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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. It's a new day in many, many senses. We saw some justice last night. We saw something that represents the beginning and a change. And I think it's fair to say all over the country, there was a sense of relief that justice was finally done. But it's not enough, George Floyd's not here. He should be here. He should be alive. He should be with his family. He should be living his life. And he's not. So, right there we know that it's only some justice. And the changes we need to make are much greater. And this needs to be a moment to really dedicate ourselves, to take the relief and the hope and the sense that maybe things can change, but act on it. And to look at what can really make a change.

Here in this city, we've had a long journey. Changing the relationship between police and community, reforming the police department – we have a lot more to do. I want to be clear. And some approaches will work better than others. But we have learned some things fundamentally. Reforming policing is necessary. It has to be ongoing. It is a task that does not end because there's always more to do. And building a bond between police and community is actually both necessary for peace, but it's also the only way to safety. We can't effectively police without communities being fully involved and engaged and believing that what their police are doing is right. All over the city I've heard for years and years from people, communities of color, working people, immigrants, they want to be protected, but they want it done the right way. They want to be respected. They want to make sure there's no discrimination. And we've made strides in that direction. But we sure have more to do.

That said we've done some things here that I think do work and should be recognized in other places that still have to create fundamental reform. There's no question in my mind that neighborhood policing as a strategy is the way forward. That stronger oversight and transparency works. The things we've done to strengthen the Civilian Complaint Review Board, to make police discipline records available, but even more so recently the discipline matrix, which I think is a model that could have power all over this country. So, everyone knows very, very publicly, very openly, what happens if an officer does something wrong? So, much of what we heard last night was that simple word, accountability. People finally seeing some accountability. It needs to be an everyday thing and that discipline matrix allows for that. Retraining the police force, that

happened here, every single officer after the killing of Eric Garner. What that led to was an understanding that de-escalation has to be the approach always, implicit bias training has to be the approach always. Right now, I think every police officer in America should be retrained to deescalate conflict, to use the minimum of force – not what we've seen in so many horrible videos, the maximum of force, unnecessary force, reckless force. So, the changes that we're making here, I really do think could be the basis of a lot of good other places as well.

And also acknowledging the problem as we did in the recent series of police reforms, acknowledging that there's structural racism in policing that must be weeded out. That work continues. Saying those words and acting on them. And the work we're going to do with our racial justice commission, looking at our whole City government and our laws to recognize where there's institutional racism and very specifically identify it, renounce it, move forward with new laws, new policies. That's the work we're going to have to do every day from now on. So, we never lose another George Floyd. We never have to wait on a jury verdict because the work has been done at the beginning. And there's never a moment like this again. So, we feel relief. We feel hope, but I feel resolve and I hope we all feel resolve to do a lot more to build from this moment.

Okay. Let's talk about what we talk about every single day. How would we bring this city back and the crucial role of vaccination in bringing this city back? Again, everyone, I want you to take this personally, you can help bring back New York City. You can be part of our recovery through the simple act of getting vaccinated. To all of the people out there have been waiting for a moment where it got easier. That's this moment right now. It's easy now. Literally – it's easy to get an appointment, go to nyc.gov/vaccinefinder, or you can call 8-7-7-VAX-4NYC. You get an appointment quickly. It's the best it's ever been. And more and more we're using the walkup approach. Currently it's for folks 50 years old and older, at 30-plus City vaccination sites. We're looking to expand that effort. And we'll have more to say on that soon. But what could be easier than just walking in and getting the shot? We're going to have more and more sites near where you live, more and more pop-up sites at houses of worship and public housing. It's going to be easier and easier. And we're taking the vaccine to you, the bus. The vaccine bus is on the move. It'll be in Chinatown the next days. And then after that in Astoria, Queens. And the vaccine bus is the kind of approach that we're really excited about because anything that brings the vaccine to the people, makes it easy, makes it visible is helpful. So, this is one of the approaches we're going to use more and more. So, as we continue to move forward, we're going to continue to innovate and make vaccination as easy and convenient as possible. To date 5,890,423 doses have been given. That's extraordinary. And that work continues every single day.

Okay. Now let's talk about the really big picture, where we go from here. When we talk about recovery for all of us, it has to be about our future. It has to be a recovery that means we are protecting all New Yorkers from a host of challenges and making the city strong and sustainable for the future. So of course, I'm going to talk again about the climate crisis. This week, especially as we get ready for Earth Day tomorrow, we're thinking about the climate. And this is what we're going to be thinking about for years and years. COVID is going to recede, it's going to be less and less of what we think about by the end of this year. More and more of our attention is going to go into climate, where it needs to be. So, all week we're talking about the future, the future is

renewable energy. And the future is doing things we have not done before and challenging ourselves to go places that we haven't gone before.

So, today we're going to make a major advance in developing geothermal power right here in New York City. Literally power from the Earth, right beneath us, that's going untapped, that we have to get to. Because we need every form of renewable energy we can get our hands on. We have to strand the fossil fuels in the ground because they are a danger to us. We need every conceivable form of renewable energy and some of it's right here. New York City has succeeded in building geothermal systems for individual buildings. You want examples? P.S. 62 on Staten Island, FDNY Rescue Company 2 in Brooklyn. There are buildings that are right now benefiting from geothermal power and that's wonderful. But we're just scratching the surface. We need to make geothermal power a big part of what we do going forward. It has to reach tens of thousands of New Yorkers, ultimately hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in combination with wind and solar and hydro, all of the things that will give us a green future.

And by the way, as I talk about green, I will always say, I am a firm believer in the Green New Deal. We have started our own New York City Green New Deal. And the Green New Deal includes a lot of jobs as we create that renewable energy. Paris right now has developed geothermal systems that serve over 40,000 Parisians. Toronto has a system that reaches about 180 buildings. America needs to catch up. It needs to invest in this possibility and New York City is going to lead the way. So, we're launching a pilot program right away to identify the best sites for large-scale geothermal energy in this city. And we believe that we could have as many as 130,000 buildings that could benefit from this approach. Thousands of blocks in the city that could benefit from this approach. And it means turning on geothermal and turning off gas boilers and traditional air conditioners, and saving hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in a lot of buildings – that's a big, big deal. And we take away all the greenhouse gas emissions in the process.

So, we're going to work with the City Council to pursue legislation to give New York City the authority we need to do this, so we can operate these larger geothermal systems. This is part of the future and it's really amazing that it's gone untapped this long. But if we feel urgency right now, we can do something amazing here. Just like we talked about yesterday, we're doubling down our commitment to hydropower and we're doing a lot to help in the development of solar and wind. If we just fire on all those cylinders, we can have a very different city and a very different country and a very different earth. And that's what we should commit ourselves to as we look forward to Earth Day tomorrow.

Okay. Now, our recovery for all of us certainly means bringing back every facet of this city, the life, the energy, the vibrancy – of course, the jobs. And we have been, throughout the last months, talking about all the things we're bringing back – arts and culture, flourishing again in New York City. It's really exciting to see it grow before our eyes. Sports is back. Outdoor dining and indoor dining. So many things are moving forward in this city. And, obviously, our schools open, and we're looking forward to every child being back in school in September. These are all the building blocks of bringing back this city, but another important piece has been missing. And you're starting to see that change, and we want to supercharge that change – we want to bring tourism back. Tourism has been an important part of life in this city, an important part of our

economy. Hundreds of thousands of jobs depend on tourism. And think about it, think about the taxi driver who benefits from tourism, think about the folks who work in our hotels, think about the restaurant workers, think about everyone in the cultural community, Broadway and the museums, all the places that get so many of their customers from tourism. We want them all to thrive again. It's not going to happen overnight, we know that. But it will happen, I don't have any doubt at all. 400,000 jobs connected to tourism before the pandemic, they will come back. We are absolutely certain that New York City will get all our jobs back and then proceed to set new records for jobs, going forward.

But these things don't happen on their own, so we have to make sure we spark it and we energize this effort. So, today, we're going to spark our economic recovery with a new \$30 million marketing campaign to bring back the tourists and to bring back all that they do to invest in this city to bring back the jobs. The campaign's called New York City Reawakens – and that's exactly what's happening. I'll tell you, when I go around this city, people keep commenting on how they see more and more activity, more and more energy. New York city is reawakening. We need to celebrate it. We need to let people know we're open for business. It's safe. Come here, join this amazing moment. Come to this city that's been so heroic during this crisis. This'll be the largest-ever campaign to promote tourism in New York City. And it will remind people, this is the place to be. There's no place else like it in the world. It's the greatest city in the world for a reason and you can experience so many amazing things here. We're going to remind people and they will come back. If we build it, they will come – that's my quote of the day.

I want you to hear from the man who's spearheading this effort. He's done amazing work. Throughout the course of this administration, I've admired the work of Fred Dickson, leading NYC & Company, helping us set all-time records for tourism, because of his amazing efforts and his team, letting the world know why New York City is so special. Their messages have been heard literally in every corner of the world and they will be again. My pleasure introduce the CEO of NYC & Company, Fred Dickson.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Fred. And, Fred, seriously, what you and your team had done for years, you don't get many chances to hear our appreciation. You just do the work and you've brought in millions and millions of tourists to the city. And so many people have thrived so many businesses, so many jobs because of the work that you and your team. So, I just want to thank you on behalf of 8.5 million New Yorkers for such successful efforts. And this is a great example – you know exactly what to do, because you've proven it year after year. You now have the resources to go out there and I don't have a doubt in my mind that, yeah, there's a lot of competition, there's a lot of great places to go – there's only one New York City. And the more people get reminded, the more they're going to come right here. So, thank you, Fred to you and your team for all you're doing.

All right. Now, what does it mean? What does it mean to bring tourism back? Well, we wanted you to hear from someone who really understands this very personally. He is in New York City legend – I don't think that's too strong a term. And he has thrived in the city and he has built businesses and he is employed so many people. And yeah, a lot of New Yorkers enjoy the

amazing work he does, but people come literally from all over the world. And so, I thought if you're going to understand the power of bringing back tourism, what it means to the city, let's hear from someone who has been beloved and for whom tourists travel a long, long way to experience his magical restaurants. My pleasure to introduce the legendary chef, Daniel Boulud.

[...]

Mayor: Chef, I want to tell you, I really appreciate your just total belief in this city, and I've seen it so many times, and I love it. And I remember when we were together last year at the ribbon cutting for the One Vanderbilt building right next to grand central station. And I was really struck when you spoke, because you talked about the new restaurant there in the building that you're opening this year, and you said it with certainty. It was at a very tough moment. It was, you know, last year at a really tough time. And I was so happy that One Vanderbilt was opening, but your hope and your certainty gave me hope. And I want to thank you for just being so fantastically committed to New York City.

David Boulud: Mr. Mayor, in about a month we are opening Le Pavillon, the new restaurant at One Vanderbilt and [inaudible] that will also initiate the fact that tourists want to come back to discover this restaurant and many other restaurants. I have colleagues opening small restaurants and I hear that there are chefs coming to New York City who want to open restaurants. So, New York City has always attracted young talent and always attracted creativity and ambition. And I think anyone with ambitious and creative should join us in New York City because it's going to be exciting.

Mayor: Chef, I have one more question. When I have the joy of visiting you and Le Pavillon is open, what is the number-one thing I should eat from that menu?

Boulud: Vegetable. We're going to have a vegetable-centric menu, but also seafood. Local vegetables, and, of course, local seafood. We're in the most amazing coast for seafood here in New York. And so, there'll be a focus on that. And, of course, some other wonderful items like some beautiful meat. But vegetables and seafood will be the focus – that keeps you healthy, happy, [inaudible] by being you know, New York-centric with ingredients. And making the local farmers and the local fishermen work also.

Mayor: That's beautiful. Well, Chef, thank you. I look forward to joining you there. And congratulations to you. And thank you for joining us today, because your enthusiasm is always infectious. So, it's great to share it with the people of New York City. Thank you so much, Chef. *Merci beaucoup.*

All right. Now, I want to bring up one more guest to talk about this effort. And he's put so much energy into helping to build up jobs in the city and to make sure the City economy worked for everyone. He's been the Chair of the Economic Development committee in New York City, and he's worked really closely with NYC & Company. But I also want to thank him, because of everything he's done in public service, and his whole family. This is two generations of the Vallone family have done so much for New York City. And again, I like to give credit where credit's due, this is a family that's given their all – three generations, I'm sorry. Your grandfather

as well, Paul – three generations of the Vallone family have done so much for this city. And it's a beautiful story, and you have continued that story so well. So, my pleasure to introduce Council Member Paul Vallone.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you, council member, and you have made it official today, yes, that the Knicks are actually going to be in the playoffs. So, all things are possible. I think this is the greatest affirmation in the world. Never give up. If at once you don't succeed, try, try again, look at those Knicks. So, thank you so much, council member. There you go.

All right. Now as every day, let's go to indicators and again today again, we're all going to put all the disclaimers on. We got a long way to go. We got a lot of work to do, but again, today we see some good news. So, here are the indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report 162 patients. Again, well below the threshold. Confirmed positivity, 52.69 percent. Hospitalization rate per 100,000, 2.64. So, we keep moving that rate down. We want to get below two and we're making progress. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report, 2,063 cases. So again, nice steady downward line there. We like to look at that. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19 on a seven-day rolling average, today's report 4.83 percent. Now several days below the threshold, we want to keep driving downward, but these are definitely good signs. Okay. I'm going to say a few words now in Spanish, going to go back to the efforts to bring back tourism strong in this city.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Good morning. We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we are joined by Dr. Mitchell Katz, President and CEO of Health + Hospitals, Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma, and Ben Furnas, Director of Mayor's Office of Climate and Sustainability. First up, we have Juan Manuel from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Juan Manuel, how are you doing today?

Question: Very good. Thank you. Regarding your announcement on tourism, what do you think the city should do when it comes to tourists visiting the city? Should they bring – and I know that this is that this might be a State decision, but do you think these tourists coming to the city should bring a negative test or they should be already vaccinated or would the city now that so many New Yorkers are already vaccinated, should the city – would the city start an effort to provide vaccines to people visiting New York City?

Mayor: Good questions. I'll try and keep it simple. Look I think what's obvious is a lot of tourism is already being driven by people who have gotten vaccinated, by folks – that's the number one I think of what's happening here. And obviously I think a lot of people are being smart if they haven't yet been vaccinated to get tested. That's certainly what we want to see to the maximum extent possible, get vaccinated wherever you are. It's a great door opener to travel. As for our ability to serve people here, look, we still have a lot of people to serve right here in this city. As you know, folks have been getting vaccinated in New York City from the suburbs, from Connecticut, from New Jersey from the very beginning. So that's not a news flash. It's a good question, how we want to handle and support tourists going forward. I'm hoping we'll have the ability to do that, but right now job one is to focus on the millions of New Yorkers who still need to get vaccinated. That's the best thing for everyone. Go ahead, Juan Manual.

Question: And are you getting worried at the fact that right now it's so easy to get a vaccine and you still have a lot of New Yorkers that apparently are not getting an appointment or they're [inaudible] going to one of those sites, if they're over 50, and walking in and getting vaccinated? Is it given the fact that we are still getting at least 2,000 cases, that's the seven-day average of new cases? Are you concerned that maybe there are some New Yorkers right now that they just don't want to get the shot?

Mayor: I'd say a couple of different things, Juan Manual, so right now, as of today, we've got about 3.2 million adults in this city who have received at least one dose. I think people have received one dose, obviously overwhelmingly are going to get the second dose. I think a lot more people are now coming forward to get vaccinated who haven't been vaccinated yet at all, because it's getting easy, finally. This is a really new phenomenon, you know, a week ago or a little more, it was really, really hard to get an appointment. So, we've only gone a matter of days where it's finally easy to get an appointment, and we're seeing that that is helping a lot of people to finally come forward. The outreach efforts where everything we try, we find works, more grassroots sites works, door to door works, not having the need to have an appointment, just walk up, works. We're just going to apply those approaches more and more and more. So, there's plenty of people out there that we can and will reach. I'm very, very confident we'll be able to get a lot more people. And the fact that it's easier is going to actually help us a lot. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we have Jeff Mays from the New York Times.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'm not sure I appreciate your Knicks jokes, all right –

Mayor: Wait, wait, Jeff, that was affirmational.

Question: Didn't sound that way to me, didn't sound that way to me –

Mayor: I mean – okay, let me clarify, Jeff, this will not count as a question. I just need to say this. I actually am saying it with respect. We all know that history has not smiled on the recent New York Knicks, but this year's team is earning it. I'm tipping my cap, there a real thing.

Question: That's right.

Mayor: I want to let – I'm glad you gave me an opportunity to clarify, Jeff.

Question: All right, good. Thank you. Appreciate that. May I have a question on behalf of one of my colleagues, the NYPD just cleared the officer who killed Kawasaki Trawick even though that officer failed to follow the de-escalation training that you have advocated for and cited as an example of police reform, do you think that training does any good when there are no consequences for failing to follow that training?

Mayor: Jeff, I want to answer with the facts in front of me, and I don't want a – deep respect for you, but I don't want to accept those assumptions. I want to get briefed, and then I'll be happy to give you a fuller answer. To the bigger question, does de-escalation training have an impact? It has a massive impact. When you look at the last years how many situations officers have de-escalated in that they would not have before if they hadn't had the training, it's very striking. And again, we all are obviously affected by tragedies and individual instances, but I'm talking about 35,000 officers, 365 days a year, you know, working with 8.5 million people in this city, de-escalation training has had a massive impact. And if you look at use of force, and these two concepts are related, training to avoid unnecessary use of force, gun discharges have gone down constantly in recent years to the point that they're really minimal in this city, thank God. So – by officers, I mean – so I do believe this training is very high impact. For this specific case, let me get a briefing and then I'll come back to you on that. Go ahead, Jeff.

Question: Thank you. I just want to follow up on policing, especially after the verdict in the George Floyd trial. I mean, Mr. Mayor, you've been very vocal about some of these killings and other police involved killings in other jurisdictions. You condemned the death of George Floyd. You call Daunte Wright's death unbelievable. But at the same time, New York City has continued to suffer similar incidents where civilians are killed by police. I'm wondering if you could get towards the end of your term from, do you believe you've moved the needle at all to end discriminatory policing, and I'm wondering what advice would you give to your successor in order to help address this issue further?

Mayor: Yeah, again, Jeff, I would say the way you opened up that question, I don't think we're like other places at this point. I really don't. Have we had some horrible situations? Absolutely. But what we're seeing in these videos from around the country are things that represent that the fact that there's not – obviously not training in de-escalation, there's not training in using minimal force or there's poor supervision or whatever it is. The standards here are very different. We do not have some of these tragedies we've seen other places. We still have a lot of work to do. But I do think this has become a very different place for a lot of reasons, and we also have to remember, again, the scale, 8.5 million people, 35,000 officers, every single day the things that actually do go right because of the right training, the right supervision, the right standards, the right oversight. I want to give credit to that, but have we moved the needle? Unquestionably.

The police force today is much more diverse than it was in terms of its composition. The leadership is much more diverse and will be more and more in the years ahead. We have the discipline matrix. We have a stronger CCRB. We have a fully retrained police force in de-escalation and implicit bias and reduced use of force. There's so many things that have changed.

I'm always a little amazed, Jeff – I know your question is very earnest – but I'm amazed that these big structural changes occur and they're somehow hard for the sort of public discourse to take in. I know – I've heard from everyday people. They see the changes. I mean, obviously it began with ending stop and frisk, and I would hear constantly from young people in their families what a difference that made. But, you know, we changed the approach to marijuana arrest years ago. So many fewer arrests in 2019, 180,000 fewer arrests than the last year of Bloomberg. I mean, that's a lot of people who did not end up going into the criminal justice system. You know, we've massively reduced incarceration. These are the kinds of changes we had to make, and we've made them and we got more to do, but this stuff moves the needle. There's no question about it.

Moderator: Next. We have Sydney from Gothamist.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to follow up on what you spoke about yesterday, I believe with the switch to Moderna for the Homebound Vaccination Program, and I – my understanding is the mobile vaccine bus will also be using Moderna until we learn more about what will happen with the Johnson & Johnson option. And I'm wondering how has the city expanding the cold chain around that? Basically, just the storage systems to make that – those programs work with Moderna and has the city purchased the ultra-cold portable coolers that were used to transport vaccines in West Africa?

Mayor: Dr. Katz or Dr. Varma who wants that one?

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals: I'm happy to start, sir, just to clarify that with Moderna vaccine while you have to keep it frozen storage while waiting, if you're going to use it within six hours, it does not require that intense, frozen storage. So, we're able to take a vial, plan the number of visits we're going to have within a six-hour period, and use all of the vaccine and therefore not require the super freezer procedures. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you. Sydney, does that answer your question?

Question: I think so. I guess I'm just wondering like how the switch to Moderna is happening given there was so much talk around how Moderna and Pfizer were just not an option before, and we were waiting on Johnson & Johnson, So, I'm just kind of wondering how –

Mayor: Yeah, I got it now. I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Varma. I think I'm getting this right as a layman, but Dr. Varma will be my expert witness here. Sydney, I think Johnson & Johnson is more usable, the refrigeration issue, but most especially the one shot and that made it particularly helpful for the homebound program, and still, we hope will. Again, because we still anticipate by the end of the week, getting some guidance that will allow us to use it again with whatever appropriate, you know, warnings or restrictions. But I want to tell you, I was up in a Co-Op City in the Bronx, and I was talking to folks when we opened up that center there, that vaccination center who came, it was really striking to me. These are exactly the folks we wanted to reach. Working class folks, city employees, everyday New Yorkers, overwhelmingly people of color, and a number of folks in individual conversations said to me, oh, I'm here because it's one dose. I didn't want to deal with two doses. I just wanted to get it once and get it out of the way. And the

Johnson & Johnson actually turned out to be a real selling point there. So, I think it's really valuable as a tool because it's easier, but also because it's going to be more appealing to people. And for the homebound, it's just immensely better to not have to come back a second time because it takes so much effort to do the homebound, and it's so much better for the folks involved just to get at once. Jay, you want to add?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah, I would just add, just to give Sydney a little bit more technical information, you know, there have been some changes in the way Moderna vaccine needs to be handled, what we refer to as un-punctured vials and they can be stored at refrigeration temperatures for up to 30 days and don't require that ultra-cold storage. So, the main challenge has been that, you know, we designed our homebound program according to the J&J requirements. Because of course it is much more flexible overall not just the single dose, but also the routine storage and handling, and so it did take us a little while to adjust our procedures to manage how we're going to administer the Moderna vaccine. But we are able to do that now, and I hope to continue to increase the numbers regularly.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next, we have Shant from Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Shant, how you been?

Question: I'm doing well, doing well. I just want to pick up from, from where Jeff left off just in the vein of police accountability you've been discussing. So, yesterday a Manhattan judge gave a possible start date for a judicial inquiry into Eric Garner's death. City lawyers have been pushing to get the judge to throw out the case. So, I guess I want to ask how can New Yorkers take your comments about police accountability now seriously, when you're trying to get an inquiry into Eric Garner's death dismissed?

Mayor: Shant, this is about, you know, a case that obviously was acted on by the City of New York, where there was accountability, and I think the fact that that accountability happened is what matters here. It didn't happen from the U.S. Justice Department, which is something that continues to frustrate me, but it did happen here with the NYPD's process. So, I think the fact is that the Law Department believes that the issues have been addressed and we're moving forward.

Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah, so thanks for that. I mean, I understand you may be called upon to testify if the case is allowed to proceed, would you be willing to do so?

Mayor: Again, Shant, this is something I defer to the Law Department on, but I think there's a longstanding belief that there has to be a very, very careful approach to if and when a mayor ever gets involved in a court case. There are lawsuits and court actions hourly directed at the City of

New York, and the Law Department's very wise assumption is that it's very, very rare if ever that a mayor gets involved in testimony. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we have Yehudit from Boro Park 24.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good. How are you doing today?

Question: Good. Thank you. So, in Borough Park, there are low vaccination rates, partly because a great part of our population are young children, but also because there are WhatsApp messages, robocalls and flyers circulating with vaccine misinformation. I was wondering whether you, Dr. Varma, or Dr. Katz have any specific plans to fight fire with fire and provide more accurate information with accurate, reassuring, positive, encouraging vaccine information on WhatsApp, robocalls, and flyers, and also perhaps getting local rabbis and community leaders to help spread the message?

Mayor: I think that's a very, very important point, and I'm going to turn to Dr. Katz, who has spent a lot of time talking to leaders and members of the Orthodox community and who is a proud son of Brooklyn who's had a lot of personal connection to the community, and I think you're right. We've got to do more. We saw this with measles a couple of years ago, a lot of misinformation, we got to fight back the misinformation. The way we did it then was with community voices and with healthcare professionals from the community. So, I think it's time to do that again. Dr. Katz, you want to speak to that?

President Katz: Yes, sir. Thank you so much. I appreciate the question and the sentiment behind it. The rabbinic has been very responsible. In fact, they've censored some of their own members who suggested that vaccines were not a good idea, because of a basic tenant of Judaism is protection of life, and protection of your community in the vaccine does both of those things. So, I think the overwhelming view of rabbis is that this is a very important intervention to have and we'll, following what the Mayor has said, we will double our efforts to counter the misinformation. Thank you.

Mayor: Go ahead, Yehudit.

Question: Thank you, and then also I think it was a few weeks ago, you introduced a city cleanup project city wide, and you talked about communities initiating their own cleanup projects. I was just wondering if you could be specific on the types of cleanup projects you had in mind that you would want communities to initiate or that other communities have done?

Mayor: Yeah, obviously we've got the City Cleanup Corps coming, which will go all over the city and work with community groups, and, you know, do everything from pick up litter to remove graffiti and create murals and a whole host of things. But we also see community groups just doing their own cleanups and we want to support them and work with them whether it means connecting them with the Cleanup Corps as it grows, or sometimes Sanitation Department supporting those efforts. A lot of people are just pitching in and there's tremendous energy and

recognition that, you know, cleaning up as part of our renewal and part of our moving forward. So, definitely community groups that want to work with us, we want to connect them with the Cleanup Corps, connect them with Sanitation Department. Help them make things happen.

Moderator: Next, we have Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

Mayor: I am doing well, Henry, how are you?

Question: I'm doing okay. You seem to be in a much happier frame of mind these days.

Mayor: Well, there's a lot of good stuff happening and a lot of people are working together. Those are the kinds of things that make me happy, Henry.

Question: All right, well, that's a reasonable response. On the tourism front, the challenges to the tourism industry are not to be underestimated, I'm sure you realize that. One of the major problems that hotels face is actually paying their property tax bills when their effective occupancy rate is so low, much lower than it takes to actually break even. They've been asking the administration for a moratorium on paying their property tax and avoiding the 18 – the enormous – I'm not sure what the interest rate, it's very high, it's like paying a credit card bill – you are late on your property taxes and so far they have not had any success in persuading the administration about this. So, where does the administration stand on giving these hotels property tax relief, or at least the moratorium on paying this bill and certainly not paying the interest rate on the late payment of the tax?

Mayor: Yeah. Henry look, I'll make it simple. We're certainly talking with industry. We're looking at ways that we can be helpful, but we're also mindful that we got to keep moving the city forward and that, you know, what we do with one industry, you know, we have to think about parallels with other industries. So, this one's not, you know, just to sort of snap your fingers. We have to think about this one some more, but we are talking to the industry. We do hear their concern and we'll have more to say on it, you know, in a little while. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Second question I have is that, you know, there is this proposal going around the City, that the City should spend a billion dollars giving the 500,000 most needy individuals in the city, a \$1000 a year, or actually it's \$2000 a year. Now it would amount to a payment of about \$167 a month to these individuals. This is a proposal that's been raised by the person who's currently leading in the public opinion polls to be the next mayor of New York City. How do you feel, you know, as someone who was made income inequality a major issue in your career, how do you feel about the proposal of giving people \$167 a month to somehow address this issue of income inequality?

Mayor: Look, I think it's a good conversation for the city to have. What I would say is I am most focused on the most structural ways of addressing poverty. I think it is about guaranteeing higher wages, which is why I was an early supporter of the fight for \$15 minimum wage. It is about reducing burdens on people to a much higher level than that would achieve, for example, giving

families free 3-K and Pre-K, which takes, you know, on average about \$10,000 per child of costs off of a family for each grade level free after-school programs, which we deepened quite a bit things like paid sick days. I mean, there's so many other things I think are structural that I would put the focus on that there's a lot more work to be done on, and obviously EITC is another great tool. So, I that's my first instinct. I think with any UBI approach, the question has to be sustainability and also, you know, is there an even stronger structural fix that would achieve a bigger impact for those families? Those are the questions I would ask.

Moderator: We have time for two more questions today. Next we have Medina from Politico.

Question: Alright. Hi, everyone. How's it going?

Mayor: Good, Medina. How you been?

Question: I'm good. I'm good. Thanks. So, my first question, since you're opening this geothermal pilot, would you support Bruce Teitelbaum's proposal to bring a green energy hub, including geothermal, at the Amazon site? The one that was meant to be built in Queens?

Mayor: We are looking – I don't know everything about that proposal, Medina, but I can say that what we're looking for in terms of a center to focus on climate and to create solutions and advocacy and research is really Governor's Island. I'm very, very excited and we're seeing a lot more on that in the coming months.

The site that was the Amazon site, I've heard different pieces about, but what we want to make sure in all development always is that any development supports things like job creation for the community, open space for the community. Sometimes it's obviously public schools and new amenities and obviously first and foremost affordable housing. So, that's how we're judging any proposal. I haven't seen that proposal lately, but that's how we're judging every proposal. Go ahead, Medina.

Question: Alright. So, one of the mayoral candidates, Kathryn Garcia called on you today to expand the City's organics recycling program and make it permanent and mandatory. Could you respond to that? Is that something you would consider doing or supporting?

Mayor: We're going to be speaking more about organics in the coming days? Look, I think the ideal is to have us deepen all of our efforts at recycling and at organics, and obviously we really believe in getting to zero waste to landfill, and this is something that I think Kathryn Garcia did really great work on as our Sanitation Commissioner for seven years, and so we're going to be talking about that soon, how we build again toward those goals. I think the question of mandatory to me is a challenging one in terms of what we can ask of people and what's going to work, but we're looking at all those issues right now and we're going to come out with some updates soon.

Moderator: Our last question for today goes to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Mayor: Wait, he's almost here.

Question: Hello?

Mayor: Hello, how are you?

Question: Hi, Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, good.

Question: Okay. I would like to know the – New York State – undocumented immigrants will get some stimulus. Is there any plan in New York City for when the program will start?

Mayor: Great question. We're working on that right now, and we got to get you an update on the exact way it's going to be implemented. The State Legislature has been given a lot of credit lately. It is all deserved to Carl Heastie and Andrea Stewart-Cousins, because this was a very important decision on their part to help our fellow New Yorkers who are undocumented. This is really going to help a lot of families who are our neighbors. So, I'm really appreciative of it. But how it's going to work. We will have updates on that soon, and we can update you. Go ahead, Abu.

Question: And then any update of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

Mayor: Okay, I'll start, and I'll turn to Dr. Varma. From what I understand, Abu, I think that the greatest likelihood is by the end of this calendar week, some kind of guidance from the federal government, and I think it'll be either some warnings or maybe some age restrictions, but what it will say to us, I'm hoping, and I believe is that we can use Johnson & Johnson widely. Again, we certainly would greatly benefit from having it back as part of our effort to reach so many more New Yorkers. That's what I think, I'm not guaranteeing that, but that's just what I think the tea leaves are telling us, but you'll now hear a more educated response from Dr. Varma.

Senior Advisor Varma: Well, Mr. Mayor, I think you actually summarized it quite well. The CDC Advisory Committee is meeting tomorrow to discuss the latest updates on this, and we are hopeful that they will make a recommendation to continue using the vaccine, potentially either with increased education of people, so that during their informed consent process, they know about potential risks or possibly with some restrictions based on either age or gender. We have heard recently this past week that the European Medicines Agency has gone forward with permitting the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to be used, with only additional education of people receiving the vaccine. So, we are hopeful that we'll get more information by the end of this week and they can restart using it where appropriate.

Mayor: Excellent. Thank you, Dr. Varma, and listen, as we conclude, I think the key point again is, you know, we have, for the first time, a wonderful reality in this city where anyone who wants to get vaccinated can get it quickly and easily. I remember during all those months where people were struggling to get appointments, the many valid questions, the frustrations, you know, people were saying, oh my God, it's so hard to get an appointment. This is really difficult, and they were right, and we all worked together to maximize the supply and get the freedom to

vaccinate from the State and set up more and more vaccination centers, and then we got to that very good day last week, where it started to get easy to appointments, and I, for one I'm really, really happy about that, because I think that will bring in hundreds of thousands of folks who were waiting for it to get easier and needed it to be a little bit easier, and from there more and more people will keep reaching them at the grassroots, and that's going to continue to build this recovery. So, everyone, do your part. If you haven't yet done it now is the perfect time, go out and get vaccinated.

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