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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I want to say good morning. I always say good morning, but it is such a challenging morning in this country right now. I'm just going to say this for a moment. I watched like so many of you watched yesterday, the events in Washington DC with shock, with pain. I guess in the age of Donald Trump it's hard to say that something's impossible because we've seen such horrible things. We've seen so many of our democratic norms assaulted by President Trump over years now. We've seen decency attack, democracy attacked, overt racism, but what we saw yesterday, literally that's what the path of fascism looks like. It literally does. I mean, we know our history when a mob incited by a racist leader attacks the seat of government, attacks democracy. What does that sound like to you? Does that remind you of some things we've seen in history? It is shocking in every sense, but not shocking because we've watched the systematic building of a racist, nationalist movement by Donald Trump and it just has extraordinary consistency with history. I mean, again, it's – I don't want us for a moment to underestimate or diminish the shock of what we saw, but I also don't want us to pretend this is the first time this has ever happened in America or many other places that we're supposed to be “civilized and modern and democratic”.

So, the President of United States incited a mob to do violence against our democratic institutions. Literally, we could have seen Senators and Congress members killed. I wouldn't have been shocked at all if we had seen that. It's horrible that anyone died. I don't care what their beliefs, it's horrible that anyone died, but that mob easily could have killed the people who represent us. Thank God all of our Senators and Congress Members from New York State and New York City are safe. But just think about the idea, the president urged people to do violence. That is sedition. That's treason. He shouldn't be president anymore. He is a dangerous man and it's clear he should not be an office. I'm not missing the fact that the impeachment proceeding or the use of the 25th amendment is hard to believe that can happen in two weeks' time, but it should happen. It should happen because he literally attacked the government the United States of America – that's treason. And, by the way, Senator Josh Hawley is hardly any better because if not for him, there would not have been this proceeding that then incited this mob. So, I think history is going to judge President Trump very, very harshly for everything, but especially for this. I think that sick ambition, the grotesque ambition of Josh Hawley has been laid bare here and I hope it comes back to haunt him.

But let's get to the other piece of this equation in Washington, how the hell did this happen? It's not believable that there were just some over-matched Capitol police. I am sorry. I don't accept that. I want to know who was in charge and I want to know why they did not put up a defensive perimeter around the United States Capitol. This is 101 security, ask anyone in the policing profession around the country, this would have been the first thing you did. And if you needed a lot of reinforcements, you bring in reinforcements. This was a day that everyone knew was

coming. They knew the President of United States was going to hold a demonstration. They knew people were gathering in Washington at his demand. They could guess it was not even hard to assume there would be violence. Where were the security forces? Well, someone at a higher level made the decision not to have them there and I want to know why, I think we all need to know why there needs to be a real immediate and independent investigation. But this is not about the average Capitol police officer. This is about the people who did not send enough security to the Capitol when it was obvious that the people inside the Capitol were in danger. That's not a mistake. That's not an oversight. That's someone doing something purposely and we need to know who.

Everyone look, these next two weeks I think are going to be about as tense as a get as we just pray we get safely to the moment when Joe Biden and Kamala Harris take office. Yesterday morning, a lot of us were celebrating the victory in Georgia - the two victories in Georgia. I do think last night, a lot of people showed the good side of democracy by getting to that certification and a lot of folks show decency and the belief in the constitution, we should cling to that positive, but it's going to be a very tough two weeks and we're all going to have to stand up for our democracy.

All right, let's get back to our city. Look, whatever's going on in DC, we're going to just keep doing the work we need to do now to protect our people. We need to vaccinate the – right now, right now, we need to vaccinate all New Yorkers who are vulnerable, all New Yorkers who are high priority. Everyone who's willing. We need the freedom to vaccinate. Yesterday, I told you about a new State rules that come out that we interpreted, and we think very clearly, very appropriately, very legally, to mean that we could vaccinate our correction officers, that we could vaccinate our police officers who respond to 911 calls, who have to administer CPR, who have to administer Narcan to stop someone from overdosing. The folks who at any moment could be in very close, intimate proximity with another person, and obviously another person who could have COVID. We were ready to go and do a huge vaccination effort at Department of Correction and the NYPD. We were told by the State that they would not allow that. They are allowing a smaller percentage, several thousand and NYPD Medical Corps members, and we're going ahead with those vaccinations, but we really think the rules couldn't be clear. So I want to show you the City definition, the State definition on the screen to give you a clear sense of why we believed it was absolutely right to go ahead and vaccinate our patrol officers, so many of whom are ready, willing, and able to be vaccinated and we could vaccinate in a matter of days. Look at the definitions for yourself. I don't think it's at all gray, what patrol officers do. Of course, they have to be ready to perform CPR on a moment's notice. Of course, they have to be able to use lifesaving equipment and deal with any kind of emergency of any type. What is gray here?

So, there's the City's definition of who we want to vaccinate. There's the State's definition. Why don't we just resolve this and give the City of New York the freedom to vaccinate high priority people as we see fit so we can speed up the vaccination process. By the way, I know this is true all over the State of New York. I know of county executives, county public health officials are just asking for the freedom to vaccinate. We understand what we can do on the ground, in our own communities, give us that freedom because everyone agrees on one thing. We want the maximum number of high priority people vaccinated. Sometimes the federal government, the State government need to stand back and let local government do what it knows how to do best. This is one of those times. So, we get the freedom of vaccine, what I've said before, I want to get

all of category 1-B approved. That means everyone over 75. That should be a decision today, authorizing that we can vaccinate everyone over 75 in New York City. You've heard from Dr. Chokshi that that's the most vulnerable group of people. We should be able to vaccinate them right now. All essential workers, first responders, food service, grocery, we've depended on them in this crisis, they've been heroes, childcare workers, educators, teachers, school staff. They all need to be vaccinated now.

So, that's what we're calling for and I know leaders all over the State of New York cities, towns, counties, all over the State in New York are calling for the exact same thing. So, I'm just hoping and praying the state government will hear our call, give us that freedom so we can move forward. In the meantime, what we do have finally is all of category 1-A approved. That's only been in the last couple of days and we have to fight just for that. But it does mean that there's more people who can be vaccinated, that's a good thing. So, for example, our home health care workers, our home health aides, folks who work, obviously, in hospitals and public health institutions. Folks who are in group living facilities or work in group living facilities. We want to vaccinate as many of these people as possible. Now, again, I said that won't be clear. Right now, a substantial percentage are not yet choosing to vaccinate. Probably a third or even more in some of these categories. That's another reason why we want the flexibility to keep going to wherever people are ready to be vaccinated. But for everyone in that category 1-A, let's get you vaccinated right away. So, there's vaccination drives in a lot of these institutional settings, but now we're going to be talking about all the sites around the city, many of which are open right now, some of which will start to open on Sunday, community sites, vaccine hubs, Department of Health, the mega sites that are being put up, the 24/7 sites, two of them this Sunday, more coming in the coming days. We want to make it easy for those in category 1-A to get the vaccination again, quick, free, safe, effective. So again, the two mega sites, Brooklyn Army Terminal, Bathgate in the Bronx opening Sunday 24/7. We're looking at additional sites, there going to be in all five boroughs. I talked about yesterday, some of the potential Staten Island sites, we'll have those nailed down and announced in the next couple of days. Queens Theater in Queens, very likely site, we're going to have that announced shortly, La Marqueta, East Harlem.

So the exact opening of each one, we will announce, but you're going to have these 24/7 sites in every borough. Okay, but right now, if you're in category 1-A, you want to get vaccinated, let's go through how you do that and the key thing to remember is where you get your reservation to be vaccinated, where you get your appointment. You go to nyc.gov/vaccinelocations, nyc.gov/vaccinelocations. This is the portal to getting your appointment. Now, you can go there now and get appointments at a number of sites. As we said, we started the week with 125 sites. We'll be up to about 160 or so by the end of the week. You can go online right now, Dr. Choksi is going to walk this through, sign up for any number of sites. Starting on Saturday, but we'll have the ability for people to sign up for the new mega sites that'll open Sunday, little bit more work was being done there to get that reservation system ready. But for right now, you can sign up at sites all over Saturday for the mega site.

Further, very common-sense point. We want the authorization to reach people over 75. I'll be the first to tell you there's a number of people over 75 who are not going to be as comfortable going online to make a reservation would rather do it by phone. Starting on Monday we're launching a call center to take those calls. Now, again, this is an anticipation that the State will do the right thing and authorized category 1-B and let people over 75 get vaccinated. We're going to be ready on Monday for people to pick up the phone, call, get screened, make a reservation by phone,

looking forward to the opportunity to do that. And the next week we'll add an additional tool, My Turn NYC, that's going to help people at any point they want to check in on their eligibility and the presumed timing of when they can get vaccinated. That's going to be a tool that anyone can get an update through. That'll be launching next week, we'll have more details on that, but right now we want to talk about people in category 1-A getting vaccinated today, tomorrow, Saturday, Sunday, here's how you do it. Dr. Chokshi, we welcome you, and you're going to go through it. You're out there – go through with us –walk us through from the point of view of the everyday New Yorker how you go ahead and make that appointment.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor and my first point that I want to make is to just build on what you've said, which is we have thousands of appointments currently available. So, if you are eligible, if you are a healthcare worker in any of the categories that the Mayor has described please navigate to this website, nyc.gov/vaccinelocations and that's your first step with respect to making sure that you can get an appointment, get your reservation for a vaccine. This is a simple three-step process that we have set up. So, number one is, go to nyc.gov/vaccinelocations. What you'll see is what's on the screen before you right now, a simple listing of who is eligible and also the locations by borough. So, that gets us to the second step, which is on the next slide, find a location in your borough. For example, if you live in the Bronx or if you work in the Bronx, these are all of the sites that are available to you right now, today, either to make an appointment online, or, you'll see in some of the descriptions that are listed here, there are phone numbers as well to be able to make an appointment. Each of them has dates and hours of operation listed so you can figure out when to go, if it's after work, before work, sometime during the day, if the weekend is more convenient for you. And many of these have evening hours as well. So, this is step two. And then the next slide is step three, which is actually making the appointment. Making the appointment happens through our scheduling app. So, you see an example of how we would make an appointment for the COVID Vaccine Hubs that the Mayor has mentioned or for the Health + Hospitals sites for unaffiliated health care workers. Both of them are simple. You navigate through some screens to fill out your own information, your contact information, you select a specific appointment slot, and that's it, you're done. So, those three steps, nyc.gov/vaccinelocations, number one; number two, find a location in your borough; and then, number three, make an appointment via these websites.

The only other thing that I would say is that there are just some small additional requirements from New York State – a screening form that has to be filled out and then bringing your proof of employment to the appointment. And so, if you follow those steps, you'll be able to get your COVID-19 vaccine, the safe free, easy vaccine that will help protect us, going forward. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you, Dr. Chokshi. So, everyone, look, again, go online. If you're in that category 1-A, you want to clarify you're in that category 1-A, just go on that website. You can make a reservation. You can make an appointment. We want to get everyone out there. We understand some people are hesitant. We understand people are looking for answers. You can also get information from the Department of Health. But the bottom line here is these vaccines are ready for you right now, even though we'd like to be able to get to a lot more people. Right now, there are New Yorkers who will be getting these vaccines. The sites are ready. You can get your appointment. Let's go. Once you get there, it's going to be very easy and it's free.

Okay. Let's switch gears and talk about something that will be on all of our minds, all of 2021, which is how we bring our city back strong, how we recover, how we rebuild our economy, how we bring back our jobs. Everyone's gone through so much this year. No one's gone through more than our small business owners. For God sakes, after all the challenges that a small business owner has to begin with, the challenges, the pain, the suffering, the small businesses have been through because of the coronavirus is just astounding. We need help. Now, even though we're all focused on the horrible events later in the day in Washington, let's remember the good events of yesterday morning in Georgia, which answered a crucial question – will there be a Democratic U.S. Senate? Yes. The answer's yes. And now, a stimulus becomes even more of a possibility, a real stimulus that will stimulate the economy, that will move us forward. And that stimulus needs to include a lot of direct aid to small businesses. That's what we're going to fight for. And I think we have more opportunity to win that than we have, obviously, in quite a while. That said, in the meantime, there's so much we need to do here in New York City, keep helping small business. Looking forward to the day when they get the relief they truly deserve from the federal government. And so, what we're focused on is the kinds of things that small businesses are telling us they need. The best way to govern is to listen to the people, what they need. Small business owners have told us there's a lot they need to help survive – to help them survive, to help them grow. And constantly what we hear from small business owners is they need help figuring out their future path. They need to help figure out how to survive. They need mentors. They need people who've been through it. They need people who have succeeded to show them the way. Today, we're going to talk about three mentorship programs that are going to help thousands and thousands of New York City small businesses – the Small Business Mentors NYC program, the Be NYC Mentors initiative, and the M/WBE mentors. Last one was particularly crucial to making sure that government resources, government contracting goes to communities of color, it goes to women-owned businesses, making sure we do something that's about fairness and justice. These mentors are going to help make that happen. This is all going to be a part of our bigger recovery plan we'll be talking about a lot in the month of January and beyond.

Here to tell you about these mentorship programs, and I want to thank him for his leadership, because he has been a passionate advocate for small businesses. Our Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris.

Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Small Business Services: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It is an honor to wake up every day and fight for small businesses across our city, especially in this moment. But today is really personal for me. When I was getting my career started, I went out on my own and built my own small consultant business. I knew it was a risk. I knew I've had a steep learning curve. I worked hard, put in long nights like every entrepreneur. But I saw really quickly, there was a lot I just did not know. And I wouldn't have survived without a guy named Al Wilsher. He is my mentor. He was my mentor. He taught me how to negotiate contracts, how to fight for a seat at the table. He helped me make the right connections. He gave me the confidence that I could do this. Every small business owner deserves that confidence in normal times and especially in this difficult moment. First, we know mentorship works. We've proven it over the past five years through our WE Connect Mentors initiative for female entrepreneurs. And when I talk about WE NYC, I first have to tell you a little bit about my mom, an immigrant New Yorker, social worker for the city, but that was only half of it. She was the best sales person I've ever seen. Avon, home decorated interior, Amway, you name it, she did it as a side business on top of raising six kids with my dad and going to school at night. But like so many women at the time, she didn't have, have anyone to help harness that talent. And I always wonder what might have

been, what she could have built if she had a mentor. Times have changed. Through WE NYC, we can now say that over 1,700 women have been mentored by successful entrepreneurs. They've grown incredible businesses and made our city more vibrant. It's time to take that lesson and apply it even further as our city continues to come back from this crisis.

That's why today we're rolling out these three new programs to help our entrepreneurs get the support they deserve. First, BE NYC mentors. We launched Black entrepreneurship or BE NYC last September to address a stark problem, almost a quarter of our city is Black, but only two percent of the businesses are Black-owned and less than 40 percent of those entrepreneurs had access to mentors when launching their businesses. If we're going to recover a fairer and stronger New York City, we need more Black businesses. So, it's time to help them to get off the ground. We'll connect talented Black entrepreneurs with experienced mentors in the pre-startup and very early stages in their businesses. And our city will be more vibrant because of it.

Second, Small Business Mentors NYC. This program grew directly out of the work of the Mayor's Task Force on Racial Equity and Inclusion. Walk through any neighborhood and you'll see that our storefronts helped define those neighborhoods. We have to save them and we will. Small Business Mentor NYC will help storefront owners in our hardest-hit communities who have been struggling to recover and grow. Being an entrepreneur is means consistently and constantly shifting and pivoting your business to what fits the moment, and that is such a valuable experience today. We'll match up storefront business owners with entrepreneurs who have successfully pivoted during COVID and help them think outside the box to get their business going again.

Lastly, but not least – real dear to me is the M/WBE Mentors program. We've worked hard to build a strong and diverse pool of vendors to keep government running during COVID. M/WBE mentors in the cities, this is our first peer mentorship program for certified firms and will help M/WBE's connect to founding business owners who will guide them to success, build professional networks, get more access to resources. And, by the end of the year, 800 businesses would have gone through this program, connecting them to billions of dollars in City contracting opportunities.

To conclude, it is said that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it also takes a village to build a successful business. Being able to pick people's brains, people who've been in the trenches and have got your back is just as valuable as access to capital, is just another kind of capital. Every small business owner deserves that in this crisis and well beyond. Let's keep our small businesses and this city strong. If you're interested in this program, you can visit us at nyc.gov/businessmentors, or, as always, you can contact us at 888-SBS-4NYC. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you very much, Commissioner Jonnel Doris for your passionate presentation of why this is so important to help our small businesses, save our small businesses. We love them. We need them. I'm always going to keep reminding people, love small businesses by shopping local. Buy local. Shop your city. But this mentorship initiative is going to help so many small businesses to reach their full potential. And I want you to hear from someone who is reaching her full potential right now, and she gained the support of mentors, she gained the kind of backup that she needed to fulfill her dreams, and she's doing it in such an amazing way. Particularly, the WE NYC program was something that helped her along. And she is the founder

and the chef of Dining with Grace, which is a catering and consulting service. My pleasure to introduce Grace Odogbili.

[...]

Thank you so much, Grace. I liked that you're redefining the language. You're taking a word that we don't always think as a good one, you're making it a good word. I like that. I like that. Stay fluid. Stay flexible. Stay agile in this moment. I also love the name of your business, because it took me a moment – I was just thinking about Dining with Grace, your first name, but I thought, wait a minute, Grace, that's a beautiful thought. We want a graceful dining experience. And so, thank you. Look, thank you for what you're doing, keeping the business alive, giving people hope that their business has going to work and keep going. But I love what you said, grow the wings. We're going to help everyone grow those wings. And thank you for being a great example in the best of luck to you ahead.

All right. As we do every day now, let's go to our indicators. Here's the latest we have. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for COVID-19 – today's report, 273 patients. Obviously, too high. Hospitalization rate, 4.28 per 100,000. But again, I'm having the conversation every single day with our health care leadership, hospital systems continue to do a great job handling the challenge. We're watching this every day, every hour carefully. But, thank God, they're doing very well with this challenge. New cases, today, 3,870 – way too high again. And percent positivity, seven-day rolling average 9.21 percent. All of these numbers we've got to fight down. Again, every one of you, every one of us can do it with what we do ourselves. And the vaccine is going to be a crucial part of the equation, another reason why we want the freedom to vaccinate.

Let me go – a few words in Spanish and we'll be back on the small business issue –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Small Business Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Dr. Ted Long, Executive Director of Test and Trace, Dr. Mitchell Katz, CEO of Health + Hospitals, Dr. Dave Chokshi, Health Commissioner, and our special guest, Grace. With that, we'll go to Dana Rubinstein from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Dana. Happy New Year to you.

Question: Thanks. Happy New Year. Regarding vaccinations and the State rules surrounding them, history has shown that the Governor doesn't necessarily like to give you wins. Are you concerned that your calling them out so explicitly will backfire?

Mayor: Dana, let me go back to something Ed Cox used to say, which I really subscribed to. He said that for a Mayor of New York City, you have to defend our people and our interests. When a

Governor does something right for New Yorkers, thank them, praise them. When the Governor does something that's not in New York City's interest, you've got to stand up and fight for New Yorkers. That's what I'm doing. We need the right to vaccinate. We need the freedom to vaccinate. I know this is something that's being felt all over the State of New York. County executives are saying this all over the State, Democrats and Republicans alike, county health officials – give us the freedom to vaccinate. So, you know, Dana, I appreciate the question. Obviously, one could attempt silence as a strategy when something's wrong, but, I think in this case, we would need to vaccinate people right now. And for weeks we appealed to the State to give us more flexibility and more freedom because that hasn't happened, It's important to raise the issue publicly so that we can actually get to people. Just think about people over 75. This is the part that drives me absolutely crazy. Right now, Mitch Katz's story, his 98-year-old father. He's not legally allowed to vaccinate his 98-year-old father. Come on, give us the freedom to vaccinate. Go ahead, Dana.

Question: Thanks. And then on another note regarding what happened yesterday in D.C., I'm curious how you think electeds like Nicole Malliotakis should balance what they clearly consider those, sort of, their local political imperatives and their sort of responsibilities to our country?

Mayor: It's a very important question, Dana. Thank you. We saw last night, actually some very moving moments where Republicans, even Republicans who have been strong supporters of President Trump said enough is enough. You know, Lindsey Graham in his speech you know, made a joke about him and Rand Paul agreeing for once. Well, I don't think I've ever agreed with Lindsay Graham, but I will give him credit. I thought his speech was powerful because he said enough is enough. And it's time for people to say out loud, and with total conviction that people have spoken and Joe Biden will be President, Kamala Harris will be Vice President. Every Republican needs to do that. So, I do understand people have local political considerations. I've lived in that world. But there are those moments that are moral moments. This is a moral moment. And I actually think what's going to happen in the future is that, you know, folks who are just absolutely undignified and disgusting, like Josh Hawley are going to pay the price for what they did. And folks who showed honor to the Constitution and put country a head of party are going to be rewarded by the voters. By Republican, Democratic and independent voters. So I think it's the moral thing to do, but I also think the people will ultimately appreciate those who put their country first. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Happy New Year.

Mayor: Happy New Year, Marcia. Let's find a way to make it a happy new year.

Question: So, you were actually talking about the possibility of a happy new year yesterday with the selection with – with the election in Georgia and the selection of Chuck Schumer, hopefully as the Senate Majority Leader. So, my question to you is this, I know that you have a big want list and the Governor has a big want list. And you're hoping that the Senator can wave his magic wand and make all your budget problems go away. But my question is, is that realistic or will you still have to reign in some of your programs and do budget cuts because you're not going to get everything you want from Washington?

Mayor: We are absolutely going to have to take tough budget actions under any scenario. It's a very important question, Marcia. I thank you for it. First of all, Chuck Schumer will be the Senate Majority Leader, and that is incredibly good for America and for New York City. He is a proud New Yorker, proud Brooklynite. This is going to be an incredible moment in our history that one of our own reaches that position of power and importance in our nation. This is a really, really important moment. I'm, particularly as a Brooklynite, very, very proud. Chuck Schumer knows what he's doing. He's going to make great things happen for New York City. But the magnitude of the problem Marcia, is beyond the reach of any one leader right now. As we've said, you know, the initial estimates still hold about \$9 billion in lost revenue and a long road back for our economy. We've made a lot of cuts. We've cut office, the Mayor's Office by about 12 percent in the last year. We took furloughs here in the Mayor's Office and management all over the City government. We're going to be making a lot more cuts. We're asking every agency to make cuts in the budget that I'll announce next week. There is a PEG program which is an across the board cut program. All of that has to continue. We are far from out of the woods. So, I'm very hopeful there'll be a real stimulus, no doubt. And that stimulus must include local and state aid. But I also want to remind you while there hasn't been a stimulus the pressure keeps mounting. There's tremendous State cuts looming if they don't get a huge stimulus for the State of New York. So, no, we are – we have a lot more belt tightening to do. Go ahead, Marcia.

Question: So, I wonder if, if you have a wish list? Like if you could go to Chuck and say, these are my top three to five priorities, these are the places that I would love to see federal aid. What would be on your list? And do you think he is capable of waving his magic wand and making it happen for you?

Mayor: Okay. Well, you said Trump there, I assuming you meant Schumer from the previous question? I believe that yeah, as Majority Leader, I think Chuck Schumer will work with Joe Biden and Nancy Pelosi to create a real stimulus. Not a survival plan or a COVID relief plan, but a stimulus to bring our economy back. And I am convinced he will include substantial state and local aid. That's what we need. When it will happen? We don't know. How much it will be? We don't know. But what I want is for the State of New York to be made whole and the City of New York to be made whole, because obviously what happens to the State affects all of us and vice versa. Also crucially want to see FEMA reimbursement go to 100 percent. This was an international pandemic. This is not something where localities should have to spend money they don't have on something that should have been the federal government's responsibility to begin with. We need to see that FEMA reimbursement go to 100 percent and go retroactively to the beginning of the crisis. Beyond there's many other important matters we could talk about, but I'm just staying real clear. We need a stimulus that makes us whole and gets our economy back on its feet. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Mr. Mayor, how are you doing this morning?

Mayor: Henry, quite a morning. It's a very stark contrast to go from yesterday morning to this morning. But you know what we will, we will get to better days.

Question: I want to ask you if you can give some more clarity to this difference you have with the State over the distribution of the vaccines? Because there seems to be some confusion among

some people about what the nature of this dispute is. The Governor seems to be saying all health care personnel must be inoculated first. And he doesn't want vaccines going to people who are not health care workers. You appear to be saying that because some health care workers are demurring to this or resisting it, there is vaccine leftover that isn't being used and should be used for other people who need it. Am I correct so far?

Mayor: I think broadly I would. I'm going to add, but finish your statement.

Question: So, my questions are number one, have all New York City health care personnel who want the vaccine, have they been inoculated? Or are there still health care personnel who must be inoculated who want the vaccine? And, therefore, is your request premature on this? And shouldn't you make this request when everyone has been inoculated?

Mayor: No.

Question: Okay.

Mayor: I'm going to lay it out. What I am saying is the same thing that county executives and county public health officials are saying all over the State of New York, Democrat and Republican, upstate, and downstate. When you see people agree who don't agree philosophically don't share a party, don't share a region, but are all saying the same thing that tells you something. Everyone is saying, we need the freedom to vaccinate because in the real world, what helps is to be able to reach anyone who's ready, willing, and able right now, and is high priority. It makes no sense if I've got someone over 75, who's vulnerable and is ready right now to be vaccinated, and I could be vaccinating them, there's no reason I shouldn't be doing that right now. If I've got an essential worker or first responder, who's ready right now. And we have really efficient ways to reach them because they're part of the government, we can organize within our agencies very efficiently. There's no reason to hold that back. The problem that we're seeing is when you're talking about a voluntary vaccination initiative and one where people have to present themselves to be vaccinated, it's not like pushing a button and doing something automatically. So, within category 1-A, all those health workers and other folks in congregate settings, you need the person to be willing. You need the person to be available and there to do it. If it's someone who you need a permission for, for example, certain seniors, a family member needs gives permission. If they don't give the permission, you can't give the vaccination if they're in a nursing home. So, the problem we have is we have been making the vaccine available. There are places like in Health + Hospitals, vaccines were made available. A lot of people have been getting it. Some have been choosing not to, as Dr. Katz talked about yesterday, Health + Hospitals has almost no one left to vaccinate at this point within its own employee base. Now they're working with unaffiliated health care organizations. But we could be reaching folks right this minute who are really vulnerable, 75 years old, 80 years old, 85 years old right now. Essential workers right now. And that's the best way to constantly use the supply of vaccine we have. It's the much saner way to maximize people being ready, willing, and able at all times, get the vaccine. One more point Henry. If you had a perfect world, it'd be like a constant assembly line. Just, it's once you have people pre-registered pre-certified it really only takes minutes. Dr. Katz said yesterday with the right setup, you can do 30 or even 40 people. A single vaccinator can do 30 or 40 people in an hour, but it takes having a pool of people ready, willing, and able at any given moment to get that vaccine. We have got to expand that pool to do this efficiently. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Okay. Thank you. But I'm trying to understand the Governor on some level here other than that this is a clash of will. And to give the Governor maybe as much as he is due, isn't he saying that statewide, there may not be enough vaccine for every health worker so that if New York has already reached its level of inoculating health workers we shouldn't go onto the next tranche until the entire first tranche is completely served statewide? And if you have extra, give it up so that we can finish the job statewide?

Mayor: That's not how the real world works Henry. I absolutely will dignify that I could see someone having that worldview and believing that that's the way to do things. But I'm going to quote my Aunt Yola passed away at the age of 95, a few years ago. And she used to always say, don't let perfect be the enemy of good. Right now, and I'm going to bring in Dr. Katz to speak about this. Because he can tell you about his own experience with his own health care workers. If you've got – if you had a world where everyone said I, 100 percent want the vaccine, just tell me where to be, I'll be there. I'll wait. I'm ready. Great. Then the Governor's theory would make a lot of sense. But on the ground, the world is different. Which is why you're hearing county executives, county public health officials, our own health officials here, and me saying, guess what? We're at the front line. You know, if like in war, the generals are back at the headquarters, we're at the frontline. At the frontline here's what we're seeing. A lot of people aren't ready to take the vaccine. There are some people adamantly opposed to taking the vaccine in those categories within 1-A. There's a lot of people who in theory are willing to take the vaccine, but getting them to show up is not an automatic thing. We've got now a pool of 50,000 or 60,000 home health aides that were just finally approved by the State in the last 48 hours. We're working with a union 1199 to maximize the number of them who get vaccinated next few days. Big, massive effort that doesn't guarantee people are going to make the choice to show up. We need them to show up to be vaccinated. So, in the real world, you know that you need freedom and flexibility, if you're really going to vaccinate a lot of people. You're saying, everyone's saying rightfully, let's get these numbers up. We all want to get the numbers up. Give us the freedom to vaccinate. I got a huge number of folks over 75, who would show up right now, if we would allow them to do it. The State won't allow it. I got a bunch of police officers who are ready right now. State won't allow it. Correction officers, State won't allow it. Go down the list, give us the freedom and we can move these numbers. And then you say, well, what about the vaccine supply? Look, we need the federal government and the manufacturers to keep that supply coming. But Henry, you know, if we're saying don't vaccinate quickly because we're not sure we're going to have a supply, then we're all screwed. I would argue vaccinate intensely quickly now and keep pushing for more supply. But don't have someone who's ready right now and willing told they can't, even though they're a high priority person. Dr. Katz, would you speak about the experience you're having?

President Katz: Yes, Mr. Mayor. And I think I can very much give people a sense of what it's like right on the hospital floor. So, when we opened vaccine slots, there was tremendous interest. We filled the first slots immediately. There were large numbers, especially of our physicians who wanted to get that vaccine right away. What then happened was as the days moved on we found that demand after all of those people who most wanted it past, the demand began to decrease. And we spent a lot of time walking through the hospital, encouraging people individually to come and get the vaccine on work time. We would take care of their patients, come with us. There's an appointment now. And what we learned is that a lot of people who've been doing this work for ten months felt, you know what? I have been a nurse taking care of COVID patients for

ten months and I've either had COVID because of it. Or I feel that because I haven't gotten COVID, I must in some way be immune to it. And I'm just not ready. This vaccine has been rushed through. I'm worried about it. I would like some additional time. And so all of a sudden we now have appointments available and we don't have arms to give that injection to. We have posted all over all of our hospitals, the available times. Again, we have it on the website. We've talked to people individually. We've encouraged everyone. Everyone at Health + Hospitals who is eligible has been offered an appointment. And as the Mayor says, now we want to be able to move on to the other populations. We are scheduling right now unaffiliated physicians and nurses and optometrists, dentists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, other health care providers, midwives, we want them to come forward, and the home care aides, so important. And we want, as the Mayor has said, we want to vaccinate our own patients who are older than 75, who have very high likelihood that if they get COVID, they will get very sick. So I can assure you Henry, everybody at Health + Hospitals who wants to get vaccinated has that opportunity. But I still have thousands of slots available. I want to put that vaccine in the arms of people who need it. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Mitch. I'm going to hammer that last point. If someone who is 75, 80, 85 is in one of Health + Hospitals facilities and wants the COVID vaccine, they are not allowed to get it right now by State rules. Just think about that. An 80-year-old at Bellevue right now says, could I please have the COVID vaccine? And the State's answer is no. It makes no sense. Whatever that person is in the hospital for, give them the vaccine right now. We have a chance to protect them right now. That's what we're trying to achieve.

Moderator: Next is Andrew from WNBC.

Question: Mayor, I'm going to follow up exactly on the point you just made. If it's a matter of life and death, and you have thousands of vaccines just sitting there. And you have 80-year-olds in Health + Hospital facilities right now, and you're convinced that on the matter of the law, you're correct. Why not vaccinate them and fight it out in court and save lives while you're waiting?

Mayor: Very fair question, Andrew. That's why when it came to the question of the first responders and I put up the slide earlier. We believe the definition that was put forward encompassed a substantial number of police officers who do that frontline work, including CPR, lifesaving work, direct work with people. The State told us explicitly yesterday afternoon, no. I made the announcement yesterday morning. I said, we've got a plan to get to 10,000 police officers by Sunday. The State said you can't do that. I don't find that acceptable. Clearly, we're trying to respect State law. But you know, if they put forward a broad definition, we're going to take that definition and try and be as open as we can with it to reach people. But we're being told explicitly, that's a violation of law. So, look, I'll certainly speak to the Law Department further because I think what's happening here makes no sense. I think the bottom line is we've got to save lives. And right now, who are the most vulnerable people? All of our doctors are saying it, the folks over 75, that's who's most vulnerable. Protecting health care workers, incredibly important priority, but who's most vulnerable, who unfortunately is in most danger, most possibility we may lose them? People over 75. Go ahead.

Question: In regard to the thousands of slots available right now, isn't that some – isn't some of that on the City's delay in getting the website up and running, the application process up and

running, the hubs are not opening until Sunday. If all of this had been set up from day one with clear instructions for folks, two weeks before the vaccine arrived and an education process two weeks before the vaccine arrived, might you have thousands of more New Yorkers who've already been vaccinated at this point?

Mayor: Andrew, I'm going to say two things. One, that wouldn't solve the fundamental problem I'm raising, and that, again, county officials are raising in concert all over New York State. It doesn't work that way if you say, hey, we're going to limit the categories artificially and we have a high percentage of people who are not ready and willing, or maybe think they're ready, but just don't show up. It doesn't work that way. You need freedom from the beginning to reach a bigger pool of people. Just think about it again, if I've got a center that can do, for example, what we're starting on Sunday, 24/7, I need a pool of people who are willing, ready, and able to be there, to use up all the vaccine effectively. That is the core problem right now. We have the wrong rules. We need the freedom to vaccinate. Now, of course, this was complex, it took a lot to make sure that we were absolutely secure about how our health officials used – and our health care workers use the vaccine, the refrigeration issues. Everything had to be worked through to make sure we were 100 percent sure it would be safe, it would be effective, that we could distribute effectively. There were a lot of things that had to be worked out. Some of which, Andrew, could only be worked through when we actually had the vaccine to work with. Not theory, but practice. It had to be put through a practical trial. I'm always going to push myself and my team to do better. I'm sure there's some things we could have done better, but that's not the central problem here. The central problem here is we've got a huge number of people in need that we're not allowed to vaccinate. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Bob from the Chief Leader.

Question: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Early on in the pandemic, the issue of at-home deaths from COVID was largely ignored yet for certain NYC civil service titles, we covered at the Chief Leader, it was a grim 24/7 reality. Such was a case for New York City detectives who lost six members who were required by law to document the circumstances of these at-home deaths, which meant they had to interact with families who'd been caring for loved ones with the virus and were at greater risk of infection. Wouldn't these police officers face the same occupational risk as the clinicians who are graded 1-A for the purpose of getting the vaccination, who are in a setting that is – you know, a sterile hospital setting?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll start, and I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi. He'll give you the medical answer. I'll give you the layman's answer. I think the answer is yes that any detective, any officer who's in that kind of intimate setting where the disease has been present, of course, I want them vaccinated. I want to protect them, and it doesn't make any sense to me that we're not allowed to, according to State law. Dr. Chokshi –

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes. Mr. Mayor, I'll just add to that briefly to say that the way that we think about the priorities for vaccination overall are risk of exposure as well as risk of severe outcomes. You know, the risk of severe outcomes is one of the reasons that we really do want to move as quickly as possible to vaccinate older New Yorkers, particularly those above the age of 75. But the risk of exposure is the reason that we are vaccinating our health care workers but also our funeral workers, those emergency medical technicians and paramedics, and other parts of our

first responder services who do have that greater risk of exposure. And I think that captures the example that you're describing as well.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead, Bob.

Question: Yeah. And then just switch gears a bit because you are responsible for the nation's largest police force. There's a lot of concern that hours have gone by since the insurrection effort attempt. And there's been, to my knowledge, no public briefing by the [inaudible] law enforcement authorities responsible for the security. There seems to have been ample evidence referred to in a number of publications about some police officers actually facilitating access, taking selfies with the mob. Don't the American people deserve some kind of forthwith explanation of exactly what happened considering the billions we spend on homeland security in the post-9/11 world?

Mayor: 110 percent, Bob. This is just – it makes no sense. And look, every officer there needed to do their job and protect the capital itself and the people in the Capitol, and I'm sure the vast majority did. But the individual officer's actions are not the thing we should be focused on. We should be focused on the decisions of the leadership of the different security agencies. Why on Earth did they not set up a defensive perimeter around the Capitol and screen anyone approaching the Capitol? The only people who should have been led into the Capitol for a moment of this consequence are those who had a specific right and reason to be there. Protest, as we always understand, needs to be allowed and respected of all points of view. It can be at a safe remove from where that vote count is. That didn't happen. It's mysterious. If you want to be generous, you would call it mysterious.

I think it could be something worse. We need to know who gave the orders. It is very strange to me – I've been around security issues a long time. I can't imagine not having thousands of officers, and even if needed National Guard there well in advance, knowing it would be the most consequential day in the capital in a long, long time, knowing the passions and intensity that were being aroused by the President of the United States, who has been telling people for months that the election was illegitimate. This is not a complex equation. It is quite clear there should have been thousands of law enforcement officers ringing the Capitol with a defensive perimeter. And none of this should have been possible. Commanders made that decision, security officials made that decision. Who are those people? They need to come forward and answer for what they did, and my fear is they did it on purpose. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mayor de Blasio. My questions are kind of follow ups to what my colleagues have asked. The first will be something that Andrew asks about the City's own preparation in getting ready for the vaccinations, when did the City start scoping out the places? I saw your spokesman tweet this week that you were looking at spaces. It seems like there should have been done weeks ago. So, if you want to just talk a little bit about when you all prepared to get a list of locations, because I think a lot of people say, why didn't the City have a list? Okay, here are the 50 places we're going to do it. These are the [inaudible] when they're going to open.

Mayor: Katie, I'll tell you a quick answer, but I am much more concerned that right now we vaccinate the maximum people possible and we don't have the freedom to do it, and we need it. As I said, we started the week with 125 locations, 125 locations. That's a lot of locations. And you heard Dr. Katz just now say, increasingly the problem is not having people willing to come forward and take the vaccine or not having them willing to show up, even if they want it, at the time and place where it's available, which is why we need a bigger pool. This is just plain logistics, but it's also about humanity. Folks over 75 right now want this vaccine and we're not allowed to give it to them. So, we have locations, 125 locations is a hell of a lot of locations and they're growing all the time. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: And my second is about the NYPD. I know that they often speak out, they tweet, they put out statements when there is violence in other cities. They have not said anything since yesterday. And my question to you is, have you spoken with the NYPD leadership about what happened yesterday? And I know you have a lot of criticism for other police departments, but there have been documented incidents of excessive force by the police for certain protests. And then for example, a pro-Trump car parade before the election, where there were no arrests and the police allowed cars without license plates visible to drive around New York City kind of without any consequences. So, I guess there's that question of, have you spoken with the NYPD about A, any threats to New York City of continued violence from pro-Trump supporters and B, just your thoughts on the difference in policing when there are political events, especially in the criticism against the NYPD.

Mayor: Very, very different than anything we've experienced here. What happened in Washington yesterday was entirely different than anything we've experienced here and had something like that been brewing in New York City there would have been a defensive perimeter put up. I absolutely guarantee that. And that would never have been allowed to happen. That could never, would never have happened in today's New York City. I have been briefed by the NYPD on the plans that were put in place after the events yesterday to make sure that we had security, obviously, at all our government facilities and that we could protect people in the event of any protest, of any viewpoint. We're going to be particularly aware if there are folks who are trying to replicate what happened yesterday at the Capitol. We're not seeing that right now, Katie, but we would be ready for that if anyone attempted it. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more. First up is Sophia from Gothamist.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Sophia. How are you?

Question: I'm doing okay. So, going back to the vaccination of the Corrections officers, given that jails are so dangerous for the spread of COVID and they're central to stopping it, is the plan going to move forward and, you know, the union's cheering it on, what's going to happen on that regard?

Mayor: We don't have authorization from the State of New York to vaccinate our Correction officers. We need the freedom to vaccinate. Correction officers are clearly in a setting that makes them vulnerable. They deserve to be vaccinated immediately. So, we are waiting for that ability to just do – we could do it right in a way we have Correctional Health Service. They're ready to

go. We can start vaccinating Correction officers in the next 24 hours, but we have been told explicitly by the State that we're not allowed to. Go ahead.

Question: Thank you. And then with the call for – the Governor calling on unions to prepare vaccination operational plans, and the UFT has said they are going to present a plan to the State on Friday for vaccinating teachers. What role do you see these unions playing in the distribution effort and what is the plan specifically for teachers?

Mayor: It's – Sophia, very good, important question. We welcome ideas from the UFT. I talked to Michael Mulgrew all the time. We welcome their support and encouragement of their members to get vaccinated. Clearly, we would set up the apparatus and the beauty of going and doing vaccinations in schools is it's exactly the same model we have with testing in schools. We are testing at every school in New York City every week. We would set up, in schools, a vaccination effort as quickly as we get the authorization to do it. Once again, I would like that authorization right now. I'd like to be given the right by the State of New York right now to start vaccinating educators and school staff. We have health personnel in every school. We have testing apparatuses going every week to every school. It's a layup to go into schools and start protecting our educators and our staff. I just want the freedom to do it, and I want to work closely with the UFT to maximize the number of members who would be willing to get vaccinated. Go ahead.

Moderator: For the last question, we'll go to Amanda from Politico.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Amanda, how are you?

Question: I'm doing well. Thank you. So, I wanted to follow up on Katie and Andrew's questions in regard to the preparation. So, I read an email from the City from late September to its Medical Reserve Corps, asking about who would be willing to start vaccinating people. So, if the emails were sent in September trying to recruit people, why has there been a delay [inaudible]?

Mayor: Amanda, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi. Again, we have all of our current team, which is obviously first and foremost, a large number of staff at Health + Hospitals, there's staff at the Department of Health, there's other City employees who are already a part of everything we're talking about with the sites, again, the 125 sites that we have now. But we knew we were going to need more and more talent, Medical Reserve Corps, contract staff. That effort's been going on for weeks. It continues to grow. As we're announcing more and more sites, obviously we have to have a staffing plan to go with. They were going from 125 sites to 250 sites. We were going to need more and more staffing. I've been talking to my colleagues daily. We're confident that we'll be able to keep developing that staffing. So, the bottom line here is this is going to be a big and growing endeavor, but we can't fuel the engine if we don't have the right to vaccinate folks over 75, first responders, educators, all the people that would allow us to make this so much more efficient. Dr. Chokshi, do you want to speak about that medical reserve group?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, Sir. Thank you. And thank you for the question. We have indeed been planning and preparing for months as that note to the Medical Reserve Corps in September

indicates. We've made sure that the sites where we're setting up our New York City vaccine hubs were pre-identified, were screened to make sure that they would be appropriate for vaccination sites when we had the ability to scale up. So, that's on the space side. And on the staffing side, we've made sure whether it's Health Department staff, Medical Reserve Corps volunteers, other City staff, that we have a ready pipeline with respect to staffing for our vaccination sites as well. And now our task is to ensure that we match up the supply with that preparation and actually get New Yorkers so that we turn vaccines into vaccinations.

Mayor: Amen. Go ahead, Amanda.

Question: Great. And that's a great segue for my second question, which is, I understand that you do not run the MTA, but the MTA is now, you know, not running between one and four. If we're going to be doing 24/7 mass vaccinations, what does that look like logistically if health care workers can't take the subway to get to these sites? What about people trying to get [inaudible]? Is this something that's been on your radar? Are you looking at other ways that the City can get people to and from, or is this going to be part of these stimulus talks to try to get more funding for the MTA?

Mayor: Obviously, huge issue in the stimulus is more support for the MTA. Absolutely, this is one of the reasons I'm so happy that Chuck Schumer will be the majority leader of the U. S. Senate, because I know he understands how crucial the MTA is. You're right, the State runs the MTA. They make decisions often their own way. What we care about here is, absolutely want to see transit workers vaccinated, want to make sure everyone else can get to vaccinations, want to make sure the MTA is kept on its feet. We are absolutely – the city runs on our subways and buses. We need that aid. But I will say that I have confidence that Senator Schumer will lead the way in making sure there's a true relief packet – package, I should say, a true relief package for the MTA and transit agencies all over the country. He gets it, that this is something that's absolutely needed. And speaking of Senator Schumer, he put out a statement just now, and as I conclude, I want to read this. I think it's so important because it really says powerfully what we need to conclude from the events in Washington yesterday, I'm going to just read a few sentences from Senator Schumer's statement.

He said, “What happened at the United States Capitol yesterday was an insurrection against the United States, incited by the president. This president should not hold office one day longer, the quickest and most effective way it can be done today to remove this president from office would be for the vice-president to immediately invoke the 25th Amendment. If the vice-president and the cabinet refused to stand up, Congress should reconvene to impeach the president.” I couldn't agree more. Senator Schumer is exactly right. What happened yesterday in the entire history of this republic, almost 250 years, we have never seen a president of the United States attempt to overthrow the Congress, to cause harm to members of the Congress that represent all of us, to undermine and destroy our democratic system. That's what the president did.

He called together a mob. He pointed them at the U. S. Congress. He told them, go disrupt, destroy. He should not be president one day longer. I agree with Senator Schumer. Now it's up to every one of us to recognize the danger that we are facing in this country. That's why I said, I don't use a word like fascism lightly, but what you saw yesterday, you could have dropped that scene right into Germany in the 1920s or 30s or Italy in the 1920s. I could give you so many other examples. What you saw in those images yesterday in the history of fascism and Nazi-ism,

those images would have been right at home. And we should see that as a danger to our country today and we need to stand up. We need to support Senator Schumer and everyone else who is saying it's time for this president to go because this is not going to be allowed in a democratic country. Thank you, everyone.

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