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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. We have a lot to talk about today. And, of course, we're going to be talking about in a few minutes the situation with our vaccine supply and everything we're doing to fight COVID. But I'm starting on a different topic today, I'm starting on the biggest fight that we will be fighting for years ahead, the existential fight, and that's the fight against climate change, the thing we all need to focus on. And New York City is leading the way. And I've got to tell you, I am optimistic. I'm optimistic that we can make a big difference in this city and set a positive example for this whole nation. I'm wearing my green tie today out of optimism. And also, because it's an important day for New York City and something really, really momentous is happening this week in terms of changing the way we go about living, getting away from fossil fuels, once and for all, and moving forward to renewable energy. Now, the City, obviously, has long had a commitment, but the commitment is now turning into action. Just yesterday, New York City pension funds announced that we'll be divesting \$4 billion from fossil fuels – \$4 billion. And that comes from two very large elements of our pension system, the New York City Employees Retirement System and the New York City Teachers Retirement System. This will be the largest fossil fuel divestment in the nation in history and it is a difference-maker.

I want to thank all of the elected officials who are members of the pension boards. I want to thank the union leaders and all of the members of the unions who are part of the pension boards. Everyone came together in common cause to protect Mother Earth and to deal with a problem that needs aggressive action. So, today, what we're talking about is so powerful. It is about literally protecting our earth, protecting our children and grandchildren, using our power – now, let's remember, we watched with horror as President Trump pulled the United States out of the Paris agreement on climate change. Thank God, President Biden's taken us right back in. But remember, we have power here in this city to make a huge difference. One of the greatest cities in the world, we're able to make a difference by our actions. Our divestment action has encouraged cities around the country, cities around the world to do the same thing. Just in the last few days, Seattle followed the same path, because they saw New York City's leadership. That's something all New Yorkers should be proud of.

And I want to thank, again, everyone involved. I want you to hear from some of the people who worked really hard to make this possible. And first, someone who I had the honor of announcing this whole new with several years ago. It's now come to fruition with this \$4 billion announcement. My pleasure to introduce the Comptroller of the City of New York, Scott Stringer.

[...]

Thank you so much, Scott. And thanks for your leadership. And, again, this has been an effort where so many people have contributed to the vision and making it come alive. But when it comes to the vision itself, the original thought here – someone who deserves tremendous credit for years ago – many years ago, sounding the alarm about global warming, showing us just how dangerous it could be, and then leading the way in terms of divestment, showing us that we had tools to fight back and we could make a difference with the power of our dollars. He is literally one of the founders of the effort to stop climate change and to protect the earth – author, advocate, co-founder of 350.org. My pleasure to introduce Bill McKibben.

[...]

Thank you, Bill. Bill, I'm so appreciative for everything you said, and so much from the heart, I can tell. And I remember that day, it was a beautiful day when we got together a few years ago. And thank you to you, and Naomi, and all the activists who were there that day, representing this extraordinary movement in New York and beyond. I also have to say to my fellow mayors, I worked with Mayor Khan of London on this divestment effort and I showed him what we had done in New York, and London has done a great job following through. Our teams talked with the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo. We are working around the country and working around the world with your leadership. And what I'm finding is, the more people we show it can be done, it can be done right, and it can make a difference, the more people want to join. So, thank you so much.

And I want to turn to our labor partners who have made a huge difference here. They were absolutely committed. Their involvement is what actually makes this possible, because they have to look out for their retirees, but they also understand this is about saving the earth for everyone and there's a way to do both. I want you to hear from two of our labor leaders. First, the Executive Director of DC37, Henry Garrido.

[...]

Thank you very much, Henry. And now, I want you to hear from another leader who's played a crucial role in this effort and represents so many crucial City workers, folks who make our housing authority run, and our school safety agents, and so many other good folks who serve us. The President of Local 237 of the Teamsters, Greg Floyd.

[...]

Thank you so much, Greg. Thank you for your leadership. And one more person I want you to hear from, also a member of the pension fund board of NYCERS, as I used to be when I was Public Advocate, and he understands fully the power of the grassroots. This has been so much of his life and it's a great example today of grassroots power, demanding change, and then our leaders turning it into action with this divestment. Pleasure to introduce our Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams.

[...]

Thank you very much, Jumaane. Thank you for your leadership and thank you for shouting out a lot of good people who've done the work.

All right. Now, I want to turn from this crucial divestment and what we're doing to protect the planet now and for the future, going to bring us back to the here and now, the fight against the coronavirus and the latest developments. Let me first give an update on New York City's effort. As of the end of yesterday, we had vaccinated 650,546 doses. So, we had provided 650,546 doses to the people of this city, that is more people than the total population of Portland, Oregon. We're going to keep giving you updates each day and compare with other places around the country just to give you scale. But it's literally as if we had vaccinated every single human being in Portland, Oregon. That's the scale we're working on now. We could be doing so much more. Right now, I need hundreds of thousands more doses per week. I know that in February we can reach a level of half-a-million vaccinations per week – per week, if we had the supply.

Now, I'll just tell you over these last days my team and I have been constantly talking with members of the Biden administration. I'm always encouraged by those conversations, because I hear focus, and urgency, and creativity. As you heard, President Biden had upped the goal yesterday, I think that's fantastic and the right thing to do. This morning, I spoke with Jeff Zients, who is the White House COVID coordinator – always accessible and providing us a sense of where they're going, listening to our concerns. I'm very, very convinced that the commitment is there and we're going to see a lot of impact from the Biden White House. In the meantime, right now, we're dealing with the residue of what was left to us previously, and we have almost no supply to allow us to create new opportunities for people, new appointments for people. As of this morning, we have just about 7,700 doses on hand. But the bigger challenge here, I talked about it earlier this morning, is that we have doses that are waiting for that second dose use, but for over two weeks in the future. As of the end of yesterday, that number was almost 100,000 doses. We've got to make sense of this situation and we needed the help of all of our partners, because here's an opportunity to do something here now – just put those second doses into play, particularly when we know the Biden administration is going to move manufacturing of the vaccine more quickly, particularly when we know the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is coming, could just be weeks away. I really believe that when we move the second doses up and use them for first doses whenever possible, it just allows us to do the most essential thing, which is protect people. Fifty percent protection for a senior citizen is so much better than no protection at all. And again, spend some time with our seniors, and you hear this loud and clear – whenever I've talked to a senior about what this means to them, it's sounds obvious, but I'm going to say it, it's a matter of life and death. The fear that senior citizens have been living in for the last year is overwhelming. Even some protection matters so much to them, obviously medically as well as emotionally. We owe it to our seniors to use everything we've got and know that more supplies coming. So, we're going to keep fighting to do that, to make a difference for our seniors.

Now, let's remember, and every person we vaccinate takes us one step closer to our recovery. It's as simple as that. Every person we vaccinate is another person who's not going to get this disease and that's what's going to move this city forward. So, every day we're looking for every way to speed this up, open up more sites, bring it to the people and that's essential. We need the most grassroots effort possible, the more decentralized, the more localized, the more neighborhood-based, the more trust there will be, the more impact, the more people we will reach, that's our game plan. All right, let me do one quick thing before we go to our indicators, we have some weather starting to hit us this morning. I always will say to people you're never sure what you're getting from mother nature. So, the initial reports have been pretty modest, but we've taken real precautions because many a time we get surprised by a sudden uptick in the amount of snow or

the speed of a storm. So, national weather service has issued a winter weather advisory. We expect snow and sleet all day. We do expect slick conditions, icy conditions later on in the day. I really want to urge people if you don't need to drive today, don't, particularly the evening rush hour could be really slippery and difficult. I want to just urge folks, if you can stay home, stay home. If you can take mass transit, take mass transit. If you can get out earlier, if you have to get home it's going to get worse, obviously, as we get later into the day and evening. So, everyone, take precautions today. Alternate side parking is suspended today but outdoor dining will be going on. So, I'll make sure people get that, alternate side parking suspended. We expect this weather in the course of today, but it's not enough as of what we're seeing now to interfere with outdoor dining. So, outdoor dining will be open, but bundle up and stay warm out there. And then final point, everyone as always help your neighbors, New York City – people in New York City help each other. That's the beauty of this place. There's a senior citizen neighborhood or someone who really could use some help shoveling or any kind of help at all, as they go through this weather, please look out for it makes a huge, huge difference.

Okay, let's talk about our indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report 230 patients and the hospitalization rate per 100,000, 5.14. Current new cases, today's number on a seven-day average, 4,844. And number 3, percentage of New York City residents testing positive on a seven-day rolling average, 8.4 percent. Few words in Spanish, and once again on the really important announcement today on climate change.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

**Moderator:** We will now begin our Q-and-A, as a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, by Dr. Katz, by Chief Climate Policy Advisor Dan Zarrilli, by Sanitation Commissioner Edward Grayson, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

**Question:** Oh, hi. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, everyone. My first question, actually, Mr. Mayor, since you just mentioned outdoor dining, the Governor said New York City not ready yet for indoor dining. So, I was wondering, what have your conversations been like with the Governor about this and how are you – are you pushing to, or encouraging him to do something specific about indoor dining in New York City?

**Mayor:** I appreciate that question a lot Juliet, because so many New Yorkers are really ready to support our local businesses and remind everyone it's Restaurant Week, but with a twist, it's Restaurant Week to Go this week, and please there are amazing deals out there and great opportunity to patronize our restaurants right now on delivery and takeout basis. But to Juliet's question, look, I think about the restaurants in my neighborhood, I think about the people work there, I would love to see them come back fully. I'd love to see more and more people employed. I'd love to see these businesses built up with people's hands make it through, but right now the central focus is health and safety. So, at this moment, we obviously still have way too many cases in the city. We have these new variants that we're watching really carefully. We're going to

be governed by the data and the science. Right now, the data and the science tells us be careful. So, I will just say every conversation I've ever had with the Governor and his team, they are also entirely focused on the data and the science, and, you know, our goal of course, is to get people vaccinated and then the answer is clear, then we're in a position to reopen a lot of things. But right now, we got to be really careful about the numbers we're seeing. Go ahead, Juliet.

**Question:** Okay. Given that you just asked about variants, I have a question for you and for your health experts. There's been discussion about the variants and needing two masks, two double mask or better masks, what are your health experts' thoughts on that? Is that advisable, should people be doing this?

**Mayor:** Let me turn to Dr. Varma because we were just talking in detail last night about the new variants and what we know, and Dr. Varma, why don't you start with just a quick overview of what we know and don't know about the new variants at this point because there's obviously some alarm out there, we want to set that straight, and then you can speak to the double mask idea.

**Senior Advisor Jay Varma:** Yeah, thank you very much for the question. We are very carefully monitoring the situation both here in New York City, as well as both nationally and globally. So, what we know is, as we've said before, that all viruses mutate, and they particularly have the opportunity to mutate when they're inside a human. So, the single best way we can prevent against these mutations is to prevent people from getting infected. The three strains that we are most concerned about and people have been tracking there are referred to by these very technical names, but people are also referring to them by the countries in which they were first detected, in the UK and South Africa and Brazil. What we know so far quite definitively is that these strains appear to be more infectious. That is one person is more likely to transmit infection to another person than the strains that have normally been circulating here in the United States. We are starting to see some evidence out of the UK that it may also be that some of these strains that are found in the UK may also be a little bit more dangerous. That is still preliminary information. It doesn't quite have the solid sort of founding of multiple different studies so we're tracking it very carefully, but what's really most concerning is this infectiousness, because the more it can spread, the more people that are ultimately infected and the more complications you could have. We don't know for sure why these are more infectious. That's something that is still being evaluated and understood.

So, in the meantime, your question about masks is very, very important and it's something we've actually been discussing actively. I think our current thinking right now, and we're going to hopefully be able to come out with some more strict guidance very soon on this is, that first of all, you should always wear a mask. You know, our single biggest problem is actually people not wearing any face covering outside of the home. So, we really, really want to emphasize to people the importance of wearing it correctly and consistently at all times. That's number one. And then number two, is if you have the opportunity to wear more than one mask, it is more likely that it's going to be helpful then it's going to be harmful. And in fact, myself, you know, I now am more starting to wear a surgical mask covered by a fabric mask. So that is really the current thinking that we have right now. That more is probably better, even though we don't know for sure why these new strains are more infections.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next we have Courtney Gross from NY1.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Courtney. How you been?

**Question:** I'm good, thank you. I wanted to talk about the second dose issue and the way I'm interpreting your comments both this morning and Morning Joe on today, is that the pool of second doses that you have, the 100,000 or so, you say send them out right now, right? So, what do you say to the person who has an appointment two weeks from now to get that second dose? Are you basically telling people that you only need the one dose or that's better than nothing?

**Mayor:** No –

**Question:** Can you guarantee the second doses will happen?

**Mayor:** Well, yeah. Listen, it's a very, very important question. Thank you for asking it because this is exactly the thing where you want to make sure people fully understand what's going on. We're absolutely committed to everyone getting their second dose, period. Everyone will get a second dose. Anyone who gets a first dose, we'll get a second dose. The question is timing in the context of the scarcity we're experiencing. So, the CDC last week said, a second dose, of course, the ideal is given exact day that you're first eligible for it, which depending on the vaccine is have three weeks or four weeks after your first dose. That's the perfect world. What we're seeing, Courtney, is we are not living in the perfect world right now. We are living in a world of total scarcity when it comes to this vaccine. So, the CDC said, if that second dose is even up to six weeks after it's perfect date, it's still entirely effective. You want to get it to people the first available moment, but if there is a small amount of lag, it's still entirely effective, Dr. Varma has spoken to that previously in these press conferences as well. So, I'm saying, so as of yesterday, we had almost 100,000 doses that could not be given for two weeks or more because there weren't enough people qualified yet that they'd gone the timeframe to be able to get a second dose. So, those doses, as I said almost a 100,000 at that point, were sitting in refrigerators that are going to have to wait for two weeks and then they get applied. I'm saying, let's use what we have now, because we obviously see more efforts being made to increase supply. We know Johnson and Johnson is coming, and even if we have to say to people, your second dose is going to be slightly delayed, it's still better to get a first dose in as many people's arms as possible to give them that 50 percent protection. That's what I'm arguing. Otherwise, what we're left with is a situation we can do very few vaccinations at all. We're just stuck right now because we don't have supply. Go ahead, Courtney.

**Question:** And then what – you said, you talked to the White House this morning, so what kind of guarantee or indication from them did you get that there would actually be an increase of supply and then do you have numbers on how many doses the city is slated to get this week and how many cancellations you also had to do appointment wise?

**Mayor:** I will turn to Dr. Chokshi on the latter point about what the numbers are looking at right now. If you – I'm just going to hold up a summary from Department of Health website, one of the things that I've done to clarify now, which is really important, is showing how many first doses are on hand, and as of this morning, fewer than 7,700 doses left, first doses, but over 200,000 second doses, including I said some that are way off – their use will be way off in the future. So, this is I think very, very helpful and clear. I'll let Dr. Chokshi speak about the latest on the appointments. Look, obviously, Courtney, I want to respect conversations with the White House in terms of the specificity. They'll be making their announcements when they're ready. What I can say, just sort of compositing for you is, came away from the conversation very confident about the direction they're taking and confident that things are going to get better in the coming days. Dr. Chokshi you want to add on appointments and how many we've had to cancel?

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Yes, sir. Thank you. And so, for the specific question about how many first doses we're expecting this week, it's approximately 107,000 that we're expecting, those deliveries will occur over today and tomorrow and that will allow us to fulfill the appointments that have been scheduled through the course of this week. The goal, of course, is to not have to cancel or reschedule any appointments, but the fact of the matter is that if we have more supply, we would be able to schedule additional appointments beyond what we're expecting for this week. One of the important points here with respect to the conversation with the federal government is we know what our allocation is for this week. We'll find out either today or tomorrow what our allocation will be for next week, but for the planning purposes that the Mayor has described, we really need to know that for a far longer timeframe, to be able to plan out, prepare, and schedule appointments accordingly.

**Mayor:** Amen.

**Moderator:** The next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, everyone, I did want to ask about the vaccine distribution, particularly with the second doses. Have you had to reschedule anyone's rescheduled appointments at any point? I know that there some people who were scheduled for sometime after last week, but I just don't know if you have that data. And then a follow-up to that is just asking about the percentage of non-New Yorkers who are getting it. Do you have any information on whether it's just people who don't work for the city? Obviously, lots of city employees live outside, but I don't know if you have that information?

**Mayor:** I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi on the cancellation of appointments, what we've experienced the last week or two, and we'll get more detailed information out shortly on the composition in general. There's several things we'll be talking about and putting out publicly on the composition of who's been vaccinated. What I want to emphasize is, a lot of the people who serve us, who work in our hospitals in the five boroughs, who patrol our streets, who keep us safe from fire and emergencies, who work in our schools, a lot of those folks live outside the five boroughs, and from day one of the vaccination effort it's been clear that those folks who work for us, serve us, we want them vaccinated and we're ready to vaccinate them right here in New York City in addition to our own residents. That has been the central thrust. So, we'll get specific numbers, but of course, you're going to see in those numbers, it's been true from the beginning, substantial

number of people who are not from the city, but who do serve the city and that's absolutely appropriate. Dr. Chokshi, again, clarifying on how it is gone with having to cancel or – postpone is a better word – postpone, reschedule certain appointments, including four second doses, just to give some kind of overview on that'd be helpful.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, sir. I'll be happy to and thank you for the question. I'll talk about it with respect to first dose appointments and then with respect to second dose appointments. For first dose appointments, there were some appointments that had to be rescheduled from the end of last week. Those are now all rescheduled for the end of this week and we have ensured that the supply that we're getting from the federal government this week will fulfill those appointments that have been scheduled. Those are just for city sites and specifically for the Health Department hubs that I'm referring to. We do know that other hospital systems and other places that are administering vaccine have had to reschedule some of their appointments as well, again, due to the supply issues. So, that's for first dose appointments and then briefly on second dose appointments, anyone who receives a first dose appointment either already has or will receive a second dose appointment. In the vast majority of cases, this is scheduled, you know, at the time of the first dose appointment, and when that doesn't happen for whatever reason, there are multiple safeguards in place to ensure that someone who has a first dose appointment will get a second dose appointment according to the right schedule.

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

**Question:** Thanks, and my second question, you know, I know the last time it snowed in the city, a lot of the restaurant – well few, I don't want to say lot – but there were a decent amount of restaurants in the city had a little fun poking at, you know, the fact that active dining was still open given the weather conditions. Would you consider dining outside tonight? I don't know, show some solidarity for the restaurants. I know you're from New England that's – you guys do that for fun, maybe hanging out in the snow?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I have done outdoor dining in this kind of temperature and not a problem at all for me, I'm able to do it. Let me see about my schedule. Let me see if I can get some place and at least if I can't stay, maybe I can get some takeout or something, but this is perfectly good weather, and there's a lot of great outdoor dining set ups that have really kept people real warm and safe. They've done great. So, I encourage everyone have a winter adventure tonight. Go ahead.

**Question:** The next is Andrew Siff from WNBC. Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Andrew, how you doing?

**Question:** Good. I wanted to just step back a couple of weeks to your daily drum beat when you were asking the state for the freedom to vaccinate relentlessly, and you prevailed to get them to open up to category 1-B, but at the time, what Governor Cuomo told us as far as his reluctance to do that was the moment he did it, we'd run out of vaccine, and sure enough, we ran out of vaccine. Does any part of you sort of regret that expansion before we have the supply to fulfill it?



**Mayor:** No, not at all, Andrew. I appreciate the question. I'll tell you why I don't regret it. First of all, based on everything we understood at the time, we expected ever expanding supply. I think that is coming. I would have expected to see more evidence than it already, but I think it's coming. Second, we were seeing in a lot of the categories, those 1-A categories, real hesitancy. We had, you know, some places where we were expecting a lot of people want get vaccinated. We were getting 30 percent or 40 percent or 50 percent of those eligible who were passing on it. But meanwhile, we had seniors who felt literally their lives are in danger and they were right. Who wanted the vaccine right now, who are anxious for it, I am absolutely glad we fought for the freedom to vaccinate and every single senior who's even gotten their first shot will tell you it was the right thing to do. Go ahead.

**Question:** This follows up on Courtney and others who've asked about the second shot. You sound awfully confident at Johnson and Johnson, and other supplies are coming in. Do you not have concerns that if you do delay the second shot for folks who think they're getting it, that's some kind of an obstacle, an unanticipated problem, might then jeopardize the protection for folks who are counting on that second shot?

**Mayor:** You have to always be concerned. Andrew. It would be irresponsible not to be worried, not to be concerned about any potential impact, but I'll tell you something. We've seen a trajectory already with these vaccines. The projected reality has come to pass very consistently. Dr. Varma spoke yesterday about Johnson and Johnson. Nothing's a sure thing in life, but we like what we're seeing, and we're very hopeful about it being a tight timeframe – literally, a matter of weeks before you start to see doses start to flow, and it's a single dose vaccine, which changes the entire discussion. I'm going by a real simple theory here, Andrew. I've got a whole lot of people who need a first dose. I've talked to people what that first dose means for them, how it makes them feel hope, how it makes them feel protected, and they in fact are protected. Even 50 percent protection is better than none to say the least. I don't think it's right to hold back the first dose from people who would be so appreciative, who would make so much of an impact on their life, when we know that we have a new administration in Washington that's going to speed supply and we have more vaccines coming, new vaccines coming, and ones that will be even faster and easier to use because it's a single dose. Why on earth would we hesitate? And we know it is safe, even if someone has to wait a bit for that second dose, that when they get it, it will have full, full impact. You could argue either side of it, but I feel passionately – I want to protect as many people as possible, and I'd rather give more people some protection, than fewer people all protection, because, again, talk to any senior citizen who feels vulnerable. I can't look up in the eye and say, hey, we could be giving you some help right now, but we're going to hold it back. It just doesn't make sense to me.

**Moderator:** The next is Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

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

**Mayor:** I'm doing okay, Henry? How are you doing in our winter wonderland today?

**Question:** Doing pretty well. Hanging in there, looking forward to June-July, baseball season.

**Mayor:** It's coming, Henry.

**Question:** Let me ask you a question about the distribution – the demography of distribution. At the outset, there was a lot of emphasis on getting the vaccine to people who have been historically disenfranchised, disproportionately affected. How is the demography shaping up in terms of who's getting the vaccine in New York? Are these people being served or do we have a problem here?

**Mayor:** Well, we're going to be providing the data later on this week, and I'll be getting a fuller briefing on that. What we know is we always have to focus efforts on the communities hardest hit by COVID. They are the most vulnerable communities in this city, for so many reasons – because of what we already learned painfully with their experience with COVID already, because these are also communities where people have gotten historically much less health care than they deserve. So, unquestionably, the data's going to continue to remind us of that fact, but we'll put out the specifics, and I think what is so crucial here is building trust. This is why I keep saying you cannot have a vaccination effort with, you know, just big central locations. That those are great, but that's not enough. You have to go deep into communities. If you're going to fight disparity? If you're going to make sure that people have real concerns about the vaccine, have those concerns answered? You have to go deep into communities, you have to get community organizations involved. You have to go, as we've been doing, right into public housing developments. You need clergy and community leaders – they are themselves encouraging people. That's how you fight the disparities. Go ahead, Henry.

**Question:** Okay. When do you think the city will be able to get past the supply problem and really have a system that's running on all cylinders, where the vaccine supply is adequate and up to the task of running a 24/7 operation out of Citi Field, Yankee Stadium, et cetera? When is that going to—

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'll tell you two answers that are both true, but are different parts of the equation. Our ability to hit half a million vaccinations per week: February, unquestionably. February, I'd say first or second week, but definitely February. The supply: I can't give you an exact date on the supply. I can tell you that if the federal government was able to either intensify supply, or improve delivery, or do some shifting of supply to where there are places with very fast distribution versus places with slower, and then, you know, backfill after that, that could make a huge difference, that might get us to the level we need. Certainly, Johnson & Johnson might get us to level we need, and that's potentially just a few weeks away. I don't have the perfect date when we have the supply to go with the half million per week rate. I know our capacity to go to a half million a week is in basically the next week or two. Go ahead, Henry – oh I'm sorry. We got both. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next is Kayla from FOX 5.

**Question:** Hi, Mayor de Blasio. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good Kayla, how've you been?

**Question:** Good. My first question is piggybacking off of the first question about indoor dining. It sounds like you agree with Governor Cuomo, at this point – his stance on not allowing indoor dining in New York City just yet. But there are other regions in New York State, well,

everywhere in New York State for that matter, with higher positivity rates that have been allowed indoor dining in some capacity, and they too are seeing their numbers come down. DC, another city that's starting to allow indoor dining at a 25 percent capacity. So, can you just clarify why you're still in favor of keeping those businesses closed?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Kayla, thank you for the question. Again, let's go right back to the data and the science. You said the most important words. There are places that have seen their numbers come down and then they reopened indoor dining. That's exactly what we want. I want to see indoor dining reopened when it's safe. We're obviously the biggest city in the country, incredibly densely packed place. We were the epicenter of this crisis. We lost tens of thousands of New Yorkers. We're going to be really careful and smart about when we let people get back together in close proximity with their masks off because they're eating and drinking, because this has been an issue all over the world. So, when the numbers come down, and we're confident that a staying down that is a great time to do it, but obviously we're not seeing that yet. I gave you the numbers earlier and we're worried about these new variants, so that that's what's on my mind. Go ahead, Kayla.

**Question:** My second question is somewhat similar. It's about the wedding industry. A lot of people postponed their 2020 wedding to 2021 and are now wondering if they should be pushing their date. Second, maybe third time given the vaccine rollout has been somewhat messy, let's just say, I wonder if the city is considering ways to allow larger gatherings under conditions that there's maybe proof of vaccination, rapid testing. The uncertainty of course puts a bunch of industries in tough positions, catering, venues, florists, so forth.

**Mayor:** I have very important question. What I'd say is, you know, I get why people are frustrated, obviously, because we all want this vaccination, you know, all over the country want to see vaccination move much, much more quickly for everyone's good. I got to say, sort of, from a perspective of appreciating things, I still want to note the fact that we got a vaccine in December was a miracle to begin with, and the fact that this country is approaching a million vaccinations a day is not a minor matter. That's still a really good thing. We got to go a lot faster, but to your point about weddings and all. Look, if we can have tools that will help us to give people the standards that will protect them. That's something I want to see us do, but I think we're not quite there yet, because again, we've got, unfortunately we've seen increases in cases in recent weeks, by a lot. A lot more people in the hospital. We have the new variants we're worrying about. I don't like the notion of us thinking about big gatherings indoors in that atmosphere. I think as things start to turn, we can do more and more to figure out how can we facilitate the right kind of gatherings. But the real answer, if someone said to me, in fact, someone did at my barbershop last week, they said "hey, I was planning a wedding for April. What should I do?" And I said, you know, I got to tell you, you're going to be a lot better off in the summer with the rate we're going with vaccination. I would not be planning a wedding for the spring, if I had the option to do it for the summer. Now, I understand folks want to get married and make cases as fast as possible. They might want to consider getting, you know, a civil or religious ceremony to become married, but doing the gathering, the party, the reception in the summer, that is just my commonsense advice, but we are going to look for ways to help once we see a real improvement in the health care situation.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more for today. The next is Kevin Duggan from the Brooklyn Paper.

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

**Mayor:** I'm doing good, Kevin, and I'm a big fan of the Brooklyn Paper, and it makes me feel young again because I used to read them all the time when I was a school board member and a City Council member.

**Question:** That's great to hear. I want to go a little bit off topic to a very Brooklyn topic. You know, a year ago, your expert panel released a report on the BQE, and I was wondering where things stand there ever since. I know we've had the pandemic, obviously, that's taken a lot of resources, but, and it's still will with the budget, but you know, you have Polly Trottenberg at the US DOT now, and a new administration. I guess, what are your plans for the BQE in your last year in office?

**Mayor:** Yeah, we'll be, we'll be speaking to that much more in the next few weeks, Kevin. I want to say having Polly Trottenberg as the number two person at the US Department of Transportation is a great blessing for the city. She and I talked about the BQE a lot. I know she really feels urgency to help us find solutions and support. But we talked about this yesterday as well. You know, the repairs have been done over the last year or two to keep shoring up the situation. We're doing more work on enforcement on oversized trucks. That's going to really re-engage now as we start to move out of the pandemic, but we do need that long-term plan, and that's what we'll be saying more on this in the coming weeks, because it's important to start that work and prepare for the next administration to carry it through and really protect people for years to come. Go ahead, Kevin.

**Question:** Yeah, I guess just as a follow-up. So, just to confirm, so have you been speaking with Polly Trottenberg since she assumed her new position about BQE?

**Mayor:** I have not talked to her about the BQE. I talked to her to congratulate her, and I was just really, really happy for her and proud for our administration when we see people like Polly reach that role, and of course, Deanne Criswell, who's going to be the National FEMA Administrator who is also going to be in a position to help us a lot. It makes me very proud. Polly and I have talked particularly about Vision Zero which I am passionate about and using it as a national model, and I think she'll be able to do a lot with that in her new role. But we certainly will be talking in the weeks ahead on the BQE as well.

**Moderator:** Last question for today, it goes to Aundrea from WCBS.

**Question:** Good morning. My first question is about homebound seniors. Council members and state lawmakers are going to be unveiling a plan later this afternoon. Where does the City's plan stand? And if there isn't one yet, are you at all open to hearing suggestions from the community?

**Mayor:** Yeah, so I'll start and I will turn to Dr. Chokshi and then if Dr. Katz or Dr. Varma want to add. We're always open. Look, this is we're in the middle of a crisis, Aundrea. We are always open to good ideas, and over the last couple of weeks, we've talked about homebound seniors as a particular challenge. Now, for seniors who can get around, we announced different transportation options to help them get to vaccinations for seniors who didn't have their own transportation. I think that's going pretty well, but homebound seniors who literally need an

individualized approach, you know, someone able to give the vaccine safely has to go to their home. That's obviously much more complex, takes a lot of labor, but we're devoted to getting it done, particularly as we get more vaccine. So, Dr. Chokshi will give you our latest thinking on that, and then we certainly look forward to the suggestions from the legislators.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor, and this is such an important issue with respect to ensuring that we're getting vaccinations to some of the people who will most benefit from it. Certainly, I think about the patients that I've taken care of over the years who have limited mobility, or are fully homebound and it's particularly important for us to be able to serve them. As the Mayor has alluded to we're really thinking about this in three primary ways the first is ensuring that the sites that we set up, particularly city sites, but also working with other partners who are vaccinating to make them as accessible as possible setting up, you know, areas where people who find it difficult to walk or need a wheelchair are able to access those sites as easily as possible. That's number one.

Number two, as the Mayor has said, is ensuring that we have transportation options for people who may be partially homebound or may require further assistance with respect to actually getting to a place where vaccine is delivered, and then the third part is acknowledging that there are some homebound seniors who will not be able to leave their homes and that means bringing the vaccine to them. We're actively planning for this, both in NYCHA developments, as well as more broadly to set up more mobile options for vaccination. We do have to be upfront about the fact that the vaccines that we have for them to remain safe and effective do have certain handling and transport requirements, and so of course we want to do it in a safe way, that still meets those access imperatives. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Aundrea.

**Question:** Second question is just to piggyback on the kind of the equity framework, when you're talking about going into communities, using clergy and stuff. Can we just go a little bit deeper about that? Because just because a site may open up in a hard-hit community does not necessarily mean that community are the ones that are getting the vaccine. People have been coming from all over the city to just try to get this coveted vaccine. What are you doing in terms of an information campaign? Are Zoom meetings happening? Are people knocking on doors? Is there something more personal happening to get to convince people?

**Mayor:** Yeah, all of that has begun and will deepen. That's absolutely the approach. You know, our vaccine command center from the beginning, with the leadership of Deputy Mayor Melanie Hartzog, has been devoted to creating a grassroots effort with a heavy outreach component, literally down to things like the knocking on doors and the Zoom meetings, as you said. Town hall meetings via Zoom, getting the maximum amount of local community leadership upfront in the process. Using community health care providers, using community-based organizations to lead the way locally. There's going to be hesitancy. Look, I mean, we already know, we knew it from the beginning. There is a lot of hesitancy in general. That's not a news flash. Clearly the clear majority of New Yorkers want the vaccine, but there's still a lot of hesitancy in a variety of communities. We know that hesitancy is intensified in communities of color, where there's been mistrust and historical evidence of why people should feel mistrust because of things that happened that the government and the medical community did over the years, and did wrong because of institutional racism. That mistrust, unfortunately, comes from someplace real.

But the answer to it is to just make the vaccine as easily available, widely available with as many community-trusted voices connected to it, and I think you're going to see a human thing happen, Aundrea, where folks will see someone they trust offering the vaccine or someone they trust getting the vaccine and that's going to encourage them, and it takes some time, but it creates kind of a virtuous cycle and things move forward. That's the basic game plan. Doctors Katz, Chokshi Varma, anything I left out that you want to add?

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals:** I think you covered it, sir.

**Mayor:** Okay. I'm unless someone else jumps in, I'm going to assume I got it. Okay. Everyone, as we conclude today, look, we got a lot of work ahead, but I am really optimistic when it comes to our vaccine effort. Because as I said, I know when we get to full speed, half million vaccinations a week, it's going to have an amazing impact and a really quick impact on the people of this city, and I really do have confidence in administration of Washington that they're going to help us get it done. But, in the meantime, we remember there's a lot of other things we have to do. We have to get ready to bring this city back fully – our recovery ahead. We have so much to do together, and today we spoke about the biggest challenge going forward, which is climate change. But today's conversation is a hopeful one because we can do something about climate change. Just like we're doing something at record speed as a nation, thank God to fight the coronavirus. We can do something about climate change. Today's announcement that we're taking money away from fossil fuels, putting money into renewable energy. This is the shape of things to come, and New York City is literally leading the way. We're seeing cities all over the world, deciding it's right for them because they saw New York City do it first. So, New Yorkers should be proud of the way we can spark positive change and we can make a difference, and that's what we're going to keep doing. Thank you, everybody.

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