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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. So, we've been talking about it for days now – we are in the midst of trying to fight back – fight back against a second wave of COVID taking on New York City. And we need to remember our ability to fight back, the power of all New Yorkers to fight back. We're in the middle of something really tough right now and we see such painful realities all over the country, but New York City continues to be strong and New Yorkers are doing the right thing. Let me tell you just about testing alone. This last week, almost 300,000 New Yorkers went and got tested. On Friday alone – this last Friday, almost 75,000 New Yorkers got tested. That is crucial to our ability to fight back this disease. That is New Yorkers taking matters into their own hands in the best way. And I'm also seeing all over the city, an extraordinary amount of mask usage. We need to keep deepening that. Dr. Chokshi will talk about that in just a moment. But look, the things we've talked about from the beginning, starting with testing, that's what works. So, I'm going to keep saying it to everyone – if you haven't been tested, get out there. It's available. It's free. It's easy. It's quick. If you haven't been tested at all, get tested. If you haven't been tested in a while, get tested. It makes such a huge difference at this moment. And so many New Yorkers are responding and I think New Yorkers understand after the heroic efforts of these last eight months, that it really makes a difference what each person does. So, we're going to keep talking about this. We've seen such horrible problems around the country. We know everyone's going through a lot of fatigue, but New Yorkers are tough and New Yorkers are resilient and we can keep fighting back this second wave. It will not be easy. If anyone says, look at what's happening around us, isn't it overwhelming, the challenges we face? We face profound challenges, that is true. But the way to respond to these challenges is not to give up and not to be mesmerized by the extent of the problem, but to remember our ability to fight back, that's the only thing that's going to make a difference.

So, we're going to talk about the things that matter – testing, obviously; mask usage. Tough things we're going to ask people, like not traveling for the holidays. Again, it pains me to suggest it, but it's what we need. People really should not travel for these holidays, really should keep family gatherings as small as possible. It won't be easy, but it's the best way to stop this upsurge that we've seen lately.

Now, let's talk about our schools. It's on everyone's minds. I'll go over the indicators in a moment. But, today, New York City schools are open. Tomorrow, they will be open as well. We've got a fight ahead to keep them open, but I'm not giving up and you shouldn't give up either. Every day that we can keep our schools open is a blessing for our children and our families. So, we set the three percent standard, and that was part of how we were able to open our schools to begin with. I remind people, if you go back to August, September, many, many

Doubting Thomases. Many folks said New York City public schools would never open, the largest school system in the country. I am proud to say that so many of us believed they could open and they needed to open it and we could do it safely, and we did do it safely. Now, a lot of the same people are saying, look how safe our schools are. Well, that's a blessing. They are safe. It's been amazing. And thanks to parents and students and educators and staff and our health care workers who have done so much to keep our schools safe. But we made a promise that we would set a gold standard for safety in our schools, that we would provide every conceivable measure, whether it's face coverings for all students and staff alike, social distancing, ventilation, constant cleaning – so many measures – 10 kids in a classroom, typically – things you couldn't have imagined. All of those measures together have kept our schools safe. But we also said that we would hold to a three percent threshold. We said that to give people confidence that we will put health and safety first, and we have put health and safety first, and we will put health and safety first. So, we're sticking to that threshold and I believe there's still a chance to fight back this disease and keep our schools open for a good while ahead. But if that is not our reality, if, in fact, we surpass the threshold, then we will have the immediate effort to get schools back and get them back quickly.

In the meantime, our Learning Bridges Initiative, our childcare will be available for essential workers and for anyone in particular need, according to the priorities we've set. And we're going to make sure to accommodate those who have those great needs. But, remember, we're not to that point yet. Our schools remain open and you can help them remain open by participating, by going out and getting tested if you haven't, by wearing a mask, by practicing social distancing, by helping everyone in your life know to avoid indoor gatherings, particularly without masks on. So, again, it gets back to what you can do, particularly as the weather gets colder, the bars being raised on us, that what we have to do is more and more to fight back. But, again, this is the place that fought back before and succeeded. So, here to tell you about how important it is to wear masks and the other measures that we need to implement right now to fight back this second wave, our Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. As New Yorkers, we all know someone who has been affected by COVID-19. For some of us, it has been a firsthand, often painful, sometimes lingering experience. For others, it's someone near to us who suffered because of the virus, perhaps a neighbor, a friend, or a relative. Or, it may be someone we know, even if we don't know their full name – the bus driver, barber bodega owner, and the people who write the news that you read every day. What those fellow New Yorkers went through must be a reminder of what's at stake right now. Many of us are experiencing pandemic fatigue. Look, I get it, but we can't let COVID fatigue turn into compassion fatigue. Trying to prevent more suffering is why I won't be traveling or seeing people who are so close to me this holiday season. We do have some difficult weeks ahead, and what we do, what we say and the choices that we make, they all send a message. Making that decision not to host a holiday gathering and telling your loved ones why conveys a message of care and caution for those who are closest to you.

We have suffered so much from the spread of the virus, but we have to remember that positive behavior spreads as well. One important action that we're asking all New Yorkers to take is to mask up both outdoors and indoors, anytime you're outside of your own home. That includes

when you're getting together with people whom you know well, whether they're friends or relatives beyond your immediate family. The virus takes advantage of our familiarity and often transmits in smaller social gatherings, such as birthday parties, or friends gathering to watch the big game. That's why our new Health Department campaign, indoors or outdoors, keep your face covering on, is reminding New Yorkers that COVID-19 can spread easily indoors, particularly as the weather becomes colder. So, unless you're younger than two, or you have a medical condition that prevents wearing your face covering, please wear it indoors and outdoors, and make it into an everyday routine just like putting on your jacket or coat before you head out. The CDC recently affirmed that face coverings protect those who wear them and that mask in someone else's home or wherever you may encounter them is yet another message of care for those around you.

In the days ahead, spreading these positive actions must be more contagious than the virus itself. That's how we're going to get through this together.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Dr. Chokshi. And that's a clear message to us all, everything we need to. And, remember, there's so many reasons for hope. The extraordinary efforts of New Yorkers over these months should give you hope. The fact that there is now real progress on a vaccine and we can see the day when the vaccine starts to be distributed, coming closer and closer, and this city is ready to distribute that vaccine quickly once we get it. Obviously, the new leadership that we look forward to in Washington to help us out of this crisis. There was a lot of reasons for hope, but let's win this battle before us right now. And let's fight this immediate challenge by everyone doing what we all need to do to keep the coronavirus at bay.

And now, perfect segue to going over our indicators for the day. So, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, the threshold is 200 patients – again, interestingly day, 92 patients. Now, that's, that's a number we'd like to get lower, obviously. And we are always watching to see where this number will go, because it is a lagging indicator, but it still remains at a level that the hospital system is handling well. This confirmed positivity rate, though, continues to go up. That's obviously a concern – 44.2 percent. So, we're watching that carefully. New reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold 550. We've obviously gone far past that – today's report 1,057 cases. Very worrisome on its face, do juxtapose that though with the massive amount of testing that's now happening. Again, when 75,000 people get tested in a single day – that was Friday, the highest testing level we've had in the entire time of the coronavirus. Of course, you're going to see a more positive cases because we're finally getting more and more people tested as we've wanted to for a long time. So, some of that's explained by more testing. Obviously, some of that also shows the challenge that we're facing. And then number three, percentage of the people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold five percent – today's report is 1.68 percent and the seven-day rolling average 2.77 percent.

Now, a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, Dr. Ted Long, Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps., Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. And with that, we'll go to Rich Lamb from WCBS 880.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: How are you doing?

Question: I'm doing all right. So, let me just ask you a question about the school situation, the closure, and the three-percent trigger. So, given the Governor's recent statements about the three-percent trigger, and you must be aware of them, given the disruption an in-person shut down would cause and given the extremely safe environment that schools unexpectedly are since you made your three-percent pledge, how is it breaking a commitment or a promise to keep the schools open in the face of new facts? And why is rational flexibility not called for here?

Mayor: Rich, I appreciate the question, I really do. And it's something that we've talked through a lot. I've talked to the Governor multiple times about it. Our teams are talking, our health teams are talking in the city and between the City and the State. But, remember, it comes down to this, there is a second wave bearing down on us. We're trying to beat it back. We said we would make health and safety the priority. We said we would hold this standard. That was part of how we convinced everyone that it would be safe to come into the schools. Now, we did expect our schools to be safe. The only way I differ with you is to say it is not unexpected that our schools are safe. We expected them to be safe. We've been very, very impressed by the work everyone's done. They're extraordinarily safe. With that said, we set a standard. We asked everyone to trust it and believe in it. It's important to keep consistency with that. If we surpass that standard, and that is not a given, but if we do, then the conversation we're having with the State is how to quickly come back at what it's going to take. And, you know, the Governor spoke about this morning, we've been talking about additional testing measures, additional things that we could do to come back quickly. But it is important to recognize that we are dealing with a serious threat of a second wave that has real ramifications for all of us. And if we do have to shut down, we would work to come back very quickly with additional safety measures. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: Okay. So, let me follow up just by asking very directly, couldn't the Governor overrule you on this?

Mayor: Of course, the Governor has the power in so many areas because of this crisis and his emergency powers to make a range of decisions. But we've talked it through, our teams have talked it through, and I think there's a broad agreement that keeping faith with everyone, that the standard we put forward, being consistent about it, and then raising the bar for a comeback, but finding a way to come back quickly is the path forward.

Moderator: Next, we have Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, everybody. My [inaudible] about mask wearing, which we all know is very important. And this is part of outreach campaign from the Health Department. But I know this has been asked of you multiple times [inaudible] have a reluctance to wear masks, police officers. I know I covered a protest two weeks, many, many, many, many officers did not wear masks. They got mad when you asked them to put one on. So, I'm curious if the City is sort of doing more outreach or at least checking with its own employees to ensure that the City's employees are practicing what you're preaching terms up safety for the rest of us here in the city.

Mayor: That's a good question, Katie. And they have to. And we've had this conversation with City agencies – and many City agencies many times. They have to – I think there has been some real progress, I think there has to be more, and I think there has to be consequences for anyone who doesn't wear a mask. So that work continues. Sometimes particularly in public safety work or in health work, there may be a valid reason, but overwhelmingly all public servants should have those masks on, period, and they don't there should be consequences.

Question: Thanks, and my second question is about the testing being used and the [inaudible] schools. You know, we've seen the numbers fluctuate hugely, right, over the last few days, which is confusing to parents and teachers and administrators. So do you think we're trying to capture the second threat and the positivity rate, but when something can be sort of easily missed by huge groups of people [inaudible], I mean, is there a better way to make a decision that could affect, you know, more than a million students and everyone works there [inaudible] especially if you can certainly have a rush of people testing to skew a figure that was high a week ago.

Mayor: Okay, let me start and get Dr. Chokshi into this too. The truth is what we find when more and more people get tested. This has been what we've called for from the beginning. Obviously in the early months, we just weren't given the testing capacity we needed by the federal government, but now that we have more and more, thank God, we'll keep telling people the more people get tested, the clearer picture we get, if more and more people got tested and the positivity keeps going up that tells you something profound. If more and more people get tested and positivity level goes down, that is important and reassuring. So I would say, I think the positivity level is the truest measure, but we look at other measures as well. There are almost a million students, but let's be clear, you know, right now we're trying to make sure we understand who truly wants to be in school and who wants to be in remote. It's been about 300,000 students that have been in school. That community of kids and families is deeply affected, and I certainly can relate to it because I was a public school parent. I feel what they're going through now, but it's also the community of people that demanded of us that we ensure that the schools were as absolutely safe as they could be and demanded tough standards, and again, to me, it's absolutely crucial to keep faith with them. Dr. Chokshi want to speak about the testing piece?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes. Thanks Mr. Mayor, and you covered the high points here. I'll just reiterate that percent positivity; the test positivity rate is one of the most important measures. We've seen that in New York City, but that's also the experience of other municipalities, states, you know, countries around the world, and that's because it helps us understand what's happening over time with respect to how the epidemic is growing and spreading. The reason for that is that if we do see cases increasing then that is likely to be reflected in the test positivity

rate. We know this because the more people that get tested particularly when you have cases on the upswing that means that the percent positivity will go up concomitantly as well, and unfortunately we do have we do have predicates that we can look at around the country right now, where percent positivity rates continue to climb as those epidemics get worse. So as the Mayor said, that's one of the measures that we use in the panoply that we follow. You know, we're particularly looking with concern at the number of cases that are growing over time as well. But for the single measure that gives us the most information the test positivity rate is a good one.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Kala from PIX 11.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. I just wanted to – hi. I just wanted to know, after speaking with the Governor, would you be considering the Governor's suggestion for in the future setting a threshold within the schools and not the communities or the cities as a whole, because he keeps saying, and he's going back and forth a little bit, but the schools are now not the issue, it's restaurants and gyms.

Mayor: I don't think that's everything he's saying to be fair. I think the Governor's looking at the wholeness of this crisis, just like we are and restaurants and gyms, there's some particular concerns, but we've got something much, much bigger than just restaurants and gyms we're dealing with. But to your core question, yeah, we're going to look at different approaches, including what's happening in the schools, across the board, and then what's going on in specific schools and what we can do to ensure they are safe, including potentially additional testing. There's a lot of good discussion going on about how to strike that balance, but it all is against the backdrop where job one is to fight this thing back, and so I do – I think all of these questions are very, very valid, but I want to remind people, you know, every single time people do the things we're asking of them, they help us get to the heart of the matter, which is this disease can be defeated. We do not have to give into it, and that's where I want the first energy to be on it. Is everyone doing everything they can do to stop this? Is everyone wearing a mask to the maximum extent possible, doing their distancing? Has everyone unfortunately canceled their holiday travel because we need that, we need those smaller gatherings, local gatherings. I understand everyone wants to say, well, what is the government doing? These are fair questions, but we also have to ask ourselves, are we doing the maximum to fight this disease back? The more we do, the more we can keep open for the life of the city. Go ahead, Kala.

Question: I know you mentioned Learning Bridges. So I wanted to know what's going to happen with D-75 special needs schools, if schools shut down, and also what's the plan to keep remote learning attendance at an acceptable percentage, because we've seen this as a problem in the past when we shut down in March, and then of course at the beginning of the school year.

Mayor: Yeah, Kala it's a challenge, obviously when we can't see kids in person it is much harder in many ways to ensure attendance, I'll turn to the Chancellor on this as well. But we did find over time more and more ways to connect with families and create continuity and attendance,

and we're going to keep expanding those efforts for sure. What was the first part of your question, Kala, I'm sorry?

Question: I wanted to know what's happening with these 75 schools. You said Learning Bridges is open, but what about special needs?

Mayor: Yeah, we're working on that too, because I think it's fair to say all in-person education matters for our kids, but probably the kids who have the greatest needs and benefit the most from in-person education are our special needs kids, and so that's an area where we really want to figure out how we can protect, you know, those kids and their needs, and if we do have to shut down, get those back quickly, that would be a high priority. Chancellor, you want to speak to any of those issues?

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Yes, sir, I think you hit the top lines, but again, we're prioritizing all of our most vulnerable student populations, which includes our youngest students, but also include students in our D-75 schools, as you've mentioned. We've also learned quite a bit since we pivoted to remote learning in March, and part of that is a really robust system that schools have and borough offices have to track students and to intervene when we haven't heard from students, being able to be in-person learning since September 21st has also provided schools with the ability to make contact with students and have our teachers and our guidance counselors and social workers also involved as well as our parent coordinators in making contact with families as well. That won't change if we unfortunately have to pivot to all remote learning for a short time period, we'll just keep on making sure that we're tracking and we're intervening and looking for, and staying in touch with students as we go forward. But as the Mayor did mention all of our vulnerable student populations, it's much more difficult for them in an all remote-learning settings. So, we're being very, very cognizant about the interventions to make sure that we're serving them in the unfortunate that we have to for a short time pivot to in-person – remote learning.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I want to make sure I understand what you're saying about schools and coming back. I point out to you that when there were red zones and orange zones, the Governor allowed some schools to come back if they increased testing. So are you saying that if you had to close schools, when it goes to three percent, you will try to evaluate the schools and the ability to test and that you might be able to come back, even though the numbers might be over three percent, because you will be able to test more students, and that you would be able to make sure that the number of positive rate in the schools is below three percent?

Mayor: Yes, you hit the nail on the head.

Question: Could you, you know, say exactly what you mean?

Mayor: Well, you said it really well, but I'll add to it certainly if you want. Yeah, I mean, look, the State put forward that standard for the red zones and that model could make a lot of sense here. We're obviously going to talk it through with the State, as the Governor said this morning, and I've said, we need to keep a bond of trust with parents, with educators, with staff, we're going to be talking to all the stakeholders, but that is certainly one of the models that could work to say we'll do additional testing requirements, school by school, as part of the pathway back.

Moderator: Next is Alex from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask a question about remote learning more broadly. Obviously the school year was always going to be about remote learning to some degree, you know, even under the hybrid plan, the vast majority of students would be learning remotely on most school days, and now that we're sort of staring down the possibility of wider school building shutdowns, I'm wondering if you can give a pretty specific accounting of what the city has done to improve remote instruction since the spring?

Mayor: Yeah, let me start Alex and turn to the Chancellor, but I want to make a point, I think I disagree a bit with your frame. Do not forget that here it is, it's November 16th. It's very early in the school year. That's a hopeful reality for me. That means we have a long way ahead both to constantly improve the work we're doing, including the remote work, but also we have a long time ahead to maximize the possibility of our kids coming back, and I don't mean just in terms of a temporary shutdown this immediate problem, I'm saying the bigger picture. We now have vaccines emerging. That's the biggest factor here, obviously, in terms of our ability to not just bring back some kids, but potentially bring back all kids in the course of the school year. We have new leadership in Washington that I fundamentally believe is going to improve the fight against COVID and improve the level of trust people have in the vaccine, et cetera.

So, this ball game has just begun. The majority of the school year happens after January 1st, you know, basically three or four months before, and almost six months after January 1st. So I'm planning with the Chancellor and the whole team, not just for one scenario, but multiple scenarios. We said it in the very beginning. We might at various points have to go all remote, then go back to a mix, and then one day, I hope in this school year, we're going to be able to get to the point where we restore a five day a week education across the board. So everything is a point on the continuum, but to your question about how to improve remote, this is every day effort working with principals, working with teachers, working with the unions to figure out how to improve it and what we're learning. Even in the spring, under duress, we found people made some really great improvements and innovations that work is happening every week. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, so this is a question that I think we continue to answer and look, we've built tremendous capacity since we pivoted to remote learning in March and we're building upon that capacity. Teachers have ever undergone many hours of professional development, we've developed and made available digital curriculum and digital supports for students, teachers and parents. We're continuing to invest in the technology. So we've distributed over 300,000 devices. We're going to continue to distribute more devices as a need becomes apparent. We're working with the internet providers on providing Wi-Fi. We're providing LTE enabled devices

for students in temporary shelters. We're continuing to make sure that the scheduling that's happening in school is based on the continuum learning for students so that the teacher that's teaching in-person is coordinating with the teacher that's doing the remote learning, who is coordinating with those teachers that are doing 100 percent remote learning – why? To make sure that students are getting a continuum of education that is not different based on the venue that they're receiving their education. In addition to that, we're wrapping around the academic work that's happening with trauma informed curriculum and pedagogy. We've got tens of thousands of teachers that have been trained in that. We're looking at how do we then continue to move the education for students, whether it's in person or remotely, within a grading policy that makes sense, given the pandemic that we're all facing. So there's a ton of work that continues to be done and that we've done, but again, this is all – and the Mayor has been very clear about this – you can never replace in-person learning. There is a magic that happens when there is a caring well-trained adult in the classroom with the student that you can never replace and it's a fool's errand if anyone is trying to equate the fact that well, remote – it, you know, you have work to do in remote because, you know, we hear all of these stories. We're educators. We understand that, but it's important to also understand that we're trying to make it the best we can and we're doing better and better every single day, but we're not satisfied yet.

Mayor: Go ahead Alex.

Question: Yeah. I mean, I'm wondering if you could just speak a little bit more specifically though about like, what the city is really doing to improve remote teaching? Like, I understand that you guys have, you know, bought hundreds of thousands of devices, but that's kind of a separate question from the quality of what's actually delivered on those devices. And so I'm just wondering if you could speak a little bit more specifically other than, you know, trainings which I understand have been made available, but are also often optional. Like what the City's – like, what the DOE's strategy really is here to improve the quality of remote teaching? I understand your point about it not being as good as in-person teaching, but the fact of the matter is, you know, the majority of instruction that's happening this year is happening remotely.

Mayor: The majority of instruction that's happening so far this year. And again, I've just wanted to keep us – Alex, I'm not negating your question, it's a very fair question. I just want to remind everyone we are on a continuum and it, you know, the frustrating reality of the coronavirus is it, everything changes all the time, which makes it really hard for us to make sense of, but don't miss the forest for the trees that, you know, our ability to profoundly address the situation has improved greatly in just the last few weeks because of the election and because of the announcements related to a vaccine development. We have a very different reality in a few months. So I just don't want us to get lost in this moment in time, but your question is fair, I'll start and pass to the Chancellor. I think Alex, this is a combination of the things that DOE centrally is doing, and that includes making sure there's enough devices and that includes providing for the training, and that includes using the supervisory structure of the executive superintendents and the superintendents to do quality control school by school and keep pushing them to hope, you know, creatively improve their remote learning and listening to the concerns we're getting back from parents and students. But ultimately a lot of this happens of course at the school level, principals and educators determining the adjustments they need to make. And I see

a lot of determination out there to do that, to keep improving, and Chancellor, you want to speak to that?

Chancellor Carranza: I think we've answered this question multiple times. I think you are right on the money, sir. I mean, every day we want to do better than the previous day, we respond every single day to whatever challenges arise from remote learning. We're developing more digital curriculum. We're adding more digital curriculum. We have more training, more supports for not only teachers, but also students and parents. We're solidifying our platforms. I mean, it's – I'm not really sure what else we can answer. We, like every school system across the country, are really working hard to make it as a positive and strong experience for students and for teachers every day possible.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah, good morning everyone, I guess like all my colleagues, I'm also wondering about the situation with schools. I think one thing that hasn't – I haven't heard come up yet is the question of the union's role here. What's your read on what the UFT wants? Do you see them, you know, kind of sticking to this idea of shutting across the board, shut down if the three percent threshold is reached? Do you think they're more flexible, amenable to a targeted cluster? And yeah could just bring us up to speed –excuse me –targeted shutdown, and can you just bring us up to speed in your latest discussions with them?

Mayor: Shant, you know, I want to respect the fact that we have a lot of conversations and the private conversations don't want to characterize past a point and obviously they can speak for themselves, but I can say is for months now, I've had multiple calls each week with both Michael Mulgrew and Mark Cannizzaro, the President of CSA, the administrator's union, and they've been very productive joined by the Chancellor and the First Deputy Mayor. We do these multiple times a week. We get a lot done. There's been ongoing dialogue. I think there's a tremendous concern for health and safety for everyone in the school community. There's also a consistently an understanding that in-person learning achieves much more for children than remote. And so we're having that conversation and I believe that unions are having a conversation with the State as well. Everyone's talking, trying to figure out the best approach. I think the simplest beginning is to say we set a standard, I think it was a fair standard of what would require a shutdown, but now we're all working together to figure out what's the quickest way back and the best standards for that quick turnaround. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah, thanks for that. So switching gears to the Biden administration, obviously all eyes are on the numerous crises in the city now, but yeah, just looking at it too, you know, maybe the end of your own term, would you take a position in the Biden administration or any other role in Washington looking ahead to this the new Democratic White House?

Mayor: I appreciate the question, look, I've got 14 more months of work to do, and I can't tell you what it's been like these last eight months have been all encompassing like every hour, every day, and that's where I'm going to keep my focus is getting us out of this crisis and getting the

city on with its recovery, and we will recover, I don't have a doubt in my mind. And the fact that there is a Biden administration is going to help us to speed up our recovery. So I will be right here until December 31st, 2021, and then, you know, I'm certain the future will take care of itself.

Moderator: We have time for two more. First up is Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, everyone on the call. Happy Monday.

Mayor: Happy Monday, Gersh, how are you?

Question: Thank you. For sure. Question for you Mr. Mayor to start, over the weekend Council Member Brad Lander proposed transferring responsibility for crash investigation from the NYPD to the DOT, because as Lander argued citing a lot of evidence, the NYPD very rarely holds criminal drivers accountable anyway, and it's crash investigations do not lead to changes in road design by the DOT anyway. The Lander proposal would also replace the NYPD's Traffic Enforcement with better road design and more enforcement cameras, which are not racially biased as many humans are. So what do you think?

Mayor: Well, I haven't seen the details of the proposal. I'd say a couple of things. One, I want to see more and better prosecution of motorists who harm or kill pedestrians, bicyclists, or other motorists. This something, Gersh, we've talked about for a long time. You know there's been progress on those laws, both in the city and in Albany, but there needs to be more. I still think there's a bias in the American legal system for the motorist in a way that does not value human life enough and we need to make continued reform on that front. That to me is the essence of the problem. I certainly want to see the NYPD as rigorous as possible and I don't think it's one thing or another. I think that there's been times when I've seen exactly what I want to see in terms of investigations, other times I think we have to do more. So I'm not sure the notion is just send it to DOT and everything's okay. That said, I think there is definitely an interesting point about maximizing the role of DOT on the follow-through when we find a problem that emerges from a crash that leads to the need for greater change. Vision Zero has been all about constant change and improvement. So if there's more DOT needs to do to connect what's happened with the crash to the actions we have to take. I certainly want to look at that, but I'd be careful on the the front end of this equation, not to miss the important role that the NYPD has to play. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. But just to follow up on that, you're definitely right about the bias in the legal system, but your Collision Investigation Squad only investigates about 250 crashes a year when there are in fact thousands of serious crashes per year, meaning so few crashes are even investigated. So would you at least commit to expanding the NYPD Collision Investigation Squad, so it can inform DOT decisions?

Mayor: I want the crashes that – there's obviously many different types, but the serious crashes, I want to make sure there's rigorous investigation follow through. If we need to put more personnel on that, that's something I'm very open to and something we will come back on and address. But I want to be clear, again I think part of the issue you're raising is an important issue. I want a very muscular approach by law enforcement to addressing when someone has recklessly

harmed another human being. So that's where, to me, taking them NYPD out of the equation actually is counterproductive. Making sure there are enough investigations and rigorous enough investigations and tough enough follow through by the NYPD and by prosecutors, by the way, is essential, and if we need to put more personnel on that, that's something I'm very open to.

Moderator: For our last question, we'll go to Alejandra from AM New York.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, I have another education question. So now that the opt-in period for blended learning has ended, when is the soonest that we can get updated enrollment numbers or blended learning, and does the city plan on releasing numbers – or I'm sorry – enrollment numbers for Learning Bridges?

Mayor: On the first point, the Chancellor can jump in here, obviously we want to get those numbers out on the opt-ins quickly. I think that will take at least a few days to make sure we have the final count right. And then as I talked about last week, we really want to work with parents to make sure that all the parents who are in blended really have their kids taking full advantage of it in classrooms. And then on Learning Bridges, we've seen, you know, so far steady uptake in it, not the numbers we were expecting. I'll have to get back to you on exactly when we can give you an update, but we can do that soon. My hope is both of those we can get a sense of this week. Chancellor you want to add?

Chancellor Carranza: Yes, sir. So the numbers on the opt-in we will have this week, we're busy crunching those numbers right now, and we'll know a school by school as well as the borough by borough, and then obviously system-wide.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Alejandra.

Question: Yeah, no, that's it. Thank you.

Mayor: Okay, great. Everyone look I'm going to conclude where I was earlier in this gathering. We've got to understand that with a second wave bearing down on us there's an opportunity to fight and there's an opportunity to beat this back. This is our last chance to fight and beat it back. Whatever happens here, New Yorkers are going to be strong and resilient and whatever happens here, thank God we're finally on the pathway to a vaccine and the bigger changes we need, but I don't want anyone to give up now when we still have a chance to beat this back. I'll talk to you about the indicators before, we see some areas where there's real concern, but we also see a lot more people getting tested. That's a very good thing. A very important thing. We see, thank God, the hospitalization is still a lot lower than one might've thought. That's a very good thing. We see our hospitals handling this crisis very well having learned tremendous lessons from the spring.

We are in this fight right now. So when it comes to New Yorkers and their ability to fight back, there is no such thing as a foregone conclusion, there is no such thing as saying New Yorkers are going to lose because we just assume they're going to lose. No, we have a chance to do something here, historic, but it all comes down to each of you. I think we understand that every individual action matters. We probably understand it in New York City better than anywhere else in the country. Obviously a lot of places have gone through such a tough time, and they also got

a lot of mixed messages from Washington and sometimes from their local leaders as well. And there also often wasn't enough devotion to data and science. What we tried to set up here was a simple concept, we're going to show you the numbers all the time, we're going to treat you like the adults you are and respect their intelligence and say, here's what's really happening, now it's your time to act on this information and New Yorkers have done it. We're asking you to go farther. We're asking you to wear this mask all the time. We're asking you to go out and get tested. We're asking you to change your holiday plans, to protect your family and all of us. And I know New Yorkers will answer the call and we can fight this back together. Thanks, everyone.

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