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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW

Brian Lehrer: It's the Brian Lehrer show on WNYC. Good morning, everyone. And we begin as we usually do on Fridays with our weekly Ask the Mayor segment, my questions in yours for Mayor Bill de Blasio at 212-433-WNYC – 433-9692. If you have a question for the Mayor that you want to call in or you can tweet a question, just use the hashtag #AsktheMayor. And good morning, Mr. Mayor, welcome back to WNYC.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Brian.

Lehrer: So, Jared Kushner announced at the President's daily briefing yesterday that he has secured and is having shipped to New York hundreds of thousands of N95 masks that he says will be enough for the whole New York City public hospital system for the next month. Can you confirm that?

Mayor: Yeah, the – well, first of all, I appreciate very much the effort. I'm going to be clear, Brian, when I think the white house in the federal government needed to do more, and overwhelmingly they need to do more because we are not ready for next week in terms of the supplies from the federal government when it comes to ventilators, when it comes to medical personnel. I have a specific request in to the White House, to the Pentagon, I've had repeated conversations with the President, the Defense Secretary, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the FEMA administrator, telling them all that we must have 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors, 300 respiratory therapists immediately. I started this conversation and documented it over a week ago, said that we needed them by Sunday. We don't have anything yet. And I've said we need 2,500 to 3000 ventilators by next week and we do not have a resupply for next week yet. But I do want to say, Jared Kushner, to his credit, specifically reached out to Dr. Mitch Katz, the CEO of Health + Hospitals, our public hospitals, asked about the N95 supply. The base-level supply that we needed was a 200,000 N95's to get through April. Now, I think, honestly, that that number is going to probably grow intensely as the number of COVID ICU cases go up, but Mitch gave him the number as it was at this moment. Jared Kushner said he would get that supply. We need to get that in hand. But I very much appreciate, you know, that there's at least a pathway to action. I want to see it now arrive and get where it needs to go.

Lehrer: And what about those health care workers? I saw you called for almost like a wartime draft of health care workers to be deployed to New York now, to be deployed elsewhere if maybe New York passes its peak and then other places reach their peak. Is anybody doing anything like that in a centralized way?

Mayor: No. Brian, you said it perfectly. Again, I've had this conversation with the President, with the military leadership. I have said that we are literally, I think, days away from missing the window for the military to mobilize, first of all, their own medical personnel – tens of thousands of doctors, nurses, highly trained medical personnel in the U.S. military. Obviously, the military right now is at their basis, they are not mobilized for action – they should be. The Commander in Chief, the President has to give that order right now. If he gave it right now, there would be time to actually mobilize them in a way that could save lives here and elsewhere. So, just having those military medical personnel, and that's the group I asked that specific set of requests from – I said – I didn't ask some crazy number that was unattainable, I asked them for numbers they have for the nation's largest city that's the epicenter of the epidemic. And they could do that right now, they need to do it. But the bigger point is to mobilize the military more broadly, get all the medical personnel in the play, all the reserve medical personnel into play, use the logistical capacity of the military, the organizational capacity to do just as you said – a peace time call-up of civilian medical personnel who can answer the nation's call. Look, some of them are going to be urgently needed where they are, obviously. Some of them may be people who, because of their own personal health, couldn't do it, but there's still going to be many tens of thousands of doctors, nurses, other medical personnel who are in parts of the country that are not feeling this crisis yet, who could be mobilized, sent to New York, send to New Orleans, to all the places that are struggling and then moved immediately, as you said – moved immediately out to another frontline location. But the only organization that could possibly make that happen is the military. They have not been given that order. It has to happen now for them possibly to ramp up in time.

Lehrer: Locally, you are now recommending that all New Yorkers going outside should wear masks. The City's position used to be that healthy people don't need masks because they're not very effective at preventing the virus from coming in, they're mostly for keep you from spreading it. So, explain this new recommendation.

Mayor: Exactly. It's still the fundamental truth. So, we have, you know, a renowned health department here in New York City, the largest public hospital system as well – all of our health leadership had been going over this issue and only in the last really 48 hours or so do they feel they've seen evidence from around the world, particularly a new study coming out of Singapore, that shows more evidence that this disease can be spread by asymptomatic people. But the point is exactly what you said, by saying face coverings – I'm really going to use that word very carefully – face coverings, because we do not want anyone anybody who's not a first responder or a health care worker to go anywhere near surgical masks or N95's – those are only for the people fighting the frontline battle. What I talked about yesterday, advising the people of the city, use a scarf, use a bandana, use something that you create at home. But it is exactly what you said still, it is not about an average New Yorker using that scarf for bandana to stop themselves from contracting it, it is to make sure that if they happen to be – if you happen to be someone who has a disease and you just don't know it yet, it just helps make sure that you won't inadvertently spread it to another person. So, it's a smart move in an age of community spread of this disease when we're trying to do things like a shelter in place and social distancing as preventative measures. Let's take another step, just abundance of caution and make sure that no one's spreading the disease inadvertently.

Lehrer: Didn't we know weeks and months ago that asymptomatic people can spread the disease?

Mayor: No. The fact is – and, you know, I've been at so many of these press conferences where our top doctors from New York City address this issue and they said, we just didn't have evidence from all the global medical community that was studying this issue. There was suspicion, but there was not evidence. And the concern throughout was, we did not want to have a situation where people were taking the supply of surgical masks and N95's away from the people who are doing the life and death work who must be protected. We did not want to create an artificial demand there, nor did we want to create a sense that if you had something over your face, you didn't need the practice social distancing, you didn't need to shelter in place, which are much more profoundly important strategies. This is a new approach based on new data that says this is an additional measure. It makes sense to protect the whole community somewhat more. But it's still an area that is – where we have imperfect data, because we have imperfect data bluntly about coronavirus in general. It's a smart precaution. Now, you don't need to do it when you're around the people that you're in your own household with, you don't even socially distance with people you're in your whole household with.

Lehrer: Well, maybe somebody who's being internally quarantined, but we're actually going to talk about that in our next segment. But go ahead.

Mayor: Right, but the last point I'm making – if you're out on the street – this is what Dr. Barbot said to the whole city yesterday, our health commissioner – if you're out in the street and you're truly alone, you're distanced, you don't do it then either. It's when you think you might come in closer contact with people despite social distancing as a precaution, that's when you put a face covering on.

Lehrer: Two things about masks and gloves for that matter. One is just, I will reinforce, and I presume you will too, tell me if you don't, that masks and gloves can give people a false sense of security when these items become contaminated themselves. So, you still have to keep six feet. You still have to wash your hands and many people don't realize we actually have to treat the masks and gloves like contaminated, dangerous themselves when we take them off. So, masks and gloves in some cases can do more harm than good unless people use them exactly right. And the second thing is, I know people can make masks themselves, but they need the right materials, and the quality of protection of a homemade mask might vary widely. So, what's your vision of how 8 million New Yorkers are going to get masks without competing with the health care workers for them?

Mayor: So, the first part of your question I think was right on the money. The second part of your question, honestly, I think is inadvertently misleading. It's not about protection. That's what I'm trying to get across. And it's not me talking, it's our health commissioner, it's our deputy commissioner for disease control who are folks who are studying everything that's been produced by the global medical community. Putting on a scarf, a bandana, a homemade item to make sure that you're not inadvertently spreading the disease to others because you have no indication you even have it, that's all this is and we were very blunt about it.

Lehrer: Only that, not for protection, incoming, even minimally –

Mayor: Yes, correct. There's just not enough evidence to suggest otherwise based on what the doctors are telling me. So, we are going with – we're trying to tell people what we know, which changes as more studies come in, obviously, in a disease that no one ever heard of six months ago. But here's the bottom line, so you can use household items, you can use a scarf or bandana – it's to just keep your own breath from not inadvertently spreading this if you happen to have it and don't know it. That's the name of the game. That's why it's just additional smart guidance. What you said in the first part of your question is 100 percent true. First of all, the way to stop the spread, the way to slow, you know, and bend the curve, is shelter in place, it is the social distancing, and it is the constant cleaning hands, hand sanitizing, you know, covering your mouth when you cough and sneeze. All those fundamentals are much more important than anything for the every-day person that a face covering could achieve. In terms of the strategy for how to protect this city and bend this curve, the previous policies are the core strategy still. This is something – additional abundance of caution. Now, your point about when people – some people have – had some kind of gloves or some kind of mask and they've thrown them on the street, you're right, that's fundamentally dangerous. Not only is it littering. it's dangerous littering. Anything that you've been wearing needs to be discarded. Some things are cleanable, some things are not. There's guidance out there about that. But the point is, you don't – when something needs to be discarded, you can't leave it around because it could create its own danger. That's exactly right.

Lehrer: You know, we have a call coming in about this throwing masks and gloves on the streets. So, let's take Que in the Bronx. You're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Que.

Question: Hi, yes. Thanks, Mayor de Blasio and Brian for your efforts in keeping the people in the New York Tristate area safe. So yeah, you did answer my question about the gloves because I'm finding lots of gloves all over the street. People are taking them off and just throwing them in the street and sidewalks and I'm having to pick them up. I either sweep them all with gloves because being a homeowner, having the disposable [inaudible] you know, other people's [inaudible] thanks for addressing that and telling people to put them in the garbage. The other three important things I think would be helpful for people. One is, essential stores, the 99 cent stores, I'm wondering how come they've then shuttered and not included in the essential services? And why that is, because grocery store, I mean, often – I mean, in normal time, essential stores have often served – have often –

Lehrer: 99 cent stores have often been a center – if you're going to do three, you got to do them as bullet points. What's number two?

Question: Yeah, well, I'm just saying, just have them open so that, you know, people can buy the essential stuff at those stores, because often their prices are cheaper than regular local neighborhood stores. So, that's why their stores are essential [inaudible] –

Lehrer: Got it.

Question: The other thing with parks, I know the Governor yesterday in the news conference said he's going to close the parks and leave open areas, and I'm assuming he's talking about bigger parks. But in communities we have local parks, rather, with open spaces so you can close the playground areas or group play areas and leave the open spaces with tracks where people are getting their exercise. I have a track near me where it's never crowded and people do use it. And those – and sometimes people cannot run in the streets for whatever medical conditions or whatever their rehabbing. So, have those tracks open. The fourth thing is, I don't, it's not pertaining to you, but you can help the Congressional representatives and maybe City Council people – it's regarding the stimulus check for individuals. I mean, I think people forget that there are people who don't have bank accounts – excuse me – and then they go cash their checks in check cashing places.

Lehrer: Absolutely. And Que, I'm going to leave it there so we can get to some other people, but every single one of his questions is a good one. Can we go through them quickly? 99 cent stores, are they ordered closed?

Mayor: It's a good question. And to the best of my knowledge they are, but I want to check that carefully, Brian, and we'll put something out publicly today to confirm. And one, are they closed now or not, and, two, should they be conceivably allowed open? It's a good question, because they are cheaper in a lot of cases –

Lehrer: And they do sell a lot of food and cleaning supplies, I know the ones in my neighborhood do.

Mayor: Yeah. So, I'm going to – that's a very good question from Que, and I'm going to check on that and we'll get an answer up immediately. On the parks, so, again, parks remain open. The State's action was related to playgrounds specifically, not the larger parks. The larger parks remain open, but you must practice social distancing. NYPD and Parks enforcement are enforcing, and if people do not abide by the rules, even when given a warning, fines are being issued now. So, we want people to go get the exercise they need and get right back home and do that quickly, but we're going to enforce the rules very, very vigorously. On the stimulus for individuals, I think the question was about the check cashing places, which are still a huge problem throughout our city, because they really put people over a barrel. I didn't get the end of the question to know what the –

Lehrer: I think he was concerned about people who don't have the means for direct deposit or who don't have social security numbers and getting them their checks, which is a more cumbersome process.

Mayor: Yeah. I will get my team that's working on the stimulus to get out some public information on that, because I don't want to give any information I don't yet have ideally. So let me, let me get that out on how people can go about addressing that if they don't have a bank account or a social security number.

Lehrer: Que, thank you for all that. Amir, in Jackson Heights, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Amir.

Question: Hello. Good morning, Brian. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How you doing today?

Mayor: Good morning.

Question: Very good, very good. I'm calling today because I just don't understand it, it's beyond me to understand why it's taking so long to get a rent freeze for New Yorkers as well as a commercial rent freeze for small business? We're suffering here, it's April 1st, the first of the month, thousands upon thousands of New Yorkers are going to have to pay their rent and they can't. They don't have the money. And now on top of that, the commercial rent is still due the first of a month and a lot of small businesses still – and they're closed, and they got no income coming, and they have to pay rent.

Lehrer: Right. And so, what's the best you can offer now for this? I know the State policy now is no evictions for the next 90 days, but the rent would have to be made up after that. Can you do any better at the City level?

Mayor: Well, first, for the residential side, I have requested that the State at the – again, this is at the City's request so the State doesn't feel that they're doing anything inappropriate – at the City's request, at my request, that they suspend the Rent Guidelines Board that would allow us to do a rent freeze for well over 2 million New Yorkers who live in rent stabilized housing. So, that's the first thing that could be done with a stroke of a pen up in Albany that just would allow us to ensure that there's no increase authorized to this year for those 2 million-plus New Yorkers. The second thing is to figure out some kind of moratorium structure for other renters, because it's obvious – and certainly at least for those who can't pay – and I'm obviously aware that some people can pay and they should – but for those who can't, giving them a structure they can work with. And there's the point about security deposits, the State could take action to authorize that for those renters who need, who don't have the money to pay the rent, that they could draw on their security deposit and that would give the renter the money to pay the rent, it would give the landlord money in their pocket to pay expenses. It would have to be in some ways replaced over time that, you know, an installment plan or something like that. But, right now, by law, the renter can't do that and the landlord can't do it. They can't draw on that money, that's in escrow. The State should change that right away, give renters and landlords that ability to do that. And then on the commercial side, as well, I think there needs to be some kind of moratorium structure to help those small businesses that cannot pay the rent to get through. You know, the stimulus right now, people should go to the SBA website, all small businesses, and apply immediately for those loans.

Lehrer: That's the federal Small Business Association, right?

Mayor: Yes, I'm sorry – Small Business Association. Small businesses, right at this minute, if you haven't applied yet this morning, apply right now, it's open. Those loans are on favorable terms and those loans can be forgiven, so getting that money in your pocket might allow you to pay the rent. But for those who can't pay the rent, there has to be a forbearance structure. And crucially, you know, there's no evictions happening. There should not be any because the court system is shut down effectively. And extending that no eviction as long as we need to, because,

Brian, that's the bottom line for anyone who literally – they just have no choice, they can't pay and no relief is coming from the federal government or State government in that particular case, then so long as they can stay in their apartment, we can sort it all out later. So, keeping that no eviction policy in place until this crisis is over and then, you know, we'll worry about settling up the financial score later on.

Lehrer: Willa, in Manhattan, you're on WNYC. Hi, Willa.

Question: Hi. Thank you for taking my call. My question is about FDNY EMS. Specifically, last week on March 26th, FDNY EMS responded to over 6,500 calls surpassing the number of calls that they responded to even on September 11th, 2001. Last year, when FDNY EMS' union went to renegotiate their contract, the Mayor said that he values the work that EMS professionals do, but that he sees it as fundamentally “different” than the work that other first responders do, namely FDNY [inaudible] and NYPD, in essence justifying a \$40,000 pay gap after five years on the job between the services. So, this is what these men and women signed up for – this pandemic – and they will meet this moment. They will be here to help us heal and rebuild after we beat back coronavirus and they're risking real sickness and death and doing so. But they need to know that you have their back. So, my question is, do you still value the work that FDNY EMS [inaudible] less than other first responders in terms of real dollars and cents?

Lehrer: I'm going to leave it there, Willa, but your question is very clear. Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Willa I appreciate the question. And look, I was with EMS members yesterday morning out in Queens, paramedics and EMTs, and 100 percent value their work and we're trying to support them in a lot of ways now, including getting reinforcements for them and from around the country, which we pushed FEMA to do. FEMA has now brought in 500 EMTs and paramedics and 250 ambulances, and that number has to grow and we have to do everything to shift the burden that we can off the paramedics and EMTs. They are doing an amazing job and they're very brave people and they are in this time and they always are.

Again, we have a different reality in each of our services. They do different things, different challenges, but respect all, we're trying to support all, we will continue to try and support all in different ways. But the bottom line, to me, is that the burden that's hit in these last days, it is extraordinary. But what the FDNY is doing is they're shifting personnel on to the 9-1-1 calls. The – again, bringing in the out-of-state personnel, shifting internally personnel, getting a better system in place to take a number of those 9-1-1 calls that actually don't need, I will not go into detail, but I'll tell you that in talking with the EMTs and paramedics out in Queens yesterday, they said they're still seeing people call 9-1-1 for things that are not in the least in emergency or because they are worried or because –

Lehrer: Right, but she's drawing attention to the pay disparity between EMS workers and firefighters. Does this crisis disprove that that's a fair pay disparity?

Mayor: I – it's just not – we want to take care of these workers and support them. Of course, have their backs, but this is a bigger issue in the labor dynamics of the city. It's not the time to

you know, make something up on the fly in the middle of crisis. That's just the truth. We'll figure this out when we get through this crisis.

Lehrer: Question from our newsroom regarding first responders, could the city provide quarantine housing for first responders who are worried about bringing COVID-19 home to their families? I read they have something like this in China.

Mayor: Could we say – clarify? Could we provide quarantine housing? So, we have a number of hotel rooms for first responders and health care workers who want to stay separate from their families, and, in some cases, who are working so hard they just can't even get home to their families. Yes. Those are available and we're making more available.

Lehrer: David in Rye Brook, you're on WNYC with Mayor de Blasio. Hello David.

Question: Hey, good morning everyone. Mayor de Blasio, I'll make it pretty quick. We thank you for all of your service. We appreciate it. We know you're very overwhelmed. I have access to millions of masks and gowns because my father represents factories in China and we will of course – and I listen to every day Brian – and you said over the last two weeks that you are running out of supplies you would have –

Lehrer: That the city is, yeah –

Question: You would have an order already going if somebody from your team had responded. So, we'd love to get in touch directly with someone in order to get these supplies to our front line. Can you help?

Mayor: David, right now, I'll tell you if you please give your information to WNYC. I'm going to have our chief procurement officer reach out to you immediately who's been accessing supplies from all over the world. Reach out to him right now and he'll be calling you. I also want to tell all listeners, anyone who can offer supplies, equipment, who knows – who is a medical professional who is ready to volunteer or knows one, you can call 833-NYC-0040 or go on our website, nyc.gov/helpnow. So those are the two universal – and Brian, if you guys would keep getting that out there throughout your shows – those are the two universal ways that people can offer. We want these offers, we need them, David, I'm very, very appreciative. David, I'm sure you know, we are dealing with a struggle. China is, you know, the government in China it kind of seems to be changing the rules as we go along about the exports. So that's a real concern, but we want to get those orders in and see which ones we can expedite. We need that – we need all that material immediately.

Lehrer: And we're still taking them too, and if it's a significant donation, we will try to match you with the city or with the hospital or whatever's appropriate. But that number again to get in touch with the city directly again was 8-3-3 – what?

Mayor: Yeah. Again, it's 833-NYC-0040.

Lehrer: All right, you're – and David, thank you so much for offering this through us. You're using the NYPD to enforce social distancing now, we have the worst spread in low-income areas according to the neighborhood zip code by zip code numbers released by the city. I've heard of police cars blasting sirens and lights at teenagers of color congregating. The Intercept has an article about police without masks approaching people to disperse them. So, what direction would you like to give the NYPD about the softest, affective touch to not wind up with disparate policing by race and class in the emergency?

Mayor: Yeah, I think right now that goes with everything that all of our training at NYPD over the last six years and everything about the neighborhood policing strategy is about communication with the community, respect for the community, building relationships. This is – and this is something Commissioner Shea has said really clearly. This is about educating people, helping them understand the new reality, warning them if they're not following the guidance that they're actually creating a danger for themselves and others. So all officers can approach if they keep to social distancing, they can approach a group. They don't need to be wearing a mask to approach a group if they're six feet or more away from the individuals. The guidance we've given today is if you're approaching more closely to anyone, you know, put something over your face for everyone's benefit. Again, that could be in the case of everyday in New York or something like a scarf or a bandana.

The NYPD has been sent hundreds of thousands of masks for when officers do need them for their protection in situations where they're closely in encountering people. So I hear your underlying point, Brian, but I think NYPD has been, you know, really evolving to be much more about communicating with communities. If a group of young people are congregating, I want officers to go and address that group of young people make really clear that's unacceptable. I don't want to give fines unless we have to, but fines will be given if warnings are given and folks are told if you don't disperse, we're going to start fining you, then they're going to get fined. So our officers have to be urgent about it. And they have been, they've been doing a great job, but I think they've been doing it in a way that really is respectful of the people in the middle of a crisis.

Lehrer: One other NYPD thing that's also related to the White House, President Trump's advisor, Peter Navarro said at the briefing yesterday, they've also procured more than 1,700 Tyvek suits from Raytheon, specifically for NYPD homicide detectives after being asked by NYPD Chief of Department, Terrence Monahan, so that the detectives don't have to go into homes with possible COVID cases and put themselves at risk to investigate murders. So one, can you confirm that one? And also important as the homicide detectives are, we don't have more than a few hundred murders a year in the city these days - thank goodness – is that where 1,700 Tyvek suits are most needed right now?

Mayor: Yeah. Look, first of all, Peter Navarro has been very, very responsive over these last weeks and actually gotten this a lot of the things we need here in New York City, so he and I may disagree on some bigger policy matters, but on this one I want to give him credit. He's been moving a lot to New York City. On that one, I think that as with everything there is a need and the NYPD, if some of that need isn't readily, you know, something that needs to be tapped into right away, it should be moved to other agencies, obviously health workers or others who need it.

There's been tremendous coordination between the agencies. Chief Monahan has been right in the middle of all that. So I assure you that, you know, we wanted everything we'd get our hands on in terms of every form of protective gear. We'll work with the NYPD to make sure if some of it is not being urgently used that it gets moved where it's needed most.

Question: Last question from a listener for today. This one comes via Twitter. I'm a FedEx employee. Every day we go to work with less subway cars. The trains are full, again. We could drive but we can't park near facilities in Manhattan without paying high fees. We're asking for free parking specifically for essential employees and workers so we go to work safely, maybe even just suspending parking meters. What do you say to this FedEx employee?

Mayor: It's a great question. I say I want to get an answer for that employee. We have different ways that we can address that and I want to figure out, because obviously they are essential employees and we have to make sure that they can get around. The MTA – look to the train's point and I'm perplexed by this because the MTA has something like, you know, only 10 percent of the ridership it had a couple of months ago. I don't understand why we have these persistent reports of trains being crowded. I do know they've lost a lot of staff obviously, and they've lost a lot of money, but I don't understand what the MTA is doing in terms of their planning that they can't put out the trains where they're needed to handle such a small number of people without crowding. We've also asked the NYPD to intervene to go to the places that appear to be hotspots and literally, you know, direct people to spread out across the train or keep people from getting on the train if it is too crowded.

And I would say that to all New Yorkers, if you're waiting for a train or bus and it is crowded, don't get on it. You know, if you're worried about what's going to happen at your job or something that's fair. But we cannot, you know, you can't be in harm's way. It's not right to have anyone get into a situation like a crowded subway car or bus at this point. We've got to figure out – I just don't understand the situation with MTA and I'm asking them to give us a better answer on why they can't adjust for this, so that everyone can have the assurance who those essential workers, that they get on a train, they're going to be safe.

Lehrer: And last thing for me for today, and then you can say anything to the listening public that you want going out the door. You appointed a Food Czar, Kathryn Garcia who's usually the Sanitation Commissioner. Are you concerned about the food supply?

Mayor: I am, but first reason I'm concerned, Brian, is that, you know, we think in the short term it's going to be something like a half million New Yorkers who lost their job as a result of COVID-19. Even though there was action in the federal stimulus bill, that money won't instantaneously be in people's pockets. You got a lot of people – it goes back to your rent question too – you got a lot of people who just don't have any money. So my first concern is that even though there's food on the shelves, a lot of people can't afford it. So that's – today we announced at 435 public school sites that were feeding kids, they're starting today they will feed families as well, meaning any New York families who need food. You can go online nyc.gov, get the sites, you can call 3-1-1, find a site near you.

Anyone can walk up during the hours of operation, which I believe are 7:30 am to 1:30 pm. You can get breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It's all to go. No ones sitting down, obviously. But you can go in there and say, my family needs food. You'll get breakfast, lunch, and dinner for as many people as you indicate you need it for. The, you know, there's going to be absolute respect that families are in need and everyone, the workers there have a green light to give people whatever they deem appropriate. And that's going to be every weekday for the foreseeable future because we want to make sure there's a very widespread network of food. This is something Kathryn Garcia put together with the Department of Education, and we're going to go farther than that because I just think you're going to see with every passing week, people are just going to run out of money and need food. So we have to ensure that we have a very strong delivery mechanism and we have to make sure that food gets where it's needed.

And that's another thing, we're in a wartime dynamic and this, you know, thank you for the offer of a chance to finish with something and I'll put the two points together, this is a wartime dynamic, but the federal government's not acting like we're in a war. A war time dynamic is this. We've lost 1,500 new Yorkers lives already. There's going to be a lot more tragically. You've got people getting sick all the time. You got this city among other cities around the country struggling just to keep our health care system going. If that doesn't describe a war, I don't know what does. And yet Washington's on a peacetime footing right now when they should be on a wartime footing. So even to the point of not just the medical personnel we need, the surgical supplies, the ventilators, I'm concerned also, how do we make sure that food gets to everyone who needs it? You know, how do we make sure it is actually distributed properly in a situation where people don't have money to pay for it?

We are in a crisis that combines a lot of what we've experienced in a war with a lot of what this nation experienced in the Great Depression, but the federal government is not on that footing. So, I'll finish the way I started. Everyone who's listening should raise their voice to our congressional delegation and directly to the leaders in Washington and say, this is unbelievable that this many people are suffering and our military is at their bases, they have not been called up, and there is no effort, literally no effort right now by the government to take doctors from other parts of the country that are experiencing little or no COVID-19 and get them where the need is greatest. We would have done that if there was a hurricane, we would have done that if there was a crisis in another country and humanitarian aid was pouring in from around the world. It's not being done for our own country and the only chance we have to fix this is if the federal government acts in the next days. Otherwise, we'll already be in the thick of the worst of it and it'll be too late.

Lehrer: Mr. Mayor, I know you're holding extended news conferences every afternoon. We appreciate that you're continuing to come on with us on Friday mornings. Talk to you next week.

Mayor: Thank you, Brian. Take care now.

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