

THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 11, 2020

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**VACCINE: MAYOR DE BLASIO OUTLINES EQUITY PLAN AND LAUNCHES
COMMAND CENTER**

With equity at the forefront, new Vaccine Command Center will coordinate distribution and outreach citywide

NEW YORK— Today Mayor de Blasio and the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity outlined the City’s Vaccine Equity Plan and launched the vaccine command center. Through targeted outreach and a network of trusted community messengers, the City will ensure equitable vaccine distribution to the 27 hardest-hit neighborhoods identified by the Task Force. The City will also stand up a dedicated Vaccine Command Center, led by Deputy Mayor Hartzog and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dave Chokshi, to coordinate vaccine distribution across the city. Through the Center, the City will track critical metrics on vaccine coverage, with a priority focus on the 27 neighborhoods.

“A vaccine must be distributed equally to be effective,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “COVID-19 has exposed our city's most painful disparities, and we are addressing those inequities head-on and making a vaccine available for all New Yorkers.”

"As our City navigates the path to recovery, the families and communities that have been negatively and disproportionately affected must be in the forefront of our efforts to distribute the vaccine.” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “When we established the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity, we set out to identify immediate and long term solutions to help heal and strengthen these communities. With a vaccine on the horizon, it’s time for all of us to engage deeply and rebuild even stronger.”

The City will use NYCHA space—including NYC Health + Hospitals clinics—to vaccinate priority populations, following the successful partnership model the City established with NYCHA for COVID-19 testing. Through a broader outreach effort, the City will work with NYCHA residents, community partners, and faith leaders to spread accurate and trustworthy information about the vaccine and improve the distribution process.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will also host virtual conversations with residents in the 27 neighborhoods and community leaders to share information on vaccine planning and provide opportunities for community members to raise questions and concerns. Community

partners will have access to a training model, allowing them to serve as trusted messengers and hold webinars and community conversations on the City’s vaccine plan information and updates

The Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity will also establish a subcommittee to focus on vaccine distribution in the city’s hardest-hit neighborhoods and engage their robust network of over 200 community organizations to ensure effective outreach. Their work will inform the City’s Vaccine Equity Principles, a set of commitments to ensure the vaccine is accessible to priority populations, with the obligation to continually solicit feedback from hardest-hit neighborhoods throughout the distribution process.

Headquartered at 253 Broadway, the Vaccine Command Center—a joint initiative between DOHMH, NYC Health + Hospitals, The Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity Task Force, the Mayor's Office for Community and Faith Partnerships, Public Engagement Unit, and other agencies—will provide real-time troubleshooting and rapid response across public and private providers, including urgent cares, private pharmacies, hospitals, and community vaccination sites. To build trust in a safe and effective vaccine, the Command Center will deploy Test & Trace Corps members and DOHMH outreach teams citywide. These teams will coordinate with elected officials and community leaders on neighborhood vaccination drives. They will also support the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity and NYCHA to publicize official, science-based messaging.

The City is expected to receive 465,000 doses of the vaccine by the beginning of January. In accordance with State and CDC guidelines, the initial expected doses will be given to nursing homes and health care personnel performing high-risk activities. The first shipments of the vaccine will be sent to hospitals, who have the capacity for ultracold storage, which is required for the Pfizer vaccine. Other healthcare personnel will receive the vaccine next.

Taskforce Appoints Melanie Hartzog as Co-Chair

Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services Melanie Hartzog will now serve as a Co-Chair to the Taskforce on Racial Equity & Inclusion. In her role, Hartzog is responsible for City’s response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring the City’s social services continue to support every New Yorker, especially those experiencing homelessness.

“Our City’s recovery depends on us addressing the disparities from COVID-19” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Melanie Hartzog**. “Equity is at the heart of our vaccination plan, which is why we continue to do everything we can to maximize trust and ensure access to communities hardest hit by the pandemic.”

“For decades, racist policies and unjust practices have left communities of color and low-income neighborhoods with limited resources and opportunities, which makes equity crucial to the response,” said First Deputy Health Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer **Dr. Torian**

Easterling. “We are partnering with more than 200 community organizations to earn the trust of the community—something that history has stripped of too many government entities.”

###