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

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Well, today, we have some very important news for all New Yorkers. We've had some real breakthroughs, and one in particular I want to talk about related to testing, which has been the topic we've all been focused on now for months and months. So, I'm going to give you some important news and some good news, but I want to frame it first because this really comes down to how New York City and New Yorkers are responding to this crisis. Now, this is a city that has always been a special place, has always been a place full of energy, creativity, entrepreneurship. This is a place – everyone knows it all over the nation, all over the world – this is a place where people make things happen. And even in the midst of this crisis, New Yorkers have been making things happen. You know, small things in the neighborhood to help people out; big things that could change lives and save lives as well. The spirit of ingenuity, the spirit of fight has been so clear over these last weeks in this city and it's growing all the time. People are not – not only are New Yorkers not giving up, New Yorkers never give up. New Yorkers are forging ahead to find new ways to fight back against the coronavirus. And, look, this is who we are, this is a place where we believe in getting things done. And I have challenged the members of my team to do things that were previously not doable, not thinkable, but now have to be in light of the crisis we're facing and all the problems we've had getting our federal government to respond, getting the markets all over the world to be reliable, all the challenges we've faced trying to get the supplies we need and the help we need have create a reality for us where we have to defend ourselves. We have to fight for ourselves. We have to create things here even if they were never created before. So, that's who we are as a people. And that's what New Yorkers are showing once again in one of the greatest crises we've ever felt.

Let me talk to you today about how we got to what I'm about to tell you about. Over these last years, we've seen in New York City more and more the growth of advanced manufacturing, the growth of biotech, the growth of the technology sector – over these last years, more and more capacity growing in this city and it's allowing us to do things that before would not have been imaginable. So, let me start with the crucial, crucial supplies that we depend on to protect our health care workers and our first responders, the personal protective equipment. I've taken several trips out to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. I've tried to show all of you the amazing work happening there. But what I first want to tell you about today is that this work is now being supercharged. The face shields, which are so crucial to keeping our heroes safe, started modestly, people in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, making the face shields by hand with the components they could get – a wartime factory for wartime conditions. I told you a few days ago on Sunday, that when it came to face shields. We really need them, but we only had enough to get through this week when you look at all the hospitals of our city. But now, we are having a real breakthrough.

The companies that came together have now been joined by more companies. Now, we have eight companies in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the Brooklyn Army Terminal, and in Manhattan, all working together to create the maximum number of face shields for our heroes. They started very modestly, but now they can produce 240,000 per week. That will grow to 465,000 per week by Friday, April 24th. And then the goal soon thereafter will be to produce 620,000 face shields per week right here in New York City, made by New York city workers in New York City companies. That is enough to reach the crisis standard we're working under right now. What this means is we will be able to fulfill our entire need for face shields right here in New York City. Now, we're going to keep working to get more outside. Obviously, we want a bigger supply. We want to make sure we're secure for the future. We want to someday move off that crisis standard and go higher to an even, better standard. But for long as we're in the middle of this war – so long as we're fighting the coronavirus in the kind of crisis dynamics we are in now. For the first time with something as important as face shields, one of the major PPEs, we're going to be able to say we are self-sufficient – New York city will be self-sufficient. We will no longer be at the whim of either the federal government, the international markets. We won't have to import things from overseas. We will be self-sufficient. That's the first point.

The second point – surgical gowns. Now, we need a huge number of these every week, this is an area where it's not possible yet to be self-sufficient, but where we're making huge, huge strides. Again, on Sunday, I told you this was an area I was deeply concerned about where we had enough to get through this week, but we couldn't tell you yet about next week. We're moving to get major supplies in from all over the country. So, this is an area where we do see some relief coming, but, again, we will be best off if the most possible surgical gowns are made right here in New York City. Five companies are now participating in this effort to protect our heroes. They're in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, they're in Sunset Park, they're in the Garment center in Manhattan and in Long Island City, Queens. They're currently only making 30,000 per week, but by next week that will go up to 1,000. Soon thereafter, we want to get to 250,000 surgical gowns per week. And then, we're looking to go even farther. So, this is an area where we're going to make a lot of progress. These are particularly important to protecting those who are saving our lives – another great example of New York City ingenuity and the speed with which New Yorkers can move. Both these items I just told you about – face shields, surgical gowns – were never in recent memory made in New York City. These are brand new production lines created from scratch by companies here, by New York City workers in an atmosphere crisis, and they've surpassed any possible expectation we could have, and they're going farther.

But look, as much as we've been so deeply concerned about the PPEs, and we're going to be concerned about them until this crisis is over, because they mean protection for those who are saving our lives, the number one issue from day one has been testing. When we started fighting the coronavirus here in the city, we said we needed the federal help with testing. It never came. We have scoured the world looking for a test kits on the open market. It's been extraordinarily frustrating. We've had so many good people searching everywhere just to buy the test kits, to get a reliable supply. It has not been possible. So, over months now, the place we turn to for help, Washington DC, we never got a straight answer. We never got a consistent approach and we wondered when would the day come that we could actually get the test kits we need so we could start on that road that I talked about a few days ago from this widespread transmission of the coronavirus to low-level transmission and eventually no transmission. To get there, you must

have testing in large quantities. And we knew that, as recently as yesterday, we did not know when and where we would get those test kits.

Now, we've had one breakthrough on the open market and then another breakthrough right here in New York City, and I'm so excited to tell you about this. Our friends from Carmel, Indiana, I talked about them a few days ago, they donated test kits – a biotech firm there donated test kits to us. But now, they have confirmed they can produce them regularly for New York City. So, on top of their donation of 50,000 kits, which we're so appreciative for, Aria Diagnostics, Carmel, Indiana is now going to be producing test kits for New York City. We will be purchasing them, starting Monday, April 20th – this coming Monday – we'll be purchasing 50,000 full test kits per week from Aria Diagnostics. I'm sure New Yorkers wouldn't have thought that the cavalry would come from Carmel, Indiana, but it has. This is going to be a big piece of the solution, going forward. We're going to get a whole lot more, I want to be clear, because to really get to that point where there's no more transmission, we're going to need a huge number of test kits. But even being able to know we can rely on 50,000 a week from a supplier that we believe in, that's going to be a major, major step forward for this city. I want to thank Mayor Jim Brainard of Carmel, Indiana, who I've gotten to know over the last few years very well at the U.S. Conference of Mayors. He and I are on the leadership of that body, and he has been an extraordinary friend, and ally, and really stepped up for New York City. So, Mayor Brainard, again, thank you. Thank you to everyone in Carmel. Thank you to Aria Diagnostics. This is a big step.

So, that's 50,000 per week, but we're going to need a lot more. And remember, a test kit – and I talked about this a few days ago, I used the analogy of a cup of coffee with cream and sugar – you need the coffee beans, you need the water, you need the cream, you need the sugar, you need the coffee mug. Putting together the full test kit takes three basic components, the nasal swab, the liquid solution – that's what you keep the sample in, it's called a viral transport medium – and a tube with a screw top that keeps the sample secure and sanitary. You need all three of those things to perform a test for the coronavirus. And then, of course, you have to get that test to a lab that then processes it. So, we're talking right now about just collecting the test itself from an individual – whole other part of the equation is continuing to increase the capacity in labs to process these tests and give us the answer person by person, positive or negative. And again, we'll have to do that on a mass scale, going forward. But to get these three parts together so you can collect a test from someone, well that's – you can't get the first base unless you have the actual test that you can collect from people. So, needing those three pieces was crucial. Again, our efforts to get them consistently from Washington DC – no result; our effort scan from the open market – never could get a reliable partner until today with Aria Diagnostics. So, as we went through these last days and saw New York City companies stepping up, our local government, particularly our Economic Development Corporation, bringing together partners from the private sector, figuring out how we could do surgical gowns, figuring out how can we do face shields, starting to figure out other equipment that we need to build – and we'll have announcements on that too – constantly figuring out new ways to support our hospitals and get them the supplies and equipment they need. More and more what's happened is the members of our team here at City Hall, Economic Development Corporation and companies, and even universities now, all talking about what can we produce here? How can we do it more and more? How can we do things that have never been done in New York City?

So, just a few days ago people started saying, wait a minute, if we can make all these other things, could we say no matter what's going on in the international market, no matter what's going on in Washington, could we actually make the test kits here? There's nothing like it in New York City being made right now. Nothing even close, but could we make them here if we just throw in the kitchen sink and tried all the ingenuity that exists in this city? At first, of course we didn't know what the answer would be. We had to pull together a lot of smart people to figure out could it be done? Could it be done quickly enough? Could it be done in the quantities that we needed? And we thought about what New Yorkers are facing. We thought about this crisis and what we have to get through, and we said, well, if people can make them around the world, why not us? Why couldn't we make them, even if we've never done it before? Companies all over the world could make some of these components. Why couldn't the most innovative city on earth figure out a way? So, I'm here to announce to you that we have found a way. And, starting in a few weeks, we will be producing here in New York City, 50,000 test kits per week with components put together right here with companies, universities, New York City workers right here, building a brand-new supply chain to feed this industry that will now develop in New York City. 50,000 tests per week to begin, and if we can go farther, we're going to build it up rapidly. It means commercial labs and academic institutions in this city working together to produce that liquid solution the right way. It means local manufacturers and 3D printers, coming together to make the testing swabs and the tubes. Something as simple as us testing swabs, the entire international market has been struggling, because those swabs had been less and less available. In fact, a lot of them are made in places that were deep in the middle of the COVID crisis themselves. So, the whole international supply was disrupted. But now, through the ingenuity of New York City producers, figured out a way to make them right here. Production will begin in a few weeks at the beginning of May – 50,000 a week to begin. Add that to the 50,000 a week from Aria Diagnostics, we'll have 100,000 full test kits per week that New York City can rely on, 400,000 per month, and that's just the beginning.

So, we will have to take that new capacity, ensure that there are labs that can handle all those tests and get us results in real time. And remember, we're going to need the personnel to administer the tests, we're going to need the PPEs to protect the personnel who administer the test. There's a lot of pieces to this equation. And, all the while, continuing as a city to make the progress we're making through social distancing and shelter in place. So, even while we're building out this brand-new capacity and it's going to help us to the next stage, we will not let our foot off the gas. We will not relent in the successful strategies that are now opening the door to getting out of this horrible crisis. But I want to keep cautioning, it takes all these pieces coming together.

Now, the good news is as we see some progress on the hospital front – and we're far from out of the woods, but as we see some progress, that's going to get us a little more ability to free up some medical personnel for testing. As we see some progress getting more PPEs, that will allow us to devote more PPEs to testing. But all of these pieces have to come together and we're still not in a situation where we can say it's going to be easy, it's not, but we need to find a way to keep building up the testing because it's one of the foundations of getting to that next phase. When you get to that next phase, when you get to low-level transmission, remember, then you're able to constantly test people, figure out who has the coronavirus, needs to be isolated, needs to be

quarantine on, get them the support they need, keep them away from other folks that they might infect. You have to know how to constantly trace anyone who has been infected, the people in their life who might've been exposed – you can get to them, test them, isolate them if they need it. It's a constant moving machine to ensure that the cases, each and every one individually are addressed and you go back to a containment strategy, which is where we were weeks ago when we had the very first cases here in New York City. That's where we want to get back to. But to do that, we need a whole lot of testing. For the first time, we're going to have a truly reliable, major supply of testing. And I'm so proud of my fellow New Yorkers. I'm so proud of the people in the companies who are helping us. So proud of the people in my administration who put together this plan. You know, a lot of folks would have said this was impossible. They're making it possible, and that's what New Yorkers do.

Now, I want to be crystal clear. This does not let the federal government off the hook. So, please, even though I'm telling you good news and something unprecedented and a real breakthrough, it does not take away the responsibility the federal government has. Not only do they have to deal with the fact that for months and months, they didn't do what they needed that could have helped us stop this crisis from growing the way it has, but they still have to come through now because the amount of testing we're going to need, the amount of testing is going to need it all over the country is vast. But hopefully the example New York City is setting will be recognized in Washington, that if we can do it here – a place that doesn't produce tests is figuring out a way to do it – then why can't it be done all over this country? Why can't we build up a supply that could protect all of us? If the federal government can't figure it out, then get out of the way and let us at the local level get this done, but support us, get us the components, get us the help so that we can do this rapidly and protect ourselves.

So, I want to see how far we can go, how quickly we can go. 50,000 test kits produced in New York City per week, starting in the beginning of May is just a beginning from my point of view. I want to see how far we can take this and I want to challenge all New Yorkers who could contribute to this effort – I want to challenge the academic labs, I want to challenge the research labs, I want to challenge the manufacturers, I want challenge the 3D printers – all the companies with 3D printing – the biotech companies, the pharmaceutical companies, the research universities that chemical companies – if you're in New York City or you're in any part of the New York area or anywhere in the country and you want to help build this effort, we need you. We're going to get a lot of help to make this work. You can be a part of history. You can do something unprecedented. You can save lives through this effort. So, everyone who can help, please, right away, communicate with us. Let us know you're willing. Let us know you're ready. Email us at testhelp@edc.nyc. Again, testhelp@edc.nyc. We need you. We will be responding to people. As soon as the emails come in, we're going to be reaching out to people, because this needs to move immediately. And anyone out there that could help us, I want to say thank you in advance, because this is going to be a huge step forward.

So, again, everything I just talked about is about taking us on that journey from where we are now – high level of transmission, widespread transmission of coronavirus, deep in this crisis, to low-level transmission where we go that containment strategy and we get to trace each case, get people isolated, quarantine, support them, reduce the number of cases all the time, and then no transmission – the place we all want to get to where coronavirus is a rarity in this city and life

goes back to normal. That's the journey we're on. The testing is crucial, but also making sure we use the right strategy. And, again, the social distancing, the shelter in place – it is working, New York City. You're doing an amazing job. You, again, are the heroes, because you're following these rules in unprecedented manner – 8.6 million people, together. We need to keep doing it. And I said, every day we'll go over those three indicators that we announced yesterday to tell you where we stand. We'll all watch them together. We'll all know where we are. We've got to see consistent progress to be able to talk about any changes in those rules and restrictions that are working. So, we're going to stick with them until we see really sustained progress.

So, going over the numbers today, the new numbers. Again, you'll be able to see this online, nyc.gov/coronavirus. So, when it comes to the daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected a coronavirus conditions, that number has gone down, I'm happy to say. Remember, these statistics have been verified, there's a two-day lag because of when the information comes in from the hospital. So, this goes back to April 12th – that's the latest confirmed information. But April 12th, two days ago, we saw a reduction from the day before – it went from 383, April 11th, to 326, April 12th. That's the corrector a direction, that's a good thing. But now here's a situation where we don't have good news, on this statistic. The daily number of people in ICU across our health and hospital system, our 11 hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – that number from April 11th to April 12th actually went up from 835 to 850. Then the other measure, people – percentage of people tested who are positive for COVID-19 – citywide, that number again went up – April 11th, 58.1 percent; April 12th, 59.6. The public health labs tests – again, that number went up – April 11th, 78.4 percent to 84 percent on April 12th. So, look, again, this is the real world, real talk. We had a really good day yesterday, progress in all those indicators, all went down together. Today, no such luck. It does not mean you should be discouraged. It's just a reminder. We're going to fight our way out of this. It's not going to happen overnight. There'll be good days and bad days. We got to start some momentum here. You need to keep at it. We all need to keep at it with the social distancing, with the shelter place because it's working. Every day, we have to win that battle to prove that we can reduce the spread of this virus, get those indicators to go down in unison over a longer period of time. And then we'll be in a position to talk about our next steps. But I think what's clear is people will be able to see what we're doing and what's working and be reminded there's going to be ups and downs, but sticking to the strategy is the best way forward.

Okay. I'll summarize now with a few words in Spanish and then we'll take questions from our colleagues in the media.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that we will turn to questions and please let me know the name of the reporter in the outlet.

Moderator: Hi all, just a reminder that we have Commissioner Barbot and James Patchett, President and CEO of the EDC on the line. With that, I will start with Debralee from Manhattan Times and Bronx Free Press.

Question: Good morning, everyone. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes, indeed.

Question: Great. So, this is good news obviously on the testing front. Can you speak specifically, both Commissioner Patchett and Mayor, on what efforts are being done to make sure that this first wave of new testing capacity is going to go right to the front lines of these hardest hit communities, the 88 ZIP codes that you spoke about now for the past week. And then secondly, to the degree that you're looking to deploy a workforce that's going to respond to this new capacity, the personnel, the creation of PPE, what efforts are being made to make sure that these communities are also being engaged directly, that beyond the Brooklyn Navy Yard that you're also looking to call, recruit, you know, really attract from these communities. Again, they're also being hit with these unemployment numbers. And again, are being affected so disproportionately by the virus.

Mayor: Excellent questions. I'll start and if the President of EDC, James Patchett, wants to add, he will jump in. So, first of all, yes, of course, one of the things that's so powerful about this new announcement is it's going to allow us, in combination with everything else we need, to focus on the communities that are being hardest hit and get them more testing, but also to build the framework for the bigger effort to do, again, as I said, that constant tracing and the constant efforts to take us out of this period of widespread transmission and into a better phase of low level transmission. So, the targeted piece in the communities that are hardest hit is crucial. For everyone, having the ability to transfer our efforts, to evolve our efforts to a containment strategy is absolutely necessary. That's how we actually save lives the most, getting out of this period of the crisis and being able to apply testing anywhere and everywhere we need it as part of a containment strategy.

So, in terms of the first part as you heard over the last few days we plan to get additional test centers up later this week, but we have – also it was very clear that we needed to ensure the test kits, we needed to ensure there'd be the PPEs, we needed to ensure there'll be the personnel. Every day changes. And Debralee, it is something that's hard to describe, but I've been trying to, that literally the supply dynamics change by days. We have good days and bad days. We have days where supplies come in. We have days where we get more than expected. We have days where a company steps up or the federal government or state government or FEMA come through with something. We have days that are bad days too, where an order that we were promised from a company in this country overseas suddenly evaporates or is delayed. So, to get the PPEs to the point that we know we can sustain testing is still a challenge, but we're fighting that fight all the time and being able to make more of them here obviously is going to help.

The part about personnel, too. We've got to see this crisis beat back enough to free up medical personnel who can be devoted to testing. Remember a few days ago, really, when it looked like the hospitals were going to bear the brunt, even worse, we were surging all available personnel with any medical training into the hospitals. We are getting ready to expand ICU massively. And again, Debralee it's hard to think about, like, the – it feels like a day is like a week or a month nowadays because things change so rapidly. But literally just days ago we were preparing for a vast conversion of our hospitals to ICUs and taking every available medical personnel in this entire area and surging them into hospitals, which would have taken away, of course, from the ability to be out testing the communities. We're getting some improvement in that situation. That

is freeing up the potential of getting more personnel who could be out doing the test. You do need people with a certain amount of medical training to do these tests, but I'm a little more hopeful now.

So, to finish the first point, this now improves our ability to do the grassroots testing. We certainly will make it a priority. We do need to add those other pieces to the puzzle. We obviously need to make sure there's also the lab capacity to process the tests. Every day we'll be working to perfect that equation, every day we'll be giving updates on when and how grassroots testing is progressing and how much will be done at each site, which also will vary according to all these supply dynamics and logistics. Our goal is to get as many tests done where they're needed the most and that's we'll keep driving towards.

On the job front, I think that's a great point, a lot of the companies that we are working with, of course, the first thing they did was they brought back their own workers who really do represent working people all over this city. When I was at the Brooklyn Navy Yard a couple of weeks ago, you know, you could not have had a more beautiful picture of all of New York City, all people of all backgrounds in one place, working class people who had been out of work because those companies didn't make essential items. Then they converted to making face shields. They brought their whole workforce back. So, that's going to be a kind of thing you'll see that will employ a lot of people who have been out of work particularly from communities of color. But we can target further, to your point. And so, I'll ask James Patchett and the team at EDC to ensure when we need to do more hiring, we focus on the communities that have been hardest hit. And I certainly want to remind everyone that there are also our jobs being made available now at H + H and, again, we want people to take advantage of those jobs. We need the help, we need the labor, but we also need people to get a paycheck. But, yes, we will target those new hiring efforts as they emerge to the places that need them most. James, do you want to add at all?

President James Patchett, Economic Development Corporation: Sure, I'll just add primarily on the second point. I think, you know, the Mayor has visited the Brooklyn Navy Yard two times, but I don't want folks to over-index on that as the sole producer. We have over 15 different firms across gowns and face shields that are producing across the city that represents four boroughs. So, the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. And one of the – although Staten Island is not represented, one of the organizations we're working with is run by two Staten Islanders, although their organization is based in Brooklyn. So, all five boroughs are well-represented. Just to give you an example, one of our largest gown producers, it's an organization called Course of Trade, and not-for-profit organization based in Sunset Park who does [inaudible] training of seamstresses. And they are bringing back over 400 seamstresses from the Sunset Park and greater community to construct these gowns. So, it really is an across the city effort. And the great thing about a lot of these jobs is they're people, as the Mayor said, who were put out of work and are now back to work doing this type of manual labor that is both a good-paying as well as being available and accessible to a lot of different New Yorkers.

Moderator: Next we have Andrew from NBC New York.

Question: Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Andrew. How are you doing?

Question: Good. Since you've spoken about New York and the ability to innovate and come up with creative ways to do things, I want to re-ask about why you have not come up with a way to close more of the streets given that there are very few cars on the streets, streets like – cities like Oakland and Minneapolis have closed block after block. And I know your answer before was that the NYPD wouldn't have the personnel for that, but do they really need the personnel for that? Could you not find ways to get people outdoors safely with more space?

Mayor: Well, yeah, I've heard the concerns and the questions from people in communities and also from the media. I asked the NYPD and Department of Transportation to analyze the Oakland plan, which was the one that was raised a few days ago. Adamantly, the answer back was, we are just profoundly different than those other cities. In Oakland, as I understand it, they said that streets were closed off, but they didn't put up any barricades. They didn't have any enforcement. They just depended on drivers to not go on those streets and everyone to look out and be careful and that's, you know, noble and hopefully that would happen anytime, particularly in a crisis, but we are not comfortable saying that we are going to just assume that people are going to be safe because that's our good intention. You know, this is all about safety, Andrew, the whole concept right now, everything we're doing is about people's health and people's safety. That's where we're going to stay focused. And I do not believe we can do that safely. I do not believe that we can do it in a way that does not undermine enforcement of other things we need to do. So, I heard it. I've been elected by the people to make decisions including at a time of crisis. I have heard the concern, we've analyzed the concern, we've analyzed the possibility. The answer is, I do not believe it will work, period. We'll continue to look at it if situations change going forward. But right now, I am convinced that we need to take the NYPD and the other enforcement entities, keep them focused on where people have to be, the grocery stores or supermarkets, the pharmacies, the parks, the subways, the buses, make sure those are being enforced properly, get the NYPD back to full strength – that's where our focus is – and protect lives. The last thing I want to do is have a situation where we end up endangering people because we put a plan in place that we could not enforce properly. So, that's where we stand now. We'll keep looking at going forward.

Moderator: Next we have Marcia from CBS.

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

Mayor: Good morning, Marcia, how are you?

Question: I'm good. Mr. Mayor, there's been a raging debate about when and how to reopen the economy and businesses. I wonder who should be making the decision? Should it be the Mayor of New York City, the Governor of New York, or the President of the United States? And will you follow the decisions made by the governor and the president?

Mayor: Marcia, great question. Marcia, I think you'll appreciate – we've known each other a long time – in this case, I'm going to declare myself a conservative. The fact is we cannot jump too soon. This is all about safety and all about health. That's all we should be thinking about.

That does not mean we don't need to restart the economy. We do, of course. People's livelihoods depend on it. We've got to, over time, get back to normal. But, Marcia, my profound concern is that if we do this the wrong way, if we do it prematurely, we will see a resurgence of this disease. And this disease is a ferocious one. It has put the entire nation, the entire world back on its heels. So, we would be fools, I think, to ignore the warnings we have received and including in places that did act a little prematurely and ended up paying for it.

My view is job one, health and safety; job two, restarting the economy. You can't restart the economy effectively until you perfect the health and safety equation. If you do attempt an artificially early restart of the economy, you'll end up having to shut a lot of it down again because the coronavirus will reassert. That's the worst of all worlds. So, my view is, smart, cautious approach, beat it back, prove that we've beaten it back, get to that containment strategy, that low level transmission phase I've talked about, secure that phase. That's when you can start to loosen up. But don't do it artificially.

In terms of who makes the decision. Look, it's a federal system. The founding fathers are really clear about this. Of course, the president has a crucial role to play, particularly a time of national crisis. Of course, the governor has a crucial role to play at, particularly in a time of crisis in this state. Localities still play a crucial role in our federal system no matter what. That's how this country was built. So, I'm going to defend the health and safety of New Yorkers. I believe in a lot of ways people will – all levels of government will find some consensus. That's my hope, especially because I think the disease will give us a lot of information, you know, literally, because if we do things right, we'll beat it back. If we do things wrong, unfortunately, the disease will prove its power to us. But in the end, my job is to protect the health and safety of New Yorkers and I will do that no matter what.

Moderator: Next we have Julia from the Post.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Julia. How do you feel?

Question: Good. I'm wondering if – a follow up on Debralee's question, who exactly will be prioritized for testing because we know that, you know, 100,000 is a great start, but based on what the Governor said, we may need tens of millions of these tests to get to the next phase. And then I wonder if you have a cost of the tests from Aria and if you can name any of the companies and universities involved in New York City's homegrown testing efforts.

Mayor: Okay, good questions all around. We'll get you what we can on Aria. I don't have it in front of me. On the institutions involved – absolutely anticipated that question – we are, right now, in conversation with a number of organizations to get this done. Want to make sure they are comfortable with their names coming out before we just start talking about them. And again, we're trying to recruit a lot more. So, over the next few days we will announce the different partners in this initiative. On the question of the testing priorities at the community level. Again, what I said was, here's the plan to get this done by the end of the week, at least to start in as many locations as possible pending getting those PPEs and the personnel. The exact priorities

we're going to announce shortly, Julia. It's obviously going to be a focus on the most vulnerable. So, the exact criteria we will announce, we've said what the locations will be, the tests will be for people from those communities because those had been amongst the hardest hit. But the general criteria we've discussed previously, folks with pre-existing conditions, folks who are older, and particularly those who have both. And that's the number one concern. Folks who are over 50 and have pre-existing conditions. So, we'll lay out the exact focal group, the exact priority group for the grassroots testing. It's going to be limited to begin, so we want to make sure it gets to those who need it most. And we'll have more to say on that in the next few days.

Moderator: Next, we have Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Thank you, Mayor. Wanted to follow up on the regional working group a bit more. Have you spoken with Governor Cuomo since the regional working group was announced? And what would you say is your role either formally or informally in that group?

Mayor: I have not spoken to them. I think it sounds like a good idea. You know, I love the notion of everyone trying to solve these problems together. And again, the states have their role to play. Here's the truth about cities and localities. We provide the services to the people. You know, the federal government does its role. The state government does its role, but in the end, this is where the rubber hits the road. So, when it comes to protecting people it's our police force, it's our fire department, when it comes to the health of everyday New Yorkers, it's our health department, it's our public hospitals with Health + Hospitals. We've obviously been mounting the constant effort to get supplies to the hospitals that need them, to get help to people who need them. It's our EMS, obviously, that brings people to the hospital. And our EMS workers have been extraordinary and valiant in this effort. And by the way again, a thank you to FEMA. Thank you to the federal government. Those 250 ambulances we've gotten, 500 EMTs and paramedics from around the country. I visited with them a few weeks ago. They've been amazing. They've helped us deal with this crisis and, clearly thank God, we see the number of 9-1-1 calls starting to go down. We have, by the way, more ambulances and EMTs and paramedics coming in from around the country to augment further. I'm told by our OEM Commissioner, Deanne Criswell, we have another hundred ambulances and 200 paramedics and EMTs coming in, I believe, next week to add to those ranks further. So, that's been crucial.

So, Shant, that's just my reminder to everyone that what we do is actually directly serve people and directly protect them. So, if the governors of all those states have particular ways that, you know, I can work with them, our city can work with them, we want to for sure, but whatever they're doing together – and I'm glad they are working together – my job is to protect New Yorkers every day with all the resources of this City government. And that's what I'll do

Moderator: Next, we have Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning everyone. And Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask you, I know that the City eliminated the Summer Youth Employment Program in it's a budget saving measures, and now there's been a push to save it. I was curious because I know last month before you canceled schools, one of the major factors you cited for not canceling was what would the youth do, you know, especially teens. So, I'm curious if things improve, if there is, you know, widespread

containment of the virus in the summer, would you consider bringing back this program, so teens and the youth can have something to do in the summer. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Katie. It's a great question. We thought a lot about this. There's been a great expansion of the Summer Youth Employment Program in the course of my administration. The City Council's made it a major priority. We've worked with them. It's, I think, more than doubled from when we came into office. So, you know, it's painful to take away something like that. And it's not just that it's the other summer programs that we have well beyond summer youth, all of which are valuable. I talked about it in the State of the City, we wanted to do even more of that kind of thing. But here's the truth. And again, I'm going to declare myself a conservative on this point – when I say conservative, I'm not talking about ideology, I'm talking about strategic conservatism in light of this crisis. I want to make sure we get the health piece right.

I want to make sure we protect people's health and we actually know we've beat back this virus and we're actually in that new phase. We've talked about somewhere between May and June, we hope to have the proof that we've moved forward enough to be able to start to change some of the restrictions. But that's just the beginning. And even then, we have to watch like hawks to make sure things don't go back in the wrong direction. The numbers today, you know, we really believe in these indicators and as you saw, unfortunately, today they went in the wrong direction. So, we don't yet know the trajectory. What I do know is the kind of planning that you would normally authorize and the spending you authorize for summer initiatives of all kinds would be happening right now. We can't do that. We cannot spend a lot of money and put people through a lot of trouble for something there's no guarantee at all could possibly happen. And there's a real chance – and remember our Health Commissioner, Dr. Barbot, talked about September as really the time that we think is realistic to think about getting back to normal. We're confident, at this moment, we can reopen the schools in September, but we're not confident about June. We're not confident about July. We're not confident about August, that we could have people gathering together again in large numbers. And that's what Summer Youth is and all these other youth programs. So we're going to take this very slow and carefully to make sure we get it right. In terms of your question, what should young people do? It's tough. It's tough, look, I'm a parent. I vividly remember when my kids were teenagers and it would have been really tough to say to them that you got a whole summer ahead and you still have to practice social distancing and you still have to stay in a lot, but that could well be the case. We're going to try to provide every conceivable kind of online programming we can. We're going to try and be ready to in any way we can help kids through it. DOE is preparing contingency plans for each and every scenario for what might happen over the summer. So the answer to your question is I don't see that scenario at this moment. And I'm always going to first focus on how do we guarantee the health and safety of New Yorkers and make sure we don't take our foot off the gas too soon.

Moderator: Next, we have Gersh from Streetsblog.

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

Mayor: Good Gersh. How are you doing?

Question: I'm great. And Mr. Mayor, we can all appreciate the good news you shared today as we fight this war. But let's look ahead for a second. Residents are saying they don't want to return to streets filled with traffic. Sky polluted by car exhaust, hundreds of pedestrians and cyclists killed every year, the result of how we allocate public space to the automobile. So just as FDR, Churchill and Stalin repeatedly met to discuss the future even before they defeated Hitler, do you have someone in your administration, perhaps it's your talented Transportation Commissioner who we haven't seen during this crisis, who is planning for the car light future that residents will demand when this is all over?

Mayor: Well, Gersh, even with some editorializing there in the question, I don't agree with your entire frame. But I think your underlying question is a very good one. And the answer is yes. Real work is starting now to plan our future. So I want to affirm, I think the point, the basic point you're making, which is that we are not looking to simply bring back the status quo that existed before the coronavirus. I think that'd be a huge mistake. Now Gersh, my first concern here is the health and safety of New Yorkers. So one, the planning has to recognize that we have to get it right on ending this crisis. And if you look around the world, coronavirus is not linear. It doesn't like just have an on-off switch. We may be fighting it in different ways for an extended period of time. So I want to be careful that people not think we turn a corner and we're done necessarily. We have to be smart about that. But when you think about where we are going forward, when we think where we are now, and how we have to move forward, the first thing I would say we need to do is fight inequality. This is what I came here to do. This is what New Yorkers, I think fundamentally believe in. We're still a city racked by inequality. We must do so many things differently. And it starts with making sure that working people have better lives and have the ability to really take care of their families in a whole new way. And this is where I think the health care disparities have been pointed out here, so painfully are a call to arms. That when we come back, when we start our recovery, it has to be also about a redistribution. It has to be about fundamental changes in the direction of fairness and justice and equality. So I think the first question is about health and safety, is about economic justice. But then talking about how we address the future of the city in terms of sustainability, in terms of transportation. Unquestionably we need to make more changes. I have a real feeling that this horrible, horrible crisis, unprecedented, at the same time as it's so horrible unto itself, it's such a jolt. It's the worst health care crisis in a century. It's the worst economic crisis in 80 years. I think it's also preparing us for something ahead. And I wish it wasn't, I really do. But I think unfortunately it is preparing us for something. Which is the battles we'll have to face in the future in the fight against global warming. We all understand how dangerous that situation is. So it comes to your point to fight global warming, we have to, we have to get away from individual automobile use a lot more. We have to build a city that more and more will rely on mass transit. We have to double down on everything we've done with Vision Zero. I intend to create a plan that will do all of that. Because when we finish beating this enemy, we've got another enemy up ahead that's fierce. And that is bearing down on us quickly and we're going to all have to work together to fight. And getting out of our cars to the maximum extent possible is part of that fight. So yes, you will see those plans for the future of the city.

Moderator: Next we have Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I'm wondering if you're going to explain the rationale for requiring medical staff at the city's public hospitals to provide a doctor's note when they get sick? Relatedly the NYPD has been releasing daily updates of how many officers get sick, how many are confirmed positive. If the situation at H + H is so bad that you're requiring medical staff to prove they are not faking an illness, why can't we get the same data for H + H?

Mayor: Happy to get you that data. And I don't agree with your inference. I look at it the other way around. We need them. We need those key health care workers right now. We just need a system that creates consistency of verifiability. In fact, in a crisis, you need it more than ever. So yeah, we'll happily get out statistics. But the intention here is one thing to make sure we can save lives. We need to make sure every available health care worker is where we need them. We also need to make sure that anyone who is sick gets the support they need and is not at work but is at home getting well.

Moderator: Next we have Brigid from WNYC.

Question: Good morning Mr. Mayor and thank you for the news about testing. It feels a little bit hopeful today.

Mayor: It is, it is.

Question: I have a question on a different supply chain related to food security. Particularly for our seniors, we are hearing from people who signed up for meal delivery who are getting texts saying a delivery is coming and then nothing arrived. First, what should a senior do, you know, when they can't go out and they're not getting what they need? And I know you have Kathryn Garcia in this role as the City's Food Czar. Does that mean that she also has oversight of these supply chains, including, you know, these types of meals that are supposed to be delivering?

Mayor: Yes, Brigid. Every piece of the food equation DFTA has played a historically crucial role feeding seniors at senior centers, Meals On Wheels, that type of thing. HRA has played a crucial role with food stamps and food pantries, soup kitchens. All of that and every other piece that can be brought to bear is under the umbrella of Kathryn Garcia's leadership now, as the Food Czar. We are going to present this week a much more detailed plan on the work she is doing. There is a lot more ahead. The blunt truth is I'm very worried about the ability of New Yorkers to get the food they need because so many of them are running out of money because they've been out of work. And so what I've said is we will not let any New Yorker go hungry. I want to emphasize this. We will not let any New Yorker go hungry. Any New Yorker who needs food right this minute, we can get them food, either of those 435 programs we have through DOE. Right this minute where any family can go get three meals a day, grab-and-go, as many family members as they have. All of the soup kitchens and food pantries that we're supporting in the effort we announced with the City Council, \$25 million effort we just announced. All the other ways that we get food out, including the direct deliveries to seniors and vulnerable folks, which have been growing all the time. So we will have much more to say on that this week. But to your question about if you will quality control, make sure that anyone who signs up gets them right away. I have been really clear with everyone that it needs to be an immediate turnaround and we can't miss, because people are depending on this. There was a situation in Independence Plaza.

I'm glad several of you raised it last week. You were right. I apologize to the folks at Independence Plaza. It should never have happened. And I've told our team we have to tighten up, that can never happen again. If there's individual instances we need to know about them immediately. So any journalist or anybody who hears of a situation where someone signed up for the food and didn't get it, our team here at City Hall needs to know that so we can get Kathryn and her team to fix it. And the fix can be very quick. There's constant deliveries being made all over the city now and we'll give you those details. I think you'll be struck by how much is happening. So you know, quickly making sure that if a delivery was missed, it is quickly fixed and get the food to the person in need. We can do that, but we need to know where the problems are and if it's just individual or something more systemic that we need to fix. So please Brigid, if you'd share that information with our colleagues at City Hall and again, we'll have a bigger outline for you of everything happening this week.

Moderator: Next we have Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Yes. Good morning Mr. Mayor. Good to talk to you.

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

Question: Hi, fine, thank you. My question is this, now that you have this capacity to do a lot more testing, do you think there will come a time when every New Yorker should or needs to be tested? And I'm asking because there were concerns that there are people that are asymptomatic that may not know that they're carriers. So what happens? How would people know if they've had it with mild symptoms or they're carrying it or they have an immunity? How would that work and how would you go about doing that?

Mayor: Great, great question, Juliet. I'm going to start as the layman, Dr. Barbot will jump in, but I'm going to – she's been teaching me, so I'm probably going to immediately summarize some of what she would say. Look, again, we're fighting an enemy that we never even heard of six months ago. I mean, let's be clear about this. The coronavirus did not exist in human beings to the best of human knowledge, you know, half a year ago. And there's literally no one in the world who understands it enough. The entire international medical community is still trying to understand it. I have talked to every health expert I could find from Dr. Fauci on down. And what you keep hearing is that honest hesitancy about what they know and what they don't know. So this gets to your question, first of all, now we don't even know for sure if someone has had it and they cannot get it again in the near term. We think you can't get it again. And this goes to the antibody testing, which is its own topic. We think that would tell you something valuable, but it's not 100 percent clear if it is the final word. The same on the other side with the main coronavirus testing, the PCR testing. It tells you at that moment if you have it or not. It doesn't tell you if you're going to have it tomorrow. So some -- we're obviously getting people who are negative one day and a couple of days later they're positive. That whole point about asymptomatic transmission, which is still not sufficiently clear. You could even have someone somewhere on the pathway to infection, but it doesn't necessarily show up in the tests. I'll let Dr. Barbot speak to all of this. But the point is we're dealing with imperfect knowledge of the disease and imperfect tools to fight it, but they still give us something. So to your question, I think what I would say is the first thing we need is testing for everyone who needs it. So obviously we have

struggled to just have the testing for patients who are really sick, for health care workers, for first responders. That situation's getting better and now especially that we'll be able to have our own supply. Then of course we wanted to target communities that are hardest hit and the most vulnerable individuals specifically, not just to everyone, but the most vulnerable specific individuals in those communities. But when you go that next phase, you need testing all the time to make sure that you know exactly who can work, who can't, who should be contained and isolated, or a quarantined, who shouldn't, who's coming out of quarantine. It's like a constant assembly line, if you will, where you're constantly having to test lots of people to know exactly where they are and make sure they get the support they need. I don't know, and I don't believe in the many, many conversations we've had here at City Hall with all the health experts. I don't believe I've heard the idea of every single person, 8.6 million people needing to be tested. But I don't rule that out either. I'm thinking of this in stages where the greatest concern is to have the testing, to actually keep track of the people who need testing and have that kind of dynamic situation where anyone needs isolation or quarantine, we can get it to them. Anyone who's ready to come out of it, we can confirm the rate who come out of that, that kind of thing. Dr. Barbot take it from there.

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, sir. And so, I'll build on what you have just laid out. And I want to just sort of back up a little bit to remind folks about what I've said in the past regarding testing. The reason to test is because we want to be able to then use that information for decision making. The second thing is that the importance of testing depends on where in the curve you are and then what decisions it'll help inform. So, right now, when we have widespread community transmission, what we have said to individuals, all of our fellow New Yorkers, is assume that if you've got these symptoms you have COVID because it's so widespread. And whether or not you get tested is sort of secondary because we want to make sure that people stay home. We want to make sure that people pay attention to their symptoms. If they aren't getting worse, we want you to reach out to 9-1-1. That being said, as we start seeing a decrease in the number of new people being infected with COVID, that's where having more testing available really makes a difference. Because it then helps us identify who are those individuals that have COVID and how can we then move more quickly to slowing the spread of COVID, by ensuring that not only do we make sure that these folks stay home and isolate, but anybody who's come in contact with them also then self isolates. And so right now I think it's premature to think about the value of every single New Yorker being tested. I think it's a combination of ensuring that, as we've been saying along, the folks who are at greatest risk for poor health outcomes as a result of COVID-19 get tested. Meaning the intersection of age and underlying illnesses, as well as, individuals who may be in particular communities where we see ongoing high levels of transmission so that as a city we can start cutting off those chains of transmission.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next we have Erin from Politico.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor. I'm wondering, have you asked for authority – we reported that your administration was considering borrowing for the operating budget because of the budget crunch

that you're in currently. Have you asked yet for the SRD to do that or do you, sorry – begun that process in any way?

Mayor: Thank you for the question Erin. It's something we have to think about. Obviously we'll be presenting the executive budget soon. And we've had to go through a really tough process around cuts to the budget and savings and PEG program. But we're going to have to look at everything to figure out how we get through this. There's a lot of uncertainty ahead, revenue we're seeing everywhere going down, very painfully, more and more expenses. Look, protecting the health and safety of New Yorkers, that's the priority. We'll throw everything we got at it, but it is obviously costing a lot of money. The State budget situation is real bad. So it's a tough, tough time ahead. So we're going to look at all options. But I'll have more to say when we do the budget presentation. And we'll talk about if and when we're going to seek any formal authority to do that.

Moderator: Next we have Kathleen from Patch. And we'll take one more after that.

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

Mayor: Yes, Kathleen.

Question: Oh, great. So I'm following up on a question from my colleague on Sunday. Maya asked whether – about your blanket policy across city agencies to protect essential workers with preexisting conditions. She wondered if you had a follow up on that and what's been instituted?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a great question. Thank you. And I have – I appreciated the question. It turned out it was a very good question because it did point out that different agencies had somewhat different standards, all pretty much pointed in the same direction, but somewhat different standards. We'll be issuing guidance this week for a uniform standard for all city agencies. And basically it will be that the first consideration is to protect those with really serious health challenges. And we want to be clear that anyone whose particular health reality would put them at serious risk, we want to keep them home. Some of them can work from home, some of them can't. But whatever the case, the number one thing is to protect our city workforce. If someone by coming out of their home and going to work, even if they're doing essential work, if it would endanger their health, if they have the kind of serious specific conditions where it would endanger their health, we don't want them to take that chance. So we'll clarify that. Thankfully there are other folks who, you know, are not in the same kind of risk category. Of course anyone who can work from home, we want working from home. But there's other people who would not be running the same kind of risks, that's a different story. But we're going to send out guidance defining that if you have those serious risks, we do not want to put you in harm's way. And we will of course continue on the payroll, anyone like that on the payroll. So that guidance will be coming out soon and it will be made public.

Moderator: Last question for today. Alejandra from AMNY.

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

Mayor: Yes, Alejandra.

Question: Okay. My question has to do with the announcement from the DOE yesterday that at least 50 staffers have passed away due to coronavirus. And I'm just curious to see when you were first made aware that it was at least 50 and how much of a role did that news play in your decision to keep New York City public schools closed, last a few days ago?

Mayor: Thank you Alejandra. I had been hearing honestly day by day, the updates so long before it reached such a painful number. You know, I was hearing each day when we lost any member of a school community and that definitely is something that I had in mind and the Chancellor had in mind. The Chancellor talked about this when we announced that we keep the schools closed, that school communities are hurting right now. There's a lot of pain, there's a lot of trauma. It's something we are going to have to address now and it's something we're going to have to address very deeply and you know, intensely in September. You're going to have kids coming back who have lost people in their families, in their neighborhoods and even of course in their own school. And that's going to be really, really difficult. We've not faced something quite like this in a long, long time in this city. And it's going to be very, very painful. And pretty much every neighborhood and every school will be affected in some way. So yeah, that is a painful, awful number that we've lost so many people who were devoted to uplifting our kids. And absolutely weighed on not only the decision that the Chancellor and I had to make, it weighed on our hearts. You know, my life and public life has been very, very focused on education and Richard's whole life has been focused on education and it's horrible. But I do think it puts a point on the fact that it just is not safe to bring back our schools until we are absolutely certain that we have moved out of this crisis. You know, we're talking about places where you bring together a lot of people and the safety and health of our kids and our parents, our families, our educators, that's what we should be focusing on in making every decision we make. And it's certainly was paramount in why the Chancellor and I decided to keep our schools closed for the school year.

So everyone I'll conclude by saying yes, we had a big breakthrough today. Really exciting news. And again, I've said many times the heroes are the New Yorkers in this fight, starting with our doctors and nurses and health care workers and our first responders, everyday New Yorkers who the whole nation, the whole world is watching as you do heroic work. The heroes are all of you who every day, no matter how tough it is in the biggest city in the country, you're practicing social distancing. You're doing shelter in place. It's making a big impact. But now we have a new set of heroes. The folks in all these companies, all these innovative, creative people, including the folks on our government team who said, you know what? It doesn't matter if it's never been done before. We're going to do it here in New York City. We're going to make something happen. We're going to make something out of nothing. People said, there's nothing here to work with. We're going to still find a way. And they've actually figured out now how to make us self-sufficient in face shields. How to make a big step forward in those surgical gowns that protect our health care workers and most notably, most powerfully, how to create our own test kits. How to make up for all the mistakes that we've seen from our federal government by taking matters into our own hands more and more. And starting to produce test kits on a mass scale here in New York City. It's very powerful. It's very exciting. It's going to help us save lives. And it's a tribute to all New Yorkers.

Thank you, everybody.

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