of rapid increase in the number of tests performed, as well as the leveling off in the test positivity. I would caution, however, and the Mayor knows that, you know, the way we in public health speak is, this is not a level that we want to stay at, of course. It's a good sign that we're not seeing a continuing rapid increase, but the only way we get in control of this epidemic is, of course, to bring case numbers back down to way – the way they were in late July, early August. So, we are cautiously optimistic that efforts we're taking are having an impact, but we're nowhere near out of the woods yet.

Mayor: Dr. Long, do you want to talk about the increase in testing?

Director Ted Long, NYC Test and Trace Corps. Thank you, sir. So, over the last two weeks, we've brought in more than 20,000 new tests through our mobile units, through our new block parties, through our new self-swab stations that we call micro sites. That's focusing on the clusters that we're talking about here. Citywide, we've also seen a reflection of our increased number of tests. You know, we hit the highest number of tests in one day since the epidemic began – 52,000 tests in one day last week citywide.

Mayor: Did we lose Dr. Long? Oh, we just cut it off. Okay, good enough. All right, Shant, go ahead.

Question: Yeah. Thanks for that. I also wanted to ask about one of the themes from a forum held last night for mayoral candidates next year, which I guess was very strong criticism of your administration. I mean, Kathryn Garcia, who was joining you at these press briefings not too long ago said you were unprepared to deal with the crisis, you respond to headlines, etcetera, etcetera. Did you watch the mayoral forum last night? Any thoughts on the criticism of you during that?

Mayor: I did not watch it. I understand that people running for office all come up with their game plan and all try to create a message or project a reality that they think will help them get elected. And I think it's smart for us to take it all with a grain of salt. But I'm very, very clear what we all did together. Every member of this team, working with the people of this city to deal with an absolutely unprecedented crisis. And without the support we obviously deserve from the federal government. And we fought our way through it without the resources we needed, but we did all of us together. And that's what I'm focused on and continuing that fight right now. So I don't have time to watch mayoral forums. I'm focused right now on stopping this second wave and getting this city back on track to recovery.

Moderator: The next is Rich Lamb from WCBS 880.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everybody on the call.

Mayor: How's it going?

Question: I'm doing okay. I'm doing all right. So it seems that remote learning now has topped 50 percent, up to 52 percent is where it apparently stands. And it seems like that number is going up. And we know people can opt back into the in-person teaching next month, but it seems like

it's going in the other direction. What do you make of that? What do you think, if anything, that signifies?

Mayor: No I appreciate the question Rich. I'm thinking as a parent here. Look, I think when you've talked about seven months plus of people being bombarded with news about COVID-19, of course parents are going to be very careful, very hesitant. We opened up schools, it took some time to get it right. I think people were hearing a lot of messages that might've been discouraging. I don't think those messages were always fair or accurate, but that might've been discouraging to parents. I think it makes sense that a lot of parents are going to bide their time, watch what's happening, wait to see what happens, talk to other people they know whose kids did go to school. I mean, I don't know if you're out there or saw any of the experiences that I had on the three days where we opened up different kinds of schools, but clearly there's a lot of parents and a lot of kids who really wanted to be back in school, a lot of educators and staff who wanted them back. I think over the coming weeks as the good news stories spread, and they are often not going to spread the mainstream media, they'll spread out the grassroots, it will be word of mouth. A lot of parents will then look at that opt-out opportunity and want to take advantage of it. I mean, the, excuse me, the op-back-in opportunity, I should say. The opportunity to send their kids back into the school buildings. But they're going to want to make sure that they understand what it's like. And this is natural. So over these next weeks, we're going to show parents exactly what's going on in the schools and why we are really pleased with what we're seeing in terms of the health and safety levels. And then Rich, I think a lot of parents are going to say, okay, now is the right time for my child to go back in. Go ahead.

Question: So you know, I haven't been following it step-by-step but how many of the schools have been like closed down as a result of a kid getting sick or a staff member? I really haven't heard those numbers you know, closings and reopenings and shutting them down for a couple of weeks or a day. Is there a way that you're tracking that and do you have any sense of what it is?

Mayor: Sure. This is what our situation room does every day. And I get reports actually multiple times a day from the situation room. And I know we put out a lot of that information regularly, so Rich it's a really interesting story. So we have about 1,600 schools. And right now there are two that were shut down for a 14 day period and both of them are actually about to come back online in the coming days. We've only had two the whole time that needed that longer shutdown. We've definitely had some individual positive cases. We have definitely had some classrooms that had to be shut down. That kind of pod approach, where you could just shut down one classroom and the people who were in it. But overall it's absolutely amazing, how few we've had to shut down. How low the positivity levels have been among members of school communities. And then the situation room has been a big positive here, and I want to thank everyone who's a part of the situation room, led by Commissioner Melanie La Rocca and her team at Department of Buildings, working with Test and Trace, DOE, Department of Health, a lot of agencies. Because that's really helped to make sure that everything is acted on quickly by Test and Trace, and that it's a very organized, methodical approach. So I think so far we're seeing very good results in terms of the vast – I mean, you have two schools closed out of 1,600. You couldn't ask for better results than that. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Paul Liotta from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for taking my question. I just wanted to see – we had this story yesterday regarding a cluster that I was referring to as community spread in our 1-0-3-0-7 ZIP code. I just wanted to see if the City could say how it had determined that it was community spread and not related to a cluster?

Mayor: Paul, we're looking at every situation around the city all the time. And again, when we get to something where we think we have enough information to declare it publicly and act on it in a certain way, we'll do that. We want to make sure in every case, we're looking at that there's a big enough sample size information, that we're getting it accurately. So what I'd say is when we see something in any borough that we think needs attention, we're going to focus on it. We're going to do things like we did previously very effectively in places like Sunset Park and Soundview and Southeast Queens, which is send in more testing, send in more outreach, more mask distribution. We're prepared to do that anywhere where we have a problem. Go ahead.

Question: Understood. Thank you. And the other question I had was that the Health Department said that Staten Island has a mask adherence rate of only 45 percent. I just wanted to see how that number was determined?

Mayor: I don't know the methodology and I'm going to see if Dr. Varma has something to add here? What we've done in some places is obviously send out teams to do mask distribution and to educate people and also keep track of what they're seeing. So it may be that kind of approach? We do know, and we've seen it around the city, we definitely have more work to do on people wearing masks in different parts of the city. Overall, the city is doing very well, I think on mask usage, but there's been some slippage in some places. We got to do better for everyone's sake. Dr. Varma, you want to talk about the methodology there?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Sure. So the methodology that the Health Department uses is one that we've discussed, And actually other people have used in other settings as well. It's based on people who are just, you know, regular people who we train to make observations of what people are seeing on the streets. And they go to certain locations at certain specified times and then have an approach to, you know, a standardized definition that they use to categorize people into whether they are, you know, wearing a mask correctly, whether they're wearing a mask but not wearing it correctly. You know, most commonly, you know, you see people maybe have it over their mouth or on their chin. Whether they're holding a mask or whether they are not – don't have any obvious efforts that their appearance that they're wearing, don't have any mask of any sort whatsoever. So, you know, obviously it doesn't capture every moment in time in every person. And it also has the limitation of being restricted to people who are visualized on the street. But it is a methodology that we've used in other neighborhoods as well to provides us with comparable and useful data to get a sense about [inaudible].

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Jacob Kornbluh from the Jewish Insider.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Is it fair to say that if the increase in testing provides a city a more accurate sample of a positivity rate that you would reverse your restrictions in certain neighborhoods in the red zone as swiftly as they were imposed?

Mayor: Yeah. Let me speak to that, Jacob. But first of all we spoke a few days ago. I want to see how you're doing today?

Question: I'm doing fine. Thank you.

Mayor: Okay. I appreciate the work you're doing. And Jacob, what we talked about initially was a two week period. So, you know, we're coming up on a week so far. That there was a good scenario that we hoped would be the scenario, where over the course of two weeks we saw enough turnaround to end the restrictions in some of the areas. Now, obviously Jacob, every area is not necessarily the same. When you think about red, orange, yellow zones, different areas, different boroughs, they're not all the same. So some may move faster than others, hopefully in a better direction. But yeah, if the question is, if we get better and better test results, is that what's going to lead us to decide that we can reduce and remove restrictions? The answer is yes. It is imperative that we get the truth. And the way we get the truth is by the maximum number of people getting tested. It literally every additional person gets tested, you get a better, more accurate read on a neighborhood. And we want to know what's happening because if we don't need restrictions anymore, we want to take them off. If we need to keep them there, we need to know that too. So there's a direct and absolute correlation between the number of people who get tested, the accuracy therefore of the testing and the decisions we make. Go ahead, Jacob.

Question: Can you share with us, if you have considered any other practical solutions regarding prayer services that you believe that the community wouldn't feel like they're being singled out?

Mayor: Look, Jacob, that's a very honest question. I just want to say, remember in the beginning, when we were dealing with this problem in all communities, March, April, you know, across the board, the message was that we had to not do a lot of the things we were used to in every community. Including worship services of all faiths. And faith leaders across the board, acted on that. And there were a few you'll remember back then, there were a few often very, very small institutions that tried to defy it. And we had to take action to enforce. Then we went through months where thank God we did not have to have those kinds of restrictions. Now we're in a very particular situation. We are threatened with a full blown second wave in New York City. If that happens, Jacob, the entire city would have to go back to the restrictions we knew in March and April. I think everyone agrees. If we had to close down businesses across the board, schools across the board, you know, really go backwards, it would be horrible for all of us. So there are stringent standards in place because of this reality. But the bottom line is we want to work with people. Obviously outdoor worship has worked for some. Coming up with creative ways to have fewer people in worship services and have services more often has worked for some. There's different approaches. We want to work with any community leader, any organization that wants to talk to us about ways to be creative, we want to work with them. But I think the best thing would be to everyone to work together, to maximize testing, maximize mask usage, maximize social distancing, so we could get the restrictions off across the board. That's

the goal I want to work with all community leaders on. And my team has been doing that. Every one of my team has been working closely with the community. Special thanks to Dr. Mitch Katz and to Pinny Ringel who have really kept in constant touch with community leaders. I think if we all do this together, we can get by this and hopefully very quickly.

And as we close today, everyone looks, that's the message. This is a decisive week. This is a crucial week for New York City. This is the time to turn the tide. So, everyone, do what you have done so well, just those basic rules make such a difference. And again, think about how bad a second wave would be and let that motivate you to go the extra mile. To keep that mask on even when it isn't always fun and easy, to keep that social distancing, to remember to get tested. Again, testing is a lot easier than it used to be. It's a lot simpler. It's free, it's in a lot more places than ever. Get out there and get tested. And that's a big part of what will help us stop this second wave. So, I know we can do it. We fought off worse before we will do it again. Thank you everybody.

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