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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. Well, good news today. As we move forward with a recovery for all of us, it's time to set a goal for a full reopening of New York City. And that goal is July 1st. We are ready to bring New York City back fully on July 1st, all systems go, because you've earned it. We're going to keep working hard every day to make this city safer and safer. But what you have done – every day New Yorkers, what you have done is the reason I can make this announcement today, because you've gone out, you've gotten vaccinated, you've done so much to fight through this crisis. Now, we can see that light at the end of the tunnel. What does it mean? It means we get to go back to so many of the things we love. It means so many jobs get to come back. And, soon, it means that the things that make New York City special will be clearer than ever this summer. This is going to be the summer of New York City. We're all going to get to enjoy the city again and people are going to flock here from all over the country to be a part of this amazing moment in New York City.

It means going to stores – and anyone who wants to shop at a store, can go to a store again. It means bars and restaurants being able to come back, bring back so many of their employees, serve so many more customers. It means so many of our cultural events being open again, theaters coming back, so many of the things that we cherish. And what it means for every-day working people, for all those cooks, and waiters, and bartenders, and folks that work in the kitchen – for the small business owners, the folks who built up their businesses for years and years and have fought to survive. For every-day people, for our artists and our performers, it means a chance to do what you are so great at again, and a chance to bring joy to so many other New Yorkers. So, this is going to be an amazing summer. And I can't tell you – I just – I am so excited. I don't have words to say it enough. I am so excited that we'll be able to come back strong.

Now, what do we have to do? We have to keep getting vaccinated. The reason I'm able to make this announcement today – and we have poured over the data. We have, as always, focused on the data and the science. And we now can set this goal because we've been moving forward constantly – more and more vaccinations, fewer and fewer infections, thank God. But we've got to keep doing that, everyone. Everyone who hasn't yet been vaccinated, come forward now. This is the time. This is the right moment. It's easier than ever. It's simple. It's convenient. Let's keep moving with vaccinations. Let's keep being smart about all those basic, smart health care measures we've been taught by our health care heroes. We can do this. July 1st – we've all got a little bit of work to do, but we can get there together.

Now, this is all about a recovery for all of us. And we have been building up our recovery effort in so many ways, and that includes bringing together extraordinarily talented people to help us

with our recovery. A recovery means so many things. One of the things certainly includes is bringing back jobs, bringing back businesses, making New York City vibrant as it was before the pandemic, and then going even farther than that. I want to emphasize, we want to get as vibrant as we were before the pandemic, and then go even farther – even more jobs, even stronger economy, an even better life, even more equality. That's the goal.

To help us lead this effort, I'm so excited to bring on a new member of this extraordinary recovery team. And he is a New York City legend, one of the greatest entrepreneurs in New York City history. He has done things that people see as definitional of what's great about New York City. His sensibilities, I've always admired. He believes in equality. He believes in inclusion. He believes in an economy that works for every-day working people. And he's brought so much joy to New Yorkers and he's helped in the revitalization of the city, going back to the 1980s, when he created the iconic Union Square Café. At a time when Union Square was a place that was struggling, Danny Meyer was one of the people that turned it around and that started a lot of other turnarounds in New York City that helped to make us strong. He went on to remake the New York City dining scene – Gramercy Tavern, The Modern, and, of course, Shake Shack – beloved by all. And so, we need that spirit. We need that innovation. We need that energy. We need that sense of hope. So, I'm so happy to announce that Danny Meyer will be the new chair for the New York City Economic Development Corporation board. The EDC, we depend on to spark economic activity and growth and create jobs, and Danny Meyer will provide a lot of the vision and the energy to get us there. And I want to now bring them to you with a lot of joy that he is going to help us lead the way back. My pleasure to introduce Danny Meyer.

**Chairman Danny Meyer, Board of Directors, Economic Development Corporation:** Thank you so much, Mayor de Blasio. This is – it's a big honor, it's a big responsibility, and I've pledged to bring every ounce of care to the task of doing everything we can to help bring back New York. The recovery is happening. It's amazing confluence that I get to have the opportunity to be presented by you on the very day that you announced this morning that New York would be open on July 1. We could not be more excited and grateful. And I share your sentiment that New Yorkers are really the ones to thank. People have been so incredibly careful and thoughtful over this past year, and we deserve this moment. Now, I've made a career out of trying to turn challenges into opportunities, and we have a big challenge right now. New York is a city that thrives when people are together. This is a city that is built on people wanting to live closely together, to work closely together, to be live audiences, to be performers, and those are the very things that have been unsafe to do during the pandemic. But now, we're going to be able to bring that back.

It will be a big challenge. It'll especially be a big challenge, because we need to hire a lot of people very, very quickly in the city. There are also a lot of people who are seeking jobs at this moment in history. So, one of my hopes is that the city can be an agent to help connect job seekers with those who want to hire, because we are in for one of the biggest recoveries ever. And I truly believe that hospitality, the way we make people feel in the city, is what's going to lead the way. So, thank you for this appointment. And I will do the very, very best I can with the EDC.

**Mayor:** Well, Danny, thank you so much. I have total confidence in you. I've watched your work. I've enjoyed the benefits of what you have done by going to some of your amazing restaurants. I've seen the ethic you have created, the atmosphere you've created, the approach – it's positive, it's hopeful, always – and that's exactly what we need now. And I love what you said, turning challenges into opportunities. This is an extraordinary opportunity moment for New York City. So, we need your leadership. We need your strong voice. And I think your point about how the city can help connect those looking for jobs to all the jobs that are about to blossom now, that's a great initiative that we'll work on together. We believe there'll be at least 400,000 jobs coming back this calendar year and we need to connect great people to great jobs. So, thank you. Thank you for your leadership. It's really important to New York City that you're giving of yourself at this moment. And I can't thank you enough.

All right. Now, guess what? How do we move forward? I think you know where I'm going – vaccines. Vaccinate, vaccinate, vaccinate. We have been getting to where we are today, this amazing moment, because everyone's been doing what they needed to do. What's the number today? 6,427,404 vaccinations to-date. A number – it's just constantly growing. People are showing up. They're showing up for their second appointments or they're showing up for their first appointments. We need to keep the momentum going. This is exactly how we get to the full reopening we're all looking forward to. So, remember, every one, if you have not gotten vaccinated, today is the perfect day. Go to [nyc.gov/vaccinefinder](https://nyc.gov/vaccinefinder), or call 877-VAX-4NYC. And listen, it let's make it personal, it really matters what each person does. So, if you're watching right now and you just haven't gotten around to it, make an appointment right now, or just walk in at dozens and dozens of City sites all over the city. Let's get this done today, because that's, what's going to help us get to this amazing opportunity July 1st.

All right. Now, this is about a recovery for all of us. Everything we're talking about now is about a recovery for all of us. That means bringing the city back strong, of course, economically, but it also means bringing back the city strong humanly. We have got to be a city, going forward, that really responds to the immense challenges that people have been through. And we can do that, because we've learned in this city how to reach people in ways far beyond what we ever imagined. Now, here in this city, we did something very different years ago. We started an open and honest conversation about mental health, a focused effort to de-stigmatize an area that, unfortunately, had always been treated with kid gloves. So many people suffered in silence. So many families didn't want to come forward and talk about the problem, because they'd been told there was something wrong with them if one of the members of their family had a mental health challenge. It was never fair that anyone felt that way or was treated that way, but that's the reality. We decided we had to change that. And our first lady, Chirlane McCray – you'll hear from her in a moment – led that conversation and it made such a difference. And I've got to tell you about the times – the many times, Chirlane and I would be out on the street somewhere, walking around and someone would come to us and say, thank you. But then, inevitably, they would start to tell their own family story of a mental health challenge. And, as they did, they would start to draw closer and they'd whisper. And it was so ironic to me that even as it was clear that efforts to de-stigmatize had helped, so many people to feel it was time to now address the issue, they still had that sense that they had to be quiet, they had to be careful. And we've got to do away with that once and for all. We've got to make clear that mental health care is a human

right, that mental health challenges are part of the human experience. And everyone has a right to help and care.

So, today, we're going to take a big step forward towards a more universal approach to serving those with mental health challenges. And it means not simply half measures, but actually a universal approach to make sure that whatever people need it's there for them. We've been talking about this throughout the week. The beginning of week, we talked about making those crisis calls citywide – anyone who's in mental health distress, wherever possible, civilians, responding, health care workers responding, getting help to people in a new and better way. We talked about universal screening for our school children. This is something that's beyond anything that's been imagined before – every child getting screening and then the support they need. Mental health services in every single school, that's what we're going to have, starting in September. And then, yesterday, we talked about addressing serious mental illness with a variety of strategies – mobile intensive treatment teams, clubhouses, supportive facilities for folks with serious mental illness – a variety of tools to give people continuity and support.

Today, we announce the full vision – Mental Health for All. Today, we announce a vision of a city that does everything and anything to get people the help that they need. And a new announcement today, for all City-sponsored vaccination sites, we will be providing mental health check-ins for everyone who's been vaccinated. If you go to a City-sponsored site after you've gotten your shot, there'll be outreach workers there to check in with you to see if you have any mental health concerns you want to talk about. If you need any mental health support, if you want to get more information, or if you need a follow-up appointment, we're going to be at our City-sponsored vaccination sites, helping hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in the coming weeks by giving them a free vaccination. Let's go the extra mile – let's check in, let's see how they're doing. And if they are going through mental health challenges, as so many people are in this crisis, let's make sure that they get that next step, that they get the help they need, that they get connected to it right then and there. That'll be happening at all City-sponsored vaccination sites.

Second, a huge outreach effort to let New Yorkers know, after everything they've been through a COVID, that help is there for them. We're going to be using all the tools we have in multiple languages in all communities to let people know that mental health services are there for them, and whenever they need it to be free, it will be there for them for free.

And third, we want this work to deepen and we want to make sure it's community focused. So, our establishing a permanent Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health. In the end, the way to reach people with mental health challenges is early and often – it's schools, it's at community-based organizations, it's in shelters, it's in so places where people need help, but, historically, have not had a place to turn. This vision and this office will ensure that mental health services are available at the grassroots all over the city.

That's the vision, and I want you to hear now from the visionary, because she has continued to push the spectrum year after year, and say to people from all City agencies, we can do more, we can reach more people, we can do better, what's the next thing we need to do? And this Mental

Health for All vision comes from her hard work. My pleasure to introduce our first lady, Chirlane McCray.

**First Lady Chirlane McCray:** Thank you, Bill. And, good morning, everyone. This is a special day and a really special week for our city. It's a huge leap forward, increasing mental health support for all New Yorkers. In the early days of this administration, we held mental health town halls across every borough. And I still remember standing outside of the first one at Brooklyn Borough Hall not really knowing what to expect. We weren't sure how many people would show up. But when we walked in, let me tell you, that room was packed. And town hall after town hall was the same. I began asking people, can you please put your hand up if you or someone you care about has a mental health challenge. And, every time, almost every hand would go up. I would joke and say, if your hand is not up, then you probably don't know your friends or your family as well as you think you do. And people would laugh, and it helped get the point across that, despite the stigma, and the stereotypes, and the lack of awareness that make it so hard for us to talk openly about this subject – that mental health challenges and substance misuse are part of the human condition. They touch all of us. At that first town hall, we listened intently to people as New Yorkers from every walk of life told us their personal stories, bravely bearing their souls.

I remember there was a young African-American man who would leave work, dropping everything that he was doing to tell us – to rush to his sister's side and help her while she was in crisis at a hospital. He would do this over and over again, because she wasn't getting the constant care that she needed. A father who yearned to get his daughter the ongoing support that she needed for substance misuse also talked about his pain and his shame. He loved her, but he didn't know how to get her help. Every story we heard was different, but so many people who spoke ended their story by saying, I didn't know who to call. And I didn't know what to say. We had tapped into a deep hunger and a very deep need, and we started a public conversation, a difficult conversation that New York City had really never had before.

Every program from ThriveNYC and City agencies, every expansion of existing services over the past seven years is a direct response to what we heard in those rooms and from New Yorkers all over the city. People wanted easier access to care. They wanted culturally competent counselors who speak their language. They wanted services in their communities, more coordination across government agencies and community organizations. Since 2015, we have connected hundreds of thousands of people to care. And now, as we emerge from COVID-19, we are building on that foundation in a very big way. Every new program announced this week is designed to bring more help to New Yorkers, wherever they live, by placing services in schools, at our vaccination sites, and communities of color and more. We stand ready to help with new efficient practices like telemedicine, which has helped Health + Hospitals host more than 200,000 virtual mental health resources – mental health sessions this year. That's pretty amazing. And with this executive order and the creation of the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, we ensure these innovations will serve New Yorkers for years to come.

Mental health is part of all of our lives. And so, mental health support should be part of our lives too. Today is a promise to all New Yorkers – no matter who you are, no matter what you need, New York City – your city – is here for you.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Chirlane. And you can hear the passion in Chirlane's voice, the fervent belief that we can, and we must reach everyone who needs help. I want to bring another person forward who has been one of the most passionate voices in the City Council fighting for the residents of her district in East Harlem and the Bronx, but, also, for the whole people of New York City. She's spoken up about the need to do something even more in the area of mental health. And the need to make permanent a community-based approach to mental health. I really appreciate her advocacy and her leadership. My pleasure to introduce Council Member Diana Ayala.

[...]

Thank you so much Council Member. And your – what you said is so powerful. And you've really been a very, very honest voice. I want to thank you for that because people have to hear that so many families have their own stories. We've got to bring them out in the open and we got to demand that people get the help they need. And you've been outspoken. I want to really thank you for that. And I want to join you in thanking everyone who did this extraordinary work, our First Lady, and as you mentioned, Susan Herman, who's been doing amazing work with a whole team of committed people on Thrive and building it out into this new vision. Everyone I've met who works on mental health issues does it as a labor of love. And that's going to be clear in this, in this effort going forward and this larger vision of Mental Health for All. So, thank you Council Member. And everyone, I want you to get a look at the full sweep of Mental Health for All, what it means for people in this city and how we are building this out. So, we have a video that gives you a sense of just how important this is going to be.

[...]

Well, that's just beautiful. And it says it all. And that is so crucial to a recovery for all of us. So, this is going to be how we come back together. And that is a perfect segue to our indicators for today. And this is one of the best we have seen in months and months. So, a good day and further proof why we are now poised for a full reopening of New York City. Indicator number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, look with your own eyes. Today's report, 97 patients. Look at that line go down and down. Confirmed positivity level 53.06 percent. Hospitalization rate, we are on the verge of going below the threshold at 2.1 per 100,000. We want to get below two and it looks very, very good at this moment. We just all got to keep doing what we know what to do. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average. Today's report, and again, look at that downward slope – today's report 1,354 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 3.18 percent and declining.

And I will say, keep it declining because what is 100 percent clear is vaccination has worked. Let's get out there and keep it going. Every single day, tens of thousands of people are going out and getting vaccinated, getting their first shots, getting their second shots. If you have not yet done so you should be one of them today. And help move us forward. Few words in Spanish, and I want to talk about what we just discussed Mental Health for All, which is of such concern to the community.

[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 the First Lady of New York City Chirlane McCray; Susan Herman, Director of ThriveNYC; Dr. Dave Chokshi, Commissioner of Health; Dr. Mitch Katz, President and CEO of Health + Hospitals; and Dr. Jay Varma, Senior Advisor on public health. We will begin with Hazel from CBS New York.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Hazel. How are you doing today?

**Question:** Good. This is very good news to hear, the city opening up. That being said though, will there be any kind of vaccination requirements or proof of vaccination before you enter restaurants, bars, theaters? Because obviously not everybody will be vaccinated, so obviously there'll be concerns of still a virus spread?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Hazel look, first the big picture here is the work we'll do over the next two months to get so many more New Yorkers vaccinated. The best thing we can do is build that strong foundation and the numbers keep coming in strong. We got to keep doing that. As Dr Varma said yesterday, there certainly will be particular institutions that may choose to have rules around vaccination or testing or rapid testing. That's to me obvious, but I think the big picture point here is to build up a situation over the next two months, where we're coming into the reopening as strongly as possible, as many people vaccinated as possible. And then constantly watch the data as we always do, make adjustments, and just be smart. There's still going to be plenty of people, for example, who will choose to wear a mask in certain situations. That's a great choice. I think New Yorkers will make the adjustment as we go along. Go ahead, Hazel.

**Question:** What kind of conversations have you had with the Governor about the City's plans to fully reopen in July?

**Mayor:** I have not. And I think the best way to proceed here is to set out the City's vision. We're going to work with the federal government. We're going to work with the State government, but it's quite clear. You just saw the indicators. You've seen the numbers of vaccination. It's quite clear it's time to set a goal and move on that goal. So, we'll work with all the other levels of government, but we've got to keep moving toward a goal at this point.

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

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Definitely big news today. I guess I just wanted to ask you know, if I'm understanding correctly, basically all businesses and other kinds of – basically every part of life, you want to have reopened 100 percent capacity starting in July. But can you

say what kind of safety measures will still be in place? For instance, will the City still advise people to observe social distancing, that kind of thing?

**Mayor:** Shant, it's obviously two months away and we're going to be led by the data and the science. So, this decision after weeks of discussions with the health care team, we decided this is the right goal. We have the evidence now that really makes clear this is the right goal. We will make adjustments as we go along. If we, you know, think it's important to advise people to carry on certain practices, we will. I am convinced bluntly that many New Yorkers will still want to use their mask at a lot of times, just on a voluntary basis. But this is the right goal. Now job one, get people vaccinated. And then second, as we see more and more data, we'll make adjustments as we get closer. Go ahead, Shant.

**Question:** Yeah. So, and given that, you know, things are still in the works, can you say what at this point you and your team are doing to, I don't know, I guess, you know, queuing off of Hazel's question – give New Yorkers peace of mind when they go for indoor dining, to a gym, what have you, are you thinking of things like utilizing the State vaccine passport? Any thoughts at all about, you know, some kind of certification system?

**Mayor:** We're looking at that for sure. And again, I think some institutions are going to choose to do that. I think it'll make sense in some places, certainly some private businesses may do that. Other places that may not make as much sense. The key is to get people vaccinated. So really, you know, when you think about today, 6.4 million vaccinations, growing all the time. This is the single most important thing for all of us to do. And what we need to do – and we've signaled this, but we'll have a lot more to say in the next few days, Shant – is create more incentives for vaccination, make it even more convenient for people, reach even deeper into the grassroots. That's the best way to set up a very positive experience for July 1st. But in terms of how different institutions may approach it, we've got plenty of time to work with them on what makes sense for them.

**Moderator:** Next. We have Marla from WCBS 880.

**Question:** Good morning, Mayor and everyone else on the call. I wanted to ask about schools. Despite teachers being vaccinated, there appears to be a shortage of them qualified to provide in-person instruction to students, resulting in students learning on computers in the classrooms. You've said repeatedly that New York will offer five-day a week, full time instruction in September, but how can you assure that there will be enough teachers to accomplish that? And if teachers are vaccinated, why aren't you mandating that they returned to the classroom so, you know, more kids can get in more than one-day a week in some of the larger high schools?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Marla, First of all, the five-day a week approach has become prevalent throughout our school system. There are some schools that just because of the number of kids that came back, have had do a different schedule. But five-day a week has more and more become the norm. Especially in the elementary schools where now we're able to go to three feet. Look, the bottom line is we are well, well into the school year at this point. We've got kids on schedules, many of them remote. We've got teachers aligned to do that. We've set the pattern now for this school year. We had obviously, more than 50,000 kids come back on Monday. That's great. Now

we are turning our focus to the summer with Summer Rising, which will be universal. I want to emphasize, never be never before done in the history of New York City. That any child that wants a summer opportunity, academic, cultural recreation altogether for free, can get it. And then September. All children will be welcome back. We'll have our full teaching core. We have lots of lots of teachers we're recruiting on top of that. Lots of people want to come be a part of this comeback. So, I feel very confident that we'll have the personnel we need going forward. Go ahead Marla.

**Question:** Okay. So, will the Department of Education be offering a remote option for families in the fall who want it? And if so, who will be teaching those remote kids?

**Mayor:** Well, Marla, it's a fair question for sure. I'm going to lean on the fact that it's April 29th. And, you know, opening day of school is after Labor Day obviously, but what the Chancellor and I both feel is we want the maximum number of kids back in person and we're planning for literally the ability to have every single child back. Let's see how we continue to make progress on COVID. I think the world could be a very different reality in the next few months, and I think it's going to be a lot better, but the goal is to be able to accommodate every single child.

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

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mayor de Blasio. I guess as a follow-up to that question, other's questions. So, I'd read, I believe in Chalkbeat, that the UFT representative said teachers will still be allowed medical accommodations next year. This was granted because of COVID. Can you explain why and would that not, would a teacher – if a teacher requires a medical accommodation because of COVID when there are vaccinations and lower rates, would that not then have someone go on disability? Can you explain why the accommodations will be extended to the next school year?

**Mayor:** Yeah. I don't want to make a – I don't know who you spoke with. I want to make sure we are accurate. The accommodation system was structured for this school year in the atmosphere of a COVID crisis. We are clearly coming out of that crisis. Next school year is a different reality. We'll have a different approach. We'll have more to say on that as we get closer, but no, the rules that were in place were for this school year. Go ahead, Katie.

**Question:** Great. Thank you. I guess, you know, going back to this reopening plan, I know Monday is when City workers are set to return to offices. How – could you just update a little bit on what's been done and what's been going on in preparation for that because I know that there was some pushback for that to begin.

**Mayor:** Yeah. We have a huge number of City workers who have gotten vaccinated now. That's the first thing to know. We have, obviously, proven over and over again that we have the tools to keep people safe. The best example remains our public schools. We're all – you know that gold standard of different health and safety measures worked, continues to work. We keep bringing back more and more kids. It keeps working. We have applied a lot of those same exact measures to our public offices. There'll be a lot of cleaning, a lot of smart efforts to keep people safe, mask wearing, obviously, you know, different numbers of people at different times. There'll be a

rotation system. I'm very confident that folks that will be able to come back safely. And by coming back, they'll be able to serve New Yorkers better and we need to start sprinting now as part of this recovery. We need to bring New York City back strong for everyone. And clearly, we have the ability to do that by getting our City workforce back.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Sophia from WNYC.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Good morning. How are you doing Sophia?

**Question:** I'm good. Thank you. I am asking a follow-up to the questions about the medical accommodations especially with the declared reopening of the schools on July 1st. You know, there's been some pushback that this is conveniently after school's end date, and whether the UFT and medical accommodations that are in place right now have played a role in that timeline.

**Mayor:** No, obviously not the goal here is to prepare this city for a full reopening. We know that's going to take some work and we'll take work for different businesses and institutions to get ready for that. But it's also time to keep getting more and more people vaccinated. I said a long time ago, back in January, our goal was to get five million New Yorkers fully vaccinated by the end of June, we're still working on that goal. This synergizes perfectly with that. But we're actually seeing even better indicators now. And, again, this is the data and the science talking, we're seeing better indicators in terms of health care than we even expected at this point. And this is the power of vaccination. When you do 6.4 million vaccinations, you're going to see an impact and we're seeing it, but we'll have even more time to get ready and go much deeper between now and July 1st. Go ahead, Sophia.

**Question:** Great. Actually, that leads me to my next question, which is that – so the vaccination campaign has reached millions of people, but it's still concentrated in high-income areas and predominantly white neighborhoods. If the demand for walk-up appointments or the vaccine buses continues to drop, are you going to think about moving that reopening date from July 1st? There's been about a decline of a hundred thousand shots last week, relative to the week before.

**Mayor:** Sophia, first of all, we've had some aberrant realities the last few weeks, we all know, because of Johnson & Johnson. That was a clear curve ball that slowed us down some. But we got a lot of other interesting evidence that didn't slow us down much. As you heard from Dr. Chokshi yesterday, the rate at which people are getting their second shots is much better here in New York City than around the country. That's a really good sign. About 95 percent of people are showing up for their second shots when they should. That's amazing. That's positive. When you look at our efforts towards our goal, we're almost at the halfway point in terms of the five million, but very importantly, when it comes to the first dose, we're over 70 percent to goal in terms of New Yorkers who have had at least one dose. And because almost everyone that gets the first dose is getting a second dose, that means we're going to keep moving aggressively on that goal. We do need to do more work in the communities hardest hit by COVID. But what I'm finding is the more we make vaccination convenient, the better we're doing. And a lot of the

folks who need it the most are some of the hardest working people in New York City who've got two jobs and three jobs and struggle to make ends meet, and they need this to be as convenient as possible. So, the more we're able to do walk-ins and community-based organizations, houses of worship. This constantly is moving the needle and we'll be doing a lot more of that going forward.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Courtney from NY1.

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

**Mayor:** Good, Courtney. How you been?

**Question:** Good. Thank you. So, also on the reopening, I mean, I understand that you need State approval. What specifically do you need the State to approve considering I guess the balance of power in Albany has shifted a little bit and thinking of the State, do you also need the subways to come back 24/7 in order to really make New York back the way it used to be?

**Mayor:** Two great questions. So, look, Courtney, I think that was one of the greatest understatements I've heard all year, the – “the balance of power has shifted a little in Albany.” I think the balance of power shifted a lot in Albany. I think the Legislature is running the State of New York and thank God for it. I have a lot of faith in Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Carl Heastie, and they did literally the best budget we have seen in the history of New York State, as far as I'm concerned, certainly in the last generation. They have made clear by their actions, the last few days, that they are restoring this state to normal democracy. They are bringing back democratic norms in New York State and canceling some of the arbitrary decisions by the Governor. What we need is a full restoration of democracy while the Legislature is still in session. That is the way to help us move everything we have to do for a full recovery. So, to me, that would solve a lot of the questions and concerns here. I believe they're moving in that direction. That's what I think will be pivotal. Go ahead, Courtney.

**Question:** Oh, sorry, just on the subway closure again. When do you need the subway to come back? And then can I also get you to weigh in on the Scott Stringer news yesterday. There was a woman that came out accusing him of groping and harassment 20 years ago. Do you think that he needs to step out of the race for mayor or potentially leave his position, current position as the city comptroller?

**Mayor:** So, subways I have long believed we should get back to 24/7 at the right time. I think July 1st is the right time. I think the cleanup effort has been outstanding. This is an area where the City and State have been in agreement. The cleanup effort really helped, having the closure for several hours really helped make people more comfortable coming back to the subways. It clearly helped us. In fact, one of the things the City pushed hard was for the State to realize that the right kind of closures could help us address homelessness more productively. And it has, you know, many, many homeless folks out of the subways into shelter and they stayed in shelter and that's credit to everyone at the Department of Homeless Services, all the outreach workers. So, that's been really good, and I think that should continue for a while as we consolidate our gains.

But when we talk about a full recovery, July 1st, I'm very comfortable that's a great time to bring the subways back 24/7.

On the comptroller, there needs to be an investigation, clearly. It needs to be a fast investigation because the people of this city deserve to know before they make their decision on the future on June 22nd. So, we need the facts. We need an investigation immediately.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more questions today. The next one goes to Henry from Bloomberg.

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

**Mayor:** It's a good day, Henry. How are you? It's a good day for me, it's not a good day for Jacob deGrom. But it's a good day for me. How are you, Henry?

**Question:** Ouch, it's true. It's not a good day for Jacob deGrom. It's a good day for me. I'd like to ask you another question about New York City opening because despite the difference in the balance of power and everything else, the Governor's powers still reside, especially the decrees that he issued. They still stand according to the Legislature's vote. So, July 1 is really a goal, is it not, especially considering that Broadway is not going to be open and you know, it's – what's your response?

**Mayor:** Henry, first of all, I would say this – Broadway has been clear from the beginning that it takes a lot of lead time to put together big elaborate productions. And they've said September for a while, although there are some shows that I think that some of the smaller, more intimate shows, we might be looking more like July, August, and we'll move heaven and earth to help them get that done. And we've been supporting Broadway with the vaccinations, which has been really, really effective. But Broadway's a very important piece of the equation, very emotionally important to us all, but the vast majority of other parts of our life and our economy, we'll certainly be able to get up and running full strength or close to full strength by July 1st. You know, you talked about restaurants, talked about retail stores, cultural venues. I assure you they can make it happen by July 1st.

My point about the State of New York, I think we see the handwriting on the wall. The Legislature is reducing the Governor's emergency powers constantly. I think they're going to do some more of that. I'd like to see them take the whole big step and just bring us back to normal democracy so we can make these decisions and move forward properly. But mainly I think the people are going to want it, Henry. I think this is a goal that makes sense. It made sense to our health care team, the data, the science speak to it, the number of vaccinations speak to it. I think the people are going to say it's time to come back fully. And July 1st is a really fair date that we can make happen. Go ahead, Henry.

**Question:** Okay. Thank you. The other question I have is that there have been these persistent reports, these tweets, these complaints to me from teachers that the infection rates in schools are higher than seems to be reported. There seems to be a disconnect between what's being publicly reported about virus infections in schools and what the reality is on the ground. Is there a way

that the City could actually identify where viruses are occurring in schools and the amount of cases in these schools that are being reported?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Henry, look, there's a lot of transparency out there. We'll connect you with it, so you see it, constantly putting out information. Let me give you the last 24 hours, for example. Tests conducted in schools, 12,738. Positive cases, 46. That is a 0.37 percent positivity level. This has been very, very consistent for months that we've been in that kind of range. We put out a lot of information for the system school by school. So, connect you to that. But no, one thing I am quite certain about, there's incredible rigor, give a lot of credit to our Test and Trace team, a lot of credit to the folks in the situation room. They have been very exacting about the data and our health care leaders will tell you the data keeps coming back with extraordinary consistency, proving how safe our schools are.

**Moderator:** Our last question for today goes to Erin from Politico.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, thanks for taking my question. You made a couple of references with this reopening plan to, you know, some people are still going to want to be wearing masks. I just want it to be clear, do you anticipate – does your plan include still having the mask mandate in place or are you intending to have it lifted at that point?

**Mayor:** You know, another organic piece of this, Erin, and the health care team and I've been saying this since January, is that we want people to assume to keep your mask on through June. Our hope was that we would see tremendous progress on vaccination and in terms of our larger health care data. We're seeing that progress right now, which is fantastic and a credit to all New Yorkers and especially a credit to our health care leaders and everyone who runs the vaccination centers. I mean, there's something working here, but we've always said to people keep doing what you're doing through June. And I think that's still really where we are. It's really good advice. And then after June, I think we're going to be in a position to do some things differently. I still think a lot of New Yorkers personally want to choose to wear the masks a lot, but for the foreseeable future, absolutely we want to stick with it. Go ahead, Erin.

**Question:** And then I also wanted to ask about these allegations against Scott Stringer. You said there should be an investigation, but as you mentioned, it's only two months until the primary, less than that. So, who should be doing this investigation? And then also, I don't think you actually, the other part of Courtney's question, do you personally believe he should drop out of the race?

**Mayor:** Erin, I want to see the results of the investigation before offering any other judgment. We've just received this information. It's very important information that must be taken seriously, but it also must be investigated. There's a real question as to what's the appropriate next step. Is it the State Attorney General, is it the Department of Investigation? Whatever it is, the City of New York will obviously fully engaged but it needs to happen quickly. People need answers. So, we stand ready to take whatever next step will get this resolved.

Today, everyone, just as we wrap up, look, let's think about what we've all achieved together. And I really want to emphasize if you hear full reopening in New York City and that makes you

feel good, then you should be feeling good about yourself because you did it, the people of this city did it. We went through the toughest times. We were the epicenter of this crisis for months last year. We've been through a lot of pain, a lot of loss. But people have done the right thing over and over and over again. I always get folks who have asked me questions – well, someone didn't do the right thing, or I see someone not following the rules. You know what I always say? What I see every day is the vast majority of New Yorkers out there doing the right thing, doing the hard work, sticking with it, helping each other out. That's been the story. This has been a hero city and people should feel really good about the fact that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. So, we are beating COVID right now, but we got to finish the job. You know what I'm about to say, go get vaccinated. Thank you, everybody.

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