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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everyone. You know, we always say how important it is to vote and that voting is such an extraordinary right and privilege we have as Americans. Voting is something sacred. Yesterday, I felt that very personally, out there with hundreds and hundreds of people at my polling site, and, obviously, hundreds of thousands around the city who have participated in early voting. I felt the passion of the people that I was with who cared so much, they would stand in line no matter what to vote. It was something powerful. You could feel how much people cared, how much they wanted to make a difference. You could feel the hope that comes from that. Folks were patient. They were positive. They were supporting each other. They were determined to vote. That's the good news. The bad news is for all of us it was an extraordinarily frustrating experience to be in a line for hours, that shouldn't even have existed to begin with. There should not have been a situation where New Yorkers were forced to wait hours and hours for early voting. We're not talking about Election Day. We understand sometimes there's a huge number of people that show up at the same time. We're talking about early voting. The whole idea was to make it easier for people and be ready to make it a positive experience. And that's what we did not see from the Board of Elections. People waiting three hours to vote is unacceptable. It means, for a lot of people, they simply won't be able to give that time. They'll run out of time. That'll have to be at an appointment. They'll have to be at work, whatever it may be. It's another way where we lose the opportunity to encourage people to participate. We can't have that.

So, the Board of Elections needs to act further. I do see they took some action and I appreciate that, but they need to take a lot more action. There's still time to increase the hours for early voting further to get more machines over to the poll sites, to get more workers over there. There's a chance to get it right especially for this coming weekend where we would expect a huge turnout. So, I'm calling upon the New York City Board of Elections to get it right, to go farther, to do more, to make sure early voting really works for the people of this city. With that said, I want to offer my thanks to the folks who do the incredible work at the poll sites. I saw a lot of familiar and friendly faces in my neighborhood yesterday. The folks who work inside the polls, who really give their all to make sure that voting does work for people. The mistakes of the Board of Elections should not be in any way held against the good people working at each poll site who really want to help, who really care, who really are – constantly, I saw people asking questions, looking for directions. They were great. The people who worked at the polls were great, I salute all of them. I thank them. But to the leadership of the board, it's time to do better. And you can act immediately to make sure this weekend is a success story and not another story of frustration. Now that's what should happen immediately to improve early voting. And by the way, the more early voting works, the better things go on Election Day itself. I expect there'll be a massive turnout on Election Day, but the better early voting works, the more and more people

choose to vote early, the less you have a problem on Election Day, you relieve some of that pressure on Election Day. That's a good reason, a practical reason, and a good moral reason to get early voting right.

But let's face it, the fundamental problem is the Board of Elections. I wish that the City of New York had direct control over the board. We do not. It's something that needs to be reexamined immediately because the Board of Elections structure simply doesn't work. It's arcane. It's from literally another century. It was built for another time. It was built on the wrong concepts for what we need today. So, I want to suggest three specific actions that could be taken to address this crisis because it's not just the lines we experienced yesterday or this week. It's every single election there's been a problem with the Board of Elections. It must be changed. First, the Legislature should immediately pass Senate Bill 2726. That bill would allow for the professionalization of the Board of Elections in its current form. Now I don't think the current form makes sense, but the least what we could say is an immediate action that could be taken would be to pass this legislation to professionalize the board as is currently structured, to empower the executive director to run it as a more modern agency. This would be a step forward. I've been advocating for this bill for years. Lots of good government groups have been fighting in Albany. This would be a first step and it could be taken immediately by the Legislature.

Second, we need change – profound change ahead of next year's mayoral election. This is going to be a crucial election. We expect a very high turnout. We can't experience what we've been experiencing here. I call upon the Legislature and the Governor to examine a different kind of model, staying within the concepts laid out in the State Constitution, consider a model that still allows for the representation by political parties as is required, but works with a different kind of board and a different kind of staff. And a model that we can look at here in the city is our Campaign Finance Board, it is not perfect. And I'll be the first to say, many elected officials can tell you things that didn't work so perfectly with the Campaign Finance Board. But what we can also say is it is a modern professional organization. It is not patronage based. A board of leaders makes decisions. And then there's a professional staff that executes those decisions in a modern way that actually looks a lot more like a good functioning government agency than what we see at the Board of Elections. Something like that could be put in place for the next election within the constraints of the State Constitution. And that could really help us to have better elections in New York City next year.

And then finally, the third point, the larger solution, we need a New York State constitutional amendment. The New York State Constitution literally says that boards of election have to have representation of leadership from the political parties. I think that's a broken system. You look around the country at the places that are regarded as having really good, strong election systems. A lot of the states on the West Coast are examples. Colorado is a great example. They do not have a system based on party affiliation being the decisive factor in who leads and who staffs their boards. They have systems that are much more professional and much more transparent and lead to better elections, but we're going to have to change the State Constitution. That is a difficult process, but it can be done. We need to change the State Constitution so we can have a Board of Elections that actually functions. We just can't have people, you know, finding that their name is taken off the voter rolls. They can't find out where they're going to vote. They wait in line for hours. We can't have this anymore. So, we need that bigger change. Look, if we work

quickly, we can make improvements ahead of the elections of 2021 and then bigger improvements after that so that, really, everyone can participate fairly.

Okay. Now, let's go back to what we talk about every single day, the fight against the coronavirus and what it has meant for this city. Look, we all know we're in the middle of a health care crisis and we all know all of you have played a heroic role in fighting it back. But we also know that this crisis has had a huge impact on people's lives, not just in terms of their health, but in terms of our livelihoods. We have seen so many families lose their livelihoods. We've seen so many people lose their jobs. We've seen so many small businesses struggling to survive. It's been an extraordinary challenge. And what we've found is we need to find new solutions. We need new ways to help everyone. I want to focus on small businesses that have been through so much. For us to bring back and protect our small businesses we have to do some different things. And a great example – and it was one that, you know, we had to learn by doing – was with our Open Restaurants program. There was an example of cutting a lot of red tape, doing something that hadn't been done before, offering opportunity for restaurants to use outdoor space, bring back their employees, turned out to be a big hit, turned out to be something that really worked for New Yorkers. Let's apply that same idea to small businesses, retail businesses, all over the five boroughs that so much need additional business to survive. But it's hard to do if you have a small space and the restrictions in place. Let's liberate the outdoor space for them as well and help these small businesses to continue.

So, today we announce our Open Storefronts program, modeled on what worked with Open Restaurants and Open Streets. Here's an opportunity that'll reach over 40,000 small businesses in this city and will allow them to sell their wares outdoors right in front of their businesses to have a lot more people able to come and buy, to be able to expand their staff, the number of people they employ. We're going to do it the same way we did with Open Restaurants, a simple application, very little red tape. We want to cut through the red tape. We want to make it easy for people to move forward and people can – store owners can go online right now and start applying, nyc.gov/openstorefronts and have an opportunity to get this going immediately, and so important to have the ability to have a lot more business ahead of the holidays. And everyone knows this is such a crucial time of the year for every small business. We want them to be able to maximize it. So, we're making this opportunity available right now. I want you to hear from two people and the first of them is a small business owner. She has a great story of someone who built her business from scratch, who had a dream, and made it come alive. But also, is dealing with all the challenges right now and needs new opportunities to keep her business going and to employ people from her community. My great pleasure to introduce to you Rosanna Medina. Welcome.

Rosanna Medina: Good morning. Good morning, thank you, Mr. Mayor and Commissioner Doris for this opportunity. My name is Rosanna Medina and I'm the owner of Fajas La Grenua. It's an undergarment business that seems to enhance the beauty of the women's empowerment. So, we believe that every customer deserves to feel unique and authentic. This is why we work on some shapers as reducing postpartum, postsurgical. And as a Latina [inaudible] I went from carrying my luggage around the Grand Concourse to opening a storefront in the Bronx and Washington Heights with the help of my husband and my daughter. Like many other retail businesses, the pandemic caused me to close down all my stores and operate sales online. It was

very difficult, but with the help of SBS, we be allowed to apply and receive the PPP loan and legal services. I know like many, many other retail businesses the pandemic, you know, cause us to do that situation, in June we decided to reopen our store, following the City social distance and the health regulations. But the biggest challenge was finding a way to accommodate our large clientele in our store. And I think, and I believe the storefront program will be a huge help for us. It will allow us to process more transactions, will allow us to sell my shapewear, my merchandise as well. I am excited to continue to sell all my products in a safe and – in a safe environment and a good way. Thank you SBS for all the help you have given to us. We will continue to count on you and the City's support to economically support this pandemic. So, I hope that the storefront program can be too. Thank you, again.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Rosanna. And congratulations on building a great business and fulfilling your dream. And now I hope that this new initiative is going to allow you to really expand the business, get more people hired, bring in more customers. And I hope you thrive with this Open Storefronts system we put in place. And now I want you to hear from our Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris. And look, I want to say Small Business Services has really done an amazing job reaching out to small businesses, offering help of every kind, listening to small businesses, and thinking about new ways of doing things. And Jonnel was front and center in the effort to create the Open Restaurants and Open Streets efforts and been one of the driving forces behind this notion of re-imagining public space, thinking differently about what we have done, because this crisis is telling us we have to do things differently all the time. More creativity, less bureaucracy, more outreach and support for small businesses. That's what Jonnel and his team have been doing. So, my pleasure to introduce to you Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris.

Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Small Business Services: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And, Rosanna, wow, what an amazing story. From carrying your luggage on the street to owning two storefronts both in Washington Heights and in the Bronx, employing nine New Yorkers and bringing opportunity for those families. This is what Small Business Services is all about. We are here to assist our small businesses to get the resources they need to really advance their dreams, but also reach their potential and really bring our city back. We cannot come back fully as a city without our small businesses. And so, we're excited about this program, our Open Storefronts program. Listen, throughout this pandemic, our small businesses have been showing their tenacity and their drive. They've been showing their grit, that New York grit that they have. And certainly, we want to make sure that we're here as the city to support them. And we have done that. We're certainly looking forward to this program and it's just going to add to our Open Restaurants program, which amazingly popular and a lifeline for our small businesses. And this program will be the same for our retail facilities, particularly now, as we go into the holiday seasons when these small businesses – 70 percent, 70 percent of their sales come from this time.

So, we're making this more accessible, we're making it – giving them the opportunity to get out in front of their stores and also engage their customers, do transactions right in front of the store, and also allow them to free up space, also inside, really, to keep it safe and keep the traffic moving as we need to. So, if you are a small business, we want you to know that SBS will continue to be here for you. You can reach us at our hotline at 888-SBS-4NYC. We have helped scores of small businesses either with financial assistance or our hotline, which we've already helped 42,000 small businesses to answer questions that they need, and the like. So, listen, if you

need resources from us, if you need assistance from Small Business Services or to understand better this program, please feel free to reach out to us. We will have our mobile unit across all five boroughs. I'm going up to the Bronx today. We're very excited about it. We'll be on Southern Boulevard and we will continue across the five boroughs to bring the resources directly to our small businesses for this particular program, our Open Storefronts program. So, once again, our telephone number, if you need to reach us by our hotline is 888-SBS-4NYC, or you can reach out to us for all of our resources at nyc.gov/business. Thank you, Sir.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for all that you and your team are doing and this new initiative with Open Storefronts, again, will make a difference for tens of thousands of businesses. A lot of their employees are going to have new opportunity. And of course, a lot of customers who can't wait to come back to their favorite businesses. So let's make it official with this executive order.

[Mayor de Blasio signs executive order:]

You are Commissioner, I commend you. There it is, democracy in action, right there. Thank you so much. And as we finish talking about Open Storefronts, I want to remind people again, holidays are coming, great opportunity to patronize your local businesses. Look, everyone, we all appreciate the amazing stuff available online, but let's really double down on our local businesses here in this city. Let's give them the business they need to survive. We really hope and pray that this pandemic will be addressed by next year with a vaccine. This is going to be the toughest year for small business. This holiday season is something they really need to be good and strong for them, but we all can make a difference by buying local. So please do that. And since we have a guest with us Rosanna, tell us again, Fajas La Grenua, tell us where you're located again?

Medina: Okay. This is Fa La Grenua. We're located at 554 West 181st Street in Washington Heights. And on 133 East Fordham Road in the Bronx.

Mayor: All right, so for all those folks looking for a great place to do some holiday shopping, Rosanna and her team are ready for you. Excellent. Thank you. Thank you so much.

All right, everyone let's do our daily indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients. Today's report 105 patients with a confirmed positivity level for COVID of 22.8 percent. Number two, new reported cases on seven day average, threshold 550 cases. Today's report is 552 cases. The number three, percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 city-wide, threshold five percent, today's report 1.39 percent, with the seven day rolling average again, at 1.75 percent. That's a number we've been very close to now for the last few weeks, 1.75 percent. I'll say 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: Hi all. We'll now begin our Q and A. With us today we have Rosanna Medina, Commissioner of Small Business Services Jonnel Doris, Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson, DOT Chief Operating Officer Margaret Forgione, Senior Counsel for Democracy NYC Laura Wood and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll start with Rich from WCBS 880.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Rich. How are you doing?

Question: I'm doing all right. Just, so in this new proposal you have for the outdoors, presumably and the sidewalks, will there be a series of rules? You've got a lot of tents and that sort of thing so that people aren't going to get wet and whatever it is out there.

Mayor: Let me start and I'll turn to Commissioner Doris and the Chief Operating Officer for DOT Margaret Forgione. Look Rich, what we want to make sure is we're maximizing space, but obviously also being smart about keeping people safe. So the perfect world is where you have more space and the advantage of the open air. Think about the shopping experience, a lot of what people do, they don't necessarily have to take a lot of time to look at stuff, it's not like sitting down for a meal. We've had plenty of great examples of people shopping outdoors in the city in a lot of ways. So we want to make sure it's safe. We want to make sure there's a flow of air but also give a lot more space. And I think we can strike that balance. Commissioner?

Commissioner Doris: Yes, absolutely. So, you know, businesses can erect temporary signage. They also can use umbrellas that are collapsible to protect them from the elements as well, and also tents. But at the end of the day the business would have to bring this equipment back in. We believe that the way that we've constructed it and also the way that as the Mayor mentioned, as easy as it is for you to sign, should take a few minutes. The rules are very straightforward. And it sort of aligns with what businesses are already selling inside. Essentially they'd bring it outside. So this is a very, very, very simple process. And just like our – we do with Our Open Restaurants program again, to make sure that it's accessible for our small businesses.

Mayor: Let's get the COO of DOT into this. Margaret, what would you like to add?

Chief Operating Officer Margaret Forgione, Department of Transportation: Good morning. I would just like to add that the most critical thing is that each business must maintain an eight foot clear path for pedestrians to pass by. You have to make sure the sidewalks are still unimpeded while allowing for this new use by businesses on the sidewalk.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead. Rich.

Question: Mr. Mayor, just wondering about the Steve Cohen's proposed deal to take over the Mets use Citi Field. Has the City come to a conclusion about whether or not it will allow that to happen?

Mayor: Rich, the City Law Department is reviewing that transaction. They're doing their due diligence. I think they'll be finished with it very soon. At the point that the Law Department's

come to a determination, we'll announce that publicly, for sure. So I'd say some point in the next few days.

Moderator: Next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. This is sort of a follow up question to your Open Restaurant announcement today, Open Streets announcement today. I'm wondering a lot of restaurant owners are chafing at the fact that they can only have 25 percent of their tables indoors. I wonder at what point you might be able to move that to 50 percent, which is what happens in all the other suburbs surrounding New York City?

Mayor: Marcia, that's obviously ultimately a decision the State will make. We're going to be working with them very closely. We're all, the City and State together watching very, very vigilantly what's happening around the country, where we're seeing a horrible uptake of this disease. And we've had challenges here in the city, obviously in Brooklyn and Queens, although that situation is better, you still see the overall impact when you look at our daily indicators. So we're watching very carefully, Health leadership of both the City and State are talking to each other. I think the State's idea is to come to some initial thinking about that over the next week or so. But again, as with all decisions on whether to expand or contract activity, it should be based on the data and the science. Go ahead, Marcia.

Question: Okay. Just a follow up question. So I'm hearing from you I think, that you're concerned about increasing the number of people who can eat indoors because of the possibility there could be a second wave and the increase in the number of positive test rates?

Mayor: Marcia, absolutely number one thing I'm concerned about right now is stopping a second wave in New York City. This city looked to have been the epicenter of the crisis, fought all the way back to become one of the safest places in the country. Now threatened with a second wave that's, you know, fully affecting so much of the country. We can't let that happen here. So we have to be really smart about the choices we make. And the State ultimately decides but I think what we're all aware of, and I know the State feels the same way is we cannot allow a second wave in New York City.

Moderator: Next is Dan from WABC.

Mayor: Dan?

Question: I spoke with some landlords who say they're experiencing more than 50 percent vacancies during the pandemic, and they don't see that changing anytime soon. The Small Property Owners Association says hundreds are having a difficult time paying their mortgages and their property tax is based on rates from two years ago. There has been some help for renters in New York City. What, if anything is being done to help building owners survive moving forward?

Mayor: Look we need a bigger type of support for building owners, for renters, for small businesses, all of them deserve relief. This is a global pandemic. It is no one's fault. Everyone

deserves help to find a way through. That can only come in one form, which is a federal stimulus. Now look in six days, we're going to know the most important thing, who wins the election, the presidency, the Senate. That's going to, I think determine how and when there will be a stimulus and how big it will be. But I believe that stimulus should work to make whole everyone, so that we can restart our economy and move forward. That's the only place it can happen. Go ahead.

Question: Thank you Mayor.

Mayor: You good?

Question: Yes. Thank you so much.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask you, I think a caller asked you Friday about fitness studios not being able to open yet. And just wondering what the plan is for that because that sector is, is still struggling. And as far as I know, hasn't been able to open yet.

Mayor: Yeah. It continues to be discussed with our health care team. We're not there yet. For the very same reasons that I talked about a few minutes ago. We do have an immediate danger of a second wave in New York City. We fought it back so far effectively, and I want to thank all New Yorkers, because everyone's been a part of that. Folks in Brooklyn and Queens in some of those affected neighborhoods have been a part of that. They went out, they got tested in record numbers. They're wearing face masks, it's making a huge difference. But we are not out of the woods. So any of the issues still to be resolved in terms of reopening or expanded opening has to be looked at through the prism of the health care situation. And so we're going to be very careful to make sure there is no continued danger of a second wave before we make a lot of new expansion decisions. So that's going to be based again on the data and the science Yoav.

Question: Okay. I guess along the same lines, you know, when you heard that your barber shop was closing, you said, we need to you know, see what we can do to stop this kind of stuff. And here today you're announcing that stores that are already open can expand. So I guess there doesn't seem to be the same kind of urgency and creativity being employed for a sector of the industry, the commercial space that, you know -- it's almost November and they still haven't been allowed to open. I'm just wondering about people's livelihoods and why there either isn't more urgency and or creativity to figure out a solution other than just to say, they have to remain closed?

Mayor: I disagree with your assessment. There's tons of urgency, but the urgency is first and foremost about protecting people's lives and keeping this city moving forward and keeping our economy growing. And we have to stop a second wave to do all that. Yoav, I would simply say it's first thing first. The first mission is to stop a second wave. Or if you have a second wave, a bunch of things are going to close. That's against everyone's interests. So I disagree with you. It

has lots of urgency and there's lots of creativity. This is why we're talking about something like an Open Storefront initiative to bring stores that can do their work outdoors, outdoors. And give them the right to do it. Because a crucial factor here is outdoors versus indoors. I'm going to turn to Dr. Varma, who I think speaks passionately about this. Look what I've learned from our health care leadership, outdoors versus indoors, huge factor. Where people can wear a mask versus where it's less likely or less effective to wear a mask, huge factor. When you think about something like fitness studios, I want them to come back, but we have to bring them back when it's safe and when it makes sense. And they unfortunately are indoors and they come with challenges that we have to address. But this is all about the big picture, which is stopping a second wave. Dr. Varma, could you speak to that?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah. Thank you very much. I think the Mayor has highlighted a lot of the critically important issues. One of the areas that makes us particularly concerned about group indoor fitness activities is the fact that it's been associated with a fairly large outbreaks that has been well-documented in other parts of the world. Most recently there was a large outbreak associated with a group fitness class in Canada. There's a very well documented one that's happened in Korea. So it's one of the many reasons that gives us pause, particularly given all of the issues that the Mayor has highlighted. There was a dramatic resurgence of this disease throughout the rest of the United States and throughout Europe. And so there will continue to be a lot of pressure for us to be able to keep cases down here in New York against that. So additional activities that are known to be potentially high risk give us a lot of pause.

Mayor: Thank you very much.

Moderator: Next we have Julia from the Post.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor: I am well. And Julia, I want to wish you well, I know you'll be off duty for a little while, but I hope everything goes beautifully and we'll see you back soon.

Question: Thank you very much. And good luck continuing to steer the city through these difficult times, and I wish you and your family stay safe and healthy.

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you.

Question: So last night we saw some protests in Brooklyn over the police shooting in Philadelphia of a Black man. And the protests, you know, were not peaceful. We saw vandalization of police vehicles, a torched American flag, lit garbage fires, shattered windows of local businesses. I know there were some arrests made by the NYPD. I'm wondering if the City will push for prosecutions? And do you have any different approach from how protests were handled in June? Or is it kind of the same approach that you took then?

Mayor: No, we always are trying to learn and do better Julia. Absolutely. A lot of what happened in June was peaceful protests that was handled well by everyone, by protestors, by police. That was the vast majority of what we saw. There were situations where there was

unacceptable violence. There were situations where some police officers made mistakes and did things that weren't acceptable. But let's not lose the forest for the trees. The overall reality was peaceful protest that was managed and facilitated by the NYPD. We want to learn from May and June though, how to do things better, how to listen to concerns that have been raised and addressed them. This situation last night, I haven't gotten a full report. I'll be talking to Commissioner Shea later on. But look, I want to make clear, no violence is acceptable. If there's violence towards individuals, citizens, if it's violence against police officers, absolutely unacceptable. Violence against property unacceptable, fire is unacceptable. And of course those offenses should be prosecuted. And I absolutely want to see those prosecutions. So we just need to remind people, if you have issues you want to raise or concerns you want to raise, you can do that anytime with peaceful protest. But you can not, not use violence against anybody or anything. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. Switching gears to education here. We saw the results of a federal assessment test for fourth and eighth graders. 73 percent of eighth graders were not proficient in math. And 74 percent were not proficient in English. So those aren't, you know, the best numbers. I'm wondering if you think your administration is preparing kids to be you know, proficient enough to graduate? And this is 2019, so pre-COVID.

Mayor: Yeah. Julia, I need to get briefed on those results. Some of the national testing in recent years has been more accurate, some of it's been less accurate. There've been some real issues about the consistency of the testing, but I need to hear about the details of this so I can give you a better answer. But, look, what I know is this, we still have a lot of work to do to improve public education in the city, I'm the first to say it, but I know for a fact that we've seen over the last seven years our graduation rate go up really substantially, the test scores on the State tests have gone up consistently. We're doing a much better job of closing the achievement gap and we're seeing that particularly with the youngest kids who have benefited from pre-K and 3-K we're seeing more and more kids take part in advanced placement courses, as we've made that truly consistently, equally available all over our school system. There's a lot of signs of real meaningful progress, but there's definitely more work to do. So, we'll take a look at these specific outcomes from these tests and have more to say on that soon.

Moderator: Next we have Juan from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: How are you?

Question: I'm very good. Thank you. I want to ask you about the new program that you just announced. How are you going to ensure safety? Are you going to have more police presence? And what would you say to drivers already struggling to find a parking space? And I'm talking about NYPD presence, because you're going to have all these businesses with all the items that they are selling outside on the street.

Mayor: Well, let me have, again, Commissioner Doris and COO Forgione speak to you about this, because the way this is structured I do not think is going to create the problems you fear. I

think it's going to use sidewalk space more effectively and people are going to want it, I really believe. I think there's going to be a real desire of people to go and take advantage of this opportunity to shop locally. I don't think it dredges up the kind of safety concerns you're pointing to, but, Commissioner, do you want to start?

Commissioner Doris: Yeah, certainly. So, you know, we do agree, Mr. Mayor. You know, businesses will be utilizing the space right in front of their stores. So, you know, there is going to be a pathway for the customers and also pedestrians to pass. We believe that businesses [inaudible] employees that are normally inside will be able to come outside and work with the customers so that, you know, if there's concern about, you know, crime, etcetera – I don't think we are too concerned about that, because employees will actually be out there working with the customers and overseeing their goods and various services that are going to provide. We have not heard in the lead up to this to concerns around safety in that context. We do have our BIDs, who will be working with – Business Improvement Districts – as our partners. We have 76 of them across the city that we're working with, our chambers of commerce that we're working with to help those retail businesses survive, but also really execute on this program. And we'll be tapping in to their resources as well.

Mayor: Hey, as we turn to Margaret, let's see – can we get the image back on the screen of the actual sidewalk layout. Do you guys have? Let's see if our ace team can get that for us so that when Margaret speaks, she is referring to the actual schematic. Is that – no, the actual sidewalk, the look of the – there you go – almost there – Margaret, where we're going to set this up for you. Okay, Margaret – now, I don't know if you can see it, Margaret, but this is the schematic of how it would look with the sidewalk layout. Can you speak to that and safety considerations?

Chief Operating Officer Forgione: Perfect. So, the focus of this program is sidewalk only. We're inviting the stores to come out and set up their wares on the sidewalk directly in front of their storefront. They can set it up for about five feet directly from the building, five feet out as well as five feet high. As I mentioned before, at all times, an eight-foot clear path for pedestrians needs to be maintained. In terms of the curb lane that you refer to, the only time a store will go out into the street is when the store is already part of our Open Streets, Open Restaurants program, where the street is already being closed to traffic so that restaurants can come out. In those cases, the business can join in that format, but we think that the vast majority will just be sticking to the sidewalk directly in front of their building. So, that being said, we don't anticipate a lot of safety concerns. The key thing, again, is to keep pedestrians moving. But you won't be seeing an impact in the roadway from this program.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead.

Question: Mr. Mayor, so we've seen in the last few days an increase in the numbers of new infections in the city. I believe that some of those numbers are going beyond the line, the standard you had implemented in the past. What's a new metric that you're going to use? Do you know that in the past and in New York City has been a little bit – a few weeks after whatever was happening in Europe and we see how Europe is doing so badly right now, reimposing lockdowns in many European capitals and many regions of the continent. What's a new metric

and do you foresee similar actions being implemented in New York City as the ones that we're seeing right now in Europe?

Mayor: Thank you. Very, very important question. So, let me start and then I'll turn to Dr. Varma. I want to just go over these indicators really clearly in light of your question. We have three indicators and what we're most concerned about is when we see them all move in unison. The one that we've talked about several times the last week or two is the case number, which has now hovered right around that threshold several times the last week or two. But remember, that is also against the backdrop of a lot more testing than we've ever had in this city. And we've been encouraging testing. So, it's natural, if you have a lot more testing, even if your positivity level stays low, you're going to have a higher number of pure positive cases. If this were happening in concert with the other two indicators, we would be very concerned and we'd be taking additional actions. But because it is different from the other two indicators, that has been determining our actions. Also, because we know the problem was localized to a relatively small part of Brooklyn and Queens, and we've seen real progress in those areas – that's what tells us a lot. Also, the two other indicators – on the hospitalization level, still well below the threshold and [inaudible] still a much lower positivity level for COVID than we saw in the spring. On percent positive citywide, the seven-day rolling average, being the truest measure, again, that has been in this area somewhere between 1.5 percent, 1.75 percent now over the last few weeks. It's been pretty consistent, leveled off. We want to push that down, but the big point here is we are making some progress fighting back the second wave. We've got to do a lot more. The concern about us being a few weeks behind Europe, I think that was when we didn't have all these precautions in place and these strict rules in place, and also when there was a lot more travel interaction – there's obviously very little travel from Europe now. We've been watching this closely. But it doesn't reduce our vigilance. We're still really concerned that we're going to make our decisions very carefully. Dr. Varma?

Senior Advisor Varma: Great. Thank you. I think the Mayor has highlighted, you know, all the really critical points about how we look at all these indicators together with one big picture. I would try to highlight maybe two points. One, just to explain a little bit about the why we chose that threshold of 550, kind of what it means to us. And then a second, a little bit about the context related to Europe. We chose that number of 550 after looking extensively both at our data, as well as data from many other places around the country that had different stages of reopening. And what we found was that there was often a consistent pattern when the increase in your number of cases across certain thresholds, you know, compared to where you were at your lowest point, that that was a worrisome sign of a resurgence. The good news of all of this is that, you know, we detected those resurgences in local parts of the city earlier than this indicator tracked. And so, we were able to start taking action. Of course, the bad news is that we're hovering at a level that we don't really want to be at. You know, we would love to ideally drive case numbers back to where they were in August. But that is the origin of the indicator, it was something to indicate to us that there's a warning sign that case rates might be increasing over time and cause a second wave. The second point briefly about Europe is that we have done things that Europe hasn't done. You know, Europe did have a lot of reopening and I think the issue of pandemic fatigue probably hit there stronger. We've been really modeling our efforts after those successful large East Asian cities and taking action when we hit a threshold of like two or three percent in certain geographic areas for test positivity. In a lot of European countries,

they have waited until their test positivity levels rose to much higher levels before they took action. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: We have time for two more. With that, we'll go to Reuvain from Hamodia.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I would like to ask you about special needs children who are particularly devastated by the school shutdown in the red zones. Parents say that the children are regressing every day. I have a cousin who's a special needs child and he calls me every other day saying, can you ask the Mayor to open my school? I was just wondering if – it's possible Governor Cuomo may open them any day, but it's also possible that with the second wave we may see shutdowns in the future. So, I'm asking what any special allowance has been made for the special circumstances surrounding the special needs schools? And maybe allowing them to be open even when others are closed.

Mayor: Yeah. It's a very good question and a very important question. When we opened our public schools, the first thing we did was focused on our school programs for special needs kids, our District 75 schools, because, unquestionably, this is where the in-person learning has the biggest impact and there's the greatest need. And I feel for the families, for sure – they're dealing with so many struggles to begin with, we have to be responsive to them. So, the first thing I'd say is, we're obviously waiting for the State's next round of decisions on the red zones. We've seen a lot of progress in Brooklyn. I'm very hopeful that it will be some relief soon and that will help address the problem. The State gets to make that decision. We want to make it carefully with them, obviously, but I am hopeful, based on the sheer data we're seeing that some relief is coming very soon. Second, I think we need to think, going forward, about even when we're dealing with restrictions, do we have a different approach to special needs programs because of the dire need? How do we do that? How do we protect those programs? What precautions do we need to put in place? This is a conversation we're going to have with the State, because I think this was something unanticipated, that there was a particular need here that might have to be handled differently. Obviously, Reuvain, this uptick happened very intensely. The most important thing was to stop it. I want to thank everyone in the community who has helped, everyone who's wearing a mask and social distancing, everyone who's getting tested. It's making a huge, positive difference. I want to thank so many community leaders, organizations, members of the community have really stepped up. It's been fantastic. The best thing to do is keep that going so we don't ever have to add restrictions again. But I think your point is fair, we need to rethink the approach to special education in the light of the times when we need restrictions. Go ahead.

Question: There've been multiple reported instances of summons being given to either schools that were closed and maybe had a few administrators in the building just doing administrative work. There was an incident of a store that posted a video of an inspector giving them a summons, even though they were open only for curbside delivery. And the inspector said, I'm just following orders. In the case of the school, the inspector said, well, I have a list. And it seemed that she believed that there was a list to give summons to, not to check if they were open.

So, I'm wondering if you're aware of these instances and what's being done to prevent them in the future.

Mayor: I'm not aware of those specific instances, but I want anyone who's got information like that, if you could help us by getting it to our team here at City Hall. We want to follow up on that. If someone was given a summons appropriately, we need to act to address that and fix it. They should not be penalized if they're doing the right thing. If an inspector misunderstood the rules – look, to be fair, inspectors are being asked to adopt a whole new rules and do different kinds of work than they normally do. Some might misunderstand a particular piece, we want to fix that. So, I don't want to see anyone given a summons who shouldn't be. We know some people unfortunately have been overtly breaking the rules and they do need to receive summonses. But if it's a mistake or a misunderstanding, let's see if we can address it and get us those details. We'll follow up right away.

Moderator: For our last question, we'll go to Michael from the Daily News.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Michael. How have you been?

Question: I'm all right. A couple of questions. The first one is a follow-up to Julia's question about the protests last night. Has the driver of the car who rammed into police at that protest been arrested and why isn't Commissioner Shea here today to field questions on this. This is something that's come up in past press briefings and I was wondering if you get address it again.

Mayor: Again, we focus on the topics that we're announcing each day. Today, obviously, our focus is on this new open storefronts program, and I also wanted to speak to what's happening now, such an important moment for the city and this country in terms of the election process. When there are specific issues, obviously, the Commissioner, you know, talks with different media outlets quite a bit and the Department will address that. But look, the bottom line is, anyone who assaults an officer, that's absolutely unacceptable. There must be consequences. We'll make sure PD gets you an update on that investigation right away. Go ahead.

Question: The second question has to do with open storefronts. And I apologize if I missed something from Margaret before. Is it allowed on streets or is it only allowed on streets when an adjacent business has an open streets permit? Could you just kind of detail that a bit more? It was unclear to me when you talked about it before.

Mayor: Yeah. No, I appreciate it, Michael. I'll start and turn to Margaret. Michael, I don't know if you are in a place where you can see the screen, but we have it back up. This is about sidewalks. This is – it's different – it's inspired by what weren't with open restaurants, but structured differently to focus only on sidewalks. The exception, of course, is when we have a whole street closed off because the open streets, then the stores can expand further. Margaret, you go ahead.

Chief Operating Officer Forgione: Yes, Mayor, that's exactly right. The program is focused on the sidewalk. So, the vast majority of stores will put their wares out on the sidewalk in order to participate in the program. If there is already an open street, open restaurant on the block, they may join that. They may work with the partners that are already closing the street in order to come out into the curb lane.

Mayor: Thank you so much. Look, as we conclude today, I just want to say thank you to all New Yorkers who care about their city, care about their country, are out there voting right now. Six days until the election, I want to thank everyone who sent in an absentee ballot, everyone who is early voting, everyone has gone and go out the old-fashioned way on Election Day. Every bit of it's good and all of it is appreciated. I want to thank those good people working at the polls, volunteering to help out this city. We've seen it throughout, you know, people just step up for each other all the time. I want to thank everyone. When we sent out a call and we tell people go out and get tested, New Yorkers have done a great job getting tested. Yesterday, we talked about the need for people to give blood and protect folks who are in hospitals and protect our blood supply. People answer that call every time we put it out. New Yorkers adjust, go out and make things happen, and they care about their fellow New Yorkers and they do so much. And so, I just want to thank everyone. This is why this city is coming back strong, because of every one of you who steps up and makes a difference. And that makes a difference. And that, to me, is why I remain so confident about our future. And as we announce new opportunities today for our businesses to be open and thriving during the holidays, again, help this city, help your fellow New Yorker, buy local this holiday season. It will make a huge difference. Thanks, everybody.

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