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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S MORNING JOE

Mika Brzezinski: Joining us now, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Joe Scarborough: You giving out donuts, Mr. Mayor?

Brzezinski: Yeah, what are you doing to get people vaccinated?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Joe, your devotion to donuts is very impressive. You're like the Homer Simpson of journalism here.

[Laughter]

Brzezinski: Yes, he is.

Scarborough: I am. I am. And that, as Robert Frost said, made all the difference. So, how are vaccinations going in your city?

Mayor: You know, Joe, we actually are seeing more and more people wanting the vaccine. We did have – talking about the situation in France you discussed, we had a hesitancy problem, but it's really greatly reduced. Right now, about 3.3 million vaccinations have been given in New York City since the beginning. We could be doing over half-a-million a week if we had sufficient supply. So, that's the crucial reality now. We're very hopeful more supply is coming in the next few weeks, we've heard that from the Biden administration. But the demand is there and we have the ability to get the shots in the arm. So, I'm really hopeful.

Scarborough: Yeah, I'm hopeful too. You know, can I just ask you one more time about donuts, what donut shop to you and Andrew Cuomo go to when he comes into the city?

Brzezinski: Okay, that's just ridiculous.

Mayor: You're going to be searching for that donut shop for quite a while, Joe.

Brzezinski: Yeah, we got that.

Scarborough: Some people think, Mr. Mayor, you've enjoyed leaning into Andrew Cuomo –

Brzezinski: Now stop –

Scarborough: What – I'm asking him a question. Some people have said, as Mika always likes to frame things –

Brzezinski: No –

Scarborough: That you have enjoyed – when she's actually thinking it – that you have enjoyed leaning in on Andrew Cuomo a little too much. Is that fair?

Mayor: No, I really don't think it is. This – look, what we're dealing with, unfortunately, in the State of New York are really serious issues. We're talking about thousands of people who died in nursing homes and then an admitted coverup. We're talking about sexual harassment, multiple allegations of sexual harassment and molestation. These are serious, serious things that have to be brought out in the open and have to be addressed. So, I've got to tell you, it's been painful, but it has to, we need the truth. And, as I've said, I don't think he can continue to govern effectively while we're fighting this war against COVID.

Scarborough: You know, it is interesting, watching how the news coverage of Governor Cuomo has moved over the past month or so, that the sexual harassment charges have gained most of the attention, have gained most of the headlines. At the same time, there are a lot of people with dead relatives that are wondering why we're not talking about nursing home deaths as much or more.

Mayor: Yeah, it's painful. Families lost their loved ones. They still don't know the truth. They know the truth was covered up. That's the only fact they know. What we've got to find out is why was there a coverup? Did it have anything to do with the vast amount of campaign contributions that flowed into the Governor's coffers from the nursing home industry and from the large hospital industry? And why were these decisions made in a way that obviously led to such horrible, horrible, painful outcomes for these families? I mean, imagine if you lost someone you loved, a grandparent, a parent, an aunt and uncle, and you did not know why. And you had to wonder whether something different could have been done. And, by the way, what happens now? What happens in the future? I think we have to approach nursing homes very, very differently in the future. I think we've learned some powerful lessons, but we're not going to be able to make those changes until these issues are addressed.

Brzezinski: Okay. Let's talk about New York City. What's being done to get everybody vaccinated? What do people need to know? And are there any trouble spots?

Mayor: Listen, Mika, the demand is amazing. I'm really pleased about this. And what we did was, we decided to go to the grassroots. We've set up vaccination centers in public housing developments, in houses of worship, in community centers all over the five boroughs. And that grassroots approach is what works. People need to know a trusted community organization or a person in the community, a leader is associated with it, they feel trust in it, and that helps overcome the hesitancy. So, what we're seeing is all over the five boroughs, demand rising. Again, 3.3 million vaccinations given from day-one and we're picking up that pace steadily. I'm really hopeful, our goal is 5 million fully vaccinated New Yorkers by June. We will hit that goal. I'm very confident of that and that's going to allow us to reopen and energize. I think you're

going to see a really active summer – by the way, when you talked about tourism earlier, I'd say it all the folks looking for someplace to go, come to New York City. It's going to be safe. It's going to be exciting. You're going to see a huge amount of cultural activity, particularly outdoors. So, something's working and moving forward really aggressively in this city. We're going to have a huge comeback.

Brzezinski: Hopefully, a socially distanced Shakespeare in the Park or something like that.

Mayor: That's what you're going to see. Shakespeare in the Park is coming back.

Brzezinski: Oh, that's good. I want to talk about what's happening in the Biden administration, something that's near and dear to your heart, which is childcare. And the possibility that Universal Pre-K could be included in the next big Biden plan.

Mayor: Yeah. Mika, this is amazing. Eight years ago, I ran for mayor and my number-one priority was pre-K for all the children in New York City. And I have to tell you, we did it. We made it a universal right in New York City for free, and it was great for parents working class parents, middle-class parents, everyone benefited. And here's what we heard from parents consistently, it took a huge amount of stress out of their life. It took the whole question mark of where would they find quality, early child education for their kid. It was resolved. It was there for them. And then we saw now, years later, the results. As we have seen test scores come back from the State, we've actually seen the achievement gaps start to close. African-American, Latino students, doing better and better because of the positive impact of early childhood education. And it needs to be a universal right. And I commend Joe Biden. Look, this is one of the things that will define the Biden presidency. He said in his remarks after the stimulus, something I believe in thoroughly – he said, we need to put working people first. This is what the Democratic Party is supposed to be all about. Joe Biden's doing that. And by putting Universal Pre-K front and center into this new initiative, this is going to transform education in America. This is going to open up incredible opportunity for families, particularly working families. There's literally nothing more foundational you can do. Imagine every American child, starting at the same starting line with equal opportunity. That's what's at stake here.

Scarborough: All right. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio –

Brzezinski: Thank you.

Scarborough: As always, we love having you on. Thank you so much for being here.

Mayor: Thank you, Joe. Take care guys.

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