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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON COVID-19

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everybody. Talked a lot the last few days about faith in a season of faith and how we have to keep the faith because we're all doing something together that is so important at this moment. And it really depends on all of us. New Yorkers have really been stepping up. And even though sometimes it's hard to see, it's hard to feel we are making some real progress, and it's because of all of you. It's because of the hard work you're doing with social distancing, with shelter in place, because of the changes you've had to make in your life. But you've done it and you've done it really, really well under very tough circumstances and very fast changes in your life. So, faith is when we believe we can get somewhere, we can get somewhere together and I want people's faith to be rewarded. I want you to see the fruits of your labors.

And today we're – in a moment we're going to unveil some really important new information that gives you a sense of how things are progressing and how it directly relates back to what you have been doing, the hard work you've been doing, all of us have been doing. But I want to put it this way. We are now one big team, New York City, all of us, 8.6 million people all together. One cause, one destiny. We're one team. And when you think about it, this is the most important team you will ever be a part of, fighting the coronavirus, the greatest health care crisis in a century. Greatest crisis of any kind in our lifetimes. We all together need to fight this. So, every single one of us is on the same team here. There will never be a moment that's more important to act as a team, to believe that together we can be greater than the sum of the parts.

New Yorkers are proving that right now. And I want to thank you for that. And so, as I said, it's important to show you that what you're doing, every single one of you, affects the information about the show you because every time you practice shelter in place, every time you practice social distancing, you're reducing the spread of this disease and you're saving lives, you're protecting people, you're reducing the number of people who end up in the hospital, the number of people who end up fighting for their lives in the ICU, you're reducing the number of people that test positive. Your actions will be reflected every single day in the information we provide and we'll all watch it together and act on it together. So, let's go to this new information now and talk through what it means.

I talked about it last Thursday when I said we're going to go through phases here. Right now, we're in the widespread transmission phase, the one we don't want to be in, where the coronavirus is deep seated in our communities. We want to end this phase. We want to move forward. But to do that, we have to keep doing the hard work, the shelter in place, the social distancing. We have to keep earning our way out of this. None of us asked for this horrible

disease. None of us deserve it, but we still have to fight our way out, earn our way out of it through our actions. So, that means staying focused, staying buckled down on the rules that actually work and continuing to stick to them. No matter what's going on around us, this is the way forward.

Now, three indicators I said we would roll out today and you can see them live right now at nyc.gov/coronavirus. I'm going to go over them but again, this'll be information that's always available to you, updated daily, and we'll all watch the progress together. And I want to note right there, I want it to be steady progress. We all want it to be steady progress. It may not always be steady progress, stating the obvious. Sometimes the numbers may go up, sometimes down. We want it to be down, though, a lot, but we can't guarantee every day is going to be perfect. Sometimes one will go up, another one will go down. We've got to see them all move down in unison over a prolonged period of time to be able to get to that next phase where we have low level transmission and then we can start on the path to a more normal life. So, let's go over these indicators.

Number one is the daily number of people admitted to hospitals in New York City for suspected COVID-19 conditions. So, again, we're going to show you the progression from day to day. And the data, I should tell you upfront, is typically about 48 hours lag between when the information that we're talking about – when the actual admissions to the hospital or the ICU, et cetera, when it happens and when it's reported. And that is because different hospitals report at different times in different ways and our Health Department has to get all the data collected and consistent before it's published. So, there will be a lag. We're always going to see if we can reduce it, but, for now, assume about a 48-hour difference. But it's still going to tell us what we need to know. So, for April 11th, that is Saturday, you had 383 people admitted – new hospital admissions for suspected COVID-19. The day before that was 463 people, so that's a really meaningful improvement. That's a step in the right direction, the second number of daily number of people in the ICU across our Health + Hospitals hospitals. That's 11 hospitals, public hospitals, the number of people in the ICU for suspected COVID-19. So again, going back to April 10th, 857; by April 11th, Saturday, 835 – also moving in the right direction. And then the third indicator of the percentage of people who tested positive for COVID-19. So again, that number going back to April 10th, 59.3 percent citywide; by April 11th, 58.1 percent, moving in the right direction. And then a very specific subset of that, the tests done by our public health lab and they focus those tests specifically on a certain type of case, and the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner can go over that in detail in a moment. There we see the public health lab testing again the same good pattern, April 10th 80.5 percent of those tests were coming back positive; by April, 11, 78.4 percent.

So, day-one of this new effort, I'm pleased to report, we do see all the indicators moving in the right direction, moving downward together. This is a very good day. This is day one. Now, we've got to keep working all together to keep these numbers moving the right direction. And I want everyone to take it personally. I want you to feel like when you see these numbers – numbers are abstractions, but they represent human beings and they represent the future of the city and what our lives are going to be like. When you see these numbers, take it personally. Recognize this represents the progress that you have achieved, but we've got a lot more to do to keep that progress going, to get to the point where we might be able to ease some of the

restrictions and move towards normalcy and have a low transmission dynamic with COVID-19. And I always will keep saying, if we don't get it right, or, God forbid, this disease resurges, we're going to have to potentially tighten restrictions further. So, we don't want that to happen. Obviously, best way to avoid that is to stick with what's working and keep our discipline and New Yorkers have been absolutely outstanding.

So, the next topic I want to talk about, this is the question of how we make sure that we address everything we're seeing in this crisis. This crisis has had so many negative effects on so many New Yorkers, but more and more we're learning, we're finding out just how much there's been a painful disparity. So many people have suffered across all communities. Some communities have suffered very particularly in a disproportionate manner. Now, we know we will get through this. We know this is a crisis that will end at some point, but the disparities that we have now uncovered are deeply, deeply troubling. They reflect historic disparities and they remind us that we must do something different, going forward, if we're going to stop these disparities. We can't just see it and consider it something that's unmovable or something we have to live with. We should never live with these kinds of disparities. We should in every way we can today and in the future to end these disparities. Right now, we have a lot of work to do to address the needs of communities of color right this minute. And what I announced when we put forward the information proving the disparities was a four-point plan, and I'm going to talk today in more detail about two parts of that plan. There will be more announced going forward over the coming days, but I want to start to fill in the information as we have it for everyone. So, one of the key pieces of that plan was a really large scale, a media campaign to educate people about the coronavirus to help them know what they can and should do to protect themselves and their families and all of us.

And we had an original campaign that we launched in the middle of March, as we were seeing the first deaths from this horrible disease. We launched an \$8 million media campaign, TV, radio, digital ads in 15 languages, subway ads in English, Spanish and Chinese, print ads in 15 languages. \$1.5 million of ads that were put putting community and ethnic media that are so important in this City and trusted in so many communities. We put that out there to try and really get people a lot of information that a lot of people weren't getting from other sources to start clarifying what was going on with the coronavirus and how people could respond. We launched an advisory committee of 80 community-based organizations, every kind of New Yorker of all five boroughs to help us make sure we were doing the right message, the right outreach. And we did outreach and other forums on WhatsApp, on WeChat, on KakaoTalk, which is Korean focused. So, we used a lot of methodologies, but what we're announcing today is a new campaign and this one is laser focus on the communities that have been hardest hit and where the disparities are greatest. This is going to be a \$10 million advertising campaign to not only get the information out again, but to get it out in a deeper way, meaning to focus on a very pinpoint—manner on where the need is greatest. So, we've targeted 88 ZIP codes in New York City where we see the most disproportionate negative impact of the coronavirus. That's where the focus will be to get this information out, to make sure that some of the confusion that everyone's feeling about coronavirus is addressed head on. That some of the myths and misunderstandings are addressed, that people are given more information about what they can do or where they can turn if they need help and to do it in the languages that so many New Yorkers speak.

So again, a \$10 million campaign, 88 high impact, high needs zip codes will be focused on, TV, radio, and digital in 15 languages, but beyond that now direct mail pieces to homes giving people information that will go right to their doorstep in a very accessible format. So that's on the media side, but as I said a few days ago, traditional media and digital are very powerful and we need to use them fully. But we also need to go to the grassroots, especially if we're going to reach communities that are not necessarily hearing all the messages and that need more help and reassurance. There are many communities that that describes, but particularly immigrant communities, particularly communities that in recent years have felt very much that they were in danger and in many ways have receded in terms of how they connect with the rest of our community, pulled back out of fear. We've got to reach out in a really compassionate open manner to communities that need a lot more information and some of that has to be done on the front lines media alone can't do that. So, we're going to be doing two targeted communities, we'll be doing robocalls, we'll be doing live calls from people who have the information calling directly into households, we'll be doing a texting campaign. We'll make sure at places that people still are going essential businesses, grocery stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, those grab and go meal locations, the 435 locations where people can get free food we'll have information posted there. We're going to also work with community-based health clinics and these are organizations that do such important work and they know their communities, they speak the language, they know the culture, we want to bring them back into this work more deeply. A lot of them been disrupted in recent weeks, we want to get them back in this will have more to say on that in the coming days. And we want to see ultimately the restarting of the kind of grassroots outreach literally people out in the community educating, answering questions, but to do that, we have to keep our health care workers safe. We have to have health care workers who can move into that type of work and not just be needed at hospitals and that has everything to do with those indicators I talked about earlier and we need, of course, the protection for all of them, the PPEs. So, a number of pieces have to come together, but our goal is to soon have that grassroots outreach moving to really make sure the information reaches communities deeply and widely and people feel it, understand it, act on it. This is how we can help protect folks who are really bearing some of the brunt here.

Now, speaking of bearing the brunt, I've said many times, this is unfortunately not just a health care crisis, it's something worse it is also the greatest economic crisis since the great depression. That's what we're seeing unfold right now, and for a lot of us, we used to hear those stories from our parents and grandparents and never thought we'd live through anything even slightly like it. Well, guess what? Very, very sadly, we are living through something like it, the number of people who have become unemployed just in the last few weeks is staggering and unbelievable we're just still beginning to understand the magnitude of it. And the only parallel is the Great Depression and the suddenness with which this happened in some ways was even worse than what happened 80 years ago. So, we need to move aggressively and I'm going to tell you always what the City is doing, there's a lot of things the State needs to do, there's a lot of things the federal government needs to do. The federal government did come along with the stimulus and that was good cause that were important pieces directly for working people, but we need so much more and we need the next stimulus to happen quickly this month to keep getting support to working people, keep getting support to small businesses and to the City and State governments that directly support everyday people and protect them. That has to happen, we need to do a lot of other things quickly to catch up with the totality of this crisis. So, what's

happened already? There's been a moratorium on evictions, that's a very good thing and that continues. So, you know, what's, what's basic and essential here? Having a roof over your head, even if your livelihood is gone. Well, no one can take your home away from you, there's a moratorium on those evictions to protect you. The 2 million plus New Yorkers who are rent stabilized, I've called upon the rent guidelines board to act quickly to give all of you a rent freeze. It's something Rent Guidelines Board has the power to do is something they have done before in times where the facts merited it. I think this is absolutely a time where it's 100 percent clear people are hurting like never before, they deserve a rent freeze. I want to see that happen quickly, that will provide some relief for over 2 million New Yorkers and rent-stabilized housing.

I've urged the State of New York to act, change the laws and rules to allow renters to use their security deposit to pay rent, there's no reason at this point given how much dislocation has occurred that a security deposit is sitting in a bank account, not helping anyone when it could be used to pay the rent, help the renter, help the landlord have money to pay their expenses. That is the kind of thing we need to do in the middle of a crisis and I want to see the State act on that, we need to think about and act on some other pieces as well. So, we're launching— a tenant hotline for tenants in all five boroughs through 3-1-1 because a lot of tenants right now don't know what their rights are, they don't know how to navigate this, they're running out of money, they want to know where they can get relief. And remember, what we can help you with is all the different you can get income, making sure you get money from the stimulus, making sure you get unemployment insurance, if you qualify for food stamps that's another way to put money in your pocket. We want to make sure that if there's anything that people can get, they're getting it and that your rights are being recognized – no landlord can attempt to evict you - no landlord can tell you, you have to leave temporarily because you're sick. You have clear rights as tenants. We want to protect everyone, so we're setting up this hotline through 3-1-1 to make sure people can get those answers and that support and if it raises to the point that someone needs a lawyer right away through 3-1-1 we can get you free legal assistance and assign a lawyer if you need one to protect your rights – so that will be up and running immediately.

And then two other things I think would be really crucial in this situation given the magnitude of what people are experiencing. I'm urging the state of New York to take a very good thing – the moratorium on evictions - and extend it to 60 days after this crisis. And so, I'm very thankful that the state acted to protect renters and I know to protect other folks to keep a roof over their head, but we need to make sure that that moratorium on evictions doesn't run out and it doesn't run out prematurely. We need to see this crisis end and then give period a grace period to people to protect them so we don't have a horrible situation where we finally get out of the coronavirus crisis and then see a massive wave of evictions. We need a period of time to help people get things back together and to protect them and make sure that they still have a home. So, the State should act on that right away.

And then also something I think the State of New York could do that would help everyone – let tenants who lost their income defer their rent. So, if a tenant can document that they lost their job, which I'm so sorry to say so many people can at this point. If you can document you lost your job and you don't have income; give tenants the ability to defer their rent payments and repay over the next 12 months on a payment plan. There's, I think some clear ways to put this

together that protect tenants and respect the rights of landlords and make sure that everyone is whole in the end, but we can't have a situation where folks just have no money and no way to pay and they're living with that constant insecurity. Let's acknowledge the extent of this crisis and give our tenants a clear way forward. That's something I think the state should do as well, as quickly as possible.

Alright, let me move to a very different topic and on this one again, one that we all care about and one where I can at least give people a little bit of good news as we fight through this crisis together. As we've seen with alternate side parking, folks obviously want to know where we're going with this and want the security of knowing that they don't have to worry about moving their cars. I've always said the one thing I cared about was making sure we didn't end up in a situation where our neighborhoods weren't clean, especially in the middle of a health crisis. I'm happy to say we've been monitoring, our Sanitation Department has been out there; the neighborhoods remain clean in a large measure because so few people are out and about the way they normally are. So, we actually see a level of cleanliness that is the right one for our city, and therefore I'm announcing we are suspending alternate side parking for another two weeks and this will take us until Tuesday, April 28th. So, we're going to continue to update you, but right now - rest assured - no alternate side parking until Tuesday, April 28th. We'll update you again as we get close to that and to the maximum extent possible we can give people this relief, I want to do it.

Okay, now going back to where I started with how we are making the progress we're making. Look, every single person is a part of this, as I said, and it's not just what you do. What you're doing is working - people are practicing social distancing, they're practicing shelter in place. And you know, we've sent out a lot of enforcement agents; we've sent out the NYPD and, and we've constantly followed up on any concerns and we're seeing really pretty amazing levels of compliance by New Yorkers and sometimes when there's a report of a problem and the police show up or another department shows up, folks immediately fix the problem is what we're finding, and that's what we want. So, the best way to make sure that everyone observes social distancing and continues to follow these rules for the good of all is to make sure you're doing it yourself, but if you see someone who's not, that, I want you to think about that, that phrase we have used for years about protecting ourselves in this case from a different enemy; when we say, "if you see something, say something". In this instance, I want you to see that you can make a real impact; if someone's not doing the right thing, if a line has developed that's packed too tight together, if a store's too crowded, if people are gathering someplace they shouldn't be not practicing social distancing, please let us know right away. This is about saving lives - no one should hesitate - this is about saving lives. Every time we practice these rules, it helps us forward. So, you can call 3-1-1 at any moment, tell them exactly what you're seeing, where it is, what time you saw it, and we'll send out the NYPD and the other agencies to enforce and fix the situation. And another option is you can go on nyc.gov/coronavirus and you can just quickly put down just a little bit of information and that will instantly register, so all of our enforcement agencies can get on it right away. And in the next few days we're going to add another option where you can just submit a photo on the 3-1-1 app or the 3-1-1 website and just indicate, you know, the location and just by the virtue of having that photo and knowing what time it was and the location, the NYPD and all our other agencies will be able to act quickly to address the condition. We want to make it easy, we want to make it fast - we want to make sure the

enforcement is fast. Everyone has a role to play in this and we need everyone to help us. You are the eyes and ears; it's your city, it's your fight against the coronavirus. We're all in this together. Letting us know if you see a problem is one of the best ways to contribute to getting us out of this really, really tough phase and onto a better future.

So, I'll conclude and then I'll just say a quick few words in Spanish and we'll turn to our colleagues in the media. But I'll conclude on this important point about being a team. A lot of us are feeling right now, the absence of sports. We, you know, so many New Yorkers, we love our teams and we love team sports; we love playing team sports. I'm missing it all the time; I bet a lot of you are missing it all the time. We're not getting to watch the teams we love, but in fact we are now part of a team. As I said in the beginning, this is the most important team you will ever be a part of in your whole life, right now. And we, you know, we watch sports and we have heroes who play on teams that we love and they do amazing things and they show strength and they show resilience and they do things we thought couldn't be done and we love them for it. Well, guess what? That's you now. You are actually in the middle of such an extraordinary fight. You get to do the things that you have admired in other people. You get to be the player on the field who makes a difference, who does the extraordinary, who does what people thought couldn't be done.

So, this is where we are now – all 8.6 million of us on one team and people have been acting like they're on one team and have been making a huge difference and we see it already. Those three key indicators we're all of us going to be able to watch them together. We're all going to be able to talk about what it means, but you saw even on day one, that what you've been doing has had an impact; what you've been doing is working. We're all going to keep watching them together to get us through to the next phase. So, everyone, we right now in our time, we've been shown a challenge we could never have imagined, but you have been doing everything that we need you to do to win. This is, you know, this is a battle. This is something we've never seen before, but together we can overcome it. And instead of just saying, you know, here's some vague ideas, we're going to show you the facts that prove we can overcome it and prove what it means for you to be in this game and fighting hard and fighting to win. So, thank you for being a team and acting like a team. It's making a huge difference.

Just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we will now turn to our colleagues in the media.

Moderator: And just a quick reminder to folks that we have Dr. Barbot in the Blue Room and Dr. Katz and Dr. Daskalakis on the phone. And with that, Andrew Siff from NBC New York is up first. Andrew?

Question: Mayor, good morning. Hope you're doing well.

Mayor: Thank you, Andrew.

Question: Question about the reportage shortage of swabs for COVID tests – wasn't the reason you brought on Jimmy O'Neill to sort of get ahead of these gear shortages? And how severe a shortage is this? What will it do to the goal of ramping up testing to the point that it makes a difference?

Mayor: Great question, Andrew. Okay, let me separate for a moment the reality in the hospitals, which is where Jimmy O'Neill is focused with his whole team. He's got dozens of people working with him versus the broader question of testing, which is really central to our strategy going forward. So, in the hospitals, Andrew, the question has been this week-to-week, day-to-day struggle to make sure the equipment and the supplies, the PPEs, are where they're needed when they're needed. I always say – and I hate to have to emphasize it, but it's true – this is a crisis standard with the PPEs. It's not the ideal standard. It's not what we wish we could do. It's a crisis standard to protect our health care workers. But Jimmy and his team have been working to make sure that flow of supplies is constant, the materials, the things that are needed in each place are in the right place at the right time, being distributed effectively, and when there have to be adjustments, which is normal when you've got 56 hospitals and an ever-changing dynamic. Those adjustments made in real time. That's the central focus of his team. We're, obviously, all together, watching personnel levels as well to make sure that is accounted for with our hospitals. The testing – the testing has been in a dynamic – scarcity from day one. The weeks and weeks and weeks that we all pleaded before things got so bad for the testing that could have helped us stave off this disease, the week since then we've been pleading for more testing so we could make more impact, the amounts we've had have caused us to be essentially limited to the patients with the greatest problems who are right now in a life and death situation where the testing was crucial to protecting them, protecting our health care workers, determining who could be on duty, who couldn't be at any given point, and trying to keep as many health care workers in the game as possible and making sure those who needed care got it. And the same with our first responders, to make sure that we were handling them and supporting them properly. That's where the emphasis has been. We are now trying, as we see a little bit of progress with this disease to open up more and more of the testing capacity for strategic use in communities where the need is greatest, communities that have been hardest hit and the vulnerable individuals within those communities. And we're going to give out more of those details soon. But even that testing, remember, the tests kits are one piece of the equation – and they come with lots of components just to make matters more complicated, we need all the pieces – the swabs and everything else, but then you need the personnel to administer them who are trained and you need the PPEs. So, until very recently we were struggling to have enough personnel and we still are fighting that fight, but we hope we'll be able to free up some more personnel for testing. We hope to be able to free up more PPEs, but that, again, is going to be a day-to-day decision. If we can put those pieces together, we can start this grassroots testing in the places that have been hardest hit. But as you can hear in my answer, Andrew, it's still an atmosphere of tremendous scarcity. What we need to get to low transmission – that next phase we all want to get to – is much more widespread testing. And I have appealed consistently to Washington. I spoke to the President yesterday and other key members of the administration, the FEMA administrator and others, to say, this is the crucial need if we're going to transcend to the next level and really reduce the presence of this disease. We have not gotten yet any guarantees from Washington about how and when we will get a much greater amount of testing. So, right now, I at least want to keep us doing what we're doing, start to get into targeted community testing, but I know that until we get

a much more ample supply of testing, we can't sustain what we need to to get into that next phase.

Moderator: Next up is Debralee from the Bronx Free Press and Manhattan Times. Debralee?

Question: Hey. Good morning, everyone. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Debralee.

Question: I want to follow up on that question, and also, just generally, as we talk about amplified testing, both in resources and personnel, Mayor and Commissioner Barbot, you know, the question becomes when will we have these resources, because you know, one thing is pie in the sky in terms of what we need, what we need now and what we don't have, what the requests have been. But in order then for us to return to some semblance of normalcy, as per administration, we've got to get to zero transmission and we'd have to really ramp up testing. When you look at it in light of opening up the city and the region for business and particularly for schools as well, how can we achieve that with the resources in hand? And then, specifically, can you tell us what kind of testing needs to be in place? When you talk to school leaders, they talk about these buildings having to be safe for the gathering spaces for the community, for families, for parents, for teachers. How will you in fact be able to assure that come September – that's the end goal now – that these buildings will be that. What will testing look like at that point when you have strangers coming in and out of the buildings all the time?

Mayor: Great question. I'll start and I know Dr. Barbot will certainly want to comment on this. So, Debralee, you've done your homework, obviously. I think you really framed it powerfully. Okay. So, first of all, what I talked about last week with the phases, you know, from widespread transmission now to low level transmission to, you're right, zero – no transmission, effectively no cases or only very occasionally. Dr. Barbot has said from the beginning to give us some guidepost – and we all understand it could change, but she said, look, September is a viable thing to be talking about really getting back to normal, but no one's guaranteeing that. We're saying it's something we can shoot for that we think is realistic. And remember, when we talked about coming out of the current phase, you know this month we're going to be unfortunately in the widespread transmission no matter what. Next month, undoubtedly, for some of May, if not all of May, we'll still be in widespread transmission. We go into June, I hope we're either already moving out or start to move out in June. This puts – again, you know, you raise the issue of the schools – this puts the school's point in perspective again given that it's so unclear when we even start on that pathway to low level transmission. This is another reason why it makes sense to keep our schools closed. But then you talk about what would it look like? Well, we keep demanding a real timeline from the federal government. And look, unfortunately, from what we know right now for the kind of level of testing we would need – really widespread – the federal government is the only place where we could get the impact we need. We're working on the private market and every other tool we can find, but to really guarantee a constant supply, the federal government's got to do something very different than what they've done so far. I was clear they're still not using the Defense Production Act to the maximum, it's clear there's still not the level of coordination that we need to see on the federal level. We need to know a lot of testing is coming and it will be sustained. I don't think any of us believe that's happening, you

know, in the next few weeks. I think that's something that looks like a month or more away and we just don't have clean answers on it. But it can be done, it's a matter of, you know, using all their powers to make it happen. Because, again, Debralee here is the fallacy – if the President of the United States or anyone else wants a recovery – and we all want it, right – but if you're serious about it, you can't do it without widespread testing. You cannot have a real recovery if you can't test people and you can't get this horrible widespread situation reduced so we can get down to low level. If you don't get down to low level, you're not going to have recovery. If your hospitals are constantly on the verge of being overwhelmed, you're not going to get a recovery. If your cities and States can't function, can't provide basic services, because we're still in the middle of crisis and there's no revenue, you can't get to a recovery. You actually have to get the health care part of this equation, right to be able to get the rest of the economic equation right. And I fear a lot of the time hearing the President, and some others in Washington, that they kind of want to skip a step and say, hey, let's just reopen regardless of what it's going to take. And I think if you listen to some of the really great health experts, including Dr. Fauci, you hear the constant warning, get it right, do not take your foot off the gas, do not jump the gun, or you'll regret it when this disease reasserts. So, that is my way of saying to you to actually get to the day where we can get to low level transmission, that takes a lot of testing so that anytime you need to test anyone, anytime you need to test people, you're tracing in a group of people like those disease detectives from the Department of Health do. They need a test available, you know, anytime we're trying to make sure that someone who has been in quarantine or isolation can come out. You need a test available. We have to be able to have it when we need it. That would then put us on the pathway to showing that transmission had gotten so low that you could have confidence in doing things like reopening schools in September.

Doctor?

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: So, to build on what the Mayor just laid out, what I would say is, first and foremost, the most important thing that we are doing right now to get us to that point of reducing transmission is the social distancing, is all of the things that are currently in place. Beyond that, this tightening of the supply chain for the swabs that are necessary for testing are part of a national and international challenge. And that's why we have been focused on ensuring that we target testing to those most in need and that the testing of others is sort of ramped up as supplies allow. But the most important thing is that as we get to the point – or let me rephrase, the most important thing is we won't be able to get this over the finish line, if you will, if we don't have the supply that the Mayor was calling for and the assistance from the federal government, because that's when testing is going to become that much more critical for us to ensure that when we have identified additional individuals who do contract COVID-19, we're able to put the control measures in place to ensure that we go from low-level transmission to no transmission and testing is going to be critical at that juncture.

Moderator: Marcia Kramer from CBS New York. Marcia?

Question: Can you hear me?

Moderator: Yes, we can.

Mayor: Hey, Marcia. How are you doing?

Question: How are you doing, Mr. Mayor? So, the question is this, there's a big fear that if we don't get businesses open soon, you may have widespread business failure in New York City. I wonder if that's something that keeps you up awake at night, if you're worried about it, and how do we get to the point where we can do it so that we have, you know, both healthy New Yorkers and a healthy economy?

Mayor: Yeah. Marcia, excellent question. I do worry deeply about our businesses, particularly our small businesses surviving this and being able to employ, you know, our fellow New Yorkers and keep us all going. So, that worries me, but what worries me even more is all the people whose lives are in danger, making sure we do everything to protect them and making sure we do not make the mistake of letting this disease come back even stronger. And there is evidence around the world that sometimes governments took their eye off the ball and they paid for it in a really bad way when the disease reasserted. So, to save those businesses, we actually have to get the health care part of this right. And Marcia, I don't think that means forever. I think that means doing it right for, you know, weeks or a few months and really making sure we've shut the door on this to the maximum extent possible, moving into that phase of low-level transmission, getting through that to the point where we basically don't have cases. We've got to get that right, that's the best way to make sure that businesses can come back. In the meantime, it's incumbent on our federal government to keep supporting small businesses. I'm done with the corporate bailouts. The big corporations are going to find a way, but the bailouts we need, the support we need is for small business. I know this is something Senator Schumer keeps talking about. There's more that needs to be done in the next stimulus. So, let's get health care part right and that's the way to actually save the small businesses and revive the economy.

Moderator: Yoav from The City is up next. Yoav?

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I'm just wondering if you can detail some of the City's efforts to ramp up testing? The last public-private partnership I can recall being announced was March 17th with BioReference. That was on the analysis side. If there's a swab shortage, is there anything the City can do possibly to tap local manufacturers to create it? So, you know, leaving the federal government's role aside for a second, what has the City been doing and what have been the obstacles here?

Mayor: The City is -- we're definitely looking for anything that can be done effectively to either create components or in any way expand capacity. We got to do a lot of expansion and we've got to keep it sustainable. But yes, we are trying right now to figure out if there's a way to do it. I think the truth is that from what we're seeing so far, the only way we could have the really big supply we need on a sustainable level is if the federal government was able to do something very different to help us. But we will keep looking to see how we can help ourselves for sure. And as we have any progress, we'll announce it. The challenge has been since that announcement from -- with the great help we got from BioReference, which was absolutely fantastic, how much of the testing has been needed to address the ever-growing number of cases and then ever-growing number of people whose lives are in danger, to address the needs of the health care workers and

keep them going and the first responders as well. So even though we built out a lot through BioReference, there was a whole lot of need too. The other thing to remember is since then the number one preoccupation has been keeping the hospitals going. And only in the last few days have we begun to feel that situation is improving. But it's only improving, you know, to an extent. And we're still struggling on the supplies, the PPEs and that's where a lot of focus has to be. So the answer is, you know, that's where we, that's where we've been over these last few weeks. But we are going to see quickly if there's more we can do in the city and how far that could take us.

Moderator: Katie from the Wall Street Journal is up next. Katie, Katie, can you hear us?

Question: Can you hear me?

Moderator: Yes,

Question: Hi, thanks Olivia and thanks Mayor de Blasio. My question, and I've kind of asked this previously, but hearing again about the increased advertising and the robo calls in 15 languages to communities, particularly the most vulnerable communities. I just, I'm so struck by how late it all seems and I want to know Mayor, why this wasn't done a month ago, why this wasn't done sooner? You know, you look at the number of the sick and the dead and the communities and I just can't help but think that this all feels a little late when it could have been done a month ago. And I just want to know why, you know, the City knows which communities are their most vulnerable. They know the languages people speak, they know the health care realities that they have. So can you just explain to listeners and to viewers why now and not last month or not even two weeks ago?

Mayor: Well, Katie, again, I said just a few minutes ago that the first major campaign was mid-March and it was an \$8 million campaign. So clearly, in 15 different languages and much of it was in community and ethnic media. So in fact, it did happen right as we were seeing this crisis take a new direction and that's when that happened. This new one is targeted even further given what we've learned in the last days. In addition, the central thrust over the last few weeks has been to protect the people of the communities hardest hit by protecting the hospitals that serve them. The public hospitals and the independent hospitals. The last few weeks have been day to day, hour to hour, making sure we had the ventilators, the supplies, the doctors, the nurses, the health care workers where we needed them, when we needed them in a crisis that took on an extraordinarily fast trajectory. That was how we could make sure to save the lives that could be saved. And that's always been the core guiding light here is save every life that can be saved.

So that's where a huge amount of time, energy and resources went. And again, it builds upon, thank God, the billions of dollars we put into our public health system to save H + H years ago. That now has given us a foundation to be able to save lives here and now. But no, we've been out there with these messages deeply into communities. We're targeting them even more now and we're going to keep fighting with everything we've got. We're going to try and get the new testing out there. Again with a clear understanding, it depends on the supplies, the PPEs, the personnel, but everything has been about trying to get what we need to keep things going and protect the health care, protect particularly the hospitals that save lives.

Moderator: Brigid from WNYC is up next. Brigid?

Question: Morning Mr. Mayor. You know, there was a lot of reporting over the weekend about the decision to close schools for the rest of the school year. You said the decision was made, the Governor said the decision wasn't official. You two haven't appeared together since March 2nd. Respectfully, what do you think went wrong in terms of the communication in this particular case? And respectfully, what's the way forward so that your messages are in sync and New Yorkers don't have to experience the disorientation they feel when you're saying different things?

Mayor: Yeah, Brigid, respectfully back, as I've said many times, the vast majority of issues the City and State have been absolutely on the same page. Again, you guys will report on the exceptional. I understand that, but I'm going to strongly ask you to look at the whole trajectory through February, March, April, where the City and State and we've all been talking constantly, have agreed on directions together constantly. It is not shocking that sometimes there's this differences of perspective because what I need to do to protect kids and parents and families and educators in New York City, it may be a different reality than what the Governor's thinking about if he's thinking about the whole state or the whole tri-state region. But what I did, what the Chancellor did was to protect our people. Schools clearly need to stay closed. They will stay closed because the reality is just what we talked about before. There's not going to be a context to reopen schools with so much we're going to have to deal with on the health front to get to a better place and a more stable place. So we're always working to make sure that we get to the same positive outcomes. Sometimes there may not be perfect agreement, but we're still going to get someplace together. And I actually think the – respectfully, I think the media is very sensitive on this topic. I think everyday people just want to know where we are ultimately going to go. And I'm telling you the schools are not going to open because it won't be safe to open them.

Moderator: Sydney from the Advance is up next. Sydney?

Question: Hi there Mr. Mayor. So Borough President James Oddo said over the weekend that you agreed to send more medical staff supplies and coronavirus testing to RUMC and SIUH. Can you tell us a little bit more details about these commitments? What specifically are you sending, when they will be arriving at the hospitals and also why it took you so long to commit to sending these things to Staten Island? And just one more –

Mayor: Sydney, it didn't take long. And again, I, you know, I think very highly of the Borough President, we've had this conversation, he and I over many days, every single time. And Dr. Barbot will attest to this. Every time the Borough President has said there's a certain supply needed, we've made sure the supply got where it was needed. Or we made sure that the State or FEMA or someone was getting the supplies where they were needed. The personnel situation we've been working on, that's been a hard situation for everyone because we're still trying to get more personnel. But no, I'm sorry, I'm just not accepting the way you're phrasing the question. Staten Island has been a priority with all the other boroughs to get constant supplies PPEs ventilators, whatever hospitals have needed. And every time I've checked in on what's going on with the Staten Island hospitals, I keep getting the report back that they, like everyone else have been sent all of these basic supplies, what everyone is grappling with is that it is not the standard

any of us want to be living with, which is to go back to a kind of peacetime standard. We are in this crisis standard. No one loves living this way, but all hospitals are being supplied and served.

Moderator: Gloria from NY1 is up next. Gloria, can you hear us?

Question: Yes, can you hear me?

Moderator: Yes, we can.

Question: Okay. I have a question from my colleagues who are covering the education beat during this time. And they're specifically wondering, the UFT has said that they have knowledge of at least 40 school staff that have passed away as a result of coronavirus. But the Department of Education has not released any data or any numbers about it. So what is taking so long? How are you tracking deaths within the DOE? And why hasn't the information been released yet?

Mayor: Yeah. And Gloria, every piece of information that we have that's been confirmed should be released exactly as we're doing today with the new indicators. So the Chancellor is not on the phone with us. But the bottom line always is that we want, once something's confirmed, we want it released. So I'm told that today the DOE will put out an update, it's a very painful update. I mean, this is about people who are beloved in their school communities and have done so much good and now they're gone. But today the DOE is going to give that update.

Moderator: Erin from Politico is up next. Erin?

Question: Mr. Mayor, on the school closing or opening issue. I heard you say that they will remain closed and that, you know, most people just want to know what the outcome is going to be, which is definitely true. You know, so can you explain – it would seem in normal circumstances at least, the schools are controlled by the mayor. If you say they're closed, they're going to be closed. Have you done any kind of analysis as to whether there's anything in the Governor's emergency powers or any other contingency that could require them to open? Or as far as you understand, is your authority simply to close them because they work for you?

Mayor: I appreciate the question, Erin. And I think it's a real question, but I also think in many ways it's a hypothetical question. I'll tell you why. Because the health reality, the safety reality is just overwhelmingly clear. In the final analysis, we have to protect our kids, our parents, our families, and our educators. The only way we can do that with assurance is to keep our closed. The only way we can help make sure that we actually get out of this horrible phase of this disease is to keep our schools closed. Now, think about it this way. Who is presenting the opposite view? Well, I'll tell you when I talked to national and local health care leaders, they all say keep the schools closed. When I talk to educators and union leaders, they say, keep the schools closed. When I talk to all of the people who have been in the middle of fighting this crisis and want to see us turn the corner and beat back the coronavirus, they say keep the schools closed. I literally don't hear any voice saying we need to open these schools in the middle of so much insecurity and such a huge fight. I don't hear anyone saying, Oh, don't worry. It's going to be fine. It's going to be safe for 1.1 million kids. So I understand the question, but I'm only going

to say it this way. I think in real terms, in practical terms, like bottom line, the schools are not going to reopen.

Moderator: Jeff Mays from the New York Times is up next. Jeff?

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Just a quick question on the disparities, your plan to address the coronavirus disparities. I wanted to ask is are there any other plans to do things such as increase access to health care for people in these underserved communities? Or provide more PPE to sort of the frontline workers who tend to be from some of these underserved communities? What else are you going to do other than the ad campaign to address these health disparities?

Mayor: Okay, so Jeff, you'll remember that we said there were four points to what we were doing right away. Protecting and continuing to support the public hospitals that have borne the brunt of this. Elmhurst being the most prominent, but many others as well. Making sure they had the personnel they needed. We've gotten a lot of those military medical personnel to them. Hundreds which have been very, very helpful, giving some relief and support. Getting a lot more contract personnel in there. That's been thousands. Making sure they have the supplies, the PPEs, the ventilators, anything and everything to protect the public hospitals that are really at the front line, the tip of the spear of addressing the disparities. And obviously true for a lot of the independent hospitals as well. And we're supporting them directly to make sure they can keep doing their work.

So this is the most important piece of the equation. If you are going to fight disparities, you have to actually ensure that the hospitals that have borne the brunt and historically didn't have enough, because this is a blunt truth about the disparity. These are all the hospitals that were under-resourced for decades and have borne the brunt of this crisis, but all the disparities for, for years and years before. As I said the other day, we put billions of dollars way before this crisis, into saving Health + Hospitals, saving our public hospitals. Thank God that was done because now those hospitals can be in the lead of this fight. Second to make sure we were communicating more deeply, more in a targeted fashion to the parts of the city, to parts of the community that needed even more communication. Third, the grassroots outreach that I described, which ideally is going to take a very direct physical form in the meantime. It will be, you know, through things like texting and direct phone calls into individual households to help them get information, to have a way to get guidance. Fourth to do the telehealth model on a much deeper level. So anyone, but particularly folks who are in communities that have really suffered particularly and need more information, need more guidance, need a health professional to talk to, that they can reach someone readily at, you know, a broad range of hours a day and get the help they need. So that's the immediate plan. But it is connected to years of trying to shift, and I told you, billions of dollars redistributed towards communities of greatest need and we talked about it the other day, not just for the hospital system, but for housing, for employment, for benefits, wages and benefits being improved. All of the things that come together, the public health people will attest to this and I'll turn to Dr. Barbot, how all these things come together.

If you're actually going to go at these disparities, you have to spend years redistributing wealth and creating a whole different foundation for communities that have been left out to have some

potential to get what they deserve, including the health care they deserve. And then most notably, what we started a year-and-a-half ago, a guaranteed health care effort for anyone who didn't have insurance, to either get them better lower cost insurance or get them the NYC Care card so they could get health care directly through our public hospitals and clinics. Physical health, mental health, obviously the entire Thrive initiative has been about getting mental health services to people who never had them, who never could afford them. That has been working on a big scale. The demand for Thrive mental health services is skyrocketing, unfortunately, sadly, because of this crisis, but no one has to pay for those services. You know, that mental health services used to be largely for those who are well off. And those who did not have money, didn't get mental health care. Thrive has been changing. That is particularly true now.

So, all of these things are about addressing disparities in health care. We've got all the things we did before, we've got the things we've announced more, and then as we look to recovery, we have to continue to change this city. We have to see the recovery effort as a fundamental moment for further redistribution and further equalizing and creating a fairer and more just city. We cannot just take a bad broken status quo and report it – and repeat it again. We've got to do something different. So, we're going to go through all of these stages rapidly. But anything that we have that we can use to help people, we're going to. And you made the point about the PPEs, the whole concept of getting the PPEs to protect our health care workers and our first responders has inherently been addressing the historic inequities because so many of our health care workers come from lower income communities, come from communities of color, need the protection. This has been the obsession to get it to them. We want to get it even more widely out into our workforce and into communities. But the first thing has been to protect our health care workforce and our first responders so that everything else can happen. Dr. Barbot.

Commissioner Barbot: So, Mr. Mayor, just to add to what you laid out so comprehensively is that in tackling the inequities, it's not enough to deal with what is on the surface, but it's also important to deal with the underlying drivers. And so, the fact that there has been attention paid to supporting the infrastructure, the health care infrastructure that serves communities of color and serves poor people in the city and the infusion of support to Health + Hospitals, infusion of support to the underlying educational system, all of those things really drive to support an equity agenda. You know, the sad reality is that these inequities have been for generations, hard-baked into the way in which this city works. And undoing those takes much more than just dealing with what's on the surface. Doesn't mean, of course, we don't deal with what's on the surface, but if you don't deal with what's underlying it, then we're always going to have those inequities. And so, this equity plan that we're laying out that the Mayor really talked about is going to be a phased approach and there are going to be more components to it. But we're starting here and now with doubling down on the direct mailings, on the robo-calls, and we're ensuring that we leverage the trusted voices of the community-based organizations that serve these communities so that we can then go even further into delivering the message that's going to help to save lives.

Moderator: Last two, Anna from the Daily News. Anna.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes, Anna. How are you doing?

Question: Good. I hope you're doing well, too. I'm wanting to know if – whether the Correction Commissioner, if there's any reason why Commissioner Brann hasn't spoken publicly about the pandemic, given what's happening at Rikers and just the high rates of infection and the number of workers and inmates who've gotten sick and died. She doesn't appear to be at any briefings and I don't think she's ever appeared on television speaking about it. So, can you address that?

Mayor: Sure, Anna. Of course, I don't know everything about her schedule. I know about her work. I think Commissioner Brann has continued over the last couple of years to really reform and improve our Correction system and it's a huge, difficult job. But she and her team have been moving the jail system forward and making it, in so many ways, safer and more humane for everyone. But it's against a backdrop of making up for years and years of bad policies and disinvestment well before we came here. In this crisis I know she's been working very closely with Dr. Katz and everyone from Correctional Health to make sure that health care is provided. She's been working with our team here at City Hall and with the NYPD on determining what were the appropriate releases of inmates, which is now a number somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,200 who had been released, including those released with the agreement of the State and the DA's.

Everything to ensure that inmates who needed to be – as they were released were handled properly, supervised, gotten to isolation if they needed that, got the health care they need, she's been in the middle of all this and leading through all this. So, whether she is, you know, a public face all the time or not, I just don't know how and when she addresses the press, but I can see her work and am very sure it's effective. Certainly, want to make sure if she's got something that she wants to say publicly, she gets the opportunity to do it. But that's why, you know, I'm convinced having watched what's happened, that the work that we need done is being done.

Moderator: Last question goes to Henry from Bloomberg, Henry?

Question: Yes, how are you Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Hey, Henry.

Question: Hi. I want to get back to the subject of these neighborhoods that have had a disparate impact. These neighborhoods, I've been calling people in these neighborhoods for the last month and they've really had no information at all for the last five weeks. I mean, they literally have – some of these politicians have constituents who have had no clue as to what to do about the virus and people were getting sick. But my question really goes to the neighborhood clinics where, you know, you set up this health system and you touted it very highly that you were going to save the public hospital system by going into the neighborhoods and having clinics. And when this crisis hit, the clinics were gone and people couldn't walk to get medical care. So, they stayed at home and their conditions became much more acute and they wound up overwhelming hospital emergency rooms. Isn't this a complete reversal of what you saw as the salvation of the public health system in New York?

Mayor: No, it's not. It is a response to an unprecedented global health crisis. And I'll start and then Dr. Katz is on the line and he can add, and if Dr. Barbot wants to add as well. First of all, Henry, just following the track of what you said. Obviously, we've been incessantly trying to get information out very, very broadly. And on the one hand there's been a non-stop flow of information, whether it's these daily briefings or all the outreach that the City government does in so many ways to make information available to people. We've actually asked the elected officials, community organizations, faith organizations, everyone to be our partners in getting information out as well as the advertising and the other ways we get information out. I think there's been a lot put out. I think it's true, however, that with an ever-changing crisis and a confusing reality because there's no one on Earth who fully understands the coronavirus, that some of the information still needs to be amplified, clarified, done in other languages, you know, reached in a more targeted fashion. That's what we're doing now.

But there's no question about how intense and total the basic effort has been to get good information out, including a lot of direction. I've heard Dr. Barbot say in English and Spanish more times than I could count in the last few months exactly how people should address the situation personally in their family, in their lives. So, that's been happening. We're going to just do more and more targeted all the time. On the question of the community-based clinics, Henry, the fundamental conundrum here was we had to fall back to the hospitals. I mean this was a very explicit discussion over weeks and weeks right from here at this table that the trajectory we saw for this disease was so bad that we had to hold the hospitals as the last line of defense to save lives.

And that meant focusing everything we had on supplying and protecting the hospitals and making sure that they were never overwhelmed. The community-based clinics couldn't do, of course, what the hospitals could do. There's also the problem of trying to make sure that people didn't travel in the ways that they historically had. It would have been another danger if that had happened. We had to try and limit what people did in the right way by making sure at the same time that people who needed the help the most got it. So, it was a very challenging equation. Now that we have a little bit of breathing room, we want to go back and reinvigorate those community clinics to the maximum extent possible so they can go out into communities. We're still not saying to people do a lot of traveling around, go back to your regular patterns, but we do want to get the clinics out in an outreach way, out into communities to maximum extent possible as we work our way out of this phase and get to a better phase where we can then start to loosen things up.

So, to conclude, and I'll turn to Mitch, Henry, this is absolutely the result of going from peacetime to wartime. What you saw was a radical shift because it was the only way we could guarantee that our hospitals could function and save lives. And we had to make some very, very tough choices in an atmosphere where we knew there would be profound scarcity whether you're talking about hospital beds, personnel, PPEs. Until a week or so ago, it was entirely hand to mouth. It's still pretty damn hand to mouth. You know, as I said yesterday, I only can say that the city has the PPEs to get through this week. I can't guarantee you next week yet. So that's the backdrop against which we made the decisions, concentrating all of our capacity where it would have the biggest impact and protecting the core of our health care system. Dr. Katz.

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals: I would just add, Mr. Mayor, that through your efforts, we have 3-1-1 sending all phone calls to Health + Hospitals with anyone with a clinical question. We've answered more than 50,000 questions. And that's a real doctor, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And because of the language capability of 3-1-1 it's in all languages. So, I think that's one of the ways we've tried to stretch ourselves during these horrible times. Also, all of our clinics are open. Our doctors make telephone visits to their patients. I called all of my patients last Wednesday that were on my schedule, including a new patient who had not previously been seen to check out if any of them needed refills, that we maintain enough staffing so that if people do need refills of chronic medications or they need to be seen because they have a problem they can still be seen. So, we are doing our very best, as you explained, to keep things going during this horrific emergency.

Mayor: Thank you, Dr. Barbot, do you want to add?

Commissioner Barbot: No, I think the two of you covered it just right.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Doctor.

Everyone, thank you. Again, I'll conclude with the point that we have today for the first time, these new indicators that are going to give us a very clear picture of what's really happening and where we are going. Today you can see, thankfully, thank God some proof we're going in the right direction, but we got a lot more to do. And finishing on that point of team, when you're on a team there's that feeling, that very good feeling, that sense of camaraderie, that sense of everyone pulling together. We're all used to thinking as individuals, but when you're on a team, you think about something bigger. That's what I see New Yorkers doing more and more. And sometimes you see, if you're a sports fan, you see a team that's got some good players on it, but somehow achieve something even greater than you would think that group of players could achieve, greater than the sum of the parts, well, New Yorkers were already great, but you're achieving something even greater with the way you're working as a team. We are really moving mountains right now because people are sticking with social distancing, sticking with shelter in place. It's not easy. We've been really clear, it's not going to be easy, but you can do it. You've proven you can do it and God bless you all. Keep going.

Thank you.

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