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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 24, 2020, 4:15 PM

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVER REMARKS AT THE VIRTUAL U.S.
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS METRO ECONOMIES COMMITTEE MEETING**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much, Mayor Williams. I really appreciate it. And thank you for your leadership. And I want to say a special thank you to Mayor Barnett. We appreciate you. You saw us through a really, really tough time in our history. And I'm only going to say nice things about you this time, Bryan. I'm going to be a class act, okay? But, no, seriously, I've enjoyed – I think we've all enjoyed Bryan's leadership and his wit and his energy – and thank you, brother.

Mayor Bryan Barnett: Thank you, Bill.

Mayor: Everybody, look, I don't think even in our worst nightmares we could have imagined, all of us, going through all of this. I feel like we've been to hell and back. And on just health care alone or just people losing their jobs or just racial disparity or just financial crisis – I mean I can't even imagine how all of this stuff got layered on top of each other in the space of 100 days. But that's what we've been through. And so, to everyone, just appreciation to all of you for being, sort of – the folks in this moment, in this time, we didn't know our generation was going to be called to this but we were. And I think mayors around the country and everyone here held the line and showed tremendous strength under extraordinary circumstances. So, a real thank you to all my colleagues. And just the sheer magnitude, I mean, we, obviously – I'm very sad to say my city was the epicenter of the COVID crisis for a long time. There was a point in March where we didn't have anywhere near enough testing nor did anyone else here in this conference but testing we were doing was coming back 70 percent – 70 percent positive for COVID. Lately we're doing a huge amount of testing all across our city, it's coming back two percent positive. So, you know, we've been through every possible up and down here but thank God now we're experiencing something that's finally stabilizing and we're able to move forward.

And what we have found, you know, through a lot of trial and error, to say the least – but we realized the federal government was not coming, the cavalry was not coming on testing. We found lots of ways to expand testing ourselves. That's helped immensely. Been really struck by how much people take reassurance from the antibody testing, so we're leaning in there more. Heavy, heavy emphasis on moving testing to the grassroots, community clinics, houses of worship, wherever it is easy for people. We've teamed up with urgent care centers, nonprofits and private centers. It's been very productive. That has helped immensely. The face coverings have been a big x-factor too. At first, we were not sure it could make an impact now they appear to be making a very big impact. We ended up doing free face coverings everywhere we possibly

could – in our mass transit, our parks. We’ve been giving them to small businesses as they open so it’s one less thing for them to have to hassle with. That’s really helped.

We’re finding now as we’ve gone through the first two phases of reopening, people are starting to gain confidence. It’s kind of – given the magnitude of what happened here – it’s slow and steady but it is picking up. We’re seeing more and more people coming back to mass transit because real stringent standards were put in place – not to crowd our trains, our buses, a lot of cleaning, constant cleaning. We’re doing outdoor dining. We’re still not to the point where we can allow indoor dining at all but we’ve been really aggressive about allowing outdoor dining. That started this week. It’s been a huge success already. And we just said, whatever the rules were in the past, we’re waiving all the rules. All you have to do is tell us you want to do it and you’re in, you can use the sidewalks or part of the sidewalks around your restaurants, you can take up the curb and put tables there and put up dividers to keep you separated from the traffic. People have really, really gotten into that. It’s been really impressive. We’ve made it really simple.

And then the other thing we’ve focused on is a heavy, heavy test-and-trace approach in addition to a lot of free testing in a lot of places. We’ve hired a whole slew, thousands of – for the size of our place, over eight million people – thousands of tracers who are trying to make it real simple. If someone tests positive or someone is symptomatic, it’s really easy to engage with the help they need. If they need to stay home, they need help getting food, medicine, whatever support, talking to a doctor – we’re making that available. If they need to go to a hotel and separate from their family because there are a lot of people under one roof, we’re making that available. And more and more that’s picking up steam so that heavy engagement – we saw this in some other parts of the world – the heavy engagement, sort of hands on, user friendly, everything will be there to support people, is helping more and more people connect with the test-and-trace effort. We’re now in touch with thousands and thousands of people, and we’re finding we do believe it’s helping them stay isolated and not spread the disease. So, that’s looking pretty good, a long way to go.

But the other thing I’ll say is we all, as was talked about in the resolutions, we all are dealing with these multiple crises. We’re dealing with the huge disparity crisis. We’re all looking down the barrel of structural and institutional racism and how to fix it. And one of the things we did here, we started a City commission based on what was done in South Africa years ago – a truth and reconciliation commission. We started here a racial justice reconciliation commission not to talk but to actually identify what structural racism looks like and tear it down and change our institutions, change our programs, change our funding, redistribute funding to folks who have not gotten their fair share. We’re going to try and do that very, very aggressively. We all know – for all of us who do what we want to do, we have to keep fighting for that federal stimulus and that has been on-again, off-again. I know I’m preaching to the converted but there were times a few weeks ago I thought it was a given and we were [inaudible] do pretty well, but now I don’t have a clue if, how, when it’s going to happen.

I talked to Senator Schumer a few days back and it’s really grey when and how we’re going to get that stimulus. So, I do think we’re going to have to really ban together, Democrats and Republicans, and fight for it again. Because if we’re going to do the health care work, the

economic reopening, and the work of addressing racial injustice, we're going to need that stimulus money and just to get back on our feet. The last thing I'll say just to give you the magnitude of what we're facing here – and again, we were the epicenter. Everyone saw how bad it got here. We're now – on top of all those other crises, I have a budget due on Tuesday. I know a lot of you, I think, have the same kind of fiscal year. A lot of our colleagues do. June 30th. We are a billion dollars short right now, trying to figure out with our labor unions some kind of plan to address it, trying to see if our state can do something, but we're not getting very far with them. I had to announce today that if we cannot get support from somewhere, from our state, borrowing power, or a federal stimulus, or something, we unfortunately are looking at a huge number of layoffs and it's a staggering number given, you know, what most governments have. We're talking about by the fall having to lay off 22,000 City workers. And it's a stunning, painful, horrible number and in the middle of a time where we have over a million people unemployed in this city – since February, a million new unemployed – imagine having to do even more. But we are talking about 22,000 people could be laid off by the fall, every single City agency. I hate it. I know all of you who have to consider layoffs and furloughs hate it, but we're talking about cutting back City services when we need them the most, hurting our recovery. But we are just out of money.

So, I'm hoping and praying we can fight that back working with labor, and fight with all of you and get that stimulus, but I know we're all feeling it. One crisis just feeds the next and I think, you know – I'll finish by saying, the best thing we have is each other and I – this is my seventh year as a mayor and the solidarity of mayors, I know Tom Cochran knows what I'm talking about, the solidarity between mayors and mayors having each other's backs, supporting each other, fighting in Washington together, it's one of the only things that's kept me sane. So, I want to thank all of you for that but we're going to have to – if we're going to avert, in our city and so many others, cutbacks and something that would stop our recovery, we're going to have to go to Washington harder than ever to get that stimulus. That's my update. Thank you very much, Mayor, for the chance to offer a few words.

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