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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. I hope you all had a great Memorial Day weekend, a chance to relax a little, breakout of some of the challenges that we've been facing over these months. I hope you had a chance to spend time with your family, your friends, relax, reflect. We've all been through a whole lot here, and it's not, it wasn't like the long weekends we're used to when things are normal to say the least, but I hope it was a chance to recharge a little bit. Get ready for both the fight ahead and the better times ahead. Chirlane and I were in Brooklyn yesterday. We were at Cadman Plaza. There's a memorial there to all the Brooklynites who fought in World War II and all we lost in that war. I've said many times that World War II generation is something very special to me in Chirlane, because our parents were part of that greatest generation. And we stood there, we laid wreaths and we stood there for a moment of silence. And I looked up and I saw the words on the memorial, and you know, a lot of times we go by something like that and we don't really take in what it says, but the words were powerful. The words said, "let's pray that the sacrifice that they made will inspire future generations." And we now are that generation they were talking about, we're now the ones in the fight. It's a different kind of fight than our ancestors could ever have imagined, but we're the ones now called to be a great generation in our time and to overcome a very, very difficult foe. And as we get ready for the next phase of this fight, I again offer my thanks to all of you, because New Yorkers have done so much, have been so exemplary. We've got a lot more to do, but you should be very, very proud of how far we've come and look from the beginning to this very day, the fight has come down to first and foremost, one thing, one piece of the puzzle that defines all possibilities. It's the same thing it's been from the beginning, it's testing. So, I want to talk to you now about where we're going with testing in the city of New York.

So, now we're at situation where we're able to get more and more people tested than ever before, and we want to get the word out. And really, it's important for people to understand, because for months the message was there wasn't much testing, and that was the sad truth. But now there's more, and more every day. And I think a lot of folks weren't sure what to make of testing, and so I'm going to keep saying from now on, testing is simple, it's easy, it's quick, and it's free. And I want everyone to that, and to make sure everyone understands that. We're going to do a huge advertising campaign, TV, radio, digital community, newspapers, billboards, you name it. We're going to get the word out all over this city in multiple languages to let people know it is now time for more and more people to get tested. And with every passing day, every passing week, we're going to expand the amount of testing, and who can get tested. So, right now, we want to focus in addition to all the folks who originally were getting tested, we want to focus on people who have symptoms. We want to focus on people that are in close contact with someone who

tested positive for the coronavirus, and folks who were in facilities like nursing homes, adult care facilities, shelters. That's where the focus is now, but it's going to continue to grow from there. We've already talked about folks who are older, folks who have preexisting conditions, folks who live in the hardest hit neighborhoods, all of those New Yorkers we're encouraging already, now these new groups of New Yorkers. More and more, the messages go out there to get tested. It's good for you. It's good for everyone, and if you want to know where to go, you can call 3-1-1 or go online [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://nyc.gov/covidtest).

Now, over the next five weeks, we will be opening more and more testing sites. So, first of all we'll be opening 12 new testing sites through our public health system, Health and Hospitals. This week, one will open in Queens. In the week of June 1st, five more will open in Queens and the Bronx. The week of June 8th, two more in Brooklyn. And then after June 15th, four more will open in the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. And we have a new partnership to announce today. We've had really wonderful examples of folks from the private sector stepping up. We had a great announcement a few days ago with City MD, now another private health care provider stepping forward and I'm very, very grateful. Advantage Care Physicians. Advantage Care is stepping up, joining the fight, and we are so thankful to them. Locations across all five boroughs. We're going to start with 16 more sites that will be opening on June 1st through Advantage Care. Now, appointments are encouraged, but if you walk in, that's okay too. If you have insurance, it can be charged to your insurance, if not, the test will be provided to you for free. So, thank you to everyone to Advantage Care. This is another great step forward, making testing easier, making it more and more available, and I'm going to keep saying that word free. And if you want to make an appointment with Advantage Care, call 866-749-2660.

So, now, with these announcements today, we're going to have 180, over 180 sites available for testing New Yorkers by the end of June, and now we are already well above our testing capacity that we hope to hit by this point of 20,000 tests per day. That is growing all the time. By August 1st, our goal is to be at 50,000 tests per day, and we feel confident about our ability to get to that number. So, testing is what gives us the ability to know what's going on person by person, and in the whole city. And now, we're going to have something on a vast scale we didn't have before, which is tracing. Tracing allows us then to follow up on the contacts of everyone who has been tested, the close contacts, the people they had real connection to, and then make sure each of those folks gets tested and is followed up on, and anyone that needs isolation or quarantine gets it. So, this is a huge new piece of the puzzle. This is when we go on the offensive and we put into place something that really changes our whole fight against the coronavirus. This is a big muscular effort and the goal we had set was to have a thousand tracers available by June 1. As of today, I am pleased to say we have hired over 1,700 contact tracers, and they will be trained and an action by June 1. So, surpassing the original goal by quite a bit. 1,700 tracers will be on duty and during their good work by June 1st, just a few days from now.

Now, many good people have put together this effort. It has been based in Health and Hospitals with tremendous support from our department of health, and a number of other agencies have played a big role as well. Our Department of Buildings, Design and Construction, our IT Department do it, many, many city agencies supporting this effort. The leader of this effort is doing a great job building this tracing army from scratch, and all the pieces that will go with it as we help people get what they need, as we help people get to hotels, and they'll get the support

that they need when they need to be isolated. The leader of this effort is the executive director of the test and trace core, Dr. Ted Long. And I'd like Ted now to give us an update on this good news, Ted.

**Dr. Ted Long, Health + Hospitals:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. The test and trace core set out to hire a thousand tracers by June 1, and I'm proud to sit here today and tell you that as the mayor said, we already have 1,700 on our team that will be starting by June 1. Now, the test and trace corps believes that the best tracers are people from our communities who truly understand our communities. There's two different types of tracers. We have our case investigators and we have our monitors. The case investigators are the tracers that call people that have a positive coronavirus result, talk to them about it, make sure they're safe, and then trace or track down the contacts that they've been in with. The monitors then call those contacts, bring them in for tests, but also call everybody every day to make sure that people diagnosed with Corona virus are safe. Among our case investigators, more than 400 are from our hardest hit communities in New York City. That's almost half of them. They speak more than 40 languages. Among our monitors. More than 300 are from the hardest hit communities in New York City, almost half, and 40 percent of them speak Spanish. As we sit here today and are moving the program forward, we have an additional 100 tracers that are already doing the work in target ZIP codes in New York City right now.

Now, what I want to do is tell you a little bit more about what tracers do day to day. A tracer will start off by calling somebody on the phone that has a positive coronavirus result. They'll go over symptoms, make sure they're safe, will go over close contacts, intimate partners, people they live with or people they've been within six feet up for more than 10 minutes. The contact will then be passed to the monitors, the monitors will call them. They'll come in and get tested. Anybody positive will become a new case, and then we'll call them and start the process over. But I want to make a really important point here. In New York City, we're doing way more than just that. When you're on the phone with the tracer in New York City, we want to make sure that you're okay at home. So, we're going to ask you, do you need help with utilities, food, medications, and if so, if you could stay at home to self-separate from your family members to keep them safe. We're going to help you with everything else to make sure you're successful. We're going to put you on the phone with a resource navigator, somebody also from your community that can navigate all of those four things for you, and make sure that you could be at home and your family is safe as well. Or, during that same phone call we're going to make you an appointment with a hotel with a medical monitoring system that we've set up to ensure that you're safe, and in doing so, to ensure that you can keep your family safe as well by not transmitting the virus to them. With that, I'm excited to share these updates with you today – and back to the Mayor.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, Ted. Well done. Thank you to you and your whole team for this amazing effort. And everyone, look, this has been put together with lightning speed, literally a matter of weeks. So, this is an extraordinary effort. I'm so thankful to everyone in the test and trace core for the amazing job they're doing. And it's with a clear sense of addressing the crisis at hand, and also really going head on really clearly at the disparities that have been so clear in this crisis. The coronavirus pointed out disparities that are deep in the city, and must be fought in every way. So, it's so important that 700, over 700 of the tracers come from the very neighborhoods that have been hardest hit, and will understand what needs to be done to reach

people, to communicate, people, to change this reality that we are facing. And that's what this is all about. And to make sure that effort is deepened, we wanted to add another leader to the team whose lifelong commitment has been to equity and fairness and inclusion, who has in everything she has done, made very clear. She does not tolerate the inequities that have pervaded too much of the history of this city and of this country. So, we have found a great leader to come in as our new Chief Equity Officer for the test and trace corps, Annabel Palma. Annabel is someone I have gotten to know very well over the years, worked closely with, we both serve in the city council together and her story is remarkable. Born and bred in the Bronx, lost her mom very, very sadly at an early age. Became a young mom herself, dealt with so many of the challenges that come with poverty, ended up homeless for a period of her life. She took all that pain, all that challenge and turned it into a deep desire to help other people. Got active in her community, eventually became a member of the New York City Council, became the chair of the general welfare committee. Where she helped to make sure that so many other folks got what they needed, the support they needed as they fought so many of these ills in our society. She fought particularly for the people of the Bronx to bring fairness and joined our administration three years ago as Deputy Commissioner at our Department of Social Services, focusing on how to make sure that people got the help they needed in a way that was part of every community and fair to every community. So, she's going to come in now as Chief Equity Officer, make sure that the test and trace initiative really epitomizes our commitment to fairness. Our commitment to fighting inequality reflects the people our city, and it acts on the inequalities and disparities that have been laid, so bare here. So, we welcome Annabel Palma to this team.

Now, we've talked about testing so many times testing the big constant word, the constant idea we talk about is testing. Well that's the kind of testing that tells you if you have a disease or not, but you know, there's been another test running through this whole crisis and that is the test of faith. Our faith communities have gone through so much in these last three months. I have to tell you, I've spoken to so many people, religious leaders and devout people who have felt the pain of this crisis felt the pain of people that worshiped with those they've lost the families that are going through so much. But at the same time with their devotion to faith challenged not in their hearts or in their souls or in their minds, but in terms of day to day life, the ability to have the services that are so important to every faith tradition, that ability to go to a church or a mosque or a synagogue to be together, to pray together. So much of what has made up the life of this city and the strength of this city and right in the middle of this crisis, three of the most important holidays in three great faith traditions, Easter, Passover, Ramadan, and each faith tradition had to find a way to somehow make sense of these holidays without the benefit of all the people who are used to all the support that they give each other. It's been very, very hard, I have to put on the table a challenging reality. On Friday, President Trump made a statement about reopening religious services and whatever the intention, I think it's important to speak about it in a forthright manner. Every person of faith would love nothing more, but the resume, the services that are so important to them. And I've talked to some of the most prominent faith leaders in this city and multiple faiths and reaffirm their view starting with Cardinal Dolan, who I spoke to on Friday. And there's a universal feeling that everyone would love to come back, but there's a deep understanding of the dangers right now in this crisis. There's a deep understanding that each faith tradition honors human life, and every shepherd, every pastor, every leader of a congregation knows their job is to protect their people. So, what I've heard from faith leaders over these last days is that yes, they want to come back, but they know this is not the time that we will all work together and we'll try

and every way to help people through the immediate situation look for any ways of supporting faith communities. But the idea of people coming back together and full services, large numbers of people congregating, it's not that time, that would endanger everyone. And we have to be smart, we're really making progress when it comes to this disease. But it is not time for large gatherings, it is not time to take the risk of going in the wrong direction. So, I want to thank all our partners, our faith leaders, we're going to keep communicating constantly. We're going to look for every opportunity to support your efforts to restart the right way. But I want to thank our faith leadership for their clear resolve that we will do things all in the right time.

So, that is about something truly sacred, the faith communities in New York City. But now, I want to talk about something that may feel sacred to a lot of New Yorkers and that is, it's a much more mundane matter, it's a much more pedestrian matter. But when I say feel sacred, I mean it, it brings out a lot of feeling and a lot of emotion in New Yorkers and that is any time that alternate side parking is canceled. So, I'm happy to say that alternate side parking is suspended again, and we'll be through Sunday, June 7th. Last week – did a clean sweep of the whole city, catching up after weeks and weeks where we didn't have alternate side parking effect. That was a great effort by our Sanitation Department, so now we're able to suspend alternate side parking again. Again, it will be suspended through Sunday, June 7th we'll be evaluating the meantime whether we're able to suspend it further after that, but let me take a moment to just talk about our Sanitation Department because a lot of times these are the, amongst the greatest unsung heroes in New York City, these are folks who everyday keep this city going. Our Sanitation workers, I want to tell you, I have spent a lot of time with our sanitation workers. A lot of times in sanitation garages often in their heroic moments where maybe they get a little bit recognition, but usually it's nowhere near enough. Like when they beat back a snowstorm, including a few years ago, the largest blizzard in the history of New York City and our sanitation department had the city up and running as normal in about 36 hours. What they have done in moments of crisis, I'll never forget after Sandy, hurricane Sandy, so many people just were hoping and praying sanitation would show up to help them take away the things that were no longer a part of their life. The things that were broken and destroyed and let them start over and every time sanitation showed up, people had an incredible feeling of hope and closure and our sanitation workers do so much for us. They have been fighting through this crisis as well. Remember, this city is not clean, it doesn't function. In fact, they've had to deal with more and more trash in a lot of places because people have been home, but they've been there keeping things together in a city and then have gone the extra mile playing a major role. For example, in our effort to set up feeding stations all over the city and making sure that people have enough to eat, our sanitation department has been there every step of the way. So, thanks to the men and women who do this great work at the New York City Sanitation Department. And a special thank you to a labor leader who is dear to me and someone this whole city should appreciate, Harry Nespoli who's the President of Teamsters Local 831 and the chair of the municipal labor committee, one of the great labor leaders of this city who has been devoted to making sure everything keeps moving forward in this crisis. Thank you, Harry, and thank you to all your members.

Okay. Every time we get together, we talk about where we stand in this crisis and on Friday talked about the indicators we had been using previously and now the new focus on the thresholds, which make a lot of sense now given the way things have evolved. So, what does it tell us, it tells us exactly where we stand in the open, transparent manner and it tells us when

we're ready for restart. So, remember when the restart comes, it's going to be in phases [inaudible] by the State. Phase one is the first phase. We're getting ready. We're taking the steps to be ready for phase one. We're getting the enforcement in place that will be needed from city agencies. When we talk about the sectors that will be reopening manufacturing, construction, wholesale, retail with certain restrictions like curbside pickup, we need to make sure the support is there, the protocols are there. We're doing all that work now we're communicating with people and leaders of different industries to get ready and we've been talking to our advisory councils to have been playing such a crucial role. Look, we're thinking about all the pieces, how do people come back to work? What kind of precautions need to be in place? How do we monitor it? How do we inspect it? How do we make sure everyone's doing what they're supposed to be doing? We're also thinking about the fact that hundreds of thousands more people in coming back to work, well that means hundreds of more thousand people close together. Even with the social distancing restrictions, we're still concerned when you see a lot more people coming into circulation. Obviously, a lot of them will be taking subways and buses, that's a concern we're going to be working with the MTA on that. So, the work of preparing for the restart is going on every single day. But it's led again by the indicators, by the thresholds telling us if it's that time.

So, let's go over today's results. So, indicator one daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, so again that threshold we're looking at staying under 200. 200 is a level that our healthcare leadership leads— if the daily number coming in is under 200, we can handle that, we can keep people safe. Our hospital system can handle it today only 63 that's very good news, only 63 new patients, so that's well below the level we need to be at. Now daily number of people in our health, and hospitals ICU, that's a threshold of 375, Now that's a level of, we're below that level, we're certain we can handle anything that's thrown at us. A lot of work is going into making sure that we are redoubling our efforts to strengthen our ICUs. I know it's happening in our public hospitals; I know it's happening in our voluntary hospitals as well. We're going to be working with the state to make sure that everyone's ready on this front. So today we're want to get below 375 we're at 423 but again, that number has been moving in the right direction overwhelmingly, we're confident that it will come together. And then indicator three, percent of people tested citywide tested positive for COVID-19 – that threshold is 15 percent – and today's report seven percent, an excellent number and we've seen really, really great progress on that front, so a very good day. We're moving in the right direction steadily. We're getting ready for that restart in the first half of June we'll be watching the numbers and I'll do the disclaimer the numbers have to keep moving right direction. Stay in the right direction. That's what tells us when it's time, but very much like the direction we're moving in and it's all because of your hard work. So, I know you want to get to that restart that phase one, keep doing what you're doing so we can get there together.

A few quick words in Spanish now –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that we turn to questions from our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

**Moderator:** Just a quick reminder that we have Dr. Long in the Blue Room and Dr. Katz and Commissioner Silver on the phone. And the first question goes to Al from 1010 WINS. Al?

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey Al. How are you doing?

**Question:** Very well, thank you. With it seems that New York City will be the last region in the state to reopen at least the way it lines up now. Do you think there's going to be, is there going to be additional pressure put on the city? Do you anticipate maybe some people jumping the gun? How are you going to try to tamp down expectations and keep in line for when you officially reopen everything?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Al, I think New Yorkers have been fantastic and I'm not saying it just because I love New York City and love the people in New York City; I'm saying it because it's clear from all the progress. I mean, look at, look at these results. People are devoted to getting it right; to protect themselves, to protect their families, of course, but I think there's a really strong understanding we're all in this together and that we have to get it right. So I don't see a lot of jumping the gun. We had a lot of enforcement out this weekend, saw very few problems in the scheme of things. So, I think the message into your point Al, we got to be really clear; we're not to phase one until the numbers absolutely confirm it. I feel very good about the trajectory. I feel very good we will get there in the first two weeks of June, but we have to actually get there. The work has to happen now to make sure that when it happens it's done safely, but with very few exceptions. I don't think people are jumping the gun; I think they want to know it's going to be safe. And I think you're going to see how some people who could come back and restart their business, who are going to hesitate until they see others do it and believe it's safe. So I don't get the feeling of many people jumping the gun. I think people are being pretty sober about this.

**Moderator:** Next is Shant from the Daily News. Shant?

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, wanted to ask while you are considering taking out debt to cover operating costs, would you yourself take a pay cut and/or do pay cuts for the highest paid members of the administration? In a different vein looking back to the early stages of the outbreak, I've been hearing some criticism that your focus on the Bernie Sanders campaign distracted from the coronavirus response [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** Hold on one sec. Just roll back. I couldn't hear. Focus on what? Say, say that again.

**Question:** Well, on the Bernie Sanders campaign. Basically, the criticism I've been hearing is that your desire to campaign for him may have distracted from handling the outbreak more expeditiously. Just want to get your comment on that.

**Mayor:** Okay, on the first question, no plans for pay cuts for any New York City employees right now, whether it's City Hall or any place else, but you know, we never know what the future brings. On the second question, that's the first I've heard anyone suggest it and I find it with all due respect, Shant, I find it interesting that this is coming up three months into the crisis. So, no,

I did precisely one trip with Bernie Sanders. I obviously believed he would be a great President and could do a lot of the work we needed that had it been done earlier, we would have dealt with a very different reality in this crisis; had we had universal health care in this country, everything would have been different. So, I believe he was absolutely right about that, but my focus has always been on the people of this city and as it was clear we were dealing with this challenge more and more, this is the only thing I've been doing.

**Moderator:** Next is Andrew from ABC, or NBC New York, excuse me – Andrew.

**Question:** That's right, NBC New York. Hope everyone is doing well this morning. Mayor, hope you're doing well.

**Mayor:** Andrew, I want to thank you and everyone at NBC New York.

**Question:** Hey, my question you did allude to this about concerns on folks riding the subway and buses as manufacturing and wholesale begins and resumes and people don't necessarily have a clear picture of how they're supposed to get to work. Wall Street has told the traders returning to the stock exchange, don't take the subway, but in general the advice to New Yorkers in normal times is to use mass transit. So, what is your official advice for people going back to work and how safe is it?

**Mayor:** Yeah, so Andrew, great question. First of all, the future is going to be mass transit; let's be very clear. We're dealing with the immediate crisis right now, but when we come out of this crisis, we have to double down on mass transit and we have to double down on our efforts to get away from our over-reliance on vehicles because you know, we're, we're going to be dealing with a much bigger challenge in the future, which is addressing global warming and addressing, you know, the, the need for this city to have a very different quality of life in the future. That has to be about mass transit, but in the short term, in this crisis, there's a real fair question of, you know, what amount of use of mass transit makes sense. We're having this conversation with the state and the MTA right now because it's, we anticipate just phase one is easily hundreds of thousands of more people going to work and then phase two even more so. So what we can say with assurance is, you know, due to the plan to have the subway shut at night for cleaning, they're obviously a lot cleaner; that's great news, but we still have to make sure that we don't end up with a lot of crowded subway cars and buses. So that's something we are working on. As we get closer to phase one, we'll provide people with clear guidance on how to approach that, but I think the central question working with the MTA is what's the maximum amount of service that they can put into play and what measures do we need to take to help make sure there is social distancing on the trains and in the buses. So, we're working on that right now and I'm hopeful we can strike the right balance.

**Moderator:** Next is Abu from Bangla Patrika, Abu.

**Question:** Hello, Mayor. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Abu. How you doing?



**Question:** Thank you so much. [inaudible] you know I don't have any statistics of the people who lost their life in, in COVID-19. But you know, community wise, like Bangladesh, Indian, Hispanic, you know, do you have any statistics?

**Mayor:** Do I have? I'm sorry Abu, say that again.

**Question:** Do you have any statistic that community-wise, you know, every community how many people they lost? Like City you know a magazine that had been reported, the Southeast Asia, like Bangladesh community lost about more than 270 people.

**Mayor:** Yeah, no.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Right, Abu. So first of all, you know, I really believe it's important to be honest about the sheer impact of this disease and the disparities that have come out here and how it absolutely directly connects to people's income, to race, to immigration status. I think a big, a big question here is how much people didn't seek healthcare even well before this crisis or during it because they were fearful because of their immigration status. There are huge issues here that have to be uncovered. We've tried to be really transparent with both the facts about where people came from, who we know died from COVID, and we put out the list of people that are the numbers of people we think probably died from COVID and we've tried to really constantly update, you know, by zip code and you know, very openly those facts. So, take a look at everything that is out there. It's at [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/coronavirus) – it's all the data is there all the demographic information. If you see an area where we need to go farther, we'll certainly see if the Health Department can get you more, but there's no question that there's been profound disparity that's affected South Asian communities as well, it's affected the Bangladeshi community, which is a big community in this city. And the way forward is to fight back this disease, but then get right to work on addressing these disparities in every way - healthcare disparities, economic disparities, et cetera. If we're going to really make sure that nothing like this happens again in the future.

**Moderator:** Yoav from the City is up next. Yoav, can you hear us?

**Question:** Yes, hi. Yeah. Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes Yoav, how are you doing?

**Question:** Okay, good. How are you? I just wanted, I just wanted to ask about the, the Texas firm Crew Facilities that's booking some of the hotels for the city.

**Mayor:** I'm sorry. Yoav, say the name of the firm again.

**Question:** It's called [crewfacilities.com](https://crewfacilities.com).

**Mayor:** Okay.

**Question:** They're booking most of the hotel rooms for hospital workers and the homeless shelter residents and apparently they're getting a \$27 fee per room per night. It appears to be well above the industry standard of a 10 percent fee and they're also charging about \$18 for breakfast, \$19 for lunch, and \$34 for every dinner that's provided. I just want to ask you, I know that the contract was negotiated you know, in, in, in a real emergency when apparently it expired on May 1st. It may be in the process of being renegotiated and I just wanted to ask, are you going to try get some of those fees down now that things are a little bit more stable?

**Mayor:** I'll turn to Ted. I can be very straightforward with you, Yoav; I don't know the details of the contract and how it was negotiated. But you're absolutely right, it was negotiated in the context where we had to move immediately to get people support. But this is – you know, as we move out of the worst of this crisis, we're always going to be looking to do better and to make sure we get what we need and the taxpayer is respected in the process. So, we'll keep looking at each and every contractor's go along. But Ted, do you want to speak to that one specifically?

**Dr. Long:** Sure. What I can say specifically is that the hotels and our program to keep New Yorkers safe are free. We want you to come. Please come to our hotels. The specifics of the contract that you're referring to I would also have to research and get back.

**Mayor:** Yeah, and, Yoav, the fact is – and we'll confirm this back to you – but we do expect in this instance, this is the type of thing we expect to get FEMA reimbursement on as well.

**Moderator:** Andrea from CBS New York is up next. Andrea?

**Question:** Hi. Good morning, everyone. Just a question about contact tracing. Are there any concerns about people not wanting to share information about who else is in their circle or that they've been possibly exposed to for fear of how the information is going to be used? And on a completely separate note, last week I was at Jacobi Hospital and was struck at how empty the emergency department is. What's being done to restore trust in the community to get their needs met, especially these communities that already have other medical ailments beyond COVID?

**Mayor:** Andrea, great, great question. I think you are smart to be raising the point that people are starting to make adjustments and think beyond COVID and, yeah, there's a lot of health care challenges out there. So, in the second, I'll turn to Dr. Katz on that, but on this one I'll start and then if Ted wants to add. Look, I think it's a legitimate point and legitimate concern you're raising that is, is everyone going to want to be as forthcoming as they might be with information? Andrea, I think the answer is – everyone? No. We're still dealing with human beings here. Do I think the vast majority of people are going to be forthcoming? Absolutely, because people understand what we're up against here. Generally speaking, I would say people are looking out for themselves and their families and the people they care about and their lives and they do not want to withhold information if it could lead to the disease spreading and endangering everyone. So, remember, in the contact tracing, it's pretty straightforward about whoever you had close contact with just in the last few days. I think the vast majority of New Yorkers are going to be forthcoming in the vast majority of cases. Ted, would you like to add?

**Dr. Long:** Yeah, I think you covered all the key points, Mr. Mayor, I would just add two things. First is, it's so important that the contact tracers we use are people from the community in which they're working, because they're the trusted people that when they're talking to somebody on the phone, they can really get that critical information about who they've been in contact with. And the second point is to give you a little bit of evidence there or data here. We've actually done – we've started to do this at the clinic where I work, at Morrisania in the Bronx where I see patients every week. There we haven't had a problem at all in terms of identifying cases, talking to them and figuring out who their contacts have been and then actually tracking them down. So, so far so good. But it is especially critical that our tracers are trusted people in our communities.

**Mayor:** Dr. Katz, do you want to speak to the Jacobi example and the emergency rooms?

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals:** Yes, absolutely. Jacobi and other emergency rooms across New York City are much quieter than are historically. There are several reasons for this, some are even positive, because there are fewer cars on the road, there are many fewer car accidents, homicides and other violent crimes are down. But, by all [inaudible] the major reason is that people still are wary of going to hospitals. Some of it is that they've learned that they can have their needs met through using the phone or video. And we're very proud that Health + Hospitals and the City runs a phone line, that people don't have to come to the emergency room to talk to a real doctor and get and get full advice. Within the hospital emergency departments, we're creating clear areas that where we see patients who are COVID negative, we've been erecting barriers to make sure that there's good social distancing. So, we want patients to come back if they need to come back. We want to accommodate them at home if they want to be seen through a virtual visit. We find a lot of our own patients are happier to go to a nearby community health center, whether ours or one of the other great federally qualified health centers in New York City, because there is still some fear of hospitals. But we're doing everything possible to make sure that people who come and are COVID negative are seen and taken care of in areas where there are only COVID negative patients. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Mitch.

**Moderator:** Next is Julia from the Post? Julia?

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Mr. Mayor, I'd just like for you to talk us through the phases that are going to happen in the coming weeks. Could you walk us through phase one a little bit more closely in terms of, you know, do we expect that to happen in the first week of June? In the second week of June? And any of those NYC-specific measures that you've mentioned? And what would phase two look like if the indicators hold, when would that be and what kind of activities can we see come online?

**Mayor:** So, Julia, the most important thing to say to you is we're going to be briefing all New Yorkers on each of these questions as we get closer. I'm feeling confident right now that phase one will begin by the first or second week of June, as I've said. The fact is the indicators, the thresholds all keep pointing in that direction. Now, I feel confident because I'm watching the very consistent trends here, but that doesn't mean we're there yet. And until we are 100 percent there, you know, we're going to be very clear that we aren't there until we're there. I'll keep

updating people every single day. In terms of the categories – and, again, we're assessing the number of people that we expect to come back in the first instance, and then if people see it's going well, I think you'll see that number grow – unquestionably several hundred thousand people to begin as you open up construction, manufacturing, wholesale and more retail because you can do the curbside and the pickups. We're going to – the State has put out its guidance, which is very helpful guidance about what's needed in each in each place of business, but we have to do the enforcement work and the monitoring. So, we're going to be talking about these next few days, which agency's going to do which industry, how that's going to go, what's going to be expected of people, what's going to happen when we don't see the kind of compliance we need. That's a lot that we have to put together and put on the table, but it'll all be in place well before we announced the actual day for the restart. In terms of phase two, I don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We still have to get to phase one and we have to prove that phase one works and that will obviously be for at least several weeks. We'll talk more about that as we get closer. But, right now, let's – you know, let's get through the first steps before we get too far ahead of ourselves.

**Moderator:** Erin from Politico is up next. Erin?

**Question:** Hey, Mr. Mayor. Two questions about contact tracing. You said you're going to have 1,700 – you have 1,700 people now. I believe to meet Governor Cuomo thresholds, you need 2,500. Do you have an estimate of when that will be achieved? Second question, if I understand this correctly, you're only focusing on close contacts. So, I'm wondering, is there any plan to address the issues of people who may be contracting this in public places, grocery stores, subway cars, etcetera, etcetera. You know, people who aren't getting it from close contacts, how are we dealing with containment in those scenarios?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Erin, on the first point we expect to get to that 2,500-plus number in the first two weeks of June. So, as we are getting there, we'll have announcements on that, but we do feel good getting to that number during that timeframe. On the close contacts, I think this is just a practicality and reality point. If you are someone who tests positive and there's follow-up from the tracers to you and they say – and Ted can go into detail on this – but you know, who have you been in contact with? It's going to be the realistic options of who are people you knew you were in contact with and you knew who they were so they can be followed up on. It's not going to be if you happen to be close to someone, but have no way of knowing their identity. That doesn't obviously help us or get anything done. So, it's based on the reality of who you had that contact with and who you knew so we can find them. Ted, do you want to add?

**Dr. Long:** You hit all the main points. The only thing I would add is that the way that we're defining close contacts is grounded in the guidelines from our State Department of Health, which brings to bear all of the most recent evidence. So, things like within six feet for more than 10 minutes. We're using the most – the latest evidence and we're consistent with what the experts are currently saying. But moving forward, your point's well taken, we're going to consider all options as the evidence guides us.

**Mayor:** And, Erin, I would just say, that's a lot of people if you think about it. I know it is normal to think about the things that might not be so perfect, or the things we can't achieve. But I

always am glass-half-full. I want to focus on what we can achieve. If you think about the people you have been in close contact with in the last 48 hours, by that standard you probably could name a number of people. That's what we want to focus on, the people we can find, and we think that's going to add up to a lot.

**Moderator:** Next is Henry from Bloomberg. Henry?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

**Mayor:** Good. Henry, how are you?

**Question:** Good. I'm good. I'm going to follow up on Andrew Siff's question because the subways have always been called the circulation system of the city, that's crucial to the economy, and basically my question is what specifically can you do? Are they contemplating handing out disposable masks to everyone, requiring that everyone wear a mask? Does that create problems with disposing of the masks? What specifically has New York and the MTA discussed to deal with this problem of the subways?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Henry, these are conversations that are happening right now because, again, as the City and the State are looking at the sheer magnitude of the number of people who will come back into the economy, back to their workplaces, again, every part of the state is going through its own reopening approach but there's nowhere where you're talking about so many people in motion as here, by far. This is the place where the challenge is greatest. And we do need to think about exactly what you said, how do we maximize wearing of face coverings on subways? What does that look like? How do we make sure that on subways and buses, obviously, there isn't overcrowding? Some of that is frequency of service. And I know the MTA is working very hard to maximize service and they have their staffing back by and large now, which is going to help them a lot. But it's got to be very systematic and this is the concern that, you know, we're looking at and talking to the MTA about when you think about all the pieces – the cleaning, that looks great, but you need the frequency of the service, you'd need the face coverings, for sure, you'd need some way to make sure that there wasn't overcrowding and we got to figure out what that would be, that will do it in a systematic way because, again, every time you add a hundred thousand more people back into the subway system and then the next hundred thousand, and the next hundred thousand the bar gets raised in terms of how we make sure that we keep everybody safe. So, we'll have a lot more to say on that in the next few days. But, you know, this is a crucial part of the equation. As I said, I don't see the restart happening until the first or second week of June. That's not far off. But we have, certainly, some days to work with the MTA, to try and perfect these strategies, and then as with everything else to see how they're going and make adjustments as we go along.

**Moderator:** Jose from Univision is up next. Jose.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, good morning. So, on Friday, the City Council's Public Safety Committee held a hearing about the pretty sharp disparity in the enforcement of social distancing by the NYPD. Now at that hearing, the NYPD leadership was resistant to sharing that data, which ultimately showed that blacks and Hispanics received 79 percent of the summonses. Even

though, as you know, the majority of the 3-1-1 calls complaining about the lack of social distancing came from white neighborhoods. So, I've got two questions. The first is going forward, will the NYPD make this kind of information accessible to the public in real time? Is there a way to do that? The second question is, what changes is your administration making to address this kind of disparity? I understand there's a plan to reduce the NYPD's role in this kind of enforcement, but now some people, as I saw on Friday, are concerned that the average person would not listen to volunteers or people without actual law enforcement authority.

**Mayor:** Yeah, Jose, thank you for the question. It's a great question. So, first, yes, we do have to have the data provided by the NYPD on a regular basis, consistent basis. I'll make sure that happens for sure. But what I think you're going to see as you just indicated when it comes to summonses related to face coverings and social distancing, that that's just not going to be the area the NYPD focuses on anymore. There may be other types of offenses that happen in combination with someone, you know, not social distancing or not wearing a face covering, but that's what they would focus on, not the actual social distancing or face covering itself. They're getting out of that work, that's going to be done by the civilian employees of the city, the ambassadors, that's going to be done – and one of the things I'll be talking about later on today – by the Cure Violence Movement, which has been so successful in beating back gun violence in this city and is, you know, so deeply grounded in our communities.

So, I believe with the level of information and education that's out there about the coronavirus, that when you send out people to educate, to remind, to give out face coverings that does the vast majority of what we need. NYPD will be in reserve for dealing with gatherings, particularly large gatherings. That scenario, I've been very clear, we still need them to play a role when we see a problem, we haven't seen that many problems, thank God. And folks, actually, whenever any authorities have been showing up – I looked at the weekend as it progressed, Jose, I was getting regular updates on what was happening in different parts of the city, what different agencies were experiencing, same results constantly. People responded. When any figures of authority showed up, they responded. They made the adjustments overwhelmingly. So, that's where we're going to focus and I think it'll be successful. Where we will keep a PD presence and other enforcement agencies, as we talked about, is if we see businesses that are not complying with the rules. You know, we'll start with warnings and if that solves it, great. If not, we can go to summonses or even more aggressive actions. But yes to transparency, no, you're not going to see NYPD involved in enforcement on social distancing or face coverings.

**Moderator:** Brigid from WNYC is up next. Brigid.

**Question:** Morning, Mr. Mayor, this is sort of a follow up question unrelated to the previous question. Specifically, the Center for Constitutional Rights is filing an emergency order today, calling on the NYPD stop-and-frisk monitor to investigate the department's social distancing enforcement practices. I'm wondering if you support that investigation. And similarly, will you direct the NYPD to release full arrest data by race as the attorneys are requesting? And then separately on your announcement today about Annabel Palma as the Chief Equity Officer for the Test and Trace Corps, can you talk a little bit more specifically about what her responsibilities will be and is this a public health function or more of a data oversight function and just what she'll be doing?

**Mayor:** Sure. I will turn to Ted. Let me talk about your first question real quick and then I'll mention my view of – or talk about my view of the work that Annabel will be doing and Ted will talk in more detail. On the monitor, look, we've been working very closely with the monitor throughout. This is the administration that settled the stop-and-frisk case. We've done very productive work with the monitor. If the monitor has concerns, we're always going to work cooperatively. If there's a legal action being taken by an outside group, I want to just be mindful that I'll keep my comments brief. But, look, we do believe in transparency. Wherever we can get clear information, it's always important to make sure the information is clear and consistent. I want to see it published regularly. But, again, any looking at what happened with the very few instances where there was enforcement on social distancing, and I keep coming back to this, I don't blame anyone for the concern about things that went wrong or disparities.

Both of those are unacceptable. Any incident where the dynamics between police and community weren't what we wanted to be, where our police officers didn't handle things right, we care about. Any time where there's disparity, I care about that, the department cares about it, we have to fix it. But I also want to keep coming back to, thank God we're talking about very few instances where there even was any enforcement, and now that has ended. But we're always, always ready to take a look back if it helps us do our job better going forward. We're just not going to tolerate disparities in this city. That's the bottom line.

To Annabel Palma, the important work of making sure that everything being done in the testing and tracing effort is focused on addressing the disparities. That means that it has to be responsive to communities of color, it has to be responsive to immigrants, has to be responsive to people that don't speak English, that it is culturally competent, sensitive to the needs of all the communities that have taken on the chin in this crisis that, you know, again, the tracers continue to look like the people they serve and are able to best serve people. And then if there's community concerns about what's working, what's not working, that there's an actual active listening going on to make the adjustments and fix things. That's what I see Annabel's role as. Ted, do you want to add?

**Dr. Long:** Yeah. Thank you, Sir. The Test and Trace Corps will be most effective and most successful if it's a local initiative and Annabel Palma will be going into our communities doing everything the Mayor just said to ensure that happens.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Last two. Gloria from NY1 – Gloria.

**Question:** Thank you. Mr. Mayor, I wanted to follow up on Shant's question because I'm not sure I heard an answer. Are you looking to increase your borrowing capability in order to cover operational costs? And what does that mean? Isn't the City prohibited from funding operating expenses with borrowed money? So, what authority would that give the State if they were to allow you to increase the borrowing capability? My second question is about your comment on religious gatherings. I understand you were commenting on what the President ordered last

week, but does it also go against the 10 people maximum order in any way or are you still in agreement with that?

**Mayor:** Yeah, no, the ten people – thank you for the question Gloria, because I always want to make sure I'm clear. The ten people maximum gathering, absolutely we can work with that. We can make that work. And that makes sense, whether it's a religious gathering or just people gathering for another purpose. Remember what the State has said clearly is that still comes with the need to socially distance. And if there's any chance that people may be closed for any period of time they need to wear the face covering. So I think the State has it right there. We will work with that in a religious setting and in a nonreligious setting. Absolutely, fine with that. What I'm talking about is that big traditional religious services where you're talking about hundreds, even thousands of people gathered together. I know there's a deep yearning to restart. What I'm saying is it is not time. With all due respect to the President, the President left the impression on Friday that any and all religious services should just start again. I'm saying very clearly that is dangerous. It is not time to restart large gatherings of any kind. Even though we deeply, deeply value faith. The key faith leaders of this city are saying it's not time, across the board. I spent much of the last few days talking to faith leaders. And I'd say, what do you feel about this moment? What's right for your faith, for your congregation, for your people? To a one, they said, it is not the time for large gatherings. It is not the time for traditional large services again. So I just want to make sure there's no misinterpretation of what the President said. From the point of view of the faith leaders of New York City, it's not time yet to go back to traditional large services. From the point of view of the City of New York. It's not time yet. And so we're all going to keep working together to keep people safe.

On the borrowing – this is a last resort. Obviously, we do not want to resort to borrowing and we should not have to resort to borrowing, Gloria. We have dealt with an international crisis, international pandemic. That was something that our federal government, like any foreign threat, was supposed to address. It has not been addressed, obviously. This city, this state, many cities, many states have borne the brunt. We have lost billions upon billions of dollars of revenue that we use to serve our people. It's gone. It's not coming back. The only way to possibly keep this city functioning, keep the services provided, keep people on our payroll is if we get a really substantial stimulus program from Washington. And we don't know when that's going to be right now. They have not scheduled to vote in the Senate. We don't know what it's going to look like. And meanwhile, we have a budget due on June 30th by law. So, the action, Albany is to give us the last resort of borrowing. It is a long-term capacity. I'll have my colleagues go over with you the technical and legal issues, so you understand this obviously is something patterned on what happened after 9/11, when the City did use that capacity for a period of time.

But we're dealing with something as horrible as 9/11 was in every sense humanly and otherwise for this city. This is a much, much deeper crisis in terms of how many years it will take for us to navigate it, the depth of the economic pain that people are feeling, that over a million New Yorkers out of work now. We're going to be in a horrible budget situation for years. So this borrowing capacity is to give us a fallback no matter what happens up ahead. But I don't want to do borrowing. I want to see a stimulus that makes us whole so we can actually provide services, keep people employed and move this city forward. So I think that summarizes it on both of your questions.



**Moderator:** Last question goes to Rich from WCBS 880, Rich?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, thanks for taking my question here. So, I know it's been a very long haul up until now, but are the numbers coming down more quickly than you and your team anticipated? And does that say anything about the possibility of opening before June 15th? And second question you know, do you anticipate that people may move out of New York City as a result of the concentration of the virus? There's been some reports that people want to get out and get to the suburbs because – to raise their families for instance, because of the threat the virus presented in the city?

**Mayor:** That's a great question. I appreciate the question, Rich. And I think it's important we talk about this stuff openly. On your first question, I'm very impressed at what New Yorkers have achieved here. We here in the city government, we've tried to set the model of what we had to do and give people the support and the tools and New Yorkers have taken that and run with it. Because these numbers have come down consistently and certainly we – Rich it is not going to surprise you. We don't sit around, you know, thinking about best case scenarios, typically we prepare for worst case scenarios. And we're very pleasantly surprised when we see something better. Certainly, you know, we're seeing more progress here than we might've originally imagined.

It's hard to get too giddy when you think about as recently as April 5th, we literally thought our hospital system was on the verge of being overwhelmed. It was very, you know, it was very few weeks ago. So, I am really heartened by the progress we've made, but we are far from out of the woods. I see the kind of progress that gives me confidence we'll get to phase one in the first two weeks of June. But that's something we got to earn every day and that could turn in a number of days. So, I'll always put down a disclaimer, you know, ask me in a few days if we're still on track and then ask me a few days after that again. We're not there until we're there. But no, have the numbers come down quicker than some of our estimates might have originally anticipated? Absolutely. But this is, you know, the other problem, Rich, you know, is if people start to take their foot off the gas and stop being vigilant, then unfortunately the numbers go right back in the wrong direction. So, we got to stay tight.

On the question of the future of the city. I am very confident about the future of this city, Rich. People in this city are strong and resilient. And again, just the litany of things we've been through. The way the city came back from the Great Depression, the way it came back from the fiscal crisis after 9/11 and you remember how devastating that was, after Hurricane Sandy. Literally every single time there were all sorts of prognostications in New York City would never be the same and it wouldn't be able to come back. And it has come back every single time and stronger, literally stronger each time. So some people may choose to leave and I believe a lot of people will choose to come in. I think the vast majority of people who are here believe in this place. And that will be a vaccine one day and that will be sooner rather than later. And that will change everything as well.

So, I'm confident about our future and I'm also confident there's people all over this metropolitan area, all over this country, all over this world who want to be a part of New York City. And as

soon as things get back to normal, I think you're going to see a lot of people engaging and coming here because they've always wanted that opportunity and it will be there for them. So remain optimistic because of the strength and resilience of New Yorkers and everything that we have here, which is irreplaceable. No place in the world has all the things that we have. Final point on that Rich, I think people have watched a lot of heroism here. I mean, you know, whatever the fears, again, those fears will be deeply changed as we make progress against the disease and as we get a vaccine. That New Yorkers have mounted a heroic, heroic effort here. And a lot of people admire that and a lot of people look at New York City and feel very, very strongly that this place is special and people have done something amazing. So keep that in perspective as well.

So, everyone, as we conclude, look, and I think it kind of fits with Rich's question. You know, what do we think about as we're coming off of Memorial Day? We think about people who did extraordinary things. In fact, you know, made sacrifices that are so hard for so many of us to imagine what it must've been like for so many good young men and women to be out fighting for us far away from home, giving their all. It must've felt to many of them, you know, as I said, my dad was one of them back in World War II. There must've been many a day where it felt overwhelming. Many a day where they didn't know what the future would bring. And there must've been moments where people wondered if they could make it through. But we remember them as heroes because they found a way. We remembered them as heroes, because they found that strength and they banded together. And they did something great and something greater than the sum of the parts. And that's what we're called to do now. So as we reflect on Memorial Day and the sacrifices of others, let's recognize it's our time. It's our time to find the greatness in us. And to all of you, you've been doing that every single day. Every time you put on a face covering, every time you exercise social distancing, every time you stay home even though you'd rather be out, every time you help a neighbor, every time you give of yourself, you are part of making that change. So, thank you, everyone, for doing what our time demands and helping us all move forward.

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