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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON PIX 11**

**Dan Mannarino:** New York City really continues to be the hot spot for coronavirus in America and as local leaders prepare for the worst, just what sort of shape is the city really in? We're getting an update this morning live from Mayor Bill de Blasio, who is joining us right now. And so, Mayor, good morning to you. Thanks for joining us. You're at Pier 90 where the USNS Comfort has docked. So, please tell me, what are the plans exactly for this ship? Because I understand that COVID-19 patients will be kept at hospitals. So, who is going to this ship?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** So, Dan, think of it this way, we have a hospital system that usually you go into hospital with every kind of different problem and there's an ICU and there's other parts of the hospital. Well, we're changing all that to deal with this battle. We are going to make hospitals essentially all ICU over time, all intensive care. Every other kind of case that requires hospitalization, but doesn't require intensive care is being moved out to other types of facilities. So, what the USNS Comfort has going to allow us to do is actually take the pressure off the hospitals so they can make that conversion to focus on the worst cases and focus on the toughest coronavirus cases. Dan, this hospital ship arriving, it's like adding another hospital to New York City. It's an amazing, amazing thing that the Navy is doing for us. But it's also, I'm telling people it's not just about the physical reality, it's about the emotional reality too. This is going to give people hope in the midst of such a tough, tough battle to see our military arrive. I mean, I've seen the guys in uniform here today. It's giving me hope to know that we're getting the help we need. I think New Yorkers are really going to be encouraged by that.

**Mannarino:** Yeah. And I want to talk specifically about that help in terms of ventilators. We keep hearing this – these numbers going back and forth about ventilators in New York City. Are you worried they may run out this week? And what about the President talking about PPE equipment and how it seems like some of that is disappearing from the back doors of hospitals?

**Mayor:** Dan, there's just no evidence of that whatsoever. And the President did something really insulting by saying that. Our health care workers are heroes. They're at the front line. They're dealing with extraordinary challenge. They're extraordinarily stressed. I've asked the President to get us more medical personnel immediately from the military reserve, from wherever we can get it around the country to finally give some relief to our frontline heroes, our doctors, our nurses, all these health care workers. I've asked him for this repeatedly. That's what I think he should focus on, not questioning what people are doing with the supplies. Those supplies go in to get used immediately and imagine the huge uptick in cases. I mean, you've seen the numbers. It's astounding how many cases we have. Our frontline medical personnel, every time there's another case, there's another mask they have to use, there's the gloves they have to use. They are

constantly using more and more. So, the President's being incredibly insensitive to the people who are actually doing the hard work. What he should focus on, what I've asked him to focus on is getting us more ventilators. I've asked for 400 more this week to make sure we get ready for the end of this week. I've told everyone, Sunday, April 5th is D-Day. We need a major resupply by then to be ready for the following week. You know, what the President should do is focus on being Commander in Chief and getting us what we need, not insulting people who at the front line in our hospitals doing lifesaving work.

**Mannarino:** And one more question about ventilators, Mr. Mayor, you know, I actually worked in an ICU prior to me working in news, and I know that with ventilators come to the need for respiratory therapists as well. Do you have enough staff to work all of the ventilators – the thousands of ventilators that are coming?

**Mayor:** Dan, is a constant challenge. What our doctors are doing is amazing and what the head of our public hospitals, Dr. Mitch Katz, has said is we all are going to have to get used to a different kind of medicine. This is going to be like a military situation, a war situation where doctors and nurses are going to have to do things to save lives that, you know, are not what are used to doing normally, but out of just sheer emergency need they're going to have to do everything possible. So, you know, we're constantly trying to get more respiratory therapists, that's part of what I've asked the federal government for as well. But the attitude of our health care workers is, whatever it takes in any given moment to save a life that can be saved, that's what we're going to be doing. We just got to get them – if they have the ventilator they can, they can use it. If they don't have it, you know, a life's going to be lost that could've been saved.

**Mannarino:** And in terms of social distancing, you know, the number of deaths in New York City has tripled in a week. You have said repeatedly that the worst is yet to come. So, in terms of social distancing, is it time just to give out those fines of people not complying? And the niceties and the warnings and say, okay, you will be fined starting today?

**Mayor:** Yes, I've already said that yesterday, Dan. I don't want to see anyone fined, especially in a time of economic hardship. But if, at this point, after all the education, all the warnings, there's any New Yorkers out there who are not practicing social distancing, then what our police will do and our other enforcement agencies – they'll give them one last warning and they'll say if you don't comply right now you're going to get a fine. And we're going to have to do that because people have to understand this is about saving lives. Right now, the NYPD, which saves lives every day, is at the front and center in the battle against coronavirus and every time they break up – social distancing and teach someone a lesson that's actually saving lives in a different way. So, that's happening starting right now.

**Mannarino:** Yeah. You mentioned the NYPD. We have more than 10 percent of the police force actually calling out. So, what kind of reassurance can you give New York City right now that the streets will still be safe as we see many more officers come down with COVID-19?

**Mayor:** We definitely see right now – in fact, crime has gone down in this crisis. The PD has extraordinary resources. It's the finest police force in the country. Commissioner Shea has already made a number of plans to prepare for the number of people who will be out. We can go

to a longer shifts. We have a lot of overtime we can use. On top of that, we're starting to see officers come back who were sick, Dan. So, the first officers who recovered from the coronavirus have now come back on duty. You'll see that happening too, thank God.

**Mannarino:** That is good news. And lastly, Mr. Mayor, you know, social distancing, the President came out yesterday and said he'd like to see that extended through the end of April. What does that actually mean for New York City and specifically public schools? Will that actually remain closed until the end of April here?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Dan, you know, we're still assessing whether there's any chance to come back on April 20th, which was the date that we originally set after the spring vacation. But I said at that time we did it, I hated closing our schools, it pains me. But I said, if we close them now, I'm not sure we're ever going to be able get him up for the rest of the school year. So, right now, we'll look to see if there's any chance to come back in April or May, but I fear we may lose the whole school year at this point. We're trying our best with the distance learning. And any student out there, any family that needs to access distance learning with the DOE and is having trouble can call 3-1-1 and get instruction about how to get the devices you need or whatever it is. But it's going to be really tough to bring school back. We'll give it one more chance to see if there's a way to do it.

**Mannarino:** You know, I always have – I always say last question then I've got one more. So, let me squeeze one more in while I have you. About those devices, do you have a timeline for folks?

**Mayor:** Dan, a lot of them were given out before the kids left school. A lot of them were given out the week after school clothes. It's just ongoing. So, any family that does not have the proper device to be participant in district distance learning or doesn't have internet service, call 3-1-1. We can arrange for a device to be made available with the service already attached to it. And we've said from the beginning, it's going to take weeks to make this work for 1.1 million kids. It's never been tried before on this scale, but every week it's going to get better. Any family needs that help, just call 3-1-1 and we'll get you to the people can help you

**Mannarino:** Appreciate the updates. Always appreciate you coming here on PIX 11, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for letting me push the limits with you this morning. I do appreciate your time and I'm looking forward to seeing that Navy ship behind you this morning.

**Mayor:** Amen. Thanks, Dan.

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