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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good afternoon, everybody. You know, over these last weeks, we had some moments as New Yorkers that we could celebrate after everything we've been through. We saw a really extraordinary fight back against the coronavirus and months of low levels of positivity. We saw, last Thursday, a great moment for the city where all our public schools were open, but we've had challenges throughout. And when we have challenges, it's important to lay them on the table and be upfront about them – that's what all New Yorkers want. So, today, unfortunately, is not a day for celebration. Today is a more difficult day. And I'm going to be giving an update that gives me no joy at all. In fact, it pains me to be putting forward this approach that we'll need. But, in some parts of our city, in Brooklyn and Queens, we're having an extraordinary problem, something we haven't seen since the spring and we have to address this issue for forthrightly. That's why we're here on a Sunday after several days of continuing to review all the data and look at everything from the point of view that it's gotten us this far as a city, always relying on the data and the science. What has become clear is that there are a number of neighborhoods now that have continued to have a high level of coronavirus positivity, and that requires stronger action than we've had to take for many months. I want to emphasize there's been extensive efforts over recent weeks in these communities – extraordinary outreach efforts, close cooperation with community institutions and community leaders across the ZIP codes involved. An immense amount of City personnel have been out educating, providing free face masks, enforcing where enforcement was necessary. All of these things have been going on for weeks, in addition to a huge expansion of testing in these communities. These efforts have truly been extensive, but, in the end, were not enough to turn around this situation. So, what we are now reporting is we now have nine ZIP codes in Brooklyn and Queens that have been above a three percent positivity level for seven consecutive days or more. And that measure tells us that we have to take more extensive action. It will be very difficult. I want to emphasize this again, it gives me no joy in saying this because it will be very difficult for the people who live in these ZIP codes of all communities. It will be difficult for people who have done so much to fight back through this crisis, but it is necessary to stop the spread of the coronavirus in these communities and beyond, and it's necessary for the good of all of New York City, which still overall continues to have a very low positivity level. We have to keep it that way. So, we have to take strategic action now to protect everyone, over 8 million New Yorkers who are depending on this virus to be held in check.

Now, the proposal I'm going to go over – we've presented it initially to the State of New York. I want to emphasize that everything I'm about to say will require the support and approval of the State of New York. And we're going to be working intensely today and tomorrow on the details with the State and, assuming we get through all this quickly and it is approved, we'll put this into

effect on the timeline I will describe. So, the plan is to rewind in these nine ZIP codes – to rewind, to go back to address the problem by using the tools that we know work, which is to ensure that non-essential businesses are not open and a variety of activities are not happening. Again, no joy in saying that, but, that, unfortunately, we do know is what is necessary to stop the spread of the coronavirus. So, this would begin this Wednesday morning coming – Wednesday, October 7th – require the closure of nonessential businesses in these nine ZIP codes, and I want to go through them now. It's Edgemere, Far Rockaway 11691; Borough Park, 11219, Gravesend, Homecrest, 11223; Midwood, 11230; Bensonhurst and Mapleton, 11204; Flatlands, Midwood, 11210; Gerritsen Beach, Homecrest, Sheepshead Bay, 11229; Kew Gardens, 11415; and Kew Gardens Hills, Pomonok, 112469 – those are the nine ZIP codes that have over three percent positivity for at least seven consecutive days.

Now, on top of that, out of an abundance of caution, we will be moving to close schools as well. And by that, I mean, starting Wednesday morning, public and non-public schools. Again, this is the strategy that worked for us in the spring and summer, which is limiting activity in a community to stop the spread. That's how the City came out of an extraordinarily difficult crisis in the spring, a much tougher situation than what we're dealing with now. And one that was in every corner of the city, we fought our way back with these restrictions and with social distancing, with a mask wearing. We have to do it again in a pinpoint area, but it is crucial that we do it in a rigorous fashion to stop the spread within those communities and beyond. So, again, pending approval from the State of New York, starting Wednesday morning, public and non-public schools would be closed in these areas. In addition, dining, both indoor and outdoor dining would be closed in these areas. Of course, as was true throughout the crisis, restaurants would still be able to do a delivery and have pickup by their customers.

Now, again, the goal here is to prevent the spread. The goal here is to do everything we can to stop something bigger from happening right now. The schools, I want to emphasize, we have seen very little coronavirus activity in our schools. We have a situation room that's been monitoring constantly. This is not because we have seen a number of specific problems in our schools, our public schools, we have not. This is out of abundance of caution. And in coordination with a larger strategy that mirrors what we did successfully with spring of a larger shutdown to ensure we stop the spread. Now, again, everything is based on data and based on a scientific approach. As we get questions from media, you'll hear from our healthcare leadership. They have been looking at this data constantly, looking for what it tells us and what actions are necessary. The specific benchmark of three percent positivity or more, for more than seven consecutive – seven or more consecutive days – has been crucial in their deliberations.

So, that's what's going to happen in those nine ZIP codes that already have reached that level. But now, I want to emphasize, we have more work to do beyond, because there are 11 additional ZIP codes that are areas of real concern. These 11 ZIP codes have not yet reached a level of three percent positivity for at least seven consecutive days, but they are edging up toward that level and we are concerned. So, again, in these areas – we're going to do in all these areas, the original nine I mentioned and in these 11 ZIP codes, we're going to do a huge amount of ongoing outreach. We're going to have continued enforcement. We're going to have continued mask distribution. But these ZIP codes will not require those larger restrictions yet. And, hopefully, they will not at all, but we are going to be watching them very carefully. Let me go over these 11

ZIP codes that are on this watch list. Bedford Stuyvesant, West Clinton Hill, Fort Greene, 11205; East Williamsburg and Williamsburg, 11211 and 11249; Brighton Beach, Manhattan Beach, Sheepshead Bay, 11235; Bergin Beach, Flatlands, Marine Park, and Mill Basin, 11234; Crown Heights East, 11213; Kensington and Windsor Terrace, 11218; Rego Park, 11374; Fresh Meadows-Hillcrest, 11366; Hillcrest, Jamaica Estates, Jamaica Hills, 11492; and Auburndale, Fresh Meadows, Pomonok, Utopia, 11365.

So, in those 11 ZIP codes, there'll be intensive outreach efforts, testing efforts, not the full-scale restrictions that we're calling for in the first nine, again, pending State approval. But in these 11 intensive outreach to test and to enforce, in addition, we believe we should close down higher risk activities – and that means indoor dining, gyms and pools, that those activities should be restricted as of Wednesday morning, but other activities can continue. The other lower risk business activities can continue, schools can continue, etcetera. Now, beyond the nine ZIP codes that we have particular challenges in, and the 11 on our watch list, those 20 ZIP codes, beyond them, there are 126 other ZIP codes in New York City that, right now, thank God, overwhelmingly, are doing well. We always want to be vigilant. We want the maximum testing by all New Yorkers. We want to make sure that people are wearing masks, practicing social distancing. We need to be vigilant in every corner of the city, but I want to emphasize the vast majority of New York City is holding steady right now with low positivity levels and we want to keep it that way. And these actions that we're taking in Brooklyn and Queens are to protect the whole city.

Now, I want to emphasize, none of this is easy. It's difficult. It's challenging. It will require sacrifice. We're talking about the people who have been through so much, businesses that have struggled to survive. This will not be easy at all for families who depend on their livelihoods. But it's something that we believe is necessary to keep this city from going backwards towards where we were months ago. So, I want to emphasize that throughout we've been in constant contact with community leaders, elected officials, clergy, folks who have been working so hard to try and turn the tide in these communities and these ZIP codes. And we will continue to work with them because we're all in this together.

Now, in terms of what it would take to turn us around, let's emphasize – the way forward is to double down on the basics, the core four, to focus on the face coverings, the social distancing, the hand washing the staying home with your sick. Those basic approaches make all the difference in the world. We have a standard we're setting for what we believe is the clear measure that would tell us that these communities can no longer – will no longer need restrictions and there are two versions. The first, the faster one, is a 14-day pause, which would require that the last seven days be under three percent positivity. So, this is the more hopeful version, that if a community can work together with us and we all are able to beat back the disease and we can keep the disease under three percent positivity for seven days, that we would reopen that community after a total period of time of 14 days. Again, this is our vision we're presenting to the State. This is what we think is the best-case scenario. The other scenario that we believe is quite plausible is a 28-day pause, four weeks. And by the end of that pause, by the last day of that pause, the community is below three percent based on a 14-day average. Those are two very viable ways for a community to come out of these restrictions.

So, we will continue with the huge quantity of City personnel out in force, and we'll keep adding to it in all these ZIP codes – again, passing out masks, giving people information, enforcing and enforcing rigorously, and increasing the amount of testing. And when it comes to testing in the ZIP codes most effected, on Friday, for example, we had almost 2,000 new tests on top of what we had previously at over 20 locations in these keys ZIP codes. We're going to continue to amplify that, continue to add testing capacity in these communities. We're going to continue to ramp up inspection enforcement as we have been. There's been over 2,000 inspections to-date of businesses and community institutions that have yielded 26 violations and 883 warnings. So, the enforcement has been going on, will continue to go on. But, look, no one – no one wants to see the community, any community have to go through this closure of businesses and community institutions. There's a lot of people in these ZIP codes, we're talking about nine ZIP codes with hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in the many different kinds of communities. Everyone affected in common. We also know within these ZIP codes are many people who today are observing a holiday. And I want to say I'm sensitive to that fact. It was so important to get this information out as soon as this plan was formulated, that I chose to announce it now to give people the maximum amount of time to make adjustments. And we chose to have the implementation begin Wednesday morning to give time for that a transition. We'll be talking today with a number of community leaders, tonight with community leaders who are coming off the holiday and onto tomorrow morning, while we continue our discussions with the State as well. But the important thing was to give people time to adjust, to give our schools time to get ready, but at the same time act aggressively, because we've learned over and over from this disease that it is important to act aggressively. And when the data tells us it's time for even the toughest and most rigorous actions, we follow the data, we follow the science.

Now, some may ask, does this signal a larger resurgence in New York City? I've asked the health care professionals here with us their assessment – their assessment is no, it does not have to signal that. If we contain the situation in the nine keys ZIP codes and the 11 on the watch list, we can stop this from spreading more deeply into New York City. We can stop this from being a “second wave” in New York City. But in these communities, it is a very troublesome reality that must be addressed very aggressively.

So, I'll conclude before giving the daily indicators by saying that it is so important to understand, and there'll be lots of questions and lots of concerns, but it's so important to remember where we were in March, where we were in April, how difficult it was, how tough it looked at that time, how difficult it was to believe we can overcome it. And yet we all did. Why? Because people worked together, people heard the guidance, follow the guidance. We can use the exact formula again to beat this back. We'd beaten back something tougher before we're going to beat this back again.

Let me go over the daily indicators for the City as a whole. Indicator number one, daily number of people are admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, the threshold is 200 patients – today's report is 70 patients. The confirmed positivity level for those patients is 27 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, the threshold is 550 cases – total, today's report, 464 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19 today's report is 1.54 percent. And on the seven-day rolling average, 1.72 percent. Let me do a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. We're joined today by Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps. Ted Long, Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, and Senior Advisor Jay Varma. First question today goes to Steve from WCBS radio.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. Good to be with you today. I wanted to ask first, I think the question on a lot of people's minds is, why Wednesday? Obviously, if it's problem now, it's been a problem for seven days, why wait another few days to get this underway?

Mayor: Steve, several things. One, again, we are presenting this right now to the State of New York. We're awaiting their approval and support so we can move forward. But we do think communities need some time to adjust, that's been the case with many other restrictions in the past, that there was a bit of wanting and transition time provided – really important for communities coming off the holiday tonight to have some time to make adjustments, really important for store owners to have time to get ready and adjust their approaches, really important for schools. I'm talking now in particular for our public schools, some kids haven't gotten into school yet. We want to at least get them one chance to connect with their teachers, get materials, get devices, whatever they need for the period of time when they're going to be remote. So, we're – these are very, very aggressive actions, but we thought a few days of transition was necessary here. Go ahead.

Question: And yeah, just to follow up, I believe this was the first time the City is looking at a specific, individualized closures versus entire measure for the whole city. So, does that concern you, that people in these ZIP codes, like, just be incentivized to travel and do their business elsewhere in the city?

Mayor: Steve, we got to watch every situation we're facing here. We understand this is uncharted territory. Look, I think all of our previous assumptions were based on our experience in the spring where the situation was consistent across the whole city. We saw obviously some real disparities in terms of impact, but the coronavirus was affecting every single part of the city intensely. We did not anticipate a situation where it would be so narrow in the scheme of things, only a small number of ZIP codes out of the whole city. So, this is something we haven't dealt with before, but we think this is the best way to address it given the facts and the data we now have. To your point, we're going to watch carefully to see if we see any larger spread and address that. But I would say to everyone, including folks who live in these ZIP codes to practice those safety measures, because wherever they may go so long as they are really being careful with those measures, washing hands, and the hand sanitizer, and the face coverings and social distancing, we believe we can contain the situation for the city as a whole.

Moderator: Next up is Dana, from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I was wondering if you could, sort of – could you have any numbers on how many people live in these nine ZIP codes or the number of businesses that will be impacted and how – secondly, how likely is it that the 11 additional areas of real concern will ultimately be subject to these same restrictions?

Mayor: So, I'll start with this – in terms of number of people, we'll get you a more specific estimate, but my understanding is well over a half-a-million people in these areas. The number of businesses we'd need to count on. I know for these nine ZIP codes, Dana, it's just about a hundred public school sites and about 200 nonpublic school sites. But, again, our hope here is that working with the community, we can keep this to a brief duration, that this can be something that can be turned around in a matter of weeks and then people can continue on with their lives. Go ahead.

Question: Thank you. And I guess, secondly, how much is this sort of an effort to satisfy the teacher's union, which has been calling for the closure of schools in these hotspot neighborhoods?

Mayor: Again, Dana, the facts are quite clear. We've been in constant touch with the teacher's union and we are not seeing a problem in the schools, in these communities. There were a couple of small exceptions. We are not seeing anything that suggests that there's a deep connection, honestly, and the health indicators of the public schools and these surrounding communities. And we are doing this out of an abundance of caution. If we're going to the extent of, again, with the State's approval, closing non-essential businesses, it stands to reason that we would close down both public and nonpublic schools as well – that's in the nine ZIP codes. In the 11 on the watch list, we want to keep overall activity going unless the data tells us otherwise. So, in the 11 we're only calling for the closure of the most high-risk businesses. But, in those areas, other businesses will continue and schools will continue.

Moderator: For our next question, we'll go to Gloria from NY1.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I just want to follow up on Dana's question so that for folks who are listening to you right now who are in the 11 areas that you are concerned about, but not exactly fully pausing yet, what will be the trigger, so to speak, for these areas to become areas of real concern that might, in fact, push that full on pause.

Mayor: Gloria, it's a very important question. And I want to emphasize that the data we're working from has been a clear when a community does go above that three percent testing level. And this is also based on more and more testing being poured into the community, more and more testing locations, more and more efforts to get people tested, continuing to get a larger cross section of the community tested. When it goes above three percent for seven consecutive days that tells us something particularly worrisome. The goal here is to do everything we can to keep these other 11 ZIP codes below that level. Now, no one's here to do hypotheticals. We obviously are concerned that a number of those ZIP codes might end up above that three percent, seven-day threshold. But that's a very clear indicator – three percent, seven consecutive days, we're going to publish the data daily so people can see what's going on. Based on the

conversations over the last 48 hours with our health leadership, I would say we certainly are concerned that some of those in the 11 could end up in that top tier that requires more restrictions, but by no means does it have to be all of them. And the more people work with us, the better chances some of those ZIP codes could avoid needing those deeper restrictions.

Question: Okay. And, Mr. Mayor, if I may, I just want to ask the question about how you came to deciding to do this in this way, the Wednesday pause, and I just wanted to ask about the obvious, you know, if you are somebody who lives in Far Rockaway, but say, goes to work every day in Crown Heights, is that not just going to create a problem here, that people are still going to be moving around, even if some essential businesses close and that we will see a community spread, maybe in a matter of days, if not weeks here?

Mayor: It's a fair question. I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. Gloria, this is what I say – first of all, unlike where we were in the spring – I think there's a profound difference – the level of consciousness among New Yorkers, and the fact that New Yorkers are acting on the information they have, is the strongest we've ever had. People really are overwhelmingly practicing social distancing, washing their hands, wearing their face mask. You see it all over the city, and I think this announcement will cause people to double down further all over the city, recognizing we got to tighten up here. So that's Point 1, it's a very different environment where spread is limited most intensely by what people do, by what individual New Yorkers do. We're obviously going to watch carefully to see if people moving around from community to community is having an effect, but to date, we do not see that happening on a wide scale. We see a situation where it's pretty definable where our problem is, and we want to keep it that way. Dr. Varma then Dr. Chokshi.

Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma: Great. Thank you for the question. It's a very important question about how much movement you should restrict from people. I think the most important points to consider are first we're seeing widespread transmission in the ZIP codes that we're proposing that return back to pause, and the most important thing we can do is reduce the amount of nonessential contact that people have outside of their homes. So that's really the single most important thing we can do at this point, combined with all of the other measures, including mass wearing, physical distancing, and our Test and Trace program. So it becomes a question as you raise about whether or not we need to restrict the movement of people in or out of those areas, and that presents really very important human rights considerations, even during the period of pause, when we made tremendous progress in bringing these case numbers down, there was no restriction on people moving between neighborhoods or outside of the city or even between states. So we don't believe that it is an essential feature of this proposal that we're putting forward right now. We simply have the public health evidence to indicate that the measures that we're proposing right now have a very high likelihood of succeeding.

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yes, I would just emphasize one additional point here, which is when we see a certain threshold of evidence for community transmission. That's when we put in place the community measures that are being described, particularly for the nine ZIP codes of greatest concern. However, whether you're in

those nine ZIP codes or the other 11 ZIP codes or elsewhere in New York City, to prevent individual transmission, the individual measures that we've talked about are of the utmost importance. We have emphasized the importance of masks and face coverings. But I also want to make sure that we appropriately emphasize the importance of physical distancing or social distancing as part of that, and that becomes critically important for us to halt the patterns that we're seeing right now.

Moderator: Next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. My first question is I haven't heard any mention of houses of worship – will they also be closed in these ZIP codes and potentially in the other tier two, I guess, watched ZIPs?

Mayor: Not at this point, we're going to obviously watch the situation very carefully, but given that there are restrictions in place on occupancy, and I do believe we're seeing a lot of recognition from community leaders across the spectrum, across the whole faith spectrum of the importance of social distancing, mass wearing in houses of worship. They would continue to be open, but with restrictions.

Question: Thanks, and my second question is just, I guess, going off of Gloria's question, how can you contain this? If you had, you know, for example, the neighborhood of Forest Hills, is it between two ZIPs that are now closed? If you have students who live in a ZIP that has now been restricted, but go to school in another and vice versa – how realistically can the city actually contain this? And do you think that you, I mean a week ago you were well, as of Tuesday, when you actually first spoke with the press about this, it seems that you were downplaying the severity of this, said it was only in insular communities, said these people didn't go to – people who were infected didn't go to public schools. Do you think you acted fast enough on what you saw and what your health officials saw was a rising spike throughout?

Mayor: Obvious reality is that we continue to not see evidence of a problem in the public schools. So I said, Tuesday remains true today. We are not seeing a crossover of this situation to the public schools in these ZIP codes. We're just not seeing it. We have a situation room that is gathering data every single day, we've been over it constantly. There's a lot of testing going on outside schools. It's yielding a very different reality in the public schools than in the surrounding communities, and we know that there's a certain amount of disconnect between those two realities normally. So no, that piece remains very clear, and the overall situation in the city remains very positive. The question you asked to begin with, I'll turn to my health colleagues – the way to handle a situation when the data says it is time for more restrictive actions than take more restrictive actions. That's what we've always lived by. When the data says you don't need those restrictive actions anymore, you stop using them. Earlier in the week, it was not clear it was time for this level of restrictive action, which comes with a lot of impact on people's lives, and I feel horrible for people who have a business has been struggling for example, and will need to be close for a period of time. You don't do that lightly – only do it if the facts really demand it. I also want emphasize, you said the words “now closed”, that is not accurate, and I want to emphasize – we're putting this proposal forward, telling the people of this city, what I believe, and the healthcare team believes needs to happen. This can only happen with state approval. So

we're going to now work with the State to get approval for this plan so we can move forward with it.

Now, I'll turn again to Dr. Varma, Dr. Chokshi on the question of how you stop a spread to other areas and how important it is to address the immediate problem as part of stopping that spread. Go ahead.

Senior Advisor Varma: Yep. So the challenge of course is how do you stop transmission, you know, in a place where again, people will mix in in many different ways. So we know that the single most important measures are the ones individuals can take, as Dr. – Commissioner Chokshi has said – wearing a mask, keeping physical distance, watching your activities that you do, limiting gatherings and good hand hygiene. But there comes a time as the Mayor has said, when you need to develop and implement stricter community control measures, we try to do these in the least restrictive way possible, and I think the Commissioner can describe in detail all of the activities that we have been doing for several weeks to try to reduce community transmission. But the simple fact is once you get to a level where there's widespread transmission, you need to reduce the amount of contact that individuals and households are having with each other, and when you do that in selected geographic areas, you can have a direct impact on the amount of disease. We are watching the data carefully, literally many times every day, we're sitting in debating and discussing data points. We're finding how we do the analysis to see whether or not there was transmission to other parts of the city, and then we would of course take action based on what the data tells us.

Mayor: Go ahead, doctor.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you. What I would add to this is that what the Mayor has asked of us is to ensure that every time we see an early warning signal that is indicated both to the leadership of the city, but also to the public as well, and that's what you have witnessed from us over the last few weeks and months. When those signals do occur, we have a range of actions that we can take, and as Dr. Varma was explaining these occur on a spectrum. We always start with ramping up the outreach and engagement that we do for affected communities reaching out to community leaders, to local healthcare providers, making phone calls, knocking on doors, doing all of those things. In concert, we ensure that we calibrate up all of the testing and tracing that we're doing in those communities as well, and that has a direct impact on trying to hold spread because when you test and you contact trace, you can get people to isolate and quarantine and break the chains of transmission. Beyond that there has been increased enforcement as well particularly focusing on the places in the community where spread occurs and that has also ramped up over the last few days and weeks, and then if those measures are not yet sufficient to stop the spread or when we take the community mitigation measures that we've described today, and so that's the full spectrum, but always taking swift and decisive action every time we see a signal that more needs to be done.

Mayor: And I want to emphasize that Dr. Chokshi not this week we're ending, but the previous week made very clear to people in these communities in Brooklyn and Queens, that there was the potential for much greater restrictions, and we tried to use every tool working with the community to see if it was possible to avert that because again, we know the huge cost that has in

terms of people's lives. So that warning was duly given an immense amount of effort, took place in the last two weeks to address the situation, a lot of cooperation from community leaders of all kinds, but it simply wasn't enough to avoid these restrictions that we're proposing to the state. It's a different scenario than what we saw in other situations. Over the previous few months, we had a problem in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, Soundview in the Bronx, we had a problem in Southeast Queens – followed the same playbook for all of them, and later on for Borough Park and then Far Rockaway and Edgemere, and what had worked in the previous situations did not yield the same result this time, and that's why we have to first warn people of the potential for more restrictive measures, and now we are in fact, proposing them.

Moderator: Next up is Robert from AM New York.

Question: Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good. How are you doing Robert?

Question: Good. Thank you. So just to clarify about the closing of schools in these nine areas could you explain how that's going to take place? Well, I presume that these classes are going to shift over to our learning?

Mayor: That's right, Monday and Tuesday, and again, this is pending final confirmation with the state, but Monday and Tuesday would be regular school days. The kids who are in blended learning, who would be going to school should go to school. Again, an opportunity for them to connect with their teachers, get additional guidance. If they have not yet seen their teachers, because they're on a rotation this is a chance for them to connect with the teachers before they go remote, get devices, if they don't have devices. So right now the Department of Education is alerting principals in these schools that if there's any children who don't have a device, we want to make sure they get it in the course of Monday and Tuesday, so they can bring it home. Of course, with internet service just really giving the schools a chance to prepare under a tough situation to maximize the positive impact of remote learning. But then those schools would go all remote again, for as little as two weeks could be more like four weeks, depending on what happens in the specific ZIP code.

Question: Okay, and just to follow up on the enforcement here earlier today, the Governor announced a new taskforce focused on mask enforcement and social distancing enforcement, and I was wondering if you can explain how that is going to work with the city in expanding mask and social distancing enforcement in these hot zones.

Mayor: Right. It was just announced Robert, so I don't have the details, but whatever the state is doing, we'll of course we'll work with them. We want the maximum education, maximum masks distribution, maximum enforcement. I mean, we've had a thousand city personnel out in the key ZIP codes over the last few days in a very, very intensive enforcement effort. We are finding some places where enforcement is needed, but really not that many in the scheme of things. But we will keep pounding away with that, and we'll certainly work with the state in every way possible.

Moderator: Next up is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah. Thank you. Oh, I was just wondering – to follow up on the schools question. Could Chancellor Carranza speak in a bit detail on how he and you expect this to affect learning for cans in the nine ZIP codes and just what the city might be doing to kind of facilitate this transition?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to the Chancellor. Look, the Chancellor and I've been really clear that there is nothing as powerful as impersonal instruction. So we understand it will be difficult for families who have been waiting and finally, just beginning to taste in-person instruction again, to have to wait longer. But we do know that educators can work wonders and are extraordinary in their ability to create solutions and having a few days to get ready and to make sure that they can maximize the remote learning and make it as good as it can be for the time that kids have to be remote, I think will make a difference here. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, sir. So that's exactly right. So those 48 hours, those two days are going to give us crucial time to make sure that students have the devices that they need for the remote learning tenure that they will have. That will allow us also to communicate with families. It'll allow us to set up schedules for remote learning with teachers that we're doing in person learning as well. So a lot of those logistics will start in earnest now where we're communicating with building leaders in these ZIP codes. So again, a lot of moving pieces, the good news is that we've already done this before. And our planning always has included the eventuality that we would one day need to pivot to remote learning. So, we've planned for this as well. So, we're very, very much prepared and ready to go.

Mayor: Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah. And I was wondering if in the same vein that you, kind of, illustrated two possible scenarios for what happens next to the nine ZIP codes, can you do something similar for the rest of the city because I'm sure a lot of people have to be worried this could be the beginning of a second wave? Do you have, sort of, scenarios on the table where one is, things are contained, there's no second wave, and two is, maybe there is a second wave just – and how that would play out in the city?

Mayor: Shant, it's an important question, but I don't want to do hypotheticals at this point because we're being very clear there does not have to be a second wave. The fact is that these communities are experiencing a problem. We have nine ZIP codes out of 146 in New York City where there's a real problem. We have 11 others where there's a growing problem, we're worried might become deeper. We're going to do very strict actions with the support of the State to ensure it does not spread further. So, I want to emphasize, we do not start from a scenario that this causes a bigger spread. We start from the scenario we need to contain the situation and absolutely we can avoid a bigger second wave in New York City. But it will take everyone's effort, as people did so virtuously before, to ensure we keep this situation contained. Of course, in the meantime, we'll prepare for different eventualities, but I think what's most important to do right now is recognize we have a distinct problem and address that distinct problem forcefully.

Moderator: We're down to our last two questions. And with that, we'll go to Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, everyone. I'm just looking for a little clarification on how the public schools got swept up into these targeted closures. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I feel like everything that had been said in the previous weeks was that you were looking specifically at individual schools, you weren't seeing any concerns among the public schools, and that any way you were relying on that three percent citywide threshold. So, what happened here?

Mayor: Again, Yoav, I spoke to it earlier, but I'll happily repeat. We do not see a nexus to the public schools. This is an action being taken out of the abundance of caution. We need to be aggressive to stop the spread from in these nine ZIP codes and beyond the nine ZIP codes. Therefore, we're suggesting and proposing very aggressive actions, including going back through phases one through four, in terms of non-essential business, and really reducing the amount of contact that people have in the community overall, the amount of travel within the community. We're talking about rewinding here. If we're closing down all non-essential businesses, it stands to reason we need to close down both public and nonpublic schools as well. That's in the nine most effective ZIP codes. In the 11 that are on the watch list, schools continue, public and nonpublic, business continues except for the highest risk activities. So, that's why we're acting strategically. We're looking at the whole picture of the neighborhood and acting out of an abundance of caution. Go ahead.

Question: Well, I guess, I also want to ask about the – I understand why you would want to limit the highest risk categories like gyms and indoor pools and the like, but I'm just wondering what are – you know, we have this huge contact tracing apparatus, where have they been seeing that the transmission coming from, because, you know, the indoor dining, the pools and the gyms are relatively new activities, and I can't imagine that they're responsible for the bulk of these transmissions. So, where are they seeing the transmissions happening?

Mayor: Let me offer a layman's quick overview and then turn to the Dr. Varma and Dr. Long. I think the point here, again, we're looking at the whole picture of a neighborhood, and if there is a chance that a neighborhood can be turned around with outreach, education, enforcement, the support and buy-in of local institutions and leaders, all the doubling down on the core four, if those measures can turn around the situation, Lord knows we do not want to close down businesses that have been through so much. So, so long as there is a chance that we can have a turnaround, we want to take that chance. The Test and Trace, obviously, goes after each individual case, and there's a variety of ways that the disease spreads. But I want to emphasize, we are trying to make sure that we turn around the situation in these 11 ZIP codes, use rigorous measures when it's proven that they are absolutely what's necessary. And the standard we've set is seven consecutive days above three percent, and if a neighborhood has not reached that level, we're going to still try and see if we can turn it around without having to resort to the higher restrictions. Go ahead, Dr. Varma then Dr. Long.

Senior Advisor Varma: Thank you for the question. So, to emphasize, again, that the most important measures that we have to control this infection are the individual measures combined with the testing and tracing, and then combined with community measures which are either

limited if we can get away with it or more restrictive if there's widespread community transmission. So, the efforts that we have taken in these communities are what are really necessary to reduce as much mixing of people outside their households as possible. You're absolutely correct that the highest risk activities that were just recently added such as indoor dining and gyms, are not the primary contributors because they've only recently started, these things occurred earlier, but we need to also try to reduce any new opportunities for transmission to occur. Once transmission becomes widespread, you need to limit the number of high risk settings in which people can interact. In terms of the risk factors that people have for transmission, I'm going to turn to Dr. Long who can describe what we've been seeing from our testing and tracing data. I would just sort of conclude by saying that one of the challenges, and one of the reasons we have to move to more restrictive measures is because there becomes a point where testing and tracing is not enough to control transmission. And this is the lesson that has been learned from all of the jurisdictions around the world, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, that have done this well. They have used individual measures. They have used testing and tracing, but when there is a resurgence in a local area, they have to add these community restrictions.

Executive Director Ted Long, Test and Trace Corps.: Yeah, I think you covered the important points. I would add that we are seeing transmission, especially among close contacts and household members. Now our interventions thus far across New York City have worked and can work. We don't want to do restrictions. In Sunset Park and in Soundview, our interventions drove down the percent of people testing positive by the exact same amount, two-thirds. We're employing all of those efforts into the 11 ZIP codes that the Mayor described. We've handed out 800,000 masks, contracted with 39 CBOs. The amount of testing that we've done on Friday alone, this is looking at all of the ZIP codes now, double the amount of testing in the highest risk ZIP codes from the previous baseline. So, we are hoping that we can employ the same efforts that have been successful in multiple other communities so that we don't have to do further restrictions. And we have been successful, and we will succeed here overall, too.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: For our last question, we'll go to Sydney from Gothamist.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, thank you for your time this morning. So, the Governor earlier just announced he was going to focus on enforcement and a State task force to enforce these rules as you're announcing new restrictions. So, I'm wondering if you could elaborate on any coordination with the Governor on this new partial rollback here and how enforcement would play a part, and why not announce the details of the plan until it is approved by the State in coordination with the Governor?

Mayor: So, Sydney, for the first part, I think we all believe in enforcement. Enforcement has been crucial to what we've been doing throughout. It's really the range of activities. It's education. It is community buy-in. It's providing the free masks, enforcement, for sure, consequences, Test and Trace. You need to do all these things simultaneously and we'll continue to, and even with restrictions in place, by definition, we're going to do a lot of enforcement. I think the bottom line is that we want the State to know, in a very public manner, what we believe

will allow us to contain the situation in these nine ZIP codes and protect the 11 ZIP codes that are on this watch list. The thing I've learned now over these seven-plus months is that it is very important, once we have come to a conclusion of what is needed to be very public about it. The people in New York City deserve to know, and it's important that the State of New York hears what we're calling for and understands what we're saying to everyone openly. This is what is necessary, but based on the data and the science, based on the health care leadership of this city of very experienced leadership, looking at the situation and determining what can contain the spread. So, we've been talking with the State always, but in terms of this proposal, which really has been generated by the data that's come through in the last day or so, it was very important to me to put it out to all the people of the city, so they could hear the direction that we think is necessary. Go ahead, Sydney.

Question: Okay. And then my other question is, how many public schools and non-public schools are in these nine hotspot ZIP codes? And you said that transmission isn't – doesn't appear to be coming from public schools, but is it coming from the nonpublic schools?

Mayor: My initial point I'd make to you, which is important here is that in the public schools, Sydney, we've had an extremely intensive monitoring effort. And this is what we call our situation room that, daily, gets reports from public schools all over the city and looks at when there is a positive case, everything we can learn about that case. Obviously, Test and Trace Corps gets involved with school immediately and of late we've, of course, been watching to see if we've seen any unusual number of cases in these ZIP codes, either from the schools in the ZIP codes, folks who live in the ZIP codes and go to school someplace else, work in those ZIP codes, or go to work in a school in a ZIP code, even if they live somewhere else. We're looking at all these permutations. We're testing outside of specific schools in these ZIP codes. Consistently, what we've found is no evidence of spread in the schools.

In fact, I mentioned in the press conference the other day, two schools in one of these ZIP codes that were tested, it was 178 tests between those two schools of teachers and staff, and only one came back positive. That has been consistent as we've done more and more testing, just very low levels. In the nonpublic schools we've had, I think it is four yeshivas that had to be closed in these ZIP codes, but a very intensive monitoring effort by the Department of Health across the nonpublic schools that generally has not been yielding larger problems. And we've been getting a high level of cooperation from those schools, working with us on the Commissioner's order and the specific standards the Department of Health is holding for those schools. So, so far we're not seeing a nexus to schools in a substantial way, but when it gets to the point of needing to put those bigger restrictions on a community, we know that people going back and forth to school, people who work in the schools, everything contributes to the overall reality of the community. And you want to reduce the level of activity in the community. You want to reduce the amount of people moving around, coming in contact with them. That's what worked in the past. So, again, for the nine ZIP codes, only for the nine ZIP codes, that's why out of an abundance of caution, we're urging the State to agree to close the public and nonpublic schools as of Wednesday, hopefully for as little as two weeks, maybe as much as four. And to your question, it's just about a hundred public schools in those nine ZIP codes and just about 200 nonpublic schools. And, again, for the City system, that means there's another 1,500 that are not affected by this.

Okay. Everyone, as we close up today, look, I just want to emphasize what history has taught us – that we, in this city, went through so much, in the spring especially, epicenter of the nation. We learned extraordinarily difficult lessons, but people learn them deeply. This city won't go back. We have moved forward by depending on science, by looking at the data, by acting on the science and the data consistently. We're doing that again. We're calling on the State of New York to help us take another step that is dictated by the science and by the data so we can protect everyone. And I'm very aware of the challenges this will cause. And I'm very aware that for people in these nine ZIP codes, there'll be a tough period ahead, but I know we will overcome. I know we'll all work together. And I know what has worked for this city is the strength and resiliency of New Yorkers and the fact that people do work together. We are all in this together. We have overcome much worse than this challenge, and we will overcome this one as well. Thank you, everyone.

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