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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**MEDIA CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** ...out with kids, with parents, with teachers and school staff. Everyone yesterday morning that I was with in Elmhurst Queens, they were – the only word to say is they were pumped up. They were ready for the school year to begin. It was inspiring. It was uplifting. And, as you can see, children are – they always amaze me, they always inspire me. They are just ready to find the good and the positive, and the kids yesterday, going into that pre-K center, they were just excited and happy to be someplace that's warm and positive and with teachers who love them and care about them. And the whole school community, you could see the excitement all around. It's really, really inspiring – that's the right word. And this is a tough year, obviously – the toughest, in many ways, we've ever experienced, but kids were ready for the joy, for the excitement. Parents were relieved to see something coming back to normal, a little bit, something positive. And I think parents need a little relief too. And it was great to see that the educators were there to embrace their kids and continue to help the kids grow and learn and develop. So, it was inspiring and it was just another part of New York City coming back and coming back strong. Everyone in the school community deserves a lot of credit yesterday, all over the city. I monitored the situation and talk to the top leadership in the DOE, in our educator unions. What I heard consistently was, the first day of school at 734 public schools and 1,050 community-based organizations with pre-K and 3-K – almost 1,800 sites, and things aren't off really very well, very smoothly, thanks to the great work of our professionals who are there for our kids. And thanks to parents who worked with them as well. I want to give a special thank you to folks who don't get enough credit, but I saw them right there yesterday in Elmhurst doing a great job and I heard about their work all over the city – our school safety agents. Everyone that works for school safety, thank you. You played a crucial role yesterday, making sure everything came off smoothly. You were there to make sure kids were getting the temperature checks. You were there to make sure that everyone was safe. Thank you – a special thank you to school safety agents and everyone at school safety. You are part of the glue that makes our school system work and you do a great job yesterday.

Okay. Now, the temperature checks – and you see a great image there. Again, kids are so flexible and adaptable, they don't mind getting their temperature checked. And this way of doing it is so quick, it only takes seconds. This is an important priority – we want to make sure everyone's healthy and safe in our schools. So, there's a daily health screening. Now, look, the best way for this to happen is for parents to do what is required of them to take their children's temperature in the morning and record it on a health screening form. You can do that online or you can do that literally on paper and make sure your school has it. You can send it in online or put it in your child's book bag. They can bring it with them, show it to the folks at school when they get there. But in the event that that doesn't happen, the backup is the temperature checks. So, those will be

something you see regularly at schools, making sure kids are screened and checked on. Obviously, any kid that has a high temperature, we're going to separate them and get them the help they need. But what we're seeing again is a lot of parents are immediately focusing on doing what we need them to do. They are taking temperatures in the morning. More and more, I'm sure we'll do it and fill out those health screening forms. It's going to help everyone in the school community. The more you do that, the better. And we're sending home free temporary – excuse me, free thermometers for any parents who need them. We'll be sending those as well.

Now, obviously, another crucial part of the equation, not just for our schools, for our whole city is testing. And we've said from the very beginning, what matters – testing, testing, testing, it makes all the difference. So, it is Get Tested Tuesday. So, I'm going to remind everyone, if you have never gotten tested, this is a great day to get tested. It's fast. It is easy. It is free. If you never gotten tested, get tested. If you haven't been tested for a long time, get tested. If your child's about to go back to school next week, get them tested. School personnel – many have been tested. Anyone who hasn't, it's a good time to get tested. Look, we know that when people get tested it tells us what's really going on. It tells you what's going on and what you can do if you need any help. And that's what test and trace is all about. For those who do test positive – and, thank God, it's not a lot of people in this city – but for those who do test positive, Test and Trace is there for you to make sure you get the help and support you need, you know what to do. If you need anything special to get you through a period of safe separation, it's there for you. And, of course, always free, available, simple, and in many, many languages. So, we want to keep reminding people how important it is to get tested. And so, today, we will have a testing locations at over a dozen public housing developments in the city. And again, you see the locations there – all five boroughs. These are some of our larger housing developments and a lot of the different parts of the city. Free, easy, on-site testing with community-based folks helping to lead the way. So, really want to encourage people who live in those housing developments or nearby, come on over and get tested. It'll be a really good thing to do for yourself, your family, and for your city.

Now, look, what we've found is the more we focus testing where the need is greatest, the more impact that makes. So, this is the hyperlocal effort that Test and Trace is focused on. It's made all the difference. And one of the areas now that been already involved in the hyperlocal testing effort and the outreach effort is Ozone Park, Queens. There's been free rapid testing available. This is the point of care testing with a fast turnaround testing, quick answers – and that's been available and continues to be available through October 2nd at the Queens Public Library in Ozone Park. And there are medical interpreters onsite – they speak Spanish, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, and Cantonese. So, really ready to serve the needs of that particular community. So, whenever we see an area we need to focus on, we've seen consistently what happens – a lot more testing, happens a lot more outreach, a lot more communication, and we see good results and we're going to keep doing that. So we're continuing that effort and ozone park Queens. We're continuing the effort in Borough Park, in Brooklyn – testing center open at Fort Hamilton Parkway in 41st Street. Again, crucial for people to get tested in that community. And we have other areas where we need to really focus more and we're going to see expanded community outreach efforts into neighborhoods where we are seeing some upticks in the last day. So, here are some areas we're concerned about Kew Gardens, Midwood, Flatbush, Far Rockaway and Williamsburg. All these are neighborhoods where we've seen some upticks lately. We need to

apply a lot of energy and focus to these areas. You're going to see a lot of activity in the community to remind people of the basics, how important it is and what we call the core four – four things that you can do that makes such a difference – wear a mask, socially distance, wash your hands, and stay home if you're sick. Four things – I can do this for things

[Laughter]

Dave, you have to – you have to train me on that. Four things that you can do that makes such a difference. And we're going to work with community leaders, community organizations, trusted members of the community to get that word out, particularly any place where we see an uptick. We saw a challenge some weeks ago in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, huge hyperlocal effort made all the difference, numbers came right back down. We saw that in Soundview in the Bronx. Now, we're going to be focused on these communities to make sure those numbers get back down where we need them to be.

Now, again, a reminder to everyone, the weather is starting to get a little cooler. It's now turned from summer to fall pretty rapidly as you can feel. So, now, we have a particular challenge around indoor gatherings and we have to keep reminding all New Yorkers, large indoor gatherings are not acceptable. There are clear rules from the State on this. Large gatherings are still a problem both legally and in terms of the health problem they create. So, we need people to avoid that. We do not want to spread this virus. We want to continue New York City's success. And here to talk about what we're going to do to continue that success and how we're going to really delve deep into communities to help make sure that no upticks get very far, our Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi.

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Thank you, sir. Well, from the beginning, we've said we're watching the indicators like hawks both citywide as well as at the neighborhood level. We're now seeing signals that COVID is spreading in some neighborhoods faster and wider than the rest of the city, as the Mayor mentioned. But as we've done in Sunset Park and Tremont, in Borough Park, in Soundview, now in Ozone Park, and elsewhere, we're launching a targeted approach that applies more pressure where there is growth in COVID-19 rates. We're doing this to communicate the urgency we feel and that we need everyone to feel about following guidance to prevent the spread of COVID and to protect one another. So, specifically, in the days ahead, we'll launch robocalls and WhatsApp messages, communications with houses of worship, core-four palm cards to businesses, distribution of masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. We'll place additional ads in community newspapers and we'll offer new point-of-care testing resources in these six neighborhoods at both Urgent Care and community provider offices. We aim to be seen and heard, so sound trucks will broadcast core four messages in these neighborhoods as well. Because this must be done by, for, and with the community, we'll enhance our partnerships with community-based organizations so that they can activate their networks to best reach New Yorkers. And all of you can do something about this as well, reaching out to your family members to your neighbors, to your colleagues. All of this is building on activity that has already happened, including calls, neighborhood outreach, ads, and interviews with news media. But where more COVID cases are seen, more outreach and activity will be applied. We have the tools to hold COVID at bay. We do this by avoiding large indoor gatherings, as well as the core four – particularly wearing face coverings if you're older than two,

maintaining at least six feet of distance from others, hand-washing, and staying home if you're ill. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, Commissioner. Listen, everyone, this is such an important message. Let's do the basics. Let's make sure we do not let this disease back in the door here in this city, because we've come so far and we've fought so well against it. And one of the last things that Commissioner Chokshi said, you know, kids – kids are so important in this equation. They have done an amazing job with the masks. There was a lot of concern that young kids wouldn't wear a mask. I was so struck yesterday in Elmhurst, every child wearing their mask, wearing it comfortably. We need this for the whole family. We need everyone wearing those masks. It makes a world of difference. So, let's get the word out and let's work together to fight back this disease as we have done so successfully.

Now, we've talked in the last few days about a lot of really important things coming up. Yesterday, I talked about the census deadline just eight days away, and we're going to be talking about the census a lot the next few days. But it's also important to remember in six weeks, yes, 42 days, six weeks from now the most important election of our lifetimes – can't come soon enough in my personal opinion. But here's something to know, the registration deadline. It's really important that everyone should be a part of this election, whatever you believe, whatever you feel, everyone should be in the game. The deadline to register to vote for the general election, the presidential election, all the other key offices that are up on the ballot, the deadline's October 9th to register to vote. And that's the last day you can register if you want to vote in the November election. Today is national Voter Registration Day, so what a good day to get registered. So, if you have not yet gotten registered or anyone in your life, family, friends, neighbors let them know three ways you can register to vote. You can go online or in-person, any Department of Motor Vehicles office can do that with you, or online – [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) – that's an easy way to do it. Or, you can go in person to any local Board of Elections office, or any City or State office – all of them have voter registration materials available. We want to make sure that everyone is part of this election. So, 42 days left, six weeks to go, couldn't be more important. No excuses – if you care, get registered to vote by October 9th.

All right. Now, before I go to our indicators, one last thing. And, you know, we talked yesterday, everyone's feeling so much – talked to so many people feeling pain, feeling loss, deep loss because of the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. It's personal for all of us as New Yorkers. It's personal for so many people who were inspired by her and saw her as a guiding light and example. We want to make sure we honor her in every conceivable way and especially in the borough that she came from that gave her so much of her strength and spirit, the borough of Brooklyn. So, today, I'm proud to announce that we will rename the Brooklyn Municipal Building after Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. And what an extraordinary opportunity to say to the people of Brooklyn, here's one of your own who changed the world. Here's someone of, and by, and for Brooklyn, and this city, who did the greatest things on the world stage. And that building will carry her name forevermore. And that photo is evocative, because I think if anyone would appreciate both the value of public service and what government does for our people, and at this moment in history connected to a message of fairness and equality that you see there before you – Black Lives Matter – I am certain Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg would feel something very,

very special, and we will honor her with her family in the weeks to come to thank her for all she did and to remember all she did for this city and for this nation.

Now, let's do our indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19. The threshold is 200 patients – today's report is 59, and the percentage confirmed positive for COVID-19 is 10 percent. Number two, the new reported cases on a seven-day average, the threshold 550 cases – today's report is 333 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19, threshold is five percent – today's report, 1.14 percent.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we'll 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-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, Chancellor Carranza, Commissioner Melanie La Rocca, Corporation Council Jim Johnson, Special Counsel to DemocracyNYC Laura Wood, Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma, and the Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps. Dr. Ted Long. First question today goes to Al Jones from 1010 WINS.

**Mayor:** Hey, Al. Can you hear me?

**Question:** I can. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Good morning, Al. How are you doing?

**Question:** I'm doing well. The Comedy Clubs – the Governor says opening them is too risky. Senator Gianaris is now floating a plan that would have them opening with 25 percent occupancy if they serve food and drink, 50 percent if they don't, 100 percent if they're outdoors – I don't know how that's to go, but I'm just wondering, do you think it's about time that that segment of our economy open up?

**Mayor:** It's a good question, Al. Look, we're doing this step by step and stage by stage, and that's what's been working. Remember, months and months of progress in the city because we've done the steady, smart approach based on the data. So, that's what we're going to keep doing. We'll look at that one. Honestly, it hasn't been one of the areas we focused on a lot, but it's an important part of life in the city. It's something we're proud of. Outdoors works so long as it's the right size group and there's distancing. Obviously, we always prefer outdoors. But, in terms of indoors, it's something we'll talk about. Dr. Chokshi and the team and I will work with the State. We'll come back with an answer on that soon.

Go ahead, Al.

**Question:** Sure. One more too – this is on schools. Back in the summer, 25 percent of the parents were opting for remote only. Now, that number is approaching 50 percent. So, what does that tell you about parents’ apprehension about the in-school setting being safe for their kids?

**Mayor:** Al, it's natural that parents – look, I was a public school parent. I absolutely think it makes sense that parents wanted their kids back in school. That was their aspiration. As the weeks passed, I think parents just being careful, cautious, it's understandable that they wanted to make sure they got the answers to their concerns. Now, look, we tried to put out a lot of information, a lot of clarity. I also honestly think there was a lot of misinformation coming from all over that probably made parents more apprehensive. But I think what you're seeing now is parents watching carefully and wanting to see what goes on and then they're going to make their bigger decisions. Remember, in just a matter of weeks, parents have the opportunity to opt back in. So, certainly, from some parents I've talked to their decision was to hold back initially, but if they saw what they hoped to see, then they would like to get their kids back in. And from what I saw yesterday, we're off to a really strong start. And I think parents will be encouraged by that and will move back in short order.

**Moderator:** The next is Marcia from CBS,

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I'd like to follow up on that question having to do with teachers. I know that middle school and high school students are going to be returning to classes on Monday. I wonder where you are in terms of having enough teachers, hiring enough teachers, you know, how many do you need? And to follow up on Al's question: is the fact that people more people are opting for remote making it more difficult for you to find enough teachers to staff all the classes?

**Mayor:** Okay. First a factual point, Marcia, and I really want to make sure we always get this right. Because of Yom Kippur it's actually Tuesday, the 29th, is the first day back for K-5 schools and K-8 schools, and then Thursday, the 1st, is the first day back for middle schools and high schools. I just want to make sure everyone knows those facts.

Look Marcia, in terms of the hiring process, it continues. I think there have been a lot of changes, but the fact is with more and more information coming in, the hiring is now speeding up much the way we need it to we're getting to the point, and we saw it yesterday, where we had everyone we needed across again, 734 school sites, 1,050 community-based sites. We had the staffing we needed more and more people are signing up. I feel good about the staffing situation as we go into next week. Go ahead, Marcia.

**Question:** Yes. Mr. Mayor, I guess the follow-up question is this: will everybody who goes into an in-person learning situation, be learning directly with the teacher or will some of them have to do remote learning on their iPads, even though they're in a classroom because of the teacher shortage. Are you at all worried about that and how – what's the number? How many people do you have to hire so you won't have to do that?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Marcia, the – first of all, no, on your first question, the answer is no. Our kids are going to go into classrooms, staffed by adults, ready to teach them in-person. We're going to

have for the kids in blended learning, on the days they're not in school, there will be online learning. Obviously, a lot of schools are already doing a synchronous model for a lot of that learning. That's going to keep growing as we go through the next few weeks. But no, the bottom line is we've had till now a changing situation in terms of number of teachers available, number of students available the need to blend in, in-person learning blended, remote learning, full time remote learning never been attempted before nothing this complex has ever been attempted before in New York City, it has caused some real challenges in getting the numbers right. But what we saw in the last few days is we surged a certain amount of personnel to make sure the needs were filled. That strategy is clearly working. I think that's the important thing. This was not on paper Marcia – this was real world. Across almost 1,800 sites they got their staffing pattern right, they had the people they needed. We're going to take that same model and apply it to next Tuesday, and next Thursday. We'll be able to publicly say what the grand total number is soon as we keep developing that model out. But the approach works and I feel good that we'll have the people we need when we need them.

**Moderator:** The next is Dana from the New York Times.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey Dana, how are you doing?

**Question:** I'm doing all right, thank you. I was curious if you could reflect at all on how we got to a place where the president of the United States sees fit to threaten New York City's financial underpinnings at such a perilous time in its history?

**Mayor:** What an important question, and Dana, thank you because I've sometimes stopped even the middle of all this activity to reflect on that, and it is a sign of danger. It's a profound sign of danger. It means that our constitutional norms are under assault. It means that the things that we used to believe were sort of off limits and on limits have all been scrambled in a really dangerous way in terms of having a healthy democratic society, and this is how things start to degrade and democracy is endangered. So, I don't think it's a minor matter at all. I think it's ridiculous, I think it's divisive, I think it's a political stunt and it won't work because it's unconstitutional and our court system actually still functions, but it's an incredibly dangerous sign because one, the notion that a president could try and seize power from the Congress and subvert the Congress's will in terms of budgeting, that's dangerous. The notion that a president of his own whim could try and deny funding to cities that don't agree with him politically, that's extraordinarily dangerous. The fact that the president could fail to lead in a crisis and think that's okay, you know, that horrifying comment about the blue states the other day, that sounded like he really didn't care what happened to the blue states. We should be really, really worried about things like that, and we have to fight them each and every time. I think the answer is always to fight back and I do want to turn to our Corporation Counsel Jim Johnson, because I know he's been thinking about the very same question, about what this means about our constitutional norms, and I want to give him a chance to weigh in as well.

Jim, can you hear us? You may be on mute. Wait, we need a little more volume.

**Corporation Counsel James Johnson:** Good morning, and thanks. This is – am I coming through now?

**Mayor:** Yep. You're coming through.

**Corporation Counsel Johnson:** Right, as the Mayor mentioned, this would be a clear violation of two constitutional provisions. One is the Spending Clause, that governs how Congress allocates funds [inaudible]. The second is the 10th Amendment that protects the states [inaudible] operate in its own sphere [inaudible] municipalities' leadership to govern there, and what the president has threatened is to step in, push the municipalities out of the way and clearly tread upon the discretion that Mayor and the Police Commissioner to govern this city.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Dana.

**Question:** Thank you, and then on another topic on the topic of long-term borrowing, I'm curious why you have yet to produce a plan to explain how you'd utilize the borrowing as Andrea Stewart-Cousins and others have called for?

**Mayor:** Dana. I really feel we've articulated to the public and to the leaders in Albany exactly what the plan is. If we have not messaged it well enough, then that's on us, but it couldn't be clearer so let me say it again. To stave off the billion-dollar gap we have now that could lead to the layoffs, we need \$1 billion in borrowing for this fiscal year and then to continue staving off that layoff, we needed a billion dollars for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1st. There is \$2 billion right there of the \$5 billion, we've said from the beginning of the \$5 billion is to stretch out over a period of time, multiple years, to give us a backstop if we don't get stimulus money from the federal government, and as we deal with huge revenue challenges around.

So, there's \$2 billion out of \$5 billion. So, you say, okay, where does the other \$3 billion go? The other \$3 billion is to offset the state cuts, which would be inevitable if there were no stimulus. So, all of this keys off the stimulus, if there is a stimulus, if there's an ample stimulus, there is no borrowing. There's no need for borrowing. We want the authority as a backstop, but we wouldn't use it. But if there is no stimulus and there are several scenarios where that could be the case, depending on what happens, particularly in the election, if there is no stimulus, the State of New York will start cutting all municipalities, billions and billions of dollars. We think this fiscal year alone that cuts \$1 billion or \$2 billion easily, and then even more the following fiscal year. So here is your simple explanation: \$2 billion of the \$5 billion is to keep the layoffs from happening, to stop the layoffs, keep our personnel in place serving the public, \$3 billion is to compensate for the state cuts so we can keep services going. All we're trying to do is keep basic services going in the city and avoid the layoffs of the people who serve us so well. That's where the \$5 billion would go, but Dana, we hope we never need to borrow because as stimulus comes and we continue to work with labor on other alternatives, such as savings, that's happening literally daily, and we're going to keep working to maximize that option as well.

**Moderator:** The next is Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?



**Mayor:** Good, Michael, how are you?

**Question:** I'm all right, thanks. So, I wanted to just go back to Marcia's question from earlier. I was wondering if you could tell us what will happen if we don't get enough teachers in time? We had this 2,500 new teachers you announced, I think it was last week coming in. But I mean, these are teachers that you have to recruit, hire, train from outside the existing pool of teachers and substitutes in DOE, right? So if we can't get to that the number that we need, what's kind of plan B there?

**Mayor:** That's a fair question, Michael. But I think what we are seeing more and more as a fundamental confidence that the numbers are coming in the way we need them to. Again, we all tried to make sense of this very complex equation of in-person learning, blended learning, including remote blended, full-time remote, the number of teachers varying as the medical exemptions came in, the number of students varying. You know, I feel for our principals, I feel for everyone at DOE trying to make sense of that very complex equation. But what we are finding is the thousands of educators who now work at the DOE, who are certified, ready to go, we're working in other kinds of jobs, not in classrooms. They're moving into the classrooms. That's working smoothly. The substitute pool was over 5,000 who have been substitutes in our system, who are already certified. They're moving into place, we're finding more and more of the teachers who have taught previously want to come back into the profession. Young people planning to be teachers in the middle of their degree programs. There's a lot of different pieces here. Adjunct professors who are at CUNY who don't have work anymore, but are obviously trained teachers. The numbers are now coming in much stronger. So there's confidence, and I had this conversation in detail with the entire leadership of the DOE over at the Tweed Building yesterday. There's confidence those numbers are coming forward the way we need them to, and there's a lot of people looking for work, which is the other X factor here because of this very tough economy, and we will have the people we need. We're always looking for redundancy to answer your question, Michael, we want as a lot of redundancy, we need substitutes obviously for just daily substitute work on a day by day basis, when someone just happens to be sick, but the numbers are coming in quite strong now. Go ahead.

**Question:** My second question has to do with Donald Speight. I don't know if you saw this story we ran this weekend about him. He was an HRA employee, veteran HRA employee. He worked at one of the food stamp offices in Brooklyn, I think he directed it actually, and he died from COVID in April, and the reason I'm asking is about him is he requested work from home in March and his family says he was, you know, kind of put off and eventually granted the work-from-home and three days after being granted it got sick and subsequently died from COVID, I think about a week and a half later – within two weeks about. And his daughters are left parentless and they're trying to secure their father's pension benefits now, and I'm wondering, you know, so they're kind of two issues here: the work-from-home coming in, I think from his family's perspective too late and, and the pension benefits, and I'm wondering if there's anything the city can do or is doing to address kind of the situation that this family has been left in after, you know, Speight from, you know, the accounts I heard was a very devoted city worker, you know, living in Bushwick, I believe.

**Mayor:** Okay. So, look, it's a very sad situation obviously, and we immediately have to make sure the family gets what is due to them in terms of the support and the benefits. So I'll have our team here at City Hall, follow up on this right away to make sure that's happening. I did not see the story and I don't know the history, honestly, Michael we want to make sure everyone is treated fairly. We want to make sure that people who have legitimate needs medically are heard and it's addressed quickly. We were all trying in the first days of this crisis to make sense of a lot of complex things, but the most important thing now is to make sure that family gets the help they deserve, and we'll follow up on that immediately.

**Moderator:** The next is Rich Lamb from WCBS 880

**Question:** Good morning to everybody on the call, good morning Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** How are you doing Rich?

**Question:** I'm doing all right. Except that I read this morning that the number of confirmed cases the coronavirus has gone up more than 15% in the last 10 days across the United States and other countries are seeing what they're now calling a second wave. Do your people think there's a second wave developing, especially after your having told us about those six neighborhoods where they're seeing an uptick?

**Mayor:** It's a really important question, Rich. I'll start, and I want Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi to weigh in as well. Look, we're watching the situation very carefully. We have a different situation than the other parts of the world that are having their second wave for a couple of reasons. What we saw certainly – look, take the European countries as an example. We saw, unfortunately in a lot of those countries very lax guidelines around indoor dining, bars, nightclubs, that really hurt them. I've read some stories about Spain that were really troubling about having let the situation go from, you know, something very strict to something very loose quickly, and that really has burned a lot of countries, and a lot of people have suffered because of it. There seems to have been a lot of problems with young people gathering. We've seen some of that in New York City, but nowhere near like what has been seen in so many other countries, there are problems with travel. I don't think the travel dynamics have been the same here. There's obviously been a really devoted approach to quarantine here, and a lot of messaging about that I think has had an impact. So, I really think we're in a different situation, but that being said, we are watching carefully because when we see this many neighborhoods with a problem it's causing us a lot of concern for sure, and we have to immediately address it. Let's start with Dr. Varma.

**Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma:** Great. Thank you very much for the question. I would, you know, echo what the Mayor has said which is that we have done a tremendous amount to keep our rates low, and that includes in addition, obviously, to the Test and Trace Corps, it includes all the very the cautious reopening of steps. But these local problems that have been neighborhoods that Commissioner Chokshi has highlighted can always extend into other areas. So that's why the hyperlocal response that you're hearing is absolutely so critical and we are monitoring the data every day to ensure that those efforts are in fact working because what we've seen from the experience in Europe and Israel and in parts of Asia is that when these second waves occur, they

always start as small problems that expanded to big ones. So our aggressive approaches are absolutely critical to prevent that from happening.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, sir. Just one point that I would add to it, which is when we do look around the world and around the country the other common thread to some of the resurgences that we've seen is when people are not wearing masks and when they are attending large indoor gatherings of different types. So it makes it crucially important for us to focus on those things, because we know what has worked in New York City over the last few months but we can't get complacent about those things. So we have to remain vigilant, particularly around masks and avoiding large indoor gatherings.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead, Rich.

**Question:** So just back to the question about the schools in regard to people switching to remote from in-person or blended, however you want to look at it, has there been an acceleration in that recently? Has it stabilized or is it getting faster and faster?

**Mayor:** Rich from what I've heard, and I haven't gotten the last 24 or 48 hours' specific numbers, but what I've seen previously is it was pretty steady over the last week or two, there were still parents deciding up to the last moment, it's understandable, and definitely a number of them were choosing remote. I, again – I'm a parent. I get it. If parents weren't sure what was going on, it would make sense that a lot of them would say, hey, I think I'll do remote to begin. Obviously, a lot of other parents as we saw yesterday in Elmhurst and all over the city are like, no, I need my kid to be in school for a lot of reasons, and it's what's right for the child. And, you know, they saw something very important yesterday with 1,800 sites up and running. That means literally every neighborhood in New York City, people were seeing with their own eyes, and everything's been kind of talk and theory and sometimes noise over these last months. Yesterday was proof. Yesterday was the facts on the ground. Parents saw kids going into school, safely, the right way, and that message is going to spread. But what I think again is going to happen in a number of cases is a number of parents are going to watch how the first weeks go and then they know they can have another bite at the apple to decide literally in a matter of weeks if they want their kids to come in then, and it's our job to show everyone how effectively our schools will move forward and how safely, and to make sure everyone feels that sense of encouragement.

**Moderator:** The next is Nolan from the New York Post.

**Question:** Good morning, everyone. Is this on?

**Mayor:** Yes, you are. Nolan, how you doing?

**Question:** I'm all right. I need another cup of coffee. I just want to follow up on some of the questions that you've gotten this morning. You said you have a fundamental confidence that the numbers are coming in the way you need them to, with regards to teacher staffing levels. What is the number you're shooting for you? You haven't –

**Mayor:** Yeah, no, I haven't – Nolan, I like to be straightforward when there isn't yet a final number, because what we found out in the previous dynamics was there was so much complexity going on that we had to cut through it and get the numbers right, case by case, school by school and that process clearly needed work. And now what I saw going into yesterday was it had finally aligned the way we needed it to, and remember originally we had hoped to be up and running September 10th, 11 days later 1,800 sites up and the staffing was right. So the model needed work. There's no question about that. It got resolved. It was proven now on a large scale, that same model is going to work for next Tuesday and next Thursday, we got a lot of work to do, but we finally have the design we need to do it. We will be able to tell you a final number, but it's going to need a little more work to get to that final number that we can say, that's it once and for all, and when we have that, I'll certainly announce it.

**Question:** Separately on the issue of indoor dining, city restaurants have been asking for details for weeks. Boston has a plan to allow restaurants to set up heaters and to extend their indoor dining plan into the winter time –

**Mayor:** You mean outdoor Nolan? Just to make sure.

**Question:** Outdoor dining, excuse me –

**Mayor:** You need another cup of coffee, Nolan, you need another cup of coffee.

**Question:** Another cup of coffee. So on the outdoor dining, when is there going to be a plan for outdoor dining in the winter time for city restaurants?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Very soon, in fact it's on the agenda I think even later on today to try and resolve that. We're going to work obviously with the city agencies, with the State. I want to see what we can do to address that fairly because I want to give every possible opportunity to our restaurants to succeed and survive. Now it comes with real health and safety concerns that have to be addressed that are different than what we have during warmer weather, obviously, because with warmer weather you have much more possibility of open air. So there's some still some real issues to be worked through, but we'll have an announcement on it soon. I think the good news here is that restaurants now, thank God, you know about 10,000 restaurants and outdoor dining, it's really helped a lot of them keep going. Takeout and delivery has been strong for a lot of them. If very soon they'll start to have indoor dining, if that goes well, that will expand. We've announced that outdoor dining we'll be back next year so that restaurants can plan on it. But the last piece, your right to fill in as those rules around the continuance of outdoor, what makes sense? What doesn't make sense? How will that work? And we will have that announcement very soon.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more for today. The next is Gersh from Streetsblog.

**Question;** Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good Gersh, how you been?

**Question:** Great to be back. So listen, Mr. Mayor, we did a story the other day on how cyclists and pedestrians are terrified at the increase in driving and speeding right now. You know, the story featured all kinds of anecdotes of insanely fast driving and statistics that back that up. Now you pride yourself on still being a pedestrian, but more important, you spend a lot of time on the road and cars. So I'm wondering if you could tell us if you are seeing more reckless driving out there or hearing it on the FDR Drive under Gracie Mansion and what you're going to do about it?

**Mayor:** I see some for sure Gersh and the message to the NYPD and all relevant agencies is we need to continue to crack down on speeding wherever we see it, you know, all the big anti-speeding efforts continue. Obviously, a huge victory we all achieved to get more speed cameras at the schools, the enforcement by the NYPD, that needs to keep growing, but overall, that's not what I've seen. So even though I will acknowledge absolutely, I see some of it and we need to crack down on it. The other thing I'm seeing is slower traffic, noticeably slower traffic than say a month ago because there's more cars out there and that's a problem, you and I would agree immediately and something we don't want to see go on for long. I think it's a transitional reality. I think it will abate as more and more people gain confidence in mass transit, and then obviously once there's a vaccine, but I wouldn't say the speeding is widespread from what I'm experiencing, but it's enough of a problem for sure that we have to address it. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay. Does it – as a tangential follow up on that in the past few weeks, you've tweeted about the death of Daniel Prude, you've tweeted about the death of Tom Seaver, you tweeted about Naomi Osaka, who won a tennis tournament, but you haven't discussed the six cyclists who have died so far in September bringing the total to 17 so far this year. Now last week, we published an interview with the brother of Sarah Pitts, who was a Brooklyn prosecutor who was killed at a dangerous intersection in Williamsburg. He actually blamed you for encouraged cycling in early in the pandemic but then doing too little to keep cyclists, especially new cyclists safe. So what do you say to that grieving brother?

**Mayor:** Gersh, I feel for that family deeply and from everything I've heard of her, she was an amazing public servant, you know, taken from us way too early. Again, all I can say to you is I have been committed from day one to something that no other mayor did and that's called Vision Zero, and it has continued to grow every single year and it will continue to grow. And we constantly – I can literally say the word constantly – have added bike lanes, have changed and improved intersections, have added speed cameras, we have a lot more to do. And all I can say to every family in New York City is we're committed Vision Zero deeply. I want to do everything I can in the next 15 months to deepen Vision Zero, and then I think it needs to continue and expand further in the next administration, but to every family out there, we are committed to the safety of all pedestrians, all bicyclists and we're doing something about it. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Last question for today, it goes to Erin from Politico.

**Question:** Hi there, I'm wondering if we can just get a little more detail on the neighborhoods you mentioned having upticks as well as the large events that you're concerned about. So are there numbers of new cases or percentage rates in those neighborhoods that are making you particularly concerned? And what kind of violations are you seeing as far as the large gatherings

we are talking about, weddings or religious services or parties or what kind of stuff are we talking about?

**Mayor:** Yeah, it's an important question. Let me have Dr. Choksi give you those details.

**Commissioner Choksi:** Yes. Thank you so much for that question. You know, as you mentioned, we are – we're worried about the the neighborhoods, particularly with respect to some upticks that we're seeing in cases in those neighborhoods with respect to specific numbers. I would say we look at a whole panoply of different indicators in some instances it's because we see the proportion of cases going up, in others it's because of the percentages of test positivity that are going up in specific neighborhoods and we take all of those and create, you know, a comprehensive picture of where we need to be focused with respect to our hyperlocal efforts. So those are the things that we are using to narrow in on where to guide the hyperlocal efforts that were mentioned. With respect to indoor gatherings, it's another very important question, and the rule is simple, regardless of whether it's a wedding or some other large event, if you're having large gatherings with many people indoors and particularly if masks are not being used regularly, those are the things that we know both from New York City as well as around the world, can lead to further transmission in communities. So those are the things that we're trying to prevent going forward.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Erin.

**Question:** Okay. And then my second question is about testing in schools. So the mandatory, random testing of 10 percent or 20 percent of the school population is now supposed to start right around the time that school itself is starting. Can you tell us any more about how that's going to work? How are you going to be choosing people, you know, did they get tested right there in the school? And what happens if someone refuses and just basically the nitty gritty of how it's going to work?

**Mayor:** Yeah, that's being worked out as we speak. I'm going to turn to Dr. Choksi in a second, because he is not only a crucial figure in this effort, but as you all know, his better half is and assistant principal, so he's really familiar with the specifics of how we need to approach things, but what we're working on right now is how that medical monitoring will be done in every school, every month, it'll be different days depending on the school, obviously, we're not going to do them all on the same day because it takes a lot of capacity to do it. So it will be spread out over the course of the month. If your school starts testing on October 2nd, then it will start testing the next month on November 2nd, if your school starts testing on October 10th, the next month will be November 10th and every month thereafter and there'll be a sample between 10 and 20 percent of the people in the building. So that means teachers, staff, students, and we're going to be reaching out to parents to let them know about this, obviously get their permission and then just keep proceeding from there. Dave, do you want to add?

**Commissioner Choksi:** Yes sir. I think you covered all of the high points. The only thing that I'll add is, you know, to one of the specific parts of your question, yes, that testing will be available on site at the school. So that's how we intend to operationalize it.

**Mayor:** Yeah and that's, I'll take that and pull it back one more time, Erin, really important point for all New Yorkers to know, for parents to know in particular, right on site. We have testing we can bring right to the schools, mobile vans. We can set up testing tents. Some schools actually are right next to clinics. We can use those clinics. So we're going to make it very convenient and easy for the school community. But again, it will be a sample of each school community, each month, on a regular basis.

Okay, everybody as we conclude today, I just want to really point out the last few questions have gotten at something really important, which is holding the line here in New York City. Everyone should be proud, it's astounding. You see the charts when we go over the indicators, and you see how everyone in this city has together kept this infection rate really low, made this one of literally the safest, healthiest places in the whole nation and kept it that way where you've seen a lot other places go in the wrong direction in this country and similar countries around the world why has New York City succeeded so much? Because of you and because of your discipline, your strength, your resiliency, but we got to hold that, especially as thank God, we see more and more jobs coming back, more and more people starting to do more, move around more, thank God school's coming back. But with that comes the need to stay tight and disciplined about our approach.

So my message today is simple. We have made amazing progress. We have to protect that progress. Everyone has to protect that progress and we're going to be out there reminding people how important it is. That just the simple things like wearing a mask, what a difference they make. But everyone, every single person can lead by example. New York City's leading by example right now in our nation. We're showing people what it means to make our decisions based on data and science and get it right. I need every New Yorker to lead by example and keep those masks on and practice that social distancing and do the smart thing so we can all move forward together. Thank you very much.

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