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

Mika Brzezinski: It is three minutes past the top of the hour. Joining us now, the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. Mayor de Blasio, give us a sense of how the city is fairing this morning, any new information, new numbers, new details moving forward as we're – would it be safe to say – at a plateau in deaths and numbers?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Mika, first of all, we have lost so many people and there's real pain in this city right now and I think we should be very careful to not declare a new reality until we're sure. I'm not sure we have that plateau yet. I'm not sure there couldn't be a resurgence. I think our job is to stay tough and stay focused on the approach that's working. The social distancing, the shelter in place has clearly helped improve the situation and the heroes are everyday New Yorkers who, you know – Mika, you know the city you love this city. What would you have said the chances would be that people in the most densely packed city in America who are used to being, you know, really close together all the time, would actually figure out quickly how to practice social distancing and shelter in place. Well New Yorkers have done that to a remarkable degree, they're heroes.

And then as you were just talking about with our health care workers, I mean, it's unbelievable how they've held the line up. For a few weeks, it looked like our hospital system literally could be overwhelmed. And our doctors, nurses, health care workers held the line. If this had been a military battle, it was as if you know, a huge enemy force was thrown at them, but they held and they kept holding and they're still holding. So the good story is about what New Yorkers have done. The tough part of this is we don't know exactly what this next phase looks like. We do know if you take your foot off the gas, if you for a moment, let your guard down – we've seen it in Asia instances where the disease reasserts. So, I'm saying to all my fellow New Yorkers, hold the line now because you know we've beat it back some but we're going to have to hold for weeks and weeks before we can start to get to a place where we could possibly relax some of these restrictions and start to move to something more normal.

Brzezinski: And that is the question as to when and how that is possible and can that New York City, which you describe as so many people in such a small amount of space really working together – can New York City sustain this on a long level like through November? Can the hospitals sustain this? Right now you're still using field hospitals and extra help, and also in terms of families that are stuck in, in crisis that need City services that can't get to them. I just wonder what the months ahead look like and what your city might need.

Mayor: So, Mika, you're exactly right. Look, I think the right way to think about this is months where we're still fighting this disease back and no one has the perfect date about when we get back to normal. But months of making sure it never reasserts. Now the challenge there is how do

we get there? Well, first of all, we need to keep protecting and supporting the health care personnel, keep the hospitals strong. We need those PPEs, the personal protective equipment. We've got enough – here's the reality. In New York City this week we're starting, we have enough for this week. We do not have enough for next week. We've done better on the ventilators, thank God, because we see fewer people surging into the ICUs, but for a while there it looked like we were going to run out of ventilators and there's nothing to say that's not going to be a challenge again.

So we've got to stay focused. But to get to the next phase, to get to the phase that we would call low-level transmission when we're starting actually downhill towards normal, we need the testing. And, Mika, I've got to tell you, when the history is written, this is going to be the central topic, that it was not there and a lot of us were demanding it in January and February, never came from the federal government. We've been demanding it every day since. We can't make that transition back to normal without testing on a much wider scale. Because you know what we want to do? We want to get back to a containment strategy, we want to beat this disease back. And then whenever you find the case, trace everyone connected to that case, make sure they're isolated, quarantined, get the support they need, constantly test people constantly know who has it, who doesn't, so we can get our way back to normal.

But right now, every time I ask the federal government for more testing I hear it's not yet possible. So, we've got to come to grips with the fact that this country, not only was not prepared, still hasn't figured out – our national government still hasn't figured out how to provide testing on a wide scale. And that's the only way we get to normal. There's this obsession about, and I understand it for sure, reopen the country, reopen the economy, but let's not kid ourselves. If you don't have testing, if you have hospitals that are still, you know, a week away from running out of PPEs, if you've got local governments that can barely provide critical services, basic services, because, of course, we're running out of money on top of everything else. If all those things are unclear, how are we going to get back to normal? So I think people kind of – the federal government, Washington has to put the horse before the cart if they really want to see a recovery.

Joe Scarborough: Well and Mika, I want to just follow up really quickly on something that the Mayor said and that is that we've been lied to by the Trump administration repeatedly about testing. They've given us numbers about all the people that are going to be tested. They never followed through with it. I remember Dr. Birx last week, very upset because 80 percent of the testing, the facilities weren't using – they were using 80 percent of their actual test kits. And when that happens, you know, we need a follow up. We need explanations. Mike Pence tells us great things are coming. They never come on testing. Until we can test and trace, isolate, treat, and then let people go back into the workforce, we're going to be stuck here losing trillions of dollars, Mika, it's got – the president has got to nationalize this and move on it quickly.

Brzezinski: Well, I understand that –

Mayor: [Inaudible] when Pence said there'll be a million tests by the end of the week or whatever it was, and we never saw anything like that. And remember it's not just the test kits, you need the PPEs to protect the health care professionals and you need the professionals to be available and not stuck fighting the battle in the hospital. But none of this has been coordinated from Washington as a whole to say, here's how you actually recover. You recover by stabilizing

the health situation. You do that with testing and all the other pieces we need to make testing work.

Scarborough: Right, and that was Pence's lie. Donald Trump said on March 6th if you want to test, you can get a test. And, of course, there's so many – there's millions of people who want tests that still can't get it. Jonathan Lemire is in New York and has a question.

Jonathan Lemire: Mr. Mayor. Good morning. I'm going to charitably describe your relationship with Governor Cuomo as up-and-down – you and he, at times, have both dismissed media coverage of the of the rivalry as you know, it was just politics and it shouldn't be dwelled upon, but we're – New York is in a pandemic right now. There's a lot of really worried people looking to the government for leadership and a consistent message. Over the weekend, you announced that New York City schools would remain closed for the remainder of the school year. Within an hour or two, the Governor seemed to overrule you and contradict you and say that that would not be the case, that no final decision had been made on schools and that it would eventually – that final call would come with him. So, can you tell us right now, what is going to happen with New York City schools the rest of the year, but also how does this mixed messaging, how does this, sort of, this back and forth between you and the Governor, how is that helpful to New Yorkers panicked in this pandemic?

Mayor: Yeah, Jonathan. The Governor and I have different jobs to do and I respect the job he's doing for sure. My job is to protect the children in New York City, the parents, the families, the educators in New York City. And what I said and our Schools Chancellor said was really clear. We're not reopening our schools, it won't be safe for all the people we're supposed to protect. And our job, our responsibility is to them. It's not to anyone else, it's to them. And on top of that, there's no way we can bring back schools in a productive way that would actually help our kids' education. By the time you came back, it would be almost time to go again. So, I made very clear, you know, I run the schools along with the Chancellor under the system we have here. And the fact is when you really look at the big picture over these months, the Governor and I actually have agreed on the vast majority of things.

I know the media rightfully reports on the exceptional, but the Governor and I have agreed on the vast majority of strategies and approaches. There's a lot of communication between our teams. And if you look at the crisis dynamics in New York City and New York State have been, you know, very, very consistently on the same page except for a few times and we worked those times out. So, I think the bottom line is about, what is the first principle – safety, protecting kids and families, and then what's going to help you to this next phase we were just describing. Well, if we act too soon, Jonathan, if we start to, you know, go to “normal” or tried to restart our society the wrong way, you'll see a resurgence of this disease. So, you know, I've said that that's where we're going. The Governor said yesterday he understood my position. He's looking at the whole state. That's a different responsibility. But what I've made clear is, you know, New York City schools have to stay closed.

Brzezinski: Alright, Mayor Bill de Blasio, come back soon. Thank you very much for bringing us up to date.

Mayor: Thank you.

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