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**ADAMS ADMINISTRATION PARTNERS WITH CDC TO DELIVER 10,000
ACCESSIBLE AT-HOME COVID-19 TESTS TO THOSE WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE
LOW VISION**

*Allotment Marks One of Largest Distributions of Accessible At-Home Test Kits to Any
Municipality Across Nation*

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), and NYC Health + Hospitals/Test & Treat Corps (H+H/T2) today announced that the city will distribute 10,000 COVID-19 at-home test kits that are more accessible to New Yorkers that are blind or have low vision. The at-home test kits — manufactured by Ellume and sent to New York City by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — utilize easier-to-use test components for those who are blind or have low vision and communicate with a user’s smartphone to give an electronic text readout of their result. The more accessible test kits will be distributed in the coming weeks and will be available through MOPD and a host of additional partner organizations.

“Every New Yorker deserves to have access to free testing to ensure that they and their loved ones are protected against COVID-19,” said **Mayor Adams**. “Having at-home test kits available and accessible to the blind and low-vision community will ensure that their health remains a top priority and that they can test in the privacy of their home before coming in contact with others. We thank the CDC for the allotment of these 10,000 more accessible test kits and our partners for helping to distribute them. It’s important we remember that we’re all in this together.”

According to an analysis from New York City Department of City Planning, there are approximately 1 million people across the city that have disclosed having some type of disability, of whom about 200,000 reported having vision difficulty. The Ellume at-home test kits were initially made available to people by the federal government through a White House initiative where individuals could order 12 at-home tests online. Through advocacy from the Mayor’s Office, the CDC sent these at-home test kits directly to New York City. In a robust effort to make at-home COVID-19 tests readily available to every person and community in New York City, the Adams administration will continue to explore avenues for procurement of additional test kits to serve the blind/low-vision community and all New Yorkers.

Along with MOPD, organizations receiving the COVID-19 test kits will be:

- Alphapointe
- Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled
- Bronx Independent Living Services
- Center for Independence of the Disabled of New York
- Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School
- Helen Keller Services for the Blind
- Independence Care System
- Lighthouse Guild
- New York Public Library – Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commission for the Blind
- State University of New York College of Optometry
- VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

“At-home test kits have been and will remain a significant part of our strategy to keep New York City moving and thriving. We must ensure that test kits are available and truly accessible to everyone across the city, and today’s announcement is a step in that direction,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom**. “Based on recent statistics, there are approximately 200,000 New Yorkers who have disclosed that they are blind or have low vision. Those New Yorkers are our partners, our parents, our grandparents, our children, our friends, and our colleagues. They need and deserve access to COVID-19 test kits that will give them the ability to protect their health, the health of their loved ones, and the health of their community. Thank you to the interagency group that led this effort, thank you to our federal partners, and thank you to all the service providers that will distribute these kits in the community.”

“Improving the offering of at-home testing kits that reduce accessibility barriers for people who are blind or have low vision is a step in the right direction,” said **MOPD Commissioner Christina Curry**. “Now, people who are blind or have low vision can privately and independently take precautions against COVID-19 for themselves and their loved ones.”

“Our mission is to make city government work for all New Yorkers, and that is what drives us as we seek to ensure everyone has access to critical resources like these Ellume at-home test kits for those who are blind or have low vision,” said **DCAS Commissioner Dawn M. Pinnock**. “We are pleased that our role in facilitating the delivery of thousands of free COVID-19 at-home test kits can make a difference in so many lives and help protect some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. We thank our partners at the CDC for providing the free test kits and our sister agencies, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and NYC Health + Hospitals, for help coordinating this effort.”

“We are committed to providing all New Yorkers the convenience to get tested in the comfort of their homes and receive immediate access to life-saving treatment by calling 212-COVID-19, 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” said **Ted Long, MD, executive director, NYC Test & Treat Corps; senior vice president, Ambulatory Care and Population Health, NYC Health +**

Hospitals. “That’s why we’ve distributed over 60 million free at-home tests across the city — no matter your location, income, insurance, immigration status, language, or disability. We are proud to work with over 1,200 city and community distribution partners to meet New Yorkers where they are. Delivering 10,000 audible tests designed for people who are blind or have low vision will further that mission and continue to make our city more equitable and safe.”

“New Yorkers have embraced at-home tests as a convenient way to guide their behavior and protect those around them from COVID,” said **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan**. “As a city and a nation, we have a responsibility to match that acceptance with accessibility. This is an important initiative to promote that goal.”

“New York City is committed to centering equity in our ongoing COVID-19 response. Diversity is our strength, and we must meet the unique needs of all New Yorkers,” said **Mayor's Office of Equity Commissioner Sideya Sherman**. “The rollout of these new test kits will ensure that everyone has access to the tools needed to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

To request an accessible at-home test kit, New Yorkers should contact one of the receiving organizations or MOPD by calling 212-788-2830. New Yorkers who are deaf or hard of hearing and use American Sign Language should contact MOPD via ASL Direct at 646-396-5830. A community call via zoom will be made available by MOPD where representatives from H+H/T2 will demonstrate the use of the test kits and answer COVID-19 related questions. To sign up for this call, New Yorkers can [register online](#).

“At this point in my life, I can gain access to everything I need. I have the support and resources that make my life easier. But, when I was younger, as a single person who also happened to be blind and, in a time, when support for the disability community was not what it is today, I struggled a lot,” said **David A. Paterson, former governor of New York and the second blind governor in United States history**. “I was not unique; so many others in the disability community struggled as well. How would we navigate to get to our doctor’s appointment, could we have the independence and privacy that our sighted counterparts enjoyed, and so many other unresolved questions. I am so glad to see that these test kits are coming to New York and will make their way into the hands of people who need them. They will help keep people healthy, safe, and will give people who are blind or have low vision the independence they deserve. Thank you to Mayor Adams and to the Biden-Harris administration for recognizing the need in the disability community, thank you to all the advocates that made this possible, and thank you to our local service providers for getting these kits into the hands of New Yorkers. There is more to do to support the disability community, but today’s announcement is a step in the right direction.”

“We are grateful to the mayor and MOPD for making the audible test kits available to the people we serve every day. Throughout the pandemic the disparities that exist in the disability community have only been more amplified,” said **Brett L. Eisenberg, executive director, Bronx Independent Living Services (BILS)**. “These test kits are vitally important to the health and safety of our community and will allow us to be more confident about our health. BILS

looks forward to continuing to work with MOPD going forward on not only the health and safety of everyone but creating the most inclusive city in the country.”

“We are very pleased to partner with the New York City Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities to provide these accessible COVID-19 at-home test kits to blind and visually impaired New Yorkers. It’s crucial that we ensure full and equal access to all people regarding healthcare and provide equal opportunities for all to live healthy lives, including information that can potentially save lives. The commission appreciates this opportunity to distribute the test kits to those we serve. Thank you to Mayor Adams and his staff for their advocacy,” said **New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commission for the Blind Associate Commissioner Julie Hovey**.

“The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) is very pleased to partner with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities in assisting people with blindness and low vision issues to receive COVID-19 kits. These kits will help properly detect those who are infected with the COVID-19 virus. We are happy to distribute these kits to our consumers who are blind, low vision, and deaf/blind. CIDNY advocates for accessibility, inclusion, and access to appropriate housing, physical healthcare, mental health services, employment, education, transportation, and voting. All people including people with disabilities deserve to know their medical status during this pandemic and these kits afford a person with a visual disability to test independently,” said **Sharon McLennon-Wier, Ph.D., MEd., CRC, LMHC, executive director, CIDNY**.

"We are very appreciative of this distribution of accessible COVID-19 at home test kits. People with disabilities are more likely to be low income and less likely to be working compared to their sighted peers. We are working along with the city to change those disadvantages. Kudos to New York City for getting thousands of test kits so that individuals with vision loss can complete the test independently without requiring help from a sighted person," said **Nancy D Miller, LMSW executive director/CEO, VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired**.

"Testing is an essential part of the effort to beat back COVID-19, but blind and low vision users have been shut out of self-testing until now," said **Joe Rappaport, executive director, Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled (BCID)**. "We applaud the city for getting the tests, and we look to getting them into the hands of community members quickly."

“The importance of accessibility in all aspects of life cannot be understated. We thank Mayor Adams, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and NYC Health + Hospitals/Tests & Treat Corps for enabling Lighthouse Guild to provide more accessible home COVID-19 tests to the community of people we serve,” said **Dr. Calvin W. Roberts, president and CEO, Lighthouse Guild**.

“Helen Keller Services applauds the efforts of Mayor Adams, MOPD, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and the NYC Health & Hospitals/Test & Treat Corp for their advocacy and success in acquiring accessible test kits for residents in New York City who are blind or have low vision. Thank you for making a generous disbursement of these accessible test kits to the community. These kits will have a significant impact on the lives of individuals who

are blind or have low vision who, until now, have struggled with reading their Covid-19 test results; thank you,” said **Sue Ruzenski, CEO, Helen Keller Services for the Blind**.

“As one of the largest employers and providers of rehabilitation services for people who are blind in the nation, Alphapointe is thrilled to partner with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and NYC Health + Hospitals/Test & Treat Corps to ensure that our team members receive these accessible tests,” said **Reinhard Mabry, president and CEO, Alphapointe**. “The pandemic helped to shine a spotlight on the tremendous need for accessibility in virtually all aspects of our lives and this partnership demonstrates a commitment to accessibility for people who are blind or have low vision.”

“In New York City alone, there are approximately 200,000 individuals in the blind and low vision community who are directly adversely impacted by the inaccessibility of home test kits,” said **U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat**. “I am glad to see the city’s utilization of tests that can communicate with a user’s smartphone to provide electronic readouts of their results. This is a great step forward in our ability to ensure COVID-19 resources are more accessible throughout the blind and low vision community. COVID-19 continues to impact our communities and prevention and awareness are imperative in our efforts to control future outbreaks. Today’s announcement helps in our fight to address disparities throughout our communities to provide equitable solutions to help keep all communities healthy and safe.”

“I wholeheartedly support the city’s efforts to increase the availability of COVID-19 tests for people with disabilities such as those who are blind or have low vision,” said **New York State Senator James Sanders Jr.** “It is important that we do not forget vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities who may not easily have access to resources that are readily available to others.”

“Ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to vital medical tools ought to be a top priority for our city,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz**. “Kudos to Mayor Adams and other city leaders for taking this step to ensure that people with low vision or blindness are able to monitor their COVID-19 status and make educated decisions about their day-to-day lives.”

“I am heartened to see New York City step up to lead in at-home healthcare that is accessible for people with blindness or low vision. This action will improve so many lives,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon**. “As COVID testing has become routine across communities, I look forward to more innovative ways to bring equity to healthcare in our city and state.”

“When it comes to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone should have access to the tools they need to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. That includes making tried and true disease control strategies like at-home COVID-19 testing as accessible as possible” said **New York State Assemblymember Al Taylor**. “I applaud the city of New York for making thousands of at-home COVID-19 test kits that are more accessible for those who are blind or have low vision available to the New Yorkers who need them the most. The COVID-19 virus

does not discriminate, and we must continue to offer resources to help all New Yorkers stay healthy and prepared throughout the cold and flu season.”

“A Stanford University study found that 93% of people with vision loss were concerned about access to COVID-19 results data. No data is more important than the health status of ourselves and our loved ones, and all New Yorkers must have access,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar**. “Test kits that provide electronic readouts are one of the most accessible tools for the 200,000 New Yorkers who are blind or have low vision to protect themselves from COVID-19. This distribution is an inclusive, responsive, and user-friendly public health policy that will help us emerge from the pandemic.”

“I would like to applaud Mayor Adams for his advocacy work in extending a White House initiative that with the Centers for Disease Control, saw the delivery of COVID-19 home kits mailed directly to Americans with disabilities,” said **Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson**. “This new distribution of 10,000 COVID-19 test kits to established community-based organizations in New York City, will ensure that these resources get to those who need it the most. I would like to thank Mayor Adams, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and New York City Health + Hospitals/Test & Treat Corps for their work to ensure every New Yorker has access to the necessary tools to stay safe and healthy in our city.”

“At-home COVID-19 tests allow New Yorkers to make the best, most-informed decisions to protect their health and the health of those around them. Residents who are blind or have low vision – and all New Yorkers with disabilities – must be equipped with the resources they need to share in the benefits of this medical technology,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso**. “I’m thrilled that our city will soon receive this huge delivery of COVID-19 tests that are more accessible to those with low vision and look forward to continuing to build pathways of accessibility and inclusion so New Yorkers can be healthy and safe as they enjoy our city.”

“Especially as we head into a cold-weather surge of COVID cases, it’s critical that blind and low vision New Yorkers have test kits they can use,” said **Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine**. “One of the most vital ways to achieve an equitable COVID response is by ensuring widespread accessibility to testing infrastructure, especially for New Yorkers who are blind or low vision, have other physical, sensory or mobility disabilities, or who are immunocompromised.”

“Equity must be at the heart of our recovery from COVID 19. Ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of ability, have equitable access to items as critical as at-home test kits is a major step toward that ultimate goal,” said **Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr.** “I look forward to working with the mayor’s office and all our city and community partners to ensure these tests are accessible for Queens residents.”

“As the city continues to provide all the resources to keep New Yorkers safe from the threat of COVID, I applaud the efforts from the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and the NYC Health + Hospitals/Test & Treat Corps to provide accessible test kits for people who are blind or have low vision,” said **New**

York City Councilmember Linda Lee, chair, Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addictions. “New York City will continue striving to promote the accessibility of its resources and services to ensure that every community receives the best quality care that can save lives and promote healthful living.”

“COVID-19 is the biggest public health crisis of our lifetime and providing access to lifesaving COVID-19 tests for the blind and low vision community is essential to expanding access to equitable healthcare for everyone, said **New York City Councilmember Lynn Schulman, chair, Committee on Health.** “For too long, the disability community has received second-hand treatment by the healthcare community, and this is a good first step to increasing healthcare equity to these New Yorkers.”

“As we move into the post-COVID world, it’s important that we provide testing to all New Yorkers so we can avoid any re-emergence of the virus in the future. Blind and low vision New Yorkers have been at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to at home testing throughout the pandemic, but this new deployment of testing kits will seek to rectify that and provide some real equity to a group that is often forgotten or overlooked. By providing everyone with accurate testing kits, we can further drive down COVID numbers and continue our march into a world in which the virus is not the omnipotent threat it was only one year ago,” said **New York City Councilmember Joann Ariola.**

“I commend Mayor Adams for improving the public health system by expanding access to COVID tests that are designed for use by individuals who are blind or have low vision. Too often people with disabilities are left out of emergency planning and responses,” said **New York City Councilmember Gale A. Brewer.**

“COVID-19 remains a threat for every New Yorker, and I thank the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and the CDC for this incredible initiative on behalf of the blind and low vision community. We must remain vigilant in ensuring that every population in our city, including individuals with disabilities, are as protected as they can be from COVID-19,” said **New York City Councilmember Rita Joseph.**

“Providing all communities with the ability to screen themselves regardless of physical ability is imperative to moving forward at this stage of the pandemic. As the chair of the Subcommittee of Covid-19 Recovery and Resiliency, I believe that providing testing is a key component to slowing down the spread of COVID-19. I am grateful to the CDC for providing these tests to the blind and low vision community in New York City,” said **New York City Councilmember Francisco Moya.**

“Far too often, people with disabilities are an afterthought when it comes to health equity and access,” said **Karen Blachowicz, president, ACB of New York; and Ian Foley, legislative chairman, ACB of New York.** “The American Council of the Blind of New York, the state affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, commends Mayor Adams on behalf of all our members for this important initiative to ensure people who are blind and low vision have access to more accessible at-home COVID-19 tests in their local community.”

“We are thrilled to have access to these audible, at-home COVID-19 tests to support our members with disabilities and chronic health conditions,” said **Regina Martinez-Estela, president and CEO, Independence Care System**. “As the first and only “Health Home” program in New York State with disability-expert staff and programs designed to promote the health and independence of people with disabilities, it’s imperative we provide the necessary support and resources to ensure our members remain healthy and protected against COVID-19. We extend our sincere thanks to Mayor Adams, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, and other agencies for securing these tests to support the most vulnerable population of New Yorkers.”

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