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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 25, 2020, 5:45 PM

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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON COVID-19

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I want to give everyone an update. This is another day where a lot is going on here in New York City of course, but also in Washington. That will mean a lot for us. I'm going to speak about that in a moment. I want to explain from the beginning how important I think it is to tell you information that I believe is 100 percent accurate, that I believe is crucial for New Yorkers to know, and to tell you information that sometimes will be tough to hear, other times, thank God, will be hopeful and inspiring information that will show just how many people are working hard together to address this crisis, how many people are working together here in the city, but also all the people around the country, and not only rooting for New York City, but are really stepping up to help us out. I'll tell you those stories and those facts and I'll tell you the facts when they're difficult to hear, but important for all New Yorkers to know.

What I'm always going to be careful about is not to tell you something if I am not certain it's accurate information. A lot of times we're going to see really fast changing developments, a lot of times we're going to have information that we do not think is complete because of this ever-changing situation or information that might be inadvertently misleading to New Yorkers instead of giving you the complete picture. My job is to always try and sort that out and do the best I can to level with you about the challenge and what we do about it, but also constantly tell you the good news to, all of the things that are being done to address this challenge.

One thing I believe very, very strongly is to be honest about the timeline here. It's been a lot of discussion in the last few days. You've heard people talk about the hope that we can get back to normal really quickly in this city and in this country. I want to tell you that we should not cling to that false hope. I want to get back to normal as much as anyone. And maybe after a period of time if we saw sustained progress, really, really had evidence of progress, we could have had that conversation. But we're seeing right now unfortunately, a growing challenge, a growing crisis that's clearly going to take us into April in a really tough situation and for everything we know now we're going to continue to deal with more and more challenges in April. And I have tried to be honest with everyone to not get into a situation where we let our guard down. We start to have false hopes. I think we're much better off being girded for battle and knowing the truth. So, I believe that April is going to be tougher than March. And I think at this point May could be tougher than April and people need to be ready for that. But the notion that everything might be fine by Easter, I don't know where on earth that idea comes from. Certainly, does not apply to anything we're seeing here in New York City. And again, if that situation ever changes, I will be the first to tell you, I assure you. What we're seeing right now is huge challenges and intense stress in particular on our hospital capacity, on the men and women who do such amazing work

in our healthcare system and clearly on the supplies and equipment that we need to make sure that we can keep moving forward.

We did get some good news in the last few days and that is very, very important to say. Supplies have come in from the federal government, from the state government and elsewhere that have certainly improved our situation this week. That'll help us get into next week. That is a Ray of light for sure. But we know we're going to have giant challenges ahead in terms of producing enough hospital space or enough personnel who are trained to help us in this crisis and that ongoing challenge with equipment and supplies. That's what we'll be dealing with for weeks and weeks ahead. The painful obligation I have every time I joined with you to tell you the overall numbers. And I will say every single time, these are human beings, these are families represented in these numbers. These are our neighbors. So, in New York City today, as of the official numbers from this morning, the last official count that we have, 17,856 cases, almost 18,000 at this point. Now at this point, we, our cases in New York city constitute about 54 percent – 54 percent of the total in the State of New York, and about 32 percent, almost a third of the cases in the United States of America. And very, very sadly now the death toll from coronavirus New York city has reached to almost 200.

What do we do? It's what we do every day. We work to make sure that we fight back and we stay ahead of this crisis and that, and we are winning that race against time for as many people as possible. And that starts with ventilators. This is going to be the single most valuable item, the single most valuable piece of equipment in this fight ahead. And we can say compared to last week, we've seen real progress. The 400 that came in yesterday from FEMA, the 2,000 we expect by the end of this week on top of that from the federal government, a big step in the right direction, but only one step more. We must receive and we must receive quickly. And that's what we're working on every single day. The goal for New York city is 15,000 ventilators. So, the numbers that we have from this week gets us about a sixth of the way there, and that is important, but we got a lot more to do and the sooner we get them, the better.

We still need the federal government to maximize the use of the defense production act. There's been some major steps forward in the last a day or two. FEMA has certainly been taking a more aggressive role in using the possibilities of defense production act, but nowhere near where we needed to go. And I've got to be clear that this is in everyone's interest everywhere in the United States of America. It's us today. It will be some other part of the country tomorrow. We need this production to be maximized for everyone's good. But on top of that, we have to be honest about the fact that even if the production occurs, the only way it will get to us in time on a sustained basis, is if the United States military gets involved much more deeply. I had a second round of conversations yesterday with the Defense Secretary and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to constantly update them on what we are facing here, to thank them for the supplies, and the troops that we're starting to get come in from the United States military to play a crucial role. There is some military presence now in New York City, and that's going to help us a lot. And that's going to give us everything from the extraordinary talent of our men and women in uniform, the supplies, the equipment, and also a real boost to all of our morale to see heroes from all over this country coming here to help New Yorkers, protect New Yorkers, and save New Yorkers.

That's a really positive sign, but we need to go to a much, much higher level and for the good of our nation we need the military to be directly involved in getting supplies all over this country on a really rapid basis, starting with those ventilators. Putting into play their extraordinary medical personnel on much higher level and bringing medical personnel, civilian medical personnel, from all over the country to serve here quickly. And then we will all together turn to support the next part of the country that deals with this challenge after our crisis is over. But I have to be clear, if the military is not mobilized on a higher level, I can't see a scenario where those supplies, that equipment, those personnel get where they need to go here in New York City in time. The only way we have a guarantee is with the active presence of the United States military.

Now, today in Washington, obviously there's been a real movement on the stimulus bill, although we are still waiting to confirm exactly what's going to be happening with it. We have seen a lot of detail come out today. And I have to say that I will talk in a moment about some of the things in the bill that are absolutely crucial for New York City and for the people of New York City and some of the things that went right. But I've got to first honestly talk about the thing that didn't go right and what has to be done to fix it. And that has to be addressed really quickly. Look, here's the truth. It was the majority leader of the U S Senate, Mitch McConnell, who stood in the way of real aid to New York City and New York state. That is just a fact. We know from all the negotiations that played out in recent days that all the other parties were willing to do more to support direct aid to New York City, direct aid to New York state, to keep our governments functioning at their current level.

Look, we are every single day doing more and more to address COVID-19. We are doing more and more to help people in need and the need keeps expanding all the time. At the same time, of course, our economy has ended up in a very difficult situation and our resources are plummeting. Our revenues plummeting. The, the money that we use to help people is drying up. So, what the most obvious thing in the world would've been to say, okay, we know, everyone in the country knows New York City is the epicenter of this crisis. Therefore, the state government, the city government in New York need all the help they can get to keep helping everyday people and to keep afloat everything else that we do. We need every other service of government to work, police and fire, and water, and sanitation, all the things we do. And that gets harder and harder if you have less and less money. So, it should have been one of the easiest no-brainers in the world for the U.S. Senate to include real money for New York City and New York state, in this stimulus bill, and yet it didn't happen. And we know why, because Mitch McConnell wouldn't let it happen. I don't understand how anybody, any public servant could live with themselves if they deprived the cities in the middle of the biggest crisis since the Great Depression, deprived us, deprived our state, of the money we need, giving New York City \$1 billion out of \$150 billion pool that they provide for the entire Country. But we are one-third of the cases in this country right now, someone do the math down there in Washington, in the Senate, Republican majority, someone do the math. They gave us less than 1 percent of the money that they were giving out to cities and states, and we have a third of the cases in the Nation – that is just immoral.

I'm going to call President Trump. I've spoken to President Trump several times about the stimulus bill, about what it means to New York City. I'm going to call President Trump and appeal to him – to intervene or to either fix this bill as it is or to guarantee that there will be

another stimulus bill in the coming weeks that will address this problem immediately. I reached out today to Senator Schumer, I reached out to Speaker Pelosi, spoke with both of them and I want to thank them because we all know they were the lead negotiators in achieving all the good in this legislation. The direct money that will be provided to families in need to working people who have lost their jobs, those extended employment benefits, the grants to small businesses. Senator Schumer, Speaker Pelosi made a priority of helping the American people and helping the people in New York City who are suffering and only because of their presence do those items end up in the legislation. I say thank you to them, but I know where the roadblock is on the money, we need to keep this City and the State going. I know it's Mitch McConnell and I'm going to appeal to President Trump who's from this city, who understands very personally just what's at stake here. I'm going to appeal to him to step in and fix this situation on behalf of all Americans and to make sure that all New Yorkers are safe.

I'm going to give you some quick updates on some other issues. We have in our regional enrichment centers for the Department of Education, we are providing – education and childcare for the children of our essential workers. And we've said from the beginning that we include those who work in Healthcare, our first responders, transit workers— starting this Friday, we're going to add to that list— workers in a number of other categories and this is something that can be added to at any point. We'll make adjustments to the regional enrichment centers on a regular basis as we experience everything happening in this crisis, and we determined the best way to proceed. So, starting on Friday, the children of grocery workers and pharmacy workers, the essential staff at groceries and pharmacies, their children will also qualify for regional enrichment centers. There are staff members at our Department of Health who were not previously covered they will now be covered. Essential staff from Staten Island Ferry and NYC Ferry will join other transit workers in having the ability to bring their children to those regional enrichment centers. Department of Environmental Protection essential staff, the people who made sure we get water, the people who make sure the sewer systems working among other things their children as well, and essential staff from Department of Probation. So that's an update and all of that will be activated for Friday.

I want also to talk to you about the activities out in our communities to make sure social distancing is being enforced, I want to thank New Yorkers. Overwhelming, I've talked to Police Commissioner constantly gotten statistics from numerous agencies I've gotten counts on how many inspections are done. What came from a number of encounters, thousands and thousands of encounters with every-day New Yorkers, meeting our enforcement agents, and the results are the same every single time. Overwhelmingly, New Yorkers are paying attention to social distancing rules they understand how serious it is, they understand it's about their health and their family's health and our whole City. So, overwhelmingly, we are seeing New Yorkers follow the rules. We do have some issues though, and we're going to be very open and honest about those issues when we have them. And that specific problem we've seen is in some parks, not all, some parks when it comes to basketball courts and every one of us who loves basketball and I'm one of them loves to go out and court and play a pickup game – or play with your family on the court. I want to differentiate in fact what's acceptable and what's not on a basketball court in the age of coronavirus. If you're a kid or adult who just wants to shoot hoops yourself, single, solitary, you can do that. Make sure you're socially distanced from the people around you. If you're a family that people live under the same roof and you want to play with each other on the basketball

court, that's fine. But what's not fine anymore is any kind of basketball game between people who do not live under the same roof, because, let's face it, it's a contact sport, people are going to get close together, it creates a danger. It does not mean social distancing, so here's what we're going to do. I've heard back from the Parks Department and the NYPD that they have found 80 locations – 80 courts around the city out of about 1,700 that, after repeated attempts to make sure everyone there understood what social distancing was, they did not get the response they wanted. And so, in those 80 locations, we're going to remove the basketball hoops and make it impossible, sadly, for people to play basketball there. That's what we have to do right now at those 80 locations. The courts will still be there for folks who want to do any other kind of recreation and we'll be enforcing that. But there will not be any basketball games because there will not be any basketball hoops. And as I said, there's about 1,700 locations total so that means about 1,600 more courts that we can leave intact, if people follow the rules. People don't follow the rules, we'll take the hoops down there. And if we have to end up closing off basketball courts across the board, we'll do it, if we have to. I don't want to do it. I want to see if we can get it right. I want to give people maximum options, but you'd got to follow the rules to matter of everyone's safety.

I also want to give you an update this'll be a daily reality until we get to the point that we believe all this work has been done in terms of our jail population. A lot of work is going on right now to ensure that any inmates who should be brought out of our jail system because of health issues or concerns will be any inmates who can be directly acted on by the City of New York and not pose a specific serious threat to community. But we want to make sure that those who can be released are, there will be some, as I said yesterday who will not be released because they do pose a threat or because for example, they've committed an offense related to domestic violence or sexual offenses and we're going to have to work with other agencies, district attorneys and the State to determine what would happen with a number of other inmates.

But as for the total today, by tonight 200 inmates will have been released, there will be more releases tomorrow—and we will give you that update as it occurs. By way of closing, I'll say a special thank you to folks who have been out there educating their fellow New Yorkers working with them. I gave you the example of one of the few things we've had a problem with those very specific basketball courts, but as you saw, that's not many out of the grand total in this City. But overwhelmingly what I've heard back from the Parks Department and NYPD is again, that cooperation from New Yorkers. I want to thank all of our park's workers and a special thank you to our park's enforcement patrol workers for all you do every day, but especially during this crisis. Thank you for educating people about social distancing. Thank you for enforcing a special thank you to all of the men and women at the NYPD who have become really experts in describing social distancing and enforcing it over the last few days and they've been doing a fantastic job. So, thank you to all the men and women at the NYPD, and to all the six other agencies that are out there doing this work. This, again, is how we keep our parks and playgrounds going. And thank you, it's making a big, big difference.

And look, I will conclude before I say a few words in Spanish and then we'll open up to questions. I'll conclude by saying just a point to everyone about this new reality we are living in – it is very easy to feel alone in a situation like this. But you really – even if you feel it, even if you feel the confusion and the uncertainty, I guarantee you you're not alone. First of all, there are

millions of us all feeling a lot of the same things. Second of all, there are literally hundreds of thousands of good people working every single day to protect you. Whether it's our first responders, our health care workers, our transit workers, and all those other essential workers, folks at the grocery stores and the pharmacies I mentioned earlier – so many people who are making it their business to get out there and help you live your life and protect you and your family. So, you may feel alone sometimes, but I guarantee you you're not. There are a lot of heroes out there who are going to help us save lives, and that's what we do here in New York City, that's a New York City tradition. Even in the toughest times, New Yorkers step up – in fact, a lot of people would say it's in crisis, in a moment like this. And New Yorkers are not at their very best and no one wishes for a time like this, but we've seen time and time again just how good New Yorkers can be even when our backs are against the wall. So, I just want to reassure everyone, you are definitely not alone and we will all get through this together.

Let me just say a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I would be happy now to turn to Olivia, and we will take questions from the media. Go ahead, Olivia.

Moderator: Quick programming note at the top – to ensure that we get to as many outlets as possible, we're going to limit it to one question per reporter and we'll come back around if we have time. So, with that, we're going to start with Kathleen from Patch. Kathleen, can you hear us?

Mayor: That's not working so far. Kathleen, last call. All right, we'll come back.

Moderator: Next up is Reema, from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Okay, great. Hi to everyone there. So, I have a question just about the Regional Enrichment Centers. Do you know what the total capacity is of the centers in terms of how many children came to go there? And then do you know what the latest attendance numbers were?

Mayor: I want to – I'm not sure if the Chancellor is on the line.

Moderator: He is on line.

Mayor: Chancellor, can you answer those questions? Chancellor, can you hear us? Go ahead. Chancellor, did you hear those questions?

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Can you repeat those questions, Reema, please?

Question: Yeah. Hi, Mr. Chancellor. So, I'm wondering what the total capacity in terms of how many kids total capacity is for the RECs and then do you know about the latest attendance members were to update us?

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, so we have a capacity of about 8,000 students at the moment. Today's attendance, we're still compiling that information, but I can see that a little less [inaudible] –

Moderator: Reema, I think you are typing.

Mayor: Yeah, Chancellor, you know, are you in a place where you can – we're getting a lot of background noise there.

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, it's not me.

Mayor: Okay. There you go. Go ahead.

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, so we're seeing that the uptake hasn't been as robust as we anticipated, and that's why the Mayor announced today that we're opening up capacity for additional people in those Regional Enrichment Centers. We have 32 sites in Brooklyn, 22 in Bronx, 20 in Queens, 15 in Manhattan and four in Staten Island and we're fully staffed and we have a we have about 5,000 volunteers that are staffing those centers. So, we're confident that we're going to be able to meet the need of whoever needs those, those centers. We have approximately 40,000 student capacity in those centers. So, we're going to keep ramping up and going to different tiers of first responders and your emergency workers, until we get to that 40,000 a student capacity number.

Mayor: Let me, let me add to Reema, that we understand this is an ever-evolving situation. So, what the Chancellor's told you is, you know, we're ready to go to a number like that. We're also ready if we don't find that demand at any given point, we can adjust for that as well. The thing, the important thing is to understand because it's about essential workers, that's really the crucial crux of this matter is making sure we are supporting those essential workers and giving them the option in terms of our kids. If they want to take advantage of it and we find a lot of pickup on it, we're going to be able to have the capacity we have now. We could even build it out more. If we find that there is not as much use of it, we'll of course be able to compress it if we need to. But important point is we will grow in whatever direction according to the level of need to make sure those essential workers can get to work and be really comfortable about where their kids are and what they're doing.

Chancellor Carranza: Mr. Mayor, if I can add one more caveat, late breaking information. So, today's enrollment was about 8,000 students. Okay. So, we have some capacity.

Mayor: Thank you, Chancellor.

Moderator: Back to Kathleen from Patch. Kathleen? Kathleen? Kathleen – okay, we'll come back to her. Next up is Julia, from the Post.

Mayor: Julia, can you hear us okay?

Question: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah, there you go.

Question: Okay. So, on the open streets, again, I believe that is supposed to be rolled out tomorrow, do you have any details for us?

Mayor: Yeah, we are finalizing with NYPD and other city agencies and the Council. As we said, it'll be up to two sites per borough. Key point is to make sure that we are confident about the enforcement levels. We are going to announce those sites, I think by the end of the evening. We're going to need one extra day to get them up and running because of some of the practical considerations. So, those will be open on Friday.

Moderator: Thanks, Julia.

Question: [Inaudible]

Moderator: Julia, can you repeat your question? We couldn't hear you.

Question: Yeah, sorry, Mr. Mayor, could you say what the enforcement will look like and can you tease expectations?

Mayor: Yeah, the enforcement is going to be similar to what we're doing with parks now. We have to make sure if we leave any official space for people to gather and we don't put enforcement with it, my fear has always been, it becomes like a new magnet for people to return to the way we all lived for all our lives until a week ago. And people started gathering and getting too close together. So, especially with a new site, which might attract a lot of interests, we want to make sure, whether it's NYPD, Parks, whatever way we configure it that there will be enforcement at the locations. And that we know all the other places that have to be enforced are covered as well. So that's what we're refining. Again, we'll have those sites shortly.

Moderator: Yoav is up next. Yoav?

Question: Yeah. Hi, Mr. Mayor. There was apparently there's a FEMA leadership briefing document, the Times obtained it, and it says that the City's more than 1,800 intensive care units are expected to be full by Friday. Just wondering if you can confirm that that's is that the right figure for the number of ICU, is that prognosis correct? And also, as far as the 400 ventilators, how quickly do those get mobilized? The ones we got up in the hands of, are they all entirely in the hands of hospitals?

Mayor: Yeah, that was – as you can imagine, Yoav, the days are – I can't really remember sometimes when one day ended and the next day began. But yesterday was – when I was at the warehouse in Brooklyn and they all went out yesterday – 100 to Health + Hospitals facilities

from that 400; 100 to Health + Hospitals facilities; 300 to all different types of voluntary hospitals, wherever the need was greatest. To your question about overall capacity, again, I'm going to be very, very clear that I am not going to get into details that are ever-changing. So, ICU's are not a fixed asset anymore. They used to be in the world we knew a few weeks ago and are not anymore. And Dr Katz is the person who most educated me on this point. He is going to be turning vast amounts of his buildings into ICU's He conceivably could have a hospital that's all ICU. So, there's a very fast evolving situation now, where we're going to make more and more and more beds that used to not be ICU beds into ICU beds. So, the notion of a fixed number is a thing of the past. It's going to be very dynamic of what we do know is if we've got the space the equipment, the supplies, the staff, we can create an ICU bed in any hospital facility and even outside of them as we go along. So, that's what we'll be doing. The ground rule I'll give you, and I'll be very clear about it, is I'll tell you every single day if we have what it takes to get through that day, that week and wherever we're looking for the week ahead. Right now, across our hospitals in New York City, we did get some good resupply both in terms of equipment and other supplies. We do have a huge number of professionals who are showing up doing what we need them to do and others who are joining. And we have the beds we need. That is the case today. That's the projection for this week into next week. But we remain concerned as we start April about capacity and we'll keep updating you on that as we go along.

Moderator: Alex, from The Daily Beast is up next. Alex.

Question: Hi. I have a question about Rikers Island. And thank you for taking my question. Legal Aid just sent out a press release saying that Rikers Island now has seven times the rate of the infection as the rest of the city. And I'm wondering if you guys have a plan on how you're going to deal with that. Are we going to open hospitals on Rikers? Is there going to be a separate place for, I mean, isolating prisoners? What, what is the plan going forward at this point?

Mayor: I'll start and then D Katz will – obviously, H + H runs Correctional health, so he'll speak to it. Okay. So, we start with the reality that there's about 6,000 fewer inmates in our Corrections system overall than six years ago and obviously, that means, especially on Rikers. So, we have more space we're dealing with, more ability to isolate, more ability to provide healthcare to what is a much smaller number of inmates. We also, as I said, by the end of today, we'll have 200 inmates who will have left because of the decisions we made directly related to this crisis. That number will keep growing as we go ahead and we're going to determine when that number stops, but it will keep growing in the short term with a particular focus on inmates who are really older, particularly over 70, and inmates who have preexisting conditions. There's a lot of work to do very quickly to get inmates out who would be appropriate to get out. We have to work in many cases with the state and or the DA's. But that is happening now rapidly. So, you'll see, I think substantial numbers over the next few days. Every time we get a single inmate out, it creates that much more space. And that many obviously each time there's one less inmate, it makes it easier on the medical personnel. So as to your core question about how health care is being provided by the correctional health folks, Dr. Katz –

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals: Anytime someone is symptomatic in the jail, we isolate them, as the Mayor has explained, because the population at Rikers is dramatically down. We have more space and we're opening up more wards. If

somebody is seriously symptomatic, we move them to Bellevue Hospital. That's a much better facility for taking care of someone who is very ill, then trying to create a Hospital on Rikers.

Moderator: Next step is Mark from CNN. Mark?

Question: Hey guys, how you doing today?

Mayor: Good Mark.

Question: I wanted to ask about the morgue situation right now in the city. From what I understand from that [inaudible] the briefing that you all were referencing like choosing hospitals who already reached capacity and that the rest of the city hospitals maybe at capacity by weeks end. I want you to talk a little bit about [inaudible] mobile morgue that's in front of Bellevue now and what that plan is for relieving that, and then where exactly does it stand right now? Are there enough morgues for the city hospitals? Is that going to be full by Friday [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, I'm not going to get into a lot of detail. We'll make sure our team gives you a lot of specifics. But let me say, I understand there's all sorts of documents that are being put out there. Some of them accurate, some of them inaccurate, some of them new, some of them old. I would just want folks, when you ask the question, just realize I'm going to be listening very carefully for whether it's something that has been confirmed as fact or is not fact. So the facts as I have heard them from folks in my administration are that we have capacity right now. We have capacity for the foreseeable future. We've been working with FEMA to ensure that we have additional capacity and we can handle what we have. As this crisis deepens, we'll keep updating you on the status of things, but right now we have the capacity, and in terms of any of the details, I'll have my team follow up with you.

Moderator: Josh from ABC-7, Josh?

Question: Hi there Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Josh.

Question: I wonder – you walk around the city now that almost serenity. It's empty everybody's inside, there's no traffic, if it was over 40 degrees warmer, it would feel like a summer weekend, but obviously we know what's really going on, But we don't have a picture of what's happening in the hospitals. And I wondered if maybe Dr. Katz or Dr. Barbot or somebody could sort of paint the picture of what it's like right now at Elmhurst or Kings County or even Columbia Presbyterian that, you know, how desperate is the situation right now? What does it feel like to walk in there and what are, you know, what [inaudible]?

Mayor: I'll turn to Dr. Katz and Dr. Barbot, but let me just give you the layman's answer first. I think it varies obviously by hospital, but I think what we can say right now is, again, every hospital has the personnel, the equipment, the supplies and the beds, but we know in a week or two it's going to be a much tougher situation. And I do think we see some real variation in terms

of some hospitals having a lot activity, others less, I think over time that will even out a lot more. But I think it's be a different experience depending on where you go. Go ahead, doctor.

President Katz: I think Mr. Mayor you've done a good job of expressing that there are hospitals like Elmhurst that have been very heavily impacted. There are other hospitals in our public system such as Coney Island that haven't had very many patients with COVID. But today we were able to transfer 30 patients, including 28 to them to help relieve our hospital at Elmhurst. I think the hardest struggles right now are psychological. This is a very difficult disease despite providing the very best of care, those people who are elderly and to have comorbid conditions especially are very much hurt by this illness. It is an illness right now with a major role of the hospital is to provide supportive care as doctors and nurses. We like it best when we can provide a medication that is known to be effective. In this case, we're using experimental treatments where they're available, but primarily we are supporting people until their immune system comes back. So you would see if you walked into Elmhurst, you would see a lot of heroic doctors and nurses who were working very long hours under challenging conditions. They are unfortunately seeing some of their patients die, which is always extremely difficult for doctors and nurses. We seek not only to provide all of the care, but we hope that it works and it's very difficult for us when it doesn't.

Moderator: Jennifer, from the AP is up next. Jennifer.

Question: Thank you. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Thank you. Following on that, actually, I wanted to ask what information the city has about the number of health care workers who are themselves testing positive and what impact that's having on the hospitals?

Mayor: I'll start again, Dr. Katz or Dr. Barbot jump in. Clear look – everyone, everyone's being affected. And you know, I said in my message this morning that we should anticipate that half of all of us or more could be infected. Although again, thank God, most New Yorkers who are infected with this disease will have a very limited, mild experience, and be able to get back to work in seven to 10 days. So it's a real issue for all parts of the city, for all of us, but especially as we think about how much we're depending on our health care workers and our other essential workers, we're going to have at any given point in time a number of them, you know, having to go home, having to take care of themselves, but in the vast majority of cases, they will come back quickly and get right back into action. But we are seeing it happen across every part of the city, including the health care sector. Do you want to add?

President Katz: Yes, absolutely. They've have been health care workers who have - who are infected with COVID-19, just as you would expect, given how many people are infected already in New York City. The vast majority are doing well, but there have been people who have required hospitalization. I don't think anybody has an exact number. But we wish them all as we do with all patients who are sick a speedy recovery.

Moderator: Katie Honan is up next. Katie.

Question: Hey, Mayor de Blasio, I wanted to get your reaction to statements saying that everyone has visited New York City should self-quarantine?

Mayor: I'm sorry. You're saying that from the federal government?

Question: Yes, that people who visited New York City should self-quarantine, I just wanted to get your reaction on that and the city's taken any quarantine measures for visitors?

Mayor: Yeah, look, I think what I heard was – I'm always going to respect our federal authorities, but I think there's a little bit of a lack of recognition right now of just how much this disease has already spread around the country. So, you're talking about New Yorkers going elsewhere, I think we know where the disease that's in all 50 states and pretty much all over the world, I don't love the notion of the suggestion that, you know, there's any more likelihood of coming from one place or another. It's obviously everywhere already and will continue to spread. People need to be smart individually. Anyone who's symptomatic needs to isolate themselves and follow the rules we've been over so many times and you know, reach out only after a period of time to a doctor if they haven't gotten better.

So I would say that Katie, I think we're seeing a weird kind of – you know, if I was using the psychological term, sort of approach avoidance, to the topic of coronavirus from different officials around the country, where on the one hand, people seem to in one moment talk about the seriousness of the threat and in another moment sort of say, oh, it'll be over soon. It's not going to be over soon. For us it's going to be several tough months ahead and then for a lot of other places in the country, they're going to go through their round. So, I think the notion of a travel being particularly relevant at this point is it seems to be pretty limited. That's my nonmedical opinion. But I'm happy if either doctor wants to jump in.

President Katz: I think you did it well.

Mayor: Alright, I'm learning –

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Mr. Mayor, you got it just right.

Mayor: Okay. Thank you, doctor.

Moderator: Bobby Cuza is up next, Bobby?

Question: Hey Mr. Mayor, I wanted to follow up on the morgue issue. I know you said you can't confirm details, but there is a tent that's gone up on the East Side and the Medical Examiner's Office told us they have bought 45 tents and trailers to expand the capacity of the city morgue. I guess I wonder what, what's the message for New Yorkers who see that, who see this tent and it's obviously alarming, but you know, in the vein of what you said earlier about telling people the

truth, should New Yorkers be bracing for the possibility that the death toll is going to go up dramatically from what we've seen so far?

Mayor: Yes, of course. Bobby. I mean, there's not – you know, I don't think any of us and I think I can speak for Dr. Katz and Dr. Barbot, I don't think any of us have tried to sugar coat this. It's going to be really tough. I know the more I was pushed a really strong emotional button, obviously we're all humans, it's a very troubling thing to see, and it makes it kind of very immediate, very visceral. But let's be honest, we've been talking now for weeks and weeks about this disease coming on and we watched it move all over the world and we've seen the horrible things that happened in China and Italy, so many places. I think most people are really quite aware.

I think the news media understandably is trying to tap into the human reality, the emotional reality. I think that's what you guys do and that's very important. But I would tell you, having talked to somebody in New Yorkers, I think people are there and then some already. They know how bad this is. And I've been trying to be real straight forward. I think the Governor has been very straight forward as well and I commend him. We've been clear, it's going to get a lot worse. So clearly, you know, what we're trying to do now is save the people that don't need to die. And that's where our constant pleas, particularly to the federal government, for more supplies, more equipment, to help us get personnel, you know, all the efforts are being made to create more beds, that's to make sure that no one dies who could have been saved. But we've been real honest that unfortunately we're going to lose a number of people as this continues to grow. So no one's trying to, Bobby, no one is trying to downplay. It's going to be very, very painful. But let's acknowledge it's here. It's our reality. Now let's fight back. Let's do everything we can to fight back and we can't do it alone. We need help from Washington in particular. If we get that help, we're going to be able to save a lot of lives.

Moderator: Matt Chayes is up next. Matt?

Question: Hey there, Mr. Mayor. Last night you said you'd consider closing playgrounds by Saturday night. You guys found insufficient social distancing compliance. You also consider doing that for the city parks if there's similar insufficient compliance? And are there more or fewer unchanged numbers of people reaching out to Thrive during this time?

Mayor: I don't have the thrives statistics, but I will say I think anyone, I know the Governor made an announcement today, which I thought was very good for folks all over the state who are feeling anxiety, who are fearful, who need someone professional in mental health to talk to. I was very happy to see that. And certainly, with Thrive, a reminder to all of New Yorkers you can call 8-8-8-NYCWELL, a 24/7, trained counselors, multiple languages, there's nothing wrong with feeling afraid or anxious at this moment. If you need some help, pick up that phone and they can also help you get ongoing mental health support if you need it. But, so that's that part of the question to the part of the question and I don't – again, we'll get you the follow-up on the numbers, Matt, I don't have them at my fingertips.

On the question of the parks now, I really want – glad you asked it, I want to differentiate strongly the parks and the playgrounds. The area that we're all concerned about to make sure that

there's real clear adherence to the rules or else by the end of Saturday we might get to a shutdown, is the playgrounds themselves. The parks obviously are – in many of them huge. They're absolutely necessary in a situation like this. Parks will remain open, but with a lot of enforcement under any scenario. So, there's a real differentiation there. And again, we'll make that decision on the playgrounds at the end of Saturday after we've seen how it's gone up to them.

Moderator: Amanda, from Bloomberg is up next. Amanda?

Question: Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yep.

Question: I'm wondering – we had a story today about emergent emergency medical services, you know, seeing the most calls since September 11th. Are you worried about, you know, whether those services are staffed enough? Or, is there any kind of change to the resources that, you know, emergency medical services have at this time?

Mayor: It's a great question, Amanda. I mean, until very recently – I checked with Commissioner Nigro only days ago – we were actually fairly steady, fairly normal. We also had that reality with emergency rooms around the city, by and large. So, we've really seen some movement in recent days and, obviously, we're additionally concerned because a number of workers are out sick. I've said to Commissioner Nigro, whatever we have to do to make sure he has what he needs we'll do. Like the Police Department, the Fire Department has a very deep bench and they're really good at knowing how to move folks around to compensate for different situations. So, I'm confident about that. At this point, we'll continue to back that up. But, you know, this is the kind of thing we'll be dealing with intensely for the next weeks that we are going to need to make sure those services keep going. And this is why, again, it comes back to that discussion earlier about Washington. I'm going to be very blunt with everyone in Washington, starting with President Trump, that when we are in a situation where we don't have the money to pay for the most vital services, this is where you get to a very dangerous place. And I know the State's in the same boat. We need the resources to not only keep our fire department doing what it does every day, but you know, fire, EMS, doing what they would have to do on a higher level in this crisis. And we are the epicenter for the nation, so this is exactly an example – it's not just all the huge expenditures being put out to protect people's health with Department of Health, with Health + Hospitals, but also the additional strains on police, on fire, on a lot of other agencies, and that's why we need that direct support from Washington and we need it immediately.

Moderator: Erin Durkin is up next. Erin?

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I heard you say that you're expecting that 50 percent of New Yorkers will be infected with coronavirus. Can you just talk a little bit about what that is? What's the basis for that prediction? And relatedly, since most people are not being tested, I think – I assume the number of confirmed cases doesn't reflect a full spread currently. Do you have any just order of magnitude sense of what the true current prevalence might be?

Mayor: I'll start on both those and then if Dr. Barbot wants to jump in, she will. Erin, I don't think there's anyone that knows the answer accurately to your second question. Perfectly fair question – I think we – my layman's way of saying it is, there's a lot more people out there who have had coronavirus already and gone through the whole course of it and people out there right now who have it. There's a lot more of them than we know and there's a lot, obviously, who have never been tested. We don't even know truly when it first asserted here in the city, that could have been people who had it before we even knew it was here. So, what we do know based on a lot of different projections – and we don't have a perfect single projection, but sort of compositing a lot of projections is, it's a fair bet to say that half of all New Yorkers, and maybe more than half, will end up contracting this disease. And that's worrisome, very deeply worrisome for all of us. But you know, we have to start with the truth and recognizing that for 80 percent of those who do it will be a very limited experience. So, you know, I don't – I can't tell you it's going to be 50-50, but I think as much as we're dealing with a lot of painful reality, a lot of fear, one way to think of this that is a little more hopeful is, you know, a certain number of people will not, and that may be 50 percent, or 45 percent, or 40 percent – whatever it is, a certain number of New Yorkers will not contract this disease this season. And of the ones who do, 80 percent will have very limited experience. But for that other 20 percent, we have a lot of work to do to protect them. Most of them, of course, the vast majority of even them will come through okay. But we have to make sure of that by really having all the health care they need available. So, the answer is, it is a composite of a lot of different projections. But I think we see consistently that 50 percent-plus is the right way to think about it. Dr. Barbot, do you want to add?

Commissioner Barbot: Yeah, Mr. Mayor, I think you got it right. The only thing I would add is that, right now, you know, I think it's safe to say that there are tens of thousands of New Yorkers that are somewhere along the spectrum of having COVID-19 or having been exposed to COVID-19, and that's why it's so important for people to stay home. You know, we've been saying all along that person to person transmission is widespread in the community and 80 percent of the folks will have mild illness. And I think also just to reemphasize what the Mayor said in terms of, you know, we think 50 percent will – by the end of this epidemic, this pandemic – so, by the time September rolls around, likely 50 percent, but it could also be much higher. And so, that's why we've been so focused on slowing the spread of this pandemic, because we don't want all of those people to be seeking health care at the same time. The measures that we're putting into place in terms of closing schools, in terms of telling New Yorkers to stay home is our best chance at slowing that spread and then spreading those individuals who may need to seek health care in a hospital – spread it out over time so that we maintain the capacity to treat everyone who needs treatment.

Moderator: Last two. Ashley, from the Times. Ashley, can you hear us?

Question: Yes, I can. Thank you. My question for the Police Commissioner.

Mayor: I don't think we have the Police Commissioner, Ashley. Let's make sure on our team that we put up every time who is actually available so reporters can see that –

Moderator: They can see it on the app right now.

Mayor: Where is the app? Let's advertise how reporters [inaudible] make sure we're clear –

Moderator: Yes.

Question: Yeah, it's fine. You know, I'm on audio only [inaudible]. But maybe you know the answer to this question, Mr. Mayor. The NYPD sick rate is approaching 10 percent and the Police Commissioner in the past has talked about going to 12-hour shifts and doing reassignments of administrative officers to patrol jobs. I wonder if you can – what the most recent numbers tell us, you know, at what point [inaudible] does NYPD go through those contingency options and what happens if they exhaust them? For instance, they call in the National Guard?

Mayor: Yeah. Ashley, appreciate the question, but I'd say, first of all, we're not to that point with even the 12-hour shifts and all yet. At any point we might get there and we'll obviously announce it when and if we do. Last conversation I had with the Commissioner, he was confident that, you know, we're sort of in plan-A now and plan-B was very, very straight forward about how to utilize people differently and we've got a lot of people to work with. Again, we also have to remember that, for the vast majority of folks who get sick, after seven to 10 days, they'll be back. And I would further remind you, there's no one taking vacations now. So, there will not be people taking vacations anytime soon for any of us until this battle's over. So, we're going to have a lot of areas where we lose different public servants for a period of time, but we also are not seeing people take their normal time off like they would in peacetime and we'll make all the pieces fit. In terms of needing any outside help, we are nowhere near that this point. If we ever get to that point, we'll talk about it, but we're nowhere near that.

Moderator: Last call is Kathleen from Patch. One more time – Kathleen, can you hear us?

Question: Can you hear me this time?

Mayor: There you go. Third time's the charm, Kathleen.

Question: Thank you for your patience, Mr. Mayor. I just wanted to check in with you about a potential rent freeze. I know that you said last week it was something you would potentially support and April 1st is fast approaching. What's your update for the renters out there who have concerns?

Mayor: Thank you for the question, Kathleen. There's obviously the process that our Rent Guidelines Board goes through – and we'll have more to say on that soon for sure – but there's also a question of beyond the Rent Guidelines Board, how we should handle folks who are not covered by rent stabilization. Look, I think at this point – I mean, we know for all intents and purposes, evictions are not happening and that is absolutely the right thing in the middle of a crisis like this. To the question of whether we could do something deeper like a rent moratorium, this is an idea that I think has a lot of value to it. I'm going to be looking to see if something like that is possible. Even though I'm heartened by what I see in the stimulus bill in terms of money back in people's pockets, again, I want to get all those details and I want to see how long it's

going to last, and I want to see how long this crisis is going to last. I mean, that will certainly help, but we need to understand if it's enough for people to actually make ends-meet and be able to afford food, be able to afford the rent, be able to afford a medicine, and, if not, we need to look at all, you know, any and all possibilities. So, all that's being discussed and we will have updates on that very soon for sure.

And let me say thank you again to my colleagues in government who are part of the call. Thank you. To all the members of the media who have participated. Just one more thing at the end here. We started something today in addition to press conferences and individual interviews I give to the media. Every day I will do a daily message from the Mayor. It's going to be a very brief but, I hope, a helpful message, giving people a little bit of grounding as we start the day as to where we stand, what we're dealing with, and some very important reminders about how to think about this situation, but also answers to questions that every-day New Yorkers are asking me and all of us in government. So, I'll make that a daily feature. I'll give some opening statement, but then I'll quickly go to talking about questions I've received and giving you answers that I hope will be very helpful to you in your every-day life. Anyone who has a question for me, you can go to #AskMyMayor – again, #AskMyMayor – and raise whatever question it is. It could be something about, you know, very specific to your neighborhood or your life. It could be something that we're all dealing with. But send in your questions, I'll try and answer as many as I can and will make sure that we're constantly updating people on things that they care about. You can get that message from the Mayor every day at 9:00 am. It'll go up and you can find it on my Twitter feed – and that's @NYCMayor. You can find that at Facebook, which is NYCMayor. And on Instagram – @MayorBilldeBlasio. And I will constantly endeavor to give you information in a brief, straight forward manner that will really, hopefully help you get through this crisis.

And I'll conclude by saying, the one thing I know in my heart – and I know for sure, and it is a fact – we will get through this crisis. And it will not be easy, but we will all get through together.

Thank you, everybody.

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