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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON NBC'S THE TODAY SHOW

Savannah Guthrie: Alright, Tom, thank you. And joining us now to talk more about his city's response to this outbreak is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, good morning. It's good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning.

Guthrie: You've said quite bluntly that the worst is yet to come for New York City in New York State. Can you take us behind the data that leads you to that conclusion?

Mayor: Savannah, you know, the data is what we're looking at all the time, making our decisions based on. But Savannah, obviously it means human lives – over 900 lives already lost in New York City. And what we're seeing is a sharp upturn over the last days, certainly the last few weeks. We have to look at this pattern and conclude that the worst is certainly in the next few weeks minimum. I could see it going into May, in fact, with the numbers we're looking at because we have community spread and that's really the issue. It's deeply seated in our communities and we're going to see this all over the country, unfortunately.

Guthrie: You know, it just has this feel of, it's not the calm before the storm, but you know, you feel that this is all about to really hit in a huge way when you see something like the US Navy ship, Comfort, docking off the West Side of Manhattan, you see a makeshift field hospital going up in Central Park. Right now they're empty. But is your expectation that these hospitals will have to be filled with overflow patients because the other hospitals are filled with COVID-19 patients?

Mayor: Yeah. Let me give you the projection and it's very blunt, Savannah. We have about 20,000 hospital beds in all of New York City. That's where we were, say, the beginning of this month, normal times. We project the potential that all of those beds, all 20,000 will have to be turned into intensive care beds to focus on COVID-19 patients who are really, really sick. That gives you a sense of just how abnormal it could be. Now I hope the projections don't come true, but we have to, as Dr. Fauci says, you have to plan for the worst. The projection has it getting worse over the next few weeks, potentially expanding well into May and will require a level of hospital capacity we've never seen, we've never even conceived of. We're talking about tripling hospital capacity to be able to handle this.

Guthrie: And Mr. Mayor, correct me if I'm wrong, the last I heard in New York you cannot get a COVID-19 test unless you are so sick you have to be in the hospital. So, when I read the latest

ones – the one I have, say 67,000 cases in New York. Doesn't that dramatically under count the number of people who are sick?

Mayor: Savannah absolutely. And community spread, you know, this is what people all over the country have to really feel in their bones. Community spread means it's out there and it continues to grow and there's a point where it stops like every other seasonal disease. There is an end point here, but for the weeks ahead, let's not kid ourselves, it gets a lot worse before it gets better.

Guthrie: Can we talk about this issue of testing? I just mentioned that in New York, in order to conserve testing capacity, only the hospitalized are getting these tests. The president was on a call with governors yesterday. He was – one of the governors from Montana mentioned that state's need for tests. He said he hadn't heard about testing in a few weeks. Is testing still an issue here in New York

Mayor: Testing at this point – you know, if testing had come earlier, I asked for testing from the federal government originally on January 24th. If we had gotten it in January, in February, beginning of February, we could have gotten ahead of this. I think there are still states where they can, and getting them testing is crucial. What it means now is it's the way we determine who needs the most immediate, urgent care. It's a way we help to protect our first responders and decide a course who needs to go and be isolated. But I think the fact is testing is going to play a different role now. If we could get rapid testing on a truly universal level that could help us a lot, that could help us immediately tell people what they had to do. And the best kind of testing is the testing early before you get an outbreak. Some states could still benefit from that.

Guthrie: Couple of quick things – I mentioned the US Navy ship, Comfort, has now come to Manhattan. I'm sure you saw these sites yesterday where many people wanted to get a glimpse and some of the images indicated that people weren't really keeping that social distance as they crammed in to get a shot. What's your message to folks who may have done that here in our city?

Mayor: Yeah, that's unacceptable. Savannah, look, we all feel a lot emotionally about the arrival of the Comfort. It's giving us so much hope that our military is here and we're going to need a lot more military presence. We're going to get a lot more help from the federal government, including medical personnel from the military very, very quickly. I've told that to President Trump. We need folks by Sunday, starting this Sunday to get ahead of that horrible onslaught we expect in the next week or two. But in the meantime, as much as we love the Comfort and we love the fact the military is here, people must practice social distancing. And I've authorized our police to start giving out fines, \$250, \$500 fines to people who don't get it. Because at this point we've said it, we've educated, we've given people the message. Anyone who's not social distance at this point actually is putting other people in danger. And if we have to give him fines, we will.

Guthrie: Alright, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you for your time, Sir, this morning. We really appreciate it.

Mayor: Thank you, Savannah.

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