

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2021, 10:00 AM
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Beautiful day in New York City. And it's time to vote, everybody. We are one week out from Election Day. Early voting began on Saturday, continues this week. It is so important to get out there and vote. New Yorkers are already going out to the polls, want to urge everyone, get out and vote and determine the future of New York City. Ranked choice voting is new, but it is a tremendous system allowing everyone to really express their preferences and have their vote have the maximum impact. We undertook a \$15 million awareness campaign to help people understand ranked choice voting, to really get them to connect with it, and – TV, radio, digital, you name it. That's been really helpful. But what we know for sure is New Yorkers really start to embrace something when they get to express their strong opinions, because that's who we are as New Yorkers. And so, we had an election before the election for the best pizza topping. And this has brought out the true heart and soul of New York City.

I've been talking to people about ranked choice voting, and I've been talking to people about their favorite pizza toppings. New York City comes alive when you talk about pizza toppings. I got together with a great guy, a great comedian, and someone who's done a lot to help us spread the word about ranked choice voting, Matt Richards. We hit the streets, we wanted to help New Yorkers have everything they 'knead' to know – knead, that's a pizza dough reference there, okay. That they 'knead' to know. I could go over it again. Anyway, we were out there. Matt talked to a lot of voters, topped off the day with a slice. Before we announce the winner of the favorite pizza topping vote here in New York City. I want you to see this video of me and Matt together in Brooklyn.

[...]

I think Matt Richards said it all there, really wonderful explanation of ranked choice voting. It was a joy to hang out with him. Happy birthday, Matt. It's his birthday today. And now the moment you've all been waiting for, 20,000 votes were cast. Talk about what New Yorkers care about, 20,000 votes were cast. And you're going to hear in a moment how the votes distributed round by round. But now, I – you know, the tension, you could cut it with a knife. You could cut it with a pizza roller. So, it's time to let you know the winner. And I'm not just going to talk about the winner. That would be so banal. I'm going to take another step and I want to give a special thank you to Albergo at Little Italy Pizza on Park Place who, even at this early hour in the morning, was able to accommodate us. Ladies and gentlemen, unlike any other election result you've ever seen, here it is. Here it is – pepperoni, ladies and gentlemen, pepperoni has won. And in honor of the new king, I want to just take a bite here. I'll tell you what it feels like.

Mm, mm. Ranked choice voting, mmm. I didn't know it would be this delicious.

When you think about ranked choice voting, think about this. Now, if you're vegan, it could be vegan pepperoni. Again, we're ecumenical. We want everyone to be a part of this. Here to break down how the vote went and to show you how each round of voting was redistributed – it's very dramatic – our Chief Democracy Officer, Laura Wood.

Chief Democracy Officer Laura Wood, DemocracyNYC: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And thank you so much for the slice of pepperoni, which I plan to enjoy very soon –

Mayor: At a more appropriate hour? Is that what you're saying?

[Laughter]

Chief Democracy Officer Wood: Perhaps, although, as you said last week, there's no wrong time for pizza.

Mayor: That's right.

Chief Democracy Officer Wood: One thing is clear, New Yorkers care about their pizza toppings, and they are not a fan of clams on pizza. Another thing is clear, which is that New Yorkers understand ranked choice voting and are ready to rank their votes. And we urge all eligible voters, if you haven't voted yet already, please make a plan to vote by June 22nd. Now, as the Mayor said to show everyone how the ranked choice voting tabulation works, we thought we would run through the results of the pizza ballot. And for anyone who's interested, you can also check out the results at nyc.gov/votepizza results. And please note the ballot is actually still live for those who want to practice. But for purposes of this exercise, we cut off the voting at eight this morning.

So, let's take a look at where things stand after round one. With thousands of votes cast, you can see that pepperoni is clearly the leader with about 45 percent of the vote, but that's not a majority. And as you can also see, clams have the fewest votes. So, moving on to round two clams are eliminated and the first-choice clam votes get redistributed to their second choices. After round two, vegan cheese has the least amount of votes. So, the first-choice vegan cheese votes go to those voters' next choices. The next one to go – and I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor – is green peppers.

Mayor: It was great while it lasted, Laura. I want to say to all the green pepper voters, thank you. Thank you for believing in a better New York City. Continue, Laura.

Chief Democracy Officer Wood: Yes – no, it put up a decent showing, but it just could not put together a broad enough coalition. So, the green pepper votes go to those voters' next choices. And after that, we see that olives are eliminated, and those votes get redistributed. Next to go – and this is some good news, Mr. Mayor, you don't have to worry about pineapple winning.

Mayor: Boo yah! Okay. Take that, pineapple. You're an imposter from the beginning. The people in New York City saw through you.

Chief Democracy Officer Wood: Yes, it is true, pineapple, although it put up a better showing than I think many of us would have expected is eliminated in round five. And it's now gone. And we then move on to the third – third to last, which is sausages. And finally, here we are, we're down to just two toppings, mushrooms and pepperoni. And as you can see, pepperoni has crossed that 50 percent threshold and is the clear winner of the first ever New York City Pizza Toppings Ranked Choice Voting Election. Pepperoni also happens to be my daughter, Phoebe's favorite, and today's her birthday. So, I'm going to give her a shout out and enjoy the pizza later. And we hope this is helpful. You know, this is meant to be fun. It's meant to be a fun way to understand how ranked choice voting works and we know New Yorkers get it. And we're confident that they will continue to rank their votes at the polls.

We've been having fun with pizza, but the election is really serious and will have an impact on all New Yorkers. So, again, please make a plan to vote. If you want to vote by absentee ballot, please request your ballot today. Today is the deadline, and make sure to post-market by June 22nd. And, of course, you can vote early through Sunday or on Primary Day itself. One other quick thing to note is that ranked choice voting is only being used for municipal elections. So, there may be some races on your ballot, including Manhattan DA, that don't use ranked choice voting. Please visit nyc.gov/democracy or voting.nyc for more information. Again, you can check out the pizza results at nyc.gov/votepizzaresults. Thank you so much. And back to you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you, Laura, tremendously important news today in this election. First of all, respect – mushroom, respect. Strong number two, didn't see that coming. That's what hard work and spunk is. That's a real New York thing I saw from mushroom here in this election. We've got a big proponent of vegan cheese coming up here to talk to us. I know he's a very gracious guy. He's going to take the defeat with grace and dignity, but more importantly, he believes that it is crucial to educate people on this new system and get people out to vote. My pleasure to introduce Council Member – from Bay Ridge, Brooklyn – Justin Brannan.

[...]

Thank you so much, Justin. Obviously, vegan cheese is not giving up and we have more breaking news as vegan cheese makes a late surge here. I admire that. I admire that. It ain't over until the last vote is counted. And everyone, what Justin said is so important. Make your voting plan, literally figure out in advance exactly how you want to rank your top five in every race that you're voting in – mayor, comptroller, borough president, city council. Doing that work in advance really helps. If you want to confirm where you're voting, go to findmypollsite.vote.nyc or any questions you have go to nyc.gov/democracynyc.

So, now I want to talk about another vote, a vote of confidence in New York City. You know, last week we talked about New York City's future. We talked about the investments we're making to build the economy of New York City to bring us a whole new piece of the puzzle. I was going to say piece of the pie, but I can't overuse the joke. And that is life sciences and our

goal of becoming the public health capital of the world. This is New York City's future. A new report has come out showing really striking growth in the life sciences field this year in New York City. A lot of investment coming in, a lot of private sector focus on New York City and life sciences in 2021. We've already set the record for life sciences space that has been leased in a single year. So, it's only, not even halfway through 2021. This has already been the strongest year for life sciences investments in New York City. And that means over 257,000 square feet of new lab space has been leased already this year. And we expect that to climb rapidly because all over the country, more and more people in life sciences are realizing New York City is the place to be. Some of the top names already involved in this new surge, Mount Sinai, c16 Biosciences, Black Diamond, and Volastra. This is a key element of how we make New York City the public health capital of the world. We've invested a billion dollars, what we announced last week, a billion dollars to build out space for life sciences, to foster this industry to make it a big part of New York City's economy of the future, and the market is speaking. The companies are speaking. The investors are speaking. Good news for New York City.

And in the good news category as well, vaccine update. Numbers keep growing, as of today from day one, 8,789,865 doses. And we continue to add incentives. We continue to make it more and more exciting for people – the staycation vacation packages that we talked about are the contest prizes for this week, the referral bonus program partnering with local organizations. And we're going to focus on the neighborhoods that are not as strong in terms of the number of vaccinations. We're going to be investing in them further and in the organizations that people trust in those neighborhoods. But we're going to keep adding incentives to energize people. So, new incentives today from our friends at Coney Island and at Luna Park – 10,000 Family Fun Wristbands will be given away. As people sign up to get vaccinated, get the wristband, enjoy everything amazing at Luna Park. Also, free rides on the Cyclone, everybody. I rode the first Cyclone ride of the year. It was an amazing experience. If you haven't done it, you have to. If you have done it, go back and get vaccinated so you can go do that for free.

And this one's exciting, a new one – a new vaccination location. We've had real energy from New Yorkers, especially examples like the Museum of Natural History, people wanting to get vaccinated under the blue whale. Here is an opportunity to have a truly memorable vaccination site, arguably the best selfie spot in New York City, the Empire State Building. If you go get vaccinated at the 80th floor of the Empire State Building, for free you get to go to the Observation Deck on the 86th floor, take in the views, take a selfie, have a story for the rest of your life. You got vaccinated at the Empire State Building. Pretty amazing. Doesn't get more New York City than that. I want to thank everyone at the Empire State Building, especially Tony Malkin, the CEO of the Empire State Realty Trust, who has been a great partner with us on sustainability and fighting climate change and just great, great efforts, the Empire State Building, to help New York City out of this crisis and lead us forward. Thank you, Tony, and to everyone over there.

So, everyone, we have great news today also, record low positivity for New York City, 0.57 percent, and we are awaiting the formal announcement that New York State has hit the 70 percent mark. That's great news. We expect that today. That means we've got to open up even more. That means we've got to keep moving forward and that means the summer in New York City is even closer. So, that's good news is all around.

Now, to keep fuel doing our recovery of course, vaccination continues to be the key, but we also love that we're seeing more and more activity out in the streets, more and more tourism, more and more jobs coming back. Recovery is going to help us in so many ways. To ensure recovery we have to keep acting on public safety, but as I always say, public safety equals recovery. Recovery equals public safety. The recovery is making us safer unto itself. So, we have announcements we're going to be making regularly about additional efforts in communities to help foster public safety. The NYPD has been leading the way as part of the Safe Summer NYC effort, which remembers a focus on community investments, it's a focus on precision policing and smart efforts by police to address issues. It's also a focus on our court system, bringing that back strong, all of these pieces together, help get us safer. One of the community investments, which is deeply appreciated in communities because everyone says wherever I go, we need better options for our kids. We need places for kids to go that are positive. We need kids to know they're being invested in and that we care about them. So, the NYPD has worked with great partners to refurbish 15 basketball courts at public housing developments by August so that kids can enjoy them this summer, and I joined with Commissioner Shea and other leaders of the NYPD, with the Mandela foundation, and with union settlement for the extraordinary new court at the Wagner Houses in East Harlem. I sank a few free-throws. I'm proud to say my form was excellent in case the Nets with their injury issues need help – I'm ready. But, this refurbishing of basketball courts is deeply appreciated by kids, by parents, the community. Today, a new court opening at Marcy Houses in Brooklyn and five new courts opening in the following days, and you see where on the screen and we're going to keep doing that because it's so important to give kids these positive options and to show police and community working together for the good of our children, and we have a lot more to say on that in the coming days.

Now, also when it comes to public safety. Big news at the end of last week, and we really need to talk about it. The New York State Assembly did something crucial for the safety of all New Yorkers. I want to thank Speaker Carl Heastie and all the members of the assembly. They took an historic step, passing legislation to support parolees in a whole new way to actually ensure that when people come out of prison, when they're returning citizens, coming back to communities that they get support – support with housing, with jobs, with health, including mental health, that there's a chance that these individuals can therefore turn the corner and have a better life because they have support and not end up in a vicious circle, which has happened in the past. Too often in the past, parolees come back, end up getting, unfortunately, right back into crime, either as perpetrators or victims, four times more likely parolees are to be perpetrators and victims of gun violence than others who have been involved in the justice system. But that's in large measure because there hasn't been support. There hasn't been a focus on rehabilitation and the State of New York hasn't taken that responsibility until now. The action of the State Assembly is crucial. We are now very hopeful when the State Senate comes back, we can take the next big step. Here to talk about it, someone who really appreciates how important it is to support people in their rehabilitation. Also, I know he's excited about that. The new court at Marcy houses in his district pleasure introduced to you Council Member Robert Cornegy.

[...]

Mayor: I am ready at all times to meet you on the court, Robert Cornegy, and I think that HORSE is a fine choice because you're a greater experience, your greater skill, your greater height will be less crucial in HORSE than if we were actually doing one-on-one. So, I think this is really a fine compromise, and I will see you on the court for an extraordinary showdown.

[...]

Mayor: Excellent and thank you for supporting this important legislation in Albany. This is going to be really crucial going forward, and we look forward to the State Senate coming back and getting this passed for the good of everyone. Thank you, Council Member.

Okay, now let's go to our indicators for the day and again, good news, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 today's report – 68 patients. Confirmed positivity level – 11.11 percent. Hospitalization rate – 0.43 per 100,000, very strong numbers. New reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report – 200 cases, and number three, percentage of the people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, the seven-day rolling average, today's report, lowest we've ever had – 0.57 percent. Let's keep driving that down. That line keeps going down. Let's keep driving it down by getting vaccinated.

Okay a few words in Spanish on the crucial topic of the election coming up and ranked-choice voting.

[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: Good morning. We will now begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we are joined by Chief Democracy Officer Laura Wood, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, and Dr. Mitch Katz, President and CEO of New York City Health + Hospitals. Our first question for today goes to Derick from ABC.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor. I just wanted to ask well, first of all, any idea where these fireworks are going to be happening tonight in the city, are there any plans for the city that you know of?

Mayor: Derick, we're waiting for more information on that. We obviously want to make sure that the NYPD and everyone else relevant is coordinated with this effort. So, we haven't gotten the final details, but we expect to quite shortly and then we'll get to work on making sure it's safe for everyone. Go ahead, Derick.

Question: You know, yesterday, Governor Cuomo kind of he had a list of all the ZIP codes that had kind of the worst rates of vaccination, and I'm curious if there's any new efforts or initiatives that the city is doing to kind of boost those numbers. It looked like you know, there's a ZIP code in Brooklyn, for example, that had – it was only in the thirties. The vaccination rate was only in the thirties, and I'm curious if you're doing anything new to kind of boost those numbers?

Mayor: Derick, yes. What we talked about just yesterday, the effort to work with community organizations with the referral bonus. Look, we understand that in some communities has been particular hesitancy the way to address those, keep answering people's valid questions. Keep going out there, connecting with family doctors, pediatricians, talking to their patients, we're deepening that, but the referral bonus program is fantastic because it says to community-based organizations, resident associations in public housing, houses of worship – reach out to all of your constituents, to all the people that listen to you and trust you, get them coming and get vaccinated and we'll make resources available to your organization for everyone that you bring in. I think that's going to be a great incentive that also circulates money right back into the community. So, I think that's the kind of thing that's going to make a difference.

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

Question: Yeah. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'm going to bite my tongue on the pizza topping survey outcome and the interest of not showing—

Mayor: Shant. You should bite. Shant, don't bite your tongue, Shant. Bite this delicious pepperoni pizza.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: That's the breakfast of champions, Shant.

Question: I know. I'm going to have to go out and get a slice. Speaking of voting, the New York Times is reporting that you've been supporting Eric Adams behind the scenes. Why not support him outright? Are you, are you concerned that a public statement in support of Adams could possibly backfire?

Mayor: Shant, I haven't even made up my mind who I'm voting for, let alone who I'm supporting. I want to see more. I'm very concerned to see this next debate. I respect the candidates. I still think there has been a lack of clear vision, and I want to see more from these candidates and then I'll make my final decisions. Go ahead.

Question: Yeah. Thanks for that. So, another topic. The DOE's summarizing program for students. I understand the principals union, and some others have been concerned about whether the City can recruit enough teachers to staff that program starting next month. Can you give an update on how recruitment is going? Also are there are any strategies, like possibly bonuses for teachers who sign up, that kind of thing?

Mayor: Shant, we talked about this from the beginning. Look, this is an unprecedented effort to reach young people after everything families have been through, and kids have been through. It is there for every child. You have a safe, positive place to be this summer with academics, cultural activities, recreation, any parent who doesn't have a better option. This is there for them, and we have gotten a lot of willingness from educators to come forward and be a part of this. We found a lot of talent out there when we had to create all of the new approaches for this last year.

So, I'm not hearing from the DOE that there's a particular problem there, but if there's anything we have to do, of course we'll do it to get additional talent in for this initiative.

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

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, just to follow up on Shant's question. My colleagues reported today that you know, you've reached out to union leaders and urged them to back Adams, and I'm just curious why back him versus either of the two women who are running who worked for you?

Mayor: Well, Dana, the original construct of your question doesn't get to what really has happened. What has happened is I've had union leaders, elected officials, clergy, community leaders, people I'm talking to all the time. People have reached out to me for advice. People want to compare notes on different candidates. I've told them what I think about a variety of candidates, but it keeps evolving as I see the election continue, and I've said good things about multiple candidates. So, this is just an ongoing dialogue and that's really what's happened. Go ahead, Dana.

Question: Thanks, and then I just to follow up, you said good things about multiple candidates. Who have you not said good things about?

Mayor: Dana, again, I want to respect private conversations. I think there's merits to each of these candidates as always with any election. Everyone brings something to the table and what I've done is just offered reflections. A lot of times what people say to me is they're choosing between two or three candidates. What do I think of each? Typically, folks have some preferences in mind, and they want to compare notes on that. So, again, I'd like to see more from all the candidates. We're getting down to the wire here. I believe in my heart the vast majority of New Yorkers have not made up their mind 110 percent and they're looking for more information and I think this next debate is going to be really crucial.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Paul Liotta from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Paul, how are you doing?

Question: I'm well, thank you. For you and the medical professionals on the call, the Governor is expected to lift most of the remaining restrictions today with some low vaccine rates in the city. I wanted to get a sense of, if you think that's appropriate and more broadly, what you think of it overall.

Mayor: Paul, I just want to make sure I got that. Say that part again, what you said, which [inaudible] low vaccine rates?

Question: With some areas in the city having low vaccine rates, I think the Governor's metric is 70 percent statewide and—

Mayor: Yeah, I – look, I think we're ready. That's the bottom line, Paul. You see the decline in positivity in the city steadily, the decline in hospitalizations, more and more people vaccinated. As of now we've got 4.5 million New Yorkers who received at least one dose, and as we've discussed, when they get one, almost inevitably, they'll get a second. So, more than half of the total population of the city on their way to full vaccination. It's time, I'm very comfortable its time, but I also think we have more work to do in some neighborhoods, and that's why we're doing things like the referral bonus program and a host of other approaches to deepen. We're going to stay at it. We'll stay at it for weeks and months until we continue to drive up those numbers. Go ahead, Paul.

Question: Thank you for that, and Community Board One on the North Shore, they rejected a high-rise development. They're against it, essentially. Economic development on the North Shore has had its difficulties. I wanted to get a sense of what do you think specifically of that high rise development and more broadly you know, in your remaining time in office, what do you see as the future of the North Shore going forward?

Mayor: Paul, I'm not going to speak to the specific development because I don't have all the details of that in front of me, but what I can tell you is, look, it's never surprising when a community board opposes development, that's pretty consistent across all the neighborhoods in New York City. I do think Staten Island is an amazing place to live. I do think the North Shore is a place that makes sense that you can have some additional housing, including affordable housing, because there's so much transportation available to people. I think we got to recognize that this city is going to start growing again and people need good places to live. So, that's my general take, but of course it always has to be done in a way that's sensitive to communities and we have to keep addressing the infrastructure needs in the North Shore and every community. I'm happy that we're going to have a new piece in play with the NYC Ferry going to the West Side of Manhattan. That's going to be value added, that's going to be a new piece to add to infrastructure and transportation options. But this is work we have to keep doing, obviously.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Gersh from Streetsblog. Well, how are you Mr. Mayor? I appreciate you taking the call.

Mayor: Gersh, I want you to, you know, the team has decided you're a power hitter. You're in the five hole today. That's for a muscular guy who drives in runs. That's how we see you, Gersh.

Question: Well, I am, I'm not that. As I've always said, I'm all glove, no stick, but I do appreciate watching you eat food. I know I'm alone in the NYC Press Corps by saying, I appreciate you watching – I like seeing you eat that slice of pizza as God and Ray intended it, you know, with the fold, not with a knife and fork, but I digress. So, Mr. Mayor—

Mayor: Wait, I just got that. Wait a minute, Gersh. I just got that God and Ray intended. That was pretty good. I was pretty high up the scale of wittiness there, Gersh.

Question: I do what I can. So, Mr. Mayor, serious question. So, you know, I asked you a lot about this and I apologize to my friends in the press corps, but this is actually breaking news, at this point six mayoral candidates, Kathryn Garcia, Andrew Yang, Art Chang, Maya Wiley, Scott

Stringer, and Eric Adams have signed a petition to turn your gold standard Open Street on 34th Avenue into a permanent 1.3 mile linear park. But as you know, the DOT announced last week that it has not come up with a plan, and whatever plan it does come up with will be implemented by the next mayor, as I said, all of whom support the linear park. So, will you commit right now to consult whoever wins the November election to make sure your DOT's plan is indeed bold enough to meet what all of the major candidates are clearly asking for?

Mayor: Gersh, we continue to look at this issue. We haven't been ready to take the step that you've been advocating for yet, and we're continuing to look at it and look, there'll be another administration in here in a little over six months. So, I don't think we're talking about a big change either way. If my administration ultimately decides to move forward on it, that's great. If we don't think it's the right time yet, and a new mayor is ready to, they'll be able to do that soon. So – but I give you points for persistence. Go ahead, Gersh.

Question: Okay. Well, just to be clear, I'm not advocating, I'm just covering the issue, but I want to go on a completely different topic, which is, you know, you mentioned earlier today that you want to see more from the mayoral race, more questions answered, more debate. It's funny because the debates thus far have been dominated by discussions of crime and even one brief discussion of cycling the other day was actually spurred on by a question about crime. So, it all came back to crime, and all of the candidates have promised to continue your Vision Zero street safety program. I mean, they call it many different things, but basically, they want to build on what you've done with Vision Zero. So, I would ask you as a seasoned political observer, which you are, why do you think that debates have not addressed the future of how we get around in this city? Transit, biking, bike share, et cetera, is it because TV reporters and anchors see everything from behind the windshield and are simply incapable of understanding the importance of other modes of transportation, except I guess if crime is associated with it, what's going on do you think Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: It's a very thoughtful question, Gersh. I'm going to say only a couple of things. I do think is time for folks to reset their understanding of where we're going as a city. It is natural in politics, and media, and government to be a little too tethered to the past. What's obvious to me is this is a city that in the future is going to involve a lot more mass transit, a lot more walking, a lot more biking. It's going to be a different city and we do need to end our deep, deep reverence for the automobile as a society in general. I think Vision Zero was an important step on that journey because it really put a safety and humanity first, and actually New Yorkers embraced it. So, I do think there's got to be deeper dialogue in our community, in our city, to realize we need a different perspective going forward. But in general, I also think the election as a whole, it's not just the transportation issues that haven't gotten as deep a discussion as they should. I don't think education has. I don't think income inequality has. I think there's a number of areas. So, again, I'm hoping this next debate gives us a truer look at how these leaders intend to move us forward.

Moderator: Our next question goes to James from PIX11.

Mayor: Hey, James?

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor and everyone on the call. Can you hear me okay?

Mayor: Yeah, James, how you doing today?

Question: Okay. Yeah, I was having some issues with [inaudible] I hope you're well.

Mayor: Good, good. What's going on?

Question: Okay, first you talked about, and you do every day, and congratulations for reaching 8.755 million doses of vaccine, but we know that at least 20 percent of that number probably higher are just first doses. Can you respond to two concerns that some medical experts have regarding coronavirus spread, particularly for the Delta variant which has shown itself to be really resilient against people with just one dose? We're about to reopen. We have this 70 percent threshold yet only about half of all New Yorkers are fully vaccinated. What concerns do you have regarding the fact that a lower percentage than what is being reported are actually fully protected against coronavirus and its variance?

Mayor: Okay, very important question, James, I'll start, and I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi and Dr. Katz, but first just the numbers because I think they're important. Right now, 3.9 million fully vaccinated New Yorkers, and 4.5 million who've received at least one dose. So, the numbers actually are not as different as you might have suspected. The vast majority of folks in this pool of 4.5 million are fully vaccinated. We also know that folks who get the first shot overwhelmingly, 95 percent, come back for the second shot and that is within three or four weeks. So, it moves pretty quickly. So, we've seen steadiness on that front. I am quite convinced that soon we'll have a 4.5 million and rising fully vaccinated. But your point about the Delta variant is a good one. We're watching it very, very carefully. We take it seriously, but to date, we've fundamentally believed the best way to address it is for more people to get vaccinated and our overall progress has been so consistent that even with some new factors in the equation, I feel very confident in our position, and if we see a need to make some adjustments, of course we always will. But to date, it's been very, very steady progress as we've gotten into these really high numbers of vaccinated New Yorkers. Let me turn to Dr. Chokshi then Dr. Katz.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, you made the most important point, which is that first, it is very important for New Yorkers to get fully vaccinated. That means for the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines that they get both doses, but we are also seeing that the vast majority of people who get vaccinated with one of those shots are completing their vaccine series, and that's great news. The second point is that we are seeing with the Delta variant that that second shot is even more important than we had already known that it was, and so this is why all of the work that we and our health care partners are doing to ensure that people are coming back for that second shot becomes all the more important in the context of the Delta variant. But I do want to make sure that people are aware that the science indicates that when you are fully vaccinated, it does give you strong protection against all of the variants including the Delta variant. And so that leads to my last point, which is that my greatest concern remains for people who are unvaccinated, and we want to continue to do everything that we can, the community outreach, the canvassing, the partnering with clinicians that you've heard the Mayor mentioned, so that every single person who remains unvaccinated is reached out to, and we get as many of them protected as possible.

Mayor: Thank you, Dr. Katz?

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals: I would just add that the proof of the success of our efforts is that your indicators, sir, every day, they keep getting better despite the fact that the city is opening more and more. So, we know that what we're doing is working and as you have said and Dr. Chokshi has said the most important thing is people getting vaccinated and making sure they get that second shot as well so they're protected against all the variants. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, James.

Question: Thank you all. My second question is on behalf of my colleague, Rebecca Solomon. I'm sure you're well aware that the actor Lisa Banes passed away and that she had been struck by some sort of motorized scooter or motorbike, possibly an electric powered scooter. The last time we had issues with Revel scooters the city had committed to clamping down on motorized scooters. Can you talk about what the city is doing now? Not only in the wake of this tragic death, but in the wake of a variety of reports of scooters violating traffic rules, full disclosure, I am driving right now and just observed a motorized scooter riding against traffic down Second Avenue in the lane next to me. What's the city doing to clamp down on motorized scooters?

Mayor: It's a really important question, James, and thank you, and it's a tragedy when we lose someone in these kinds of horrible crashes. Look, we had a situation, as you mentioned, with Revel, we shut them down, we said, we need to see much clearer safety measures in place, changes were made. But this is something we continue to monitor closely and something we're going to have to keep working on. I'm very troubled when people go against traffic and create danger for themselves and others. So, we are going to keep refining how we regulate, how we enforce. But again, any time we believe a particular company is not acting in a way that's safe for New Yorkers, we also maintain the option to shut them down, and that's something we're going to continue to look at.

Moderator: We have time for two more questions today. Our next question goes to Yehudit from Boro Park 24.

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

Mayor: I'm doing well. How you been?

Question: Great. Really great. So yesterday, I was dismayed to see that Governor Cuomo again put up the same chart that's misleading, and if I may I'd like for the other reporters to hear this, because Governor Cuomo said that he wanted to vaccinate 70 percent of adults, but the chart actually – the governor's chart combines the – all the ages with the 18 and under population. So, as I said last week this really skews the data because some neighborhoods like the Hasidic neighborhoods have much larger populations of 18 and under. And so, Dr. Katz said that – and then that puts us at, opens us up to criticism that we're vaccine hesitant and things like that when really the rates are the same as white communities, and that the data is just skewed because

Cuomo is including the 18 and under which number one he himself said, just got – were made eligible and all throughout the pandemic, they were told that they were not among the most at risk, so they're going to be, you know, slower in getting vaccinated. So, last week Dr. Katz said that he would point out to the State that they were, you know, this – they were including this, the under 18 data that the city actually separates out. So, I was wondering, did Dr. Katz provide that input? And if he did, what was the response?

Mayor: I'm going to turn to Dr. Katz, but Yehudit thank you for raising the issue and I always appreciate follow-up because it is really important, we portray the truth to people. And I want to say again, I have found people in the community, leaders in the community, institutions in the community very good partners in helping us to ensure testing and vaccination, and I want to make sure everyone hears that. There's been a great, great efforts in the community to keep everyone safe and to help keep the whole city safe. Dr. Katz, you want to speak to the follow-up on that? Dr. Katz, do we have Dr. Katz? He's muted? He's not muted? Okay.

President Katz: Sorry, sir, I was muted. Yehudit, I will get back to you today on the State. I don't have an answer now.

Mayor: Okay, we'll get that back to you. Go ahead, Yehudit.

Question: Sorry, just in terms of yes or no, did he say anything to them yet?

Mayor: Dr. Katz, just if – we're happy either way –

President Katz: Yehudit, I'm sorry –

Mayor: Can you hear us? All right. Yehudit, we will get you an answer on the status and if he's had that conversation or what the response was, but either way we will pursue it. It's a very good topic and thank you.

Moderator: Our final question for today goes to Paul Berger from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Paul, how are you doing?

Question: Good, thanks. Hope you're well. I just wanted to turn back to that question about the scooters and street safety. I was just wondering, I don't yet have the latest Vision Zero data from DOT, but you know, I know that at least a month ago, we were looking at one of the worst years in the last five. You obviously made street safety a massive priority when you came into office, and I was just wondering, what is your takeaway of the fact that despite everything you've done, despite all the work that your DOT has done, that, you know, in your final year, you could be looking at one of the highest death tolls in the last five years and that in particular is, you know, pedestrians that are being killed?

Mayor: Paul it's been horrible, but we know why, and we have to address it, and I think it can and will be fixed. We had global pandemic. People were not comfortable using mass transportation. They turned to their cars more than ever, unfortunately at the same time, and I think the deep pain and emotion everyone's going through probably contributed to this, people started being a little too reckless, too much speeding. It was dangerous. Lives were lost. This is just tragedy leading to more tragedy and it will change as we normalize. We do see more and more people coming back each week to subways and buses, ferries, et cetera, more and more people biking. We are in a process of normalization, a process of rebalancing, and now we got to get right back to the work of getting people out of their cars and keeping us all safe. It will happen. It will happen. I do not think this is the last word by any stretch. I think Vision Zero worked pre-pandemic, it was working in an incredibly consistent, positive way. It will, again, there's going to be a post pandemic world, and I say this a lot, Paul, we got to get our minds out of COVID. COVID is increasingly going to be in our past, and we're going to a world like the one we were in before, and one what I think we have to do much more and can do better. So, Vision Zero will be the future, in my opinion. Go ahead, Paul.

Question: Thank you, and then the second question is, you know, you were talking a great deal about cars, in the case, this most recent case, we still actually don't know, as far as I'm aware, whether this was a standup scooter or a sit-down moped, the police don't seem to know what type of vehicle was involved, but obviously one thing that has changed a great deal in the last three or four years is the types of vehicles we're seeing on the streets, electric scooters, electric bikes, electric mopeds, some of them being ridden by people who don't have a great deal of experience or not riding with a great deal of care. But you talked earlier on about what you'd done with Revel, and of course you do have power to regulate companies that are operating in the city, but what about also the, you know, large and I assume increasing number of people privately owning these vehicles and perhaps riding those recklessly too. What can the city do to try to make sure that those people act more responsibly on the street?

Mayor: It's a great question, Paul. Thank you. Look, as the conversation ensued about e-bikes and scooters, and I always offered a sort of what I thought was a common sense, grass root's view, which I heard from so many New Yorkers at town hall meetings, concerned about safety. That we were going to see more and more crowded streets, more and more crowded bike lanes, different types of vehicles going at different types of speed. It was going to be difficult for pedestrians. I think these are real issues. So, the state made the decision to legalize e-bikes and e-scooters, we're in the process of continuing to work out those regulations. It's always going to be a combination of regulation, education, enforcement, and pushing really hard to get these pieces right to keep everyone safe. And if for some reason we need new laws or different regulations, we got to keep doing that, but it's a tough situation. It's the most crowded place on earth, and you know, or certainly in the country, and we're throwing these new elements in, and we have to be really smart about it.

So, I think the answer is education, enforcement, and continuing to refine the regulations to get it right. And with that, everyone, just to say, look, these are the kinds of issues we're going to be working on going forward in the city, but today some of these questions to me actually are a positive sign because we're not talking as much about a pandemic as life after the pandemic, and that's a very good sign. That's a very good reality. We're now going to start to sort out our future,

reminding everyone in the next week, crucial decisions about the future of New York City. Please, everyone, get out and vote, early vote this week, last day to get your absentee if you need that, and of course, primary date Tuesday the 22nd. And remember ranked choice voting, choose five people for each office. Make sure your vote has its maximum impact for the good in New York City. Thank you, everyone.

###