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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everybody. Another wintry day in our city. Thank God, New York City is getting a lot less than so many other parts of the country, but we take it seriously, always, and we are ready. So, let me give you the latest we're hearing from the National Weather Service. We expect steady snowfall today, seems at this point to be the total will not be too bad – three-to-five inches. But it will be steady, more in the overnight hours, going into tomorrow – another one-to-three inches. Look, this is not a huge storm, but it is coming on top of the snow we've had before. Obviously, a lot of snow still around. So, what it means is, be careful out there. It means that the evening rush hour is going to be messy and it's going to be slow. We want people to, as much as possible, stay off the roads, if you can. Look, what we all want whenever the snow is to get out of the way, get back to life as quickly as possible. The way to do that is, as much as you humanly can, stay off the roads for your own safety. Stay off the roads, so the good folks at the Sanitation Department can do their work.

We're giving you a couple other updates here – Sanitation is out in force already, brining the streets, salting, getting ready to do more and more plowing. Alternate Side Parking suspended through Saturday, so leave your car where it is. A lot of things, the good news is, will remain open. Vaccine sites will remain open. Testing sites will remain open. Food distribution sites will remain open, because the storm, even though we take it seriously, so far, not too bad. What we are going to shut down just for today is the roadway element of the outdoor dining, not the sidewalk part. The sidewalk part is fine. So, I want to make sure this is really clear – indoor dining, 25 percent capacity is open. Sidewalk dining is open. The only thing that's closed for today, and today only, is the roadway element of outdoor dining. And, again, based on what we're seeing now, everything should be fine for outdoor dining for tomorrow, full strength.

We know mother nature throws us curve balls sometimes. So, we're going to be vigilant and keep updating you. But the number-one message, the clearest message, the simplest message is, stay off the roads, use mass transit or stay home, if you can, that way Sanitation can do their job and we'll come back tomorrow in strong shape.

Now, I mentioned dining, so I want to talk about a great experience I had yesterday in Chinatown, here in Manhattan – an opportunity to experience indoor dining again. And it's really wonderful to have the experience of being in a restaurant, a family-owned restaurant owned now for two generations with a chef who loves what he does. It was really a great experience. I went to Hwa Yuan Szechuan restaurant in Chinatown. Chef Chen Lien Tang – great personality, energetic, loves what he does, passionate about the food he creates, so happy that his restaurant has made it through and will continue to thrive. We talked about indoor dining. We also talked about outdoor dining, how that's going to now be a permanent part of New York City's future. And it's exciting for a lot of folks who own restaurants and work in restaurants to know that

outdoor dining will be permanent. And the warm months – it's hard to believe today, at this hour, but spring is just around the corner. Outdoor dining is going to be all over New York City and help us as part of our strong recovery for all of us. So, I'm excited to see that. But I had a great experience yesterday. And look, it's a reminder of a couple of things – it's a reminder of the strength and resiliency of our Asian-American communities, the businesses that people built – so many immigrants who built businesses up with their own hands, you know, from scratch, amazing family stories of perseverance. We're wishing everyone a happy Lunar New Year – and it's also a reminder of the strength of the communities of the city that celebrate Lunar New Year. And what a great example I saw yesterday. So, we need these small businesses to survive. They're part of who we are and a part of our identity as New York City, part of what makes us great. And we're going to do everything we can, particularly if we get the kind of stimulus that we deserve, to pass it along a lot of those resources to small businesses, help them stay strong for that big recovery that's coming this summer, this fall in this city.

Now, what do we need to recover? First and foremost, vaccine. I've talked about lately, we used to talk months ago about our number-one problem, our number-one challenge – testing, testing testing. It's now really clear, it's about vaccine. It's about supply, supply, supply. We do not have enough vaccine coming from the manufacturers, the federal government, the State government. We're not getting what we need. It's holding us back. The more we get, the more we can do. On top of that, we've had a weather problem. The weather all over the country, everyone knows, it's horrible weather – vast amount of the country affected, has caused real delays. This is a real problem. We've lost a couple of days in terms of vaccine supply. We are hopeful that by tomorrow, our supply will be replenished and we can get back on track. But, as everyone knows, 30-35,000 appointments have to be held back – never liked doing that. We don't want to do that. We need supply so that we can keep giving people the support they need and get the shots in people's arms so we can protect them. We had to postpone, as a result of the weather and the supply not arriving, two new sites, but they'll both be up tomorrow – Martin Van Buren High School in Queens and the Empire Outlets on Staten Island, both will be open tomorrow. We are going to shift supply around as we need to, but we, again, are hoping that by tomorrow our supply will be back to where it was normally. That's still way less than we need. I want to emphasize, normal is not enough. Status quo is not enough. But hopefully, we will get those that supply in. Now, as of today, just to give you update, we're just about at 1.4 million doses given from the beginning of this process – 1.4 million vaccinations, but we could make that number move a lot quicker if we could get the supply we need.

Now, we also know we're dealing with a profound equity issue, a disparity issue. And the way to deal with that is to educate folks, get information out, answer questions that people have who are hesitant to go out into communities, to put the vaccination centers where the need is greatest. 77 percent of the City-run vaccination centers are in the communities hardest hit by COVID. But we're also going to the people door-to-door. And this is so important, throughout this administration, one of the things I'm very proud is our teams have believed in this hands-on, door-to-door approach. You saw it originally back in 2014, when we initiated Pre-K for All. We didn't just say, hey, there's pre-K seats – good luck. We went out into communities. We had community organizers, people supported by the City government to go out, go door-to-door, talk to people at parks, at playgrounds, barbershops, beauty salons, PTA meetings, whatever it took to get the message out, to answer people's questions, and get people engaged. We did it again to great effect last year with the Census initiative. Amazing – in the middle of pandemic, this city had as good a response to the Census as it did 10 years ago, when there was no pandemic. That

was about getting out in the communities, going door-to-door, going to where people are. That's what works. So, right now, we have 250 canvassers on the ground out there, focusing on the communities that have been hardest hit by COVID, communities of color that have borne the brunt. And this is particularly true for public housing. We have a special focus in this outreach effort on public housing and in the areas around where we have these community-based vaccination sites, because we want people to know it's there for them. Our Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity has led the way on this effort. They made very clear that it wasn't enough just to put up sites, that we had to go out to the people. So, literally, we have canvassers out there answering questions, giving people the education they need, but also signing them up right then and there for appointments, right at their door, right there making sure that seniors in particular get the appointments they need and making sure for the folks who, you know, are having any trouble navigating the application process, or have any trouble going online, the door-to-door folks, the canvassers are there to literally help them, make sure to get that appointment, sign them up on the spot. So, a really great initiative. I want you to hear more about it from the Chief Equity Officer of the City's Test and Trace Corps., Annabel Palma.

Chief Equity Officer Annabel Palma, NYC Test and Trace Corps.: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And I'll elaborate on the words you just said and the work that the Test and Trace Corps. is doing to help New Yorkers in the hardest-hit areas. Of course, we have created teams of canvassers, like you mentioned. These are canvassers, learning from what we did with the Census, they are in the community, they are they are part of the community, they are directly connecting with individuals to educate them on how to navigate the system, to get an appointment for vaccination. Let's also understand the importance of getting that vaccine, especially our senior population. These are our trusted messengers. These are individuals, again, who are part of the community. Their mission and their work is extremely important. It's all about promoting vaccination location, the facts on the vaccines, scheduling and confirming appointments. We want to make sure that every New Yorker gets a vaccine as soon as supply allows. And we're doing this by conducting door-to-door operations, by conducting robocalls. Just this week, we were able to make [inaudible] robocalls to NYCHA residents and we were able to send out about 3.3 million postcards to all residential addresses. This is imperative to reach New Yorkers without internet access, but especially our senior population and those who are homebound, who have – who we have noted have had the most difficulty accessing the vaccine appointment.

We continue our efforts to work with our community partners, our trusted messengers in the community, through our CBO partnerships. And we are doing everything we can to make to make New Yorkers feel confident that they can get this vaccine, that they do have access to that this vaccine. And this work could not happen had we not had the partnerships that we have and the work that – and the work that's being done through the taskforce. I am especially excited to see how people are responding once we're connecting with them one-on-one. And you and I have been out in the community, and we have done some canvassing when we visited sites, and we know all too well how much New Yorkers appreciate that one-on-one connection, especially those who have language barriers. And, in this case, we are able to connect directly with individuals in their language that they understand that these services are there for them.

A few words in Spanish –

[Chief Equity Officer Palma speaks in Spanish]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Annabel. Annabel, I really appreciate what you're doing, what everyone at Test and Trace is doing, the hands-on outreach. And I've seen you out there yourself, I know you know a lot about going out into communities, going door-to-door, talking to people. I've seen you answer the questions and get people to help they need. So, thank you to you and all your colleagues.

And, everyone, look, we're going to do this work to get people vaccinated. We need that supply, but we're going to incessantly work to get people vaccinated, get answers to their questions, and get us to a whole new place – 5 million New Yorkers vaccinated by June. This is our goal. We absolutely can meet this goal if we have supply. 5 million New Yorkers fully vaccinated by June, that's how we create a recovery for all of us. That's the key.

In the meantime, we have to protect ourselves. Our Department of Health has done a great job, educating New Yorkers on the things that work. So, we know that even as the vaccine is here, that the need to keep wearing the masks is paramount – crucial. It's amazing how, of all the things that we've learned in this crisis, maybe the most profound is the power of a mask. You know, even one of these paper masks makes a huge difference. But what we're saying today is, time to double up – two masks are better than one, make it a double. So, this is what more and more the science is telling us, more protection from two masks. The Department of Health wants to educate New Yorkers on this, this is based on CDC guidance. And what's clear is, masks have been a big part of what's protected – two are better than one. Here with all of the expertise to back up that statement, and welcome back in-person, our Health Commissioner – strong and healthy – Dr. Dave Chokshi.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And I'm really glad to be back and full steam ahead for our important work to keep New Yorkers safe and healthy. So, thank you. For months, face coverings have been an indispensable tool to shield yourself from COVID. Masks are now a part of our daily lives and help us safely face the world. We see every-day New Yorkers wearing them in grocery stores, on the subway, at home, in schools, and in our houses of worship. This is all to keep one another safe. Today, as the Mayor said, the Health Department is updating our guidance on face coverings, following recently announced guidance from the CDC as well. I want to be very clear, the single most important thing remains wearing a face covering consistently and properly so that it covers both your nose and your mouth, and you wear it both indoors and outdoors.

Here's some other important recommendations that are part of our guidance. First, tight makes right – make sure the face covering fits snugly against the sides of the face, without slipping. A snug fit will prevent you from breathing in or breathing out air droplets that may contain the virus. So, when you're choosing a specific mask, look for features that keep the face covering tight. For example, nose wires, tightly woven fabric, and face masks with fitters or braces. If it helps you can knot the ear loops or fold and tuck unneeded material under the mask to prevent air from getting in and also from escaping. I also do want to clarify that we do not recommend face coverings with an exhalation valve, because these masks allow air to escape when you're breathing out. Second, two is better than one – using two masks is more effective at stopping the spread of the virus. To double mask, use a cloth face covering over a disposable mask, not two disposable masks. Two of the disposable masks will not improve fit. Allow me to demonstrate with my own mask. This is the disposable mask, and this is my cloth face covering – adjust it so that it's fully covering your nose and mouth and so that you have this nose piece pressed against

the bridge of your nose to ensure a snug fit. Third, for those who are 65 or older and people with underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes, obesity, or hypertension, consider using a higher grade mask, like an KN-95. This also applies to household members and caregivers of people who are sick. Make sure not to confuse KN-95 with N-95. Again, this is a KN-95 mask, you can tell by its distinctive appearance. It has this metal strip against the nose bridge and it has ear loops as well. And this is the N-95 mask. Usually, it has two of these bands that go against the back of the head. It also does have this nose strip and it's made of a slightly thicker material as well. N-95s should still be used in health care settings. Fourth, wear your face covering at home if you live with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or were recently exposed to someone with the virus. Regardless of the mask you choose, I want to emphasize that we need to continue to follow the public health precautions we know work, staying home if you're sick, keeping your hands clean, staying six feet apart and getting tested regularly. Particularly with the new virus variants, our public health precautions are that much more important, both to protect ourselves and others. Finally, when it's your turn, roll up your sleeves and get the safe, effective lifesaving vaccine. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Dave. Dave, you did a good job modeling there. Thank you. It's really good to show people exactly what you mean. I appreciate that. And everyone look, New Yorkers have done something amazing this year with a lot, a lot of challenges, but the simple act of wearing a mask has been a revelation. It's been extraordinary, and it's become as typical for people in New York City as getting a coffee and bagel in the morning, and that's a really good thing. That's part of why we've been able to protect so many people. That's part of why New York City came back so strong in the summer and fall compared to so much of the country. We got to keep doing it. We got to keep doing it. This is the key, masks have made a huge difference, we got to stick with it.

Now, I got to give you some additional updates now, before I go to indicators, because we've just received more information, unfortunately, I wish I could tell you it was good news, but the breaking news here is not good news about the delivery schedule. Literally, since I started this press conference, we've gotten an update that we now hope the initial deliveries of the supply of vaccine that we've been waiting on and we'll start tomorrow, but it could go into Saturday. We now think we might not get our new first doses for this week until Sunday. So again, normally we're talking about – that's doses we get on Tuesday or Wednesday, we may not get the first doses until Sunday. So, unfortunately more delays because of the storm because the deliveries are not arriving. In fact, a vast majority of the resupply we expected for this week has not shipped from the factories yet. So, as we're getting updates, they're not going in the right direction. Hopefully, this weather will pass in the next couple of days all over the country and that's going to allow things to get back on track, but unfortunately further delays and that does have ramification for one of our sites. I mentioned two sites specifically that were delayed. Unfortunately, the Martin van Buren site now will be further delayed until Sunday at the earliest because of this new information. Again, I'm not happy to have to give you this news, but this is the latest, however, the Empire site, Empire Outlet, Staten Island, will still open tomorrow. We're just shifting supply around. We'll make sure that is up and running tomorrow.

But this is the situation we're in. It's been too hard to mouth in general, and then it's been made even worse by the storm. This is why we need a series of changes. We need to get the rest of the pharmaceutical industry into the act, so we see more vaccine produced quicker. We need direct – direct shipments of the vaccine to New York City, no strings attached. We need fewer rules from

the State government holding us back, more local control, so we can at least use the vaccine we have more effectively. We need to free up the second doses. There are so many things that we could be doing right now to get tens of thousands more people vaccinated, but unfortunately, Mother Nature now is causing us the most immediate problem with these supply delays and we of course will overcome them and keep moving forward.

Indicators for day, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for COVID-19, today's report 262 patients, 57.09 percent confirmed positivity. Hospitalization rate per 100,000, 4.42. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report 3,216. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, today's report, also seven-day rolling average is 7.17 percent. Let me say a few words in Spanish, going back to the topic of today's snowstorm and how we're going to navigate it together.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all we'll now begin our Q-and-A, with us today's Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, Emergency Management Commissioner Deanne Criswell, Sanitation Commissioner Edward Grayson, Chief Equity Officer of the Test and Trace Corps Annabel Palma, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to Sonia from 1010 WINS.

Mayor: Sonia? Sonia are you out there?

Question: Yes, can you hear me?

Mayor: There you go. How are you doing today?

Question: Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes. How are you doing?

Question: Hi I'm well, thank you. How are you?

Mayor: Good, good.

Question: Very well, thank you. Has there been progress on a universal app or website that can help people find vaccines that access all the portals, State, City, pharmacies, et cetera?

Mayor: Progress, but we talked about this in detail yesterday, Sonia. I don't want to give the false hope that we can get all these different companies and organizations exactly on the same page, because we talked about yesterday, hospital systems, pharmacy companies, city government agencies, getting them all to do exactly the same thing, that's not happening. But what we're able to do is get a lot more of them working on the same system that the city has created, I went into some of the details about that yesterday. So, more and more New Yorkers will find that they're working with one system and still on top of that, you can get the locations that have supply across all the different providers who are providing vaccine through the city

website. It's not perfect, but we continue to improve it. We now have the application in 10 different languages. We've simplified the process. We've done more obviously to show people if they're applying, that they are actually applying someplace that has appointments and we'll keep improving it. And of course, for a lot of people, the online approach won't be good enough, that's why we have the phone option. And then on top of that, we're going out into communities that need help the most, looking for seniors who are needing help, getting those appointments, and literally making the appointment at their doorstep with our canvassers out there. So, these are the kinds of things we're doing to move the process forward. Go ahead, Sonia.

Question: And you mentioned vaccine deliveries, maybe someone on the call can address this, we had a call from someone who was online with other seniors this morning waiting for a couple of hours in the cold, in the snow at August Martin High School in Queens, and they were told that the vaccine, the actual delivery was delayed. Does anybody know about this?

Mayor: I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi on that.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, sir. We do know vaccine deliveries are delayed as the Mayor has mentioned, however, at our sites and this includes at August Martin High School, the the principal number of appointments particularly for today is for people who are getting their second dose of vaccine, and there should be no effect of the delivery delays on second dose appointments. So, we can look into this specific situation at August Martin, but my message for New Yorkers is if you have an appointment that has been scheduled for today, vaccine sites do remain open, and we will continue to communicate with New Yorkers as things change on the ground.

Mayor: Yeah, and Sonia, thank you again, I'm always going to thank colleagues in the media when you bring up things that we need to know and act on. Thank you for bringing up the situation August Martin High School, the Commissioner will go get that addressed and fixed immediately. But, really important to note that we don't schedule new appointments that we don't have supply. So, just amplifying the point the Commissioner made, if an appointment is scheduled, it means there's supply to go with it. The fact that we've had to stop scheduling appointments is because we saw the supply was not coming for the week as expected. But the ones that are scheduled as the Commissioner said, there is vaccine to go with them, thank God. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I wonder how you're doing today?

Mayor: I am doing well in our winter wonderland, Marcia, how are you doing?

Question: Well, I'm in a winter wonderland myself, but unfortunately my question doesn't have to do with the winter. It has to do with what's going on in the State with the nursing home investigation. I wonder if you think there should be an investigation of what's going on with the nursing homes, and if you think that members of the Cuomo administration may have mishandled it?

Mayor: There clearly needs to be a full investigation. We're talking about thousands of people who were lost, our seniors, our elders, families that still don't know the truth and the questions that need to be answered to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again. There absolutely has to be a full investigation.

Question: So, another question that has come up has to do with the conversation that the Governor had with Assemblyman Ron Kim who says that he was threatened by Governor Cuomo. I wonder if you think that, you know, there's a dispute that Kim says he was threatened, the Governor's people say he wasn't. I wonder who you believe, and if you personally have experienced any tough conversations with Governor Cuomo?

Mayor: Many times. I believe Ron Kim. First of all, you can just see by what he's saying, it's from the heart, and it was a very painful experience for him. I believe him and he did not deserve to be treated that way and I admire him for coming forward and telling him exactly what happened.

Moderator: Next is Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

Mayor: We're fighting, Henry. We're fighting our way - we got the snow, we got the vaccine shortage, but whatever, it's not going to stop us, Henry. How you doing?

Question: All right. Very good. I'm doing well, thanks. I wanted to ask you to explain a little bit more detail what you mean by these priority areas. I know you've spent a lot of time discussing this and explaining it, but if you're in one of these areas, what are you receiving differently for being in this area? How has the city treating these areas differently? And I guess I'm assuming that we're talking about 33 areas and what data specifically do you take into consideration to determine that these are priority areas?

Mayor: Thank you. It's an important question, Henry. Now I will say, I feel like we've really talked about this a lot, so I'll just summarize at this point. I'll turn to Dave for anything he wants to add, but look, what we know is where folks suffered the most., and if we had to be very cold about it, we would say where did we lose the most of our fellow New Yorkers? Where did folks disproportionately die from this disease because of historic problems? Immigrants who came from places where they didn't get a lot of health care, folks who couldn't get their share of health care because they didn't have the kind of money to afford it in a country that still doles out health care according to wealth. We understand where the historic disparities are, and we saw a huge overlap from the beginning with where the worst impact of COVID was. So, those facts were all put together into an approach and the 33 neighborhoods were determined. What does it mean? It means a huge amount of outreach, real special efforts to educate people in dispel distrust, because, Henry, those are often the very same neighborhoods where there was the most distrust and the most hesitancy. Folks who are actually most vulnerable are also the most distrustful of the vaccine. Horrible catch-22. The outreach efforts are focused to address that, the placement of the vaccine centers to make sure the folks in greatest danger have vaccine centers near them, the door-to-door effort we talked about today, literally going, for example, in a public housing building to a senior's door, helping to convince them the vaccine makes sense for them, and then

making the appointment for them right then and there. These are the kinds of things that go with that priority focus. Dave, you want to add?

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, sir. You covered all of high points. I'll just elaborate on a couple of elements. First, if I had to boil down what we looked at to be able to identify the task force neighborhoods, it's the health and social factors that lead to preventable suffering, and based on looking at that, we've identified those 33 neighborhoods that deserve an even more concerted focus, and as the Mayor has said, this takes a few different forms that are primarily around allocation, access, and outreach. With respect to allocation of vaccine, this means not just at our city sites, but also working with the community health centers and the independent pharmacies that exist in those neighborhoods. With respect to access, as the Mayor mentioned in his remarks, three quarters of all city sites are in one of those 33 neighborhoods, and that shows our commitment to meeting people where they are with respect to access to vaccine. And the final piece of it is outreach, having the conversations, the human-to-human conversations that that Annabel Palma described, door to door canvassing, reaching out to people via phone calls, having town halls, all of those things that we know will help connect people to vaccination and get their questions answered.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: All right. Well, I'm going to follow up on that question a little bit, because I'm trying to correlate the ZIP code data with the vaccine allocation. There's a column on your ZIP code data that says priority, and does that mean that the ZIP code lies within the priority area, one of those 33 areas or is – does it mean something else?

Mayor: Go ahead, Dave.

Commissioner Chokshi: Sure, Henry, we can follow up with, you know, a more detailed conversation about this. There are two ways in which the task force neighborhoods are denoted in the ZIP code data. The first is if you actually click on a particular ZIP code, it will tell you whether one is a taskforce neighborhood or not, and then it sounds like you're actually downloading some of the data behind the map where there's also a column that shows that. But we'll be happy to walk through precisely what the different columns mean so that you have a clearer understanding of it.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Matt from Newsday.

Question: Hey, good morning. How are you, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Good Matt. How you been?

Question: I'm all right. I'm wondering if you've ever surreptitiously recorded the call with the Governor. If you have, are you're willing to release those?

Mayor: No, I have not. Go ahead.

Question: And then the second question is a lot of folks who progressive as well think that the criticism of the Governor related to the nursing homes is a right wing hit. Can you address that?

Mayor: I think it's a question of families who lost loved ones and the fact that clearly, we weren't given the whole truth and we've got to figure out how to protect people going forward. No, I don't think it's coming from one side of the spectrum or another. I think it's a concern we're hearing from the families who lost their loved ones and across the spectrum.

Moderator: Next is Michael from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: How are you, Michael?

Question: I'm all right. So, you know, this battle between Ron Kim and Cuomo now we're witnessing, I'm struggling to find the word for it. And I'm wondering if you could help me, I mean, would you describe this as a vendetta? Does it rise to the level of that sort of description? I mean, you know what we've observed here between the Governor and Kim seems pretty personal. I was wondering, you know, based on the experiences you had with the Governor, how you kind of characterize it?

Mayor: Look, I'm not here to provide the analysis of the situation. I will say this – that you know, someone being bullied is not acceptable. And Ron Kim was trying to raise real concerns and honest concerns on behalf of families in this city, in this state who have lost loved ones. And that deserves respect and he wasn't given respect. That's what I would say.

Question: Thanks, Mr. Mayor. My second question is a similar topic, same topic, basically. I mean, you've known the Governor for quite some time and you know, I'm paraphrasing a bit, but from what you said earlier this morning, this sort of behavior, I think you view as typical of him, you referred to calls you'd been on with him before. Why do you think this is given your experience, your kind of longtime relationship with the Governor? Why does he tend to treat people in these ways, his partners in government?

Mayor: Oh, I don't think it's just – Michael, I don't think it's just government. I mean, I think, you know, a number of your colleagues in the media will tell you about calls where they were berated and belittled. It's something that a lot of people in New York State have known about for a long time. I can't get into the why, that's a deeper question. I can only say it's a very unfortunate and inappropriate way to treat people. And again, Ron Kim, I believe him. It was important that he expressed his whole truth and people should respect him for that. And he refused to be intimidated and I give him credit for that.

Moderator: Next is Erin from Politico.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. We understand you recently met with labor leaders about the mayor's race, just wondering, did anything come out of that meeting? And also, what is your opinion of Andrew Yang's apparent status in the polls as a front runner at this point? Do you think he'd make a good front runner?

Mayor: Erin, I met with labor leaders, folks who I feel a lot of respect for and shared values with. And the meeting was about the working people of New York City and the future of New York City. And how to make sure that working people come first in New York City in the future? Because certainly we know what it's like in this town when working people aren't not the priority. And we know what it's like when the elites get it their way and working people are an afterthought. So, the meeting was really about where are we going? And in this moment, this horrible moment where so many working people, middle class people are suffering, how do we make sure that they are protected? And the work of labor unions continues and is not diminished. That's what we were focused on. Really wasn't about any one candidate or another. It was about something bigger. So, I'm just not going to do any punditry about the race. It's still early is the only thing I can tell you. It's a – if you go back to the equivalent time in 2013, I was in either fourth or fifth place before the primary. So, it's really early still. Go ahead. Erin.

Question: Okay, thanks. And then I want to ask about the new mask guidance that was given out. Particularly the idea that people should be wearing KN95 masks. Just wondering – I don't think they're necessarily widely available. I think you can get them on Amazon. I know the Mayor is not a fan of shopping on Amazon, but is there any plans to sort of actually distribute these and get these out to people? Or if not, are there any tips on, you know, if you just heard on this briefing, Oh, I'm supposed to wear a KN95 now, where do I get one?

Mayor: First of all, Erin, thank you for – you got your history right. Yes, I prefer people to buy local and not via Amazon. That is a true statement. But obviously we want to protect people and if they need a KN95, we want to make sure that they get what they need. Dave, why don't you talk about the level of availability? And again, specify who you think needs a KN95 versus a regular double mask approach?

Commissioner Chokshi: Absolutely, sir. And thank you for these important questions. Yeah. So, allow me to clarify first for, you know, the vast majority of New Yorkers, most important thing, wear a mask, wear it consistently and properly covering your nose and mouth, snug fit. The double masking helps with all of that because it ensures you have enough layers and it ensures that you do have that snug fit when you're wearing it. And we do think that double masking provides a higher level of protection that is comparable to some of the higher-grade masks. With that said, if you're a New Yorker who's particularly at risk, meaning at risk of severe outcomes, because you're older or you have an underlying health condition, or you're at risk because of the exposure that you have, then it is worth considering wearing a higher grade mask. The KN95, again, I'll just show it. This is an example of a KN95 mask, is just one of the higher-grade masks that are available for New Yorkers. Another example is a KF94, for example. These are now more widely available including in local stores. And people should be able to readily access them. We are as a city, as we have been doing over the last few months, going to make sure that we distribute masks that will be disposable masks, cloth masks and in some cases, higher grade masks as well, to supplement that availability across the city.

Mayor: Hey, Dave, I don't know if you had this at your fingertips, but can you describe the kinds of stores that would typically have the KN95?

Commissioner Chokshi: Certainly, sir. The kinds of stores that will have KN95s, you can check your local pharmacies in particular. They often have a range of different masks that are available.

And then just, you know, general stores, sometimes supermarkets and bodegas will have masks available as well.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: We have time for two more. First, we'll go to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Question: Hello, Mayor. Good morning.

Mayor: Good morning, Abu. How you been?

Question: Good. It's already snowing here in Long Island City.

Mayor: All right. Well, hopefully this may be the last one of the season. I'm knocking wood. Let's hope for the best.

Question: Yes. And having Bangladeshi style tea in the home.

Mayor: Very good. You're thinking of someplace warmer. I like it.

Question: Yes. All right Mayor. The first question is about the distribution of the vaccine in community pharmacy. So, I asked before about the same question, is there a decision that has been made when the community pharmacy could distribute the, you know, I mean vaccinate the community people?

Mayor: Yeah. I want to say, I feel passionately about the community-based pharmacies. Again, everyone, these are the family run pharmacies, not the chains, the independent pharmacies. That for so many of us, including my family for decades, we've depended, not on big chains, but on the family-run – family-run pharmacy in our neighborhood where we got great care, great attention. People knew our name. People knew our family. This is part of the lifeblood in New York City. These independent pharmacies have been a big part of the solution for a long time on things like flu shots. It played an important role in testing. We need them to play an important role going forward on everything we need to do to fight this pandemic. Dr. Chokshi, talk about what role they will play.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, sir. And you described very well the role that independent or community-based pharmacies play as anchors in particular neighborhoods. And we want to leverage that, to take advantage of that as a very important partnership for our vaccination campaign. Already, thousands of New Yorkers have been vaccinated at community pharmacies, that's across the five boroughs. But we would like to broaden that out much further. We've taken steps to enroll as many of those independent pharmacies as possible, so that when we do have additional supply, we'll be able to direct it to those pharmacies so they can vaccinate even more people. Right now, the limiting part of this remains supply. And as soon as that does open up, you'll be seeing much more vaccination happening through those channels.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Abu.

Question: Okay. Second question [inaudible] because the COVID and other situation, the minority business, especially the restaurant business is, you know, in the worst situation. Is there any programs that you will take to promote their businesses who are dying?

Mayor: Yeah, look, this is so important. We have to bring back our restaurants strong. When I talk about a recovery for all of us, it means right down to the grassroots. It means neighborhood restaurants, family restaurants that people love, that are part of the community's identity. For so many New Yorkers, you know, from all over the world a neighborhood restaurant is a place where you stay connected to your culture and the things that really bring you that warmth and that hope. So, we've got to protect them. What we're going to do, you know, first of all, as I've said, we really look forward to providing more support. We want to give tax breaks to small businesses. That will depend – the amount we can do will depend very much on what kind of stimulus we get. And when, and if we get a stimulus. We want to do things like the Open Restaurants approach. That's permanent now. We want to make sure as many, you know, 10,000 restaurants plus are in Open Restaurants. There's a lot more that could be a part of that now that's permanent and warm weather is just around the corner. That can be a big part of bringing restaurants back and making them strong. There's so much we want to do to support them. Our Small Business Services team has done a great job working with individual restaurants on whatever their needs are. We need to bring them back. We're going to do a lot to support – and the big thing I'd say also about the recovery is when we get five million people vaccinated by June, if we have the supply obviously, you're going to see this summer, a huge amount of activity in this city. You're going to see New Yorkers coming out and patronizing those restaurants, like never before. You're going to see folks who would have been traveling instead spending their money in their neighborhoods at those restaurants. You're even going to see people start to come in from not just the suburbs, but from around the country, as we get safer and safer, ready to have a good time again. And where are they going to go? They're going to go to New York City because we're going to be one of the safest places in the country. So, we got a lot planned for this summer and beyond to bring back our restaurant industry strong.

Moderator: Last, we'll go to [inaudible] from WNYC.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: I'm doing great. I want to make sure I pronounce your name, right. Is it [inaudible]?

Question: Yeah [inaudible] like Akon or like pecan, if you want.

Mayor: You have great analogies there. Thank you.

Question: So, our first question is about policing. It's coming from my colleague, Christopher Robbins. He's wondering, your administration opposes several of the police reform bills that are being debated by the City Council right now. And your representatives have argued that they would hamper the NYPD's ability to do its job. If that's true, why hasn't Commissioner Shea appeared at the City Council hearings to discuss them?

Mayor: You know [inaudible] the Commissioner appears and his predecessor commissioners have appeared typically at the budget hearings each year. There's one in the winter, one in the spring. Those tend to be extensive sessions and the Council members talk to the commissioner in

a variety of ways all throughout the year, particularly the public safety chair. And that dialogue is really, really important. But this specific hearing was to talk about the package, we sent the representatives who have been working on the package of reforms. And they addressed our concerns, but you know what? We're going to be working closely with the Council over the coming weeks. We expressed our views, but we're going to be in dialogue with the Council and we are going to get this reform package done by the end of March. Go ahead.

Question: Perfect. And then my second question is about vaccines. We reached out to your office and your Health Department for data on how many vaccine doses have already been distributed and administered at each of the City's vaccine sites. The Health Department said that the supply by provider is not something we are publishing. That's a quote. May I ask why this information is being withheld when it's essential for determining whether there's fair access to doses across your vaccine sites?

Mayor: Yeah, I would – thank you for the question. It's an important question. I would just urge a modification of the word withheld. I don't believe we should withhold it. I think it's been a challenge getting absolutely accurate data out. And, you know, when we put out the information on disparity, we wanted to make sure we had it right. As you remember, when we did the citywide disparity information on vaccination, we still had hundreds of thousands of doses that we didn't know the ethnicity or background of the people involved because they hadn't offered it or weren't asked it properly. We put out the ZIP code data the other day. But again, we have some information, we don't have perfect information. But I think it's right to go the next step and show what's happening site by site. So, I'd be happy to see us do that, but I think it's fair to say it takes time and we have to make sure it's accurate. Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, sir. I think you covered all the high points here. We have through the vaccination campaign, successively provided more and more data. Not just for the purposes of being transparent, which is a responsibility that we take very seriously. But to be able to share that data so that New Yorkers are armed with the information they need to know where to go to get vaccinated. And to understand how the campaign is rolling out. So, you'll continue to see us share additional data with time just as you have been. We always do take pains to ensure that it is accurate and valid and contextualized before we share anything publicly.

Mayor: Yeah. And to finish the point [inaudible] first of all, I give Dave and everyone at the Health Department, a lot of credit. The Health Department of New York City was among the first in the United States of America to say, hey, this COVID crisis is also a disparity crisis and an inequality crisis. I remember vividly when I was first shown the map, the information the Department of Health had brought together, and it's so painfully overlapped with the historic map of where poverty was in New York City. And no one hesitated to put that out and start a national conversation about the disparities of COVID. One of the places that began was right here with a report from the Department of Health at the very beginning of the crisis. When we got into vaccination, one of the first places to document from the government side, that there was a disparity crisis in vaccination was the New York City Department of Health and putting out that data openly. And now down to the ZIP code level. You're absolutely right. We should do it down to the site level. And we will. So, I'm making that commitment to you. I think it's the absolute right thing to do. We have to make sure it's accurate though. And, but I absolutely want to see more and more information. Because that openness, that transparency helps the people, it helps the media to say, okay, is this working? Is that working? It helps us to get the tough

questions we should get to make sure we're protecting people's lives. So good question. I appreciate the question. And the answer is we will be releasing that data, excuse me. And we'll let you know, as soon as possible when that will be.

To finish up today, everyone, look, again, coming back to old reliable – the masks, but now asking everyone to double up. This has been the difference maker. But you know what the mask doesn't put itself on you. You know, you have to do it and you have. New Yorkers have been amazing in this crisis. Really, I can't say enough what a heroic effort, the people of this City have made. It's worked. It's allowed us to fight back time and time again. Remember, we came back from the horrible reality of being the epicenter. We became one of the safest places in the country. We built the biggest Test and Trace Corps in the country. We brought our schools back, when most cities in America didn't dare to try. Our schools – more and more kids are coming back. Next Thursday, middle school, coming back. We're going to go farther from there. It all comes down to focus and discipline and the strength of New Yorkers. Get those masks on. Keep them on. The day is going to come where we're able to remove them and have a different kind of life again. But let's let the doctors tell us when that day is. In the meantime, let's protect each other. Thank you, everyone.

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