

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 12, 2021, 10:00 AM  
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. Well, it's a little gray outside, but I have some positive sunny news today, because we have a major milestone that we have surpassed in the city – over 5 million vaccinations have been given since the start of our effort – over 5 million doses in the arms of New Yorkers. This is a really good thing. And it's a moment to really express our appreciation. I want to express my personal appreciation to all the folks who have done this extraordinarily important vaccination work – everyone at Department of Health and Health + Hospitals, all the vaccinators, all the team members who are out there making these sites work for people. It's been a labor of love and they've gotten a long way now. Now, that's 5 million doses of the vaccine that keeps us well on target for our overall goal, 5 million fully vaccinated New Yorkers in June.

We had good news also last week. I announced on Friday that we had a record-breaking day on Thursday, our highest number of vaccinations since it began – over 104,000 vaccinations on Thursday alone. So, more vaccinations in New York City this last Thursday than there are people in the city of Albany. It gives you a sense of the sheer extent of this effort. More breaking news, last week, we actually set a record for a week in New York City – 553,342 doses in one week. So, for a long time, we've been saying we could beat half-a-million doses a week. We have now that goal and surpassed it, and we're going to keep going, and I'm really excited about where we can go going forward if we have the supply. And, obviously, we've seen some issues with the Johnson & Johnson supply – that's going to be a problem in the weeks ahead. But, overall, supply has been growing. We need it to keep growing so we can meet our goal. But, great news – 553,000 doses given the last week alone.

Now, where do we stand overall? Since the beginning of our vaccination effort 5,106,027 doses have been given, more doses than the total population of the State of Alabama. And more sites opening all over the five boroughs – these grassroots sites are really working, they're getting a lot of folks to come in. We're excited about it. Senior centers, houses of worship, public housing, all of these sites are really working well and we continue to listen for where we need additional sites. I know there was a concern to get additional sites in Staten Island. We have a site now opening at the Staten Island Mall. I want to thank Assembly Member Michael Cusick, who advocated for that site and helped us to find the right place. We're going to continue to add sites as we get supply. But the more it's been a grassroots effort, the better it is going.

Now, talking about new sites, we're really excited about today, because we're going to be kicking off a new site in Times Square. And this is focusing on our cultural community that means so much to us. Listen, New York City is all about arts and culture. New York City's identity, what makes us great, one of the things that stands out is our extraordinary cultural community. And we talked about our Broadway and off-Broadway communities, our theater communities, we set up the vaccination site for them. This is how a recovery for all of us works, to bring back the entire city to ensure that everything that makes New York City great is coming together.

Now, we know that another crucial part of our cultural community is film and television. And film and TV are coming back strong in New York City right now. You go around the city, you see filming happening all over. The film and TV industries over recent years came back to New York City in a huge way. We did a lot to foster and support that effort. Now, they're coming back strong and this is going to be important to our recovery. On Thursday, Chirlane and I had a great visit to the set of Nora from Queens. We met with Nora Lum, otherwise known as Awkwafina, and the all the other actors and the whole team that put together that remarkable show. If you have not watched it, it is amazing, and Chirlane and I are big devotees of this show. And Awkwafina, an extraordinary, extraordinary talent and a graduate of New York City public schools. I talked to her about her whole history in the public schools. She started rattling off all the public schools she went to from elementary school all the way to LaGuardia High School. And it's great to see someone who came from our schools do so well. And she's totally devoted to New York City, as is her whole team. So, this is great that film and TV are coming back. We want a film and TV community to be part of our vaccination effort as well. So, we're going to welcome them to join the vaccination center in Times Square. We want to make sure that the film and TV industry comes back stronger all the time. Vaccinations will play a key role. We want to make it easy for the actors and the producers and the crews, everyone in the film and TV industry get vaccinated. So, Times Square site will also be made available to them. We're working with the unions in the film and TV industry, the industry itself, the companies involved. We're going to have dedicated appointments set aside for folks from film and TV. And this is going to help this industry come back. But, much more important, it's part of the lifeblood of our city as part of just what makes us special.

And so many great talents are right here, so many great new who are thriving in the film and TV industry. And I want you to hear from one of them. She is a native New Yorker and she has, with her great New York City spirit, been successful in TV and film, on the stage throughout a career in Law & Order: SVU, and ER, and Marvel's Daredevil, and I want to particularly shout her out for her work in Star Trek: Picard. And Chirlane and I are Trekkies, so we have been very devoted to all the different iterations of Star Trek. And Michelle Herd is an extraordinary actor, but she also helped to save the entire known galaxy at a crucial moment in Star Trek: Picard. So, I really think – you know, I thank a lot of people when they join us in these morning gatherings, but few of them have saved the galaxy. So, Michelle, just wanted to do a special shout out – all sentient beings thank you for that act of courage and heroism. My pleasure to introduce Michelle Herd.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Michelle. And I want to thank you on behalf of all New York City. You make us very, very proud – a New Yorker who has done so much good. Also, I believe the Federation's a real thing, so I want to thank you on behalf of the Federation as well.

[Laughter]

Now, I want to bring forward another actor, someone who serves the entire community as Executive Vice President and New City President for SAG-AFTRA, representing over 160,000 actors, dancers, and singers. And that's – that's a lot of people to represent and people who are going to help bring this city back, and a great union now. In addition, Rebecca Damon, of course, as an actor herself, she's been a voiceover performer and appeared on Guiding Light, and As the World Turns, and One Life to Live – venerable shows, indeed. We welcome you, Rebecca.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Rebecca. Thank you for all you do representing these good people. And I agree with you, the union jobs in film and TV, and so many other folks that you represent, these are really good quality jobs, exactly what we need as New York City comes back. We also need to make sure that people will be safe and protected, that's why the vaccination really, really matters. I also want to note, Rebecca mentioned binge-watching – a lot of us have been binge-watching, it's true. Chirlane and I just finished binge watching, for the second time, the amazing HBO series Beforeigners, I strongly recommend it. But we never would have probably done that in normal times. So, wish we never had a pandemic, but we have caught up on a lot of culture in these last months. The site that we have in Times Square is going to be crucial to, as we originally said, the Broadway community. It's going to be now crucial to the film and TV community as well. And I'll be up there at the vaccine site – the vaccination site later on today to kick it off. And we're going to have a very special guest join us for this important moment. So, we're really looking forward to that.

Now, obviously, New York City is coming back, and arts and culture are crucial to New York City's comeback. Film and TV industry, theater – all of this is crucial. I'm going to keep talking about it, because I'm proud of New York City. I'm proud of the way New Yorkers come back. I'm proud of the spirit of New Yorkers, fought their way through this pandemic no matter what, and now are bringing back this city, and we're going to bring back this city stronger than ever, literally. There has been some criticism from our friends at Fox News that, somehow, I have been a cheerleader for my city. And I want to say to everyone at Fox News, I'm not going to apologize for celebrating New York City. It's an amazing place. It's the greatest city in the world. It's going through a beautiful Renaissance right now. So, to my friends at Fox, I know you like to present a dire picture of this city, but you don't understand New York City perhaps. This is a place of incredible heart and resiliency. We're coming back strong. We have some challenges, we overcome them – that's what we do. But I can tell you something, I'm going to celebrate each and every victory by and for New Yorkers, every step along the way. And that's something we all should do.

Okay. Speaking of a victory, let's talk about our opt-in for schools that was just completed on Friday. We talked last week about our new plan for keeping schools open safely with fewer

closures and making it work for everyone in the school community. The focus, as always, health and safety first, also a more stable schedule for our kids and families, because they deserve that. And we know – we know from experience how safe our schools are. We set a gold standard of health and safety measures that would work, and they have – safest place to be in New York City is our schools. Friday was the last day for opt-in. The final numbers are now in. We have just over 50,000 students who have opted in for in-person learning again across all grade levels. And we're going to make sure we can accommodate. We know we can, we'll accommodate all those kids. So, I want to emphasize that the plan is that 50,000-plus kids have opted in, they are all welcome back. And they will be welcomed back – our kids who have opted in will be welcomed back to school on Monday, April 26th. Everything will be ready for them, regardless of grade level. Obviously, there's been changes in the CDC guidance for elementary school that we are implementing, but even with the existing six-foot rule in middle schools and high schools we'll be able to accommodate the kids who want to come back. So, this'll be all grades. Opt-ins will be honored starting on Monday the 26th. And we're really excited for the kids who have chosen to come back, for the families who have chosen to come back. We're really excited to have the opportunity for them to have in-person learning again – obviously, the highest and best form of education – and this will help them to come back strong this year and preparing for next year when we're going to welcome back all our kids.

Okay. Now, let's talk about one of the communities of our city, this very special moment for the Muslim community tonight, the holy month of Ramadan begins. It is a time of reflection and it's a time of faith, a time where people really think about their family and their community. And we want to support the Muslim community in this special time, but especially as we all fight COVID together. So, on Saturday, I was at a pop-up vaccination site at Al-Masjidu Adam in the Bronx, a great turnout of people from the community. And the site is open to everyone, was obviously particularly important for members of the Muslim community in the Bronx to have a place that they were familiar with and connected to. But the site welcomes everyone in a part of the Bronx very hard hit by COVID. So, it was a great – a great step. I want to thank everyone who was a part of putting together this site, and you're going to see more, like them like this site in mosques and Muslim community centers around the city. And we're going to be working with all faiths, all houses of worship, because we found this has been really effective way to get more people to come in and be vaccinated in a setting that they trust and feel comfortable in. So, good news for the Muslim community. I want to wish *Ramadan Mubarak* to all our Muslim brothers and sisters this very special time.

Okay, let's go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, very good, 167 patients. One of the lowest we've seen in quite a while and I hope that's a sign of things to come. The confirmed positivity level, 57.89 percent. Hospitalization rate per 100,000 is 3.12. Again, that's getting lower. That's a good thing. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – today's report, 2,773 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19 – today's report – again, we see some good signs all around in these numbers – today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 5.27 percent. Let me say a few words in Spanish both about the announcement on the schools opt-in and our focus on bringing back our cultural community.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

**Moderator:** Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Commissioner Chokshi, Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma, Chancellor Porter, Health + Hospitals CEO Dr. Mitchell Katz, and MOME Commissioner de Castillo. With that, we'll go to Juan Manuel from NY1.

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

**Mayor:** Good, Juan Manuel. How are you doing today?

**Question:** Very good, thank you. Mayoral candidate Andrew Yang says that New York City is not enforcing rules against unlicensed street vendors. Do you have a reaction to that? And any thoughts on the mayoral race?

**Mayor:** I'll speak to this specific issue. We – look, we just did an important action with the City Council a few weeks back to continue to reform the laws and rules related to street vending. The important point here is to understand that folks who do this work, the street vendors, are overwhelmingly immigrants trying their best to feed their families trying to get a way forward. And for many it's the first opportunity they have to establish their own business and then build from there. So, we have to respect that, and at the same time, you know, we need people to follow the rules and follow the laws. And, of course, there's going to be enforcement. We got to strike a balance as always. The vendors, I respect them and all they're trying to do for their families. And I've said so many times – look, especially after what's happened with COVID, our historic brick-and-mortar stores, so many family businesses, mom-and-pop businesses, they've been struggling, and we got to always strike a balance and it can be done. So, I believe that's the way forward. I believe we've made progress with the recent legislation and we'll keep building on that. Go ahead, Juan Manuel.

**Question:** And there are also reports that there's a sense of disappointment on the left in New York City, the way the mayor's race is unfolding. I mean, I think we can consider you as part of that left in the city. Are you disappointed about what you see in the race right now?

**Mayor:** I do come from the left and I'm proud of it. And this is why this last week, I just need to comment, Juan Manuel – and you'll appreciate, you've observed things so closely for so long. I mean this last week in New York State, finally getting higher taxes on the wealthy and demanding the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes was a crucial moment. Everyone who has fought for that for years and years should be proud. Everyone who fought for legalizing marijuana the right way should be proud. There's so many victories we've seen in recent months, finally, that really reflect what progressive movements have been doing for years and years and progressive candidates and people who won those races and flipped the State Senate. There's so much here that really came from years and years of hard work and I'm proud, in this city, the changes we've made, really coming out of a time in which I think the wealthy and the elites were favored, creating a city that is much more about working people. So, all of this is adding up to

something. I think this mayoral race is still young, really. I mean, it's striking to me, Juan Manuel. The issues haven't crystallized yet. The clear visions of the candidates haven't, I think, come through or they have to do a better job articulating or both. I think there's a lot of time on the clock here, but I think this city wants progressive leadership. I really do. I think this city, at its heart, is a progressive city and people worked hard for change, and they want to see that change keep growing. But I think it's going to take time for these candidates to get their ideas out and for folks to really start to focus on this election.

**Moderator:** Next to Samantha from 1010 Wins.

**Question:** Hi. Can you hear me?

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

**Question:** I'm good, how are you? Thanks. So, currently I'd like to know – I guess this is for a Chancellor Porter – how many teachers or what percentage of teachers are still remote due to health exemptions, and will it be an issue with 50,000 kids coming back? If there is a large amount, will that affect in-person learning and will the DOE make vaccinated teachers who had a health exemption come back?

**Mayor:** I'll start Samantha and I'll pass to the Chancellor. 50,000 kids coming back is wonderful and we feel very confident we can accommodate them well with the folks we have now. So, I really want to emphasize that we feel very good about our ability to bring kids back, get them a great education in-person, maximize the number of kids that will be going five days a week with the team that we have now. With that, I'll turn to the Chancellor.

**Schools Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter:** Yeah, I agree. Thank you. I agree with the Mayor, we feel quite confident that with the team we have in place now, we can accommodate the families that have chosen to opt-in. Our goal has been to get as many students back in as want to, which is why we opened the opt-in window. And we look forward to welcoming them back into our communities, but also working with schools to ensure that we can get as many kids in for five days a week as possible.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Samantha.

**Question:** Will this affect how many days, you know, if some kids are going like five days now or four days, will it reduce the amount of days for some students? Have you looked at the logistics on that?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'll start, and I'll turn to the Chancellor again. No, any child who's in school right now, their days will remain the same. If we can increase the number of days, we will. Our goal is to continue getting more kids, more days. Chancellor.

**Chancellor Porter:** Correct. Yeah. We – it's our expectation that the student will remain in the program that was created for them. And as we bring more students in, we hope to get as many of

them in five days a week. But without interrupting the current schedules that exist for students today.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

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

**Question:** Hey, Mayor de Blasio. How are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good, Katie. How you been?

**Question:** I've been good. I've been great. Got to ride my Cyclone after you on Friday. And I got your photo as a keepsake, so it's one of my prized possessions now.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Do you have the – do you have the same bruises I have?

[Laughter]

**Question:** It was – I got my photo too, and I look very, very terrified. It gets scarier every year. I've been riding it since I was a kid writing, and it only gets worse. But my question is not about the Cyclone. It's actually following up on Samantha's question. I knew she asked specifically how many teachers have received health accommodations, and that wasn't answered. So, I'm curious if you have that number, Chancellor Porter, and I guess when will there be a reset? Will next year, there will never be an option for remote teaching? Could you just explain that a little bit, for those on health accommodations?

**Mayor:** I'll start, and I'll pass to the Chancellor. I'll see if the Chancellor has the exact number. If she does great, if not, we'll certainly get it to you. Look, next year is a very different reality, Katie. We are really, really looking forward to September. We're well on the way to getting a huge number of people vaccinated. I think September is going to be an entirely different environment. So, we'll be resetting all the rules as we go into the next school year. Go ahead, Chancellor.

**Chancellor Porter:** Yes, we have about 28,000 teachers on an accommodation, and to the Mayor's point we're working to reset for next year. We are in a very different place than we were a year ago today. And so, we're looking forward to resetting what our system looks like with our staff members coming back.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Katie.

**Question:** Thanks. And you know, someone asked me this question this morning, but I said, I'd ask on their behalf. Do you know when the City's Marriage Bureau will reopen for in-person weddings?

**Mayor:** I don't, but we will get you that answer today. It's certainly, you know, with the right restrictions in place, I assume we can do that. Let me just see if Dr. Chokshi happens to know that answer. Do you, Dr. Chokshi?

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Sir, I don't know the answer, but we'll be happy to look into it.

**Mayor:** Okay. We will get you that answer, Katie. And we obviously want to give people that opportunity with a smart approach, but we – it's a good question. We will get you a good answer.

**Moderator:** Next is James from PIX11.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Thanks for taking my call.

**Mayor:** How are you doing today, James?

**Question:** I'm doing well. And let me point out also that SAG-AFTRA also represents television and radio journalists, including many people on the call. Just want to make that clear.

**Mayor:** I did not know that honestly, and I'm glad to hear that. And obviously we want to accommodate everyone from the TV and film community at that vaccination site. So, if you haven't gotten a vaccination, come on down. If you haven't gotten vaccinated, come on down, James.

**Question:** Okay. And everyone on the call, heads up. And I have gotten vaccinated. Thank you. And now to the question, regarding the opt-in for in-person learning, it's 50,000 to 51,000 students, can you just react to that number? I mean, it does still mean that hundreds and hundreds of thousands of students are – and their families – are choosing to not go in-person. 51,000 people, 51,000 students. How much of an endorsement of the safety of in-person learning is this actually?

**Mayor:** It's a really good question, James, but I want to say, first of all, you are a true New Yorker that 51,000 kids doesn't seem like a lot to you. 51,000 kids is more than the size of many large school systems in urban America. So, it's a lot of kids. Now, what do I think is going on here? My view, and I'll get the Chancellor in this too – my view is, a lot of parents were really focused on the schedule question. They had gotten into a schedule that worked for them with remote. The kids had gotten used to, and liked the teachers they had, and they didn't want to disrupt that. I think that's where most parents were at. I think there's a growing understanding that's been going on for months that schools are very, very safe. I don't think that's the problem here. I think it's about what works with people's lives. And, you know, for some parents, it was just so important, their kids really needed that in-person connection again. And that was the number one factor. And that's – I think those are the parents, those are the kids who opted in. But for others, you know, especially because it's late in the school year, I think they wanted the continuity they had. Go ahead, Chancellor. Do you want to comment on that?



**Chancellor Porter:** Yeah, I agree. You know, we really wanted this opportunity to give parents an option to opt back in, should they want to. But we always respected the decisions that parents were making at this time. And to the Mayor's point, families have adjusted to a schedule and didn't want to have further disruption, but there were families who saw this as an opportunity to get back in and to get in for more days. And so, we're looking forward to welcoming all of our students back in person, all 50,000 of them.

**Mayor:** Excellent. Thank you. Go ahead, James.

**Question:** Talk about – I mean, but let's note then that there's still some 700,000, at least 700,000 students, that are choosing to not be in-person. Those families, what do you have to say to them regarding next year? Some are still expressing concern, especially noting that by September, it's not clear that children will be able to be vaccinated. It's still expressing concern about health and safety despite the low numbers that you cite regarding infection. They're still concerned. What can you do to increase their feeling comfortable sending their kids back in the fall?

**Mayor:** James, it's a really important question, and I'm going to start and turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. I'm going to start as a parent. You know, my kids went to New York City public schools the whole way through, health and safety of your kids is the number one consideration for all parents, unquestionably. We're in the beginning of April still. By the beginning of September, you're going to see such widespread vaccination in this city. And I really believe you're going to see a very low level of cases citywide, and I think it's going to be an entirely different environment. We're going to continue so many of the measures that have worked in our schools. I think the vast majority of parents are going to want their kids back in school five days a week. And that's what we're planning on. We're preparing for the possibility that some parents may still want remote, but I think the idea here is it's one or the other, either a kid's in school five days a week period, or they're remote five days a week, no more blended. I don't think we'll have any need for that. And I think when the schedule is clear and consistent, and there's ample evidence of the health and safety, the vast majority of parents will want their kids back in school. I truly believe that. Dr. Varma, Dr. Chokshi, do you want to comment?

**Senior Advisor Jay Varma:** Sure. Yeah, I can go first. Thank you, and Mr. Mayor, for the question. I first want to say that we fully understand why some parents may feel more comfortable having their kids continue in remote learning. We are still in the middle of a very difficult fight against this epidemic, and there are many people that still remain quite concerned. So, I do think the single most important thing we can do to build confidence is to control the epidemic. So, that means everybody persisting with all of these critical measures, like wearing masks, keeping distanced, washing their hands, getting tested, and then even getting vaccinated as soon as they can. And I think if we continue to do all the things, I am quite optimistic that during the summer months, we're going to see our disease rates dropped quite dramatically. And I think that's going to really increase people's confidence that New York can control this epidemic successfully and keep their school safe. So, I think that's the single most important thing. I think related to that, we need to continue the open dialogue that, you know, the Chancellor and her team have already started, and I've had the privilege to participate in many community discussions and need to understand what the remaining concerns are and do our best

to address them. But I do think that it's going to be a very changing situation over the next couple of months, where we're going to see the epidemic under increasing control. We're going to see more availability, eligibility for vaccines, but we also need to continue to listen and try to understand and address the concerns of people who still are worried later on.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Dr. Chokshi.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Thanks, Mr. Mayor. And I agree with what Dr. Varma has said. I just want to underline one point, which is that the reason that we have brought to bear these multiple layers of safety and precautions to keep schools as safe as possible is not just for the educational benefit that we know flows from keeping schools open, by keeping them safe, but also because of the health benefits that come along with opening schools as well. Certainly, for the health of the children who are being served in the schools but also there are these reverberating effects for the health of families as well. The stress, you know, that so many parents have felt over the last year. These are very worthy missions for us to take on with respect to keeping schools open by keeping them safe.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Next is Marcia from WCBS.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today? And how's everybody on the call?

**Mayor:** Hey, doing well, Marcia. How you been?

**Question:** Good. Thank you. So, over the weekend, there was a 12-year-old who was shot, and his grandmother says it's now turned into – the city has turned into an area of kill or be killed and shootings last week were up 257 percent. Given the fact that major crimes are up substantially in virtually every category, how is this not a rebuke of your policing strategy and your guns strategy?

**Mayor:** Marcia, we are going to fight back this challenge, there's no question about it. It's a real thing. We understand since the pandemic hit, we've seen more gun violence. Overall, crime actually went down last year, but the gun violence problem went up and that's not acceptable and we will fight it back. We're going to fight it back with the NYPD working closely with communities. We're going to fight it back with a lot of gun arrests, which is exactly what you're seeing. The NYPD is doing an outstanding job with gun arrests. We will turn the tide. We have before in this city. We have to do it again. We will do it again. We will not accept violence in this city. Go ahead, Marcia.

**Question:** I have to ask a question for one of my colleagues who's doing a story about the lack of 3-K and pre-K seats for special education students. 100 organizations have signed a letter asking you and the DOE to use the influx of federal funding to address the ongoing issue. Apparently these hundred organizations say special needs students are being left behind because for years

there have not been enough seats. What promise can you make the parents waiting for early interventions as the City allocates that influx of federal funding?

**Mayor:** Thank you, Marcia. Very important question. We are right now working on this issue because we do not ever want to leave kids with special needs behind. And this is something that a lot of parents have raised. They want to see us take a different approach with early childhood education. We're working on that right now. We'll have more say on that in the next couple of weeks, but no, it's a real concern. I want all parents to know out there we take it very, very seriously, and we will have more to say on this very soon.

**Moderator:** Next is Michael from the Daily News.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey Michael, how you been?

**Question:** I'm doing okay. I wanted to ask you about this no-knock search that happened out in Far Rockaway. And trying to get a sense of what needs to be done to avoid situations like this in the future? I mean, this could have turned out much differently than it did, and clearly the family seems to be really traumatized by it. How can we kind of avoid these things moving forward? And what's being done to kind of, to look at the situation and rectify it now?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Michael, I think you raised a very important point. This is something we've got to reevaluate now. You're right. That could have gone in a very bad direction. We've got to really do everything we can to avoid something like that happening. We got to figure out a policy that makes sense in light of everything we've learned over the years and some of the tragedies we've had. So, that's a discussion we're having right now with the NYPD to determine where we need to go. But I do think the previous policy needs to be re-evaluated. Go ahead, Michael.

**Question:** Thanks Mr. Mayor. The other question I had, and this might be something for the Chancellor as well. Is the City, is the Department of Education getting any indication that you know, more teachers are lining up to retire after, you know, like a very difficult year? I know, you know, earlier, last year we saw more police putting in papers. Are we seeing any trends as far as the Department of Education goes with teachers saying, you know, I'm ready to put in my papers?

**Mayor:** I'll turn to the Chancellor. I have not been hearing that to date Michael, but the Chancellor can tell you what she knows or we can get you a follow-up. Look, it's been a very tough year, but there's also tremendous commitment amongst our educators to their kids. I think people are really looking forward to schools coming back in-person in September. And a lot of educators deeply miss the experience of being directly connected to kids the way they were before. So, I think we've got a lot of folks who will be committed for the long haul. And there's also a whole new generation coming up that would love to teach in the New York City public schools. But Chancellor, do you have any numbers on that?

**Chancellor Porter:** Yes. Retirements are down over 20 percent from last year. And resignations are down almost 43 percent compared to the year prior. And to your point, folks have been really showing up and, you know, so super dedicated and committed to our schools and to our students. We've also been thinking prior to the pandemic about how to build our pipeline programs because we knew we had a wave of potential retirements coming and that's pre-pandemic. So, we continue to do that work and looking forward to build our recruitment opportunities going forward.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more. First we'll go to Alex from Chalkbeat.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. My first question was just I know that you all have reported on the number of students who have opted back in to in-person learning, but the DOE has not said how many students are actually showing up to buildings on a regular basis. We know how many are eligible, we don't know how many are actually going into buildings. I'm wondering if that's a piece of information that you can commit to releasing?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Alex, absolutely. Whatever we have in the way of accurate and up-to-date information, I want to get out there. We understand kids and families are going through a lot. There are and the Chancellor's talked to me a lot about this and I'll let her go next, that families are seeing all sorts of disruptions and older kids having to take care of younger kids, a whole host of things that are not like what we see in normal years. So, we have seen some variation over time, for sure. But we also know that the vast majority of kids who are signed up for in-person are participating very intensely and it means so much to them. There's no question. The in-person means so much in the middle of what we're going through now. Chancellor, you want to speak to that?

**Chancellor Porter:** Sure. I'll just say, we know that that's been a question and our team is preparing numbers to share around what attendance has been, what it's looked like. And the Mayor's correct. We've been very clear that we need to work with our families, as this a difficult time and our older students are supporting their brothers and sisters at home also. Our average daily attendance rate across the city is 89.3 percent. And that is what in-person students. And so again, we're happy to get more information, but that's where we are at this moment.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead, Alex.

**Question:** Yeah, just want to, I just want to note though that that doesn't actually tell us how many students are coming in or have come in multiple times to the building. So, I appreciate that attendance figure, but the data I'm actually interested in is like the number of students who have come into buildings two or more times this year. But to a second point, I just wanted to clarify – the move to three feet in elementary schools, will that be all elementary schools? Or will that be just some elementary schools that you know, don't have the space to maintain six feet? Can you just clarify, like which campuses will be three feet versus six feet?

**Mayor:** Sure, Alex. First of all we're going to go through a process with each school that has kids opting in. There'll be a process working with the school community, working with the parents to determine the way forward so everyone's informed and a part of it, gets to offer their input. There are definitely schools and the Chancellor will certainly add but let me just set it up. There are definitely schools where – elementary schools, where we can keep everything at six feet and accommodate the kids who have opted in. And that's ideal. Where we can do that, we certainly want to do that. We're going to be working things out, looking forward to the 26th. We have two weeks to get everything ready. And you know, we really think we'll make it work under any situation. We can keep it at six feet, that's great. If we're moving to three feet, we'll obviously do it in a way that's safe. Chancellor, you want to add?

**Chancellor Porter:** Yes. I'll just add really quickly, we know every school has an individual need, as it relates to the numbers that have changed. For some schools, just even with the number of students who have opted back in, they have fine at six feet. There are a few schools that we need to look at and they're going to be working with their families, they are going to be working with community, there is going to be an engagement process to discuss that. But our goal is to get the students back into school.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Last, we'll go to Henry from Bloomberg.

**Mayor:** Henry. Henry? Henry, are you there?

**Moderator:** Henry, do we have you? We don't seem to have, Henry.

**Mayor:** Who do you have? Let's give Henry one more chance and then go to someone else. If we don't have Henry, we'll get him tomorrow. Henry, are you out there? Who else do you got?

**Moderator:** Henry, we owe you a question tomorrow. We're going to go to Steve from WCBS Radio.

**Question:** Hey, happy Monday, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

**Mayor:** Happy Monday, Steve. It's a good day. We're making something happen today.

**Question:** Yes. Yes. First on schools, and I wanted to follow up on some of these numbers here. Kind of a follow-up to James's question, I guess. Knowing that this was a big roller coaster ride to get here, there were spats with – not, yeah, not notwithstanding what happened on Friday.

**Mayor:** That's right. You give me flashbacks, Steve.

**Question:** You know, you went through a lot with the union, with the State, with parents to get to this point where we know that for the remainder of this school year, it's going to be about a third of city students that'll be having some in-person experience. Is that the number you

expected at the outset of this? And, you know, would you have gone through [inaudible] that would be the number here at the end?

**Mayor:** Yes, Steve. Look, I think this whole year has taught us that, you know, when you're dealing with constant unpredictability and everyone trying to do their best to make sense of a really tough situation, you shouldn't have an expectation. You should just try – and you know, what we try to do is give parents and kids options, hear what they needed and do our best to respond to it. What I felt strongly from the beginning, Steve, was schools had to be open. That there were a lot of kids who really needed to be in school in-person. There's a lot of parents who really, really wanted it. And again, let's remember as New Yorkers, we get a little jaded to numbers. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of kids. By any measure, a huge part of our city and a precious part of our city. So, the fact that we were able to help hundreds of thousands of kids to get in-person learning and all the support that comes with it. Because remember, it's not just sitting in a classroom, it is the support you get from educators, from social workers, from guidance counselors, it's a community. And a lot of kids were hurting and their families were going through so much and kids lost family members and they needed that love and that support. So, the fact that we made it available from the beginning, even with the imperfections along the way, I think that's what we were really called to do. To help families and kids have that opportunity. And it didn't work for everyone and that's fine. But what it has done is for hundreds of thousands of kids and hundreds of thousands of families, it gave them a lifeline during this crisis. It also taught us how to prepare to bring back school for everyone in September. And that's another really big silver lining here. So, you know, I'm content that we offered the opportunity several times for kids to come back. This is the group of families that want their kids back. And now our job is to serve them for the next few months as best we can. And then in summer, we're going to have a lot more to say on that as soon too, to open up the doors wide this summer for kids who want that support as well. Go ahead, Steve.

**Question:** I appreciate that. And I wanted to discuss crime as well. There seems to be, I don't know, a growing disconnect that, you know, are we still in this perfect form that you're – you like to discuss when we talk about crime. You know, we're still seeing some alarming numbers. I know the March crime stats of 2020 may not be comparable because we were in a very different reality in March 2020. But you know, it seems like there's this kind of disjointed message coming out. I saw a tweet from Commissioner Shea talking kind of linking the decrease in prison population with the increase in crime. Your press secretary put out a tweet kind of rebuking that. So, we're seeing this disjointed message. It seems like you and the Commissioner aren't on the same page on a really core policy topic here? And people seem to be, you know, looking for answers on the crime numbers right now. What kind of reassurances can you give them that there are fresh approaches happening here?

**Mayor:** There's absolutely fresh approaches happening because that's what we do. I mean, that's what the NYPD has always done. That's what we do here. We're all working together, the same goal. Look, a couple of things that are really important here, Steve. It is a really good question. I thank you for it. First is to remember our court system is not functioning right now and that is making it bad for everyone. And we need to bring our courts back. And I'm asking everyone, please – this is something that the State of New York has to do. We don't run the courts. The State of New York needs to bring back our court system. We will do everything we can to help

them with the health and safety measures. Obviously, there's more and more vaccination happening. Everyone's eligible now. I've said we should have dedicated vaccinations for jurors and court officers, folks that work in DA offices, whatever it takes. But the central problem right now is that there's not a functioning justice system that allows everything else to work. And we need to bring that back. I think you made a really important point, Steve, that you can compare statistics, but it doesn't really tell you much if you're comparing against the extraordinary aberrant reality of March last year, when we went into just a horrible hellish situation. What we need to look at is what has worked previously when we've had challenges with gun violence, what has worked? And what has worked – CompStat brought us back from the horrors of the 1990s, much, much worse than anything we've seen now. The kinds of numbers we're seeing now, they're unacceptable. We will turn it around. They're not that different than some of what you saw during the Bloomberg years, but we turned them around. We will use every strategy to get guns off the streets, to reduce the shootings, to glue things back together. And it really does matter getting the court system going, getting the economy going again, getting kids back in school in large numbers in September. All of these things are going to turn the tide. So, it'll take a lot of work, but there's going to be an absolute spirit of innovation and applying all the tools we need. And very, very important to recognize in the middle of all this, the NYPD has had the highest number of gun arrests we've seen in 25 years. So, they're out there doing the job, getting the guns off the street. We're just going to do a lot more of that going forward to get this right.

Okay, everyone, look, as we conclude today remembering we've got a long road ahead and we will come out of this crisis, but what is so powerful to see is New Yorkers coming forward, helping each other, helping to bring this city back and getting vaccinated. So, today we're able to tell you over five million vaccinations from the beginning, a lot more to come. You want to bring your city back? Go out and get vaccinated. We need you. We have more and more vaccination centers than ever. It's easier than ever. It's free. Get vaccinated and participate in the comeback in New York City. And it's going to be an amazing story what happens in 2021. We need everyone to be a part of it. Thank you, everyone.

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