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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. More good news today in our fight against COVID. We keep passing milestones just constantly. This is really, really important – New York City, stepping up to beat back COVID. Another milestone today, we have passed 8 million vaccination doses in New York City – over 8 million from day-one and climbing as we speak, because of an extraordinary outreach effort all over the five boroughs. So, here's the official number – 8,062,074 vaccinations have been given since the beginning of our effort. What works? What works is taking it to the streets, going out into communities. The mobile vaccination sites, the buses, the vans, the pop-up sites in public housing and houses of worship – all of these things have worked. We're going to have regular updates on how each of these pieces is really encouraging people. And I keep hearing reports from the good folks out there doing the work of reaching New Yorkers that it really is for so many people about convenience. It's about just that right moment to get vaccinated. It's about the moment where someone really looks you in the eye and says it's time, we can help you, we can answer your questions. Obviously, the incentives – all of this is working. It's working and this is why COVID keeps being reduced, and reduced, and reduced in New York City. You're going to see it in the indicators in a few minutes. So, every time we got to talk about fighting back COVID, winning this final battle against COVID, we get to talk about recovery, and that means a recovery for all of us. That means doubling down on the vaccination effort, and bringing our economy back, and getting back to normal, and leaving COVID behind us. We have to get that into our minds now, it's time to leave COVID behind and make the adjustments back to the lives we knew, but make things better.

Today, I'm going to talk to colleagues and government about that very idea of how we restore local democracy in this state and move forward. I'm going to be joining the New York State Association of Counties – they're meeting in Rhinebeck later on today – to talk about common. Cause he, these are county executives who have done heroic work. I want to really give them the praise they deserve. They've had to fight COVID often with very limited resources and they've done a remarkable job of it all over the state. This gathering is bi-partisan – it's upstate and downstate together. It's folks working together in common interest to beat back COVID, as we did together. Freedom to vaccinate – we all stood together in a bipartisan manner to demand freedom to vaccinate from Albany. That's why so many seniors got their shots. That's why so many first responders got their shots. The effort to get federal aid directly to localities, which, thank God, worked in the stimulus, allowing us to do the work, to bring our cities, our towns, our counties back.

So, this gathering is to me a great example of what we need more of in this state and in this country, is bipartisanship with a key focus on moving forward – not living in the past of COVID,

but moving forward. So, it's time to restore local control. It's time for full democracy to return to New York State. There's still time for the Legislature to do it and that's what we'll be talking about today at this gathering.

All right. Now, our recovery for all of us means having tremendous talent in all the right places to bring us forward as a city. And I want to talk to you today about a transition that we'll be making in our administration – one great talent being replaced by another and helping us to move forward. This has to do with the City's Law Department, which alone would be one of the largest and highest impact law firms in America if it were a standalone entity. It's an extraordinarily prestigious place. It's filled – the Law Department of the City of New York has incredibly talented, committed lawyers, and staff who work for us every day. We don't often get to see their work out in the open, but I want to thank everyone at the Law Department for what you do. It's unbelievably important to the people of this city. And you've been heroic during COVID. Incredible effort over the last couple of years from our Corporation Counsel Jim Johnson. I'm going to talk about his many achievements in a moment. Jim is going to be moving on next month to take on an exciting and important new position as the Chief Operating Officer of the Trinity Church, which has such a big impact on this city. But first, I want to talk about who will succeed, Jim, because she is an extraordinary public servant.

I have worked with so many people over these last eight years. I've learned who really has the answers, who has the know-how, who has the creativity, who gets things done. And all through this City government – 380,000 employees – I've identified the most talented, most effective people. One of them, unquestionably, is Georgia Pestana. Georgia has been the go-to person on so many issues. I have – in many, many conference calls, meetings, I've known the decisive moment is turning to Georgia and saying, what do you think Georgia? What should we do? And that's often where I get the best and clearest answer. She has devoted her entire career to serving the people in New York City. And I want to emphasize that – her entire adult life, she has served the people in New York City, and I appreciate that deeply. She rose up through the ranks in the Law Department. She will be the first Corporation Counsel to have emerged from the rank and file of lawyers in the Department who worked her way up to the very highest job. And I think that's an incredible statement and an encouragement to all the good people that do the work in that department every day. Many, many achievements over the last eight years, but one I want to highlight – we had to save public housing. We had a very complex dynamic dealing with the Trump administration – many, many challenges. One of the key reasons that we were able to save public housing in New York City and move forward was the work of Georgia Pestana. She was absolutely indispensable. And the progress we're making now in NYCHA is in large measure due to her efforts. So, someone of extraordinary ability and experience ready to lead this department. She also will be a history-maker. Georgia Pestana will be the first woman in the history of New York City to lead our Law Department. She will be the first Latina in the history of New York City to lead our Law Department. She is someone who really understands the life of the people of this city, including our rich immigrant tradition, because her own parents immigrated from Cuba. So, she is someone who brings the personal perspective on top of the extraordinary legal skill and the great judgment. I cannot think literally of a better person to help New York City's recovery move forward, leading our Law Department. My pleasure to introduce our new Corporation Counsel Georgia Pestana.

Incoming Corporation Counsel Georgia Pestana: Thank you, Mayor. I'm deeply honored to be nominated to be the City's 80th Corporation Council. I really thank you for the opportunity. I admit to feeling a little bit in awe at the significance of being the first woman and the first Latina to propose – to lead a department with such a long history. When I started at the Law Department right out of law school, I never dreamed that I would be there 33 years later and – or sitting in this seat, hearing the Mayor of the City of New York nominate me to be the next Corporation Council. Over the years, I worked in a variety of positions and levels, first as a brand-new lawyer out of law school, awaiting admission to the bar, then as a trial lawyer, then as a class action litigator, to supervising other lawyers and professional support staff, managing a division that handled thousands of cases. And then, most recently, supervising a number of different divisions with different practice areas. And in each of those positions, I got to learn more and about different practice areas and develop my skills as an attorney.

For the past six years or so, I've been the First Assistant Corporation Counsel that functions more or less as a COO, and that gave me a lot of exposure to the Mayor and the City agencies, as well as the other elected officials who are also my clients. At every level, there was more to learn and new challenges to take on and problems to solve. The people I've gotten to work with at the Law Department are not just exceptionally talented and skillful, but also kind, and caring, and committed to doing what is best for the city. Their professionalism and excellence have helped the City weather this really difficult year and will certainly help the City continue on its recovery and ensure that it is a recovery for all of us, as the Mayor says.

I know what it's like to be a lawyer for the City at every level. Every day is different from the next, full of challenges and new legal issues and problems to solve – wins, losses, settlements, decisions to be made, advice to be given. Every day is different and stimulating. I'm grateful to all the supervisors I've had and to the Corporation Councils that I've had the privilege to work with, particularly Zach Carter, who promoted me to my current position; and to Jim Johnson, who has so ably led the office in this difficult time. I learned from everyone, and that daily learning and growth and collaboration with smart, dedicated people not just within the Law Department, but throughout the City, and the Mayor's Office, and the agencies and the offices of other elected officials, and advocacy groups, and some of our regular institutional litigants – that's why I'm still at the Law Department after 33 years and also why I know that – despite being a little bit in awe, I know that I am up to being the chief legal officer of the City of New York, and I will make other women and long-serving City employees proud and will make the City proud. Thank you again, Mayor, for a nominating me.

Mayor: Thank you, Georgia. Georgia, I'm so happy that you'll be taking on this role. And we have had such a close working relationship, I have tremendous faith in you. And get ready for an exciting six months ahead, seven months ahead as we bring back New York City. So, thank you so much.

Incoming Corporation Counsel Pestana: Looking forward to it.

Mayor: Now, let me just take a moment to thank Jim Johnson. He's done really outstanding work as our Corporation Council. When I first talked to Jim about taking on the role, I did not know we would be handling a pandemic. He has been a steady strong leader throughout. All

departments played a crucial role in helping us to fight back COVID, helping us to develop strategies and approaches that were necessary. You can't make things like this work on fighting back a global pandemic – you can't do it without extraordinary advisers and smart legal minds. Jim Johnson played that role beautifully. But he did know when he got into the role that he would be dealing with the vagaries and challenges of the federal government. And he spent a lot of time fighting back absolutely inappropriate attacks from the Trump administration. So many attacks on our efforts to work with and respect and help immigrants. The ludicrous attack on New York City and other cities as “anarchist cities.” And yet, it seems surreal now, but looking back then, it was a real threat to our federal funding and our ability to do the work we had to do. Jim successfully fought back all of these attacks with his colleagues. He also played a crucial effort – excuse me, a crucial role in our police reform efforts and putting out a very important report at the end of last year on additional reforms we have to make, which are being implemented right now.

So, just want to express my thanks to Jim for a job well done at a crucial time in New York City history. He goes on now to Trinity Church, one of the great historic institutions of New York City and one that happens to have a multi-billion-dollar endowment. And he is going to, as Chief Operating Officer, use that power and those resources to create affordable housing, to fight for reform and continued efforts at racial equity. He is going to take his talents and continue to contribute to the city and I'm very, very happy about that. So, Jim, thank you for all you've done for us and good luck ahead.

Okay. Now, talk about good luck ahead for all of us, our indicators keep showing that we are doing the right thing. We're making our own luck by doing the right thing in this city, by going out there getting vaccinated. You can see the impact. Here we go. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 59 patients. Just wonderfully low, let's keep driving it down. Confirmed positivity, 20.34 percent. Hospitalization rate – today's number, 0.79. Again, 0.79 per 100,000 – that's tremendous progress. Now – excuse me, number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – today's report, 385 cases. So, continued progress, because of vaccination. Number three, percentage of people testing city-wide positive for COVID-19 – today's report, seven-day rolling average, 1.08 percent. Keep getting vaccinated, New York City. Let's get that below one percent. We obviously can do it, let's double down now and go even farther.

A few words in Spanish now, and on the topic of our new Corporation Council, the new head of our Law Department.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

So, good news for all of us. Now, let's turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Good morning. We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we are joined by Georgia Pestana, Incoming Corporation Counsel; Dr. Jay Varma, Senior Advisor on Public Health; Health Commissioner, Dr. Dave Chokshi; and Dr. Mitch Katz, President and CEO of

New York City Health + Hospitals. Our first question of the day goes to Lisa Rosner from CBS New York.

Question: Hi, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Lisa. How are you doing today?

Question: Good, good. It's Lisa, just for the record.

Mayor: I'm sorry, Lisa. Allow me to formerly correct the record, Lisa.

Question: Thank you, Mayor. The question is how are COVID vaccinations going with children? And what are the efforts that are being employed to mitigate hesitancy?

Mayor: Okay, I'm going to turn to our doctors. But to say that the initial effort – it's obviously very new, but very exciting to reach the 12 to 15-year-olds has gone really, really well. A lot of energy out there. A lot of parents are ready, willing, and able to bring their kids in to get vaccinated. I think what we're seeing so far with the youngest kids who can get vaccinated is the same thing we've seen overall. Majority of people clearly want to get vaccinated. Some have questions, some need answers, some just need convenience and, you know, some urging on. So, so far so good, but let me turn to Dr. Chokshi and then see if Dr. Varma or Dr. Katz want to add.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And thanks for this important question. Yes, we are making good progress with respect to vaccinating children and adolescents. As of last week, we had surpassed 50,000 youngsters just between the ages of 12 and 15, who had been vaccinated. And we expect that to increase by tens of thousands over the coming days and weeks. So, that's great progress. But as the Mayor said you know, our commitment is to make sure that parents have all of their questions answered by the sources that they are used to turning to, particularly community pediatricians who we've been working with often on a practice by practice basis, to make sure they have not just the vaccine, but the information that they need to answer parents' questions. Along with our colleagues at the Department of Education who have really helped us in terms of the communication channels that they have for parents. So, we're seeing a good clip thus far and we'll keep pushing forward and making it as easy as possible for children to get vaccinated.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Varma, want to add anything?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Nothing for me.

Mayor: Dr. Katz, anything to add? Oh, we lost Dr. Katz. Okay. I guess he has nothing to add then. Go ahead, Lisa.

Question: Okay. And are there any – thank you. And are there any specific campaigns in the schools? You talked about working with the DOE, is there anything you can elaborate on here? And what are the goals that you're trying to hit by say, August so you can really have a safe school year?

Mayor: Lisa, I will tell you that we're really, really happy that now we can reach these younger kids. We're going to be doing extensive efforts. I know a lot of schools are already doing them to encourage kids get vaccinated, to speak to parents, let them know how important it is. The fact is that we've got, thank God a lot of time. It's still May, we've got all of June, all of July, all of August. This is going to be very, very extensive efforts throughout communities. And I think we're going to see the same pattern. The more outreach we do, the more impact we're going to make. So, we'll have more to say soon on how that specific efforts going to go, but I'm very confident we're going to have a really high percentage of kids vaccinated before the new school year opens.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Jeff Mays from the New York Times.

Question: Hey. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Jeff, how you been?

Question: Good. Thank you. I had a quick question. I'm wondering in terms of quality of life issues, I'm wondering what's happening with the effort around fireworks prevention? This was a big issue last summer with lots of people complaining about really loud noises. And also Eric Adams today is unveiling a plan to stop, you know, dirt bikes and ATVs on city streets. So, I'm wondering like, what are you doing about those two issues? And, you know, have quality of life issues, have you been able to focus on those as much because of the pandemic? Or is there a plan to address some of these issues that are, that are coming up and that are vexing New Yorkers?

Mayor: Jeff, I'll try and pull that together cleanly. Look, job one was to make this city healthy again and get people vaccinated and bring back the life of this city and create a recovery environment. We've got that going now. We are turning more and more to quality of life issues. You may have seen, if not we'll get to you, the NYPD very energetically proved that they are finding various motorcycles, dirt bikes, off-road vehicles, anything that shouldn't be on our streets, they're confiscating them. And they're crushing them as they've done in the past to send a message that if you use these things, if you bring them in New York City where they're illegal, they will be taken and you won't have them anymore. So, that's been done very, very clearly. A lot of complaints are coming in and including information about where to find where they're stored so we can get them and get rid of them. So, this has definitely been a focus for NYPD. Fireworks, we've talked about as well. We've got a lot more proactive efforts this year, based on what we learned last year, to disrupt the supply coming into the city. So, that is already underway. Go ahead, Jeff.

Question: Thank you. Mr. Mayor, this year, the Democratic primary is in June. And you know the winner of that is usually the likely mayor just given the demographics of the city. I'm wondering, is there a transition process – is that going to be different for you this time around given that we'll know in June who the next mayor is likely to be? And also in light of the pandemic, is there going to be a different transition process or a longer transition process? Have you given any thought to that?

Mayor: Jeff, you won't be surprised to know that right now I'm focused on, you know, beating back COVID and fostering this recovery. We got plenty of time to think about transition. I do think you're right that, especially at this moment in history that the Democrat is overwhelmingly likely to win. And I'm looking forward to working with whoever is the Democratic nominee. But I think we also have to be mindful that until the people speak in November, you can only do so much transition. So, when we get to that moment, we'll start figuring it out, but there's plenty of time to create a good and positive transition. What I'm obsessed with is beating back COVID now and creating a full steam for this recovery, full head of steam for this recovery. So, that I can hand off this office on December 31st, passed the baton with a lot of momentum to the next mayor. That's my focus right now.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: Good, Henry. How you been?

Question: I'm good. I'm good. I want to ask you a question about September. A lot of parents were taken by surprise. The DOE was going to have series of meetings with parents in the next week or so. Couldn't this decision have been reached after some consultation with parents' groups and with parent forums? Because a lot of parents are raising the issue or making the point that the pandemic, with all of its misery, has also created an opportunity for schools to offer a kind of parallel alternative with kind of remote makeup, particularly for AP classes, which not every school has. It seems like you're kind of just tossing out stuff that's been learned of course in this past year plus and rejecting it?

Mayor: No, I disagree obviously with that. We're taking all the lessons, Henry that we've learned, and we're going to be applying them as we've talked about for months now, with more extensive digital education, keyed off of in-person instruction. So, getting the best of both worlds. But you need in-person instruction. There's been a huge amount of consultation with parents for months and months. We have a very clear sense of parents' needs and parents' concerns. I absolutely believe that we can come back, take the lessons we've learned, improve the education of our kids based on those lessons. I think it's the right time to make clear to parents how it's going to go. I think the changes with COVID are clearer and clearer. And September is thankfully a way off, and we have plenty of time to consolidate those gains. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Well, I think you're going to find as you have more of these forums with parents in the next week or two, that there are several who are going to be disagreeing with you. That's the only question I had for today. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning.

Mayor: Hey, Michael. How are you?

Question: I'm all right. How are you doing? I, you know, I – it's been a first time in maybe, you know, I'm remiss and missing stuff in the transcript that I'd heard the word bipartisan from you. And I'm just wondering any thoughts on whether or not you might run for governor once your terms up? That idea has been floated, it's bouncing around there. I was just wondering if you can update on the status of that?

Mayor: Nothing, nothing to say there, Michael. I'm focused on fighting COVID, I'm focused on a recovery for all of us, period. No plans to report to you. Now on the question of bipartisanship, I do want you to go back and look at transcripts. I've talked about bipartisanship many times, including when we fought for freedom to vaccinate. That was a very bipartisan effort around the state. This is part of why I'm going to meeting with the county executives, because we all worked shoulder to shoulder for the freedom to vaccinate for our seniors and for our first responders. We worked shoulder to shoulder to get federal aid, to not just go to states, but go to localities. You know, we worked shoulder to shoulder and are working shoulder to shoulder to restore local control and normal democracy in the State of New York. So, there's a lot of good common interests, upstate, downstate, Democrat, Republican. Go ahead, Michael.

Question: Thanks, Mr. Mayor. The other question I had, I think is probably best suited for the Health officials on the call. I'm wondering if, you know, as far as COVID testing goes in the city are, you know, we're seeing the percentage of positive results go down. Are we seeing the number of people getting tested also decline? And if so, what are the implications of that? Could they possibly be playing a role in that? Do we want people to continue even post vaccination to get tested at the levels we were seeing you know, prior to such a high level of vaccinations?

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi, then Dr. Varma.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thanks so much. And yes, this is an important question with respect to the role of testing going forward. We are seeing testing start to decline in New York City. But this is also expected given how many people are now fully vaccinated where testing just plays a much different role. Once you were fully vaccinated, the only time that testing for COVID is recommended is if you are symptomatic or if you're part of a workplace or other mandatory testing program. So, we do expect that that level of testing that we had sustained over the last few months to start to decrease. But I would emphasize for people who remain unvaccinated, testing remains a very important part of our layered approach to keeping people safe. And so, we do continue to recommend testing frequently, if you are unvaccinated. It's one more reason why getting vaccinated is so important.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Varma?

Senior Advisor Varma: Yeah. Thank you very much for the question. As you know last year we had set a target to achieve a very high level of testing in the city. And the main reason that we had done that is because the only major tool that we had from the public health approach was to have testing and tracing. Now as Dr. Chokshi has discussed, we have an incredibly powerful

tool, vaccination. So, those people who are fully vaccinated don't need to participate in the routine testing that we have, unless it's already mandated by your employer. So, really we want to continue to have high levels of testing, but targeted primarily at those who are unvaccinated, or that small proportion of vaccinated people who become symptomatic. So, we are seeing a decrease, but that's very much expected with the high levels of vaccination that we have and the much lower levels of COVID that we have in the city.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Our next question goes to David Rodriguez from Telemundo 47.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, everyone. As we saw, you mentioned today, Georgia Pestana will be the new lawyer for the City. I wanted that you explain to us more about it and I would really appreciate it that Georgia Pestana, if she has any – a few words in Spanish, I would really appreciate her support to the community, and her expectation in the new position.

Mayor: I will start and then Georgia will use – whatever she feels like comfortably in Spanish, speak from the heart. David, I think, it is so important to recognize this is one of the most prestigious legal positions in the legal capital of America. Here we are in a place that is legendary for having created some of the greatest figures in American legal history. Here we are at a place with some of the most prominent law firms in America based here. The New York City Law Department stands right there, shoulder to shoulder with the greatest legal institutions in this country. And the fact that it will be run by a Latina, the fact that it will be run by a child of Cuban immigrants is very powerful. It speaks to progress. It speaks to change. Georgia is an absolutely outstanding lawyer and she's one of the clearest thinkers anywhere I've met in government, but she also does bring the experience and understanding of what our immigrant communities go through, understanding of what our Latino community goes through. And that informs her actions and makes her, I think, a particularly sensitive and compassionate leader as well. So, Georgia, you can say English, Spanish, both what this feels like, what this means to you at this moment and what it means for the community.

Incoming Corporation Counsel Pestana: [Pestana Speaks in Spanish] I'm very grateful – now opposite the Mayor. You're speaking Spanish, and I'm very grateful for the nomination and because I've spent the last 33 years working in and fighting for the city and I intend to continue working and fighting for the city. It's – I'm speechless at how honored I am. And thank you for the question. And I look forward to doing more for the city.

Mayor: Amen, David, go ahead.

Question; [Inaudible] the position. I know that that means a lot for the Latinos here in New York. Mayor, I have another question about vaccination. As we know, at some point there was a lot of Hispanic people that was not going to get vaccinated. Do you have any idea, any numbers that give to us an idea how he's going, vaccination in those Hispanic communities?

Mayor: Yeah. I'll give you the overview and then I'm going to turn to Dr. Chokshi, who will tell you what he can tell you off the bat and get you additional facts and statistics after. Here's what I'd say, David, we have seen real progress. In the beginning, we saw a really – troubling is the right word for it – a troubling skew ethnically, racially that was not acceptable. Disparity in who was getting vaccination. We went to work addressing that. We went out into communities in multiple languages. We did a lot of advertising in Spanish. We had a lot of Spanish speakers out there doing outreach directly to the people of our communities. We put sites everywhere, houses of worship, public housing, you name it, just pop pop-up sites, mobile sites. I was up in the Bronx a couple of weeks ago with Congress Member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at the vaccine bus in the Bronx, on a street corner, generating a lot of excitement, people coming over saying, now they were ready to get vaccinated. So, we're going to keep doing that. We've got more to finish because clearly, we got a – we still have a gap to address, but it's a lot better than what we experienced in the beginning. Dr. Chokshi, you want to add?

Commissioner Chokshi: You described it well, Mr. Mayor, I'll just add a couple of points. First, to emphasize how much outreach to the Latino community here in New York City has been central to our efforts. And it's revolved, as the Mayor has said, around convenience and conversation. Convenience, with respect to making sure that the places that we know people wanted to get vaccinated have enough supply of the vaccine, whether it's a family doctor or a hospital or one of our City sites but also equipping those very same practices with the information in Spanish language to have those conversations with their own patients. And that relates to the other aspect of it, which is those one-on-one conversations that really make the difference in terms of getting people more comfortable with vaccination. We've worked with community leaders and faith leaders particularly in the Latino community and also targeted many of our public awareness campaigns in Spanish to reach those populations. And what we're finding is that 45 percent of adults who identify as Hispanic or Latino have gotten at least one dose of the vaccine, which is great progress. And I will say it's an area where we've seen a particular increase in recent weeks. But we do have more to do. And we're committed to these last miles of our vaccination campaign.

Mayor: Thank you, Dave. Go ahead.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Nolan Hicks from the New York Post.

Question: Hey, good morning, everybody.

Mayor: Hey, Nolan. How you've been?

Question: I'm alright, Mr. Mayor. I was – you know, I'm alright, it's been a good morning.

Mayor: All right. I'm happy about that, Nolan.

Question: You know, I'm properly caffeinated [inaudible] the world's going on. How are you doing Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: You know, Nolan, I think caffeination is the answer to many problems. I want to – I want to start a new free caffeine plan for New York City. I think it would really move us forward. That's a recovery for all of us. Let me tell you.

Question: Certainly, more than your ideas for overhauling the Mets' offensive lineup. I'd like to talk about crime, which is, you know, remains a massive issue. You've said previously that, you know, the City's spending on violence interrupters, and these redeployments of staff would make a dent and we'd see the dent in the numbers and the number of shootings month over month, we're now at 101 percent over where we were at this point last year, which shows that the shooting surge that erupted last summer continues unabated. When are we going to see results from your shooting plan?

Mayor: I think everything that's been laid in is going to be felt more – literally more week by week. We had 850 officers graduate from the academy a couple of weeks ago, they're going to be joined by another 600 or so in June. The investments in Cure Violence are building up right now, so that we'll have double the number of Cure Violence staff for this summer. The court system, back this week for the first time in over a year. Let's really factor that into the equation. That's going to make a big impact. We have a number of major gang prosecutions that are going to be played out in a matter of weeks now. All of this is going to come together rapidly. So, I think we're going to see, over weeks, the impact of all of this happening. We got a lot of challenges, Nolan. I'm not diminishing the challenges. I do believe these strategies are going to have a very important impact on reducing violence and shootings. Go ahead.

Question: To the point, what is, what is that –

Mayor: Can't hear you. Nolan. Are you there?

Question: I'm here. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah, there you go.

Question: All right. Fair enough. Just to follow up, what is your metric for success? Is it shootings, you know, the increase of shootings only being up 50 percent year over year? Is it flat? Like what will you call a successful summer when it comes to shootings?

Mayor: Nolan, we're turning a tide from a global pandemic and a perfect storm of societal disconnect. I really think we have to understand this is a once in a lifetime crisis we've been through and we're seeing it all over the country, and you know it. Every city has gone through something like this. I believe success will be measured by constantly putting the building blocks in place, and then seeing them have more and more effect. And we will turn things around. I also believe recovery itself will make us safer. Recovery equals safety, safety equals recovery, and the recovery part is undoubted at this point. The economy is coming back strong. We're going to have our schools back full strength in September. You see more and more activity in the city. That's going to help our police. That's going to help our Cure Violence Movement, our Crisis Management System, the pieces come together.

Moderator: We have time for two more questions today. The next question goes to Juan Manuel from NY1.

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

Mayor: Good, good. How are you doing, Juan Manuel?

Question: Pretty good. And also caffeinated –

Mayor: Highly caffeinated.

[Laughter]

Question: Highly, really highly caffeinated. So, Mr. Mayor, the first CFB-sponsored Republican debate for mayor is tonight. Are you going to be watching and what are your thoughts on the candidates? We know that Fernando Mateo fundraised for you in the past.

Mayor: How long – what is the total time of that debate? Is that like an hour or two hours? What is it?

Question: It's going to be an hour.

Mayor: An hour. That's an hour I'm going to save for my life by not watching.

[Laughter]

So, I am absolutely positively not watching that debate. Look, again, we will always respect the will of the people and anything can happen in this world, but I am 100 percent certain that a Democrat will win. We have a very strong field of candidates. I am not going to put my time into watching that debate. Continue, Juan Manuel.

Question: And, you know, that I ask you every week, at least I try, right.

Mayor: You get points for persistence.

Question: I know. I know. So, let me ask the question in a different way. Well, I don't know if there are new thoughts that you have regarding the democratic field for mayor. And also, are you planning – because I'm sure you're going to be voting – are you planning on ranking five different candidates [inaudible] –

Mayor: Yes. Absolutely, will rank five candidates. And this is a great chance for me to do a public service announcement. I want to urge all New Yorkers, look, this system works if you own it, if you use it to the fullest. And look, we've seen so many elections around this country, decided by a hundred votes or 50 votes or four votes, it's just, let's get this clear. If you don't rank all five, you diminish your vote. You might waste your vote. You literally might be throwing away your vote because the way the system works, if your first choice candidate doesn't make it,

your vote continues to have life and moves on to your second or your third or your fourth or fifth. So, it is imperative to fill out all five. Even if you don't love your fourth or fifth choice, who would you prefer compared to the others is the question. So, I am a hundred percent going to do that now. I am trying to figure out how to sort of spark and energize a 'Draft Juan Manuel Movement.' This is something I've been working on quietly. You're going to be seeing more on that coming up though.

Moderator: Our last question of the day goes to Yoav from The City.

Mayor: Yoav, we're not hearing anything here. Yoav? Are you on mute? Try unmuting, try again. Alright, [inaudible] one more or do we have another or not? Okay. We're going to stop with that. We're going to give Yoav one more chance going once, twice. Okay. We will conclude with another day where the evidence of the power of vaccination is clear. You see it in today's indicators. You see it in this great news, passing eight million vaccinations from day one. Help us everyone if you have not yet gotten vaccinated, this is the easiest time in the entire history of this vaccination drive to get vaccinated. And the incentives, the prizes we've been talking about all week are available. Go out and get them. 50 tickets to the Governors ball, three-day passes. Very exciting. Crunch Fitness, many other things. Go look at these incentives, go sign up, go get vaccinated. Thank you, everybody.

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