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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: You know, every day I talk about the people of this city and the extraordinary job all of you have done fighting back the coronavirus. And, generally, we've been able to give you really good news because people have done what we needed, what all of us needed. We've had an infection rate at one percent or lower for weeks and weeks. Literally, one of the safest places in the entire country when it comes to the coronavirus. That's the good news that we've seen that extraordinary consistency. And when we had a few problems in some neighborhoods around the five boroughs, we were able to act on it quickly. Neighborhoods responded and we saw things resolve. But now, we have a bigger problem on our hands. We talked about it yesterday, but we've got a lot more information in the last 24 hours. And the situation particularly in Southern Brooklyn is causing a lot of concern here. We have a lot to do because we're seeing a serious uptick in multiple neighborhoods simultaneously. And it's something we have to address with a very aggressive public health effort right away. And truly want to be clear, this is something that can be addressed. We have the tools and the measures. We need a lot of cooperation from all the neighborhoods involved, but I want to be very clear. This is something that requires urgent action.

So, yesterday we spoke about some of the neighborhoods, including Midwood, Borough Park, and Bensonhurst. We see now that this constitutes a larger cluster. We're calling it the "Ocean Parkway Cluster" – a series of neighborhoods one after another. We're also seeing upticks in some other neighborhoods, Williamsburg, Kew Gardens, and Edgemere, Far Rockaway. All of these places are areas of concern. When you take all those neighborhoods together, they now make up about 20 percent of the cases, confirmed positive coronavirus cases in New York City. This is something, again, we're going to address immediately. We have been working with community leaders and institutions for weeks a week, but now we're going to greatly increase our on the ground education efforts and enforcement efforts to address this situation. And I want to be clear this, again, can be addressed effectively. We need everyone to be a part of it. And if there are particular institutions, organizations, businesses that are not being responsive to the need to protect everyone, we're going to be clear about the enforcement needed there. My hope is that everyone will work together to address this problem.

So, here's what we need to be particularly careful about, any large indoor gatherings, any large indoor gatherings, that's the place of greatest concern. We need to address those. So, of course, the Health Department leading the way, our Test and Trace Corps, lots of different parts of the City government involved in this effort. But because there will be a need to have an enforcement element, the Sheriff's Office will be involved, NYPD will be involved as well. So, this situation will lead to immediate actions today. And to give you a sense of the strategy, both what's been

unfolding in this strategy over the last few weeks, and what's going to happen now in the coming days, I want to turn to one of the leaders of all of our efforts to fight the coronavirus and someone who knows the communities of Brooklyn well, very personally, the CEO of Health + Hospitals, Dr. Mitch Katz.

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you so much for all the support you've provided to the public hospital system. We are very, very grateful. I'm so distressed by the large increase in COVID infections in these four neighborhoods, including the Ocean Parkway area, which is where I grew up, where I went to synagogue, where my brother currently lives. We want to be sure that the message is getting out and reaching those who need to hear it. Our engagement through the Test and Trace Corps has been extensive. We've talked to community leaders, physicians, elected officials, and residents. Here's what we're doing in the neighborhoods that are most affected. We've called the leading physicians in Crown Heights to improve outreach plans in that community and drive home our messages about physical distancing, wearing a face covering, staying home if you're sick, practicing good health and hygiene. We've made over 200,000 robo-calls to Borough Park, Bensonhurst, Borough Park, Midwood, Crown Heights, Williamsburg, Forest Hills, and the Rockaways.

We've distributed thousands of pieces of COVID information material to these neighborhoods. We've distributed over 13,000 masks across Borough Park, Bensonhurst, Williamsburg, Brighton Beach, and Flushing. We've placed nearly 60 newspaper ads in community papers to get the word out. We've talked to 20 synagogues in Borough Park and Bensonhurst and shared palm cards and 10,000 masks. Moving forward we're going to do even more. We're going to continue to meet with high-level religious community members. We'll be doing robo-calls in Yiddish and English. We will engage businesses and affected neighborhoods to deliver masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and palm cards. We will engage community-serving providers in isolation, quarantine, close contacts, and reporting requirements. There will be sound trucks going through neighborhoods with the major messages. We know that there are four simple ways to prevent COVID from being spread – stay home if you're sick, physical distancing, wearing a face covering, and practicing hand hygiene.

And I want to add a little bit of a very personal note. My father-in-law died two nights ago in Israel from COVID. And I know many of us have lost people that we love. And then the added burden of this is that then we can't engage in the usual rights that we would engage in at times that are really hard, like bringing large numbers of people together for a funeral. We weren't able to do that for him. It had to be a very small service in Israel. These things are extremely hard but they're what's necessary for us to get through COVID. In the absence of our doing the right thing, we will need to be in a lockdown type situation as occurred in Israel because they haven't been able to control the spread of the virus. I spoke to my mother-in-law this morning. She can't even be with her own other son because of the lockdown. We don't want that. We want people to wear masks. We want them to stay apart, to not have any large gatherings because we don't want to, again, have to close down businesses. We don't want to have to have more restrictions. There are easier ways for us to go on with our lives. So, thank you again, Mr. Mayor, for all you've done.

Mayor: Thank you. And, Mitch, I just want to say for all of us here as at City Hall, offer my condolences to you and your family. So much happening, and you've been in the lead of the effort to fight the coronavirus in the city for months and months, but it's so sad to remember that this horrible disease keeps coming home to so many families, including your own. So, my condolences to you, and thank you for expressing, in very personal and passionate terms, to the people of the city, why we need to get this right and why we need to protect everyone. So, again, you will see a very intensive effort over these next days in these next weeks, with the goal of all working together to push back this disease and make sure everyone is safe.

Now, obviously, what we're talking about today in terms of fighting the disease, it's a painful topic and it's going to require, you know, very dedicated focused actions to get us through. But as we know about this pandemic, it is hitting us on so many levels at once. So, many crises wrapped within the bigger crisis. And one of them, of course, is the challenge this city faces because of the economic crisis, because of the budget crisis. We have to keep taking actions to address this situation. None of them are pleasant. None of them are things we would want to do at all in normal times. And we're going to work hard to get past this so that people don't have to suffer. But, unfortunately, right now, further action is needed in terms of the City's budget. Last week, I announced furloughs for officials of the Mayor's Office, myself included. Today, another furlough action. And it's – again, it's a difficult one because it will affect real people and their lives. It will affect their families. And these are people who've been working nonstop for months, trying to protect all of you and look out for the whole city.

It's something very sad when the people who have worked this hard have to then sacrifice further, but that's what it's called of all of us [inaudible] us to do. So, I'm announcing a five-day furlough for all managerial employees of the City government, and all employees not represented by organized labor. That affects 9,000 – over 9,000 employees and City agencies and will save about \$21 million. So, again, a five day-furlough for all managerial employees. That furlough will start taking place next month. It'll stretch out between October and March, same schedules we talked about for the furlough for City Hall employees. Again, something that's very painful to have to announce, has real human consequences, but it is necessary. And we continue our conversations with the labor unions. We continue our conversations with Albany, trying to get relief. We don't have results yet. We need to keep finding savings to keep bridging us, to give us a chance to get to something better than layoffs. No one wants to see layoffs, but, unfortunately, they're still on the table. So, this at least gives us a little more relief while we continue those conversations and try and find a larger solution. Look, what would really solve this – a federal stimulus, and is shocking that it still hasn't happened. And the hope continues to dim for anything in the next few months. And then, long-term borrowing in Albany, I continue to say it is a straightforward, time-honored option. It is something that makes so much sense to stop this uncertainty and we're going to keep fighting for that as well.

But, you know this is a perfect segue to another absolutely crucial issue because the representation we have in Washington, Albany, really determines whether our voices are heard, our needs are met, whether we get our fair share. And, right now, our levels of representation in Washington are threatened, because we're in the middle of the census process in the most adverse possible circumstances, literally, in the middle of global pandemic with a White House that has been trying to undermine the census all along and create fear and discouraged immigrants from

participating here in greatest city of immigrants in this country. So, here's the bottom line – one week left – only one week left in the census process. We have to get every New Yorker counted. We have to leave it all on the playing field. Every possible effort must be expended. And every one of you can make a difference. Right now, we have a city response rate of 60.2 percent – 60.2 percent. And that's progress, but we've got a lot more to do in this coming next seven days. Here to tell you about it, someone who has done an outstanding job with our team, really reaching the people of this city no matter what the challenge is, the Director of the New York City Census Julie Menin.

Director Julie Menin, NYC Census: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And it's great to be here with everyone today. So, as the Mayor said, New York City's currently at 60.2 percent. To put that into context, we are six points behind the national average. In 2010, we were 14 points behind the national average. So, we've cut that gap by more than half. As the slide shows, we are ahead of many other cities, some of them include L.A., Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Miami, to name a few. With that said, we only have one week to go. We need every New Yorker to be counted. We've really accomplished some of this outreach with a team effort. We've sent over four – we've done over 4 million phone calls to New Yorkers, over 7 million texts. We have 100 events this week alone, 29 in Brooklyn, I might add. We have 34 media campaigns in 26 different languages. But time is nearly up and we need to do more.

So, what are we doing? So, now, as I mentioned, you will see our team all over the streets, at subway stops, at food distribution sites. We are also thrilled to launch a new contest called Battle of the Boroughs. And with Battle of the Boroughs is a competition where 50 residents from the borough that moves their self-response rate the most in this next week, will win a \$200 gift certificate to a restaurant of their choice. So, we also want to support small businesses during this tough time. So, I really want to thank the United Way of New York City. I want to thank the New York City Hospitality Alliance for their incredible partnership. And Battle of the Boroughs is truly the culmination of a neighborhood competition we've been running for the past five weeks. We call it the Census Subway Series. So, this past week we put Throggs Neck versus Corona in a friendly competition, and I'm thrilled to say the winner is Throggs Neck. Throggs Neck improved their self-response by one percentage point in one week, which is really fantastic.

And in closing, I would just say, look, we need every single New Yorker to step up and fill the census out. As you heard from the Mayor and from Dr. Katz, when you think about COVID, there really is a link between COVID in the census. It's a stark reminder of why the census matters, because, quite frankly, if more New Yorkers would have filled the census out in 2010, we would have had more money today for health care on the ground. And lastly, I would say the New York City Health Department looks at census data when they're terminating how to respond. So, when there was a measles outbreak, they looked at census data for vaccines. Hopefully one day soon there'll be an efficacious vaccine for COVID. This is not a time to be invisible. It's a time to stand up and be counted. We're striking distance of our 2010 number. Now, we need every New Yorker to step up.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Julie. And again, thank you to you and your team. Everyone, look, the folks who are working at the census, they work nonstop, and all they're asking of you is take 10 minutes, go to my 2020census.gov. Just fill out that form – 10 minutes. You can fill out for your entire household. What does it mean? It means the difference between hundreds of millions of dollars, even billions of dollars coming to New York City or us not getting our fair share. It means more representation in Washington or less. It sounds abstract, but it couldn't be more tangible. It affects your life – education, your child's school, the money that will be for that school, the money that we'll need for mass transit, affordable housing, you name it, the census determines how much money New York City gets, plain and simple. So, please, take the time so that we can actually be counted and given our fair share.

Okay, everybody, let's go to our daily indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients – today's report, 72. And the confirm positive rate for COVID amongst those patients, 9.72 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold 550 cases – today's report, 326. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold of five percent – today's report, 0.75 percent. So, again, even while we're fighting certain challenges, we see at the same time, overall, the hard work of the people of this city having a real impact.

Let me say a few words 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: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Katz, Census Director Julie Menin, Dr. Chokshi, Chancellor Carranza, Commissioner Campion, Commissioner La Rocca, the Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps. Dr. Ted Long, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: Hi, good morning, everyone. With regard to this uptick and the new clusters, I'm wondering, yesterday, when you disclosed the different neighborhoods, you didn't make the connection to Orthodox Jewish communities. Even last night, when you dubbed it, the Ocean Parkway cluster, it seemed somewhat like you're dancing around the commonality in these neighborhoods. Is there a hesitation on your part to be more specific about what might be contributing to the spread?

Mayor: Andrew, look, we're saying exactly where the problem is. We're working with community leaders – we have been for weeks now. We're getting out information, we're getting out masks, we're doing everything that we know how to do to stop the problem. So, I think we're being very clear about where the challenge is and we want to work with communities to solve it.

Question: [Inaudible] related to how this might impact schools. We had asked this on a more theoretical sense a few weeks back when there was a spike in Sunset Park, but when you see 4.71 percent in Bensonhurst, just a few days before kindergarten, elementary schools are set to open, might that impact the ability of schools in some of these neighborhoods, might that prevent them from opening in-person next week?

Mayor: As of now, the answer is no. It's something we obviously are all keeping a close eye on. The real issue, since we have a constant look at what's happening in each school, is to watch for upticks in the specific school community. The school community is often very different from the neighborhood around it. And this is something we have to be really clear about at all levels, particularly when you go to the higher grades, but really at all levels, the kids who go to the school often don't come from the surrounding community. Sometimes, they do come from the surrounding community. The real question is, what's happening in that school. And we have a lot of ability to see that, we have ability to know what's happening with test results, if kids are staying home sick, all sorts of things. So, right now, we feel very good about our ability to keep moving with our school openings. But the most important thing here, Andrew, is to address this problem at the community level. Immediately, we saw in Sunset Park how quickly things can be turned around. We saw it in Soundview. We need to see it here in these communities and I think people will help us get the job done.

Moderator: The next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'm curious – you know, speaking of the uptick of COVID-19 cases do you have an idea of how many cases are in the yeshivas in Brooklyn, and have any of these schools been closed? And additionally, what kind of outreach is being done with some of the rabbinical leaders in these communities? Because it has been, since the start of COVID-19, you know – I know that these are – a lot of the communities tend to be a bit insular. So, speak a little bit about the outreach you're doing to ensure that the message is getting across about the threat.

Mayor: Absolutely. I'll start, and I'll turn to a Dr. Katz, and any of the other doctors who want to add in. We have, just in the last few days, two yeshivas that have been closed because of coronavirus challenges. Health Department has taken those actions via commissioner's orders. The outreach to the community has been nonstop. I think Dr. Katz gave you some of the flavor of that – rabbinical leadership, elected officials, community organizations, very widespread, sounding the alarm. And I think a number of community leaders are themselves sounding the alarm, because this uptick has come on very intensely. So, we will look at each and every gathering place, if there's a place that violates the State rules and the City rules, of course, that has to be addressed, and, if someplace has to be shut down, it will be. Dr. Katz?

President Katz: I think you've covered it, Mr. Mayor. With the Health Department, we're working very closely, watching what's going on at all schools, including yeshivas, and making sure that there are no large banquets, which are, as you spoke earlier, sir, large indoor activities are a huge problem for COVID transmission.

Mayor: Go ahead, Katie.

Question: And my second question, I'll pivot to schools. I know you've answered various versions of this question, but I'm curious – and I'll have to ask the Chancellor also – answer the question – you know, given the staffing challenges that is inherent in the school's reopening plan, why did the City agree to this plan with the UFT and the CSA if there was this challenge of

staffing, getting thousands and thousands of additional teachers. I mean, was that present when you were agreeing to the plan or was it just something that, I guess, was perceived to be fixable?

Mayor: I appreciate the question, Katie. Look, I'm going to try and give people the flavor of the situation before turning to the Chancellor. I think there is a reality in an atmosphere of crisis, which is what we've been dealing with now for seven months, that you're trying to work with old formulas for new situations, and it's a hard thing to do. And, I think, looking back, we all needed to move off the old formulas more quickly. The fact is, if you think about staffing every year, the first few weeks of the school year in a normal year, there's still staffing adjustments being made, there's still teachers being hired. Schools often start the school year without every single teacher in place. But then, when you add the challenge of three – really, three levels of education simultaneously – the kids who were in the classroom, the kids were in blended, but not in the classroom that day, and the all-remote kids. When you add in the challenge of teachers who got medical accommodation, when you add in the moving target of how many students will be in the system in-person – and, again, that's, for now, another bite at the Apple in November, if parents wanted to get their kids back in – it's a very complex formula. And I think, in retrospect, a very different approach needed to be taken. That said, what we saw on Monday was 1,800 sites up and running – 1,800. I don't want this to get lost in the dialogue here. Between the District 75 special education sites, the public school pre-K, 3-K sites, the community-based pre-K, 3-K sites, and those were all staffed properly, and the beginning was actually strikingly effective and smooth – a credit to everyone at the DOE and the cooperation with the unions. We need to repeat that again next Tuesday, repeat it again next Thursday. And we see the way to do that now. We had to learn through experience how to adjust the model. Now, we have the tools we need to get it done. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Katie, really good question. Look, I think all of us, the Mayor, Mr. Mulgrew, Mr. Cannizzaro, myself – the easy way out would have been to do other things that we just know are not educationally sound. So, for example, could you set up a classroom and a camera and then, you know, watch as a teacher walks back and forth, you know, out of the camera range, that would have been a lot easier to do, but we know that fundamentally that's not educationally sound. And, quite frankly, the months and months and months that our students have had remote learning, we know that that has traumatized many of our students. Many of our students have regressed in their academic progress. So, when we said, because we are in a position medically in New York City to be able to consider in-person learning, then what we're not going to do is couple coming back to in-person learning with just bad practices. So, does it mean it's challenging? Absolutely. Does it mean that it's harder than if you did other things? Absolutely. But all of us are on the same page that if we're going to do this, we have to do it right and we have to do it so that it's fundamentally uplifting and it's beneficial to our students, both in-person and in the remote learning mode. That's why we're grappling with these difficult challenges, but they're not insurmountable, as the Mayor has pointed out this week with our youngest and some of our most vulnerable students already coming back in person.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: The next is Henry from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: Good, Henry. How have you been?

Question: I'm okay. Can you get back to me in about three minutes – I'm kind of multitasking here and I've got a bunch of other things I've got to –

Mayor: We have that ability, Henry. We are an agile operation. We'll reserve your place in line. Go ahead, Mitch.

Moderator: We'll get back to Henry. The next is Jeff Mays from the New York Times.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my question.

Mayor: Good morning, Jeff. How are you doing?

Question: I'm good. Thanks for asking. I wanted to ask about this uptick we're seeing in the Hasidic neighborhoods. I'm wondering what happened that we saw this decline over the summer and are now seeing this uptick. I'm wondering, was there a drop-off in outreach efforts or, you know, was there sustained efforts in this community, and I'm wondering how far the City is willing to go to, beyond outreach, to enforce the guidelines in these communities. I mean, you took some strong actions during the measles outbreak. I'm wondering how far the City is willing to go to stop this outbreak?

Mayor: That's a great question, Jeff. We're obviously going to do whatever it takes and I think the measles parallel is a very good one, but this is obviously a much tougher, more pervasive problem. As I said, we've taught shut down two yeshivas. No one wants to shut down the yeshiva. That's never something we want to do, but the Health Department deemed it was necessary, and if others have to be closed, they will be, and any situation that's not safe has to be addressed. I think the outreach efforts have been consistent. I think the challenge as with everyone, everywhere is over months and months, of course, there's some fatigue in every community about being constantly asked to follow these rules, but we've got to keep redoubling the effort. So let me turn to my colleagues and see if they want to add, but I think the biggest answer, the clearest answer I can give you is we'll take whatever measures are necessary to stop this from spreading.

President Katz: I think sir, I would only add high holy days – before the high holy days, we typically, as a people come together for more celebrations before those days the opening of schools, especially the yeshivas have made a difference, the weather getting colder I think it's something we all have to be aware of because being outside is very safe, but as the temperatures drop, more people are coming inside, and then as you say, the general fatigue, they're also people coming back and forth from other countries such as Israel makes a difference. They've been, I think a number of factors that have brought us to where we are.

Mayor: Go ahead, Jeff.

Question: Yeah. I have a question regarding Industry City and the decision by the developers to pull that plan. You supported the Atlantic Yards project when you were a council person and also supported the Amazon proposal. I'm wondering, are you concerned about the future of development in New York City if projects like Industry City and Amazon can't get off the ground, and do you think Democrats in New York have become too anti-development?

Mayor: Well, Jeff has an important question. Look, I think we should put the facts in perspective. First of all, let's talk about not just a year ago or 10 years ago, let's talk about a week ago. You know, I was at the ribbon cutting for One Vanderbilt which is an extraordinary project, you know, now one of the biggest buildings in New York City, a place that's going to attract a huge amount of economic activity, but also to the great credit of all the partners in that project – I want to give a special thanks to Marc Holliday at SL Green – from the beginning of the dialogue, there was a commitment to public benefits and those public benefits, \$220 million of subway improvements that are going to help the lives of literally millions of New Yorkers because it's one of the most important subway and connection points in the whole city. That's an example of the kind of development that works. It's a, you know, really, really important project for our economic future, and it's one where the developers held up their end of the bargain for the people. I think that's a great model going forward.

When you go back and you look at the rezonings, this administration has done, we've done them where we believed there was public benefit, East New York, East Harlem, many other examples where there's a lot of affordable housing, new public spaces, things that really mattered to communities. Amazon, to me, we have to just remember the punchline, the company pulled out wrongly and unfairly and broke the deal. They obviously could have moved forward. That was their choice, and I couldn't be more critical of the way they handled that. So I wouldn't overrate it, and how ironic that they've continued now to expand their employment levels in this city constantly. So I think what has happened over the years, and I believe in this thoroughly, Jeff, is the wrong kind of development, which I think bluntly pervaded the two previous administrations – sweetheart deals for developers, a lack of public benefits, a lack of enforceability, deals that were supposed to provide local jobs and affordable housing that never happened, supposed to provide public space that never happened. That kind of development really soured people.

What we've tried to do is a progressive vision of development, where there's strong, clear community benefits that are enforceable, that are codified, and when we've done that it's worked and it's moved forward and that's what we're going to continue to do. We have some major rezonings coming up now, City Planning is up and running again, the Gowanus rezoning in Brooklyn is moving forward, the Governor's Ireland rezoning, which is really exciting because that's going to help us make Governor's Island the global capital for addressing climate change, the New York Blood Center rezoning on the Upper East Side. These are really important for the future city. These are all going to move forward and we're going to push hard to get good development that benefits communities. That's what the public can actually buy into.

Moderator: The next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor, I wanted to go back to an issue from last week, I believe the movement of the people from the Lucerne and subsequently the Harmonia shelter. One of the justifications for moving people out of the Lucerne in the first place was that there was plenty of room in the traditional shelters. So given that, why was there any domino effect going on – if there was already space in traditional shelters, why did the movement of people from Lucerne dislodge anyone else from where they were staying?

Mayor: It's a really good question, Yoav. First of all, no one got dislodged because everything was paused to as I said, our Corporation Council Jim Johnson, our Social Services Commissioner Steve Banks are evaluating the entire system now because the goal again is to move out of hotels, our standing policy, in a safe, smart way, get into permanent shelters, obviously then move people on to affordable housing and a life outside the shelter. So we want to do that, right. Everything's being paused to get the whole situation aligned. But I think that the core point of your question is so important. Yeah, there are actually a lot fewer people in our shelter system. That's a very good thing. The challenge is the different types of people who are in shelter require different types of settings, and they need to be accommodated in the right place, whether it's a women's in a single shelter, a men's single shelter, adult families, or families with children, they're all different. They all can be used by different types of folks who are homeless, but they have to be adjusted accordingly. So that's why you can simultaneously have a lot of space now, thank God in our shelters, because fewer people are in shelter and the ability to make some moves, but they do come with other impacts. That's what we have to make better sense of. We want the minimum dislocation possible while serving people well and serving them safely. Go ahead, Yoav.

Question: And moving to schools. I saw that Michael Mulgrew said the other day that there's about 3,000 additional teachers needed to open in person learning for middle and high schools. You've been reluctant to release the number largely because it's kind of a moving target, but obviously internally you guys are working off some figure. I'm just wondering if you can confirm Margaret's figure and perhaps say more about why you were reluctant to share it in the name of transparency?

Mayor: No, because I think there's always a tension between transparency and accuracy. I don't want to give you a number and it proves to change once again, and I've been very, very clear with everyone involved, both at City Hall and Department of Education as their responsibility to once and for all resolve this issue. As I said earlier, Yoav, I grant everyone involved. They've been working nonstop for months through a crisis. I think they've all really, really had – been dealt a tough, tough hand, and then extraordinary complexity and an ever changing situation. I don't belittle any of that, but I think it calls upon everyone to think in new ways and make adjustments and kind of find a model that rises above some of those constant moving parts and gets us to resolution. That was done for Monday because 1,800 sites were up with the teachers they needed. So clearly the team at the DOE got it right for Monday, and I give them a lot of credit. They now have to get it right next week. And when we are certain we have a final and definitive number. That's when I will say it publicly talking with our union colleagues regularly, but I'm going to reserve the timing until we are 100 percent certain and everything's locked in.

Moderator: We'll go back to Henry from Bloomberg. Henry, do we have you?

Question: Thank you very much. On these infection rates in these particular neighborhoods, you must have seen this uptick happening before the high holidays, and so I'm wondering why it wasn't disclosed before the high holidays and whether or not you've detected any increase because of congregations meeting during the high holidays?

Mayor: I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Katz and Dr. Chokshi. We saw pieces of the equation and acted on them, I've been talking about Borough Park for weeks, where we've had additional testing, additional outreach. That was what appeared to be the core of the problem, and then last week we saw the problems start to emerge in the Rockaways. That's where a largest yeshiva, I think it's over 2,000 students was shut down by Department of Health, and a lot of other measures were taken. The fact that this is now coalesced the way it has, that was based on information we've seen in the last days in particular. We had seen it more localized before that, Henry, and it was being addressed, but now we have a much bigger challenge, and so everyone is mobilizing for something we haven't done previously, this goes, we'll go far beyond what we had to do in Sunset Park. This'll be a much deeper mobilization into the community to stop this trend.

Let me turn to Dr. Katz and then Dr. Chokshi.

President Katz: Yes, Mayor you have it, right, and Henry, if you look at the numbers, it's really the last week that has been so dramatic, and you have to remember that we have to act based on high quality data, some of the neighborhoods, the number of people being tested as relatively small. So you need enough information to be sure of what we're saying. Certainly these have been messages we've been out in the community for weeks with but we're here today with a more dramatic message because of really what we've seen over the last week.

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, you both have covered the facts and the high points well. I'll just reiterate in the last week that the emphasis was on Borough Park, Bensonhurst, Midwood area based on the data that we had seen there, which was which was shared both with the community as well as with the public. But just as the Mayor and Dr. Katz have said we're seeing this evolve just in the last few days and particularly in the last 24 hours with respect to the information that we're collecting, and it's so important for us to take swift action when we see that and that's what we're putting into motion.

Mayor: Go ahead, Henry.

Question: I want to get back to an issue that Andrew raised about infection rates in hyperlocal situations and how it might affect school attendance, and you said, well, a lot of students come from all over the city, but elementary schools and pre-K are pretty much neighborhood based. So is there any thought about using a different standard when a hyperlocal infection rates zoom up and local elementary schools are in the crosshairs of the virus?

Mayor: When we believe that's happening, we'll certainly – look, this is all about health and safety. If we think there's a danger to a school community, we're going to act, but again, I'll speak from personal experience – remember talking about Borough Park and Kensington. Those are neighborhoods I represented in the City Council. I was deeply, deeply involved in the specific neighborhoods house. I happened to be a community school board member in that community, and I can tell you for a fact that in Kensington, in Borough Park, the local public elementary schools, our children made up of children who come from some of the surrounding area, but also from farther out because of the nature of the community, because you obviously have a lot of families who don't send their kids to public schools and therefore other kids come into those public schools. If we see anything in the data we're getting from school communities that tell us there's a problem, we're going to act, unquestionably. Again, we have a lot of data sources within each school community, but if we don't see that, we want to make sure that schools move forward. So it's going to be based on data and science, it's going to be based on actual specific indicators we're seeing in each school.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Jacob from the Jewish Insider.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, thank you for taking—

Mayor: Jacob?

Question: Yes. You hear me?

Mayor: How are you doing?

Question: Great. Thank you for taking a question from someone who actually lives in the community and complies with all the guidelines. Can you share with us what guidance you have provided in those conversations with representatives of the community, ahead of the holidays, especially now where you're going to see an increase in gatherings and how do you regain trust with people? Why should they believe that you're going to enforce where you failed in the spring?

Mayor: Well, respectfully, Jacob, I don't agree with your assessment. We have been constantly communicating with community leaders. I've been on any number of calls myself. My team has been talking to community leaders nonstop throughout, and the message has been really clear. We've got to get people to where mass, we've got to get people to practice social distancing. There was a lot of enforcement in March and April, no one wants to have to do it, but it was done where it was needed. It did have some impact for sure, and now we see the most tangible data we've ever seen about a specific problem. So again, I took the message and I'll turn to Dr. Katz to add, but the message I think, has been really clear and consistent throughout, that we've got to avoid large gatherings that exceed the state rules. We've got to have people practice, social distancing. These messages have been pervasive, but I do believe when it comes time to exercise enforcement, that that has had a real impact. Dr. Katz?

President Katz: Jacob, thank you for following the guidelines, and we know that there are many people in our community who are following the guidelines, but many who are not. Many who don't see that how critical they are to our being able to continue life as we know it in New York City, certainly as the Mayor has said, the most critical aspects are wearing a mask, social distancing, no large indoor gatherings. And our hope was that that we could convince people both to protect health and to keep businesses open to follow these rules, and as the Mayor has said if that proves impossible, then we will have to go to stronger actions of enforcement.

Mayor: Go ahead, Jacob.

Question: Yeah. If the optic continues in the coming weeks, would you consider specific measures to these particular neighborhoods instead of just punishing the entire city and as a result put the Orthodox community in the spotlight as a prime target for the spread of COVID?

Mayor: Well, Jacob, again, I respect you and respect your publication, I want to differ with some of your word choice. This is to help people and respect and support the community because what's more important than saving lives. I've said this back in March and April, every one of our faith traditions speaks about the value of each individual life. And in fact, it was outstanding in the early time of this crisis how faith leaders in every community stepped forward and told people how important it was to practice these safety measures. In fact, faith leaders were the ones who said we shouldn't go forward with the kinds of gatherings that might create a danger. So I would say to you that what we know works is a lot of communication, what we know works is making it easy for people to wear masks by distributing them for free, which we're going to be doing intensely in these communities, what we know works is leaders of the community setting a good example, and many leaders are doing that. I really appreciate it. This is something we're all in together. Every part of the city is interconnected, but when we see a specific part of the city that's going through a challenge, we'll give everything we've got to educating people, giving them the masks, helping them through it. We want to do it productively, cooperatively. If some people don't want to be helpful to their neighbors, then we'll take stronger action. But I do think like you, the vast majority of people want to help and want to protect each other and I think they'll all be part of helping us resolve this.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Jake Offenhartz from Gothamist.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Jake, how you been?

Question: I'm okay. My first question is about policing. There was an NYPD crackdown on peaceful protesters in Times Square over the weekend. There were 86 people arrested. That's the largest number since your curfew response. The NYPD says it was because the gathering, "involved large numbers of protestors walking the street" but there've been marches going on more than 115 days regularly obstructing traffic. You said they had a right to peacefully demonstrate. So it's something different now? Was there a policy change directed by you or NYPD - excuse me - regarding ability to march?

Mayor: Jake, I appreciate the question. I will be straightforward with you I don't have all the details of what happened in Times Square at my fingertips here, but I will say having been in many, many protests, the traditional rules that this police department followed for decades and were fair was they say depending on the size of the march, depending on the location, depending on how much traffic there was, et cetera, here are the ground rules. You know, you can march on the sidewalk, you can have the street, you can't have the street, whatever the ground rules were, they had to be clearly articulated by the NYPD. They had to be usable, obviously, the number of people had to be taken to account a smaller group could be in a smaller area. If there's a huge group, of course you had to close down streets. So again, not knowing the details here, all I can say is I would suggest to you the bigger reality here is – no strategy change that has been discussed with me, certainly – but the bigger reality here is returning to what worked and did protect peaceful protest of all kinds, all beliefs for decades is just clear ground rules, usable ground rules, and then if someone chooses to violate, for example, through civil disobedience, fine, then you're warned you're going to be arrested, and many people choose to be arrested. That model works, but let me find out more about what happened in this particular case. Go ahead.

Question: Going back to the yeshiva enforcement, I think one of the schools you mentioned that was closed Darchei Torah on the Far Rockaway, they actually kind of refused to close after they were ordered and it took an extra day. We heard this morning, actually, that there's another Yeshiva that let parents know about a case, but so that they're not planning on quarantining and there's no information, not in the city's report card, there's been no data submitted by this yeshiva. So I was hoping you – kind of just detailed, like, how are you monitoring this? How is the city actually tracking cases inside the yeshivas? And in instances where these schools are not complying, like, what is the city doing besides urging or ordering or propose in some cases when they're refusing to do so?

Mayor: Yeah, I want to be careful in that assumption because that hasn't been our experience. Jake, first of all, if you're hearing about a specific location, please share it with our team to make sure we're hearing exactly what you're hearing. The case in the Rockaways, there was I think some initial confusion and miscommunication, and then once that was resolved, a school did shut down in the course of that following day. But look, no one wants to shut down the school. I understand that. Everyone hopes to find a way to avoid it. It's incredible dislocation for families and kids, but as we've made clear that the schools have to be shut down, I've seen over the course of months compliance, we certainly saw that during measles as well. So let me turn to Dr. Chokshi to talk to you about how that is handled and then Dr. Katz. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We're informed about cases at yeshivas through our [inaudible] reporting system as well as direct communication with school leaders and others in the community including health care leaders, you know, physicians and other clinicians. We take all of those sources of information and we paint a whole picture about what's happening in an individual's school. We do that through our disease detectives who initiate an investigation as rapidly as possible, usually within minutes to hours of learning about cases. And then based on that, we're in direct communication with school leadership to gather additional information so that we can rapidly make a recommendation about what makes most sense to preserve the health and safety of people who are at that school. And based on that, you know, in some cases when it meets a threshold, we do recommend a school closure, we have

conversations with school leadership, and if it's warranted we will rapidly issue a Commissioner's order related to that school closure as well. And that's what happened in the two cases that the Mayor has already mentioned. Again, I think the big picture here is that when we do see these signals, these cases emerging, we rapidly investigate and then we take action based on that.

Mayor: Thank you, Dr. Katz, you want to add?

President Katz: Just to clarify that the school in Rockaway closed and sent kids home the very same day they got the Commissioner's order from Dr. Chokshi.

Mayor: Thank you. Okay, go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Juan Manuel Benitez from NY1.

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

Mayor: Good Juan Manuel, how you doing?

Question: Very good. Thank you. My question is about the furloughs that you announced. Can you talk a little bit more about who these 9,000 city employees are and whether they've already been informed about this? And are you taking these for furlough measures to compensate from not laying off employees like you've announced last month?

Mayor: So let me start and then I'll turn to our Labor Relations Commissioner Renee Campion, but the first thing to say, Juan Manuel is look we have to look for any and all savings that we can find right now. Clearly there is a time reality to your question, is this in some ways one piece of compensating for what we're seeing in the bigger picture? Absolutely. Look, honestly going back May, June, July, August, I don't think I was alone, I think a lot of people believed eventually Washington would get its act together and there would be a stimulus that would include city and state aid. I'm shocked, honestly that nothing has happened, literally nothing. I think it was fair to assume back in the spring that given the challenges that New York City had faced, epicenter of the crisis, that Albany would step forward with some form of long-term borrowing, I'm surprised on that level as well.

So the truth is we have to find every conceivable action now to keep finding savings while we continue the dialogue with labor over labor savings, looking for something substantial there, looking for common effort with labor to get Albany back to take on long-term borrowing. So in light of what's been thrown at us, we are taking additional moves to just keep bridging, keep finding more resources to get us forward. No one wants layoffs, but unfortunately they are very much still on the table if we can't find a better alternative. In terms of who's affected and how it works, Commissioner Campion, you want to fill in that?

Commissioner Renee Campion, NYC Office of Labor Relations: Yes, yes sir. Thank you, Mayor. So to start, the employees that are impacted are managers citywide involved the Mayoral agencies, as well as the Department of Education, as well as non-represented. So they are not

represented by our labor unions. Those are the nine – that's the approximately 9,000 people that are impacted. As far as the communication, communications have started going out this morning to the employees. First of course, to the agencies and the Commissioners, and then of course to the employees to let them know, and the process under which people will be taking furloughs will be worked on individually with each agency on how those furloughs will actually occur.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner, go ahead, Juan Manuel.

Question: And Mr. Mayor about the uptick in COVID cases in some communities in Brooklyn and Queens, beyond the outreach that you're talking about are you – why not, if you had this issue for a long time already in specific communities in Brooklyn and Queens, why not announcing more forceful measures to control this uptake, knowing that it could spiral out of control really quickly?

Mayor: I'll start Juan Manuel and I'll turn to Dr. Katz. Again, what we saw, let's go over what our whole experience has been, for three, four months, the city across the board has been keeping the infection rate very low. Every community. We saw a specific problem in Sunset Park. That was readily resolvable with aggressive measures, testing outreach, mask distribution, worked very quickly. Same with Soundview in the Bronx. We didn't have an experience where it didn't work. In Borough Park we took the same measures. We did not see an immediate negative uptick that was the kind that was as Dr. Chokshi said, verifiable and that showed us the kind of numbers that would lead to more serious action. It's literally been a matter of the last days where we've started to see the kind of consolidated numbers that tell us we have to do something much more. So I do think this is a case where following the pattern of everything we experienced previously, the actions were being taken by the Health Department, by test and trace, everything according to the game plan that had been working. But now we're dealing with a different reality and a more pervasive reality, and we're going to take fast, aggressive measures to address it. Go ahead, Dr. Katz.

President Katz: I think you've said it very well. We are hoping that today serves to the community to redouble its efforts on wearing masks, on social distancing, no large gatherings. In the absence of us seeing a rapid, rapid change in the infection rates, we will have to take more stringent measures.

Mayor: Thank you. And everyone, as we conclude today, look, we're giving you some sober news. We're giving a clear warning that we've got a challenge we have to face. I think New Yorkers always liked to hear the story straight up and know exactly what is going on. So what we're saying is we do have a problem, but it's a problem we can address together. It's going to take fast action and commitment. But look, we were the epicenter of this crisis. This whole city, every neighborhood was in it together, and we all fought back together and we can do it again. We've got to remember never to let our guard down, never to let the coronavirus back in the door in this city and to what has helped us all along, our devotion facts, our devotion to data, our devotion to science, that's, what's gotten us this far and the fact that the people have listened and acted. So here's another example where we're saying the data, the science, are telling us we've got to make a really fast, intense move, and I believe people will hear it and we'll act, and we will be out there in force to help make sure this happens to support people, to help make sure that

we overcome this, like we've overcome every other challenge in these last seven months together. Thank you very much.

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