

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 1, 2020, 1:00 PM
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO PARTICIPATES IN TELE-TOWN HALL TO
DISCUSS THE CITY'S COVID-19 RESPONSE WITH AARP MEMBERS**

Beth Finkel: Hello. I'm Beth Finkel from AARP New York. Thank you for joining us here today with our very special guests, Mayor Bill de Blasio for a very important discussion about the coronavirus. This information is also being offered in Spanish.

[Translator speaks in Spanish]

And if you would like to ask a question on today's call, you can press star-three on your telephone keypad. We'll have an AARP staff member note your name and your question and place you in the queue. That is star-three.

AARP, a nonprofit, nonpartisan member organization has been working to promote the health and wellbeing of older Americans for more than 60 years. In the face of the global coronavirus pandemic, AARP is providing information and resources to help older adults and those caring for them, protect themselves from the virus, and prevent its spread to others. Today we have a very special guest, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. New York has been the global epicenter of the coronavirus and we are so very grateful to have the Mayor in place taking care of us here, and here now to discuss the city's response to this global pandemic. This is an interactive event. And after our brief opening statements, we will be taking your questions live on this call. So, this is your chance to hear from and ask questions of Mayor de Blasio and get the latest information about the coronavirus. I'd suggest keeping a pen and paper handy as we'll be sharing some phone numbers and resources with you. And remember, if you would like to ask a question at any time, just simply press star-three on your telephone keypad to be connected to an AARP staff member who will note your name and question and place you in the queue. The sooner you press star-three, the sooner you will be online with our guest.

[Translator speaks in Spanish]

And now let's go to our guest Mayor Bill de Blasio. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor, for taking the time out of your busy schedule to connect with our members. The floor is yours.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thanks so much. Thank you, Beth – and Beth, listen, I want to just thank you personally to begin. You and I have fought shoulder to shoulder for seniors many a time. Really, really appreciate your leadership and we need it now, especially – AARP across the board, one of the strongest voices in our society – and ARP right now is standing up for seniors. And the needs of seniors are distinct and sharp in this crisis. I'm going to speak about that briefly but really, really appreciate all you and your colleagues are doing. Everyone, thank you for joining us today. I'm only going to speak for a couple of minutes and I want to get to hearing questions and we want to make sure we're offering you really helpful information and hear, you know, what's on your mind, what you need right now. On the line, as well, our Health Commissioner, Dr. Oxiris Barbot, our Food Czar, Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, and our Commissioner for the Aging, Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez.

All of them are doing such important work at this moment fighting back this disease and helping seniors, helping all New Yorkers. So, they'll be available to join me in the question-and-answers. I'm appreciative to all of them. So, look to everyone, I don't think I have to tell you that this crisis is hurting everyone, but it is taking a special toll on seniors in every way. We have lost so many people, so many families are in pain right now. But the other reality is that this virus has caused isolation in a way that's just unprecedented. I mean, we've never been through anything like this. I think we are the city in this country that is – has the kind of warmest, closest culture and relationships and people are used to being together and being close together. Our families, we're used to seeing and being close to our families. And that disconnect has been very painful. The weeks where people just can't even be in each other's presence has been very, very painful for everyone, but particularly for seniors. And we see a growing crisis on the basics of life, like food, where more and more seniors, disconnected from the normal support networks, need food and need food delivered. And that's been a real priority.

So, you know, I'm going to talk about a few things that I think are really on everyone's mind. I'll just touch upon each and we can talk more about it in this call. And I know AARP will continually get information out to you on all these fronts, but first of all, the way we fight back against this disease, you know, testing, testing, testing, that's the number one tool. I want to be very clear to everyone. All the testing we are setting up around New York city is starting to grow more and more. Seniors do have priority status for that testing. That testing is obviously free. We are particularly concerned about anyone with those major pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, auto-immune diseases. Those are the areas – respiratory diseases – that we are really, really concerned about. So, there's more and more testing sites being opened. You can call 3-1-1 to get a location near you. They are walk-in sites. Anyone can show up and get those tests. And that'll be growing more and more. We're going to go in with a heavy, heavy new outreach effort with testing all over the city over the next weeks and that's going to be a priority. And that the more people we test, the more people we find out who has the disease, who doesn't, and then who might need to be given a quarantine and all the support to go with it. And we even have hotel rooms that we're making available for people that need to be quarantined away from other family members for everyone's safety.

Second item is food, of course, as I mentioned, we're on track for the month we just entered, the month of May, to provide 15 million free meals for New Yorkers, a lot of whom are seniors. We want to make sure that there's many, many places that people can turn for free food who need it.

And that's a lot more people obviously now. For any senior who needs food delivered – they can't get out, they can't get to a source of food – all you have to do is call 3-1-1 or go online, nyc.gov/getfood, and that food will be provided on a regular basis for free. So, this is a profound commitment the City's making because we know how many people are struggling right now. We know a lot of people have lost what little income they had. Families that often would take care of – you know, a single breadwinner would take care of a whole extended family, can't do that in many cases now. So, the City is stepping up with free food on whatever scale we need to reach our people.

And then third, as I mentioned, just the sense of isolation that people are feeling. We're doing a very active effort to do wellness calls to seniors who need support, who may not have people in their life who are checking in on them or nearby. And almost a half a million of those wellness calls have been done already. We're going to build that further. I emphasize that anyone – and it's normal – everything you're going through, everything everyone's going through, sometimes you feel anxious, you feel depressed or lonely and it starting to gnaw at you. There's nothing wrong with that. It's human. It's normal in this crisis. Anyone that – you, yourself, or anyone you know who needs support, who needs to talk to a trained counselor, can do that also for free at 8-8-8-NYC-WELL. Again 8-8-8-NYC-WELL. That's a free service the City provides, multiple languages, 24/7 for free.

And then I'll just finish up by saying, you know, we are going to be working to fight back this disease intensely in May. It will take some time. We're trying to be very cautious about how we restart, make sure the focus is on safety and health. I am very worried when I see some other states that are, I think, trying to restart too quickly and without a lot of evidence backing up why they're opening up so quickly. We're seeing some images from other states of people gathering together in large numbers. I'm very fearful of what's going to happen. We're not going to let that happen here. We're going to be very careful, cautious, so that as we start to open up at the right time, we can keep everybody safe and really make sure this disease does not reassert. And I'll just finish, Beth, one last point and say, you know, the truth is New Yorkers have been tried and tested before. We saw the amazing, just amazingly powerful coming together of this city after 9/11, the way people supported each other. We saw it when we were dealing with all the ravages of the Great Recession. We saw it after Sandy hit. And just the way neighbors helped each other out. So many people looked out for the seniors in their lives, in their neighborhood, in their apartment building, you name it. This is a very tough city and a very compassionate city. So, we're going to get through, there's no question we are going to get through. This crisis will be over, maybe not as quick as we want, but it will be over. And I have real faith the city's going to come back strong. But the way we get there is to have each other's back in the meantime. And the City certainly will have the backs of seniors throughout this whole crisis and onward to the day where we can start to get back to normal. So, thank you Beth, and over to you.

Finkel: Thank you, Mayor, and we've heard you loud and clear, and we thank you so much for looking out for older New Yorkers. So, if you're just joining us now, I'm Beth Finkel with AARP New York and I want to welcome you to this important discussion about the coronavirus in New York City. AARP is convening this tele-town hall to supply information about the coronavirus to help keep you and your family healthy and safe. And while we see an important role for AARP in providing information and advocacy related to the virus, you should be aware that the best

source of health and medical information is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC, and you can learn more at cdc.gov/coronavirus. We will also have information on our website. You could visit aarp.org/coronavirus. Again, that web address is aarp.org/coronavirus. And we're talking with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner of the City's Department of Sanitation – and more importantly today she is the Food Czar for COVID-19 here in New York. Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of the City Department for the Aging, and longtime friend of AARP, and Dr. Oxiris Barbot, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. And we're also going to be taking your questions live. If you've been on these tele-town halls before you know this is like a radio call-in show. So, the sooner that you press star-three at any time on your telephone keypad, you will be connected with an AARP staff person to share your questions.

[Translator speaks in Spanish]

So, we're going to open this up for questions right now to both the Mayor and the Commissioners – and Kristen, what part of the state – of New York City are we going to hit first for a question, please?

Moderator: We're going to go to Raymond in Bellerose. Go ahead, Raymond.

Question: Good morning. Good afternoon. I should say. I would like to know my daughter's, you know, a nurse and she's been dealing with the COVID patients in the hospital. I'd like to get tested. I'm a senior, I [inaudible] get tested for either antibodies or whether I've had it, you know, I don't know. That's what I'd like to find out where I can find – get tested.

Mayor: Yeah. Raymond, thank you very much for the question. So, we're building out testing all over the city now. You can call 3-1-1 and get the nearest testing site to you. Obviously if you're a senior and you might be in a particular situation, might've been exposed, that's a particularly high priority to get you tested. So, this one – this kind of testing is the coronavirus test to tell you if you have it currently, the antibody testing is starting to become more widespread. Dr. Barbot can say where that is available. And I know we always say when we talk about antibody testing, it's far from perfect – very, very clear that it doesn't tell you everything and it doesn't even tell you if it's impossible to get the disease again. So, the antibody testing should be seen as it tells you if you've been exposed. But it does not tell you if you're a hundred percent in the clear and you still have to take all precautions.

But the other testing, the coronavirus testing which is called PCR testing, does tell you accurately if you have it right now. That is being provided for free all over the city – not everywhere, but a lot of places and you can call 3-1-1 and get those locations. Dr. Barbot, do you want to add? Again, knowing the limitations of antibody testing for those who want to pursue it where it is available now.

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: So yes, Mr. Mayor, today, there are new companies and new medical providers that are offering the antibody testing. As you say, it's important for people to understand what it does, what antibodies tell us and what they don't tell us. I think the most important thing to remember is that even with an

antibiotic test, we still want all New Yorkers to remain indoors as much as possible and to continue using face coverage for when they do have to go outside. I know that H + H is starting to do some preliminary tests and there may be some urgent centers that are also doing these. My recommendation would be for you to call your medical provider and have him or her direct you to the laboratory that they are partnering with in order to have the test done.

Finkel: Thank you. Okay, Kristen, we're going to hit another borough –

Moderator: Yeah, we're going to go to Manhattan and speak with David. Go ahead, David.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor. Good afternoon and, AARP, thank you for taking my call.

Finkel: And your question please, David.

Question: My question is I just turned 65 and I didn't realize that I'm still so young at heart, but yet at the age of 65, all of a sudden, it's a game changer. And I am in a situation right now, my wife and I financially, where we have pretty much burned through all of our money, annuities, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And the question is very simple. I have been trying to apply for SNAP benefits for food, close to a month ago, and I have sent in all the documentation. I have gone online, I have made all the phone calls, I realized that many offices aren't open because of the COVID-19. I understand that and I respect it, but yet I am just looking for a simple phone call – anywhere, anybody can tell me you're approved, you're not approved, do this, do that, this document that's missing or whatever. There is no sign of life on the other end. Thank you.

Mayor: David. And thank you for telling me your experience. I don't like what I'm hearing at all. I'm very sorry that you've gone through this because yeah, we understand there's been disruption and offices have been closed and all that, but I have been assured many times that the effort for, you know, making sure that people who need to apply for SNAP is still moving and ongoing and working and it doesn't sound like it's working for you and that means it's not good enough. So, let's fix that today. Our Food Czar, and in fact, we have a Food Czar for exactly this kind of thing to make sure that anything that's not working well enough in the system is being fixed because people need food. They can't go without food in this crisis. Beth, I don't know if there's a way to get information on an individual caller so we can make sure to address a specific problem like this. If there is, please get David's information and let's make sure Kathryn and her team deal with it. But Kathryn, can you speak to the bigger situation of people who qualify for food stamps, for SNAP, and need to still get them in the middle of this coronavirus, how they can go about doing that?

Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, Department of Sanitation: Right. No, I'm surprised to hear that because my understanding was that the process was working in terms of the online and the phone calls. And I will follow up right away. But if this is a challenge and you are feeling food insecure today, please go to either 3-1-1 or to nyc.gov/getfood and we will deliver food to you. And that will continue for up to a month if you sign up for up to a month. But we want to make sure that you are not going hungry, but I will follow up on the SNAP benefits piece.

Mayor: Yeah. And to follow – just one more point to what Kathryn said, people can sign up for those food deliveries. If you need those food deliveries, again, 3-1-1 or nyc.gov/getfood. Now again, this is for folks who don't have the income to pay for the food themselves. Can't get out to the grocery store. Anyone who just is stuck and doesn't have another source of food, we're going to deliver it right to your door. So you can sign up for a month at a time and then if you need it after that, as long as this crisis is going on, we'll keep adding more. So anyone who needs that, please reach out and let people in your life know if they need that help, it's there for them. The City will provide that for every New Yorker. We're not going to let any New Yorker go hungry.

Finkel: Do you want to repeat that website that you said? And I know you said 3-1-1?

Mayor: 3-1-1 or www.nyc.gov/getfood.

Finkel: Thank you, Mayor. Okay, we're going to go to another question. Kristin who do we have next in the queue?

Moderator: We have Marcia calling from the Upper West Side.

Question: Hello. Thank you to AARP for doing this. And Mr. Mayor, I want to say that I pay attention to what people do and when I see what you do, I think you are a national hero in how you're responding and the scale at which you're responding. So thank you for everything you're doing. It's quiet mind blowing. My question is that I am not able to go out at all, but I have friends who have gone out and have bought N95 masks and other PPE at local drug stores. And they've been astonished to find them there. And at the same time they've taken advantage of the opportunity, which I understand. My question is can't the City assure that everything that is sitting in retail locations is that they know – that the City knows about it and make sure that it gets to the high priority users perhaps by buying it themselves and redistributing it? But by any method. And I will also say that I've heard from a friend who's a doctor that a lot of supplies that are needed are sitting in the offices of doctors who have closed their practices temporarily. So I want to know if the City is doing anything to get those materials to the proper, to the high priority needs?

Mayor: Those are really, really great questions Marcia. First of all, thank you for your very kind comment. And I got to say, everyone here at City Hall and all our agencies, we are trying with everything we got to figure out how to address this crisis and do things that we never could have imagined. Just like we talked about the food initiative a moment ago, everything has to be done on a vast scale. And you know, thank you so much for the encouragement. It really, really helps. To your two questions. The first one about the retail locations, I think it was a very good point. No, it makes no sense in a world where we need every N95 masks for health care workers and first responders. If they're out there in any kind of number in a retail location, we absolutely need to get our hands on them. I'm going to ask our team to follow up on that and identify if there are those locations that have quantities of them, we should just go in and buy them directly. And I want to take the occasion to say some places, and I'm not saying it is most stores, some stores are engaging in price gouging right now. And that's illegal in this crisis. So if anyone has experience that you see the kind of emergency items, hand sanitizer, masks, things like that, when the price has been jacked up, please call 3-1-1 and report it. We're giving out very intense fines to any

store that price gouges in the middle of this. Which is really unconscionable. But it's a great point about reviewing to see if there's places in the retail world where we could get back more of those masks and help our heroes.

And the second thing about the doctor's offices, that makes a lot of sense. So what the State did, which I think was really good a few weeks back, they put out a State emergency rule that said that any doctor's office, private doctor's office and other kinds of locations as well. A dentist's office, all sorts of places that might have those personal protective equipment items, that they needed to make them available for the hospitals. And, of course, they would be replaced at the appropriate time. And the law, the rule that was put forward is very, very clear. If anybody does not agree to provide what they have, then they can be commandeered. In fact, the NYPD has been participating in that effort. So, I'm going to check to see if there are still doctor's offices, dentist's offices, et cetera, that have not been willing to come forward and be helpful. My hope is most have, but we will follow up on that for sure to make sure if there's any out there that hasn't been approached, that they are. And I appreciate, again, both of these are excellent questions. Thank you.

Finkel: Thank you so much. Okay. Who is next in our queue?

Moderator: We're going over to the Bronx and talking with Donna.

Finkel: Hi Donna.

Mayor: Donna, go ahead.

Question: My question was I'm privileged to have some family that's able to assist me, but what happens to our population which don't have any family or technology and are in need of services such as food and things of that nature, medicine?

Mayor: So I'm going to start and then have our Commissioner for the Aging Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez jump in. Donna, there's a lot we can help with here at the City. Again, with food, it's as easy as picking up the phone, calling 3-1-1. If you are able to get out, there's locations around the community where we're providing food for free. If you're not able to get out, we'll have food delivered directly to you. And in terms of helping with health care needs, obviously our public hospital system will serve everyone regardless of ability to pay. Now getting medicine to a home is a particularly challenging situation. Then maybe Lorraine and Oxiris will have thoughts on that. I think that's an important question you're asking Donna, if someone needed, for example, prescription medicine and couldn't get it themselves. But I want to emphasize Donna, that for many things, the call the 3-1-1 is the way to get help. And you know, we're trying to think about a lot of different things that seniors need. As I mentioned, even things like wellness checks or if someone just needs a place to talk to, a trained counselor. That's 8-8-8- NYC-WELL. That's entirely free and always available. So, there's a lot we can do to help people. But Lorraine and Oxiris if you could speak to, Lorraine the broader point of how we help seniors that don't have anyone else to help them? And, specifically, on medicines?

Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Department for the Aging: Absolutely Mr. Mayor. Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you, Donna. Donna, I'm going to give you a phone number for everyone to use, which is 1-2-1-2-AGING-NYC. If you call that number and you will get all of the -- anyone can call that number to get information on all of the services being offered during this period at the Department for the Aging and through some of our local service providers. Included in that it's all local service providers thanks to our Food Czar, have now become trusted, authorized enrollers for both food as well as access to companies who will help with prescription drugs and give you access to that. So that I again ask you to either call 3-1-1 to get access to those entrusted enrollers or I'm going to ask you to call 2-1-1-AGING-NYC who can really introduce you to all of the services that are available, particularly for those individuals who find themselves alone and without families. There are a variety of nonprofits in our local networks who are there providing services and also reaching out and also providing caregiver services. So I ask you to reach out. We are here to support you during this time and after this pandemic.

Commissioner Barbot: Thank you, Lorraine. And I'll just add that from the Health Department side, we are working with community medical providers as well as local nonprofits to help provide technical assistance in doing outreach to individuals, especially seniors who are known to have chronic illnesses just to do proactive calls to make sure that they are up to date with their medications. And so we're doing that in partnership with various community based organizations.

Finkel: Thank you. Okay, so if you didn't hear that number it was 2-1-1-AGING-NYC, correct? Lorraine, did I get that? That's an important number for everyone to know.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Yes.

Finkel: Right. Okay. Now we're going to turn the tables for a moment and see if we can survey those of you on the phone because we would like to know exactly what is most -- what you consider your greatest need for information right now? And you'll be able to vote right on your telephone keypad. So, you've got four options. Again, the question is what is your greatest need for information about coronavirus right now? So press one on your telephone keypad if you want to hear about preparation and prevention. Press two on your telephone keypad if you want to hear about Medicare and insurance coverage. Press three on your telephone keypad if you want to hear about local resources. And finally press four on your telephone keypad if you want to hear about supporting loved ones, including your family and friends. So one more time. What is your greatest need for information right now? Press one for preparation and prevention. Press two for Medicare and insurance coverage. Press three for local resources. And press four for support of loved ones. Okay, we're going to go back and take some questions. And if you'd like more information about the coronavirus from AARP you can also visit aarp.org/coronavirus. And I think we're going to go back to questions in the queue. So Kristen, who is our next question in the queue and what borough are they from?

Moderator: We have Veronica joining us from Brooklyn. Go ahead, Veronica.

Finkel: Hello, Veronica. Alright, I don't hear Veronica, so I'm going to ask her question if that's okay. And she's asking, are seniors that receive social security -- whoops, lost the question. I think we're going to have to go to another question. Maybe we go to Michael?

Moderator: Yep. Michael in Manhattan. Go ahead, Michael.

Question: Yeah, good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity. My question is regarding to rent. We hear all these different statements about people with difficulties paying rent, but I have yet to hear what the decision is from the City or from the State.

Mayor: Michael, great question. And I'll give you a couple of things that we do know and some other things we don't know yet. So, first of all, look, there's two kinds of people right now in New York City. There are people who still have the ability to pay the rent because they still have an income and there's people who don't. And there's no judgment when I say that or no negativity, there are just so many people who have lost the ability to pay for the basics in life because to begin with, you know, hundreds of thousands of people are unemployed as a result of this crisis. And paying their own rent is a problem. Or maybe if they're helping a loved one. So every, you know, there's so much disruption right now. So here's what we do know. We do know there is a ban on evictions and obviously if someone just cannot pay the rent, doesn't have a way to pay they can at least know that they're not going to be evicted. That it's not legal for evictions to proceed during this crisis. If anyone has a landlord who's attempting to evict them or even attempting to temporarily remove them for any reason, including if they're claiming someone's sick and needs to leave the building. That is not the landlord's choice. That's something for doctors to decide. Anybody with that kind of problem, call 3-1-1 and you can talk to our tenant protection specialist. And if it is a situation where you require legal help, we can get you legal help for free. So that is one thing we do know. No evictions and definite help available if anyone attempts, if any landlord attempts an eviction or removal.

The second thing we know is that I've called upon our Rent Guidelines Board, which covers over two million New Yorkers. So, anyone in rent stabilized housing. I've called upon the Rent Guidelines Board to initiate a rent freeze for leases going forward starting in this fall. They're going to vote soon on that and it's for all leases that go from October 1st on. And they have to take that vote, but I'm pushing them very intensely to get to a rent freeze. We've done a rent freeze twice previously in my administration. When the facts warranted it. And I think the facts warrant it very, very intensely right now given how much pain people are going through economically and humanly. So, I'm very hopeful we'll get that rent freeze in place soon. Then, what we don't know – what the state of New York is going to do. Now, I'll make a parallel, Michael, the State of New Jersey did something very important. I called from New York to do it, they haven't done it yet, but New Jersey went ahead and did it. They passed a rule that said any tenant who could not pay the rent could use their security deposit to pay the rent, and it had to be released to make that possible. I'm hoping New York State will do that. I think AARP – if AARP agrees with that position, your extraordinary influence in Albany could help us a lot to get that done. Then there's other ideas, Michael, including allowing people a payment plan of up to a year if they cannot pay the rent, which I think also makes sense and also extending that eviction moratorium not only to the end of the crisis, but two months beyond just to protect people so there's time to get back on your feet. So that's the state of play – not perfect by any stretch, but

definitely there's different ways that people can be helped. And if you have a specific situation where you cannot pay the rent and those other options are not available to you, you can also call 3-1-1 and see if you qualify for emergency assistance. For certain individuals, depending on income level and all, we might be able to get you some immediate assistance with the rent. So, that's another option if you're in that situation, call 3-1-1 and they can assess if that's something available to you.

Finkel: Great. Thank you. I'm going to take a question that we got from our web questions. And question is, Mayor, who is eligible to receive the stimulus checks and do seniors qualify even if they did not fill out a tax return this year?

Mayor: Seniors definitely qualify. And Lorraine, do you want to take this one or do you want me to do it? I don't know if Lorraine can hear me. Okay, I'm going to do my best then.

Commissioner Cortes-Vazquez: I'm sorry, I was on mute. I can start and, sir, you can –

Mayor: Go ahead.

Commissioner Cortes-Vazquez: Anyone who receives social security and that has a file – income tax return online should get a stimulus check. And for those who have done it, not through direct deposit, not by direct deposit, you will be receiving a check in the mail. It is – it will take a few weeks for those who are not on a direct deposit – it will take much longer for those who are not. But there is also a website so that you can see the status of your – the status of your check. And I will give you that website in two seconds. Mr. Mayor, is there anything that you want to add to that?

Mayor: Well, I want to make sure, because I like to always be honest about where I think I have all the information where I don't. Lorraine, if we could clarify sharply that if you get a social security retirement income or any kind of social security benefit, you qualify, and just to be clear, regardless of whether you have filed a tax reform return, is that right?

Commissioner Cortes-Vazquez: Yes.

Mayor: Okay. So, anyone who's filed taxes or anyone who receives social security benefits should get that stimulus check.

Commissioner Cortes-Vazquez: That that is correct. And if you want to know that status, because you did not file or do not, do not have direct deposit, you can go to irs.gov/EIP to check the status of your payments. Let me repeat that – irs.gov/EIP.

Mayor: Excellent. Appreciate it.

Finkel: Okay. And now, I'm going to get the results of that poll question I asked, because it's very interesting. We've got to tie. It was tied between one, which was people want information about preparation and prevention, and it tied with people want local resources, which, again, underscores why it's so wonderful that, Mr. Mayor, and you and the commissioners are on the

phone with us here today and answering questions on the call. And so, I think we're ready to take another call-in question. Kristen?

Moderator: We have Elizabeth calling from Far Rockaway.

Question: Hello?

Finkel: Hi, Elizabeth. What's your question, please?

Question: Yeah. So, the problem that I'm having is with the store that's in Nassau County, but it's the closest supermarket to me and they're not social distancing at all. In order to get into the store, you have to walk by a line for customer service, and there's no enforcement of social distancing. And so, there's no way of coming into the store with that without being near this line of people who are right one on top of the other. And if you've walked straight ahead to walk in – you have to walk into the produce department, but there are bins that are blocking your entry. So, there's people who weren't socially distancing by those bins. So, in order to get into the store, there's no way to stay six feet away from people. So, people are right on top of each other. In addition to that, in that store, many of the associates are not wearing masks, so they're pulling them up and pushing them down and pulling them up and pushing them down. And they're not wearing ID tags, so you can't even identify who they are. Now, this is not New York City. I tried to call Nassau County, or I tried to call the Governor, and I couldn't get through to Nassau County or to the Governor. But the whole thing is, if the Governor is trying to keep the numbers down and they're breaking all the rules of social distancing and wearing of masks in this store, they're endangering everybody. So, who do I go to report this store? And the thing is, the people are wearing masks around their neck. So, if anybody who comes in who looks official, like if there's a policeman wearing a uniform, say immediately pull the mask back up, but they're not wearing ID –

Mayor: So, Elizabeth, what is the name of the store?

Question: [Inaudible] Avenue in Inwood.

Mayor: Say it one more time?

Question: Stop and Shop.

Mayor: Okay, in Inwood?

Question: In Inwood, on Burnside Avenue. And like I said, they observe the walking to check out and they're very careful about that. But there's a line right by the entrance for customer service. And I couldn't figure out why there were 20 people in line, and then I realized they're selling lottery tickets. So, there's no social distancing happening there. And in order to get into the store, you have to walk past that line. And then that's to the right as you walk in. And then if you want to walk forward, you can't go to the right to get away from the produce aisle where there's a bunch of people [inaudible] together, one foot away from each other, there's no way of getting into the store.

Mayor: Okay, really appreciate that you're making, you know, this report. We need to know things like this. So, Elizabeth, I'm going to reach out to the Nassau County executive, Laura Kern, who I just spoke with a couple of days ago. I'll let her know about this directly so the Nassau County authorities can follow up. And that's exactly the thing we have to address, because we cannot have people in a situation where they're they could be endangered by the lack of social distancing. So, I'm very glad you report it. People are supposed to wear face coverings in stores. What I said, certainly in terms of New York City, is that we're not going to tolerate people going into a supermarket without a face covering and the store owners and managers have a right to throw anyone out of the store if they're not wearing a face covering. So, we have to make sure that people get that message. But I will make sure the Nassau County folks know it for sure.

Finkel: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And let's go to another question please. Kristen?

Moderator: Sure, we have Helen calling in from Manhattan.

Question: Good afternoon. I can say that I'm really kind of confused because when I grew up – and that had been that long ago – the fresh air and sunshine were necessary to keep us healthy. Now, we're being told to recycle the air in our apartments [inaudible] instead of enjoying the outdoors so that we can actually be, you know, healthier. And it just is confusing to me, because that's always been – medical understanding that the sunlight really helps you and, you know, having fresh air to breathe is good for you. I mean, I lived through chicken pox and small pox and measles and red measles and mumps and German measles and all of that stuff. You know, so I don't understand the necessity to keep people imprisoned in their homes for such a long time.

Finkel: Thank you for your question, Helen. Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Yeah, listen, Helen, it's a very fair question that I'm going to start, but I want Dr. Barbot to weigh in here, obviously. Look, Helen, I think it is – there does appear to be in an illogic when you think about it because we've all throughout our lives wanted people to be able to go out and get exercise and get fresh air and all that good stuff. The problem here is that, you know, when people go out, they gather, and when people gather they're spreading the disease. And human beings, I mean, we can hardly help ourselves, we're social beings. So, if we tend to be around other people, we start to do the things we normally do and get too close together and all that. So the idea here, and I think it's been proven pretty strongly around the world, is if you tell people, you know, stay in to the maximum extent possible, then that keeps people just around their loved ones who they're already connected to, not in touch with people from outside their family. And that specifically reduces the spread of the disease and that is part of how you beat it back and save lives. So, it does not, when you think about it first makes sense. But in practice, it actually works. Dr. Barbot, do you want to add to that?

Commissioner Barbot: Yes, Mr. Mayor. You know, I think that what's been said earlier is worth repeating, that we are in unprecedented times, and the fact that none of us have ever been exposed to this virus puts each and every one of us at risk for contracting the infection. And so,

the other thing that I will say is that, you know, every day from the beginning of this pandemic, we've been learning more and more about the virus. And what we know now is that it's can spread easily from one person to another and that it can be spread even when someone is just prior to developing symptoms, right? A person can spread the virus two to three days before they even know that they're sick. And so, we didn't know that at the beginning of this pandemic. Now, we know it. And so the best way to protect all of us against this continuing spread of the virus is to make sure that we break that potential cycle of transmission by having people stay indoors and also for when people do have to go outside, because you're right, I mean there are tremendous mental health benefits to being outdoors, but we want people to use the face covering at all times when they're outdoors and to maintain that six foot distance. The reality of human behavior is that even when people are wearing face coverings, they may not be it correctly or as consistently as they need to. They may also not be washing their hands as thoroughly and consistently or be using the alcohol-based hand sanitizer. So, all of those variables in light of such a vicious and deadly virus really makes it critical for us to stay indoors and to make sure that when we start reopening the city, we do it in the safest way possible.

Finkel: Thank you so much, Commissioner. So, on behalf of AARP New York, I want to say thank you to everyone for taking part in today's telephone town hall that is focused on New York City's response to the coronavirus. We've been so fortunate to be able to talk with Mayor Bill de Blasio; Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner of the City's Department of Sanitation and COVID-19 foods czar; Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner of the City's Department of the Aging; and Dr. Oxiris Barbot, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you so much for sharing so much really vital information that is helping to keep us all healthy in this city – the gargantuan effort, and we can't thank you for all the hard work you've all put in.

And now, Mayor, we're nearing the end of our call and we're wondering if you would like to share some closing remarks.

Mayor: Yeah. Thank you so much, Beth. I am very, very appreciative to you and everyone at AARP. I think you guys know that so many people depend on you and, you know, we all just really, really appreciate that you're always stepping up for seniors and getting such important information out and, you know, always are a reliable, believable place to turn no matter what's going on. So, I'm really, really appreciative for that. And everyone, look, again, we're going to get through this. It will not be easy, but we are going to get through this. Every single New Yorker has a role to play. So, I want to keep emphasizing, it's not easy, but the social distance and counts, the staying indoors counts – it's to protect each and every one of you, it's to help stop the spread of the disease. If you need help, 3-1-1 is always the straightforward place to go. If you need food, if you're struggling with finding out how to deal with your situation as a tenant or, as you heard earlier, even something like how to get prescription medicines you can't get, call 3-1-1, we're going to do our best to get you to the help you need. But just to everyone, recognize if we stick to what we're doing – and this city has been amazing and heroic in the face of the struggle, and that's what's going to see us through. And we're just not going to ever forget to be there for seniors no matter what happens here. And I just want people to have that confidence knowing, you know, if you ever, if you're ever feeling alone you know, whether, again, it's you need someone to talk to who is a trained professional, 888-NYC-WELL. Or, you need a food

delivery – that's 3-1-1. Whatever it is, we're going to do our damndest to help you out. And I don't want people feeling alone, I want them feeling the love and support of this whole city.

So, thank you, everyone. Thank you, Beth, and your whole team. And we're going to get through it together. Take care, everybody.

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