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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. I hope everyone had a really restful and positive holiday weekend. I hope you had a chance to spend time, whether in-person, or virtually with family and friends. And really get a break from everything we've been through. And I hope that you are taking the opportunity now in the holiday season to support our small businesses, our local businesses. I had a great opportunity to go to the Strand Bookstore on Saturday and do some of our holiday shopping there. Chirlane and I went to support an amazing New York City small business. And there's so many more like it. So again, it is holiday time. People don't have as much as we had last year, obviously. And a lot of families won't be able to buy much this year, but if you are going out to do holiday shopping, please focus on those local stores. And let's help keep the money in our community.

So we've talked about buying local on Saturday. Yesterday, I outlined the plan to start reopening our schools next week. Today, we are going to focus on the thing we need the most to get us through to the vaccine. And that's testing. Testing from the very beginning has been the core to every effective strategy. And testing is what we are doubling down on now in New York City. We have the highest testing capacity we've ever had since the coronavirus began. We're going to talk about how important it is to get tested and then what to do after you get tested. So look everyone in the aftermath of Thanksgiving. If you traveled and obviously, I kept discouraging people from traveling. But if you did travel, it's important to really follow the State rules now. If you went through the procedure to test out of quarantine, that meant you got a test wherever you traveled to. You're going to get another test now upon your return within the right time frame. If you go through all that, you get negative tests, that's great. You don't have to quarantine. But for everyone who doesn't do that, you do have to quarantine. And it's really important. And we take it very seriously. We're going to be constantly focusing on educating people on the importance of following the quarantine if you traveled. But there also will be consistent enforcement and consequences for anyone who doesn't follow the quarantine rules. But again, the best way to address everything is through testing. So, whether you traveled or you didn't travel, we're encouraging people to get tested.

And to make it easier. We have more and more Health + Hospitals testing locations, more mobile sites that were moving around, 25 new locations opened in the last week. We're continuing to make it easier. One of the things I've heard from so many people is they really want to get tested, but they're concerned about long lines and the turnaround time for the test. Well, again at our public hospitals and clinics and mobile sites, the Health + Hospital sites have been really good about quick turnaround times and providing people great service. But we do want to address the wait time. So now H + H will be posting updates three times a day on Twitter. You can follow at

@NYCHealthSystem and get updates about each site. And it will direct people to where the waits are the least. So, you can go to the place that works best for you. Also, later today, there'll be a new online tool, TestAndTrace.nyc, will give you wait time updates at 51 Health + Hospitals sites. So, you can really plan carefully where you want to go get tested.

But the bottom line is get tested. There's still so many people who have never been tested or only been tested once. This is how we fight back this second wave by getting tested. Now, what happens when you get tested? Well, if you test negative, that's great. If you test positive, you get to work with the nation's largest and best Test and Trace Corps. That's going to help keep you safe, your family safe, your friends safe, everyone you came in contact with safe. And it really works. And making sure that when people do test positive, that they know how to safely separate. That is the key. But we're not just telling people, Hey, go figure it out. We're saying no, we're going to help you every step of the way. We're going to be right there with you and provide you all the support you need. And it's free. Here to talk to you about this amazing effort and how it continues to grow. And I want to thank her and her team for all they do, and thank her for leadership, the director of the Take Care of division of Test and Trace, Dr. Amanda Johnson.

Director Amanda Johnson, Take Care New York: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, New Yorkers. I'm pleased to be back here to talk to you a little bit about COVID-19 and household transmission. As well as how the Take Care program can help you prevent the spread of the virus as we face the second wave. COVID-19 transmission is common in households, and it happens fast among families and roommates who are living together. As I mentioned before, emerging evidence from the CDC shows us that the vast majority of secondary infections occur within the first five days. Household transmissions will continue to be a significant factor in the spread of COVID-19 here in New York City where people live together in small spaces, and where we are going to be spending even more time indoors as we approach the colder months. At least one in five cases investigated by our own contact tracing program in recent weeks has been found to be due to household transmission. The implication of this is clear and urgent. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or you've been exposed to someone with COVID-19, don't wait, separate. The Take Care program can help you with either a free hotel room, which includes free meals, medication delivery, and onsite clinical supports. Or the resources that you need to safely separate at home. Call 2-1-2-COVID-19 for assistance now.

And in these challenging economic times, as we've mentioned before, don't let concerns about missing work be the barrier. If you test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed, you have the right to seek paid sick leave without fearing consequences from your employer and regardless of your immigration status. Again, call 2-1-2-COVID-19 to learn more. As a city, we've done a good job. We've been wearing masks and more New Yorkers are getting tested all the time. We need to add a third step to this equation, to protect each other from the spread of COVID-19. Keep wearing your mask, continue getting tested often. And if you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone who was sick, don't wait, separate.

To reach as many New Yorkers as possible, and with our simple message of don't wait, separate, we've launched a city-wide campaign, including digital broadcast and print in multiple languages. Many New Yorkers have already headed this call. To date more than 3,000 New Yorkers have been served by our hotel program. We've sent over 65,000 Take Care packages to

people's homes. And our resource navigators have reached out to more than 51,000 New Yorkers who are quarantined or isolating in their homes to help them connect to resources such as food, medication delivery, including methadone delivery, medical care, and paid sick leave. We still have work to do. And it all starts with you. Remember, if you feel sick or have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 the Take Care program urges you don't wait, separate. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Dr. Johnson. And listen to everyone. I mean, what the doctor went over is a very compassionate, kind approach to helping folks. And this is the New York way. We don't just leave people out there on their own. We're really going the extra mile to make it possible for people to get all the support they need and get through this very brief period of time when they have to separate. But here's what it's doing. We already know Test and Trace Corps has saved thousands and thousands of people from getting infected. And it's more important than ever. But what really matters is your cooperation. So again, if you feel those symptoms, if you go and get tested and it's positive, the important thing is to reach out, to get the help you need, to accept the help when it's offered, to communicate. Because Test and Trace Corps and the Take Care initiative are there to help you and make this go well so we can all turn the page and move past the coronavirus.

All right, before we go to our daily indicators, just a quick update, something that New Yorkers care about a lot, and we love a lot. And it's part of our tradition, the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree. This is something that in normal years, we all go to see in-person. This year, I'm going to tell you to watch a different way. And on December 2nd, live and on television, this coming Wednesday, you're going to see the ceremony, the tree lighting. And that's the best way to see it. To feel that moment that we cherish every year when the lights go on, and it's another reminder of the beauty of the holiday season. And this is going to be a challenging holiday season in a lot of ways, but it's still going to be a beautiful one in so many ways. Because so many people care for each other and are looking out for each other and are taking that spirit of holidays and making it come alive in so many ways. So tune in on Wednesday to see the tree lit. Now that's the best way to do it. I know some people are going to still want to go in-person. And I'll tell you up front, please if you can make the decision to watch it on TV, that's so much better. But if you choose to go in-person, there's going to be a lot of specific rules in place to make it much safer than normally would be the case in a typical year. There will be a reservation system, groups of no more than four people at a time will be able to go up and view the tree. It's a timed socially distanced approach. And obviously it means it will be limited, the number of people that can get close. This is what we got to do to protect everyone. And if you want to see the wait times there'll be available at [rockefellercenter.com](https://www.rockefellercenter.com). A different approach, but an approach that will keep people safe. And I keep saying it, I'll say it again so we can get through the next year. Next year, I look forward to so many of our traditions coming back so we can be there in-person and enjoy them the way we always have, and that we cherish. But let's stay safe this year. So everyone can get through to next year and enjoy those traditions together.

Okay, let's go over our indicators. And I will say at the outset, we had lower testing levels over the last few days, meaning many fewer New Yorkers went to get tested. So some of our numbers may be skewed by that. I just want to offer that caution up front. We had a few days with much, much lower testing levels, obviously because of the holidays. We'll get a better sense in the course of this week, as testing levels return to normal. But let's go over the indicators. Number

one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold 200 patients, today's report is 96 patients. Confirmed positivity level for COVID of 47.06 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold 550 cases. Today's report 1,620 cases. And number three, percentage of the people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold five percent. Again, knowing that we had some abhorrent testing levels today's report for the daily 4.69 percent, for the seven-day rolling average 4.03 percent. Let me say a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Senior Director of the Test and Trace Corps Dr. Amanda Johnson, Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hey. Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everybody out there on the call today. My first question is regarding the school testing. What are the logistics for the weekly testing now for the schools? Is it going to be in schools? Outside? Do people get tested and bring their form in? How is this going to work?

Mayor: Yeah, Juliet. We – first of all, I want to wish you – I hope you had a really great Thanksgiving with your family. And, Juliet, look, the idea here is to go to weekly testing, 20 percent of the school community. And that testing will be at the schools. In some cases, there are clinics and other facilities very, very nearby that could be used, but typically it'd be right at the schools. And that'll be done on a weekly basis. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: Okay. And another topic – there have been reports that there have been large parties every weekend, hundreds of people attending, and probably not just in Manhattan. They have been shut down, but is there any sort of proactive thing that's going on to prevent these gatherings from occurring in the first place?

Mayor: Yeah. I want to thank the Sheriff and the whole team at the Sheriff's Office, but also a lot of other agencies have been participating as well. There's constant monitoring sites that have been problem sites before. And then, of course, any complaint that comes in, and that's key. The Sheriff's Office can be in a lot of places, that can't be everywhere. It really matters if someone sees something like a large gathering, call 3-1-1 immediately, and that will get action, because we have been shutting down those events when we find them. I would say, if the Sheriff were here, he would tell you that we do not believe there's a really large number of them. We think we're getting a lot of the ones that happen, but they still do happen and we've got to immediately shut them down whenever we see them, and that's what we'll do.

Moderator: Next is Narmeen from PIX11.

Question: Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: There you go. How are you?

Question: I'm sorry. Good morning. I'm doing well, thank you. I just want to follow up on Juliet's question in regards to – Mayor, the Governor has said a few times that the Department of the Sheriff is not quite as large enough to handle what we're seeing in terms of enforcement. Do you believe – do you have that same sentiment? Is there any discussion of having an expansion of the Sheriff's Department in any way?

Mayor: Narmeen, I think they've done an amazing job and they've been where we needed them to be. And, you know, other agencies are helping with their uniform personnel and in certain situations, of course, we use NYPD as well. So, no, I think the Sheriff's Office has done a great job moving resources where they're needed and it's made a big difference. Go ahead.

Question: Mayor, my next question has to do with rapid testing. I know as the City has expanded its testing efforts and expanded its sites and surely so many New Yorkers taking advantage of it. We've talked to a number of infectious disease experts over the past few weeks who've cautioned about the overuse of rapid testing, the margin of error that exists sometimes with false positives and false negatives. I wonder if there's any concern on the City side of whether that skews our numbers in any way, and maybe even in some cases sends out somebody with a false negative out into the public.

Mayor: Yeah. Narmeen, it's – rapid testing from the beginning has been an area where it's a very appealing concept obviously and the question of accuracy has been real from the beginning, although there's been some real improvement. I'll turn to Dr. Johnson, obviously Test and Trace is on the front line of this, and Dr. Varma, for them to comment. But I'd say that, you know, we are careful about rapid testing and we still don't see it as the same as the diagnostic PCR tests. Dr. Johnson?

Director Johnson: So, we've been incorporating rapid testing specifically into our point of care testing sites, part of our hyper-local response, because we know that when people are armed with information, they're going to behave differently. We've taken great pains to ensure that as we bring new testing technologies into the fold of services and testing modalities that we're offering, that we believe that they meet the standards that we need to continue to protect the city and get people the information they need to safely separate and continue contact tracing. To that end, we've also included both the rapid test along with the PCR tests so that people can follow up if there's a discordant result. And so, you know, I think this is a debate that we've had as we've continued to incorporate new modalities, and it's not unlike arguments that we faced when we've thought about the point of care testing for HIV and Hepatitis C. I would consider it another tool in our [inaudible] rather than one thing that we're going to lean on to the exclusion of other testing modalities.

Mayor: Dr. Varma, do you want to add?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Sure. I think Dr. Johnson has covered most of the important points. I would just make two quick points really quickly. The first is that not all rapid tests are equal.

Some of them use different types of technology and produce different types of results. And, as Dr. Johnson said, we have taken a very cautious, but appropriately cautious approach to making sure that we validate each of these tests before use them, and we feel competent about the use. And the second thing I would mention is that, you know, the landscape is changing dramatically so that, you know, what we know today may change tomorrow. So, as we learn more about these tests, we're going to continue using them. And one of the things we have learned is that it's very, very important for the person using the test to be fully trained in how to read the results. And we found that as long as we have that training in there, we can get results that we believe in.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Henry from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: I'm doing well, Henry. How was your Thanksgiving?

Question: It was very nice. Thank you. My questions had to do with the school restarting and the fact that so many students are not going to be participating in in-school instruction. So, what is the City doing to improve and serve and teach these you know, the vast majority of students who will be at home trying to get instruction?

Mayor: Yeah. It's a really important question, Henry. I'll turn to the Chancellor in a moment, but just to say this – we've always said from the beginning that nothing is as good as in-person education. The thing that I think will be very helpful with the new plan is that we will be able to move a lot of schools for the kids who did choose, for the families that did choose in-person, we'll be able to move to five days a week, or at least more days a week in a lot of schools. And that's going to help a lot for those kids, but for the kids who are all-remote, there's constant work going on to try and make it better. The most important work I would argue is what we all need to do to just get by this crisis in general, what everyone can do, the testing and the other precautions, to link up to the time when we get the vaccine and then get it widely distributed. Because even in this school year, we have the real possibility of bringing back a large number of kids once the vaccine gets pretty widely distributed. And, remember, you know, we're still in November now, there are seven months of the school year ahead. The vast majority of the school year is still ahead. So, I don't want to leave that out of the equation, but that could be a huge difference-maker down the line. But, the meantime, this is a constant effort, whether it's at DOE headquarters or school-by-school to try and find every way to improve on remote learning. And I do think in the schools that go to the five day a week, they'll actually have in many ways an easier using their staff towards that goal as well. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, Henry, I will only add that everything the Mayor said is right on target, but we are continuously building capacity by building out curriculum, building out the platforms that students and teachers used for instruction as well, as well as the resources. And, you know, the true experts on remote learning are the teachers that are doing it. No one's ever had to do this before. And our teachers actually have developed a lot of capacity. So, part of what we're doing – it's not sexy sounding, it's not big

newsworthy, but we're actually taking what teachers are doing and sharing those best practices with other teachers, while, at the same time, building our device distribution network and getting more devices, while at the same time making sure that we have a trauma-informed approaches, because, you know, all of all of the city has been, you know, impacted by the trauma of the pandemic. And then, at the same time, develop more of those curricular resources and instructional resources so that students that are fully remote feel like they're part of the school community and feel like they are getting to the greatest extent possible as much of an experience of being connected to their school community as possible.

Mayor: Yeah, the thing to note before your next question, Henry, the Chancellor and I went up to a middle school the first day middle schools were open and Chancellor, remind me, is it One World in the Bronx that we visited?

Chancellor Carranza: Yes, yes.

Mayor: One World Middle School and just an amazing place. But what I want to emphasize, Henry, is even that was day one, and of course the school had been through the spring having to be all remote. But it was really amazing watching the principal and the teachers how they had tried to create a consistency of the whole school community between the kids there in person, that we were standing in the classroom with versus the kids that were home, remote, and trying to get a lot of commonality going. I think we really have to honor how much our educators have innovated to make remote as, you know, vivid and positive as possible for kids, even though it's imperfect, I think there's been a lot of amazing innovation that deserves respect. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Well, I guess my next question is that to hear this kind of optimistic description of the way things are proceeding, and then the disconnect between that and the complaints and the disappointments I hear from teachers and from parents and students, I'm trying to figure out, you know, is – why is there such a disconnect when we reporters speak to parents and teachers and students about the quality of this remote instruction? The fact that a lot of people don't have devices or the internet doesn't work well enough. I don't know. I guess my question is, are you missing something? I mean, who is wrong here? Where is the –

Mayor: Henry look, I mean, I really do appreciate the openness of the question, but I'm going to push back on a values level, I don't think anyone's wrong. I think a parent or a kid who, you know, either wishes that remote could be as good as in-person, which is a very fair feeling and, you know, painful for all of us. We wish everyone was in person too, or see something specifically that needs to be improved, we got to act on it every time because this is not like a model we have lived with for years and years where you can say, you know, why, if we know how to do this so well, and we've done it for so long, there's something wrong. Now this is a model still in evolution because it's never had to be done on this vast scale in it's in an ever-changing landscape, but I'm trying to emphasize, I don't think it's two different perspectives.

I think it's looking at all the educators out there who are constantly trying to make it better despite its imperfections. And I want to give credit to the Chancellor and the DOE on the devices. Again, I don't know about the rest of the country, but I would challenge you to look

anywhere and everywhere. I mean, it's over 350,000 devices have been given out for free, you know, brand new top of the line devices. Service, if it's for any reason not working as well as it should be, literally the DOE will switch the provider to another provider for free. They'll go as we've had in homeless shelters, into the shelters to work with families, one by one to get the service right for them. I'm sure there are still some people who need help, but all they have to do is call 3-1-1 and then as quickly as possible we're going to get them the help. So I truly believe there's an amazing effort going on to try and make it better every day, and that's what we have to do in the middle of this crisis. Chancellor, you want anything? Are you on mute?

Chancellor Carranza: I think you covered it all, sir. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Rich from WCBS Radio.

Mayor: Hey, Rich? We're having tape delay day here, Rich, are you there?

Moderator: We're having some trouble with Rich. We're going to come back to him. Next is Nolan from the Post.

Question: Good morning everybody.

Mayor: Hey, how you doing?

Question: I'm all right. How are you?

Mayor: Good, thank you.

Question: On the restoration of five-day-a-week learning, do you guys have some measure of how many schools will actually be switching back the five-day-a-week learning? How many schools have capacity to add students to five-day-a-week learning? And will there be some opportunity for parents now that their kids can go back to school Monday through Friday to get their kids back into in-person learning?

Mayor: Okay, the Chancellor can help us on the first question, but what I'd say based on the meetings – that the war room meetings at DOE I've been a part of, I'd say most schools of the ones that we have announced, let's be very clear elementary, K-5, pre-K, 3-K centers, District 75 special ed., most will be able to get to five-day over time, some as early as Monday, December 7th, some will take more time. There will be schools that can't get the five-day, but certainly can improve the number of days that kids will be able to come. Why? Because we now have a specific number in the categories I talked about, it's about 190,000 kids, and we also have to be really clear that kids have to show up or else we're not going to keep that seat for them, and that's something we talked about back during the opt-in. So we now are just doing the math and seeing what capacity we have in schools, it's evident that that's what we will be able to do now on a pretty broad scale.

In terms of the last part of your question, the plan we have is to stick with what we've got now in terms of the people who were originally blended or signed up during the opt-in. Those are the folks who are going to be able to have their kids go to in-person learning. When the health situation improves and particularly when we start to see some vaccine distribution on a broader scale, and we think we're in a much better environment, then we'll do an opt-in because we'll be in a position to do an entirely different approach to our schools. But for now this will be the universe of folks whose kids will be in in-person learning. Chancellor, you want to add on the first question of how many of the schools?

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, so we're in the process right now of working with principals and they're doing their analysis, they now know how many families have additionally opted for in-person learning, and that taken into consideration with the students that were already coming in person, and then obviously super imposing that on the space availability that they have in their building. So, they're doing that analysis right now, and we hope to have a much more detailed information later this week.

Mayor: Go ahead, Nolan.

Question: Secondly, the State Assembly is going to be holding a hearing examining mayoral control, comes after Mike Mulgrew said he'd like see an end to it. I wonder if you believe you're handling the school's reopening has put mayoral control at risk for the next administration?

Mayor: No, not at all. Other way around, Nolan. I talked to Michael Mulgrew and he simply reiterated the position that he has held and the union has held for I think a decade or more. There's nothing new there. The legislature made the decision originally to create mayoral control. It worked, it has been renewed constantly. Since it began, it has always been renewed. What has happened because of mayoral control? Graduation rate in New York City has gone up about 50 percent, five-zero, 50 percent. Education has improved. We can see it by so many measures. We achieved pre-K and 3-K because of mayoral control. I could not have done it without mayoral control, guarantee it. And being able to reopen the nation's largest school system in the fall, we could not have done that without mayoral control. There's just no way. So, you know, so many families benefit because schools were open and now they're going to be open again on Monday. That's because of mayoral control and I think a lot of the legislators in Albany see that and recognize that. So I think mayoral control is going to be an important part of our future, and it's about accountability holding one person accountable, so things actually happen and happen quickly. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, I hope you had a great Thanksgiving holiday. I hope you did.

Mayor: I appreciate that Gersh. I hope you did as well.

Question: Well, thank you, Mayor. I did indeed. A couple of quick questions. So, your administration has done a lot for pedestrians during the COVID crisis, as you know, you created Open Streets, you allowed restaurants to set up in the curbside space to keep sidewalks open for

social distancing, and you even have a pilot program to allow buildings to put their garbage in the curbside space and set up the sidewalk. So now it's Christmas time, which we all know is the most wonderful time of the year, but it's also a time when sidewalks become crowded with trees that are being sold. So, I'm wondering if the administration is going to build off of Open Streets and Open Streets Restaurants to create some sort of open streets Christmas plan, so the tree sellers can use curbside spaces instead of crowded sidewalks?

Mayor: Well, it's an interesting idea, Gersh. I'll tell you in my personal experience, is that the way it's been set up over the years with folks selling Christmas trees has worked pretty well in New York City and, you know, it's kind of part of the magic of the season, but we'll certainly look to see if there's any ways we need additional space. You know, I think you're right, the way you opened up, we have found, and I will give you credit. You and others were urging this from the beginning that we've been able to really innovate and have some wonderful new experiences by using our public spaces differently. So that's something I think we're going to keep looking at, keep evolving all the time. I don't know if we need it immediately with the Christmas trees, but it's something we'll look at it right away.

Question: But just a very short little follow-up you mentioned the Rockefeller Center plan, but I didn't hear whether that also included vehicular restrictions as you did last year. You know, I think you closed a couple of lanes up 5th Avenue and some of the side streets to cars. Is that part of the plan or [inaudible] I just didn't hear it?

Mayor: Yeah, no, you didn't hear it because I didn't mention it. I know there will be – well, let me say it carefully. What I understand at this moment, our team will confirm it to you today, is that 49th and 50th Streets between 5th and 6th Avenues will be closed off like last year, and there will be some lane closures as well, but – in terms of the avenues. But the idea here, again, different from last year is to not allow crowding. So that's where I have to get a fuller update on how it's being approached because we have a reservation system to see the tree, small groups, socially distanced, different reality, and we do not want to see a bunch of crowds forming. So I think that's going to affect how the streets have to be handled, but we'll get you that update today.

Moderator: We have time for two more—

Mayor: No, you still have Rich out there.

Moderator: We're still working to get Rich back.

Mayor: We have time for three more of you get Rich, okay.

Moderator: Gloria from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask you a question specifically about schools in Staten Island. We just want to get some clarity – Staten Island and parts of Harlem, if I'm not mistaken, that currently have schools that fall into the orange zone. So with schools opening next

week is there a plan to get those schools to test out of the zone or what happens to neighborhoods that are in these zones in terms of schools going back?

Mayor: That's an important, yeah, important question. Thank you, Gloria. Look, obviously the vast majority of New York City right now is not in an orange or red zone. So, for the vast majority of neighborhoods, what we announced the timing for the schools to open next week, K-to-5, Pre-K, 3-K, and District 75 Special Education. That's moving on the schedules we announced. The only orange zone I believe is right now is in the South Shore Staten Island. Of course, that can change daily. What we're going to do there is make sure that we follow all state guidance. We intend to work to reopen those schools, hopefully as early as next week, but we have to follow all state guidance. We have to focus of course, to make sure every one of those school communities is safe. So that's the plan. That's how we'll proceed from here, and this plan again, that I laid out yesterday is what we intend to use for the duration, all the way to the vaccine. Go ahead, Gloria.

Question: Okay. Thank you, and my other question is about some of what you said this morning on CNN regarding middle and high school students going back on. I know this has been, you mentioned this throughout the morning, but you seem to suggest that plan is still in the works. What is the expectation here and could high school and middle school students really be looking at, perhaps not going back to in-person until this year is over with all the holidays and everything else that's going on—

Mayor: Yeah, at this moment. That's, that's what I see that the focus will be over the next few weeks, up until the Christmas break, getting elementary, District 75 Special Education, and Pre-K, 3-K up and running making that go smoothly with a whole lot more testing, and then you know, we're going to come back after the holidays. We're going to be able to assess the situation, then. We're going to keep building up our testing resources. I want us to move to middle school and high school as soon as we can, but we have to do one step at a time.

Moderator: Rich Lamb, if you're out there, you'll be our last question, but in the interim, we're going to go to Dana from the New York Times.

Question: I'm Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Dana, how are you?

Question: I'm okay. Thank you. I'm curious whether you think we're in a second wave or whether we're not, and even how you define a second wave. Yesterday, the Governor said we're not in a second wave. The second wave is a mutated virus. What are your thoughts on sort of our status?

Mayor: Dana, I think these are fair questions, but everyone who's involved in this work has a right to their own interpretations. What I would say – I was asked this weeks ago, my interpretation is looking at our indicators and particularly looking at all of our indicators that means hospitalizations and going deeper into that, what's happening with ICU admissions, what's happening with the quality of care that we can give people. How many people are we able to

save? Certainly, compared to the spring, we're getting actually some very good news from our hospital system, and even though we did see some increase in admissions nowhere near as much as we might have feared to date to date, obviously we're going to watch it every single day. We're also seeing a huge uptick in ICU admissions, and we're seeing much more effective treatments and many more people coming out of the ICU, even if they've been intubated, coming out alive and making it through. So I'm watching all of that and I'm also watching the way New Yorkers are participating and they still are. I mean, the mask usage has been very strong. People have been going out and getting tested in record numbers. We need them to keep doing that. So I think a second wave is still bearing down on us, but I think we're fighting it back, and the question is, can we marshal our forces and get everyone involved and keep fighting it back? Go ahead, Dana.

Question: Thanks, and secondly, as I'm sure you're aware at the Los Angeles has imposed some very severe restrictions, I'm curious how likely you think it will be that New York City will enter some sort of similar lockdown in the coming months.

Mayor: Look, obviously, as I've said, many times, that's the state's decision. Ultimately, this is a conversation I've been having with the Governor in recent days, but I think we have a chance here still with lots of testing, with lots of precautions, lots of masks wearing, we have a chance still to avert some of what we've seen in other parts of the country in terms of restrictions. But we have to recognize that if we don't beat back this wave where it could very well end up with them. So I don't have exact odds for you at this moment. We know it is something that may end up happening. We know we have to be ready for it. But so far again, I want to accent the positive. The fact that folks are getting tested. The fact that mask usage is high. The fact that our hospitals are doing as well as they are, these are all really important indicators of how we're faring.

Moderator: For our last question we'll go to Rich from WCBS Radio.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I apologize. I lost the feed for a few minutes, so I hope I'm not repeating somebody else's question. But I'm just wondering if there's, you know, given the sort of partial opening you're going to do on December 7th on the schools, is there any scenario under which you would again, closed the whole system or is it purely going to be a school by school, or grade by grade?

Mayor: No, Rich. It's a very good question and it's not repetitive because I want to really make it clear to people. The Chancellor and I have worked on this with our teams and with the health leadership. This approach is what we want to use for the duration. Unlike in August, September, when we came up with the original approach, you know, then we did not know what the specific reality in the schools would be until we took all of our plans and put them into action. We were confident we could keep people safe but it's been amazing. It's been extraordinary how safe our schools have been, and that's because of all those layers upon layers of health and safety measures and that situation room – key, key part of the equation. That's been really great at making sure each school handled any case it had really quickly and effectively.

So, we know that schools can be kept very, very safe. We also know of course, how much parents want kids back in school and how much kids need it. So, what we worked to do was come up with a new approach. We needed to reset the equation to something new and sustainable. This approach, now with more testing, with mandatory consent forms, we believe we can sustain and take it through to the point when we have a vaccine, and then as I said, when we get to that point and when the vaccine has been distributed enough that we really think the situation is much safer than that is also the time when we can bring a lot more kids back and do another opt-in. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: So, I guess just to follow-up, it sounds to me like you're saying, no, you would not [inaudible] the whole system again?

Mayor: Right, the goal here – look, Rich, you know, obviously with the coronavirus, the level of unpredictability has been extraordinary. So, I want to be always careful to note that, but our plan is to use this approach all the way through to the vaccine and not have to shut down again.

All right, everyone, look, it's a perfect note to conclude on because the vaccine is coming and this is I think the most wonderful holiday gift for all of us. We know it's here. The question of course will be how quickly can it be made available in large quantities and how quickly we can distribute? Well, the one place you want to be is in New York City in terms of the ability to distribute a vaccine quickly and get it to people that need it in every corner of the city, our Department of Health is ready, Health + Hospitals is ready. We have an extraordinary apparatus that can get that done. So, we need to get to that point, and again, every single New Yorker can help us get there every time you wear a mask and every time you get tested, every time you take those precautions, you're helping us link up to that moment when the vaccine is widely available. So that positive day is coming. That day when we get to live a much better life is coming. Let's all do what we can do now to get ourselves there safely together. Thanks, everyone.

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