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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN'S NEW DAY

John Berman: Right now New York City is really the epicenter of the outbreak in the United States and five percent of all the cases worldwide. Joining us now is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, thank you so much for being with us. You heard the Surgeon General say this week, it's about to get bad. Last count from the city – about 16,000 cases, 114 deaths. I know at a certain point it's hard to keep track of the numbers but what's the current situation in the city?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: John, the Surgeon General is right, it's going to be bad. This week is going to be worse than the following week. I mean we have to be honest about this. This is just the beginning and I don't mean that to be anything but blunt and honest with New Yorkers and all Americans. It's the beginning of something that will get worse throughout April and into May and we've got to brace ourselves and we've got to change our lives and we absolutely need help from Washington.

There's no way, not only this city, the greatest, you know, largest city in the country. We're struggling and we need help. But imagine, John, as this spreads, all of the cities, all of the towns, all of the counties around this country that are going to be overwhelmed – the only way they can make it through is with federal help. And right now that's hanging in the balance in Washington. So, John, I want to appeal to everyone in the House and Senate – you have got to help cities, towns, counties, states, public hospitals, private hospitals; you got to give all of us direct relief because we're losing billions of dollars day after day, week after week, no more revenue coming in. You know that, John, but we still have to serve people. We still have to save lives and we need that help from Washington starting today.

Berman: Well, at this point, the Democrats in the Senate, they voted 'no' on the stimulus package because they say they want more oversight over some \$500 billion in money. Are you calling on Democrats to drop their objections and just vote yes?

Mayor: No, John. I think what the Democrats are saying – I think oversight's part of it – but they're saying we should not prioritize bailouts for the airlines and the big corporations. The first bailout should go to the American people. You know, millions of people have lost their jobs suddenly. So money back in the pockets of working people, and then help cities, towns, counties, states to be able to handle extraordinary, huge new needs that we simply can't handle. I mean, you're going to see cities and towns and counties go broke unless there is this direct aid that needs to be in this package. And of course direct aid to hospitals. That's what Democrats are fighting for.

Berman: So at the Javits Center, which is here in New York City, the president announced four sets of 1,000-bed facilities. When are those beds going to be available in the city?

Mayor: John, we are waiting to confirm that. I'm certainly encouraged to see that and I think it could be absolutely crucial because we're at a point literally this week where our public system, the largest in the country, is getting increasingly stressed and running out of equipment. So, that operation at the Javits Center could be a lifesaver for us. We expect to see a lot of that up and running this week, but we're still waiting for – you know, to see it and get the final details in place.

Berman: You said last week you needed millions, tens of millions of masks and numbers of supplies. Last night the president said that some are on the way. Have you received an exact count of what's coming here?

Mayor: No, John. I spoke to President Trump and Vice President Pence last night in detail and I'm glad we had the conversation and I appreciated the focus of the conversation. But what I want to see is the real material support for the people of my city – 8.6 million people who are right now in the crosshairs as you said, the epicenter for America. We have not yet seen quantities of ventilators, of masks, of all the supplies we need. And I went over it with the president, vice president – the ventilators, if we don't get a supply of ventilators quickly, our public hospital system, literally after about a week or so, we will not have enough ventilators to keep people alive who could live through this crisis and could be saved. And then even after equipment, John, I talked to the president, vice president about personnel. There's not going to be enough medical personnel in New York. We're going to need help from the military and from other parts of the country.

Berman: What did they –

Mayor: And we, of course, talked about direct aid in the stimulus bill. If we don't get all those things, our hospital system will not be able to hold.

Berman: What do they say in terms of the ventilators when you made that request?

Mayor: Look, I don't want to typify their part of the conversation. That's for them. I will say I'm appreciative that they took the time and we went into real detail, but I made clear to them what I need right now is action, not words, and every day counts because we're literally in that very tight window now that if we don't get the ventilators in particular we will actually start to lose lives who could have been saved.

Berman: You said that this week is going to be bad, April's going to be worse, and you're worried that May could even be worse than that.

Mayor: That's right.

Berman: That's a little bit of a different message than we got from the president this morning who suggested at the end of this 15-day period, this national 15-day pause, it will be time to reassess and he says, we have to make sure that the cure is not worse than the problem. What do you say to people who say that these measures, these social distancing measures, saying 100 percent of New Yorkers not in essential industries have to stay home, is worse than letting coronavirus run its course?

Mayor: John, I understand. Honestly, I think for all of us, it took days and weeks to fully understand the magnitude of this. But now that we do it, we have to do this intense social distancing. We have to do these shelter in place measures as New York and California have done. They need to be everywhere because here's the reality, this is a disease that unless you cut off its oxygen, if you will, which is to stop people from having all the kinds of interaction we're used to as human beings, unless you create social distancing, it moves so fast, John, that it simply overwhelms any effort by the health care community to address it and therefore thousands of lives will be lost that could have been saved. It's as simple as that. And I think we have to take these extreme measures, but it's not forever. I mean, that's why I'm trying to get people in my town acclimated to – we have a couple of rough months ahead but then [inaudible]

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Berman: The question though – that's the president's raising is, is it worth it? How do you answer the question to people who ask you, is it all worth it?

Mayor: Well, I think we start with the human reality, John. How many members of our family, especially our older relatives, who are the people, you know, really vulnerable here – are we simply saying as a nation we're going to turn away and ignore the challenges facing them? I don't think that's right. I think we have to understand that if we act intensely, we can save thousands, tens of thousands of lives all over this country and stop this thing from becoming even more total and more intense. And we have to recognize, if coronavirus was not checked in some ways and slowed then you're talking about a health care system that can't function at all, including for all the people with other challenges, with all the other health care challenges we deal with all the time. So I understand people who say, you know, wow, this is an extraordinary sacrifice. It is. But if you don't slow this thing down, they'll sacrifice a lot more on the other end of the equation and we got to think about the human cost here.

Berman: How close are medical facilities in New York City now to the brink as far as you can tell and what will keep them from going over?

Mayor: In our public hospitals, our 11 public hospitals right now this week, I can only guarantee you right now, John, that we can get through this week with the equipment and supplies we have. That's the blunt reality. If we don't get some relief quickly, and I can count, John, I literally want to see hundreds of ventilators. I want to see, you know, first, hundreds of thousands then millions of masks. If that doesn't come in starting this week, we will get to a point where people can't be saved, who could have been saved.

Berman: So just to reiterate that you're talking a number of days at this point, within seven days, you think that New York will have more than it can handle?

Mayor: John, it's shocking to have to say this. Even just a few days ago, I thought we could get, you know, safely into April. It's moving so fast right now that I can't even say that anymore. Our public hospitals handle the toughest cases and the folks with, you know, the biggest health care problems, the fewest resources. If we don't get ventilators this week, we're going to start losing lives we could have saved. I can't be blunter than that. And I appealed to the president and vice president. I've appealed to the private sector and I'll say it to everyone watching right now – anyone in the United States of America who has a ventilator that you can get to New York City, we need it now. We need it [inaudible] –

Berman: You're asking private citizens with ventilators – you're asking private citizens with ventilators to drive them in at this point?

Mayor: John, I will take any help from anywhere because what's happened, John, this is a blunt reality your viewers need to know – that the national supply chain is totally roiled at this point in the sense that you could try to order ventilators or masks from anywhere in the country and then someone outbids you somewhere else in the country or in the world and suddenly your supply is gone. I mean, I've been hearing stories last few days from my Emergency Management team where they expected millions of masks to come in and they had to tell me that somehow we got outbid somewhere else in the world and they're going someplace else. I mean, the price gouging that's happening here and, bluntly, the opportunism by some, is disgusting. So, there's not now a national mechanism for ensuring and there has to be. And I talked to the president, vice president about this. There has to be a national intervention by the federal government to say, okay, here is the place first that needs the ventilators and the masks, here's second, here's third. And that's where they're going to go. Not an open market based on who can spend the most money and make the quickest deal. Because right now we have no guarantees from the private sector. So anyone out there who can help us get these supplies, we have only days to get them in place. That is the reality.

Berman: Alright, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, we appreciate your time. Thank you very much for being with us. We will let you get back to work this morning.

Mayor: Thank you, John.

Berman: Thanks, Mayor.

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