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NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 14, 2021, 10:30 AM

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON CBS' FACE THE NATION WITH  
MARGARET BRENNAN**

**Margaret Brennan:** A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City has the highest per capita death rate in the country, higher than any state in the U.S. Joining us now is Mayor Bill de Blasio. Good morning to you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, Margaret. How are you doing?

**Brennan:** I'm doing well. And I want to ask you about what's happening in your city right now, because we had Dr. Fauci on this program last Sunday, and he said he's very concerned about this new variant that's circulating in New York, because it has shown some resistance to antibody treatments and to the vaccine. What is your Health Department telling you about who's getting sick and where are they?

**Mayor:** Margaret, our health team is really hopeful at those points. We're vigilant about the variants, we don't take them lightly. But I got to tell you, we've now had 2.8 million vaccinations in New York City to date. That's more than the entire population of Chicago. The vaccination effort is moving very rapidly. We need a hell of a lot more supply, but it's moving. Hesitancy levels, going down. So, I'm really hopeful that we're going to stay one step ahead of the variants. So far, our health team says, in fact, the vaccine is effective against the variants we've seen, but I'll tell you, people should not let their guard down. Until this battle's over, keep wearing the mask, keep practicing the social distancing, and let's not get ahead of ourselves. We've got a pandemic to overcome here. We all have to do it together.

**Brennan:** Are people who were infected last spring, getting reinfected?

**Mayor:** We've not seen a lot of reinfection, Margaret. It is something our health team has studied carefully. We know that the science regarding COVID is still imperfect, but I'll tell you the answer is just to maximize the pace of vaccination. In New York City today, we could be doing over half-a-million vaccinations a week if we had more supply [inaudible] –

**Brennan:** The federal government directly provides you supply. Is the Biden administration not giving you enough?

**Mayor:** I think the Biden administration is doing an amazing job. I think it has been one of the greatest weeks in presidential history, honestly, what Joe Biden has pulled off. No, part of our problem is the State of New York. We don't get our fair share of vaccine for this city. We're vaccinating people, not just from the city, but also from the suburbs, surrounding states. We need

our fair share, but we don't have enough control of our own destiny. In this city and in cities around the country, this is something that has to be better going forward if we're really going to reach everyone who needs the vaccine.

**Brennan:** I want to ask you what you do have control of within your city. You detected the first COVID-19 case March 1st of last year. You waited until the 15th to shut down bars and restaurants, gyms, and schools. And, in fact, you tweeted yourself on March 15th, telling people to go out and get that one last drink at the bar. Why do you think you were so late in understanding the threat?

**Mayor:** Margaret, I'll tell you something. This is the anniversary of our first death, March 14th. We're doing a memorial tonight to remember everyone we lost and to keep their memories close in this city. But I'll tell you something, I was one of the first in America to shut schools, one of the first in America to shut bars and restaurants, and I called for shelter in place, one of the first. And unfortunately, my state government wouldn't agree to it. Governor Cuomo said shelter in place would be [inaudible] –

**Brennan:** That is true. That is true. You had that dispute very publicly with the Governor, but on the other coast, San Francisco's mayor, back on February the 25th, declared an emergency in her city before there was a single infection. We were looking at Italy, plenty of people sick there. The writing was on the wall, at least for her. Why didn't you see it?

**Mayor:** Margaret, as I said, we closed schools on the 15th. We closed bars and restaurants, tried to move shelter in place. But I'll tell you something, we were trying to make sure that we were working on the best health evidence while also protecting our children who needed to be in school. And this is something I've really focused on, as things have gotten better, keeping our schools open and bringing our schools back strong in September. This is the kind of thing we can now do with the stimulus money, thank God [inaudible] take care of kids [inaudible] –

**Brennan:** But do you feel responsible for that because the former CDC Director, Tom Frieden, has said that if you'd acted a week earlier, you could have saved 50 to 80 percent people.

**Mayor:** That's just not accurate. The fact is, the thing that would have been great, the thing that would have been powerful was shelter in place. When I called for it, Governor Cuomo wouldn't do it again. He said it would be “imprisoning New Yorkers.” I mean, that's just outrageous. We had an opportunity. That was the missed opportunity. If I had had local control, we would have done shelter in place.

**Brennan:** And I know you want more of that local control, as the Governor is politically embattled right now. You were one of the first Democrats in New York to call for Andrew Cuomo to resign. Do you actually think he will do that?

**Mayor:** I think he'll try to hold out, Margaret. I think he is used to getting things his way and it's been almost an imperial governorship. But I got to tell you, the folks in this state and the political leadership don't believe in him anymore. He doesn't have any credibility. So, I think an impeachment proceeding will begin and I think he will be impeached, and perhaps right before

that he'll decide to resign. That's probably the most likely outcome right now. But I got to tell you something he should resign right now because he's holding up our effort to fight COVID. He's literally in the way of us saving lives right now.

**Brennan:** Do you believe that he and his administration deliberately tried to cover up the scale of nursing home deaths?

**Mayor:** I don't have a doubt in my mind. Everything was about his public image. Everything was about his political future. It was not about what people needed. And by the way, it was about campaign contributions. The nursing home industry, the big hospital systems, they gave him millions and millions of dollars and he went easy on them, and he tried to cover up for everyone. Not just him, but his donors. And I think the investigations are going to prove this, Margaret. This was a thoroughly corrupt situation, and he just needs to resign so we can actually turn the page. And look, it's an optimistic time – as you started out this morning, it's an optimistic time, we got to put the past behind us. And Andrew Cuomo can lead us into the future. We've got the people of this state ready to reopen, but we need to get him out of the way to do it.

**Brennan:** I want to know about your future. Are you going to run for governor in 2022?

**Mayor:** I'm focused right now on fighting COVID and reopening our schools and bringing the city back. That's my focus.

**Brennan:** That's not a no, sir.

**Mayor:** Look, I'm not worried about the future right now. We're in the middle of a war right here and we're winning that war. Let me tell you, New York City is going to come back. It's going to be a recovery for all of us, a recovery that really includes every neighborhood, people everywhere. We had the most folks ride our subway last Thursday than we had since the pandemic began. The city is coming back strong, but I'm going to make sure that everyone is brought along in this recovery.

**Brennan:** Before I let you go, I have to ask you about this really troubling spike in hate crimes in New York City. It's the city with the most significant spike in crimes against Asian Americans. You have a hate crimes unit, how's this happening, why aren't you better prepared for this?

**Mayor:** Well, we created a hate crimes unit that is very strong in the NYPD. And we've been doing education and outreach and actually in most areas, thank God, Margaret –

**Brennan:** Do you need to do more?

**Mayor:** Hate crimes did go down, except with Asian Americans. It's been horrendous and disgusting. So, we're doing – we have a task force made up of Asian American police officers out in communities, finding the people that did it, making sure there's consequences, and holding the community close. I'd say this to all Americans, stand up for Asian Americans, stop Asian hate. We've got to do this together.

**Brennan:** Mayor, thank you for your time.

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