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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good afternoon, everybody. Yesterday, I announced a major counter offensive against the spread of the coronavirus here in New York City. Now this is a City that has come so far since the beginning of this crisis back in March and April, and we have shown how tough we can be in fighting this virus. And after all the progress we've made, it's tough to have to think about any rewind, any pause, even if it's in part of our city, but we have to do this now. We have to recognize what the data and the science are telling us and it's time to move forward and fight back, because a rewind, a pause is all part of fighting back against the disease. It is what worked for us before and it will work for us again.

Now I am very clear after everything we've been through in these last months, that the great lesson is take action as soon as the data and science indicate that it's time, when the data and science tell you something, act on it. The sad reality and so much of the rest of the world, and even the rest of this country, is one of the data and the science were ignored. We are not ignoring it. We're proposing a very tough plan of action right now to address this situation and to ensure that it does not turn into a second wave all across New York City, we still have time to avert that problem, and that's what I want us all to focus on, stopping this problem right now. So, the City of New York has presented a plan to the State on how we address these clusters. We've gone over the plan with the State. I spoke with the Governor earlier today. We've laid out the foundation for how to stop this spread dead in its tracks and it is part of learning from what worked before and applying it in a very pinpoint manner.

Now, the State has agreed on the need to close public and nonpublic schools in the nine highest risk ZIP codes. So that will happen effective now tomorrow morning, that's an update now. The State determined they would rather have the schools closed tomorrow morning. So, at the end of the school day today those schools will be closed public and nonpublic in the nine ZIP codes. And again, we're going to work hard to turn around those nine ZIP codes so that in the coming weeks, kids will be able to come back to school. We've also presented a plan for closing down non-essential businesses in those ZIP codes. We're continuing to work with the Governor's team on that plan. The proposal I put on the table is the basis of discussion, nine ZIP codes, close all non-essential businesses. The Governor's team are considering evasive alterations they want to make to that geography or to the approach, but until we hear otherwise, our plan is to move ahead Wednesday morning with enforcement in those nine ZIP of all non-essential businesses. We will continue to work with the State in the meantime to get to a final resolution. Now, the important thing here is to remember the State has a role to play, the City has a role to play, but the biggest role will be played by all of you, by everyday New Yorkers in these nine ZIP codes and beyond.

So, it goes back to the basics. And I want to really urge people, if you live in any of the areas of concern, the nine key ZIP codes or some of the other ones that are on our watch list, please limit your activity, stay home when you can stay home. Of course, if you're sick, especially stay home. Wear the face coverings. It's just something we need people to do consistently, indoors, outdoors, everywhere, obviously, make sure you honor social distancing, avoid gatherings, real basic things. Wash your hands, use hand sanitizers. We need people to do all this. And really, especially at this moment, we've got to get the clearest possible picture what's happening in these nine ZIP codes and literally everywhere else in the city. So I want to redouble our efforts to get people tested, more and more free testing has been made available all over New York City. If you live in one of those nine ZIP codes, imperative that you get tested. If you've not been tested recently, if you've never been tested, go out and get tested. It's free. It is quick. It's available all over the city and wherever you live in New York City. If you have not been tested recently, it's so important that we get a clear picture. The more New Yorkers that get tested, the better.

Now in terms of testing, what I've indicated to you, we do not see a citywide resurgence. We see a challenge in certain key ZIP codes. We do see an overall citywide number rising in terms of positivity, but that is largely based on what we see in those key ZIP codes, not a bigger citywide trend. That said, there is a lot more activity now, obviously, since Labor Day, we've seen a lot more economic activity, more jobs, more travel, schools coming back, there's a lot going on. So it is very, very important that people be tested in the light of everything happening and that's how we will make sure we stay at an acceptable level. Anyone who needs to know where to go to get tested, you can go online nyc.gov/covidtest, or you can call 2-1-2-COVID19 to find free testing locations and there is definitely one near you.

Now, an update on the areas of greatest concern in Brooklyn and Queens, we still have nine ZIP codes. That number has not changed in the last 24 hours, nine ZIP codes that have been above three percent positivity for seven consecutive days or more. We have a watch list that I talked about yesterday, 11 ZIP codes. We're adding one more to the watch list, and that is ZIP code 11375 in Forest Hills, Queens, because we've seen a rise in the positivity level there. Now, again, those watch list ZIP codes do end up in the category requiring the greatest restrictions in less and until they have seven consecutive days above three percent positivity in their testing, we hope that does not happen. And the best way for that not to happen is to follow all those basic health and safety rules I talked about earlier and again to everyone in those areas, in those 12 ZIP code areas that are not now in the most restricted category, please go get tested so we can get the truth about what's happening in your neighborhood. The more people get tested, the better picture we get.

Okay, speaking of testing, there's an extensive effort right now, moving testing resources into all the affected areas that will continue to grow every single day. I want you to hear about this specific effort to mobilize testing resources and to get them where they're needed the most. I'm going to turn to the Executive Director of our Test and Trace Corp, Dr. Ted Long.

Executive Director Ted Long, Test and Trace Corps.: Thank you, sir. Testing is important because it gives us a line of sight into exactly where the coronavirus is and it gives us an opportunity to intervene to stop its spread. Now in New York City, we've built a massive testing system. We per capita test more people today than European countries like Germany and Asian countries like South Korea. We're leveraging and focusing our testing system in on the ZIP codes, the communities where we're seeing these clusters. If you look last Friday alone, if you look at our nine tier one ZIP codes, the baseline level of testing that they had before, on Friday in a single day, we doubled the number of tests being done in those

communities. We're going to keep doing that and that's been a critical way that we've achieved the success that we have in communities like Sunset Park and like Soundview, where we've been able to drive down the percent of people testing positive by more than two thirds.

Our numbers over the last three days are, we did 1,900 tests, new tests on Friday and then over the weekend we did an additional more than 1,500 tests. Now I want to tell you a little bit about how we've been able to build up our testing resources so quickly because we have a few innovative and novel strategies. First, we've brought in our 13 mobile units and put them in strategic locations. Next, we've created six block parties, which is where we cordoned off part of the sidewalk, bringing a large team, and then we can test 500 people at each site per day in those instances. Next, we built out for rapid testing sites where you can come in and get a test result back within 15 minutes. We also created a new type of model, we call it the microsite model. In this model you come, pick up a self-swab kit, do the self-swab yourself, hand the kit back in, and you're done in a matter of minutes. You can go on your way. In addition, we're doing testing specifically at our schools. We've done eight schools a day since last week and today we're ramping up to test – doing testing at 12 different schools. We're going to keep doing that. Finally, we're building out rapid testing at eight additional sites, but this is a special effort. What we're doing in our additional sites is we're working with community providers in our high-risk communities. So, if you are going to your trusted doctor, we want your doctor to have one of our machines so that you can get a test done and a result back in 15 minutes. Now we're going to continue building up our testing resources as we move forward so that we can have the same success we did in Sunset Park and Soundview working together with our communities. We will suppress the coronavirus. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Dr. Long, and everybody look, this is going to take an intense effort by all New Yorkers, but I want to remind you again, what we went through before we saw tremendous sense of unity and teamwork from New Yorkers. We saw everyone working together, want to emphasize we are all in this together. Every one of these ZIP codes and in the whole city, we all have to work together. That's what's going to get us through this and it starts with everyone getting tested.

Okay, let me turn to another matter, which is very much related to new developments that has a huge impact on this city's present and future – that's the census. We have very important news that the higher court circuit court of appeals federal court ruled that the Census Bureau must continue to count until October 31st. We are pushing to ensure that actually happens. There is a possibility the Trump administration will appeal this to Supreme Court. In fact, unfortunately it's probably a likelihood, but we're working on the assumption we could have as many as four more weeks to do this work. So, want to emphasize everyone how important it is to respond to the census now – it is still alive, it is still happening. New York City now has a self-response rate of 61.1 percent, very close to where we were in 2010 without a pandemic, but we want to get that number up quite a bit. Please go to my2020census.gov. It is so important that you get involved and you get your whole family involved. Everyone involved. We need this and also want to remind everyone while you're thinking about the important things to do for today and for the future, 29 days, till the election, the opportunity to register to vote. We have only a few more days want to remind people how important it is. If you have not registered, get out there and register to vote, be a part of determining the future of the city, state and nation. All of these things we're talking about now are things everyone can do. Every single New Yorker can participate in the census. Every single New Yorker can sign up and vote, who's eligible to vote, and of course, everyone who needs a coronavirus test can get a test. All those actions are things that you can do that will make a big difference for this city right now and well into the future.

Okay, so now let me talk about our indicators. Give you the overall picture for New York City. Indicator number one: daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – threshold is 200 patients – today's report: 67 patients with a 13.4 percent confirmed positivity rate for COVID-19. Number two – new reported cases on a seven-day average threshold is 550 cases – today's report 490 cases, and number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19 – threshold five percent – today's report is 1.83 percent, and the seven-day rolling average is 1.75 percent. Okay, a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, would turn to our colleagues in the media. Please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Hi all. We'll now begin our Q and A. We're joined today by Health Commissioner, Dave Chokshi, Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps Dr. Ted Long, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to Andrew from WNBC.

Question: Hello to everyone on the call, good afternoon. With regard to the businesses. Can you clarify what the difference of opinion is right now between yourself and the Governor? He seemed to illustrate to us that his problem was with the ZIP codes, that by closing businesses in those ZIP codes, you may be punishing large sections where there are no cases. Is that your understanding of how you and the Governor differ on this issue, right now?

Mayor: This one is an ongoing conversation. Andrew, we had a good conversation this morning. I think there's a legitimate concern from both the City and State's perspectives about how to balance the factors. Why is that the Governor's – based on the guidance I'm getting from our health leadership, the folks who've been fighting all the way through this crisis, that the ZIP code is the best available measure we have, because if you look at these ZIP codes throughout them, you're seeing either very high rates or unfortunately growing rates in the peripheral areas of the ZIP code. So, say for example, one part of the ZIP code is having a particularly intense problem that does not mean the other areas as of immediately it in the ZIP code are just plain fine. Unfortunately, what we're seeing is some crossover to other areas as well, surrounding. So overwhelming, these ZIP codes are areas of concern across the board. It's not as clean as you know, the western half of the ZIP codes really troubled on the eastern half is just plain fine and perfect. No, we're seeing the whole ZIP code in many cases, having some degree or another of a higher level of positivity. We also think it's important if we've got an area that's really intense in terms of high positivity to surround it with the protections we put in place. So, it doesn't spread to even more ZIP codes. So, from my point of view, this is the best usable measure. Census tracts are interesting, but very hard for people to make sense of. I think one of the things that Governor pointed out is what of an area around his ZIP code is a problem, but not the whole next ZIP code over, I think that's a valid concern, but right now what we propose and we think it's the one, you know, available strong option is to say here's nine ZIP codes that unfortunately the problem is pervasive enough that fuller restrictions make sense across the board. Hopefully only for two to four weeks, not forever, thank God, and if the State wants to modify that in some way, obviously that's the state's ultimate decision button, unless they come back with a specific modification, we're preparing to act as early as Wednesday morning, we need some plan ready to go, and that's the plan we have. Go ahead. Andrew.

Question: You just stated that two to four-week timeframe for businesses. Is it fair to ascertain that the first schools that might be a possible timeframe as well? And if it ends up on the four-week side of things you're talking about, possibly these kids not coming back into the classroom until right before Thanksgiving?

Mayor: I think two to four weeks based on what we laid out yesterday, what we've put forward to the State and we believe this makes sense. According to the science is two weeks minimum. So you have a period of time to make sure that the results are real, and if you see one of these neighborhoods go under three percent for seven consecutive days, that's a really clear indicator. Great. We can move out of the restrictions or the other alternative for weeks whereby the last day of the four weeks, they were under three percent. Those are two very good measures. Either one of those could work. What I'd say is, you know, let's be optimistic if everyone works hard, everyone gets tested. We hope to stay on the earlier side of that. If that happened in these areas. So school would be coming back at the end of the first week in November, if it was four weeks, are they becoming back in late October if it was two weeks.

Moderator: Next up, and we'll add that we're also joined by Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, is Reuvain from Hamodia.

Mayor: Reuvain, can you hear me?

Moderator: Can you hear us?

Mayor: Sounds like you've got to come back.

Moderator: We're going to move to our next, and next up is Marcia from WCBS.

Mayor: Marcia?

Moderator: We're having a few technical difficulties. We're orienting ourselves. Next step is Erin from Politico.

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

Mayor: Yeah. Erin, how you doing?

Question: Okay, great. I'm doing all right. Hope you're okay. I just want to get some clarity here. You're saying you will go ahead and move ahead with this shutdown as of Wednesday morning, because we all thought we just heard Governor Cuomo saying was that he was not going to authorize the shutdown of nonessential businesses, at least as of now. So do you have the authority to do that?

Mayor: Now, Erin, let me make it very clear. I appreciate the question. I'm saying until there is a different plan, we are preparing to implement this plan. We presented a plan to the State of New York. Overwhelmingly what we're seeing is the state of, with the basic concepts. The State agrees with the need to close down schools in the nine ZIP codes. The State has agreed on the need to restrict activity in the nine ZIP codes. We have specifically proposed doing it by ZIP code, starting Wednesday morning, closing the non-essential businesses. The State is reviewing that right now and might come back with modifications, but we're going to be ready to move as early as Wednesday morning. If the State comes back with a modification, we'll of course follow that modification. I do not expect, Erin, the State to delay for long. I don't think anyone has an interest in delaying, but they might modify the plan in some way, in which case we'll adapt accordingly.

Question: Okay. So, I mean, but just to be a hundred percent clear here, if they don't come back with a modification, but don't come back with anything else, and when leave the status quo in place, will you be able to act on this?

Mayor: We obviously will follow state law, Erin, and if the State does not authorize restrictions. We're not going to act, but I find that very unlikely at this point. Governor has been very clear, you know, we have a problem. It's not just a problem in Brooklyn and Queens. It's a problem in Nassau County, in Rockland County, in Orange County. This is becoming a bigger problem for the City and the State, and the time to act is now. So, you know, here's a hard proposal, a specific proposal. We will certainly if follow any guidance the State gives. But one thing I would say is what we cannot afford to do is delay. The data is telling us very clearly, very loudly that it's time to act. So, we can't put the final enforcement into place until the State has given us the sign off, but I fully expect the State to act quickly.

Moderator: We're going to try Reuvain again. Next up is Reuvain.

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

Mayor: Yeah. How are you doing?

Question: Good. Hi, how are you? So, I would just like to ask you about the timing of your announcement yesterday. There was a holiday that was from Friday night until Sunday night, Orthodox Jews have no access to media, to electronics. None of us knew about this announcement until Sunday night. I'm just wondering since your proposed announcement anyway wasn't going to kick in until Wednesday, why was this not done at a time when the Orthodox community was able to hear the same way everyone was, instead of hearing it on the media maybe Sunday night or Monday morning.

Mayor: Appreciate the concern. And as I said yesterday, during the press conference, I was sensitive to the fact that the community was in the middle of a holiday, and I've acknowledged that, but I have an obligation to the people of the whole city to announce this plan as soon as it was ready. We had to get to work immediately with conversations with the State. We had to give people a warning of what it would mean. All those parents thinking about their kids' school schedules, they needed as much warning as possible. We needed to give a warning to the many, many people live in the ZIP codes who were not observing the holidays and needed as much time as possible. And, obviously, made clear yesterday

that we want to immediately get into conversations with community leaders last night, this morning, and ongoing to keep working this through. But it was an urgent reality where it was imperative to get the word out as quickly as possible. Go ahead.

Question: I want to ask the doctors if they can explain why this percent positives stat is the stat that's being focused on rather than, say, case rate in the particular ZIP code?

Mayor: Absolutely. Dr. Varma, Dr. Chokshi, do you want to jump in? Dr. Varma, are you out there? You may be on mute.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: – on mute. Yeah, there we go. Yeah, sorry, I was trying to unmute. Yes, thank you for the question. So, there are, in fact, you know, two important measures. One is the number of cases that are occurring in any community. And the second, of course, is the test positivity rate. The reason that we prefer the test positivity rate is that it provides us with a better sense of the overall prevalence of disease in the community. Because, as we know, the absolute testing numbers will vary depending on the amount of testing that's done. We do like to use both numbers, as you can tell from the areas of concern, those are based not just on test positivity, but also our concern about the rate of case growth occurring in those communities. And Commissioner Chokshi can explain the Health Department has a very sophisticated statistical method to look at the actual case numbers and try to get a sense about whether they're an aberration due to testing numbers or whether they actually represent a significant and important increase.

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And Dr. Varma is exactly right in that we do focus on multiple ways of looking at the data. I'll just add one other piece to this, which is that specifically looking at the cases often gives us, you know, the earliest signal that that we may need to be worried about our particular area. And so, at different points in time, we may have an emphasis on one measure versus the other. You know, as we continue to monitor the areas of concern, just as Dr. Varma was saying, the test positivity is the best measure for us to figure out precisely what's going on and whether – what's going on and whether we're improving or not. And so, we have to look at the data in different ways at different points in time to get the complete picture of what's happening.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Brigid from WNYC.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor. For more than a week, the Governor has been stressing the importance of local enforcement to stop mass gatherings during the city and ensure masks usage in public and has essentially laid the blame on localities for not conducting sufficient enforcement. I'm just wondering if you think that criticism is fair. Is that what has led to these spikes?

Mayor: No, I don't think that's what happened here, Brigid. I think what happened was that something unprecedented developed based on our experience now over seven months. There's been intensive efforts to educate all communities, huge amount of masks distribution and consistent enforcement happening. We – literally, if we're talking about the last few weeks, we've had instances of closing the yeshivas down, closing down stores, there's been all sorts of enforcement actions taken, as there were actions taken previously – bars, restaurants, stores – there's been enforcement throughout. I think what is different this time is that the approach that we use, for example, in the month of August in Sunset Park – we had a really substantial uptick, we applied more outreach, more masks distribution, more enforcement and more testing. We turned that around in a very quick timeframe. The same thing happened in Soundview in the Bronx. The same thing happened in Southeast Queens. We were applying the same measures first in Borough Park and Brooklyn; then, in Far Rockaway and thought we were seeing similar outcomes, initially, and then saw something very, very different. So, the fact is that we've been working the same approach all along. This last week, in light of the increases, we had over a thousand New York City employees out, whether it was NYPD, Office of Special Enforcement, Sheriff's Office, Health Department, and many other agencies, doing constant education and enforcement. And remember, enforcement requires a legal reason. For example, the closure require certain legal standards being met before you can close a school or a business. And our officials were out looking for those standards and did not find very many situations where that was needed. So, I think what happened here was the spread had deepened in a much more pervasive manner than we saw in any other community previously and has now surfaced in such a manner that we must take much more rigorous actions. It's far beyond just a matter of enforcement. We need to actually have restrictions now – schools closed, businesses closed, using the tools that worked in the spring again. Go ahead.

Question: Just to follow up on that, you know, the Governor was saying that the NYPD and Department of Health are empowered now to, for example, use a summons for people who are not wearing masks. And so, I'm just curious, given – you know, given these spikes and this renewed focus, this need to sort of go beyond education, in the Governor's words, is there anything that will be changing about enforcement and how it will be conducted, going forward?

Mayor: Yeah, I think the difference here is, first of all, what we saw last week – wherever there was an instance to enforce it was taken, but, again, within the law and in a way that was going to achieve the goal. I'm very, very clear that if I can get someone to wear a mask rather than just give a fine for its own sake, I want someone to wear the mask. If someone refuses to wear the mask, they're getting a fine. That's been our approach all along. The reality, the law with businesses, etcetera, if there's a problem that could be immediately corrected, you offer the opportunity to correct. If it's not corrected, you immediately fine or shut the business. So, we've kept to that standard throughout and very successfully in most communities. The difference now, Brigid, is it's time to go far beyond the traditional approach to enforcement that worked in June, July, August. We have a different reality here in Brooklyn and Queens, and it seems also that way in several of the suburban counties. It's time now for the kinds of restrictions that got us out of an even worse situation in the spring. So, the difference now is, once you say you're closing non-essential businesses and closing schools, the enforcement of those rules is very, very clear. If anyone tries to violate those, as we saw some back in March and April, for example, that's very quick, rigorous enforcement. There's no question that case. If you're open, you're not supposed to be open, you're shut down immediately.

Moderator: Next is Rich from WCBS Radio.

Question: Hi there, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Rich. How are you doing?

Question: Good. I'm glad you can hear me here. It seems like it's a little bit of roll of the dice. Anyway, so I thought I heard the Governor say that the State was taking over the enforcement in these hot zones, if you will. That the NYPD somehow would be under the command of State Police or the State in some manner or form. Is it your understanding? Or, what does –

Mayor: That is not my understanding. That's not how it works legally. The Governor is putting forward a particular vision. We agree, we want an aggressive enforcement vision. We're going to work together with the State. I told the Governor this morning, we had 1,000 personnel out throughout the week, last week, doing enforcement rigorously. Look, again, I hope the State will agree to immediately is that we need stronger restrictions and that will allow us to really turn the tide here. We can't wait. We need these strong restrictions. And the enforcement of the strong restrictions again is very clear. But no, the City, the City personnel worked for the City, but we'll be working in close coordination with the State. We agree with the idea of very rigorous enforcement. NYPD will coordinate with State Police as they do on so many other areas and we'll move forward together.

Question: Sounds very cooperative. So, Mr. Mayor, at one point the Governor said, why don't you ask the Mayor why he didn't work out a plan with the State first before announcing it publicly. Is that – is that an accurate assumption on his part?

Mayor: It's very clear, and I spoke to it yesterday, Rich, that I have learned over these last seven months that the best way to approach things is once we come to a decision here in New York City, and that is based on the data, based on the science, based on the views of our health care leadership who've been fighting all the way through this crisis, and so successfully, that the best thing to do is announce it to the people, to let the people know what makes sense. And that is the best way to achieve the goal. So, we informed the State before I made my public statement, but what I found – this is a very dynamic situation that we need to move very decisively very quickly – is the best way to ensure there is action is to put the proposal on the table publicly.

Moderator: Next we have Sydney from the Staten Island Advance.

Mayor: Hey, Mr. Mayor. Last week, you announced fines will be given to people refusing to wear face coverings in the ZIP codes with high infection rates. But I'm wondering if there's any plans to deploy that kind of enforcement at large gatherings in other parts of the city? Over the weekend, about 2,500 people attended a Trump rally on Staten Island, and many of those attendees were seen not wearing these coverings and a pack together in a large crowd. So, I wanted to see if you plan to step up enforcement and fines if people are spotted not wearing face coverings at large gatherings, like the one on Saturday, given the City's infection rate is on the rise? And do you think that rally should have been held in the first place just, you know, given everything that's going on right now?

Mayor: Look, Sydney, I think everyone's got to recognize right now that we need people to wear face mask, we need people to socially distance, and we need people to avoid large gatherings. I respect everyone's first amendment rights, but I would urge everyone to recognize this across the political spectrum. What we're focused on, of course, Sydney, is the places where we are having the most trouble, those nine ZIP codes, and then some of the others in the watch list. That's where we put in the intensive efforts to give people masks. And if they refused to take a mask and wear a mask, we're going straight to fines – that's where we'll focus our resources. But I'd ask everyone, all New Yorkers right now to realize we are in a situation we should be very concerned about, all of us, where our focus right now is in certain ZIP codes, and, in the scheme of things, it is a distinct part of the city, it's not all of the city. But, if we don't all deal with this together, we could be running the risk of that second wave. None of us wants to see that happen. So, I'd ask everyone to start altering their behavior in light of that reality. Go ahead.

Question: Have you figured out when you plan to take your one-week furlough?

Mayor: Sydney, I think we are going to get that all done in October. We're still working on a few of the technicalities. I think for a number of City workers, they'll spread it out, but I think, in my case, we're going to do it all in October. And, again, I will still be working on my regular constant schedule. It will just be reflected in my paycheck.

Moderator: Next is Julia from the Post.

Question: Hey, good afternoon, Mr. Mayor. I'm wondering how many sheriffs are currently out for enforcement of COVID rules in the hotspots and how many additional police officers you plan to add to them?

Mayor: Yeah, Julia, will get you updated numbers on the sheriffs. So, we've had a lot of participation from the sheriff. We moved the sheriff off a lot of the other COVID-related activities onto the hotspots – Office of Special Enforcement as well, and, as I said, a number of other agencies. As of last week, the average day was about 400 members of the NYPD, but that will keep increasing as we have to go into more ZIP codes.

Question: And then how do you feel about the Governor saying that people should be ticketed on the street for not wearing a mask, period? They've had plenty of education. They've had plenty of warnings.

Mayor: Well, again, that's something that, to me, the first question is what gets someone to wear the mask? Unquestionably, offering someone a mask and letting them know they're about to be ticketed has proven to be very effective with a lot of people. If someone refuses, they should be ticketed, absolutely. But we need to focus those efforts on where the problem is most extensive. I think if you look at New York City as a whole, New Yorkers are doing a pretty damn good job of wearing masks. That's how we got out of the crisis to begin with and how we sustain such low levels of positivity for so long. But in the places where there's been a problem, I think it's simple – if someone's not wearing a mask, they're offered it; if they refuse, they're ticketed. If they take the mask and put it on, they keep going on with their lives.

Moderator: For the last question, we'll go to Jeff from the NY Times.

Question: Hey. Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor. Couple of questions – I'm wondering about, you mentioned Rockland and Orange County earlier. I'm wondering if you think they're being put to the same standards as the City, you know, given their hotspots, or having similar and worse outcomes as New York? And I'm wondering, what is the standard for the other 11 ZIP codes? Do they have – how much time do they have before you begin the same process of considering closing schools and businesses?

Mayor: Yeah. Jeff, I appreciate the questions. First of all, I'm just sort pull out some charts here – but, first of all, on the surrounding areas – look, we understand this is now a regional problem. We understand that the spread has been caused by people connecting not just in Brooklyn or just in Queens, but across different areas. There's a Nassau County problem. There's a Rockland County problem. There's an Orange County problem. Everything interconnects, it should be dealt with as a whole. It's up to – excuse me, localities and the State to determine what's right for them. But what is not even a question anymore, is there a connective tissue here? Is there something in common? Is there something we have to address altogether? Absolutely. So, I think if we really want to stop this from spreading more deeply and affecting the whole metropolitan area, those counties need strong restrictions, whatever works best for them as well. In terms of the areas that are not part of the nine ZIP codes, but that are areas are being watched carefully and where there's a real concern – thankfully, Jeff, a number of have not yet gone above three percent. And the effort now is going to be to keep them from going above three percent. And we still have hope that a number of these ZIP codes can be – with a lot of testing, we're going to put testing resources in, we're going to urge everyone get tested that we can stop these ZIP codes from rising above that level. The two we're most concerned about right now are Brighton Beach, Manhattan Beach, Sheepshead Bay, which is ZIP code 11235; and Rego Park, which is ZIP code 11374. Those two now are five consecutive days above three percent. So, we hope that pattern breaks literally today. But if those two go past seven consecutive days, they would go into this higher-level list where we'd want to see greater restrictions. But let's hope and pray that is not the case. Go ahead, Jeff.

Question: Mr. Mayor, about the three percent threshold, I'm wondering if – you know, if you have this three percent threshold for closing positive cases in the ZIP code and the threshold for reopening schools is under three percent positive in the same ZIP code. Are you concerned at all that there will be the sort of risk of back and forth opening and closing between business and schools. I wonder, you know, how are you going to balance that three percent standard that you've set?

Mayor: Jeff, it's a good question. I would say though that the history is that these patterns are pretty clear and they move pretty consistently over substantial periods of time, that if you can turn a ZIP code, for example, that's gone above three percent – if you can turn it in the right direction, get it below three percent, typically, that will be a sustained reality. And that, again, is the story of all of New York City. We were in a horrible situation. We far away back together. People really adapted to the changes they needed to, to make it work, sustained it for months on end. Again, three areas before we saw a problem, Sunset Park, Soundview in the Bronx, Southeast Queens – all three follow the same pattern, apply additional testing, test and trace activity, masks distribution, education, and it worked consistently and quickly. And they went back into a positive situation, meaning a good situation where the disease went back down and stayed back down. So, what we've seen is generally pretty consistent and helpful tendencies here. This one's been different, but I do believe if we sustain the effort and get a lot of buy-in from people across the spectrum in the community, keep getting people tested regularly, keep getting people to wear a face mask and practice the social distancing. We can get these communities down below three percent and then keep them below three percent. We can then reopen schools and keep them open.

And that is a good note for us to close up on today. Everyone, look, what we're about now is actions that are needed right now to stop this problem before it gets worse, to protect the city from a larger second wave. If we act aggressively right now, we can do it. I have absolute faith in what New Yorkers can do once they have a clear direction – here it is. It's time to take resolute action in these nine ZIP codes and protect the whole rest of the city and turn this around. It's something that will take weeks. It does not have to take months. It does not have to take years. It can take just weeks if we all work together. And we all realize that let's put aside whatever different views people have, we should have common cause right now – get people tested, get those masks on, work together to beat back this disease once and for all. So, this is what we need to do, and I know New Yorkers are up to the task. Thank you, everyone.

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