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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. To say the least, there are so many families in this city that have suffered during the year 2020. So many families, so many kids who have gone through so much and the trauma, the pain, the challenges, they still are having such a huge impact on our families and children. And the City of New York believes it's our responsibility to help those families, to help those kids. We believe that's what we're here for as public servants to actually alleviate people's suffering and help them move forward. That's what the City believes, but the federal government is doing something very, very different. Just at the moment when we need help the most, just at the moment where our families are suffering the most, you would think this would be when the federal government would offer a helping hand the most. Remember Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our own New Yorker, the New Deal, when people were having the toughest time, the federal government stepped up, helped in unimaginable ways, helped people get out of that crisis. You'll want to believe your federal government is going to do the right thing for you and really try and every way to help us in everything we do for everyday New Yorkers, but we've experienced just the opposite. And I'm not just talking about the beginning of this crisis when there wasn't enough testing or when we couldn't get PPE from the federal government or any other things that we could go over, I'm talking about the recent actions of the Trump administration to literally cut off funding that would help us provide health care, that would help us keep people safe. A totally political action that would actually undermine the lives of New Yorkers, just when they need help the most.

What we've seen from President Trump, threatening funding for New York City and other cities, it's morally wrong. It's legally unacceptable. It's unconstitutional. And we're going to fight it. We've seen this not only directed at New York City, but at other cities that are trying to help their people, Seattle and Portland, that are trying to do the work of bringing their cities out of this crisis. Also being threatened with their funding being taken away by the federal government. So, here's the bottom line – I said weeks ago, if the Trump administration persisted in trying to illegally take away funding from New York City, we would take them to court and we will beat them in court and here to tell you what we're doing in coordination with our sister cities, the man who will lead the way, lead the charge with his team at the Law Department, our Corporation Counsel, Jim Johnson.

Corporation Counsel Jim Johnson, Law Department: Thank you, Mayor. In a couple of hours in Seattle, we will file a complaint that is pushing back on, and seeks a court's judgment on, the Trump administration's decisions to withhold funding from cities that they have, without cause and without law, determined to be anarchist cities. We're bringing this action because they have taken concrete steps. They've actually taken this anarchist designation and started to include it in

applications for federal grants. We're not going to wait for them to include it in more. We're moving now. There are three reasons why this is wrong. First off, they're stepping way over their bounds. Congress controls the power of the purse, not the Trump administration. And yet they're stepping into the congressional space. Second, they're moving in a way that is arbitrary and capricious. There is no basis in law, there is no basis in fact, for this anarchist determination, and yet they are going to use it to determine who does and who does not get federal funding. And third, it violates federalism because it steps into a space, or at least they're trying to step into a space, that is uniquely for the cities to decide – how we decide to police our streets, how we decide to spend our funds. And because those don't line up with what this administration believes that it should do, that is the Trump administration, they're deciding to withhold funds. And for New York, the amounts that potentially are at risk could exceed \$12 billion. We will see them in court. The papers will be filed in Seattle later on today. In our western sister cities, we have seen the deployment of federal troops in battle dress uniforms. And that is the appropriate place for this suit to get started. And we will be with them all along the way. We expect to prevail in court, and we expect to see victory. But there is going to be no victory unless we push the fight. And that's what we're starting today.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Jim. And thank you to you and your whole team for this crucial work. We're not going to let the rights in New York City be trampled, and our court system time and time again has shown it actually believes in the U. S. Constitution. And we are confident of victory in this case. Now, let me talk about the situation right here in this city when it comes to fighting this disease. Again, we're doing this work every single day and we're working closely with the State of New York. Our job is to fight back the coronavirus with every tool we have and we're going to remain vigilant. Even when we make progress, we don't let down our guard. Now, we do have some progress in Brooklyn and Queens. There's still work to do. I'm going to say it many times. There's still real work to do, but the two weeks of restrictions in place had a big impact. And we saw people really changing their approach in a lot of ways that were really helpful. So, again, we never, ever want to put restrictions in place unless we have to, but we had to and, in fact, they had the impact we needed. So, we see significant progress in Queens where all the Queens red and orange zones are now yellow zones by the State's standards. And that means as of today, businesses in those areas can reopen, very important that those businesses can now reopen and get back to the work of earning their livelihoods and moving forward out of this crisis. It means indoor dining can resume with appropriate restrictions in those areas. It means houses of worship can increase their capacity to 50 percent in those yellow zone areas. And it means schools will be back with in-person classes on Monday. So, that's good news all around.

Now, we're always going to keep watching all over the city and we'll keep working with the State to look for any areas that need additional work. We've seen some additional numbers in Ozone Park that led the State to put Ozone Park into the yellow zone. That means we'll get expanded outreach and testing into that area and we'll keep a close eye. But overall, the situation in Queens we've seen some really good progress. Now we've got to consolidate that progress and keep moving forward as a city. Brooklyn – in Brooklyn, there's more work to be done. There is progress but we still have work to be done. The red zone areas have remained stable. As I've said, I think it's going to take another week or two to get those areas out of that red zone status. Orange zone areas in Brooklyn are shifting to yellow, and yellow zone areas that previously existed remain unchanged. So, progress in Brooklyn, but we need more, a lot of work, a lot of

discipline needed to overcome the challenge and to make sure we get out of the restrictions altogether. But to anyone out there who's frustrated – I don't blame anyone who's frustrated by the restrictions. Look at the fact that progress did come. It did come quickly in Queens, a lot of progress, some real progress in Brooklyn. Stick to it and we overcome this quickly. Anyone's got questions, obviously, there are a lot of questions, you can go and use our online tool that will give you clear answers about what's happening in your area. That is one of the ways to get the information you need. And we want to make sure that anyone who needs further information about what addresses in each zone, that online tool can help you.

Look, everyone, I want to thank everyone who's worked so hard to overcome the challenge in these zones. I've talked to a lot of folks affected. I know it's been tough, but I want to thank everyone. We've seen a lot of leadership. We've seen a lot of tremendous effort at the community level. Folks banding together to overcome the challenge. Now, the coronavirus affects us physically, and we have seen – we do not take this disease lightly at all, we understand the huge devastating impact it can have. And we understand it as a physical challenge, but we've also come to understand the massive challenge, the mental health challenge, that has come with the coronavirus crisis. It's been a painful education to see how much, how difficult this has been for so many families in this city. We know that mental health is just as important as physical health. And we know that mental health challenges affect all ages, but our kids have been particularly vulnerable in this moment. Imagine if you're still trying to understand the world and then the world's turned upside down and you see all these painful challenges. We need to help our children. And we particularly need to help our children in the neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by COVID. So, we formed a task force – leaders of color in City government in all agencies, the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, with the goal of taking actions right now – right now, to address disparities, to reach the neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by COVID, to help everyone in 27 key neighborhoods in New York City. But there's a particular focus on children, because we know how much kids have gone through. So, today, we're announcing a new plan to reach our children. So many kids, thank God, are back in school and we can reach them better than ever and address their real mental health concerns. And here to tell you all about it – first, we're going to turn to the co-chair of our task force, our First Lady Chirlane McCray.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you, Bill. And good morning to everyone. Before we talk about our young people, I want to acknowledge today as Go Purple Day, a part of Domestic Violence Awareness month. It's a day we draw attention to the bravery and strength of survivors, but also the work we all must do to support them and stand by them. I encourage everyone listening to visit nyc.gov/nychope to learn how you can be a better ally to those who need them. And I want every survivor in our city to know there is always help and there is always hope. You know, one of the points I always make about mental health care is it works best when every individual plays a role, every individual and every agency, and we move beyond our silos and collaborate with each other. Today's announcement is an excellent example of how that is now happening with agencies coming together to support our young people.

And I thank everyone at the Department of Education, the Department of Health, Health + Hospitals, the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC, and the Mayor's Fund for their work and their

compassion. I also think our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity for bringing all the pieces together to continue the fight for our communities hit hardest in this COVID-19 crisis.

Last month, I visited P.S. 130 in Brooklyn with Chancellor Carranza, and I spoke with some of the second graders during their first week of school. We talked about what was different this year, like wearing a face covering in class. And we talked about some of the emotions that the children have – some were happy, some were sad, some were nervous. And we also talked about their hopes for the new year. Every time I talk with our young people, I'm reminded that in New York City, we have the most exceptional and resilient young children in the world. But growing up is never easy. Our children carry more than book bags in the class. They carry insecurities about making friends. They carry trauma, anger, anxieties. And if we want our young people to grow into happy, healthy adults, school cannot be about academics alone. We need to support the whole child. And that's why we came in six years ago, determined to make mental health a priority and wellness a priority in every school. We've made great progress. The Department of Education, the Department of Health, and Thrive has significantly expanded mental health services in classrooms and communities.

Last year, we took a major step forward by bringing social and emotional learning to every school so that students can learn to identify and regulate emotions and other skills that will help them throughout life. And today, we're making another step forward by increasing the level of direct mental health support for thousands of students in the neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID-19. Children who have experienced trauma can join a group therapy session with others who have had same or similar experiences. Children who have suffered through their parent's loss of livelihood, or the threat of eviction can talk about it with a specialist who facilitates the conversation and keeps coming back, building a relationship with these young people. And when a student has lost a mother, a father, or another loved one to this virus, they can be immediately referred by a teacher, a principal, or another school staffer for ongoing therapy and treatment. Someone will be there for these students as long as they need it. Think about what this means for our children, their parents, or caregivers, the teachers, and the classroom to have that kind of emotional safety net during this difficult time. That is what today is all about, being there for our young people and supporting them in every way possible. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Chirlane. And thank you for being there for our young people. And also, thank you for being there for survivors of domestic violence and standing up for them. Now, I want you all to hear a little more about this important initiative in the schools, reaching our young people, really helping them through this crisis, helping them to realize their potential, again, no matter what's been thrown at them. And I want you to hear from a really energetic and creative leader at our Department of Education – she is our Deputy Chancellor for School, Climate and Wellness. It's my pleasure to introduce Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson.

Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson, Department of Education: Thank you, Mr. Mayor and First Lady. I want to reiterate the sentiment shared by our First Lady, regarding the tremendous challenge that our young people have faced over the last seven-to-eight months. Our children dealt with abrupt separation from their teachers and counselors, distanced from their friends, various forms of loss in their families, and more. Now, that our children have returned to school, we have an opportunity to help them heal emotionally as a crucial part of helping them

fully engage with their education. We've always believed that our young people are resilient, but also know that they are carrying a tremendous burden and we must do everything we can to provide them with care, love, and support as they deal with this trauma. We must also give them tools to understand what they are feeling and why. The initiatives that announced today will provide students who attend schools within our hardest hit communities with high-quality, easily accessible mental health care. This will provide schools with additional capacity to identify students who are struggling to heal and cope before they are in crisis and respond quickly if a crisis does occur. Our educators are doing heroic work, providing high-quality education in a new environment. These resources provide crucial backup to our educators, and adds another caring adult, ready to support our students.

We have come so far as a city and we know we have a long way to go. Thank you to the Mayor, First Lady – who is one of my personal champions and heroes – and to the Chancellor for putting the wellbeing of our young people first, always. By bringing together the incredible mental health and educational resources the city has to offer, we can continue to help our young people heal and thrive.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Deputy Chancellor. Everyone, look, if you wanted another reason why it was so important to reopen the largest school system in the country, you just heard it. For so many of our kids, they need that support. They need that love and compassion. They need trained educators and mental health experts to be there for them. And that can really only be achieved best if they're there in person. So, having our schools open is opening the doors to kids, getting the help they need and moving forward with their lives after this horrendous crisis. Thank you to you, Deputy Chancellor. Again, thank you, First Lady. This is such important work for our children.

Now, let me go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients – today's report, 103 patients with a confirmed positivity level of 24.2 percent for COVID. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold 550 cases – today's report, 523 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold five percent – today's report 1.77 percent. And today's seven-day rolling average number is 1.76 percent.

Let me give you a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by First Lady Chirlane McCray, by Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson, Corporation Council Jim Johnson, ThriveNYC Director Susan Herman, Dr. Charles Baron, the Chief Medical Officer of Behavioral Health at H+H, Dr. Daniel Stephens, the Deputy Commissioner for Family and Child Health at the Department of Health, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: All right. Good morning, everybody. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: I'm doing well, Juliet. How are you today?

Question: I'm fine. Thank you. So, it's great to hear about mental health for students, but what about adults? You know, there are parents who are trying to juggle remote learning and working at the same time. There's people who lost their jobs or lost family members, but what's available [inaudible] for the every-day New Yorker who's just trying to cope and get through this pandemic as far as mental health help is concerned.

Mayor: Yeah. Juliet, I really appreciate that question, because this has been such a painful, challenging part of this crisis. And boy, I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with people, sort of more revealing than ever – people being more open than ever about the challenges they're going through. And I think even in this crisis, a small silver lining may be that that more and more people are willing to talk out loud about the mental health challenges they're experiencing. And this is what Chirlane has been working on for years, de-stigmatizing, getting this conversation to be out in the open and getting people help. So, I'll turn to Chirlane, and then any of the other leaders – Susan Herman, or Dr. Baron, Dr. Stephens want to add in – but I would say, you know, it all begins with 888-NYC-WELL as the entry point. And I'm sure Chirlane will talk about that. Go ahead.

First Lady McCray: Yes, I can't emphasize 1-888-NYC-WELL enough. That line – that helpline is not just for crisis, it is for anyone who's going through a difficult time, or if they're going through – if they have a loved one who's going through a difficult time. Trained counselors answer that that line, and you can also text, and you can go online and chat, and provide information. They provide counseling – brief counseling. They can connect people to a therapist or other mental health professionals. It really is one-stop shopping. So, I always advise anyone who's going through anything to start with 1-888-NYC-WELL. I would also remind you that in New York City, we now have guaranteed health care. And that means that anyone who doesn't have insurance or anyone who doesn't have enough insurance can take advantage of NYC Care, which will also connect them to a mental – having a primary care doctor will also connect someone to a mental health professional. So, there really are many places for people to turn. There are – and I think that NYC Well is the greatest to start, because many people aren't aware of resources within their own neighborhoods, and the folks who answer those lines actually have the best resources to determine what someone can take advantage of the easiest and in an affordable way.

Mayor: You know, I really want to turn to Susan Herman. Susan Herman has been leading the Thrive initiative extraordinarily well. And when Susan took over as my senior advisor and as the Director of the Mayor's Office for Thrive, no one knew a pandemic was coming. So, she and her colleagues have been asked to do so much more than never was originally imagined. And Susan, if you could tell us about an answer to Juliet's question – you know, some of the things you think New Yorkers need to know about, access to mental health care, and particularly the amount of calls and texts and everything coming into 888-NYC-WELL, we've obviously seen a real uptick. Could you speak to that, Susan?

Director Susan Herman, Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. What there's – the First Lady said well, I think it all begins with contacting NYC Well, but during the pandemic and this profound need that we have all observed, we've really tried hard to not just spread out the awareness of mental health resources. So, you can call NYC Well, you can text, you can chat, you can also get on their website. And one of the things that we've seen is an enormous rise – a huge jump in the people that have looked on – looked at the NYC Well website just to get resources themselves. So, you can access that information in a number of ways. But we're also trying hard to reach out to people in need. So, we've had special campaigns to call veterans, by veterans, mostly, and also by other New York volunteers. We've had special campaigns to reach out to seniors who may be experiencing much more loneliness and isolation than they were prior to the pandemic, and we know that that can lead to significant depression. While we reach out to people, we check on food insecurity, we check on housing insecurity, but we very much ask questions about their mental health and how they're doing. So, we've reached out to about 15,000 veterans and hundreds of thousands of seniors across the city. We also, on our website – on the ThriveNYC website, have resources broken down by categories of people. So, you can look on the website and see mental health resources for students, people who have been involved in the criminal justice process, veterans, older New Yorkers. We have something for everybody and something just for – things for all New Yorkers. So, there's plenty of resources there. Certainly, we'd like to have more, but we are trying as much as possible to get the information out to all New Yorkers.

Mayor: Thank you, Susan. We really want to emphasize, so many of these resources are free. You know, it's just really important to say – of course, 888-NYC-WELL is free. As Chirlane pointed out, guaranteed health care for all New Yorkers who need it through Health + Hospitals. If people can't afford anything, then the care is free. Do not think that mental health services come with extraordinary costs. We provide so much of this free, obviously for our children for free. So, anyone that needs help should not hesitate. Let me just see quickly if Dr. Baron or Dr. Stephens want to add anything.

Can you hear me? You may be on mute if [inaudible] you speaking. Dr. Baron, Dr. Stephens, do you want to add? I don't think we're hearing them. Okay. We'll give them another shot around if we have another question. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: So I guess I'd also like to ask you how your dealing with mental health for yourself. I saw an account where you take a couple of walks during the day. Is that like to clear your head or how were you dealing?

Mayor: Thank you for asking Juliet. I think it's really good of a – you're a good person and I know you asked that in a good spirit and everyone should ask each other. One of the things Chirlane talks about is just asking people, how are you feeling? How are you doing? It really helps. For me, yeah, walking is very calming and a lot of times when I'm dealing with complicated decisions, I actually prefer to walk during a conference call. I find that it – the process of walking is calming. It's clarifying. It helps you think stuff through. I have long said, and Chirlane and I practice this, whenever a couple is having any kind of issue they have to work through or any kind of disagreement, you're better off walking together because actually the very

process of walking helps you communicate better and calm down a little bit. So, yeah, it helps a lot, but it's been tough, Juliet, especially in the beginning months for all of us. I mean, it was so many unknowns. I got to say that was in many ways the worst part of this crisis was that, you know, we were trying to fight back and trying to save people and a lot of times we did not have the knowledge that we needed to have, nor did the whole medical community have the knowledge they wished they had. We didn't have the resources we needed. It was really painful and of course that affects your humanly, when you feel that, you know, there's so many unanswered questions, it affects everything. It affects your emotional wellbeing, but you have to keep going. And so, you know, we all find our way to just stay focused. I find a good walk, goes a long way.

Moderator: The next is Henry from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: I'm doing well, thank you for asking as well, Henry, how are you doing?

Question: I'm doing well, I also don't begrudge, you taking walks to clear your head and deal with all the stuff you've got to deal with. But let me get to my questions. My first question has to do with this legal action that you're taking. Am I correct in assuming that no denial of funds has occurred yet? And can you give me a little bit more detail about what these concrete steps are that have that you say have forced your hand to initiate this legal action?

Mayor: Yeah, Henry, I'll start and I'll turn to our Corporation Counsel. As with many of the politicized threats of the Trump administration, a lot of times you see, you know, a lot of threats that don't amount to a whole lot, and we have seen it over and over again. I remind you, there was one point where they said there'll be massive ICE raids. They didn't happen. There was one point where they said, they'd send in federal troops or federal officers, that didn't happen. They said they would take away our funding because we didn't ask the documentation status of immigrants, that and funding wasn't taken away. This has happened over and over again. Sometimes it's just a threat for the President's political gain, and then they move on to something else. Sometimes they actually try to follow through as was true with the immigration executive order and they're stopped in court, and that's the case here that we fundamentally believe if they take any more tangible actions that the court system will stop them. But as a layman, I'll say before turning to an actual lawyer, that we did see them taking more and more moves that might have had an impact on funding and that was the appropriate trigger for legal action. Go ahead, Jim.

Corporation Counsel Johnson: Thank you, Mayor. So the steps that they took include these. First, the President actually issued a memorandum, which we call the "anarchist memo". Second, the Attorney General engaged in an actual designation process for three cities, the three cities that are suing Portland, Seattle, and us in New York. And the third, one of the agencies is actually embedded in its noticed of funding opportunity, a requirement that a city essentially that is a city that is designated in an "anarchist city" would not be eligible for that funding. As I mentioned before, we're not going to wait additional times for them to embed this provision in any other grants or any other opportunities for the city. We need the funds. We don't want to see

them threatened any further and we're acting now rather than waiting until they move further down the track.

Mayor: Thank you, Jim. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Well I had other questions, but I've got a follow up on this. When you – the anarchist designation. Is this a term of – is this a legal term in any kind of congressional legislation or any kind of federal law, or is this something that they have made out of whole cloth?

Mayor: They entirely made it up. Look, this is a figment of Donald Trump's troubled imagination. The only anarchy in this country is coming from the White House and it's not anything we've seen from any Democratic or Republican administration ever before, and its madness. I was driving around the city yesterday and looking at all of the incredible activity in the city and people coming back and people working and people, you know, outdoor dining and everything else, I was thinking of the President calling this place a ghost town, when in fact this is a vibrant city, you know, rebounding from a horrible crisis. This President just makes things up. So this is a city that is strong and is moving forward. Those words are his words, just to create a political gain. He uses the government for political gain in a disgusting fashion, but to the legality of him using that phrase, I think our Corporation Counsel can quickly make clear how little it means. Go ahead.

Corporation Counsel Johnson: Henry, you were absolutely right to say that it's made up out of whole cloth. As we say in our complaint, this is a fabrication. There's no statutory basis for it. There's clearly no constitutional basis for it and the court will see that it should make really short work of this and reject the characterization and the consequences that come from it.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is James Ford from PIX.

Question: Good to see you all. Thanks for taking my call. Follow up about the legal case. Potentially the Trump administration potentially only has a matter of weeks left in it, what is the – certainly you can't assume that this administration is ending, I do understand that, but why this timing? Why are you filing it now? And who is the lead city of the three? If there is one?

Mayor: Go ahead, Jim.

Corporation Counsel Johnson: It's being filed in Seattle, but we were all co-plaintiffs in the action. And in terms of timing, it was just two weeks ago that they took the concrete step that I referenced, which is the notice of funding opportunity indicating that they're serious. And the, the administration actually will go to January – through January 19th or noon on January 20th, and there is no question just as Congress can act during the lame duck that the administration could take additional acts during the period if the election were to go in a way that President Trump wouldn't like. So rather than waiting and hoping, we are acting.

Mayor: Go ahead, James.

Question: And then regarding this mental health initiative that is targeting the hardest hit areas. What is this taskforce doing in the red zones where schools are still closed?

Mayor: Yeah, look, James, that's a very temporary reality. So Deputy Chancellor's coming back to join us again and she can talk about how we help kids when they're in school, as well as how we help kids even when they're remote. But remember that red zone reality we've said from the very beginning should only be a matter of weeks. You know, we have the vast, vast majority of our schools open and moving forward. So really I'm hoping when these last zones are resolved over the next few weeks, that we never have to have restrictions again, and we're going to just go straight through to the vaccine without ever having to experience it. Now we have real work to do. We have to be vigilant, but in the meantime, I think your question is very important, not just in terms of red zone, but how do we help kids if we're not seeing them in person, it's not as good as being able to see them in person, I'm very clear about that, but there's still a help we offer no matter what. So Deputy Chancellor, you want to talk to that?

Deputy Chancellor Robinson: Yes, thank you so much, James, for your question. Very important question. Before the start of the school year, we partnered with the First Lady and the Office of Thrive to release additional resources to schools through our Bridge to School plan. We have also trained over 45,000 educators in trauma informed care over, 1,600 school leaders in trauma informed care as well, and really worked to prepare the school system to receive our young people and our educators during this pandemic. We've increased adult Social Emotional Learning within our school system and partnered with the Child Mind Institute for additional resources. That information has been shared with schools and those supports are out there being utilized as speak. We have also worked to increase tele-therapy within our school system as well to ensure that every child in a red zone, orange zone, a yellow zone across our school community, whatever the case may be, and now more targeted support, and our 27 hardest hit communities are supporting children and adults every step of the way.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead. The next is Yoav from the city.

Question: How are you doing everyone? I had a question for Dr. Herman actually. The city was planning to pilot co-response teams responding to 9-1-1 calls in two high need precincts. That pilot was paused because of COVID. I'm just wondering what the status of that is. San Francisco is also dealing with coronavirus, but they just implemented – or they're launching a huge initiative to have firefighters and other workers who are unarmed respond to calls for people in mental health crisis. So even though they're dealing with the same coronavirus crisis, they're able to launch this huge initiative. My question is, respectfully, why isn't New York City able to launch that pilot in two precincts?

Mayor: Let me start and then turn to Susan. Look, first of all, tremendous respect for San Francisco and the way they've handled this crisis and Mayor London Breed has done a great job but a very, very different reality. They're very different scale, a very different experience with the size and extent of the crisis. So, you know, what we were dealing with over months and months caused us to have to pause a lot of good things that we wanted to do. But I'll simply say this way,

we're re-engaging that issue right now, and we're going to have more to say on that for sure soon. Susan, you want to add?

Director Herman: I would just add that the scale of the problem in New York City really required many people to be focusing on things that they might not usually be focusing on, so the co-response teams were functioning during the many months of the pandemic, but were functioning differently. They were functioning, the social workers were functioning mostly virtually and now have gone back into the field. Officers, many of them were redeployed, now have been coming back onto the co-response teams. And as the Mayor said, we are actively looking at that pilot and many ways of serving people when they have great need. So we are fully engaged and working on this issue.

Mayor: Go ahead, Yoav.

Question: Okay, thanks. Switching gears, I understand that NYCHA discovered there were children under six living in 6,000 more apartments with – that likely have lead paint, far higher than the 3,000 that you ordered fixed two years ago. I'm just wondering how you feel about this apparent discovery and what you're planning to do about it?

Mayor: First of all, I'm just getting this information now in the course of this gathering, and apparently it's coming from the federal monitor and we have to see that information and analyze it. Look, I'm concerned that we have to reach every single child, every single family. We have to eradicate lead paint poisoning in New York City. That I want to be really clear, we have a Vision Zero approach. In the past, some really important reforms were taken in this city and then some missteps happened for sure over multiple administrations, but in the end, what's important now is we have the clearest plan the city has ever had and there's a plan to literally eliminate lead paint poisoning once and for all. It can be done. It must be done. We're seeing many, many fewer cases, steady decrease. We put out the information quarterly and there's been a steady decrease, but if there's anything where we got to double back and go farther, we will. Also really important, Yoav, that the great work being done at NYCHA to determine the apartments that do not have lead and never had lead and do not need constant inspection and work, that's that XRF assessment that's being done, that is going to change the situation profoundly. We're already hearing of tens of thousands of apartments that are now cleared forever, and that's going to allow us to concentrate our resources. But we will follow up immediately on this federal monitor report and get down to the bottom of what's happening and we will act on it immediately.

Moderator: The next is Bob Hennelly from the Chief Leader.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Yesterday you went into some detail about what you're doing to prepare for the distribution of a COVID vaccine and you mentioned that the essential workers, first responders, and health care professionals will be part of the first phase of the vaccines deployment. While no vaccine has been identified, I can't help but feel that we're not addressing a very basic issue surrounding what's at stake from first responders and health care professionals, who would in essence be a – basically Guinea pigs for a vaccine produced, and what quite frankly, has been a process corrupted by President Trump's machinations. Could you comment on how you think we're workers are going to feel about this and then also have your

Corporate Counsel, Mr. Johnson, comment on how did we be entering a new phase here where, would the City of New York compel first responders to take this vaccine?

Mayor: Okay, we'll get Jim to come on up. Let me start, we'll start with Dr. Varma as well. First of all no, we've made really clear that we are not going to accept a vaccine unless it is thoroughly vetted by the medical community. So Bob, I know you're a long time and I know you used a phrase there that was a little bit provocative, we're not going to treat anybody as anything less than valued public servants. We're not going to do something that unless we're a hundred percent sure. So that means the State and the City together are going to be vetting any vaccine to make sure we're a 100 percent clear. If we're not a hundred percent clear, we're not going to give it to anybody. We obviously need to make sure that once we have a truly effective vaccine, that it's as widely utilized as possible. And I believe the vast majority of people in the vast majority of public servants are going to want a vaccine to protect themselves and their families. In a second, Jim can talk about legalities as we know them now, but I think the most important part of your question, goes to Dr. Varma on what we're going to do to make sure that any vaccine is appropriate before we'd even consider distributing it in New York City. Dr. Varma?

Senior Advisor Varma: Great, thank you for the question, and, you know, I'll start by saying we absolutely understand the concerns that people have. There's been obviously a lot of discussion about this process and ensuring that it's not just done quickly, which is sort of the "Operation Warp Speed" terminology, but then in fact whatever vaccine that becomes available must be safe and it must be effective. So there's been a lot of movement as you know, to make sure that this any vaccine that that gets developed is not just vetted by the federal government but also includes a thorough review by the State and the City. The Governor has announced a task force of experts. We on our health leadership team here I have also been planning on how we're going to review and evaluate that information, and so we feel strongly that we would not incorporate any vaccine into our health and safety measures until we feel confident that it's something we would use ourselves, we would use on our families, and that we would of course use on our most valued civil servants who are healthcare workers and our first responders.

Mayor: I would say, obviously, Bob, when we get to that point, if we truly believe in it, a number of us will lead the way and take it to show people that when we're advising it's something we truly would do ourselves. We will actually do that ourselves. Go ahead, Corporation Counsel.

Corporation Counsel Johnson: Just very briefly. As the Mayor's remarks and Dr. Varma's remarks made clear, there's going to be – there would be a tremendous amount of process involved before decisions are taken about the administration of the vaccine. The idea of a compulsion for a vaccine is not something that is, as far as I know, on the table.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: And then also, I think Katie Honan had a Wall Street Journal piece that was headlined a "New York Aims to Bring Back 25 Percent of City Workers by Year's End." I would like to know if you could give us a sense of the concrete criteria that goes into this determination, if that's accurate, and then moreover, what role do you see the city's public unions playing in

helping you through this process to guide themselves their members feel comfortable with taking this step?

Mayor: Yeah, of course, Bob, we work closely with so many of our municipal unions on these issues all the time. We have not made a final determination. We need to continue to consolidate the progress that we've seen in Brooklyn and Queens, and we need to continue to drive down our number citywide, but we do want to start to bring back city workers before too long, and we would do it in phases. I think the fact is that there's important work to be done, and it's important for the city to move forward, to have people start to come back, but we're going to do that in a way that we're convinced is safe and only do that when we're convinced it's safe.

Moderator: The next is Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Question: Hello, Mayor how are you?

Mayor: I'm doing well, Abu. How are you?

Question: Good. Thank you so much. I would like to ask you about [inaudible] which is regarding the children mental issue, because I found, and we are receiving a lot of phone calls from the parents that the student school student who are – it's been a long time that they are staying in the home that they are suffering by mental anxiety and other stuff. So what is your program to help the kids who are living since March in the home and they don't have that space to play in the home, they don't have that much space to go out. So do you have any suggestion or do you have any program or do you have any, anything you can say about the parents who are suffering [inaudible] doing that with their kids.

Mayor: Yes, Abu. I'm going to start and then turn to our Deputy Chancellor. Look, the best thing we can do for our children is fight back this disease, lower the level of infection, New York City, so we can go farther and farther in terms of getting kids back into school settings. That should be a mission for all of us that every time we do the right thing, you know, wear masks, practice social distancing, all those basics, we are speeding up the day when we can do more and more for our children.

The second point is that parents are going to have an opportunity in the coming weeks to opt in to in-person learning, to blended learning, and I've talked to a number of parents who are interested in the chance to get their kids to school, but they wanted to see how the beginning of the school year went. Obviously, what we're seeing is a tremendously successful reality in our public schools, in terms of health and safety, very low level of positive tests. I think a lot in parents when they get that chance to opt in and we'll take it so their kids will get that opportunity to be outside the home, will get the socialization and opportunity to be with their friends, will get the loving attention of trained adults. I think that's going to be an important moment. I'm going to give parents a lot of information and give them a chance to make that decision for their family, but in terms again, of what we continue to do, and I think it's a great point, how we're going to help parents to understand what they can do for their kids, even if their kids are in a remote setting. Deputy Chancellor, you want to speak to that?

Deputy Chancellor Robinson: Thank you so much, Abu. We understand that schools must be places of healing and learning, and that's been a core focus, and then we have also heard from families, you know, looking to be able to provide greater support. In the spring, we were able to act fast, last year, we announced Safe Resilient NYC in collaboration with Thrive, and we were able to add additional supports for schools, including Sanford Harmony which is a social emotional learning program, restorative practices, and we were ready to support families right away, back in the spring. We also trained parent coordinators and Trauma 101 and also supported parent leaders across the city as well. Really working with families to understand how to notice trauma within young people and then be able to act quickly with their own children. So we've taken a number of steps to support families directly. Our parent coordinators have been trained and have participated in our trauma sessions. So our school communities are prepared their safe places for our young people. We've answered the call to be able to provide this support, and with this new initiative announced today, it's even greater support in the communities that need it most. On the ground support, trained, licensed clinicians that can be able to support young people and group sessions continuing to train educators and parent coordinators and working closely with families, and we look forward to continuing to build upon the success of the past while we increase mental health supports more and more each day.

Mayor: Well, I'm going to have the Deputy Chancellor note if there's website or phone number that parents should call if they're just trying to get guidance on these things, but I'm going to remind you that anybody a parent non-parent a young person, older person, anyone can call 888-NYC-WELL, any New Yorker for free can call 888-NYC-WELL, if they're not only having their own struggles with mental health challenges, but if they want to talk to a trained counselor about how to help a loved one, how to help a child, there's – just want everyone to get in their minds, that this is the go-to location for any kind of concern about mental health, because what happens NYC Well is they can either help you address the issue immediately or connect you to the support you'd need. Also, they can do that in an amazing range of languages and it's 24-7. So when in doubt on a mental health issue, reach out to 888-NYC-WELL, and then for parents, is there a specific place to turn?

Deputy Commissioner Robinson: Absolutely. Please, please reach out to your parent coordinators at the school. They have been trained along with school leaders who have also been trained in trauma informed care. They are resources right at the school level and can connect families with resources.

Mayor: Okay, go ahead Abu.

Question: My second question is last week in Bengali television called Time Television, there was a panel about the drugs, alcohol and other stuff, and then the doctor, he said, marijuana is the gateway of all the drugs, and in New York City, whenever we are working, we are getting the smell of marijuana and the police [inaudible] the people are smoking marijuana. Is it legal or illegal? Or what, what kind of action you are thinking to take since it's a gateway of all drugs?

Mayor: Yeah, No, it's not legal in New York state, but we handle the enforcement differently. We do – NYPD gives out summonses for sure and addresses those issues, and we want to make sure that anyone who has an issue with substance misuse also can turn to 888-NYC-WELL, and

get help. Families can turn there to get help, but in terms of, excuse me, in terms of enforcement, it's illegal, but it's handled through summons now. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Chris Robbins from Gothamist.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. You talked earlier today about how successful in-person learning has been in schools. Can you give us an update on school attendance? Is there a reason why DOE hasn't been putting those figures out and when will the DOE release guidance on what counts as attendance?

Mayor: An important question, Chris. That information is going to come out very shortly. We have a very unusual situation and what has been the hesitation to make sure that the numbers are accurate in what has been an ever-changing situation? Obviously, school started as a phase-in and started on different dates than was originally intended. But thank God, school's got opened and got opened well. We have kids who are in school, blended, home, blended remote. We have kids who are full time remote schools are still adjusting to having three different things happening simultaneously and getting the attendance right for all of them, and then one more thing when we put together the formal numbers in the next few days and get them out, you have a phenomenon we did not anticipate, which is parents who are still in a blended status. Some days they're having their kids go to school, some days they're not, and they haven't really a hundred percent decided if they want to stay in that blended status or go to remote, and again, the last piece of the equation, which is coming up in the next few weeks, the other way around the parents who have been fully remote, who now want to send their kids back. So the honest truth is it's been a very challenging playing field to get clear numbers on. We're going to give the best numbers we have shortly once we've confirmed them, but you will see this interesting phenomenon of parents who are their kids are in blended, but clearly not yet fully using the blended status the way we expected, and that's something that we want to resolve in the coming weeks. Go ahead, Chris.

Question: Okay, thank you, and my second question is we talked about earlier this week, but the, the private owner of the pier in Greenpoint that the New York City Ferry system uses block the public from using the pier temporarily. The stop is back open, but I wanted to learn more about the agreement between the City and the private owners of the pier. So I asked the Economic Development Corporation to see a copy of that agreement, and they acknowledged that it exists, but they said, I'd have to file a Freedom of Information request for it. Do you think I should have to file a Freedom of Information request for public documents that are clearly in the public's interests like this, and more broadly, are you satisfied with how your administration has handled Freedom of Information requests? Because you know, my colleagues routinely pointed out that it takes months and sometimes more than a year to get really basic information from many agencies in your administration?

Mayor: Chris is something we got to keep working on. I am satisfied that people are trying, you know, very consistently to make the process better and better, and the whole thing with the Freedom of Information act is that acknowledges that each document has to be reviewed legally because it's not as simple as saying, you know, anything and everything can be released. There are confidentiality issues. There's a lot of issues that have to be taken into account. That's why

the Freedom of Information Act is set up the way it is. We are constantly answering requests and pulling out information. But another thing, Chris, that's very real and very practical is the number of requests has skyrocketed over the years and it takes an immense amount of work to get it right. So I want to see more and better. There's no question. I want to see the constant improvement in the release of information. When we can simplify, I want us to simplify. On that particular case, you know, a legal contract we'd need to have the lawyers check and see if it is such a simple matter of putting that out publicly without a request. But the good news is that issue got resolved that same day, and as far as I have heard that Greenpoint pier will be open for NYC Ferry on an ongoing basis.

Moderator: Last question for today, goes to Emma from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, good morning. I was wondering if you could give more specificity, Mr. Johnson, about the \$12 billion list of things that the city could lose. Other outlets have reported it could be mental health counseling for elderly New Yorkers, transit funding, health centers for COVID patients. What are we looking at here?

Corporation Counsel Johnson: Of the \$12 billion encompasses a full range of needs of the city that includes grants from HHS. That includes grants that actually go to law enforcement. It includes grants that go to, they would go to transit. So it's, it's a large number, and particularly when you consider that our operating budget is about \$97 billion, \$12 billion covers a tremendous amount.

Question: Okay, in terms of what prompted this, was it the transit funding? You said something happened two weeks ago. Was it this idea that we could not apply for transit grants?

Corporation Counsel Johnson: It is the notice of funding opportunity, which was a notice that was related to a transit – Federal Transit Administration grant. But it was the fact of the filing of the notice, the fact of including this provision in that notice that told us the potential for conditioning federal funds on this designation had moved from simply potential to a reality, and we've decided that we were going to move so within two weeks, which is actually fairly quick for lawyers, we're filing a complaint.

Mayor: That is a true statement. That was quick for lawyers. Emma, just to finish this last point is just blatantly unconstitutional. It's not even close, and you know what, as much as Donald Trump has tried to tear down American democracy, it's still alive. The court system is still rendering judgments based on the law. I mean this is just unbelievably unconstitutional. Also, this is a city that's the most important largest city in the United States of America. We're making a really heroic comeback. You'd think a President of the United States would want to help us and praise us instead of playing these games. But there's not a judge anywhere that's going to look at New York City and look at the work being done and the work to keep people safe and claim that that is "anarchism." It's just ludicrous, and the courts are going to see through this very, very quickly.

As we close everyone, look, here's the thing. It is a heroic city. I've talked about this a lot. You know, we're in the middle of this crisis. Now we're going to look back years from now and just

think about the pure heroism of New Yorkers, how they fought through this crisis, and we shouldn't just think about our healthcare workers, or our first responders. We should praise them always, but we should think about everyday New Yorkers. We should think about parents and kids who've been through so much and really, really found a way to keep going. We should think about our educators and our school staff and our mental health professionals who have been there to support our kids and families. But the important thing to remember is children need to know that it's going to be all right, whether they're a little kid or whether an adolescent, they need that reassurance from adults that it's going to be all right, and that's our job. All of us, we're all in a sense, the role models and the big brothers and sisters for all the children of New York City, let's show them that we can get them to a better place and that we cherish them and let's show them that it will be all right, and I firmly believe this city will come back, and our children who are always our future are going to be part of that heroic come back in New York City.

Thank you, everyone.

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