

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. In a couple of minutes, we're going to talk about the fight against the coronavirus. We're going to talk about some really extraordinary efforts that are helping this city to move forward and helping us support people who keep us safe and protect our health and are bringing back the city strong, and there's something there to feel very good about. But first, we have to talk about the bad news, and the bad news is we continue to have a real problem around the city with shootings this summer. And this is something that very, very sadly we have seen in the past and we've had to fight back before and we will fight it back again. But so much pain is being caused, so much fear because of this spate of shootings, and we have to find a way to beat it. And we do that by bringing police and community together in common cause – that's what's always worked. And we've got to think of this as human beings. We've got to think of this as people, New Yorkers, committed to the same thing. We need safety for our people. We need peace in our communities. Yesterday, I was in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, and experienced something so painful, spending time with the family of Devell Gardner Jr. I talked to his mom, his aunt, his grandma, and just the pain, the grief they were feeling, losing a one-year-old, playing on the playground. There one moment, gone the next, and the shock that they are feeling, and there's just a deep well of pain you could see in their eyes. No parent, no family should ever have to go through that. And if you experienced something like that firsthand, I assure you, you could easily fall into despair. But I also want to tell you that I walked the streets at Bed-Stuy with people who are trying to make a difference, folks from the Cure Violence movement, folks from SOS Bed-Stuy, an amazing community group that stops violence and conflict before it happens, that mediates disputes, stops retaliation. I walk the streets with Council Member Robert Cornegy, who's done such important work in the community and yesterday immediately convened community leaders, clergy, elected officials, people from all over the community who have fought for years, including in the many years that Bed-Stuy went through many, many challenges. They fought to bring their community back and they're ready to do it again. We talked about what we have to do to end the shootings, particularly what we need to do coming up on this weekend to bring the community out, to occupy the corners, just like we did in Harlem on Saturday night. This is a strategy that works. It's not the end-all, be-all, but it's part of the solution. And Bed-Stuy is a strong and proud community and people will come out to take back their neighborhood, and people will do that all over this city, and that's how we turn this tide – communities and police together in common cause.

So, as we proceed in the days and weeks ahead, let's think of Devell, let's hold his memory dear. Let's think of his family. Let's pray for them. But let's also take this tragedy as a signal to us, all that we have to go deeper, we have to work harder to overcome whatever divisions exist and make our communities safe again.

Now, as I said, even while we're dealing with this real challenge, we continue the fight against the coronavirus, and this city has been nothing but heroic in fighting back against this disease. I'll go over to health care indicators in a few moments, but I can tell you, again, it's a very good day and we continue to make progress because of all the efforts of you, so many New Yorkers, who are doing so much. And we have to be there for New Yorkers in this moment, the people who serve us, the people who are doing so much to bring back the jobs and livelihoods of folks in the city. It is so hard to make sense of what we're going through. But remember, it's not only the worst health care crisis in a century, it's the worst economic crisis in 90 years, since the Great Depression, that's what we're dealing with right now. And there just aren't enough resources to go around to help people. We've got to find more anywhere we can so that folks can get back on their feet. And that's where the good news comes in. The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City has raised \$54.5 million for COVID-19 emergency relief – \$54.5 million to help people move forward. Amazing response from so many people, over 9,000 donors, some big, some small, but all united by a desire to help New York City come back, to help our heroes who fought through the worst of this crisis, to get them food, to help the health care professionals, the first responders, everyone who was there for us to get them the supplies, the things they needed, the care packages to show that we love them and we needed them and we cared about them. And here to tell you more about this really extraordinary effort, this outpouring of love and support from New Yorkers, our first lady, Chirlane McCray.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you, Bill. These dollars raised are a reflection of how much New Yorkers care, how much people want to help everyone who's suffering, everyone who's in pain. It's a huge and a blessing for our COVID-19 emergency relief fund to have raised \$54.5 million. Toya Williford, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Fund and the entire Mayor's Fund team have been working incredibly hard – incredibly hard for months now to raise and process these funds. The real headline though is where these funds are being directed – to feed health workers, to save businesses, aid immigrants, and support our youth. Before I introduce the other speakers who will provide more detail, I'd like to highlight two important programs the Mayor's Fund has helped to fund and coordinate. The first is the Restaurant Revitalization Program, which will initially benefit 100 local restaurants by providing up to \$30,000 to bring back approximately 1,000 displaced workers at \$20 per hour plus tips. In Spanish –

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

Neighborhood restaurants are priority, because they're social and economic anchors. They provide meals, employment, and they're places where families gather for celebrations. After months of little to no business, these restaurant owners and their employees are hurting. Last week, I had an opportunity to visit one of these struggling establishments, the Tsion Cafe, and what a neighborhood treasure. It has a long history of service in the neighborhood. And as I walked through the door and saw the wonderful Ethiopian art and sat in the back garden, I felt totally at home. I had the vegetarian platter and food was terrific. After all the tribulations they've been through, it was wonderful to be there with the owner and founder, BJ, and her husband, Padmore, and the whole staff. And, as BJ said, the Restaurant Revitalization Program is a win-win for all and restarts a virtuous cycle for the community. Restaurant jobs at higher wages lead to families getting more support, more spending in the neighborhood, and a fast recovery for everyone in the community. But I'd like to hear directly from BJ about what this program has meant for her and for her community – BJ?

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. Excellent.

First Lady McCray: Thank you, BJ. I'm sure your message and your remarkable story will inspire others as we move forward with phase three of the recovery. And I hope everyone knows that what we are doing is not about getting back to normal. The Restaurant Revitalization Program is helping businesses leap forward with new opportunities, new standards, and support for workers. It's with that same spirit, that our is creating micro grants for domestic violence survivors.

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

Domestic violence is too often minimized or ignored, and the pandemic has brought new horrors for those who shelter in place with an abusive partner. Violence inside the home has a devastating and long-term effect on children and families for generations. These micro-grants will help mitigate some of the safety, economic and housing challenges exacerbated by COVID-19. These grants are of critical importance and if the last six months are any indication of what's up ahead, we know this is not going to be easy, but we have to build our city with opportunities and support for everyone who needs them. And a particular focus – we must have a particular focus on the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

In Spanish –

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

For more about these and other announcements, we're now going to hear from Toya Williford, our hardworking and never-daunted-by-a-challenge Executive Director of the Mayor's Fund. Toya?

Executive Director Toya Williford, Mayor's Fund: Thank you, Madam First Lady. The Mayor's Fund could not have achieved its goal of serving New Yorkers hit hardest by COVID-19 without the diverse cross-section of organizations and people who came together to support their neighbors, giving whatever they could afford to help New Yorkers weather one of the most challenging periods the city has ever seen. Their donations made vital programming possible for our city's most vulnerable communities. Programs like the Immigrant Emergency Relief Fund, which has so far provided 13,000 households across 180 ZIP codes, representing 41,000 New Yorkers with one-time emergency financial relief. Programs like the Summer Youth Employment Summer Bridge Program, for which we raise millions of dollars from the philanthropic community to add to the tens of millions in public dollars invested to ensure that 35,000 young people received online career exploration support, project-based learning programming, and most importantly stipends. I'm happy to say that the program will start in just two weeks. We also collected goods and services worth millions that include not only lifesaving personal protective equipment for our health care professionals and essential frontline workers, but also personal care products, phone chargers, iPads, and children's clothing and toys, among other items for New Yorkers in need. And finally, and most humbly, we received cash donations from more than 9,000 individuals across the country who, despite facing a national economic crisis, gave donations ranging from \$5 to \$5,000.

No relief effort in the history of this administration has ever seen this level of grass roots support. We've come a long way since March, but we're not finished yet. The Mayor's Fund is committed to our mission to ensure a fair and equitable recovery for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Toya. Thank you, Toya and everyone at the Mayor's Fund, it has been an extraordinary effort and a labor of love, and you guys have done a great job to our special guests BJ, thank you for joining us and thank you for the wonderful work you do in the community. And of course, Chirlane thank you for leading the way and inspiring these efforts. And you can see a lot of people are coming together to help New York City move forward. And it is, you could say endless need on the one hand, but there's also endless desire to help. So whether it's folks helping our small business owners back on their feet or going out and buying things from their local store to help them come back, whether it's the efforts to help our immigrant brothers and sisters that you've heard Toya talk about, all the work for our health care heroes that happened in March and April, and we need to continue to honor our health care heroes. There is so much desire to help in the city in so many ways. So thank you to everyone who supported the Mayor's Fund, and that help continues to be needed as we fight back.

And talking about fighting back, let's look at our daily indicators and again, today, very good news continued progress in this city thanks to all of you. Indicator number one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19 threshold is 200 – today's report 46. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals ICU threshold at 375 – today's report 294. And percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19 threshold 15 percent – today, once again, two percent. So that's really good to see. We continue at that really low level. Congratulations everyone. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q&A. As a reminder, we're also joined today by First Lady Chirlane McCray, MOIA Commissioner Bitta Mostofi, Mayor's Fund Executive Director Toya Williford, the Public Private Partnership Czar Peter Hatch, Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma, and ENDGBV Director of Family Justice Center Operations, Jenise Jenkins. The first question is today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: [Inaudible] everyone. My first question has to do with daycare centers, Mayor, they opened yesterday. How many of the 3,000 opened and how many kids attended and does that tell you anything about the school year?

Mayor: So – excuse me – Andrew, I'll get you the exact number. In fact, we'll see if we have it in the course of this press conference, but we know that the daycare centers were getting ready for weeks and weeks to open. And they were going through a detailed process with Department of Health. So, they knew the potential was there. They were getting ready. From what I've heard a lot are ready to move immediately, or very soon, we'll get to that number. But I want to also emphasize that is one piece of the childcare equation, and we're going to be doing more in the

coming days to build out childcare in this city and ensure that parents have maximum options. I'll have more to say on that in the next couple of days.

Question: Question has to do with schools yesterday. Governor Cuomo said that the threshold for a greenlight is actually five percent on the positive testing. Your daily metrics has it at 15 percent overall. I'm wondering if you agree with the State standard of five percent and whether you think that is indeed achievable by the August deadline for the Governor?

Mayor: Look, I think one of the things that you've seen the State and City agree on is to be cautious. I mean, there's a reason why we have fought back from the worst of the coronavirus crisis, and it was because there was unity on being really careful and cautious. And so, I think a standard that emphasizes safety is a smart standard. Right now, we've been well below that standard for weeks. I want to keep us there and it really depends on everyone doing their share, wearing those face coverings and keeping the distance and really being smart about this disease. So, I am very hopeful that based on that standard that we're going to be ready in September.

Moderator: The next question is for Matt Chayes at Newsday.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Matt.

Question: How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, man.

Question: What would you say to a young person in the suburbs who's reluctant to move to the city due to coronavirus and all that is going on?

Mayor: I would say – it's a great question, Matt – and I would say, look at the history of New York City has fought back from literally every major crisis and gotten stronger. Whether you go way, way back to the Great Depression or whether you look at 9/11 or the Great Recession or Hurricane Sandy – I mean, New York City has a clear history of fighting back and literally becoming a better, fairer place, and we intend to do a lot in the next year and a half to ensure that. So, I think this is going to be a place where big, important things are happening where the community is coming together to make this city better. I also would note the obvious Matt, you know, there were people who were putting us down around the country back in March and April. But as I said, quoting scripture, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, you know, the – when you look at where we were and how far we've come now, we're not out of the woods yet, we have more to do, but clearly the people of this city have shown tremendous discipline, tremendous sense of teamwork and unity. People have helped each other. I mean, what a place of compassion that people have helped each other to come back. You go around the city, you see stores opening, you see the outdoor dining, you see, you know, the youth programs coming back. I mean, it's inspiring. So, I think this is going to be a place where in fact, there's the most prospects going forward because we've handled things the right way. We have an incredible health care community that's done such great work. I would argue, in fact, this is the place you want to be for the future.

Question: And secondly, to what extent is there greater homelessness among youth on the LGBTQ spectrum in the pandemic and what is the city doing to address the problem?

Mayor: I'm really worried about that problem, Matt. Something I've worked on, Chirlane's worked on for years now was recognizing the LGBT youth homeless and runaway youth who have been put through so much. A lot of them kicked out of their homes by their own families, which I – it just disgusts me that that would ever happen, but it does. So, we've been expanding shelter capacity for years, and what we've found is the more we make opportunity available to protect people, that folks come in off the streets and, and take that help. I think it's been a really tough time because there's been so much dislocation. So, what I would say to you is, you know, this is a case of whatever it takes. If there's more we have to do to reach those young people, we'll do it because, you know, they've been through so much.

Moderator: The next is –

Mayor: Hold on one sec, hold on, Chirlane wants to add.

First Lady McCray: Yeah. I just want to emphasize that our shelters are open for runaway and homeless youth and that information and connection to resources can be found on the government website, nyc.gov/unity at – we are doing as much as we can to make sure that these young people do not fall through the cracks.

Mayor: Amen.

Moderator: The next is Marcia Kramer from CBS.

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

Mayor: Good, Marcia. How are you?

Question: I want to talk to you about gun violence. For the last several days, you basically have been giving the same answer when you are asked about gun violence, you say, communities need to be safe. We need to make sure people are safe, but in the last 24 hours, 18 more people were the victims of gun violence. I wonder is the same answer good enough day after day?

Mayor: Marcia, it's the truth. And again, I can go back so many times, not just in the last seven years, the last 25 years where we had moments like this, that we had to overcome. And every single time the same thing happened, the NYPD shifted resources to where the need is greatest, they use CompStat to perfect strategies. We called upon communities to get involved, and that's particularly what we've done the last seven years is get communities more deeply involved in fighting back against the violence and all the work we've done to build up the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System. It works. In the first months of my administration, Marcia, I know you saw, we had a horrible spate of shootings in public housing and going into that first summer, we were deeply worried and we threw everything we had at it, and it really turned the situation around. So, we have to do that again. But Marcia against probably the hardest backdrop we've seen this city in decades because of the coronavirus, because everything's dislocated, because the court system still not functioning, it's a harder challenge, but the solutions, the proven solutions do work.

Question: Mr. Mayor, my second question is this, why do you say there's no correlation between disbanding the anti-crime unit and the horrific surge shootings when logic dictates otherwise and shouldn't Dermot Shea be fired if he can't get the shootings under control?

Mayor: Marcia, again, respectfully, Dermot Shea is one of the people who made this the safest big city in America. And again, if you or anyone else wants to ask the question, absent the recognition that we've gone through the greatest crisis in this city's history, and that every aspect of life has been dislocated, families are suffering, people don't have jobs or school to go to, the court system's not working, I mean, come on, we are not dealing with business as usual here. But Dermot Shea is one of the people that made this city safe and helped us find a way through extraordinarily challenging circumstances. He felt, and I agreed with him, that it was important to make a change in our strategy, but to use the talents of our officers in new and better ways. And literally, I don't know anyone who knows more about how to do that than Dermot Shea. So, I have faith that we're going to make the adjustments we need to address this problem.

Moderator: Next is Erin Durkin from Politico.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I want to go back to some of the things you, one of the things you discussed yesterday, the spike that's been seen among young people. I'm just wondering, have you done any analysis as to what might be driving that? Where these cases are being infected?

Mayor: I'm sorry, Erin, just clarify. You mean the 20-to-29 year olds?

Question: Yes, yes.

Mayor: Yeah. We are trying to figure out more. I'm going to let Jay Varma speak about in a second, but I do think we've seen this concern around the country, Erin. One question of course immediately is as the crisis continues, how much do people remember to stick to the rules? We've asked a lot of people with the face coverings, with the social distancing, the shelter in place, it's a lot, and let's face it, it's harder in many ways on younger people. And I think that's some of what's happening here and elsewhere that we've got to double down our efforts to remind people they're far from impervious, and of course it's not just their own health, it's the impact that could have on others around them. Dr. Varma, you want to add?

Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma: Yeah. Thank you for the question. We haven't seen any particular pattern or connection between these cases that would explain the rise. What we have seen is that the pattern of cases doesn't exactly match the same pattern that we've seen before. So in other words, we're seeing cases in parts of Manhattan, in parts of Brooklyn among that age group, that doesn't exactly overlay with our poverty and racial disparities that we've seen in the past. That to us, that this would imply it really is closely related to you know, all the things that we would expect that people are now moving around more, they're now socializing more, and it really emphasizes the importance of strengthening those messages as the mayor said about wearing face coverings, staying away from large gatherings, keeping distance, and observing good hygiene.

Mayor: Thank you doctor. Go ahead, Erin.

Mayor: And my second question is just about, if I understand correctly, we're still in what you've referred to as a moderate transmission phase. I think young people have gone up, older people have gone down overall. It's pretty flat. Is this kind of where we're going to stay indefinitely? Or is there any prospect of actually driving it down further and getting to a, you know, low to no transmission phase or is that unrealistic until there's a vaccine?

Mayor: Well, Erin, you have clairvoyant powers because we were having this exact conversation yesterday afternoon and Dr. Varma was a part of it. Look, we're at a state right now where – if you meaning, if you took our reality right this moment, and you did continue it long-term, in terms of our ability to protect people we could do that very well. So, I'm going to answer your question in two parts. If we were at this exact level, we would be able to protect people, we have plenty of hospital capacity, our Test and Trace Corp can every single day follow up on the number of cases that come in each day. We could continue to move our city forward at this level, but obviously our goal is to do better. And I do think the prospect is there, Erin, of doing better for sure. Our original vision of what it would take has been modified by reality a bit because what we're finding is in fact, we can sustain our health care system even with several hundred new cases a day, but our goal is to go lower and I do think it stands to reason that the farther we go with educating people, the farther we go with ensuring that we take every precaution against what's coming up ahead, I'm pretty confident that that we can get better. I'm talking about before there is a vaccine. I think we can, but that's not said, Erin, lightly, because we also are very worried about resurgence and we're concerned about where resurgence may come from, and one of the areas that I was concerned about, of course, as people coming in from out of state. So, I'm very happy to hear the Governor's decision to be forceful about ensuring that people who come in from out of state have to provide us information so we can ensure they quarantine. I think that's going to be a really important step to keeping things under control. Dr. Varma, you want to add?

Senior Advisor Varma: I think you touched on all of the critical elements, which is that we are keeping ourselves at a level that our public health care system and that our health care system can manage very effectively. But we don't want to rest at this level. We're trying a number of different ways to strengthen all of our, our detective work and our case and contact management to do everything we can to drive cases down. We also do have to accept the reality as the Mayor noted and as the Governor has noted that we're going to constantly be at risk of cases being imported from other parts of the country. So, everything we can do to protect against that is going to be critically important.

Moderator: The next is Chris Robbins from Gothamist.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor. I guess my first question is, could you sort of clarify what the mask guidance is when you are outdoors at a restaurant or a bar, should people be wearing masks if they're six feet or more apart? Should they be wearing masks all the time if they're outside at a restaurant or a bar? What are the basic rule of thumb – rules of thumb for that sort of behavior? Just to, to spell it out really clearly.

Mayor: Yeah. Thank you, Chris. It's a great question, and just, as I turn to Dr. Varma, a reminder we've said from day-one with face coverings when you're talking about the group of people you live in the same household with that's different, cause you're already in such direct contact. So, if you're sitting at a restaurant outdoors with the people you live in the same

household with, that's different than if you're with folks you're meeting up with who you don't normally come in contact with. So, Dr. Varma will answer. I also want to emphasize what we said yesterday, when indoors, please, everyone, if there's anyone around, anyone you might come in contact with, keep that face covering on just on a regular basis, because we know it's hard to always judge whether you're six feet away or whether someone's going to be in close contact with you or not. So, we are emphasizing now take it up one more notch of safety and keep that face covering on indoors whenever anyone's around. But Dr. Varma to the outdoor bar-restaurant question.

Senior Advisor Varma: You know, our default recommendation always is that it's going to be safer for everybody to be wearing a face covering as much as they can whether indoors or outdoors when they're around other people. But of course, we also have to accept the reality. If you're drinking, if you're eating food, you simply can't be wearing a face covering. So that's why the critical thing is to be, you know, if you're with your family members, then of course, there's no reason to be wearing a face covering because you're spending time with them indoors normally elsewhere. If you're with friends or people you don't normally socialize with, we're trying to keep those gatherings as small as possible. So, we have to accept the reality that when people are sitting at a table, it's not practical for them to wearing face coverings. But we do of course, want to encourage people to be using them as much as possible when they're in any situation where they're not surrounded by their immediate friends and family.

Mayor: Go ahead, Chris.

Question: Thanks. Second question for you. An MTA executive said yesterday that congestion pricing has been delayed at least a year from when he was supposed to start at the beginning of 2021. You know, given the City's reliance on outdoor spaces, given some people's reluctance to go back to taking mass transit, given that more and more people are going back to work, what specifically is the city doing to limit the number of private automobiles in New York City, especially in Manhattan? Are you looking at HOV restrictions? Are you looking at other sort of restrictions that were put in place? I know HOV restrictions were in place after September 11th, but could you talk about what specifically the City's plan is if congestion is only going to – where it's projected to keep growing, but we can't have congestion pricing?

Mayor: Yeah. So, it's a very good question, Chris. First of all, you know, again, I want to see progress on congestion pricing. It was something we all worked on for a long time. It was something as you know, I had qualms and concerns about, but we got to a really good plan basically a year and a half ago now, and I want to see it move forward. So we've all seen massive dislocation here, but you know, I'm going to work with the state and the MTA to make sure that we do move it forward as quickly as possible because we need it also for the future of the MTA and its ability to continue to support itself.

Mayor: But look, we'll look at different alternatives. I certainly agree with you. The HOV lanes can be very helpful. So, we're going to look at all sorts of alternatives. But what I mentioned last week, we are seeing actually more of an increase in mass transit ridership than we are seeing cars coming in to Manhattan using the measure of the East River bridges and the Harlem River bridges, and so that's interesting to me, I think you're right to say a lot of folks are not going to be comfortable with mass transit right away. But I also think the real question is of those coming in, how many are choosing mass transit, and I'm actually impressed by what I'm seeing because

people, I think know that the subways and buses are being kept clean and real precautions are being taken and the face coverings are being provided. So, I do not necessarily see people choosing cars in much greater numbers over mass transit, but you're right, that we better be ready for every eventuality. So, we're certainly going to look at HOV lanes among other things.

Moderator: The next is Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: That's good, you call them it just then, because I was actually going to follow up on Chris's question about the congestion pricing delay. You know, Mayor, the Governor blames the Trump administration for delaying approval of congestion pricing, but the State has not even begun the environmental impact statement required by the federal government. So, I would ask you, Mr. Mayor, as someone who obviously knows the politics and speaks to people involved, who is to blame here?

Mayor: Gersh, I don't want to cast blame because I need to get more facts on exactly what's happened, but we need to move it forward. And I also remind everyone without any presumption, I will just state a fact there is an election in four months, and so the fact that things could change very soon in terms of the federal government's views on congestion pricing and the federal government's willingness to help New York City, we got to keep that in the front of our minds, but I want to get a better look at the situation and understand how we move it forward. That's what matters most? Go ahead.

Question: My follow up – I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor, that doesn't really speak for itself because you're – if you don't want to cast blame, that's fine. The State has not begun its environmental impact statement. Are you urging the Governor to start the environmental impact statement required by the federal government?

Mayor: So, Gersh, again, I want to get the full facts on why they're doing what they're doing, but what I want to make sure happens is that congestion pricing moves forward as quickly as possible, and I'll have more to say after I get more information on the current state of play.

Moderator: We've time for two more today. The next is Mark Morales from CNN.

Question: Hey everybody, how are you doing today?

Mayor: Hey Mark. How's it going?

Question: Good, good. I had a couple of questions. The first is the NYPD still partnering with the FBI to do big gang and gun takedowns and if not, why not?

Mayor: Yeah. Mark. Last I have heard, that continued – that effort continues. I mean, we have a close working relationship with the FBI in fighting terrorism and dealing with gang issues, a whole host of things, and I haven't heard anything having changed about that.

Question: And the second question I had was, is there any more, any plans in place to do something that's maybe not quite like anti-crime, but putting more plainclothes officers out, like they like almost like the same function that like anti-crime used to do. Is there anything even close to that or any other measures that are going to be implemented?

Mayor: Yeah, Mark. Again, I want to make sure we are clear that the phrase, the name of the unit is anti-crime, all NYPD officers are involved in anti-crime that's the nature of the work, and that unit is hundreds of people in a force of 36,000, and the fact is that there are numerous, numerous efforts being made to stop violence, including stopping the supply of guns to begin with, and that is something that we work on, the city works on with our federal partners. Everything, our detectives do, everything, our officers at the precinct level do everything our neighborhood coordinating officers do to find out the kind of information that helps us with gun seizures. There's so much going on here all the time and what the Commissioner said at the time, he thought that that unit, the way it was constructed could do its work better with more modern approaches, again, a more strategic approach, greater use of technology, but less disruption to the relationship between police and community, because it comes back to this again, and, and I think this is an idea that's still not sort of fully appreciated. The leadership of today's NYPD understands that you cannot create a city that gets safer and safer without full participation of the community, and so if, if a particular approach is hindering that you got to find a new approach.

Moderator: Last question for today, it goes to Reuven from Hamodia.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask you two questions straight out at the top. Then I'll hang up. They both have to do with the NYPD. First of all, there's been a lot of talk from the –

Mayor: Hey, Reuven, your voice is getting soft. Get closer to the phone.

Question: Sorry. Can you hear me now?

Mayor: Try, just speak loudly.

Question: Yeah. I'd like to ask you about reports of a bad, low morale at the NYPD both from the NYPD brass and from the union leadership. So, I'd like to ask you two questions about that. First of all, what do you have to say about that? Is that a problem or – and what is your solution to improve the morale at the NYPD and secondly, considering that there have been a rash of retirements that the NYPD, partly due to morale reportedly, are you reconsidering possibly your cancellation of the incoming class? Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Reuven. On the last point look, the retirement numbers are based on a limited period of time. We can't really judge where things are going long-term based on that, again, this is against the backdrop of an organization with 36,000 members. There are so many folks who want to join the NYPD, so many young people coming up who want to join what is the best police force in the country. So, I don't think from what we're seeing right now, that that changes anything in our approach. Everything that we did in the budget, I think was the right thing to do, and we're going to stick with that plan, and the, to the point about morale, it's been a tough time for everyone, the coronavirus to begin with all the dislocation, all the pain for our officers are out there doing their job, and yet the rest of the criminal justice system isn't functioning.

So, it's very frustrating if you do your piece of the equation, then there's nothing to hand off to, to finish up, make sure there are consequences for someone who has harmed another person. I understand why that is really tough for our officers and for the leadership, and, you know,

they've also experienced you know, a lot of negative feelings directed at them, which I think I keep saying. I think there's a huge difference between the desire for reform, which is what we've been doing for seven years now, fundamentally reforming policing versus showing respect for police officers in the work they do, and I wish more people who wanted reform would remember that. You've got to also remember the human beings who are doing the work and are protecting us.

So, I do understand there's a challenge there, but it's like everything else. What will make it better? Continuing to do the work and move forward, continuing to fight back the disease, getting our economy and our city restarted continuing to build bonds with the community. The one thing I saw throughout the development of neighborhood policing, and I would ask NCO officers this constantly is, as they got to know community members more, did they have a deeper sense that they were being appreciated by the community? They always said yes, and they gave me a lot of examples of why. So, we've got to continue to build that relationship between police and community. That is how we move forward, and that's how we improve morale for everyone.

Look on that note, everybody, let me conclude with this. Every time we're going through a tough situation, it's important to remember the power of unity, the power of people reaching out to each other and, and looking for a common solution. Even against that unspeakable pain I saw yesterday in Bed-Stuy, you could not miss the resolve of community members to go in a new direction, including folks who put their lives on the line as part of the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System who go out there to stop violence before it happens, and obviously our police officers who serve in Bed-Stuy and so many other communities, folks are clear that we have to find a way forward and we always do in New York City, but it comes from actually finding our way to each other, making that common cause and resolving that we're never going to let ourselves go backwards. That's what we have done throughout the coronavirus crisis. That's why we can actually say today that we're in much stronger shape than tragically so many of the parts of the country. Never forget what we can do together. We keep proving it every day in New York City. Thank you, everybody.

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