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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. I want to give you an update on the efforts that are being made, intense efforts, to address the specific upticks we're seeing in COVID rates in certain communities in the city. Now, again, this is nine ZIP codes where a huge amount of energy is being focused, both from within the communities by community leaders and institutions, and also all elements of the City government starting with our Health team. And that's nine ZIP codes, again in a city of 146 ZIP codes. But we need to focus a whole lot of resources and we are in those areas, particularly the Test and Trace Corps, Department of Health, front and center with large a number of personnel right now, we'll go into those details. What we are finding initially as the more there is communication with members of the community about the importance of wearing masks, the more there's free mask distribution, and obviously a sense that there are consequences to not wearing masks, the more we are seeing people pick up on that and wear a mask, and that's going to be part of how we turn the situation around.

Let me go into that. And then you're going to hear from Dr. Katz, but first I want to talk about our daily indicators as we did yesterday. I think it's important to give this update upfront and there are some important insights in these indicators. So I wanted you to hear them as we begin. So daily indicator, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients, today's report 87 with a confirmed positive rate for COVID of just under nine percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven day average, threshold is 550 cases and today's report is 354. Number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID, threshold of five percent. And again, this is the citywide number, today's report 0.94 percent. And we are now also going to be talking about the seven day rolling average. So you have that perspective, today the seven day rolling average number is 1.46 percent. So, that's the citywide picture.

This is the first of probably several times I will say today. It is so important for everyone to go out and get tested. We need to get a very clear picture of what is happening around the city. We need to get a very clear picture of what's happening in these nine key ZIP codes and several others we're concerned about. The answer as it has been from the beginning, testing, testing, testing. The more people get tested, the better picture we get. We make sure we're seeing based on a bigger sample size what's going on. So again, if you have not been tested in a while or never been tested, we need you to go get tested. Obviously, if you have symptoms, we need you to get tested. Free, quick, easier than ever. So this is the key to us addressing this situation as always, the more people get tested the better.

Now let's talk about the neighborhoods. You see on the slide, the neighborhoods and the current numbers in six of the eight neighborhoods, we do see the numbers continue to go up. We have seen some fluctuation by neighborhood. We know, and we've seen it previously in other areas like Sunset Park and Soundview, the numbers can change rapidly in the right direction. So we're going to keep working daily, hourly to make that change. But right now, in six of the eight neighborhoods, we see unfortunately, an increase. And now the neighborhood of Kew Gardens has surpassed that three percent level. We're watching carefully. We're continuing to monitor four additional ZIP codes that are lower, but we want to be very careful because we've seen some increases. We want to arrest the problem in those areas as well. And we'll be continuing to send resources to them as well. That includes Rego Park, Kensington/Windsor Terrace, Brighton Beach/Manhattan Beach/Sheepshead Bay, and Williamsburg.

Now, today we'll have a number of initiatives today. 400 plus police officers will be out in these communities, providing information, providing free masks, reminding people that they are required to wear masks. And obviously in the case where there is noncompliance, issuing summonses. 400 from the NYPD, 250 compliance officers from other City agencies, and approximately 300 members of the Test and Trace Corps. So almost a thousand City employees will be out in these target ZIP codes doing distribution of masks, information, and when necessary compliance work. Yesterday, team distributed successfully thousands and thousands of masks. We saw good compliance when folks were encountered, when there was a discussion, we saw a very high level of compliance. No summonses were necessary yesterday. We would love to see that continue, but obviously prepared to issue summonses as needed. Sheriff's Department, also yesterday visited over 130 nonpublic schools to ensure that rules were being followed.

So that's a key piece of the equation. There's going to be by the Sheriff and Office of Special Enforcement intensive outreach, going to businesses as they have been over the last few days, going back to businesses where there are instances of noncompliance. A reminder businesses can be fined or shut down. So there'll be individual work throughout the community, going business by business, hopefully finding good conditions. Where there are not good conditions, if they have not been the problem before, there'll be a warning. If there has been a problem before, a business can be fined or shut down on the spot. So that effort will continue with those compliance agencies.

And then rapid testing – the rapidly increasing, I should say the amount of testing in the area, 11 mobile testing sites have been moved into the cluster areas, tripling the capacity of the Health Department's express testing sites. And a new initiative, which Dr. Katz will explain, a positive phrase being used, block parties. These are areas where streets are closed off and a high level of testing can be done in mobile testing units. And we want to encourage community members to come out and participate with that. That amount of testing will continue to be increased daily over the coming days in these neighborhoods. We're also working with community-based organizations of all kinds to get the word out, multiple languages, let people know how important it is to get tested, how important it is to wear masks and socially distance. We have robocalls being made. We have sound trucks out in communities spreading the message in multiple languages. All of this can help, will help, is helping. Now. It's also really important to note that community leaders have been extremely helpful in this effort. I want to thank the many, many community leaders. I've been on numerous group conference calls and calls with

individual leaders of the community over the last week. I know Dr. Katz, Dr. Chokshi, many others have spent a lot of time working with community leaders on the right way to address this challenge. A special thank you to a beloved member of our team, Pinny Ringel, who works here in the Mayor's Office and has done extraordinary work with the community. I get many thanks from community members for his tremendous outreach efforts to help people know what they need to know and how to act on it. So a lot of work with community leaders and institutions and tremendous support from those organizations, getting the word out that real action needs to be taken by each and every member of the community to help address this challenge.

A special thank you to elected officials who have stepped up. And there is an op-ed today in the community newspaper Hamodia which I have known for many years and been interviewed by many times. And it's very clear. It's a very powerful, straightforward op-ed about the importance of wearing masks, of following the rules, getting tested, so many key messages addressed well and powerfully in this op-ed. So I want to thank State Senator Simcha Felder, Assembly member Simcha Eichenstein, Assembly member Daniel Rosenthal, Council member Chaim Deutsch, and Council member Kalman Yeger. All of whom joined together with a unified voice to say to the community how important it was for everyone to be part of this effort to turn back to this challenge. With that I want you to hear now from the man who's been leading this effort in so many ways and working so closely with the community. And Dr. Katz I have to tell you, there's a lot of concern. There's a lot of need, but on many, many conversations I've had with community leaders, they take time to say thank you for your involvement because they know you know the community, you care about the community. It's very personal and real for you, but also the leadership you're providing as one of the health care leaders of the city is appreciated by all. So thank you for that. And we welcome your update.

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals: Thank you Mr. Mayor. We're very pleased that in these neighborhoods yesterday we had more than 350 people on the ground, handing out masks and distributing literature, reminding people of the four core ways that we stay safe. We stay home if we're sick. We keep physical distance between us and others. We limit indoor gatherings. We wear a face covering and we practice healthy hand hygiene. And that's to protect ourselves, to protect our parents and our grandparents. As the Mayor has said, testing, testing, testing. And he has told us to do everything possible to increase the amount of testing that's available so that we have a full picture. And if people are infected, we can safely isolate them and get them the treatment that they need. So the Mayor mentioned the 11 mobile testing sites, rapid testing sites at three Health + Hospitals sites in Queens and Brooklyn. An enhanced capability at two Health Department sites.

But I'm very excited – the Mayor alluded to this as a kid, a block party was the most exciting thing in South Brooklyn. The day of your own block party, which for me was East 19th street between W and X. But of course, because we had bicycles, we had the ability to go to everybody else's block parties. And we so much enjoyed them. And I think it's a very positive use of that phrase because now we're going to do block parties where we're going to shut down portions of the street and sidewalks and set up large testing tents. We will be able to test up to 500 people in each tent or site. And anyone who gets tested will get their results back in 24 to 48 hours. We're going to keep announcing additional block party sites so that we can saturate the ZIP codes.

They will be supervised by clinical staff who will also be able to offer people self-administered tests. New Yorkers will be able to pick up a test, take a swab on the inside of their nose themselves for 10 seconds, put the swab in a tube, seal it and hand it to somebody who is supervising at the table. They will get the results in 48 hours.

We're also partnering with our community boards to implement these micro-sites. Each microsite can manage a hundred tests per day. And finally, we are distributing rapid testing machines to trusted providers in the affected neighborhoods. Sir, as you know, I was on the phone last night with a group of physicians who take care of patients in these neighborhoods. And they were saying, get me testing, get me testing. And because of your commitment, I was able to say, we're going to provide these machines to doctor's offices so that they can do a rapid point of care. Each machine uses a nasal swab test, delivers results in 20 minutes or less. And these are PCR tests. One of the concerns that the doctors raised are, are you using antigen tests, because we are worried about false positives? And I said, no, these are pure PCR tests. People felt very happy knowing that. The virus is insidious. Many people are asymptomatic and don't know they're infected and can spread the disease. Increased testing helps us to identify these people. So Mr. Mayor, thank you for giving us the resources that we need to do the job.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Dr. Katz. Thank you to you and your whole team. Everyone on our health care team is working so hard and working so closely with the community. And again, the message today is go out and get tested, whether you're in one of these key ZIP codes or any place else in New York City. Get tested, so we can get the full picture of what's going on and you can get the full picture of what's happening with your own situation. The testing, again, in this city, results are coming in much faster than they were several weeks back. And it is an easier process than ever, so important. So again, constantly people say, what can I do to help? How can I help New York City? You can help New York City by going out and getting tested today and taking that brief amount of time to make a big difference.

Now, a lot happening in the city today. And another important topic, obviously, as we continue to come back as a city, continue to bring jobs back, continue to bring people back. They're bringing people their livelihoods back, is the restaurant industry, which has gone through so much and stood so tough through this crisis. Obviously important news, in the last few days, we announced that outdoor dining, our outdoor restaurant initiative Open Restaurant initiative will be made permanent. That our Open Streets initiative and that combination of Open Restaurants and Open Streets will be made permanent. These have been a huge step forward, not just for the restaurant industry and the hundreds of thousands of people who work in it, but for the city as a whole. This is a new approach that will make this a better city. And some people like to allege that New York City is a quote unquote ghost town. I would urge those people to go see the booked solid outdoor dining all over the city. That's been such a success and I congratulate everyone in the restaurant industry for achieving that and bringing it back all those jobs.

But now this is the first day when you'll start to have indoor dining again. Now let's be clear. This is something that was worked on very carefully by the State and the City. And we'll start at a low level, 25 percent capacity. It's crucial of course, to bringing back more jobs and helping businesses to survive. But health and safety as always come first. So there will be very clear conditions and restrictions and rules here. And a lot of communication has happened with the

restaurant industry to make sure everyone understands that temperature checks must be conducted at the front door for anyone going in for indoor dining. That tables must be spaced six feet apart, and bar tops are not going to be allowed for seating. So there's clear conditions about the kinds of PPE that must be available for employees. Obviously crucial that information is kept carefully by the restaurants in case there is God forbid, a situation where follow up is needed, that the Test and Trace Corps will have the information needed. So I believe the restaurant industry has heard these messages loud and clear. And of course we will have a lot of information out there over these next days to the industry. And inspectors out going forward.

But the inspection effort is going to focus now on these ZIP codes in Brooklyn and Queens, where we're seeing the particular uptick. So I want to make that clear today. There's going to be a very rigorous inspection effort in those ZIP codes. And we're going to be looking carefully to make sure every restaurant is following the rules. Look if we see the kinds of violations that create problems like employees not wearing a mask or a violation of the 25 percent limit. If a restaurant has more than 25 percent capacity, whether it's diners or if we see alcohol being consumed at a bar, those are the kinds of things that will lead to immediate summonses. And again, we want to have a situation where everyone follows the rules and no one is penalized. We certainly don't want to see any restaurants shut down. But we need to be very rigorous everywhere in the city, but particularly in the ZIP codes in Brooklyn Queens where we're having a problem right now. So you will see Health Department inspectors and other personnel out in those restaurants starting today and tonight. And they'll be very focused on making sure everyone is following the rules. Also work going on with Small Business Services and other agencies to get the word out. We want to support this industry, but it has to be done safely. And I know as always restaurant owners and employees have questions as we continue to move forward. Anyone who needs information can go to nyc.gov/restaurantopening – I'm sorry, [restaurantreopening](https://nyc.gov/restaurantreopening) my apology, nyc.gov/restaurantreopening to get the information you need. It has been a long journey back, but it has been working. The industry has played a crucial role in the rebirth of this city. And we're going to make sure that continues.

Now, let's talk about another reopening, school reopening. Again as the Chancellor and I have said more times than I could count, it's about health and safety. By the way, as you see in that picture, our kids are doing their share. And when the Chancellor and I were at the Island School yesterday on Houston Street, we saw it. We saw it the week before, out in Elmhurst at the Mosaic Pre-K Center. Four-year-olds, five-year-olds, six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, every age, kids wearing their masks and doing it very naturally, honestly. And adults as well and social distancing being respected. We also saw kids really happy to get back in school with the teachers they love, with their friends. And we saw a lot of adults with tears in their eyes too, tears of joy that they could see the kids they love again. And then seeing everyone reunited was really, really powerful. I want to just give you an update on yesterday, a big step forward, because we had as of yesterday 870 schools open in New York City. So we went through the first step with pre K 3-K and District 75 Special Ed schools. Yesterday, K-Five, K-Eight schools. As of this morning, 870 schools open in New York City with in-person learning for the children. Yesterday went very well. We checked, I had meetings at the Department of Education, talked with our labor partners, consistently got the message that things went well and smoothly. Thank you to all our educators and staff. This was a big, big effort. And the folks at Department of Education, including everyone who works at the Tweed Building headquarters, I want to commend you all.

This was a tough effort, a big complicated effort, but yesterday we moved forward in a very big way. Now at a level that no other school system in America is, with 870 schools open for in-person learning. But tomorrow we go much farther. middle schools and high schools open at which point tomorrow morning there'll be 1,600 schools open, 1,600 public school buildings open and serving children and families in New York City. In addition to over 1,000 community-based pre-K and 3-K sites. So a really extraordinary number of schools will be open and ready to serve, and they're doing it the right way. Thank you to our educators, to our staff, to all the DOE leadership, to our parents, and to our kids. Because you're all together making this work.

Now, let me give you another update, because, again, it seems like so much is happening at this point. The census – what's going on? Well, today, was going to be the last day to be counted in New York City. And if you have not been counted today, if you haven't filled out the form, today's a good day to do it. But we have a federal district court in California that has overruled a deadline and called for a one-month extension to the original concept. It's still in the court system. We don't know what the final disposition will be. We do know that everyone can do something right now, because regardless of what's happening in the courts, the facts on the ground matter. So, if you haven't filled out the census, do it right now. It takes all of 10 minutes. Right now, New York City has a 60.8 percent response rate – 60.8 percent. That's a very impressive number given that this all happened during a pandemic, but we have to get it higher. So, the simple message is while we're waiting to see what happens in the court system, we're going to continue to do this work, continue to reach New Yorkers, especially today. Please go online, my2020census.gov or call 844-30 – excuse me, 844-330-2028 – 844-330-2020.

Okay. Now, we'll do a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi all, we'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder today, we're joined by Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Katz, Chancellor Carranza, Commissioner Doris at the Department for Small Business Services, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Andrew from WNBC.

Question: Good morning, everyone. Mayor, I wanted to ask, the UFT has made it known in a letter that if you can't turn the numbers around in some of these dangerous ZIP codes, they would like key schools – I think as much as 80 of them – as many as 80 of them to be closed while the numbers are this high. I'm wondering, how close are we to that point where you would need to close down schools in these targeted ZIP codes?

Mayor: It's a good question, but I want to give you a clear answer, Andrew. I've obviously talked to our union colleagues. I'm familiar with their concerns, but what we're doing is making our decisions based on data, based on science. And we have something now that we did not have back in March or April, which is the situation room that is watching every school, every day. We have very precise data on what is happening in each school. We'll obviously have asked the

question, what are we seeing with the schools in those ZIP codes? What are we seeing with members of the school community who work in a school in any part of the city, but live in those ZIP codes? And the answer is the same. In both cases, we are not seeing any unusual uptake among any of them. I will say it again, we have a very unusual situation here where we have an uptick in a discrete set of ZIP codes and we are not seeing an interconnection to our public school system. So, we will watch it very carefully, daily, hourly. And if at any point we determine we need to close an individual school or any number of schools in that area, we will. But, today, based on the facts, it is not warranted. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: My second question has to do with your new enforcement efforts in the in these ZIP codes. You mentioned this morning, I believe you said 400 NYPD officers will be part of this mix. Yesterday, Governor Cuomo pointed again to the fact that so many NYPD officers don't wear their masks themselves. I'm wondering if this point you find that perhaps some of the reticence on mask wearing from the fact that New Yorkers see poor modeling from their own police officers who are out on patrol, not wearing masks day after day.

Mayor: Obviously, I've had this conversation with Commissioner Shea, and I know he's sent very clear instructions repeatedly to men and women of the NYPD. And from my observation, going around the city, the vast majority are, in fact, wearing masks. But I think the answer is simple, our officers should be held to the same standard as all citizens, all public servants, unless there is a good reason, like stopping to drink water or having to do something in which a mask interferes with them doing their job. Our officers should be wearing their mask. If they don't, there should be penalties, it's as simple as that. And the NYPD has the tools to implement those penalties and they should. I don't want to see that happen, I would just prefer all our officers to follow through on these instructions that the Commissioner has given. But if anyone doesn't, there should be penalties.

Moderator: Next step is Reuvain from Hamodia.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: I'm giving you – I'm giving you a promotion today, Reuvain. I'm going to help Hamodia have more subscriptions –

Question: Thank you. Thank you. I actually – 30 seconds ago, H + H tested texted me that my COVID test was negative.

Mayor: Congratulations.

Question: Thanks. I wanted to ask, you mentioned that the – these hundreds of people that are going into the neighborhoods, part of what they're doing is to provide information and combating disinformation, but you didn't elaborate on that. So, I'm wondering if you or the doctors can elaborate on what sort of disinformation these people are combating.

Mayor: Yeah. I'll turn to Dr. Katz with this simple point – I think throughout this crisis – now, seven months – you have heard all over the city all over the country, people saying, oh, you don't

need to wear a mask; or, oh, COVID is a hoax. And I think Dr. Katz got a very personal and inappropriate example of that, what he experienced last Friday. And I'm sorry, he experienced that. He did not deserve that. But we've heard that everywhere and then we have to combat that with just the pure scientific facts. Dr. Katz?

President Katz: Thank you, sir, for the opportunity. The most common and most pernicious misconception I've heard is that the virus has changed, that it's not as lethal as it used to be. And that is not at all true. What we do know is that because we've been much more successful at protecting people in nursing homes, we have not had the number of sick people who very disabled. So, the COVID cases are somewhat younger, but, as sadly occurred with my father in law who died, he was 72. COVID was not any gentler than it was in March and April to him. And so, we have to keep reminding people, the virus has not changed. The epidemiology is a little different with younger people being infected, so that the numbers do not look as bad. But even young people have succumb to this virus. A second one I hear a lot is herd immunity, that we don't need to wear masks because we have herd immunity. There's no neighborhood that has herd immunity. And so, people definitely on need to wear a mask. And then finally, I've heard that the tests are not accurate. And I think actually what that is, is confusion about the different types of tests. The PCR tests that we're offering at all our sites, whether it's Rapid PCR or whether it's a PCR, people are getting in 24 to 48 hours, the results of – those are accurate tests and people should believe the results. I'm glad your test was negative. And I'm also pleased that you got it – you got the result by text. That would have been an unimaginable thing for Health + Hospitals to accomplish three years ago. So, I'm very glad that not only you got the result, but you got it in a modern way.

Mayor: Excellent. Thank you. Go ahead, Reuvain.

Question: Yeah. Thanks. The test was at the park there last Friday, by the way. My other question was about the testing rates. I know that in many of these ZIP codes, there are very high antibody rates. And I'm wondering if that's leading to fewer tests? Are people with antibodies less likely to test? And is that somehow affecting the positive test results?

Mayor: I'll start as the layman and turned to Dr. Katz and Dr. Chokshi. Look, I think the truth is, there's a huge percentage of New Yorkers in every neighborhood who have never been tested. And it is a very good question, I appreciate the question, whether if there's a high percentage of people who have tested positive for antibodies, they're not going back and getting tested – that would be understandable, but, remember, we don't have all the facts on this disease and simply having tested positive at some point in the past is not a reason to never get tested again. Dr. Katz and Dr. Choksi can elaborate on that. I would go to the simple point, Reuvain, that there are so many people who have never been tested once or haven't been tested in a long time. So, I think there's plenty of people to reach out to, to help us get a clearer picture. And what I'm saying to everyone in these ZIP codes and to everyone in the whole city is, help us get the truth. The more people get tested, the better picture we'll have. There is nothing to be afraid of in getting tested. It only helps us get to the truth more quickly and not just see a small number people and get a misimpression from that, but get the biggest cross section of the community possible. Dr. Katz?

President Katz: The Mayor has said it right. The groups we really want to go for testing are people who've never been tested or haven't been tested in a long time. People who had documented COVID infections within the last two to three months, that is a group of people where if they're currently asymptomatic it's not helpful to us for them to get tested. But the vast majority of people who have never been tested or have not recently been tested, they haven't had COVID, those are the people we want to go out and get tested.

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

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yes, sir. I'll add briefly, but first let me say thank you to Reuvain for what you have done to combat the disinformation that we're seeing as well. And it very much relates to your good question about who should get tested. I agree with the points that the Mayor and Dr. Katz have made. What I would emphasize is that because we are we are not seeing any evidence of herd immunity in these neighborhoods, that means, unfortunately, there are still so many people who are susceptible to the virus and those are the ones that we want to get tested, because, let's focus on the facts, we are seeing an increase in cases among those susceptible people. So, hence all of our focus and efforts around ensuring that testing is as widespread and available as possible.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next up is Juan from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good. How are you doing?

Question: Very good. Thank you. I want to ask you about the ballot situation that we have in Brooklyn, right? The Governor wants the Board of Elections to just send out new envelopes, not new ballots to voters who got the wrong ones. Do you think that's the best way to remedy this situation? And can you think – what do you think about the Governor getting into this fight?

Mayor: Look, the Board of Elections – I wish that the Board of Elections was a City agency. You know, I have mayoral control of education and so many other key parts of the City government where we can make sure there's actually accountability and that we serve people here. The Board of Elections, the City government does not control, and it's incredibly frustrating, because they make so many mistakes and they're so unresponsive to the people, and it's a very political organization, not a government organization, and it is responsible only to the State of New York. So, obviously, it's not wrong for State officials to issue their opinions. I would ask the State, all the State leaders to change the Board of Elections once and for all, to just create an entirely different structure. Either make it a mayoral agency so we can properly administer elections or come up with some other kind of model where it's modern and professional. But what we have now is not working and the State has not acted to change that, and that is why we have the problem year after year. It is the State's responsibility to fix the Board of Elections, period. As to the specific question about the ballots – look, there's more than one way, I'm sure, to solve the problem, but what we need to make sure is that people have the

accurate ballot for their community, for their neighborhood, for the people they should have a choice to vote for, and they know where to send it back and everything makes sense. Whatever will get that done, I want to see it happen quickly, and I'd like to see the maximum communication. If it were a City agency and I controlled it, I would not only say send out new ballots and new clear instructions, I would have follow-up phone calls to make sure people received them and they confirmed they got them, and if they had any questions, we answered them. There should be a very hands-on approach here. I never seen that from the Board of Elections. That's what we need now. Go ahead.

Question: And, Mr. Mayor, are you planning on going out and dining indoors today or any time this week?

Mayor: So, what I'm going to do, for sure, in the coming days is continue, as I have, to enjoy outdoor dining first while the weather's still good. I have had great experiences, starting with Melba's up in Harlem, and I was up at Mario's on Arthur Avenue, which was fantastic – hundred-year-old restaurant. So, my outdoor dining experiences have been amazing. I'm going to keep doing that for the foreseeable future. And then, of course, shift to indoor when the outdoor isn't as prevalent because of the weather. So, important thing – and I'd say to all New Yorkers, if you have the resources, please get out there and support our restaurant industry today, whether it's outdoor or indoor, get out there and support our restaurant industry.

Moderator: Next up is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, everyone. I have a question – an education-related question for you, Mr. Mayor, and the Chancellor. I've heard from parents who say that despite their children having IEP's, that mandate speech and other related services, their schools have told them that they just don't have those teachers. So, I'm curious if you want to speak about how prevalent this is across the city given the fact that this is a vital service – I don't think you'll argue with me on that – and why the DOE is not providing it?

Mayor: I'm glad you raised it. And I'm not only not going to argue with you, Katie, to your great credit, you've raised these issues constantly and I appreciate you being a champion for the families who need this support. They've gone through a lot before the pandemic and it's even been harder for them during the pandemic. So, the Chancellor will have the details, but, I want to affirm, we have to get it right for each and every one of these families, even with all the challenges we are facing. Chancellor?

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Yeah. So, Katie, first and foremost, any family should be communication with their school community, so whether that's a principal or it's a specific coordinator by IEP services, they should be doing that as we speak. If you can share any information specifically about any of those families, we'll make sure that we are in touch with them ASAP. They are part of the highest priority of students that we know have been disproportionately affected due to remote learning. So, we're doing everything we can to make sure that they have the services, and, especially if they've chosen in-person, that they have those in-person services as well. So, again, as the Mayor and I have talked about where we are we starting this massive system, so it's taking a little bit of time to get all the pieces in the right

place. But we want to make sure that the students that need the most support get it as soon as possible.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: And my second question is about mask compliance in neighborhoods, particularly the nine higher ZIP's. How do you guys calculate this? I don't know if there's – there's not the data on it. It seems purely anecdotal when you know, Dr. Katz and others say that they've seen better mask compliance. Is there like a way that you quantify this? Do you count? Do you do like a ticker where you spent a few hours? Could you explain?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to Dr. Katz. It is exactly based on City officials being out and keeping track of what they are seeing and the interactions they have. And, again, today we're going to have almost a thousand City employees out in these target neighborhoods to make sure we are providing that support. Go ahead, Dr. Katz.

President Katz: So, yes, it's people actually watch – they station themselves, two observers at a corner, they watch people go by and the raw numbers do show improvement. I'll give you a minute to plug wearing your mask correctly. So that was – I noticed an interesting thing that the observers not only are get data on, are people wearing masks, but are they wearing it correctly? Which is two different problems. People who are not – who are wearing the mask, but are not wearing it correctly, they're trying, but obviously they don't know the goal is that the mask needs to cover your mouth and nose. And contrary to the belief of some New Yorkers, you actually can talk on a cell phone while wearing your mask. I have talked to the Mayor many times wearing my mask on the cell phone. So, please, now that we've convinced people to wear a mask, it does need to cover your nose, and, yes, you can speak on the telephone while wearing it.

Mayor: I will affirm Dr. Katz's point. I've talked to Dr. Katz many times on the cell phone while wearing a mask. It absolutely can be done and it really needs to be done for everyone's health and wellbeing.

Moderator: Next up is Julia from the New York Post.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good morning, Julia. How are you?

Question: Good. Just following up on Andrew's question. You're going to kind of wait until the weather gets cooler to dine indoors. Are you concerned about the message that signals to other New Yorkers and the help that the industry needs right now, getting back to its feet, if you're not willing to do it?

Mayor: No, I didn't say not willing and I'm not concerned about the message. I'm saying I personally just prefer outdoor dining, and so long as it's available, I would always choose it. I think there's lots of people who are going to love the opportunity to dine indoors and they'll have that opportunity. So, the important thing is that the restaurant industry is coming back, coming

back strong, that folks who have the means – and a lot of people don't right now, but, thank God, many people do – should go out there and support restaurant workers and restaurant owners. And if you prefer outdoors, go outdoors. If you prefer indoors, go indoors. Go ahead.

Question: There's a video of a large gathering on a street in Borough Park last night, without any social distancing and it appears very little mask wearing. Are you and the health officials on the call aware of the incident and was there any enforcement?

Mayor: I am not. I'll turn to my colleagues, but what we will do in any case like that is follow back to who was involved, how can we reach those people? Or, if we expect any recurrence, to make sure we have personnel out to address it in advance. But, doctors, any sense of this?

President Katz: No –

Mayor: Okay. We'll look into that and make sure our team follows up with you with a further detail.

Moderator: Next up we have Jillian from WBAI.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: I'm good, Jillian, but we have a problem with your innovation here. We have a little confusion, a little confusion at the federal level.

Question: I'm digging the question marks. So, I want you to know the first question is being asked, in all due respect, the State just froze pay raises for a third time and you've extended the City's furlough to include managerial and non-represented employees. Going a step further, you have a history of awarding your staff lucrative raises as well as hiring more special assistants. Between 2016 and 2019, three of four years amounted to cumulative raises of more than \$2 million alone. And the number of special assistants has increased by more than a hundred percent since you took office. These raises are usually awarded at the end of the fiscal year, which just ended in June. Given the City's financial situation and the prospect of mass layoffs, can you say with certainty, no raises will be given within the next year and will you be reducing the number of special assistants, many of whom earn more than \$100,00 a year?

Mayor: So, Jillian, let me try and address that, different pieces you're raising there. The State has an entirely different structure than we do in terms of the way they freeze pay raises. They have different labor rules than we have. Those kinds of things in terms of the vast majority of our workers would, of course, have to be done through collective bargaining. In terms of the Mayor's Office, as I announced, I think it was last week or the week before, not only are we doing the five-day furloughs for me and all other appropriate Mayor's Office personnel, but the budget of the Mayor's Office has gone down now 12 percent since the June budget, meaning from last year to this year, down 12 percent, and we're going to continue to find savings. So, what we have done is actually reduced the number of jobs here overall. There's no raises being given that I know of. There's no plan to give raises. There are people who take on new, entirely different

jobs, and that's a different matter when you go into an entirely new job, but no, there's no plan to give raises at all. Go ahead.

Question: Thanks. Thank you. You were asked a rather incomplete question last week about the development and if Democrats were being too anti-development when, in fact, I think most of us, you know, party affiliation tends to be irrelevant in such matters. In your response, you cited three projects the City is still pursuing, but you didn't talk about a very controversial rezoning proposal for the Crown Heights area surrounding the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. While there's much to ask about this project, my main question today has to do with the fact in 1991 – so during your mentor's, David Dinkins, administration, the City conducted an analysis and an EIS, including shadow study, determining the area must have height limits to protect the garden and that more than 12 stories and will be detrimental with shadows cast over it and the City put into place height restrictions. So, what has changed since the Dinkins administration concluded the garden would be at risk by nearby development because the private project, the City and DCP currently support, includes at least a 39-story building to which your own Parks Department objected in December in a 13-page memo?

Mayor: Well, you have done your research. I need to do a little more of my research on what a City Planning is thinking about that specifically. Look, I think it's quite clear that the work that was done almost 30 years ago was for that moment in history. And we're in a very different moment in history where I would have – can tell you having been in this building in 1991, if you told me the City would grow from that time to now a million or more people, and that we would have the kind of huge crushing need for affordable housing that developed over those decades, and the kind of plus the rising cost of living and property values, I would not have believed you in 1991. If you told me that we would get upwards of 8.6 million people and that the cost of renting an apartment would go so high, I just would not have believed you. So, I would say that the assumptions then versus the assumptions now are very different. And the position we've taken all along is where development benefits the larger community in terms of affordable housing and other needs, that's where we're open to it and where it doesn't, we're not. The cases you're talking about that – there's a couple of different issues around the botanical garden. Those are private applications. Those are not City-sponsored, but I will look into the specifics and see what the latest is and have an update for you.

The bigger point I want to make to close this piece out is on the issue of development, we will support pro-community development. This is what I've been saying since long before I was mayor. We will drive a hard bargain with all developers. We're going to demand community benefits, demand maximum affordable housing, demand local hiring. Right now, it can only be done voluntarily. If the legislation we want to pass in Albany passes, it could become a requirement of development. So, for everyone out there who thinks developers are getting away with too much, go help us pass this law in Albany so we can require hiring of local community residents in development, hiring of public housing residents, folks who really need that support. We need the legal tools to do it, and it could happen with a stroke of a pen in Albany in a matter of weeks. So, what I want to see going forward is that the City continues to have a very high bar on what development we will support and what we won't. And when we don't see developers being generous enough and working with communities, we're just going to walk away from that. And when we do see developers working with communities, we're going to embrace it. I was at

One Vanderbilt a couple of weeks ago, an exemplary model because \$220 million of private money went into fixing the subway system around Grand Central Station. That's the kind of development we can embrace, but it's really up to developers to come forward in that spirit of serving the surrounding community, if they want to get the support of the City government.

Moderator: Next up, we have Michael from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Good morning, Michael. How are you?

Question: I'm good. Thanks. So, I wanted to check in on the situation with the layoffs we were talking about a few weeks back. Where is the City on that? I know you've been talking to labor leaders. You know, I think the deadline that was given a few weeks back was October 1st, which is tomorrow. So, where do things stand now with that? Have there been any breakthroughs? I know early retirement was one you've been talking about, borrowing from the State quite a bit. Could you just kind of tell us where things are now and what needs to happen moving forward?

Mayor: Michael, so, we're having very productive conversations with labor. I'm not going to speak about breakthroughs until they break through, but when we get something, of course, we're going to tell you right away, but very productive, very specific and substantive conversations with our labor partners, a lot of help from labor pushing the State Legislature to act on long-term borrowing. And we're seeing that that is having a real impact. So, we continue to focus on that effort. Early retirement, clearly something we want to be part of the package, a lot of details to work through, but we see a lot of good possibility there. So long as there is continued progress, so long as we continue to see movement toward the goal, that's where we're going to put the energy, and it's not about tomorrow or any other day. It's about if we can get this done in a positive way, I've said from day one, I do not want to turn to layoffs if there's a better option. And right now, I think we still have the possibility of a better option. Go ahead.

Question: So, based on that, do you not feel like there's kind of a time parameter fixed to layoffs at this point?

Mayor: Michael, it's a fair question, but let me put in perspective. Everything can be adjusted according to what the real possibilities are. Look, let's start with the stimulus. As I said to all of you, for months, I thought it was essentially a given. I have more recently felt it was essentially not a given until next year. Now in the last, you know, 48, 72 hours suddenly dialogue is happening again in Washington. Who knows? Long-term borrowing, again, we're hearing more and more support for that in Albany. That changes everything. I said that from the very beginning, we've tried to achieve that back in June. There never would have been any layoffs if we had gotten that back in June or any talk of layoffs. But what's important here is so long as there are more productive options available and more positive options available, we're going to pursue them. If at some point it's quite clear that none of these things is happening, no stimulus, no borrowing, no labor savings, nothing, then we will have to move forward layoffs with an adjusted figure. But that's just a hypothetical. We'll – let's see if these, I think very promising

options, play out in our favor for all of us. That would be what's best for the people in New York City and all the people work for this city.

Moderator: For our last question, we'll go to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Question: Hello, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Abu. How are you?

Question: Good. Thank you so much. My question is, there's a report came that the – because last time when, you know, because of the COVID in New York City hospitals have occurred and a second round of surge came [inaudible] how prepared you are to handle the situation?

Mayor: Well, Abu, give me a little more there, when you – help me understand what you mean about how prepared are we. Abu?

Question: Yes, there's a report, which is the, because of the finances, financial situation of New York City hospitals, if second surge came, it will be a big problem because of the financial crisis, city financial crisis. So, are you prepared if anything happened like a second surge, then the city can handle the hospitals?

Mayor: Yes. The answer is, yes. Look, we are in a very different position than most places in this country and even around the world. It's a sad reality and Dr. Varma may want to weigh in because he and I have talked about this many times. Places that have much stronger national health care systems than we do in this country managed to, unfortunately, allow the disease back in the door by making, I think, some of the wrong decisions about what to reopen and how to reopen and when to reopen it. We have been very conservative. So, even though we're dealing with a problem in certain ZIP codes, we also have immense resources we can throw at that problem and help to contain that problem. As you see, right now, again, today's indicators, today's testing number for the whole city, 0.94 percent, our seven-day rolling average, 1.46 percent. There are places all over this country, all over the world that would love to have those numbers. So, this is about containing the problem and not allowing that larger surge.

But if, God forbid, we saw something bigger across the city, we already have put tremendous resources into Health + Hospitals to strengthen them for whatever is ahead, Department of Health, Test and Trace Corps. These will be the spending priority under any scenario if we had to confront those challenges. But Dr. Varma, just jump in on the point that the difference between the approach this City, and to the credit of the State, the State have taken versus what we've seen in other places that unfortunately led to resurgence.

Senior Advisor Varma: Great. Yeah. Thank you very much for the question. I think what's really been critical in New York is first of all an all-of-government approach. You see all of the health agencies, all the agencies that have any intersection with health really working in concert to take this problem seriously. So, that's number one. Number two is you see a commitment to continuously driving disease down. You know, a number of other jurisdictions both in the United States and other parts of the world have essentially said, well, you know, we're just going to have

to live with a fairly high level of virus, there's no other way to get through this. The reality is the fastest way to restart your economy is to control the virus. And what you've seen in New York City, up until fairly recently, was very low levels of virus because of all the interventions that have been taken. And the third, of course, is the combination of that sort of all-of-government approach, a commitment to continuously driving cases down. It's only possible when you have tremendous partnership with the average person on the street, as well as all of the community groups. And I think the tremendous unified messaging that you get from government, from community leaders about the importance of social physical distancing, of wearing masks, of limiting gatherings, all of those combined together, I think they really put us in a position that really rivals many of the large cities that you see in Asia that have also done a tremendous success at this disease.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead, Abu.

Question: Yeah. Second question is, you know, since today, the indoor dining opening and then the [inaudible] and also, they're scared, some communities, the community as well, that what could happen because there is a, some the owners and some people they're reckless. Can you please specify besides the shutdown if someone breaks the rules, shut down the restaurant or any other store – what is the exact, what is the specific, you know, action the City will take if someone breaks the law?

Mayor: I'll start and Dr. Choksi can speak to this as well, obviously because the Health Department plays a crucial role here. Look, the general approach we've taken throughout the crisis, because, unfortunately it is a health care crisis and an economic crisis simultaneously, is we never want to fine people, if we can find a way around it to achieve the same goal without the fine. We never want to shut down a business if we can get the issue resolved without shutting down the business. This is something the City is very sensitive on. I can't speak for the federal government or the State government. I can say the City believes the best outcome is to solve the problem, not take money away from restaurant owners and restaurant workers or shut down a business that may not survive if it's shut down. But that said, with the challenge we're facing now in these key ZIP codes, we have to take a very strong approach. So, there has been lots of education to the restaurant community of what they need to do. We expect a lot of compliance today. I think people are very sensitive to the realities and very willing to comply. If we find noncompliance, we're going to have to be aggressive both terms of fines where appropriate, or even if we had to get to a shutdown, we would go in that direction. But the goal is to avoid that if we can solve the problem and ensure it stays solved. So, that's my preface, Dr. Choksi on the specific approach –

Commissioner Choksi: Absolutely. And as the Mayor has emphasized, when it comes to indoor dining and other aspects of reopening, our focus is absolutely on health and safety. Health and safety for the entire city, but also for the specific setting that we're talking about. And when it comes to indoor dining, you know, I have to say as a doctor who has taken care of many patients who are restaurant workers and cooks and other people who will be spending time in those settings, that is very important for us to think both about the health of people who will be going to restaurants, but also the people who are working in them. And so, the many layers of safety that are part of the inspections and the enforcement that we'll be doing are critical to

safeguard that health. That involves making sure that we focus on the capacity limits, so 25 percent of normal capacity, ensuring that there's adequate distancing between the tables within the restaurant, making sure that there's robust signage so people know exactly what their responsibilities are when they're there, a cleaning log for every restaurant as well, as well as symptom screening, both for workers and temperature checks for people who are going to dining establishments. So, all of these things taken together will help us reduce the risk for indoor dining.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner. And, everyone, as we close, look, here's the bottom line. I like to be repetitive when it's a good and important message. Please get tested today. That is the message. Wherever you are, whoever you are, wherever you live, please get tested. This is how we beat back the disease previously. Remember we were the epicenter and we fought back, and testing was crucial. We have a problem now, we're going to overcome the problem. I have no doubt we will beat it back, but we need everyone to go out there and get tested. I'll tell you something, it's a simple way to think about it, more testing equals more truth. We get the real picture of what's happening, and it helps us address it. So, again, a thank you to all the community leaders in these ZIP codes, in these communities that are dealing with this challenge, thank you to all the leaders who are stepping up and sending a message that tells people how to stay safe, how to protect their families, how to protect our community. Wear those masks, practice that distancing, get tested. And that's how we will come back and beat this back once again. I have no doubt about this city's ability to overcome because we have shown it time and time again. Thank you, everybody.

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