

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 16, 2020, 9:30 AM  
**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. The crisis we're going through, it's been real tough on all of us. Some families have suffered so much, in particular. The challenge has been so great and on top of it, there's been so much confusion, because no one, no one anywhere, still fully understands this disease that's afflicted us. So, we're all trying to make sense of that and we're all looking for anything that's clear and concrete in the midst of this fight, in the midst of this painful crisis. So, I want to offer something today that's just crystal clear, and this is about how your city will approach this crisis. How we will approach making sure that we do the things that matter most for New Yorkers. And it's often said that a budget is a statement of values. So, I'll be very, very clear about the values that I'm bringing to this process. This entire administration is bringing to this process, and it really comes down to four things. There are four things that we will focus on. Four things that I care about profoundly as we fight this battle. Four things that we will prioritize in the way we spend our resources.

First of all, keeping New Yorkers, healthy. Number-one job, keeping New Yorkers healthy. Second, keeping you safe. Third, making sure there's food on your table. Fourth, keeping a roof over your head. These are the basics. These are just fundamental basics. And look, even just weeks ago, we would've been trying to talk about a lot of other things, we'd been thinking about a lot of other things. Our lives have changed just so profoundly in very, very little time. But these four things are what people are overwhelmingly focused on, rightfully so. And your government needs to be focused on these four things too. So, things that might've been a priority, you know, two months ago, three months ago, can't be a priority right now. Things that we would love to focus on in peace time, we don't get to focused on in wartime. And this in effect is wartime. But what I can tell you is, these four things, we will spare no expense. I'll spare no effort. Whatever it takes to keep New Yorkers healthy, we'll do it. To keep you safe, we'll do it. To make sure you have enough food to eat. To make sure you have a roof over your head. Whatever it takes, we will protect you. And that's going to be clear in this presentation I make today. And everything we do thereafter when it comes to the city budget, which will be finalized in June. Whatever we do is going to follow these four priorities.

Now, let's be clear, because we're going to talk today about what we need our federal government to do for us, to help us make sure we can protect all New Yorkers. If the federal government fails us in our hour of need, then these four things that we must do get harder and harder to do. If the federal government fails us, then I want to be really clear, the notion of this city recovering, it doesn't work if we can't do the basics. Everyone wants a restart. Everyone wants our economy to recover. I know everyone in Washington feels that too, but it has to be a really clear understanding. If we can't provide the basics for our people, then you can kiss your

recovery goodbye. It's as blunt as that. The only way you have recovery, is if places like New York City in particular, the great economic leader and engine of this nation, if we're strong, our nation can be strong. If we're not strong, if our people are not safe, then this nation can't recover. And that's true for cities and states all over the country. So, as this debate starts raging in Washington D.C., I would ask the President, and Leader McConnell, in particular, in the Senate to remember the first thing you should be thinking about is the human cost. The moral question, what should we be doing for our people? What should we be doing for our fellow Americans who are New Yorkers and Americans everywhere to protect their health, their safety, the ability to put food on the table, and a roof over their head? That should be the moral question. That should be the straightforward question. But if they need somehow a pragmatic motivation, if they need a motivation that's about the economy or the restart, then I offer this. If you don't do those basics right, you won't get your restart, so why don't we do it now? Why don't we help people right now? Why don't we make sure that these basics are there for every New Yorker, every American, so we can move forward together?

When you think about what we've had to do over the last weeks, and it feels like it's been months or years, but it's really only been weeks. We had to shut down our retail stores. We had to shut down bars and restaurants. We had to change our life fundamentally in a city that's so famous for all that, all go on, all altered profoundly. We had to close our schools, that painful choice, which has meant such challenge for our families, for our children. And we had to go to shelter in place and social distancing. A way that would've been unimaginable just weeks ago. We made these decisions. I made them, New Yorkers made them too by taking these new rules and living by them, and again, you've been absolutely outstanding in your adherence to these new standards. We made these decisions. They were the right decisions. It was all about keeping people healthy and safe. But it was impossible to ignore, at the time those decisions were being considered, it was impossible to ignore all the other impact it would have on people's lives. The fact that these decisions would mean a lot of people would lose their livelihood, and we didn't know for how long. The fact that our economy would be set back profoundly, that would mean we would have a lot less to work with. We would have a lot less revenue as well to serve our people with. But again, we put the priority on your health and your safety. And now as we're feeling the effects of this crisis, those decisions we had to make, but it all comes back to the sheer ferociousness of this disease, the worst health care crisis in a century. Now, we have to do everything we possibly can to make sure that people are safe, and to protect them in all the ways I've outlined, and that's what this budget is all about.

Now, over the last six years, we talked frequently about preparing for a rainy day. We got much more than a rainy day. We got a pandemic, we got something unimaginable. I've been in many meetings where there was discussion of preparing for a recession. There was discussion of preparing for hurricanes and blizzards, all sorts of challenges. No one foresaw a pandemic of the extent of this. Something we haven't seen in a century on this earth. But getting ready for a rainy day still helped us, because we had created profound reserves, and we'll talk about that. We've had right before this horrible disease struck us, the highest fiscal reserves in the history of New York City, and thank God we did. And that work happened over the last six years, and with the great partnership of the city council that was very devoted to that process of ensuring we had ever-growing reserves. The extent of the problem, however, so unprecedented, is such that it immediately makes clear getting out of this problem will take solutions unlike any we've seen

before. They must come from Washington. This is just the honest truth. We will do our share as we are going to see today, over \$2 billion in very tough budget cuts, very unfortunate budget cuts, but they had to be done. We're taking the actions that we can take, but the only force that can ensure that we get through this the right way, is the federal government. They have the ability to provide the resources in a way that no one else, no organization, nothing else on earth can help us the way the federal government can, and now it's their hour of decision.

We had those great reserves, and you'll see today, they have been deeply affected by this crisis. We have been making cuts, and those cuts are painful, but they pale in comparison to the challenges ahead, and this is not a solution going forward to cut your way out of this crisis. If you cut your way out of this crisis, it comes at a huge cost in terms of our ability to provide for those four basic things all New Yorkers need. Let's be very clear. If we don't have the resources to ensure people's health and safety, their housing, their food, this becomes a very different city. We have to make sure those basics are there for people. So, where we can cut, we will. But when it comes to protecting New Yorkers, we will not cut that.

Now, the backdrop here is painful the loss of the revenue we need to protect our people. Sales taxes are way down because people aren't going out, they're not buying things, income tax, obviously way down, people have lost jobs, lost income. We believe based on the kind of careful forecasting that our Office of Management and Budget does every year that right now this is a horrible figure and—I'm very sorry I have to tell you this, but over this current fiscal year and next, we will lose \$7.4 billion in tax revenue. That's today's estimate. We don't know what the future brings, but that's what we know right now and that's a horrifying figure. And on top of that, we have a lot of new things that we have to do and costs we have to incur to protect people. There are huge new costs in terms of our hospital system, medical personnel, supplies to save lives this all must be a priority and we're spending whatever it takes to make sure people are protected. Food, we talked about this yesterday, \$170 million in new spending to make sure that New Yorkers have enough to eat because we now have to ask that question. How many more families won't have enough to eat in this crisis? We have to protect them and we don't know when this crisis ends, we do know it will end that much we can say thank God, but we don't know when. We don't know how and we know that the impacts that's been made on people continues to grow and we know that the loss of revenue could be even greater. So, it's a very sobering situation, but we keep coming back to those basics that's what's going to guide us.

The executive budget I'm presenting today was built for this moment in history and a moment unlike any other, literally the budget totals \$89.3 billion for Fiscal Year '21. It is balanced. Again, focuses on four things – overwhelmingly health, safety, food, shelter. It's that simple, health, safety, food, shelter. As I said, we found ways to save we found cuts we could make even if we didn't feel any anything about pain in taking away some of these things. Two billion-plus in cuts through our PEG program that's a mandating that agencies find cuts to their spending additional almost 700 million in other savings we've found so a total of \$2.7 billion in savings across both Fiscal Year '20 and Fiscal Year '21 and there will certainly be more tough choices ahead and to get us through this immediate phase. We are drawing down on our budget reserves, we built them up we hope this day would never come, but it has. Thank God those reserves were carefully built, they will now help us get through if ever there was a time to draw on reserves it's now. And on top of all the challenges brought to us by the coronavirus directly that are part of

why we have to draw on those reserves, there's yet another challenge what we've seen already in cuts from the State of New York, \$800 million already and we obviously are watching carefully cause we have to be ready for what the future brings in terms of the State budget. Now, the one way that you can get out of this without causing immense human pain and setting back our recovery, the one way is to get the kind of direct federal aid that we deserve.

No New Yorker – no New Yorker is responsible for this horrible crisis, but New York has borne the brunt, we have been the epicenter. When you look at the impact here, anybody with a heart would recognize that the federal government has to come to the rescue. We lead the nation's economy, we're the biggest City in the country, we constantly send resources out to the rest of the country year after year. There are so many reasons why it's clear, but just humanly, this is the reason that should matter the most because people are suffering because no Americans should have to go through what New York is going through and the federal government should be there for us. I remind you federal government was very quick to bail out the banks a decade ago, no questions asked, federal government was very quick to bail out the auto industry. How about bailing out the nation's largest City? How about bailing out the epicenter of this crisis where people have been suffering? That is what our federal government should do for every reason morally, practically as any question of fairness, as any question of how we move forward and we're still waiting. Now, what we're going through is what other cities are more and more going through other States are going through, we're not alone they haven't seen the help they deserve either.

There's been \$2.2 trillion in stimulus funding so far – \$2.2 trillion – of which only \$1.4 billion has been indirect aid to New York City. To give you a comparison, we got \$1.4 billion and we're the epicenter of the crisis – 8.6 million people. The airline industry got \$58 billion, so corporate bailouts, huge. But a bail out for the place that needs it most has been minimal. I want to be very clear, the leadership that we have seen, and I want to commend Senator Schumer and Speaker Pelosi, I spoke to both of them yesterday, I want to commend them for the work they're doing because they have led the way in pushing for all the elements of the stimulus that were needed, not just for Cities and States, but for everyday people. Those checks are going out to help working people, so much of that came from the leadership of Speaker Pelosi and Senator Schumer. We know where the roadblock has consistently, Senator McConnell, the majority leader of the Senate has stood in the way so many of the things needed. He has to hear our plea, he has to understand what it means for human beings that is not allowing the kind of aid to flow that we need, but it's also clearly time for President Trump to speak up. I spoke to the President yesterday, I let them know what's happening in his hometown. I let him know that we're experiencing a huge budget problem and I said to him in the clearest terms, if we don't have any more resources, how can we provide for the safety, the protection, the health of New Yorkers. And I was clear with him and the Vice President that the only way to recovery is if New York City and all our cities are able to come back strong and if they can function as they can't function, there is no recovery.

So, right now, there is an opportunity right this minute, literally negotiations are going on in Washington and what's being called Stimulus 3.5. There's another even bigger stimulus package up ahead, number four later apparently in May. But right now, there are negotiations going on stimulus 3.5 with a focus on small business and paycheck protection. Obviously, our small

businesses have gone through hell and only the federal government can help them in the way that's needed. Working people need to know that their livelihoods will be preserved, that piece of this stimulus 3.5 is crucial, if there's a discussion right now, proposal two point, excuse me, of a 250 billion, 250 billion for small business and for working people through paycheck protection. There's 100 billion on the table for hospitals and health care workers crucially needed here and many, many other places and 150 billion and I think it should be at least 150 billion. I know the governors, to our credit, the nation's governors – bipartisan consensus – are calling for even more and we need more. But, right now, even to begin a discussion of 150 billion in locality at aid directly to localities and States. But I'll be clear, that formula must be based on need, it must be based on what localities and States have actually experienced with COVID-19, not just some generic distribution for political purposes, but actually addressing the needs of this City, this State, what people have gone through. You know, if we were talking about a hurricane, we were talking about natural disaster, you wouldn't put money in for the entire nation equally, if the natural disaster help happen in one place, this is a different reality because this disaster of COVID happened many places, but thank God there are some parts of our nation have had very little impact, some parts that have had a moderate impact and then a place like New York that's borne the brunt, that's been the epicenter. This funding must reflect that reality it's just common sense, it's about helping people and about helping us back on our feet.

So, I made clear to the President that its hometown needs him, and I've had this conversation with them before they all New Yorkers, 8.6 million are watching the White House right now to see if the President will lead. Will the President speak up, if the President United States— speaks up, let's be clear, if President Trump raises his voice, the Republican Senate will follow period. Haven't heard his voice yet, I want to give him an opportunity to do the right thing. So, President Trump, here's my appeal to you, help us back on our feet. Tell Mitch McConnell that we need stimulus 3.5 and we need a directly to New York City directly to New York State so we can keep providing the help that people need, keep them healthy, keep them safe. If you lead, the Senate will follow, if you are silent, they will not. It's on you, Mr. President, as true for every City and every State in America as well. So, anyone who wants that national recovery, better take care of the places that have to build that recovery. And that's why we need this stimulus 3.5 and it could be agreed to today – literally today – and passed by the Senate by unanimous consent, and that's what we need.

Now, that is a very broad summary of what we are presenting today in the budget. The details have been posted publicly now, showing you how we made the difficult cuts we had to make – the specific programs and initiatives we had to cut back in this time of crisis. Some of them, thank God – you know, many of them, will be able to hopefully restore one day in better times. But so much of it is also about just the reality, a lot of what we're doing just can't happen now. Any expenditure that was related to people gathering as part of their normal year - there are no gatherings. So, there's a lot you'll see in these cuts that were obvious, a lot that were difficult of course; all that were necessary so that we could keep the resources for those basics I described. So, the facts, the details, are now public. How we got to the specific numbers that now dictate this budget. The toughest part will be ahead and that will all be about what happens in Washington and we have time, thank God, to see Washington decide if they're going to act or not. If they're going to save New York City and America's cities or not; we have time between

now and June for those decisions to be made and they better be made right and that will dictate everything else we have to do.

So, that is a very broad overview of the budget. I want to talk about a few, couple of, few other areas and then we will turn to questions from the media. So, right now as we fight this battle against the coronavirus, we're learning every day more and more about it, more and more about the reality. And one of the things we've talked about in the last week or two is we're seeing some real disparities in how this horrible disease is affecting our city. We're seeing some places hit particularly hard; we're seeing lower income communities hit particularly hard, we're seeing communities where people have not gotten enough health care historically hit hard, communities of color hit very hard, immigrant communities hit hard. So, we're making additional adjustments to our approach and one of them is to increase the number of free hotel rooms available for isolation and quarantine. Right now, 11,000 hotel rooms are being readied for this new effort. And this will be focused on people who need a place because of the reality of their living circumstance. For example, there are many people in multigenerational homes, particularly lower income communities that just don't have a lot of space and if there is a threat that someone might get infected in the home and it might spread amongst the members of that family, we have to guard against that. So, we are making sure that people in those multigenerational homes – many of them overcrowded homes – will have a place to go. If a member of a family, for example, is symptomatic or if a member of a family is high-risk, we will have a hotel room that will allow them to isolate from other members of the family. This is something that's going to help us protect people and slow the spread further. We'll work with community health centers and all of our public hospitals and clinics to identify who needs this particular support. This will begin this coming Wednesday and we will move those who need that help to those hotel rooms.

We're also continuing to make sure the hotel rooms are available for all health care workers. I want to emphasize this, whether they work in public hospitals, whether they work in any of the other types of voluntary hospitals, independent hospitals - any health care worker who needs a place to stay while they're doing their work, who needs to be isolated from their family for fear of spreading the disease to their family and obviously they, these incredibly heroic health care workers are exposing themselves every day to that potential risk and a lot of them do not want to take the risk of bringing it home to their families. Those hotel rooms would be available, regardless of which hospital, there's 56 hospitals in this fight – regardless of which one you work at - they will be available to you if that's what you choose. And obviously, as we discussed a few days ago, making more rooms available for homeless individuals who are in shelter settings where we need to create more space; wherever it's not possible to have the space that we need, we are going to use hotel rooms as the better option. This is made more possible by the fact that we see the reality with coronavirus somewhat differently, affecting us somewhat differently, today than it was a week or two ago. We are far from out of the woods, but bluntly at this point I had expected a number of these hotels to already have been converted to field hospitals. Our projections told us we might have to use a vast number of hotels - dozens and dozens - to be able to accommodate all the medical needs. So far, thank God that has not been the case and we will not let our guard down; we will always be vigilant. We are never ruling out that this disease might throw us another curve ball, but because there are [inaudible] hotel rooms now available, we're going to turn them to these uses more and more to keep people safe.

Another area where it's been a lot of concern and understandably so, has been about our jail system and keeping everyone safe; the people who work there, our corrections officers and all the other folks who work there, the inmates as well – there's been a real humanitarian concern. Well, what we've been devoted to from the beginning is reducing that jail population in whatever way we appropriately could, whatever way was fair and humanitarian, but also always kept public safety in mind. So, at the beginning of March, there were 5,447 inmates in our jail system and that it bears remembering, was already less than half the number compared to the day I took office when we had over 11,000 inmates – so, beginning of March, 5,447. Three weeks ago, we announced that we had gotten under 5,000 inmates and yesterday. Another historic milestone – jail population is now under 4,000 inmates. That is the lowest in 74 years. You have to go back to 1946, the year after World War II ended to have had so few people in our jail system. And again, under 4,000 people compared to a city of 8.6 million. So, thank God, we're able to find a way to do that the right way and that means there are many fewer people in the space that remains – more ability to socially distance within the jails, more ability to ensure that if people need isolation or quarantine, they can get it and this is how we're going to protect the health of everyone involved and with of course, the extraordinary efforts of our correctional health system, a part of Health + Hospitals. And I thank everyone at correctional health, they don't get a lot of attention, they don't get a lot of kudos, but I want to thank everyone in correctional health who has been making sure that everyone in our jail system, employees, and inmates, are safe. And again to all of our correction officers and everyone that works in our correction system, we know how tough your work is and it's been really tough in this period, but you've stuck to it and you've all worked together to keep people safe and we really appreciate that deeply.

Now, we're at the point where each day I tell you about the indicators that tell us how we're doing and I think you're going to see again that we should never underestimate this disease. We're hoping for sustained progress. We believe these indicators are the truest indicators to tell us where we stand and where we're going and how to approach it. But these indicators tell us a tough truth some days about the fact that it won't be easy, it won't necessarily be fast, it won't be all in a straight line. So, we believe this is the truth and New Yorkers always want the blunt truth and it tells us we've got a lot more work to do, but it's also a reminder that the progress we have made is all because of you and stick to it with those social distancing standards and with shelter in place - stick to it cause we're going to need it. So, in terms of the daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, unfortunately that number went up. And again, these are based on numbers from two days ago that have been verified - went up from 370 to 386. Daily number of people in ICUs across our Health + Hospital system for suspected COVID-19 – went up 868 to 887. The percentage of people who have tested positive - went up from 53 percent to 55 percent. And our public health labs testing, the number who tested positive went up from 76 percent to 78 percent. So, this was a tough day; this is not what we're looking for, but we know we're going to do this stage-by-stage, step-by-step. We'll get there and it just reminds us we have to stick to it.

So, before I conclude with a few words in Spanish, I'll just say, everything we've tried to do over years and years is about making people's lives better and bringing more fairness to this city. Now it is about that for sure, but it's really about four things, four basic things – your health, your safety food on your table, a roof over your head. That's what we are going to make sure all New

New Yorkers have. Whatever else happens, that's what we're going to focus on. Not even a pandemic can stop us from protecting New Yorkers, and that's what we're going to do.

Quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media. And, as always, please give me the name and the outlet of each journalist.

**Moderator:** Just a quick reminder for folks that we have Budget Director Melanie Hartzog, First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan, and Dr. Barbot on the line as well. And our first question is Andrew at NBC New York. Andrew?

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

**Mayor:** Good morning, Andrew. How you doing?

**Question:** Good. I wanted to ask, this is the second day this week that you've described as a tough day with the metrics not going in the right direction. I wonder, was the Governor premature to say the worst is over? And secondarily, is it contradictory for the mandatory masks to be in place now that we've flattened the curve? Is that not a mixed message for New Yorkers?

**Mayor** No. Good questions, Andrew, but no. First of all, I think these numbers that were given out that we – I want to emphasize, we believe these are the true numbers, meaning these are the numbers that tell you the most. There are many things – it's all about human beings. I always keep coming back to this, this is about human beings in their lives, but the numbers tell us something and we set up this kind of rigorous standard so there'd be, you know, no overconfidence. This is disease to take very seriously. I'm stating the obvious. This is disease that has thrown us curve balls before, can throw us curve balls again. So, we set up what we thought was a really smart careful way to measure where we're going. So, we never took our foot off the gas prematurely. Requiring face coverings – you know, we put out that guidance on face coverings as soon as we saw evidence that that would help protect people. And I said we required it for city workers who came in contact with the public and I was glad that the Governor acted additionally. In fact, this is exactly the time to double down. This is exactly the time to take the standards we created and make sure we're applying them very intensely, in a very disciplined manner, because we got to get out of this. And we're not going to get out of it easily, we have to get out of it through hard work. It's no fun, but we have to do it. I do think when you say something like the worst is over, that there's a truth to that in terms of what we thought was going to happen, for sure. I told you that – remember that line of demarcation, Sunday, April 5th? We thought that next week was going to be so much worse than it turned out to be. It was still horrible. We still lost a huge number of our fellow New Yorkers, but we thought it was going many times worse. So, we definitely averted at that point what we thought was going to be something much worse. We can't entirely say where we're going. But I'll tell you something, I keep coming back to this – we know that some places took the foot off the gas and paid the price. We know – and I said this to the President and the Vice President yesterday – I said very

squarely – I said, you know, I know you want to restart the economy, so do we, but the worst possible scenario is take your foot off the gas prematurely, the disease has a resurgence, then everything you were doing to try and restart, you have to stop, you have to go backwards, you have to add more restrictions, you have to slow down the timeline further, and you're going to end up waiting a long, long time before you can get people back to normal. The way to get back to normal is with careful, patient, smart actions to work our way through those phases we've discussed to the point that we can have something like normal life again. So, no, I think the face coverings is smart. Keep using them, everyone. We really need to do this. And if we are smart and disciplined, then the worst definitely will be behind us. But we really have to make sure that happens.

**Moderator:** Jeff Mays from the New York Times is up next. Jeff?

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. Good morning. I'm wondering if you have a projection on how much federal aid you need to continue balancing the budget? And, secondly, IBO has called a slightly larger budget deficit, I believe it's close to \$10 billion. How do you reconcile those differences? Are you cutting enough in order to stabilize the City's finances?

**Mayor:** Well, I respect the IBO a lot – the Independent Budget Office, they do good work. I mean, it's not the first time to say the least, we've had different projections, and we stand by ours. We think ours are careful and cautious always – our OMB projections. If you said to me, is there a chance that this revenue loss could grow? Of course, there is, and I'm very, very worried about that. It could grow by a little, it could grow by a lot. It could grow by billions even. But, right now, this is based on the facts as we know it and obviously it will all be connected to how and when the economy restarts. We need the federal government to make up all lost revenue, period. Period. Think about this model for a moment – we can't achieve new revenue in any coherent fashion at this point. We can only get revenue from the federal government. The State government is in no position to give us revenue. The federal government's done over \$2 trillion already. Of course, they can make up our budget gap. Right now, if that lost revenue stands at \$7.5 billion, of course they can make that up. Again, if they had \$58 billion to airline industry, I assure you, they can find \$7.5 billion for the nation's largest city. It's not even close. Of course, they can do it. I also think that the FEMA aid, which we deeply appreciate, and FEMA has been a fantastic partner, but right now we have to do 25 percent reimbursement – I mean, 25 percent, I should say, of the costs we have to cover – that shouldn't be in the middle of a pandemic. The federal government should cover all those costs. So, right there, to me, is the immediate issue of what the federal government should cover. And then, you know, the exceptional – anything that's exceptional related to COVID-19. It's a pandemic, it's international, it's the responsibility of the federal government. And we're fighting this fight here – there are so many cities and states that – no way they can afford to protect people unless there's federal aid. So, Jeff, it's as simple as that. The federal government should cover all lost revenue for cities and states, should cover all COVID-19-related new costs, should make sure cities and states are whole and get back on their feet. That's in everyone's interest.

**Moderator:** Todd from AM New York is up next. Todd?

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I hope your family's doing well.

**Mayor** Thank you, Todd. I hope the same for yours.

**Question:** Yes. Anyway, my questions in regard to the of Rikers Island's prisoners because of COVID-19. Commissioner Shea said yesterday, he was very concerned that some of the committing bank robberies, intimidating witnesses, one who set fire to the door of a witness. The unions [inaudible] concerned as to who's monitoring the mostly convicted felons. We spoke to Parole, Department of Corrections, your Office of Criminal Justice had no answers. With all due respect, maybe you can answer just not for me, but for your commissioner and your unions what's going on here?

**Mayor:** Todd, I appreciate the question. You and I have known each other a long time. I want to contest you and say, I do not believe they had no answers. So, I want to make sure we connect you to the right people, because I've heard the answers directly from them. So, with all due respect to, I know they have answers. There is a clear monitoring program that's been set up for anyone released. This is something that – a supervised release structure existed already. It's being utilized in this case. There are a number of measures that have been put in place to make sure that people are monitored, including in some cases using electronic monitoring. Our team can get you those details. The NYPD, Corrections Department, our Office of Criminal Justice all worked together on this. We've been talking in constantly to the district attorneys and the State on this plan and they've obviously approved releases as well. This was about making sure that anyone with a profound health danger was not put in harm's way and making sure that those who could be released were released to keep everyone else safe in that jail system. I'm concerned too. Anytime we release someone, we have to make sure we work to keep it everyone as safe as possible, but we had a real imperative about saving lives that came first. But the fact is, we're going to keep doing whatever it takes to monitor these individuals. And then, as soon as the crisis is over, the way the releases occurred, if anyone needs to be brought back to jail, they will be. So, for example, someone who was awaiting trial and there were no trials. This is a country by our constitution where they're supposed to be a speedy trial. These are folks accused of a crime, have not yet gone through their trial. If we deemed it appropriate to let them out in this crisis, but then the system comes back to normal and there are going to be awaiting trial again, we bring them back to jail awaiting trial. So, that's how the process will work going forward.

**Moderator:** Julia from the Post is up next. Julia?

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

**Mayor:** Good, Julia. How are you doing?

**Question:** Good. I see in your budget that all outdoor pools will be closed for the summer. And I understand that City Hall has told the Parks Department to prepare for every scenario, including the possibility that beaches will be closed for the season. You know, yesterday, you talked about not being able to envision Yankee stadium opening until later in the trajectory. So, at this point, how likely is it that beaches will remain closed all season? And give New Yorkers a sense for what will summer in the city look like?

**Mayor:** So, Julia, very good question. I appreciate it. On the question of the beaches, which I think we have to parallel to the pools – it's a little different, of course, because, you know, someone can walk along the beach even if the beach is not open. But, right now, I don't see us narrow anytime soon where we could – you know, imagine Coney Island the middle of summer, hundreds of thousands of people. You know, I've been on Coney Island on that beach many times – hundreds of thousands of people packed tightly together. Like, I don't see that happening anytime soon. So then, obviously, you could have a situation where people can go to the beach to walk along the beach, but not in large numbers anytime soon. We still have to observe social distancing. I know people are doing that now. But the notion of having lifeguards and people coming to the beach like normal, we don't have that in our sites yet. I think it's going to be tough to project. Right now, I'd say, lower expectations – just for everyone's sanity, lower expectations. We're at a point right now in the middle of April where we're practicing intense social distancing. Everyone's being very careful to only go outside as much as they need to, and just to get basics and get back inside. To go from that to mass gatherings of thousands or tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of people – that's a big jump. And that jump should only happen when we're sure is not going to exacerbate the disease, because, again, the worst of all worlds would be to see a resurgence. So, I need to see those indicators start to move to even talk about some loosening of restrictions and they have not been moving yet. So, I would say, every one of us would love to have our summer or some part of our summer, but keep expectations low for now. Let's not have any false moves. Let's not jump the gun. Let's make sure we get it right. The things that would have taken – that would have required spending money now to get ready for the summer we're just not doing, because we don't have yet a clear roadmap to how we get to those summer activities. So, right now, cautious approach focused on beating back this disease. That's where we're at.

**Moderator:** Yoav from the City is up next. Yoav?

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask about the 11,000 new hotel rooms, particularly when it comes to the families who are living in overcrowded houses, etcetera. What prompted this move now, I guess? Was it – were you seeing a lot of transmission among family members where some of the people trying to isolate in places like hospitals? So, what were you seeing that made this seem like a necessity? And what – I guess, why wasn't something like this implemented sooner?

**Mayor:** Thank you. Yoav, I mentioned it, but I'll emphasize it. First of all, even though these last like six weeks or so have played out in a way that feels like, you know, more like months or years, it's been just rapid, constant changes, and, you know, shocking developments in the course of six weeks that we've all been trying to make sense of. But I go back to that warning I gave about Sunday, April 5th, which, again, seems like a long time ago. It was, you know, 11 days ago. On Sunday, April 5th, even as that day dawned, I thought the likelihood was a horrendous week that week ahead. And we got into that week and things got a little bit better for a few days and I didn't know of a sort of a false dawn or something real, but it proved to sustain and we've had a better situation since that Sunday than we expected. But still, plenty of challenges, plenty of pain, plenty of things to deal with. Since that day, we've gotten to think a little bit differently. And in those 10 or 11 days, we went from thinking every hotel room – and I want you to hear the word every – every hotel room was going to be converted to hospital space. Obviously, there'll

be some for dormitories for health care workers, but otherwise it was hospital, hospital, hospital. The projections we made when we talked about having to add 60,000 hospital beds, that was going to be massive use of hotels. And we were trying to build it rapidly on top of Javits Center, and the Comfort, and the Queens tennis center – all the things that were happening. In recent days, we've had more and more assurance that we didn't need all those hotel rooms and we've been starting to use them more and more for other purposes. We talked a few days ago about using the opportunity to take those hotel rooms and get more and more people out of shelter. But now this piece we're talking about today correlates with what we learned about disparity over the last week or more. And the fact that the disparity dynamic seems to also connect to the multigenerational families and the crowded households. And you see that particularly in some lower income communities, particularly in immigrant communities. So, we're trying to come up with another targeted strategy, just like the targeted testing that we'll be starting as early as tomorrow. The targeted focus on the families that are really crowded together where we want to make sure if someone's in danger that we can give them an alternative. So, it's all been coming out of our experience, but most especially the fact that we have – we built a strategy – and the State did as well, to their credit – that was all about saving lives and saving hospitals so we could save lives, and having hospital beds, having personnel, having ventilators, having supplies to save lives. Luckily, we've been able to move a little bit off that strategy and do some other things now with those rooms so we can protect people a different way.

**Moderator:** Henry from Bloomberg is up next. Henry?

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

**Mayor:** Good, Henry. How about you?

**Question:** I'm okay. I'm trying to understand how the budget was balanced in the absence of a budget book. We don't really see a balancing of, you know – we don't see the arithmetic. So, you're saying we've lost 7.4 – or we will lose \$7.4 billion in revenue. You're cutting the budget by \$6 billion compared to January. How do you – where is the arithmetic that balances more than \$13 billion?

**Mayor:** We will get you – I know some has been put out, we'll make sure that more has been put out. We're obviously in a very different situation than our normal budget process and today's presentation certainly reflects that, but we will there'll be plenty of detail filled in. But to hear it – let me give you the basics that I think speak to your question. So, remember, we had the, the crisis hit, you know, in the fiscal year we're in right now, Fiscal Year '20, obviously starting in March. And we had to address the impact on this fiscal year, and on next year. You know, for six years as we've had these discussions, we were pretty much always looking at the fiscal year ahead, and the year we were in was balanced, and we were going to send money forward. That's been the tradition. We're in a very different situation here because the crisis hit immediately and it's undermined this year's budget, as well as next year. So, what we are dealing with now, that revenue loss that has been projected throughout the calendar year, and, of course, the \$800 million we lost from the State. The gaps we had to close for this fiscal year, currently \$2.5 billion, for next fiscal year, \$6.2 billion. So, a grand total about \$8.7 billion. How we did it. Again \$2 billion in the PEG program. We originally talked about \$1.3, we added to that, it got up

to over \$2 billion, another \$700 million or so in other types of savings, debt service savings and others. The reserves were drawing down about \$4 billion on the reserves. And then over the two fiscal years there's about \$2 billion in various types of federal aid accounted for from the previous stimulus packages and also from FEMA aid directly. But again, reminding you that right now we're required on any expense that's FEMA eligible, we're required to pay 25 percent of it. And I think that's a horrible mistake in the middle of a pandemic and we should not have to pay for FEMA eligible expenses. The federal government should cover those, but we have budgeted on the assumption that we're still having to pay that 25 percent. So, Henry, that is the way the math comes together. Obviously, this is profoundly different than what we were expecting. You know, just weeks ago when we had the preliminary budget and it's kind of like thinking about the time in February when the preliminary budget was presented. Seems like again, another century. That was projected to be over \$95 billion. This budget is \$89 billion. We are literally \$6 billion less in what we were planning on spending than just as recently as February. So that's the basic layout. But we'll make sure we get you, you know, all appropriate charts and take questions going forward on those.

**Moderator:** Juliet from 1010 WINS is up next. Juliet?

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

**Mayor:** Good, Juliet. How do you feel?

**Question:** I'm okay, thank you. So, my question is this, I called 3-1-1 this morning to inquire about, you know, the process of the food program and the delivery program. So I have to tell you what happened. I was on hold for 10 minutes. And I did time that. And then when I did get through to somebody who was very nice, I was told that there was – they couldn't process anything or register me or whoever would call and I would have to call back at 11 o'clock because the system wasn't available. So how can people get through if they need and specifically seniors who really probably rely on their phones more than, you know, going to a computer to look something up or register? What can people do?

**Mayor:** Juliet, I'm glad you did that. I appreciate it. I'm very frustrated by the report you're giving me. I have a lot of respect for the folks in my team who had been fighting this battle. And a lot of respect for the good people at 3-1-1 and I visited with them a few weeks ago and really, really appreciate their work. But I have been saying to my team incessantly, we have to make sure that people get served immediately and we need quality control on 3-1-1 and bluntly, you just proved what I've warned people about, that no one should have to go through what you went through. I understand sometimes there's a surge in demand and we in fact yesterday emphasized to all New Yorkers that food would be available for anyone who needed that delivery because they were vulnerable or a senior couldn't get out, a disabled person. We made that very clear yesterday, so it does not surprise me, Juliet, there'd be a spike in the number of calls after I told all New Yorkers this food is therefore you, no matter what, we're going to feed you. And maybe the system, maybe they did not put enough personnel on to address that spike. I don't like that, but at least I can understand that. But it is not acceptable to me and I'm going to deal with it right after this press conference. It's not acceptable that anyone would be put on hold for 10 minutes for anything in the middle of a crisis. It's not acceptable that people be told to call back later. It's

just not the way we're supposed to do things. So, I'm going to be really honestly, pissed off at the people who are supposed to be handling this, who I have warned repeatedly to not let this happen and we will fix it today. I'll just order more personnel – this is exactly the kind of thing that I'm making a priority. We will spend whatever the hell it takes and get as many personnel as is needed to ensure that doesn't happen.

And you're totally right, Juliet, that seniors are much more likely to use the phone. I mean we can, you know, we can give out the website till the cows come home, but in the end most seniors are going to pick up the phone. And a lot of people don't speak English and they need to have the translation too when they call. So, I will get this fixed today and I want you to test it again tomorrow please. And call in and I'll turn to our colleagues and say, when you call in to give your report, I want to make sure that call gets through so I can see if people have made the changes they need to make.

**Moderator:** Marcia from CBS New York is up next. Marcia?

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

**Mayor:** Good, Marcia, how are you?

**Question:** Good. My question today is about relaxing the standards for social distancing. President Trump has said today that he's going to announce new guidelines for relaxing social distancing and for reopening the economy. I wonder, two parts – when you spoke to the President and Vice President yesterday, if you discussed this issue and what your views are about how that would apply to New York City, which is clearly the epicenter?

**Mayor:** Yeah, and in fact, Marcia, I always am careful not to characterize in detail what other people said to me in a private conversation. I want to give them that respect. I will be very broad in characterizing their view. I'll tell you what I said though. I told them it would be madness to rush the restart in a way that would cause, you know, a boomerang effect, where the disease reasserted, we got setback even farther, the day when the economy could reopen got pushed back much worse, much farther because they moved too soon. I had a conversation with the Mayor of San Francisco, London Breed last night, and she talked about she had been studying the history of 1918, the Spanish Influenza epidemic and how in San Francisco, they had like a false dawn in 1918, where they thought it was going away and everyone came out and started doing big gatherings again. They literally had like a big, like city celebration that the flu was over and everyone came flocking to the celebration. And days later there was a massive outbreak and it got worse than ever and put off much longer, any recovery. That was a hundred years ago. Different situation. But it's a cautionary tale, Marcia.

So I told the President and Vice President it would be a huge mistake to restart too early. It would be a huge mistake to take our foot off the gas and to start taking away the things that actually were working before we were sure that we had turned the corner. Now I do think they – and I'll let them speak for themselves. I think they do think New York's in a particular situation. To some extent that's true. But my warning was don't see New York City as so unusual that you

think the same thing we've gone through isn't going to happen in one form or another in a lot of places.

The social distancing was necessary. The shelter in place was necessary and you have to come out of it carefully and smartly or you'll regret it. So my answer is we've got these indicators, Marsha. These three indicators are going to tell us a lot. We have to be smart. We have to be cautious. I think if the President artificially, if you will, ignores the warnings we're getting on this disease and rushes to do a restart that ignores the danger, he will regret it. I think he has one chance. I think the President has one chance to get it right. If he is smart about it and careful about it, we can actually get to a restart of the economy we can sustain. If he jumps too soon, it'll be horrible, it'll set us back further. And everyone is going to judge him by how he makes that decision. Rightfully so. And that's the decision I have to make for my city too. And I'm going to be damn careful in making that decision.

**Moderator:** Kathleen from Patch is up next. Kathleen? Oh, never mind. Reema from Chalkbeat is up next. Reema, can you hear us okay?

**Question:** Yeah, can you hear me?

**Moderator:** Yes, we can.

**Question:** Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes, Reema.

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

**Mayor:** Good, how are you?

**Question** Good, good. I wanted to ask you about just a couple of things here. Is there going to be summer school for kids who are behind, as well as the enrichment programs that are available to kids for extra classes? And also you know, unless I'm missing something, we see a lot of programs and school-based cuts here, but I don't see much at all on the central level or you know, cuts to capital projects and I'm wondering why there's not more cuts there so they don't fall on programs?

**Mayor:** So, Reema a combination of points I'd make. Definitely on the capital side a lot is being delayed. You know, things we want to do and believe in. We, obviously, you know, I'm someone who started the initiative and I believe in deeply, to put air conditioning in all our classrooms. But things like that just inherently have to wait compared to food, shelter, safety, health. You know, there are things that have to wait. But the capital spending, it will happen eventually, but a lot of it's going to be delayed. The, in terms of, you know, central costs, administrative costs, we've been making cuts to that already in previous savings plans. That continues. The summer issue, we can't plan on summer right now. So the simplest way to say it, our schools are closed for this school year. The things that we would normally plan for the summer, we cannot guarantee, we only at this point I think, can truly plan on the reopening of schools in the

beginning of September. That's where our energy is going, actually start the schools up right. Coming out of this horrible crisis, really amplify the academic side, but also address all the other challenges including the mental health challenges that the whole school community is going to go through. In the meantime, the focus on online learning, the focus on mental health needs of kids and families now, but summer's a giant question mark. So we are not announcing anything for the summer at this point. The Chancellor said they're planning all sorts of scenarios including online scenarios for the summer. But we don't have any assurance yet that we can do anything in person this summer, you know, in school buildings. And we're going to look at every option and then as we get some actual proof of where we're going, we're going to decide. But again, I'd say watching those three indicators, that's going to say a lot about whether we even get to think about summer programming in some form going forward.

**Moderator:** Anna from the Daily News is up next. Anna?

**Question:** Hey Mr. Mayor. Happy Budget Day.

**Mayor:** I guess you could call it happy, but I don't know if it is so happy. Go ahead, Anna.

**Question:** It's my favorite day of the year. So just back to the beaches issue, I think a lot of people are interpreting your comments a few moments ago that the beaches are likely to be closed. And I just have like a logistical question about that. Given, you know, the issues with enforcement of social distancing and the limited workforce, how can the City guarantee people won't go to beaches? And especially since you know, even before the summer season starts, a lot of people still go and there have been drownings because no lifeguards are on duty. How do you guys protect against that issue?

**Mayor:** Okay, so what you said is an important beginning. There's a whole lot of the year where beaches, you know, we do not have lifeguards, we do not permit swimming. And there's signs to warn people and there's all sorts of messages telling people it's not safe. And thank God the vast, vast majority of people honor that. But a few people don't. And so many times it's young people and it's very, very sad. And we've lost some young people because they went and they went swimming someplace where it wasn't safe and there wasn't a lifeguard on duty. And that's been true, unfortunately for years. And all we can do is keep telling people it's not the right thing to do for their safety and keep telling families that. And hope that people understand. That's what we deal with every year. But in terms of the summer, I do not want, and again, until we have a much, much better sense of where this is going, I don't want to create a situation where people start gathering. So if we bring out lifeguards and it's a situation where people think it's safe to go to the beach and it's safe to start resuming normalcy, it's going to endanger people based on what we know now. So no, right now we do not have a plan to open the beaches. Just like we don't have a plan to open the pools. People, you're absolutely right. Someone could go right now and walk on a beach and if they do it while practicing social distancing, okay. But right now I don't want to create a situation where people think they can go back to something like normal and be beachgoers this summer. I don't like saying that, but it's just a blunt truth. It's not safe. If things evolve, we'll assess our options going forward. But I can't project it now because it wouldn't be safe to project it now.

**Moderator:** Erin from Politico is up next. Erin?

**Question:** Hi Mr. Mayor, quick follow up on the budget and then I have a question about the hotel program. On the budget, did you end up requesting any authority to borrow for operating expenses? And then with regards to the hotels, can you go through what are the criteria to qualify one of these? Just as a lay person, it seems like most of our apartments are too small to not transmit the disease in close quarters, so what threshold do you actually have to meet to be able to go to one of these?

**Mayor:** We will get the specifics out, Erin. The idea is to address where the dangers are greatest. So we already are seeing it. You've seen the maps, you've seen the -- we understand there are some neighborhoods that are bearing the brunt of this disease. So if we combine the notion of, we know where some of the most challenged places are and where people are in danger, and we know people in multigenerational homes in crowded conditions are in particular danger within those neighborhoods, that's where we're going to focus. Overwhelmingly, that means lower income folks. I think you're right, many, many New Yorkers deal with much more crowded situations than most of the country, but for lower income folks, you know, it can mean doubling up, tripling up all sorts of things that folks were a little more money tend to not experience. So we're going to really focus on those in greatest needs and those who are most threatened. And that will be the priority in terms of these hotel rooms.

In terms of borrowing, we have not yet activated or work to activate a new borrowing capacity. It's certainly a conversation we will have going forward, the possibility of doing some kind of long-term borrowing that is fiscally smart. That's under the kind of terms that would be fair and smart. An example from the past, a 20-year repayment timeline for example. But right now we have not yet acted on that.

**Moderator:** Brigid from WNYC is up next. Brigid?

**Question:** Good morning Mr. Mayor and two questions, one related to the budget. Just can you talk a little bit more about the decision to dip into the reserves? And you know, whether you feel like the current plan goes far enough in terms of long-term planning for, you know, some of the challenges you envision ahead? And then separately, a question related to health care workers. I'm wondering if the City has an estimate of how many health care workers and hospital employees have died at City and public hospitals? And are you tracking that information? Will you be releasing that?

**Mayor:** Yes. We do. And of course, it's a very painful topic because these are folks who worked heroically to save lives and put their own lives in danger. We have information, I don't get every daily report on what's been released publicly and what hasn't, but that certainly needs to be released and we will. But my heart goes out to their families because these are people who did something very, very heroic. On the reserves and the long-term planning. The decision to use the reserves was to get us through this moment, understanding that the discussion on what would be the right thing to do, the federal support given the nature of this pandemic and the fact that we're the epicenter, that that discussion was happening now in April and would have happened in May, but our budget would be determined finally in June.

So this was to get us through now. We're going to fight hard to get that stimulus funding we deserve. And that's the big X factor here. In terms of long-term planning, right now obviously the immediate focus is on saving lives, protecting people, all those basics I talked about and then figuring out the right way, the responsible way to restart our economy. We will be doing more and more long-term planning as we go along in this process. But our urgent consideration with this executive budget was to make sure we could address the immediate needs of New Yorkers, keep our budget intact and you know, build a foundation for the future. But we'll have much more to say on the long term going forward.

**Moderator:** Sydney from the Advance is up next. Sydney.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, how are you doing? Why did you decide to move forward with a reduction in overnight service at the Staten Island Ferry in the executive budget and what do you think reduction in overnight service is going to look like through 2021? Do you have an idea of which hours will be affected?

**Mayor:** I will get you details. Sydney, look, I very much believe we have to keep consistency in Staten Island Ferry service. People depend on it. It's a lifeline for Staten Islanders. We will do that. What we found, of course, was a massive drop in ridership in the midst of this crisis. I mean, it's truly massive and they were running boats with very few people on them. So, we're trying to just create a consistent schedule that will be the one people can depend on going forward. And I don't think we can yet say through 2021 at all on anything. My hope is that, you know, we're able to do something better before 2021. If we can handle this disease properly and only restart when we're ready, you know, it's conceivable for sure to start bringing some things back to normal piece by piece carefully. So, I don't want to project anything about 2021 right now, but what we're trying to do here is just say, here's a baseline people can depend on, this makes sense given very, very low ridership right now. And then we'll figure out the future as we start to see the health care situation change.

**Moderator:** Gloria from NY1 is up next. Gloria.

**Question:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Bridget sort of got to my question, but if I could ask a follow up and just for a point of clarity, did I hear you say that you're asking for \$7.5 billion from the federal government and what are you doing – if you don't get a response from the [inaudible] if you don't get the exact amount that you are asking for and looking at what you've proposed so far, I realized [inaudible] an immediate crisis and this is [inaudible] with those immediate crisis. But what about the impact this will have on the following year and how much planning is your budget team doing now to balance some of that? This is a – you haven't made any kind of cuts [inaudible] since you've been in office, like, it's the first time that you proposed a budget that's –

**Mayor:** Gloria. I got you, I got you. The stimulus should be – for us, New York City, the epicenter of the crisis, for New York State, for all cities and states affected – it should be the amount of lost revenue due to the coronavirus. That lost revenue should be replaced dollar for dollar by the federal government. The federal government can do it. Again, \$2.2 trillion so far that they have put into various stimulus programs, only \$1.4 billion directly to the City of New

York to address this crisis in the epicenter. Clearly they can make up that \$7.4 billion that we have now projected as our lost revenue. If that grows, they should fill that gap further. There's a stimulus 3.5 now. There's another one coming in May. They will have in each one the opportunity to keep making cities and states whole and it should be done according to need, according to the impact of the coronavirus.

Also, the FEMA aid should not be 75 percent federal, 25 percent local cost. It should be 100 percent federal because of the nature of what we're dealing with. If they want a recovery, and I believe the president does, I believe everyone does, if they really want a recovery, if they really want to restart the economy, make that choice to make us whole and help everyone move forward. So that's what I'm saying to them. In terms of planning, yes, of course, this is what OMB does all the time. And pandemic or not, they keep doing it. These choices are to address the immediate situation. The cuts that were made were very substantial and very necessary and very unfortunate. The reserves, this was time to use the reserves and thank God we had built them up over the last six years. But there are many, many tough choices ahead. It will all depend on what Washington does. If they do the right thing, we'll still have tough choices to make, but we'll be able to get through and protect all those basic services I talked about. If they do the wrong thing, it's going to be a very, very tough scenario. But we're planning for all eventualities and then we're planning, of course, years ahead. That's what OMB has to do. And does do.

**Moderator:** Leslie from the Wall Street Journal is up next. Leslie.

**Question:** Hi, thank you. Are you planning any furloughs or layoffs for City employees?

**Mayor:** Leslie, I would call that the last resort. And again, I think honestly that decision rests in Washington. There's just no way to make up for this level of lost revenue, which has happened almost overnight because of a global crisis we've never seen the likes of in history and Washington has to step in so we can provide basic services. And I said this to the president and vice president, I said this to Speaker Pelosi, I said this to Senator Schumer. It's this simple, for New York City to be able to provide basic services to our people and participate in the recovery, we must have that stimulus money or else we're going to have to make horrible choices going forward. So those kinds of choices are absolutely the last resort.

**Moderator:** Gersh, from Streetsblog is up next. Gersh.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey, Gersh.

**Question:** Hello.

**Mayor:** How are you doing?

**Question:** Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes, Gersh. How are you doing?

**Question:** I'm good. You said earlier the things that might have been a priority cannot be a priority right now, but you also said that a budget is a statement [inaudible] values. All of the cuts are not yet online, but some are. If you cut, for example, your placard corruption team or you cut your Better Buses initiative [inaudible] you cut millions to divisions of your programs – are you saying that these kinds of programs are not currently a priority even though two days ago you said you will create a plan for the car reduction that many New Yorkers will want?

**Mayor:** Yeah, there's clearly – let's go over it again. The most basic things are health, safety, food, shelter. So, we're going to focus there first. The question you asked a few days ago was a great one. As we move forward into a recovery, how do we have a recovery that moves us forward beyond where we were before? I agree with that entirely and I've said very clearly the recovery must include profound changes to address a host of injustices, and we've seen it deeply with these health care disparities. We have to address injustices, we have to create a more fair society coming back, and we have to address the huge crisis of the future, which is still global warming. And that means getting people out of their cars. That we will address in the recovery plans. But right now with the choices we're facing, it goes right back to those basics and it is a statement of values to say we're going to make sure people have, you know, a roof over their head, food to eat, that they're safe, that their health care is protected. That's where we're putting our focus now. There's no question that a lot of the other things you mentioned are very important. That's why we put him in the budget to begin with and they will continue as we have more resources in the future. But we got to focus on the basics now.

**Moderator:** Last two. Kevin from the Brooklyn Paper. Kevin.

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

**Mayor:** Yes, Kevin.

**Question:** My question is about the testing sites. Brooklyn Community Board Six, which overlaps with your former City Council district in Park Slope, sent you a letter yesterday saying that the drive-thru testing centers aren't cutting it for the majority of New Yorkers given that, you know, the majority of New Yorkers don't own a car. I know the City is looking to open a new center in East New York and I think the State is opening one in Brownsville. Can you talk a little bit about the status of these new centers for people that don't have a car and want the city is doing to make it at least equally as accessible to get tested for coronavirus if you don't have a car?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Kevin, look, the testing situation has to change profoundly. And this is one of the biggest, saddest stories of this whole history of the coronavirus. You know, from January on, we were demanding that the federal government give us the right to do local testing and that took a long time and then they put huge restrictions on it. Then we were demanding the actual tests and that took a long time. And we still aren't anywhere near the amount of testing we need. And it'll be a long time until we get there. I did announce a few days ago, you know, a major breakthrough that we found a way to get some test kits that we can purchase from the open

market and others that we're going to create right here in New York City, and that's really exciting, in the beginning of May. But even that will be only a piece of what we need.

So I think the way to think about it is, there's been very limited testing. The focus to date has been on patients whose lives needed to be saved, though the testing was crucial to saving their lives. Health care workers, first responders, and now in recent days we're starting to expand it – and again, we'll have sites up starting tomorrow, some of the sites I talked about in some of the most hard-hit communities. That is the next piece we are trying to build out, but it still requires us to have the test kits, the PPEs which had been tough to come by, and the medical personnel, then we can apply to testing, and that situation's a little better, but there's still challenges for sure. Over time we want to get to a situation where we have really widespread testing available and that's part of how we get to that low level transmission phase we're talking about, and on to, effectively, zero transmission, but we don't have all that in hand yet. We got to keep building that.

So the notion of people saying, hey, I just want to make it really easy to get testing in my own community, I get that 100 percent why people feel that. We got to do something more strategic than that. We got to figure out how to get a lot more testing, apply it where it's needed most, and then build toward the day where we use it as a strategic tool to actually contain this disease, to focus it on people who have – are symptomatic, to focus it on people who we need to determine should not go to work, people who can go to work again, to focus it on who needs to be quarantined, and to make those quarantine spaces available in large number. That's the next phase. That all has to be tightly organized and prioritized. So, we'll have more to say on that, as testing supplies start to increase, but I want people to think about this as strategic. This is about how we end this crisis. Not so much just, you go someplace and you get a test that tells you at one point in time how you're doing. I understand why people want that, but we've got to do something more strategic for everyone to get out of this crisis.

**Moderator:** Mark Morales from CNN. Mark.

**Question:** Hey, everybody. How you doing today?

**Mayor:** Hey Mark, how you doing?

**Question:** Good. Good. So, I had a couple of questions on a couple of different topics. The first was – it's about the probable cases. What if anything, can or is the City doing to check up on or help the people that say maybe haven't tested positive for COVID but have gone back home and need help there or maybe in fact even die at home. And the other question I have is about the DOE and about reporting is happening now amongst the administrators and teachers and principals [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** Mark, I'm going to cut you off. Just Mark, go back on your first question. I want to make sure I understood it. Could you just restate your first question?

**Question:** Right. It's about the probable cases. What can the City do about them? So, it's like, let's say you have somebody who's at home who ends up dying at home and they get – their

bodies get picked up or services end up coming too late, what can the City do to help them to sort of prevent them from being casualties of COVID?

**Mayor:** And then what was your DOE question?

**Question:** What's being done about the reporting at DOE like as far as administrators? Like are they reporting positive numbers of COVID cases to the City, to the Health Department? Is that being done in a timely manner?

**Mayor:** Okay. On the second piece, I mean, we'll definitely have the Department of Education follow up with you, Mark. Look right now because essentially, you know, very, very few of our employees are going to a school building except for the folks who are doing the food programs and the very small number of enrichment centers for the kids of essential workers. To the extent we pray, no more DOE employees suffer. But if everyone does, that's, you know – that's going to the Health Department most likely directly. But we'll get you an update on that and we're obviously – everything we can do to try and protect, you know, the people who do such important work we will do.

On the folks – God, it's such a horrible scenario that there have been people who died at home. It's something that existed in the past, but obviously nowhere near on the level we've seen it with a coronavirus. But I think what we want to do, and as part of this intensive effort to communicate again to people including what appears to be, you know, a certain number of people who, even though there's been constant communication, still need more and we want to get it to them. That huge campaign we talked about advertising, you know, TV, radio, print, digital, the community health outreach – so, the texting and calling campaigns that we're putting in place, hopefully eventually health care workers out in communities talking to people. I think a lot of this is people who don't have access to information as much through mainstream media, a lot of people who don't speak English. We've got to get more information out to make sure that anyone who needs health care knows it is always available to them. And we're going to do that follow up with telemedicine more so people can speak to a clinician live whenever they have questions, they need anything in multiple languages. We have that but we're expanding that as part of the plan.

So, I think it's just going to be more outreach to help anyone know if they fear for their lives, if they think they're in danger, we will get help to them, unquestionably. We have to make sure they know it is there for them, no matter what.

**Moderator:** Last question goes to Jose from Univision. Jose.

**Question:** Hi, there. Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yes, Jose.

**Question:** Oh, fantastic. So, Mr. Mayor, thank you for doing these daily press briefings. They're very helpful. My question is about this paper from an economist at MIT, it came out earlier this week and it asserts that New York City's subway system was a major disseminator, if not the principal transmission vehicle of the coronavirus infection in the city. So, what I want to know is

if your office has taken a look at this paper, I don't know if I would call it a study, but it's definitely a paper. And what your office makes of those assertions and if you can, whether the City has tried to come to its own conclusions.

**Mayor:** I appreciate the question. My health care team looked at it. I think you're right. It does not appear to be – I haven't seen it myself so I'm working from their summary. It doesn't appear to be a full-blown study. It appears to be sort of an effort to look at some broad data and draw some initial conclusions. I think the part that is evident is, you know, this is why early on we said to people, if you don't need to go on the subway, don't; if you can work from home, work from home; if you can walk or bike or anything else, do so because there was a concern to start clearing out the subway to the maximum extent possible while recognizing that we also depended on the subway to get essential workers to do the lifesaving work they do.

So, we had a challenge from the beginning, but I think what is fair to say is it's, you know – I haven't seen it, but my sense is it sort of is broad in telling us that any place people gather is a place of concern. There's no question about that. And there's been, obviously, efforts now since the beginning of this crisis to have less and less, fewer, fewer people on the subway, less and less crowding on any place, including subways. And we'll keep that going I think for a substantial period of time.

Okay, everyone just wanted to say this is a very unusual day. It's not like any other day that I've ever experienced not only as Mayor, but in my life before that in public service, never seen a day like this where we're announcing an executive budget against the backdrop of a global pandemic and with so many challenges and so many question marks. But what's clear at least is we know where the help has to come from, it has to come from Washington, and it really has to, or else we're left with horrible, horrible choices. But what we will do, no matter what, no matter what, is protect New Yorkers health, protect your safety, make sure there's food on your table, make sure there's a roof over your head. That's what we will do. No matter what is thrown at us. And anyone who needs that help, it's there for you. A budget is a statement of values. Our values are clear. We're here to protect people and we will do so, and we will get through this crisis. It will not be easy, but we will get through this crisis.

Thank you very much, everyone. God bless you all.

###