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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Well, look, for years and years New Yorkers have been waiting for a moment to express their views on the direction of our country, waiting through such difficult times, through this pandemic, through all the pain, all the challenges. Energy has been building up and that energy exploded in such a positive way this weekend with early voting. We saw people really own their democracy this weekend in New York City. We saw the people come out in numbers we've never seen before to express their views and determine their future. Almost 200,000 New Yorkers voted in early voting on Saturday and Sunday – unbelievable. Literally, we've seen nothing like it before. Now, look, this is something all New Yorkers should be proud of, people care so deeply. Early voting has just begun you already see that many people engage – that's something beautiful. There's more time ahead for early voting and, of course, Election Day, and, of course, absentee ballots as well. So, we're really – this is a great sign that people may be getting involved in an unbelievably powerful manner. And this could be great for our future as well.

But, right now, we've got a problem. The Board of Elections was clearly not prepared for this kind of turnout and needs to make adjustments immediately to be able to support all the New Yorkers who want to take part in the democratic process. We need this to be a better experience. You know, long lines tell people to go home – that's just the reality. Long lines at a poll site discourage voting, they don't encourage it. And we've worked so hard over these last years to make voting and make the democratic process better, to make it more accessible, to make it clearer. We cannot at this crucial moment see people discouraged. So, here's what I'm calling on the Board of Elections to do. Right away, the Board of Elections must increase the number of voting machines and must ensure the staff is available at early voting sites to help people vote quickly and efficiently and help them move on with their day and not be discouraged from voting. The Board of Elections needs to step up. This is a historic moment. They need to act like it's a historic moment. Let me be clear – from the beginning, there are plenty of election machines, voting machines that are on hold for Election Day. Those machines should be brought out now and put in the early voting sites so that New Yorkers can vote more easily. The hours right now – the weekend hours for early voting are only 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This coming weekend, those hours should be expanded. The solutions are staring us right in the face. So, I'm saying to the Board of Elections, let's make these changes immediately for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who are ready to vote in the days to come through early voting. And if the Board of Election says they don't have the money, let me say right now, the City of New York will provide the resources. There is nothing more sacred than our democratic process, particularly at this moment in history. We will make sure the Board has what they need. They cannot claim they won't have the resources. This is about doing the right thing and making

voting easier for all New Yorkers. So, to the Board of Elections, your moment has come. Let's get it right now.

Now, I want to continue to tell everyone early voting, notwithstanding some of the challenges, it is a great solution for folks who want to avoid what will surely be a massive turnout on Election Day itself on November 3rd. So, want to encourage all New Yorkers, take advantage of early voting in the days ahead. I want to note that folks get priority if, for example, they have a particular need. Some seniors, some folks with disabilities who maybe would need to not be in a long line, they get priority. And the Board of Elections is supposed to bring them to the front of the line and facilitate their voting. Anyone who wants to participate in early voting, you can find your poll site and the hours online at voting.nyc – voting.nyc for all the information you need. We are making sure to get this information out clearly, because we want to give everyone a chance to participate. You can also drop off completed absentee ballots at early voting sites. So, everyone, let's do this. This is such an important moment. Get involved. Whatever you believe, however you're voting, get involved. The First Lady and I will be voting tomorrow, early voting, and we look forward to sharing the excitement of New Yorkers as we determine the future of our nation.

Okay. Now, nothing's more important to our democracy than voting and making sure that voting is easy, making sure everyone participates, but there's another tremendous underpinning of our democracy, and that is public education. I've talked about this before and I feel it passionately, a functioning democracy hinges on public education. It is the foundation for preparing all our young people to be the citizens of tomorrow who will own this country. And we need to always make sure that we're doing what we can to reach our young people. So, we knew that this would be a very, very tough year. We knew back in March when we had to close our schools instantly and go to all remote, and we knew in the months leading up to the opening of schools that this would be extremely difficult to do something that few school systems in America have even attempted – to reopen in a safe, healthy manner, in a way that really would give kids both the advantage of in-person education and the health and safety they need and all the adults in the building need. Well, right now, we have evidence, and it's overwhelming, and it's outstanding evidence that through the amazing work of our colleagues at the Department of Education and all the folks in our school buildings and our school communities, our schools are safe. It has been proven over and over again. The latest information we have from our random testing program and hundreds and hundreds of schools is the positivity rate based on that testing program is 0.15 percent. Extraordinary achievement for our public schools. So, we are seeing more and more evidence of just how safe our schools are and more and more evidence that kids are benefiting from in-person education. We know now a lot more about what our attendance situation is. We're going to go over those numbers now. Here's a crucial number – and this number is one that I think needs to be understood as a work in progress. So far, we've had 280,000 kids who have attended school in-person. Now, there's a lot more who could, and we want to address that situation. That 280,000, of course, that's a huge number unto itself, and many, many more kids attending in-person than in many parts of the country, but a lot more kids could be attending in person. And we want to make sure that their families know, and they know the school is safe. Attendance, so far, the percentage attending each day, has averaged around 85 percent. Given the pandemic and the extraordinary amount of upheaval – that's not a bad number, but we want that number to go up. So, we have work to do. We have work to do to help parents and kids know

they can come back safely, work to do to increase attendance percentages every day. And we'll be doing that work day by day, family by family. But we also have an opportunity now to give parents a chance to opt back in. Now, that they've seen school up and running for a month, they've gotten a chance to see how schools are working. Parents have a lot more information and I understand any parent that wanted more information before making a choice – well, now that we've been able to show how our schools are working, it's time for an opt-in period. It's time to give parents and kids a chance to come back into school if they're all remote right now. So, the opt-in period will begin next week on November 2nd and will go through November 15th. And here to tell you all about the opt-in opportunity is our Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. As you and I have said time and time again, we're proud of our students, our educators, and our families. They have all shown heroic optimism and determination to achieve in the face of unthinkable obstacles. And their efforts are beginning to bear out in the data we're beginning to share today on attendance. All that said, we know we're not yet where we want to be with attendance. We've raised the bar since the spring and we expect students to meet that bar. It's our job as a system of educators to make sure that we do. We've made progress each week and we're confident we'll keep getting better. So, we will do so by doing the following – setting clear expectations with families, leveraging attendance teachers to connect to students to understand what may be going on, and removing any barriers to participation in making sure that students can be present mentally, physically, emotionally, ready to learn. We're keeping a close eye on this and will continue to drive support to schools as they need it. We'll also be closely watching the opt-in period for schools, starting next week. And, as a reminder, any family who wishes to switch from remote to a blended learning environment can do so by simply filling out a form online and making their choice apparent. We will also make sure it's available at schools and in multiple languages, and registration can be completed over the phone as well. The pandemic has caused so much uncertainty in every aspect of life and for families who needed a bit more time to feel comfortable sending their children back, now is that time. This will be the only time to opt in. Let me repeat that – this will be the only time to opt in, which is a change from what we originally had said over the summer. We think that this is better for the sake of stability for all students, for families, and educators. So, we urge any family who is considering it to take advantage of this opportunity to do so now. We've seen the tremendous benefits of in-person education, the joy that, Mr. Mayor, you and I have observed on the faces of teachers and students and parents, even behind their masks. And the direct access to mental health support for those who have experienced trauma in the past several months is just unparalleled in-person. We're lower than we anticipated in being in terms of in-person learners and know that families initially had hesitations. We've always known this, but now we can prove it. There is no replacement for in-person learning and it's safe to do so. We invite all families who want to return to in-person learning to do so during this opt-in period. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you, Chancellor. And thank you to you and your whole team. This school system, the largest school system in America up and running every single day and kids are getting the help they need. And that's what matters. And we're going to get a lot of information out about that opt-in period. We want to answer the questions the parents have. And again, we've shown over this last month and more how safe our schools can be. We've shown how effective it is to have kids back in-person and the joy that kids and adults both share in the school community,

having everyone back together. But we know there's a lot of questions and we want to answer those questions. We want parents to get the answers. And whatever language they speak, we want parents to have access to medical professionals if they have questions. And all that information – and the places they can turn for answers will be available through the Department of Education. So, we're going to have about two weeks for parents to sign up and we want to make sure it's a two-week period where parents get all the information they need.

Okay. Now, parents who want to, obviously, know what's going on in their own school. We've been getting requests for clarity about the COVID testing data school by school and we're now going to be putting that up regularly for parents and the whole city to see. The COVID testing data will be available at the DOE website at schools.nyc.gov/covidresults. And it will have test results for every borough, for every school that's been tested and a complete case map for all known cases in New York City public schools. And that would be available at schools.nyc.gov/casemap.

So, look, I can say this as someone who was a public-school parent for a long time, when you are a parent in our New York City public schools you are entrusting the school community, all the adults in the school with your child, the person most precious to you in the world. You're entrusting the people who work in our schools to get it right. And, I have to say, our educators and our school staff have been outstanding. We have shown parents that we will keep their kids safe, this further information will make it really clear how things have played out, and we want to answer all those questions so that parents can make an informed decision as they have this opportunity to opt in to our public schools one more time.

Okay. I'm about to turn to our daily indicators, but I have to comment for a moment, because when we talk about indicators, we're talking about the fight against the coronavirus. We're talking about informing you what's going on, because every single one of you has been involved in this fight. There are over 8 million soldiers in New York City fighting the coronavirus. Every New Yorker is a soldier in the battle against the coronavirus and every New Yorker has contributed. So, here, we take the attitude, we can fight back this disease. We can control it. We can show what happens when people do the right thing, and we've shown it over and over again for months. Even when we've had challenges, we've shown the power of involving the people, educating them, getting them the testing they need, the support they need, and how it turns the situation around. Having said that, how strange to hear the chief of staff for the White House, Mark Meadows, putting up the white flag of surrender yesterday and expressing just pure defeatism, basically suggesting that our federal government can't do anything more to stop this pandemic. I've never heard something so ridiculous and so counterproductive for one of the leaders of our national government, rather than rallying us and saying, yes, we can – saying emphatically, no, we can't. So, Mark Meadows literally said, “We're not going to control the pandemic.” That's outrageous. We have been controlling the pandemic right here in New York City. We have been proving that if you engage the people and you provide the testing and the masks and the support, you can stop this pandemic from growing. We have been fighting back a second wave. We have opened our schools successfully, because we said we could and we did the things necessary and we engaged the people. So, look, I think the lessons learned here should be used around the whole country – the importance of masks, social distancing, test and trace, the importance of testing being available broadly and for free. How about the White House talks

about those lessons and applies them everywhere? How about the White House listens to Dr. Fauci when he says mask-wearing should be mandatory nationally, take the onus off of localities and make it a national standard so we can get out of this pandemic together. That's what would actually help move this country forward.

Okay, let's go to our indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients. Today's report 75 patients with a confirmed positivity rate for COVID at 28 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold is 550 cases. Today's report 551. And number three, percent of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold is five percent. Today's report, 1.74 percent, and today's seven-day rolling average, 1.73 percent. A few words in Spanish –

[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: Hi, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today, we have Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, Deputy Chancellor for School Climate and Wellness LaShawn Robinson, Senior Advisor and General Counsel to Democracy NYC Laura Wood, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll first go to Andrew from WNBC.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor and everyone on the call. My question is about the early voting. My question is, do you agree with what AOC said, which is that the long lines are a form of voter suppression? And have you yourself been out to see any of these lines or are you just sort of consuming it off social media?

Mayor: Yeah, Andrew, I'm consuming it off a lot of different media and it's quite clear. It's outstanding how intensely people want to participate. I would say it a little bit differently. I would say when the election authorities don't make voting easy, they discourage people from voting. I don't think there's a conspiracy at the Board of Elections. I think there's incompetence at the Board of Elections. And I think the Board of Elections is just the wrong organization the way they're structured. It should be abolished. It should be replaced by either a City agency or a State agency, a professional modern agency that runs the elections like we would run any other City service. But no, what's happening now is people are being discouraged from voting and that's unacceptable. And the board needs to make changes immediately to improve early voting. Go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible] has to do with what needs to take place for those changes. I think a lot of New Yorkers hear both you and the Governor express displeasure with the voting system, but they think to themselves, well, geez, you're the mayor, he's the governor, can't you guys actually by, executive action, do something to improve the situation?

Mayor: What we need is a bigger solution. Andrew, you've been around, you know, the Board of Elections is a vestige of a corrupt past. It just doesn't make sense. It's a vestige of Tammany Hall. How on Earth is the election system run by party officials instead of non-partisan public

employees? This just doesn't make any sense. So, what I would happily team up with the Governor on is legislation to abolish the board as it's constituted now and come up with an entirely different agency. We could do that for next year's elections. There's no reason that couldn't be moved quickly by the Legislature. This just doesn't make sense the way it is. In the meantime, what we've done here in the city is, with Democracy NYC, a really intensive effort to support people who want to vote and want to be involved, making campaign finance more equitable, major, major reform voted by the people. We're doing a lot of things to improve the system around the Board of Elections, but we don't control the Board of Elections. I wish I did. And we're saying to them right now – right now, put out those additional machines; right now, put out the additional staffing. If you say you don't have the money, we'll get you the money because nothing's more important than voting in our democracy.

Moderator: Next we have Rich from WCBS 880.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Rich. How you doing?

Question: I'm doing okay. If I could follow up a little bit on what Andrew was saying, isn't it really the Governor's responsibility to step up on this. I understand you say you'll team up with him, but is this not an agency – the Board of Elections – that is controlled by the State or State legislation?

Mayor: Correct, it is a State regulated agency. It is not under the direct control of the City of New York. Ironically, we end up having to pay for a lot of its operations, but we don't control it. You remember, Rich, years ago, I asked them to do some fundamental reforms, to use more technology, to bring in more poll workers, train people better. We offered them money to do that. We offered them \$20 million. They've refused money in exchange for reforms. That's the perfect example of the fact that, unfortunately, the City of New York does not control the board. State regulated. But we should all work together to change it. And it's going to take some political courage. The fact is there's a lot of people invested in the old ways, but they just don't work. I mean, how many times are we going to go through this? Election after election, there's always something wrong. Let's tear it down and start over again. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, this is a complete – sort of out of left field in a way. So, apparently there is a stipulation in the Citi Field lease that is controlled by the City that you could step in to block the change in ownership of the Mets and also Citi Field. Do you have any intention of doing that or have you thought about it?

Mayor: Rich, this is something our Law Department is evaluating right now, and we obviously want to get to a resolution on this very quickly. The deal is this, that because the land that Citi Field is on, and the stadium belongs to the City, the City always has to have a role when there is an ownership change. And there's a process for doing that. The Law Department's doing its due diligence right now. So, I'll be getting a report from them soon. And it will just be based on the facts of the research they've done. And then we'll speak to that again very quickly.

Moderator: Next is Hazel from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Hazel. How you feeling?

Question: Good. Good. This question is for you and the Schools Chancellor. I just wanted to get your reaction to reports that families dealing with broken school-issued devices or unreliable internet, in turn, their kids aren't able to log on for remote learning. We're being told that those families are being told by school administrators that they'll be notifying child services for remote truancy. Now, some of these parents say they've notified their schools about having tech issues, but they were still contacted by DOE attendance officials for an explanation as to where their kids are.

Mayor: Yeah, Hazel, I'll start and pass to the Chancellor. I, obviously, am very distressed to hear that. Look, we all understand it's a very difficult time. We all understand that it's hard to have the same kind of communication when people are not in person. But if a family reports a technology problem clearly that means they're trying to solve the problem and they want their child to be engaged in education. That is not a situation of neglect. That's a parent or a family trying to solve a problem. The left hand and the right hand at the DOE have to be able to know what's going on. So, if a family is not in touch at all, that's a problem. And, of course, the DOE has to reach out and find them because that kid, by law, is supposed to be getting an education. But if a family is trying to solve a problem, we should be working with them and not giving them the impression that we are judging them negatively. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Sir. Hazel, let me state unequivocally without any exception, there should be no reporting to ACS of any student that's having difficulty with technology. What should be reported is to the school that they're having difficulty with the technology and it's our job to follow up and make sure they get the right form of technology. That being said, it's also important to understand that as we look at attendance, it's important for folks to reach out to families where we haven't seen students logged on, or we haven't seen a positive history of being online or checking in with us. Because we want to know, are those students safe, but we've sent out guidance last spring. We've also updated that guidance this semester to school sites, making it very clear that technology issues should not be one of the reasons for a report to ACS. And we'll continue to follow up on those. If parents are getting those kinds of calls, we just need to know about it. Our superintendents in the districts should know about it. Principals should know about it, and we will follow up. But I want to be very clear, that is not the policy of the DOE.

Question: My second question is following up on the city-wide school attendance report you just released today. Just curious, how does this overall attendance compare to pre-COVID days?

Mayor: I'll start and let the Chancellor and we have Deputy Chancellor Robinson with us as well. They can speak to it. It's lower than what we had pre-COVID. Some of that is understandable because of the dislocation that's occurred. But we need to get it back to the number that we had before. And that's clearly our mandate, to get attendance back to the levels it

was before COVID so we can reach, you know, kids and really get them the help they need. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, I'll start. And then Deputy Chancellor Robinson, if she wants to add. So, it's important, Hazel, to understand as well that when we pivoted to remote learning last March, that was very quick. It was in the middle of the pandemic where we were the epicenter of the epicenter. So, obviously, we had to alter what our attendance was, our policies, taking into account all of that immense change. What's important to understand about this year is that we've strengthened, and we've made it much more rigorous. We've raised the bar on what counts for attendance this year. So, it is a much more rigorous process. That being said, pre-COVID, the overall attendance over the last five years has been about 91 percent. And obviously this 85 percent is lower than that, but keep in mind as well that there are really three attendance buckets that are being assessed every single day. In-person learning is one of those attendance facets. Then it's the blended students, students that have in-person learning on a part of the week and then the other part of the week, they have the remote. That attendance counts as well. And then you have the fully remote students. So, it's literally three buckets of attendance every single day that is being, not only accounted for by schools, but then reported up by schools. LaShawn, did you want to add anything?

Mayor: LaShawn?

Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson, Department of Education: So, you covered it. Pre-COVID, it was 91.6 percent [inaudible] –

Mayor: Thank you very much.

Moderator: Next we have Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, everyone. I wanted to follow up a bit more on the story about ACS contacting families where kids haven't been able to log onto virtual learning. I mean, I get you're saying you'll look into the, sort of, ACS side of the equation and make sure they're responding appropriately but could you say some more about the logging-on side. You know, my colleagues found some of the iPads students have received are glitchy. There is still an issue with getting Wi-Fi especially in shelters. Will you take any steps such as committing to get Wi-Fi installed in shelters?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to the Chancellor. Yes, the instruction I have given to the Law Department and to Social Services is to ensure that every shelter gets Wi-Fi, to send teams out to literally go shelter by shelter and simply ensure that, not just for that student but for the whole shelter, Wi-Fi is in place. We've got to stop this and make sure everyone has what they need. In terms of devices, I want to keep emphasizing, one, any parent, any kid with a problem should call 3-1-1 and let us know immediately. Two, schools have to really do this work as well to make sure that all the devices they have are distributed and if there is any child in a school that doesn't have one, but there is one in the school building going unused, they have to make that match. And we're getting more devices in all the time to ensure that we can reach everyone. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, yes. I want to emphasize and repeat, it is not the policy of the DOE to report families to ACS for technology issues. It is the policy of the DOE to account for our students and make sure that our students are safe and that they're well. My reading of the article, the parents didn't say they were reported to ACS. There was a threat that they would be reported to ACS. That's unacceptable. So we're following up on that as well, because there should be no threats of being reported if the only issue is a technology issue. Obviously if there are other issues, there are other things that we have as mandatory reporters, a responsibility to do. So that being said, we will again, reissue the guidance to make sure that all schools are clear about what it is that we're doing to make contact with our students. How do we report that? And then how do we hold ourselves accountable to make sure that we resolve any of those technology issues that may be reported by families or students.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah. So can you give a sense of how many shelters have wifi? Is it 0 percent? Is it 50 percent, something else? And also with the iPads, it was strange to read that, you know, some of them are glitchy. I mean, were these brand new iPads that were given out, were they maybe refurbished?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll start. I don't – first, on your first question, we'll get you the exact numbers, but my instruction to all involved is to get the wifi in these shelters immediately. We'll get you an update on that today. On the glitches, I would caution – we did a massive distribution, hundreds of thousands of iPads. You know, we're talking about kids, you know, every single kid in their household, things happen to technology. It's just not a shock that some of them might have problems either coming out of the factory or along the way. But the important point is we want to solve those problems. And sometimes that might just be providing some assistance over the phone. And sometimes that requires a new device, but whatever it is, we're going to do it. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we have Gloria from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I just kind of, I want to follow up on what you said about the long lines and the fact that you believe people are being discouraged from early voting. I don't know that you've been out there in the last two days, but what we have encountered is actually that people are, you know, being quite patient and people seem obviously energized and happy about the opportunity to get out there. So are you, I mean, do you have any, any evidence to point to that shows that people are actually choosing to stay away because there's such long lines? And what is it exactly that you're calling for here? You want more sites? What do you want the Board of Elections, if you could just get a little bit more specific, to do?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll repeat what I said earlier. The Board needs to get more machines to the sites. We originally called for a hundred sites around the city. They did 88, that's close, but they don't have enough machines at those sites. They have machines in reserve waiting for Election Day where it's obviously as many more sites. They should move those machines out now. Get them into position so that they can handle the much bigger demands on early voting. It's fantastic that

people are early voting, but they need to have the machines and the personnel out there. And we will support that in whatever way they need to help them do that for this week and obviously I expect next weekend to be, you know, a lot of voting. And we're calling on them to increase the hours next weekend, ten to four is just not enough. My point about discouraging voters is, again, I'm not saying it's a conspiracy and I'm not saying it's willful. I'm saying we've known for a long, long time, you give people long lines, at a certain point, people give up or have other obligations. If you really, really want early voting to be maximized, you have to make that line move more quickly. It's as simple as that. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. And now I also noticed that one of the medical, one of the indicators rather, you mentioned today, we went over that 550 threshold. I believe you said 551. What does it mean? And is there anything that would be triggered as a result of that number at this point?

Mayor: Yeah, I talked about this last week and I want to emphasize again. No, we are looking at those numbers in combination. When we see, thank God, the hospitalization number still on the lower side, both in terms of overall patients and the positivity. When we see the citywide positivity number stable and we've talked about that leveling off over the last few days. That means the overall picture is still good, but we have to be very, very vigilant. We have to constantly be vigilant against a second wave. We've seen progress in some of the zones of Brooklyn and Queens. That's good news. So that one number alone doesn't change what we do. It's also in part, a result of a hell of a lot more testing. And that testing is a very good thing. If all of the numbers moved in unison in a different way, that would be a real concern, but not that one number alone, given the actions we've already taken.

Moderator: Next up is Jessica from FOX 5.

Mayor: Jessica, just say that again. Couldn't hear you well.

Question: So, I tried to ask you, do you have a comment? We know that the New York Civil Liberties Union and the Legal Aid Society is suing the City and the NYPD for police brutality during the protests following the killing of George Floyd. Do you have a comment?

Mayor: Look, Jessica, first of all, it's a lawsuit. So I'm certainly not going to go into any detail when there's a litigation matter. I'd only say this, from what I've heard of the lawsuit's allegation, it doesn't sound right at all to me. You know, there's been a conscious effort for seven years now to change the relationship between the NYPD and communities, with a neighborhood policing strategy, with de-escalation training, with implicit bias training. We've seen a fundamental change, many, many fewer arrests, many fewer gun discharges, much less incarceration. This has been going on for seven years. So clearly what we want and what we believe in is a better and more peaceful relationship between the NYPD and the community. I think that evidence is clear. So again, I'm not going to speak to the details of the lawsuit, but I think the underlying concept just isn't fair. Go ahead. Jessica?

Question: Yeah. That's it. Thank you.

Moderator: Next up we have Julia from the New York Post.

Question: Hey, how are you doing?

Mayor: Okay, how are you?

Question: Good. So there was a woman who was shoved onto the subway tracks Friday morning. Thank God she was okay, but it appeared to be a random attack by a mentally ill man with a long criminal history. This at a time when serious crime, including rape and murder are up underground, despite decreased ridership. What is Thrive NYC doing to address the mentally ill homeless, especially those underground? And Sarah Feinberg has called for more police. Would you respond to that call?

Mayor: NYPD is always updating where it needs to put officers according to the facts. That's the whole idea of CompStat. So if we see additional needs in the subways, NYPD is always ready to make those adjustments. I'll leave that to Commissioner Shea to speak about specifically. In terms of Thrive, Thrive is here to cover the whole range of mental health challenges. And it begins with giving all New Yorkers, including their loved ones, the ability to reach out via 8-8-8-NYC-WELL, and connect anyone to mental health services. And that might be someone who's having a simpler problem or someone who's had a historic problem making sure we can get them the more intensive support they need. And there's a lot of work with Thrive, working directly with the NYPD to make sure that mental health professionals are available to address more serious problems. So that's – we've seen obviously, a huge uptick in the amount of New Yorkers turning to Thrive across the spectrum. And I want to encourage that. I want to encourage anyone if there's someone in your life with a problem, pick up that phone and call 8-8-8- NYC-WELL, so we can get the help that you need. Go ahead.

Question: Well the Mayor's Management Report did find a big uptick in folks calling that hotline, but there was actually – they missed the goal of connecting people to services. So do you think Thrive is doing enough to actually get services to these folks who are in distress?

Mayor: I don't have that part of the Mayor's Management Report in front of me to speak to it specifically, but I can say unquestionably the whole concept. I mean, remember that before Thrive, there was not a single place to turn. Now there is, and we've seen a huge number of examples of people getting connected to services effectively. Where for some reason it doesn't happen, we need to drill down and figure out why not, and go back and do our best to fix that. Sometimes it's obviously hard to maintain the connection to people and make them willing to receive services. But overall, what we're seeing is a lot of outreach from New Yorkers, especially during the pandemic and a lot of people being connected to services. We're always going to keep improving upon that as we go along.

Moderator: We have time for one more. And with that, we'll go to Derek from WABC.

Question: Hi, good morning. I will make this quick. We are reporting from a private school in Forest Hills that reopened this morning. And the principal was talking about the fact that, you know, now that they're in a yellow zone, they have to do the mandatory weekly, random testing just like public schools have to do. And this may be a question better for the Governor, but while

I have you, I want to know to your knowledge will private schools get any help paying for these mandatory COVID tests?

Mayor: Yeah, Derek here's what I know so far, our City Department of Health will work with any non-public school to help them get the actual test materials, you know, the tools for the test, if you will. We'll make sure they get that for free and provide them the support to work out how they would administer it. Each school will have their own approach. A lot of schools are going to use their own school personnel or own school nurse, for example. But unquestionably any non-public school with a question can turn to the City Department of Health, get support, get help, and get the actual tests. Go ahead.

Question: About charter schools. I have someone who reached out to me, he's an administrator in a charter school, and he was concerned because even though the public schools have to do this weekly random testing, the charter schools, I guess don't have that requirement. And just want to know why that is, especially when some of the charter schools do share the same building as a traditional public school?

Mayor: I'll turn to the Chancellor, I want to remind you a lot of charter schools went all remote. So that obviously changes the equation. But again, we're ready to work with any school that is in-person to ensure that they maximize testing. And obviously for parents, for staff, for kids, testing is also widely available for free in all communities outside of school hours. But go ahead Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you. So it's a little baffling, the question. I think obviously the executive orders cover all schools in the zones but if there is a charter school, that's co-located with a Department of Education school, they're considered part of the building. They are part of the random testing. So we'll dig a little deeper into that as well. And it would be helpful if we knew what charter school so we could clarify for that administrator as well.

Mayor: Thank you very much Chancellor. Look everyone as we conclude today, I just want to say this, again look at what the city has done. Look at what our schools have done. It's amazing. And it is about the everyday heroism of New Yorkers. And, you know, some history is written by famous names, but the most profound history is written by everyday people. And they may not get famous for what they did individually, but they'll I hope, be rightfully famous for what we all did together as New Yorkers. Every time someone wears a mask and every time someone practices social distancing, all the basic things, every time someone gets tested, it helps us move forward. But there's also been a heroism, you saw this weekend. Almost 200,000 people coming out early to vote because they care. And because they believe in our democracy. So this is what gives me faith that we'll get through whatever's thrown at us. We have some challenges right now, unquestionably but that incredible by every day New Yorkers is what's going to ensure that we prevail. Thank you, everybody.

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