

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON COVID-19

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Everybody, I want to give you a couple of updates on things are happening around the city and how we're addressing this crisis. Every day I think we're learning about the sheer challenge we're facing and all the forms it takes and every single day we're making changes. We're adding new approaches, new strategies. We're getting help from the state, from the federal government, from all over. Things are changing day by day, hour by hour. We find new challenges, we find those solutions, and, of course, we find the extraordinary efforts of New Yorkers to address this crisis. There is a lot more to do. Especially in terms of our federal government, a lot more to do. But I can at least say that we see on many, many fronts, help coming in. And I'll talk about, of course what happened in Washington yesterday with the stimulus bill. Many forms that help but also immense challenges that we're facing.

There's just nothing we've been through that could possibly compare to what we're experiencing now and where we're going and it will be a long, tough fight. And I'm going to keep saying that because I know there are a lot of voices out there trying to act like we can turn the page soon, and I just don't believe that's true, and I don't think it's helpful for people to be given false hope. I want to give people real hope. Real hope comes from the extraordinary commitment and hard work of our health care workers and our first responders and all the people that are protecting us right now. Real hope comes from the resiliency in New Yorkers. Real hope comes from real support. Every time a ventilator arrives, every time we get more supplies we need, every time the military comes to help us, those are the causes for me for real hope. But it's going to be a long, tough fight and we're going to be stronger if we understand that, than if we try and wish away something that in fact, we're not able to change entirely right now.

Let me talk about the overall situation, and it continues to be numbers I can barely even comprehend. I know a lot of you feel the same and they all represent real human beings, real families. Total cases as of this morning in New York City, 21,873. A number that would have been unimaginable just a couple of weeks ago. Deaths in New York City, we've now lost 281 of our fellow New Yorkers to this disease. So, we got a tough time ahead, and that's obviously particularly true in our health care system. I want to take a moment to talk to all those who are doing extraordinarily valiant work right now all over New York City. Doctors, nurses, all health care workers, everyone who works in a hospital, whatever your job is, every single one of you are doing something heroic and really difficult and absolutely necessary to save the lives of your fellow New Yorkers.

There's a phrase we use. We say people have gone above and beyond the call. Well, all of you are doing that now in a way that we're going to remember. We're not just going to remember it

next week, or next month, or next year. We're going to remember it for the rest of the history of New York City, oh and forward. It'll be part of a chapter in this city's history that will be unforgettable. That all of you stood up, all of you showed up, all of you gave your all, under very, very trying circumstances, because none of us have experienced anything like this, and it came out of nowhere. So, I want to say on behalf of all 8.6 million New Yorkers, a thank you to all our health care workers, and not only our gratitude, not only our words, but our deeds. That's what we should show our thanks through.

You deserve, and you must have, and you will have, the supplies you need. One way or another, we're going to get them to you every day. It will not be easy and we absolutely must get federal help if we're going to be able to sustain this. But my commitment is, if it is available anywhere in the United States of America, and we can get our hands on it, those supplies we'll get to you immediately to protect you, to allow you to do the lifesaving work you're doing. This is going to be a day to day, hour to hour reality. I keep saying, I know this week that we have the supplies in this city we need. I hope we can get through next week, but that is literally as far over the horizon as I can see right now in any way that I can feel comfortable about, because I need to know we're going to have what we need for our health care workers and our people.

But any health care worker who's out there who feels afraid or worried, we all stand with you, we understand why you might feel that. Anyone who feels resolute about serving their patients but is worried about supplies, I understand that, and I want to make sure you don't have to worry. That you can see the supplies coming and know there'll be there. It's understandable that health care institutions, hospitals, clinics are trying to be careful about their use of supply. They're trying to make sure that we'll always have it going forward. But we also have to make really clear to our health care workers that any supplies we get from Washington, from Albany, from the private sector, are immediately being turned around to our hospitals and our health care facilities, and I want people to see more and more evidence of that. We're going to show it very publicly. And to all of you who are experiencing challenges, we need to hear from you. We need to understand what you need, so we can get the job done for you, and thank you for all you are doing.

Now, I've said throughout this crisis, there's a lot of that we're facing, but we also have some extraordinary advantages and one of them is that we have the best public health system in the nation. We have the largest, we have the best by far. Health + Hospitals is an amazing organization that's only gotten stronger in recent years, but now it's under a tremendous amount of stress. And obviously Elmhurst hospital in Queens is right now the epicenter within the epicenter, dealing with an extraordinary surge of cases. It also happens to be an extraordinary hospital. It's renowned within our public health care system as one of the very best hospitals we have, with an incredibly committed staff who have been able to deal with so many challenges before with great skill, great compassion, great ability, and that's what they're doing right now.

The folks at Elmhurst Hospital, the folks doing this noble work, need supplies, and I'm committed to getting you supplies. In fact, in the last 10 days, we have four times resupplied Elmhurst Hospital with additional ventilators, and we will keep doing that until we're at the point that Elmhurst absolutely always has more than enough ventilators. Today we sent over 40 additional ventilators that have arrived at Elmhurst. This'll be an ongoing commitment to make

sure that that hospital and all our public hospitals have whatever they need at any given point in time. If we have it, it will get to you. We also sent today to Elmhurst hospital, 56 additional staff members to deal with the challenges that they're facing, and again, we will keep adding as needed. We have to make sure that they really, really hardworking doctors, nurses, all the health care workers who have dealt with the sudden surge. We need to give them a break as quickly as possible. We need to bring additional folks in to give them, to spell them, to give them a chance to catch up, catch their breath, get a little downtime, so they'll be able to continue on going forward. So, it's crucial that we get more and more support into Elmhurst and we will do that.

So, in terms of our entire health care system, public and voluntary nonprofit, the whole picture. Look, before the coronavirus came to New York City, we basically had 20,000 hospital beds with everything that was needed. All the staffing, the equipment, everything that you would need to fully attend to a patient in a hospital bed. That number about 20,000. Once upon a time, and once upon a time was only weeks ago, that was a really big number and that was certainly sufficient to handle demand every day in New York City. In fact, there are people who used to talk about there were too many hospital beds in New York City. Well that 20,000 number, that once seemed so impressive, now it's only a part of what we need to deal with the coronavirus. Our goal is to triple the number of hospital beds in the city by May. Now, that's an extraordinarily difficult goal, and I am not going to look you in the eye and tell you, I can guarantee you we will get there, because we have so many challenges. The bed, again is only one part of the challenge. Location is only one part of the challenge. We need the equipment, we need the supplies, and we need the highly trained personnel. All of that we're working on simultaneously. And this is where the federal government, again could be absolutely crucial and I've been very clear about what could be done on the federal level that could affect that entire equation in our favor, particularly when it comes to things like personnel. The reality is we have a very, very difficult goal to reach, but it is our goal and we will every single day work to achieve it. The surge plans that the state put forward asking every hospital in the city to increase capacity. I think it was a very good strategy. We'll add at least 7,000 beds quickly. And that's a crucial part of what we need to do.

We've obviously – in addition to what can be done in hospitals, it is crucial to find new locations either facilities that are health care-related where we can put in more beds or facilities that weren't health care at all, but where we can now create a crucial new capacity. So, those new locations in places like Coler Hospital, part of Health + Hospital system, Javits Center, obviously a convention center had nothing to do with health care, now it does. And the Federal Government, FEMA, State of New York are playing a leading role there to get that up and running— with the surges in the hospital with the additional beds outside the hospitals. That gets us to almost 34,000 beds compared to the 20,000 we had just weeks ago. That is a very, very important start in addressing this crisis. But as I said, my goal was to get us to not just 34,000, but then the 40,000 to 50,000, ultimately to 60,000 if we can get there. And if this crisis continues to build the weight, we think it will, I would love nothing more and I know you would love nothing more than to find out in fact we got some relief from this crisis and the numbers got better and the human misery got reduced and there were fewer and fewer cases. That day comes, maybe won't need 60,000 hospitals, but I cannot depend on maybe I have to prepare this city for the toughest scenario and that's what we're doing right now.

On supplies, look, there's nothing more important than ventilators – we've all talked about this, I really didn't know a lot about ventilators a month ago. Now, I know something, at least I've realized that a ventilator, it's, you know, we could put one right here on this desk. It goes in a packet that's about the size of a suitcase, but it is a lifesaver, as simple as that. If you have a ventilator, you can save a life. You can keep someone going, get them through this crisis so they can recover. You don't have a ventilator people die who didn't need to die it's as simple as that. This is one of the most important pieces in this whole puzzle, getting enough ventilators, getting them quick. 500 have come in through our efforts working with the White House, working directly with the administration to get immediate direct supplies to New York City and that's been very helpful this week. In addition, 2,000 more from FEMA – about half of them are here in New York City now over a thousand already here, the remainder coming in the next couple of days. So, when you combine all that 2,500 more ventilators that will have a few days from now, we'll have about 2,500 more ventilators than we had say 10 days ago. That's hugely important, that's only about a sixth of what we are going to need to get through this entire crisis. We predicted this moment, we need 15,000 ventilators and we are pushing every possible button. We're looking under every stone we're calling all over the country to find every ventilator we can get and soon we'll be talking about the efforts to create them right here in New York City as well. But my deep concern remains that the Federal Government is not using it to its full disposal of the Defense Production Act.

That's the game changer, that's where we could get a lot more ventilators built around this country, manufactured and shipped to New York City in time. While this crisis is raging and every ventilator comes here when we don't need it of course when the crisis is over, we're going to help make sure it gets to other parts of the country that need it. But we've got to get to that number and we got to get to that number fast. Today I saw a great example of New Yorkers stepping up to help fellow New Yorkers at the Brooklyn Navy yard an amazing example. This is something that just a few days ago, not only didn't exist, but the idea didn't even exist. And I want to thank Michael Bednark, of Bednark Studios and Michael Duggal of Duggal Greenhouse. They are doing amazing work working with everyone at the Brooklyn Navy yard, led by David Ehrenberg.

They literally came up with idea just days ago, they said, we need to help our health care workers, our first responders, we're going to create face shields. And they literally decided they would create a factory in a place that wasn't a factory, they would create a factory from scratch to make these face shields. They'd find the equipment, the different elements, they'd find the different supplies they'd get a plan, they bring it to the Department of Health. As recently as Sunday night was when they got this plan approved by the Department of Health to come up with their own version of face shield to protect all of our crucial leaders and crucial folks in the health care field our first responders, all the people out there at the front line doing such important work. This brand-new idea out of nowhere was this was put into production these face shields were put into production yesterday. They're at full bore today, they will on Friday ship 50,000 face shields to the Department of Health to distribute to hospitals all over New York City and to first responders. By next Tuesday, they'll have 120,000 made— this is just an inspiring, beautiful effort and we're going to make sure New Yorkers see a lot about this and understand how powerful this is. And what it means is for the future, so many New Yorkers are just finding many, many ways to help each other. So, we need more of that coming you're going to see a

surgical mask, gloves, surgical gowns, all sorts of things being built right here in New York City manufactured right here to protect our fellow New Yorkers. None of that takes the Federal Government off the hook, I want to be clear, and we need everything that is being produced here just to keep going day to day.

We need the Federal Government to come in with a really big numbers that really big supplies if we're going to get all the way through April into May, but we're going to help ourselves in the meantime every way we can. Finally, couple updates, there's been a lot of concern about the situation in our jails. Want to give you an update that I'll keep doing every day I'll give you an updated number. We are looking to release the inmates that we think are appropriate to release—that we think do not pose a threat to the community. And we're also very, very concerned there are inmates with very serious preexisting conditions, inmates who are much older. We have an obligation to think about them the same way we think about all New Yorkers who are in those high-risk categories. So, we're working that through.

I'll give you updates regularly about where we stand – we have to work in many cases with the district attorneys in the states – state governor, I should say, to get to a specific decisions case by case, but we'll keep updating you. So, as of last night, 200 inmates from our jail system had been released from the beginning of this process, 200 that action last night allowed us to hit a major, major milestone and none of us expected this crisis. But one thing that has come out of it has that our jail population continues to decline. Last night we went below 5,000 inmates in our jail system again, last night we went to below 5,000 inmates in our jail system in a City of 8.6 million people. The last time the New York City jail system had fewer than 5,000 inmates was 1949 right after World War II. So, this is an important a note against the backdrop of this crisis, something happening that has a real value in other ways, even though it's part of addressing this crisis. It should be noted as an important moment by tonight, by the end of the day, going into tonight that number of inmates released will go from 200 up to 375 and we will keep giving you updates as we go along. So, I wanted you hear about that, just to officially know that now our jail population as of this morning is 4,906.

On supermarkets, there's a lot of concern to make sure we keep our supermarkets clear so people go in there, can shop, observe social distancing, not be crowded, not end up being in a situation that violates the rules we put forward. We need everyone to stick to that idea. So a couple of thoughts, first of all to again, the store owners, the store managers, the employees, very, very important to practice social distancing and insist on social distance in any line inside or outside the store needs to be distanced six feet between the person before them and after them constantly have to make that happen. We have to be conscious about limiting the number of people coming into a store, if you start to see an overcrowding situation again, if that means the line outside, keep that line distanced. To any storeowner or store manager or employee says, wait a minute, we need some help to do that, we need some backup, we need some enforcement. Just pick up the phone and call 311 and we will get you help quickly. Whether it comes from the NYPD, the Fire Department, the Sheriff's Office, Buildings Department, whatever it is — members of our City Government will come to you and we'll help you achieve that social distance and you're not alone in doing this, we want to help you do it. Call 311 and we will get help to you quickly, but we've got to get this done.

Finally, a recommendation for all store owners; this will certainly be true for grocery stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, if you can - and some it will be easier, some will be harder, but if you can, there've been a lot of requests to institute senior citizen hours early in the day. So, the idea would be to set up a time - and I'm going to suggest something like 6:00 am to 8:00 am where only seniors come into shop. Look, this is a suggestion, this is a recommendation. It's something that is not typical, but, in this crisis, people are adapting and you know, getting used to very different realities. I think all New Yorkers want to make sure our seniors are safe and they get what they need. So, having those early morning hours available to any pharmacy or grocery store supermarket, anyone who can do it, whether it's six to eight or whatever version you choose; letting seniors have that time, that's just for them, keeping the crowds low, making it a little easier on them - a lot of them are up early and can get to you. If you can do that, it would really help, if we can stretch things out, it would really, really help to avoid social distancing other times of the day. I mean, excuse me, to ensure social distancing, to avoid crowding, my apology.

So, everyone, just to finish and then we'll take questions from the media and I will be joined by Dr. Oxiris Barbot remotely, our health commissioner. I talked earlier about our health care workers, our doctors, our nurses - every single human being whose working in a hospital right now, whatever your job title, you're a hero, we need you, you're at the front line. I want to also remember at the same time our, everyone at EMS, everyone emergency [inaudible] medical service who is constantly there saving New Yorkers. We depend on them 24/7, you know, you call 9-1-1 and [inaudible] as New Yorkers, we expect not only an ambulance to arrive quickly, but some of the best professionals anywhere in the world to be there and they are, and they've been great throughout this crisis. They're dealing with a lot, but they've been there for us every single day and I want to thank everyone at EMS for all you are doing.

And I want to thank the folks who get even less attention, I would say. I want to make sure EMS gets their fair share of attention and their praise and their appreciation, but our voluntary ambulance services, community based, neighborhood-based ambulance services that really play a crucial role as well, a lot of times they get low overlooked. I want to thank all of you for all you do for our communities and especially in this time of crisis and I'll make sure to, make sure to use Twitter and other forums to thank each of your organizations individually for everything you're doing. We appreciate it and it makes a big difference.

So, everyone, I conclude before saying a few words in Spanish by saying, it'll be a hell of a challenge these weeks ahead, but there's nowhere on earth where people meet a challenge like New York City and I want to thank you all, I know it's tough. I know people are really, really changing your lives, but you're also doing it in a way that's inspirational and showing the whole nation what it looks like to deal with a crisis, and, and do it with strength and dignity and resolve and I want to thank you all for that.

A few words in Spanish -

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let me turn to our colleagues from the media and we will be calling upon you one-by-one and we'll call in Dr. Barbot on questions that are relevant to her. Let's go ahead.

Moderator: Hi all, just a quick note at the top. Today, we'll ask that everyone limit themselves to just one question in an effort to get to as many outlets as possible. Just a reminder, we have Dr. Barbot and Dr. Katz on the phone today.

Mayor: Good, Dr Katz has joined us. Okay. Glad for the update. Thank you.

Moderator: With that, I will start with Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Thank you, Mayor. I wanted to ask for your reaction to today's historic unemployment numbers and if that's changing your response for your plans, looking ahead,

Mayor: Shant, it's staggering. We're only seeing the initial numbers. They will get worse, unfortunately. A lot of people can't even apply for unemployment yet, they've been trying to get through. So, right now, our early estimate is unfortunately probably at least a half million New Yorkers will end up unemployed - are already or will soon be. That's just a staggering, staggering number. What it means is, you know, we need everything in that federal stimulus bill and we need more going forward. And this is not looking a gift horse in the mouth. I really do appreciate what's in that stimulus bill. It is unprecedented. I'm very appreciative to Senator Schumer and Speaker Pelosi in particular for what they achieved, but I don't think there's anyone in Washington - I've talked to Senator Schumer, I've talked to Speaker Pelosi, I've talked to Senator Gillibrand, talked to our whole congressional delegation as a group earlier today. No one thinks it's enough. Everyone agrees there's more that has to be done, and the next, the next act will be potential additional legislation in the house very soon. So, we're going to need a lot more help for working people and a lot more help for our local government to support working people in this city. It's staggering, but look, if the federal government does everything they're capable of, it will help us get through and we can help everyone to the point that we then actually start a recovery, which I think, you know, is something that's hard to believe before the summer or fall, but we will get to that point. We need that direct support for the city government, we need that direct support for the state government in the next stimulus package or else we just won't be able to help all these folks who are unemployed and their families to the level they need, but if we can get that help we'll find a way to do a whole lot for them. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next we have Kathleen, from Patch

Question: Hi, can you hear me this time?

Mayor: Yup. That's good. It's working this time Kathleen.

Question: I was going to ask for your thoughts about legal aid society hoping to get 22 juvenile detainees with [inaudible] kind of ACS and if Dr. Barbot you wanted to weigh in, that would also be great. They are saying that these facilities aren't really equipped to protect people and that, you know, they are prone to some of the health issues that would make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Mayor: You're talking about specifically the ACS facilities for young people under 18?

Question: Exactly.

Mayor: Okay. Yeah. This is something we're going to come back with more on shortly. Obviously, the focus has been on addressing the issues around adults in our jail system, particularly those who are older or had preexisting conditions. That's where our focus has honestly been. We will have more to say on the juveniles soon. The facts keep bearing out that thank God that the challenge, the threat to those under 18 is substantially less, but we don't take it lightly and we will address what we're going to do there, but we just don't have that plan ready to announce yet. Dr. Barbot, do you want to add?

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: No, I think you covered it well.

Mayor: Okay. But Kathleen, we will have an update on that very shortly. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next we have Matthew Chayes, from AM New York.

Question: Hey Mr. Mayor, the Governor said yesterday that New York state has 11,000 ventilators – your own health department website breaks down by zip code specifics about the flu. When you've been asked provide specifics like this, you've explained you can't because the numbers are in flux, it's a fluid situation, et cetera. Obviously, they're in flux with the flu, obviously they're in flux with the state guarding ventilators. Why are you able to provide those zip codes, specific numbers for the flu? Why is Cuomo able to say how many ventilators the state has, but you won't do the same for that and other things?

Mayor: Well, it's really as simple as this, Matt, when I feel that we have something that's a non-moving target, as I just told you, the 2,500 ventilators that come in or are about to come in from the federal government – when I got something I think is really solid - I'll tell you, but I think we've got other situations here that are changing constantly. I think there's too much potential for misinformation, misunderstanding. The issue to me is that we owe it to the people to say what the practical impact of all these numbers is, what's really going on and to update them on what really matters, which is do we have the supplies, are we able to take care of people? Are we getting to a point where that's not necessarily the case and what we're doing about it? That's where I'm focused. I just don't find it productive to put out numbers that I'm not sure at any given point are accurate cause things are changing constantly and I'm just going to stick with that. If at some point I feel that we've got more stable information and I feel like it's productive and consistent cause I do not want to give out information then have you guys legitimately ask questions and it turns out it wasn't accurate or it changed in a way that isn't being reflected. So, I'm sticking with where I am. If it gets to a point that we can get that in a forum I feel better about, I'll be happy to share.

Moderator: Next we have Yoav, from The City.

Question: Yeah. I just wanted to ask him about the recreation centers. What's the plan if someone there tests positive for COVID-19 which –

Mayor: Yoav, what are you talking – which recreation centers?

Question: The school for the kids –

Mayor: No, No, you confused me with the phrase, you mean the regional enrichment centers?

Question: Yeah, yeah. I'm sorry.

Mayor: Yeah. Recreation centers got closed down already. That's where I was confused.

Question: Yeah, sorry, the enrichment centers – if someone there either a student or staff tests positive is there going to be like the, the plan for the schools where you shut them for 24 hours and clean them? And if so, there seems to be some – there seemed to be some issues with that. The teachers union didn't think the City was following the guidelines properly when it came to schools. Are you going to adjust that at all?

Mayor: So, first of all, going to the past, which seems a long time ago, we've checked very carefully. I've no evidence whatsoever that those guidelines were not followed in the past. If anyone wants to provide me evidence, I'll look at it. But I just want to say – looking you right in the eye – no, I believe those guidelines were followed properly when we were in a whole different reality a couple of weeks ago. Now we're dealing with something that's not bluntly a typical public school anymore. Now we're dealing with these enrichment centers that are explicitly meant to be there for our central workers who we must have at work. We're in a state of emergency, our first responders, our health care workers, our transit workers, and the additional workers we've added – groceries, pharmacy workers, all the people we've added to the list – we must have them at work or this city cannot function particularly in this emergency environment.

So, we have to keep those centers running. It's literally mission-critical. If we have a sickness, we're going to deal with it specifically. Meaning, we would obviously make sure that anyone who became sick immediately was taken out of school, gotten to their home, or wherever is the appropriate place for them. And anyone else that we think needs to be gotten home or gotten to a different location, we would do that. Anything that needed to be cleaned in the immediate area, we would do that. But we have to keep the centers open. So, no, it's a different standard because it's a state of emergency standard and it's for a very limited and essential purpose.

Moderator: Next, we have Sydney from the Advance,

Question: Can you hear me? Hi.

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: Thanks for finally taking my question. So, you talked about how you want to triple the number of hospital beds across the city, there's currently about 829 hospital beds on Staten Island between the borough's two private hospitals. We just found out that 1,000 more are going to be

added at the College of Staten Island. So about 1,900 beds total. This morning, there were 1,200 confirmed cases on Staten Island. Do you think 1,900 beds is enough for a borough with no public hospital? And do you have a plan in place to mobilize Staten Islanders to get to the city's public hospital system or places like the Naval hospital ship or Javits center if Staten Island's hospitals reach their capacity?

Mayor: Well, I think the first part would be like I said, we want to first double and then ideally triple our capacity everywhere. So, what already exists on Staten Island and what is going to be built out is a beginning. I want to keep looking for every additional opportunity we have to build it further on Staten Island. That to me is the obvious thing to do next and I understand the distinction on public and private hospitals, but that distinction means a lot less in the middle of an emergency. Right now, it's just about wherever we can get the beds and the ability to serve people. So, we're going to keep doing that on Staten Island. What I would say then if you say in any part of the city, what if you needed people to get out of their own borough and go somewhere else?

Well that's something that you know, Health + Hospitals is doing right now, for example, in Queens where there's been – the hospitals, the public hospitals in Queens have been getting a huge number of people coming in. Cases that can safely be diverted to other Health + Hospitals, facilities outside of Queens are being. So, we would do the same thing with any borough – if some cases – you know, people need health care out of their borough, we will do that. But I think the goal now is to maximize the growth of this system in every part of the city to make sure health care is as close to people as possible. We'll constantly give updates as we open up more capacity. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next we have Julia, from the Post.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes, indeed.

Question: I'm wondering if any federal, State, or City guidelines allow for the reuse of personal protective equipment during a pandemic. And was that in any of the executive orders you signed?

Mayor: I'll let the Health Commissioner speak to the guidelines. I think from the entire global discussion – literally, when I say global, I mean all over the world – there's been a recognition that we're in an unprecedented situation. I think it's a great question, Julie. I'm not in any way belittling the question, but I want to say that I think what's happened in the global health community, the global governmental community is a recognition that we are in something has literally never been experienced by humankind previously. And that there are a number of things where we have to use different standards to practically reach as many people as we need to and care for them. And I believe – and Dr. Barbot will speak to it – that we've seen from the World Health Organization and CDC, any number of different sources depending on the issue, depending on the topic, a recognition of the need for flexibility and improvisation in this kind of

environment. So, Dr. Barbot, that's my layman's framing. You take it from here and you can give a much more eloquent answer.

Commissioner Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, let me just first of all start off by saying that we have been focused on maximizing getting the personal protective equipment to the front-line staff and in that focusing on ways in which we can reduce the unnecessary use of personal protective equipment so that again we can maximize that supply getting to front line health care workers. That being said, there are evolving guidelines that are allowing for more extended use of personal protective equipment and we are working collaboratively with the CDC. We're working collaboratively with the State Health Department as well as our clinical partners to ensure that whatever guidance we end up evolving to always maintains the maximal safety of health care workers and front-line workers as we move to address this response. And additionally, I will say that, for example, there are health care leaders in other parts of the country that are looking at ways in which we can potentially re-sanitize, if you will, surgical masks.

We recently had a meeting with health care providers in Nebraska that are looking at ways in which we can re-sterilize surgical masks. So, the [inaudible] is that while we are focused on ensuring that PPE gets to the places where it's needed and where we are focused on ensuring that we don't squander these precious resources, we are also looking at different ways in which we can extend that supply. And actually, the Mayor referred to earlier some of the innovations that have been introduced in this, which include those full-face masks, [inaudible] again to ensure that our front-line workers are safe as they perform their really heroic duties.

Moderator: Next we have Jennifer, from AP.

Question: Hi, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: Thanks very much. I'm talking again about health care workers. As you've probably seen [inaudible] number of reports of workers who are seeing [inaudible] there's been at least one death, many are frightened about getting sick. Is there any further effort to kind of tally this and its impact on the hospitals and to try to figure out whether there's any further measures that need to be done for them?

Mayor: It's something I know our health care leaders think about all the time, both the folks who run each hospital and certainly Dr. Katz in terms of Health + Hospitals, Dr. Barbot looking at the overall situation with health care in the city. Everyone's thinking about this. I think the ways that, you know, are the basics, making sure that the equipment and supplies are there for our health care workers, trying to get them some relief going forward by bringing in more and more additional health workers from around the city, around the metropolitan area, even around the country. But the – it is obviously, you know, part of the heroism, just like our first responders, you know, run toward the danger, our health care workers every day, you know, even when there's just a normal day in New York City before this ever happened, this crisis, you know, they

put themselves in harm's way and they've chosen a profession that comes with a lot of challenges, but is an extraordinarily noble profession.

Our job is to support them and back them up and get them what they need. And so, we're always going to be looking at how we can protect them. And if there's something we're seeing, any of us, are seeing some kind of indication of something else and different that needs to be done, we're going to do it right away. But it is, unfortunately, you know, we're seeing in all parts of the essential workforce that a number of people are out sick. The vast majority of the people out sick will be back seven to 10 days later in each case. But it's a real issue we have to keep working on. So, Dr. Katz or Dr. Barbot, do you want to add anything?

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals: Mayor, I think you've expressed it very well. It's certainly within Health + Hospitals – it's extremely upsetting to staff when a fellow person becomes ill. And that [inaudible] they happen, we don't have a tally of it. But we do want to protect all our workers as best we can. And, again, as you have done, admire, they're amazing heroism in working through this pandemic.

Moderator: Next, we have Erin, from Politico.

Question: Hi, there. I'm just wondering, out of the 4,000 – about 4,000 hospitalizations, how many of those are in Health + Hospitals, facilities? And also, how long until the system runs out of operating revenue? And I guess related to that, are you currently billing patients or billing their insurance in these cases?

Mayor: Let me just say, before Dr. Katz jumps in, he can tell you about the billing process and he can tell you about the broad numbers of patients. But look we've had to and we're very willing to, as the City of New York, backup Health + Hospitals before, and we'll keep backing them up. They have to have the resources they need. I consider that really sacred at this point, especially in this pandemic. There was substantial support in the stimulus bill for hospitals. We're getting all the details on that, but that's certainly going to help. And some of the other elements of the stimulus will help us to protect Health + Hospitals for sure. So, you can talk about the budget situation, but I'll instantly say that we're going to be there to make sure that they are protected. Go ahead, Mitch.

President Katz: Well, as the Mayor has said, our focus is on saving lives, not saving dollars. If people do have insurance when we're over the crisis and we're able to send all our bills, we will certainly send out bills. There is no reason not to. The City will need that revenue. But right now, we're focused on saving lives. We'll have to get you an exact number of the people who have been hospitalized at Health + Hospitals. I don't have it separate because obviously we do a lot of testing in our outpatient facilities as well.

Moderator: Next we have Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Mr. Mayor. I'm curious – I know Governor Cuomo said he's done a tour of some of the New York city sites he's eyeing for overflow space in hospitals, Aqueduct Race Track and CSI on Staten Island. Two of them. Will you be joining him? And then secondly, you have to

release more detailed data on cases and deaths. It's negligent that you're not, I understand you [inaudible] point, but please, everyone has to get this data. Thank you.

Mayor: Look, Katie, respectfully, you can ask any question you want. I'm always going to respond. If you believe it's your role to editorialize in the middle of your question, that's your right as an American. I don't believe that not only is it not negligent, I would say to you it's the exact opposite. We are trying to never give you inaccurate information. Again, if we get to a point where we feel the information is consistent and accurate and not misleading, happily as we've done many, many times over these last months, give you a lot of information. But I don't find it appropriate for you to offer your own personal opinion on something where you're not in the middle of trying to manage this crisis. I don't think that's what the journalists are supposed to be here to do, to offer your opinions. You're supposed to ask questions so you can get answers for people.

On the question of the facilities, I was out at the Coler Facility and really appreciate the progress that's being made there. I'll be going around, certainly, as we find some other facilities that we're ready to open. You know, the Governor is working on a number of leads. We're working on a number of leads, we're all coordinated, and we'll keep doing that.

Moderator: Next we have Mark Morales, from CNN.

Question: Hi everyone. How you doing?

Mayor: Hey, Mark.

Question: A quick question. I know we have 13 deaths attributed to Elmhurst Hospital. What about today? What's the death toll there and how does that compare to the other hospitals in the city? Are they seeing comparable numbers? Is it also in the teens? What is that like?

Mayor: Mitch, do you want to start with that?

President Katz: Yeah, so the – of the last 24 hours, Elmhurst had only four deaths. I think that from the overall city counts, it looks to me like the deaths, as you would expect, are tracking very closely with the number of patients who are intubated on ventilators. So, I think all hospitals that are having a lot of patients on ventilators are experiencing a high number of deaths.

Mayor: Mitch, do you have any – I don't have the figures in front of me. Do you have any kind of comparison to other hospitals beyond that?

President Katz: I don't, Sir.

Mayor: Okay. Thank you.

President Katz: [Inaudible] work on that for tomorrow.

Mayor: Okay.

Moderator: Next we have Amanda from Bloomberg.

Question: We ran a story today about New Jersey setting up an ethics panel to kind of guide, you know, which patients will get access to ventilators. And I'm wondering if your administration would consider moving to create a similar kind of, like, ethics panel with experts, kind of, to make some of those decisions.

Mayor: Amanda, I'll let the doctors speak from their perspective. My perspective is I honestly want to do everything we can to have the equipment we need so that that is a decision that our medical personnel do not need to make. So, I understand your question entirely. If you knew you would have to make that decision, of course there should be standards. I know there already are in many cases. But I'm not giving up on the notion that we can get the ventilators we need in time to make sure every hospital has what they need, including creating our own here in New York City. I just want to be real clear on that. You know that is a challenge I still think we can meet. It won't be easy, but I still think we can beat it. And if I ever think we can't, I'll be the first to say it. But doctors, you want to add?

President Katz: I would agree that right now our focus should be on getting enough equipment so that we can save every life. There are existing State guidelines that have specific [inaudible] ahead of time into pandemic issues and what are the right ethical principles to follow in such cases. But I believe that with our efforts we're not going to need to get there.

Commissioner Barbot: Yeah, I would echo that. I think that if and when we ever got to that situation, there are guidelines that are out there and, you know, we've worked collaboratively with our partners through Greater New York through Health + Hospitals, to ensure that if and when we ever got to that situation, we would have those conversations. But I really can't stress enough that all of our efforts have been directed thus far at slowing the spread of this pandemic and protecting the health care delivery systems so that individuals who need access to care get that access to care as quickly as possible.

Mayor: Amen.

Moderator: Next we have Gersh, from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor and others. Thank you for taking the call. Late last night, the administration revealed its plan to open up those four stretches of [inaudible] for pedestrians. I have a two-part question [inaudible] question. First part is how were those particular stretches selected given that [inaudible] you chose seem to be harder to secure than quiet and residential streets that drivers could easily be diverted from?

Mayor: Gersh that was a process with my team, the City Council, DOT, NYPD. I can't give you the chapter and verse on how they were chosen, but we'll get folks to follow up with you on that.

Moderator: Next we have Bobby from NY1.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor. And this may also be a question for Dr. Barbot. I'm wondering what is the latest guidance for people who feel sick? I know as of recently the messaging was, they should stay home for three to four days, see if they get better on their own. How sick does someone have to be before they should feel it necessary to go to a hospital? And related to that I'm wondering about the status of testing. I know you guys had said testing is really only being done on people who show up at hospitals. People shouldn't be seeking a test. Is that still the case or has the testing capacity expanded?

Mayor: Dr. Barbot –

Commissioner Barbot: Certainly, so I'll start with the recommendations of what people should do when they're sick. So, from the very beginning, we've been saying that people should stay home rather than flooding the emergency departments or clinics. And we have been telling folks to stay home for about three-to-four days. And if they are not getting better, either at that mark or certainly before that mark, they should be reaching out to their health care providers. And the rationale for that was that, as we've been saying, 80 percent of individuals who do contract COVID-19 will have a mild course. And so, the recommendation has been three-to-four days not getting better, then go to your doctors. And certainly, if you're not feeling – if you're getting worse in that period of time, don't wait the three-to-four days. You know, with regards to the testing, our priorities still remain testing the right people. And I have to tell you that – I really have to emphasize the importance of testing the right people. And the right people – by the right people, we mean individuals who are above the age of 50, have one of those five chronic underlying illnesses, and who are sick and not getting better. I'm still hearing of people getting tested at some of these, you know, walk-in urgent centers like City MD and getting a test. And I really want to discourage folks from getting the test unless they are not getting better. And the reason for that is twofold. One is, we don't want people who are sick walking around. We want you home. And only if you're not getting better and your doctor tells you that you need to be seen is when we want you outdoors. The second thing is that every time we do an unnecessary test, we are burning through personal protective equipment that we need to ensure we have maximal supply for health care workers and for our frontline staff.

Moderator: Next, we have Todd, from AM New York.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I know it may be a little premature – I know that it's rare that you get the kind of money that you want from a stimulus package. So, what are you telling your commissioners in terms of what they're going to need to cut in their budgets? And are you envisioning the possibility of layoffs of municipal workers?

Mayor: Todd, it's a very important question. I mean, look, first of all, the way we have to approach this crisis is to say, what are we going to save? What are we going to protect at all costs? You know, what is the bottom line? So, the budget process is going to go like this – if it's related to fighting COVID-19, it goes to the top of the list, and that will be protected all costs, and obviously the most crucial services that New Yorkers depend on – police fire, water, you know, sanitation. We have to protect the basics very, very rigorously here. What we're going to do is, you know, as I said, we're going to look for everything that we can appropriately cut in this first effort for the April budget and that's going to be initially at least \$1.3 billion, but it's not

going to be from those areas that we have to protect and save at all costs, which, again, is the COVID-19 response and all the basic services that New Yorkers depend on. The other thing is – look, the stimulus bill is not everything I think it should've been, but there's a lot in it. There is a course to direct money that New York City will receive and then there's other elements of it that we will benefit from directly – any money that goes to our public hospital system, money that goes to our school system. So, we're still figuring out the full effect of it, but it's going to help a lot. What it doesn't do is address the billions upon billions of dollars we're going to need to keep our budget balanced, going forward. That's what I hope will be included and should be included in the next stimulus bill, the one next month because it's crazy that we are the epicenter of the crisis and we're a third of the cases in the nation, but we got funding very similar to places that have almost no cases. Something's wrong with that to say the least. So, I'm hoping that will get addressed next month in Washington.

Moderator: We'll take two more today. Next step is Alex Lynn from the Daily Beast. Hi, good afternoon. Thank you for taking my question. I am asking about new – if there's a guideline or plan in place for New Yorkers who are chemically dependent. There have been some reports of overcrowding at methadone clinics, both public and private and people who have been suggested to be in quarantine not being able to have access to their methadone and there is no sort of delivery plan in place for things like that. What do you guys have in mind?

Mayor: Doctors?

Commissioner Barbot: So, I can start and then if Dr. Katz wants to weigh in. We have been in contact with providers, reminding them of various ways in which they can ensure that their patients are safe when they come to seek care, including social distancing during a visit to the office as well as ensuring that people who are asymptomatic receive to care and people who are sick either have a mask placed on them or [inaudible]. We haven't, as of this point, heard of any issues at any of the centers that are providing methadone. And we would encourage you, if you are hearing of any of those, we would gladly follow up on them.

Moderator: Next we have Alex Zimmerman from Chalkbeat. He'll be our last question.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey.

Question: Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yep.

Question: Great. So, I wanted to ask a question – so, I know that some internet providers in New York City have been providing, you know, 60-day plans for families who might have, you know, limited internet conductivity at home. Obviously, that's relevant for the, you know, million students who are now turning to pivot to online learning. But we know that some providers aren't giving free access to families if they have outstanding bills at those providers. So, if that had like an unpaid cable bill even from a while ago, they're refusing to hook some parents up to internet

access. And I'm just wondering if you can comment on that, if that's an acceptable practice to you?

Mayor: No, I very much appreciate you raising it, Alex, because you know, we've all been going nonstop for weeks now, but that's still – every single day, either reporter raises an issue that had not been brought to my attention that I wanted to know about – in your case, I'm really glad you did – or, obviously, I'm on now accepting questions from New Yorkers that I'm talking about the morning update and, you know, a lot of important questions are coming in on things we have to deal with and I very, very much appreciate that. That really pisses me off to tell you the truth, that any provider in the middle of a crisis like this would deprive a child and their family of the chance for that child to continue their education, which we all know is going to be, you know, disrupted already because school isn't in session. I'm going to instruct my team to go back to the providers and be very clear about the fact that we find it unacceptable that any family wouldn't be given that opportunity. If there's any outstanding bills or outstanding issues, those can be addressed once the crisis is over. But we are not going to allow them to deprive children of their education. And if we have to take action – legal action or other action, I would happily do that to protect our students. Thank you very much for raising that.

Alright, that covers it. Thank you, everybody. Take care now.

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