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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Errol Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall, 734 city public schools are open for in-person instruction this week is a new phased-in approach by grade gets started. City Hall is also responding to a new memo from the US Justice Department that lists New York City as a “anarchist jurisdiction” in an effort to withhold federal funding as a result. Joining me now to talk about that and more from the blue room inside City Hall is Mayor de Blasio. Good evening, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good evening, Errol. It’s 700-plus school sites and another thousand-plus community-based sites for Pre-K and 3-K.

**Louis:** A Titanic achievement. In fact, I wanted to talk about that later, but let's talk about it now. What do you see as, going forward, the biggest challenge in keeping that momentum going?

**Mayor:** Well, listen, I first want to say everyone at Department of Education and a whole lot of other agencies really worked hard to make it all come together for this morning. I was out in Elmhurst, Queens at the Mosaic Pre-K center. It was extraordinary to see how well organized things were and also just the real energy and enthusiasm of the teachers and the staff. So I think a lot of work all through the weekend came together. You're right, we got to keep that momentum going into next week. First with the K to five schools, then the middle schools and the high schools. But I think it's just about continuing to execute the plan that worked this morning. So real heavy emphasis on the cleaning, the ventilation, the PPE, any last minute problems being addressed really quickly and then making sure the staffing is moved where it needs to be. We've got really ample staffing reserves. It's just connecting them to the right places efficiently and quickly as we go through the week, getting ready for next Tuesday.

**Louis:** You were in Elmhurst, Queens this morning with the Chancellor. I believe the First Lady was with you as well at Mosaic Pre-K. What did you see there? What did the parents or the teachers, principals, the staff, what did, what, what we're focusing telling you?

**Mayor:** Errol, it was so interesting. First of all, a big question has been around the kids. What would the kids be feeling coming back? These are four-year-olds, but they are, you know, they're going to be a good barometer and would they be able to handle the social distancing, the masks and everything else? This was really interesting. Kids were really enthusiastic. We didn't see – this was outdoors. You know, they said goodbye to their parents outdoors rather than having come into the building like you would traditionally do, and that was amazing. It was smooth. You didn't see a lot of tears. You didn't see a lot of hesitation, but here's the most striking thing:

every kid was wearing a mask. Everywhere, I looked, a kid was wearing a mask. None of them were pulling up the mask or trying to take their mask off, and on top of it, you know, everybody and you go up and down the line, parents, staff, everybody had those masks on, and this is, you know, our normal for the moment. It was really striking. The other striking thing was absolute lack of hesitation of all the adults – school safety, the school staff, the custodial staff, cafeteria staff, teachers, everyone I met, they were happy to be back with kids. They were really – there was actually like a joy, not a fear, a joy, and that was really striking.

**Louis:** Okay. One of the other schools in the network out of the 700-plus, the Zion Lutheran Preschool on Staten Island apparently is going to be closed till next Wednesday after a worker tested positive for COVID-19. Who's making those decisions on closures? Is that the war room, or the command center? Is that the Chancellor, is that you? Who makes those calls?

**Mayor:** The situation room – so the situation room, which is combined leading officials from Department of Health, Health + Hospitals, Test and Trace, Department of Education, it's housed at the Department of Buildings under leadership of the Commissioner Melanie La Rocca. So the senior officials are making those decisions, obviously deferring to the Department of Health on the final call, working with Test and Trace. But what we've seen so far is a fairly small number of positive cases each day. Several times we've had to pull a school down for 24 hours just for investigation, cleaning, things like that. But so far it's been very little impact and that's the good news. Now we're just beginning, but everything goes into that situation room. That's where the decisions are made.

**Louis:** The program called the Learning Bridges is for kids in three-year-old through eighth grade on the days when they're not doing remote learning, a place for them to stay – I should say on the days that they're scheduled for remote learning, a place for them to stay, because there are no other options for them. If a kid tests positive, where do they go if they, if they're not scheduled for in school and they can't go to Learning Bridges or do they, what happens to the case like that?

**Mayor:** No, it's a great question, Errol. A kid who tests positive has to be home. The whole concept. So the learning bridge program has been connected to classrooms to the maximum extent possible. So you have kids in not the exact same pods, but similar pods, hopefully that's the design, and if a kid tests positive, they have to stay out of school, they have to stay out of childcare, they need to stay home for that period until they are cleared to come back. That's something we have to be really scrupulous about because the whole idea of having the pod system is to keep the disease from spreading. So a few kids and teachers have to come out of the school. The whole rest of the school keeps going, but if a kid was allowed to go on to Learning Bridge, it would just end up unfortunately creating, you know, a problem for other families. We don't want to see that happen.

**Louis:** Okay. I got to bring up with you again, something I've raised about before, which is the actual of additional certified teachers that will be needed to make sure you can bring all of the remaining grades online. I've heard different numbers from you, from the principals union, from the teachers union. I think this morning at your press conference, you said you'll sort of do it depending on how much is asked for, but the numbers that have been thrown around all seem to

exceed the number that are available right now. What is the plan? And when will we know with some consistency, what the number of teachers needed actually is?

**Mayor:** Yeah and Errol, this one, I don't blame anyone who finds this confusing because it is so multilayered. It doesn't lend itself easily to a single hard number. That is the honest truth, but we're also dealing with the fact that the numbers keep changing. So it's not just that you're, if you're a principal, you're programming a school for the kids who will be in school that day, the kids who are in the blended system, but are remote that day, the kids who are all remote, but you're also have the reality of a certain number of teachers who got the medical accommodation, a certain number of kids who opt out and those numbers do change some still. So it's created those challenges, and of course you could just have a regular absence where a teacher is home sick for any other normal reason. So the answer we've come up with is to create a larger number of honestly, than was originally anticipated because we need a more flexible system.

So it's taking thousands of DOE personnel who weren't classroom teachers last year, but are perfectly certified, have experience being classroom teachers, sending them back into schools, moving them wherever they're needed. It's taking our substitute pool. We've got about 5,500 certified substitutes who have been substitutes for us, before all checked out, moving them where they're needed and continuing to grow from there with other types of educators being brought back in to the school system, including folks who were teaching and are ready to teach again. So what we need here is a big enough overall number that we can move with these ever-changing conditions always be able to account for day to day, need for substitutes as well. It's proven to be more complex than originally anticipated, but it will get done by just coming up with a big enough number to handle any contingency, and that's what we're building toward, right this moment.

**Louis:** So even there, I mean, 6,000, 10,000, 12,000, what might be the number?

**Mayor:** Well, Errol, the reason – another reason I don't jump to give you a premature number is we are also trying to be smart about the taxpayers' needs and all this, and not do more than we truly do need. We need some buffer, but we have to be also cautious on that level. So again, we knew today, we had more than enough. We keep building towards the next Tuesday. There's a lot of confidence. I was just at the war room at the Tweed Building with the Chancellor and his senior team. There's a lot of confidence that the numbers have grown in a way that will give us what we need for next Tuesday and next Thursday. But again, when we get to a point where we're absolutely certain, we have the final number and we know it's right, I'll certainly say it, but I want to make sure we get that exactly right, and it is the true number and not an excessive number. We're trying to hit that just right note.

**Louis:** Okay. Stand by Mr. Mayor. We're going to take a short break here then I want to hear more about anarchy in the streets, which is what the White House has said is going on here in the city. We're going to take a quick break. I'll be back with Mayor de Blasio.

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**Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. I'm once again joined by Mayor de Blasio who's joining us from the Blue Room. So Mr. Mayor, the Justice Department says that New York is one of several "anarchist jurisdictions" that should be denied money. We get about \$7 billion from the federal government, and while I know you've announced today that you're going to put up a fierce fight, including a legal fight, there could be some serious consequences for us right?

**Mayor:** No, it is such a game. I mean, Errol, I appreciated your close out of your last segment. I mean, I was in Queens today, obviously I started my day on the Upper East Side. I don't see any anarchy. I'm here City Hall now, I don't see anarchy. I see a city coming back from being the epicenter of the crisis and doing extraordinarily well. The people of this city really getting life back to much more normal, certainly, and it's just pitiful. It's pitiful that the President of the United States and his Justice Department would call this a city of anarchy laughable. It's just literally laughable. So no, they don't have a legal leg to stand on and they've tried these kinds of bluffs before and nothing comes of it and he may not even be president that much longer, but look, our Corporation Counsel Jim Johnson said it best, I mean, this is just blatantly unconstitutional, and if they try to withhold money, that was duly authorized, allocated by the Congress, they'll lose immediately in court. So I don't think it's more than a political stunt, honestly.

**Louis:** Right, you've described it as a political stunt. What is the stunt that he, what, gets to stand at a campaign rally and say, hey, I stuck it to these cities including New York?

**Mayor:** Sure. Look, he has consistently tried to get his base, which is overwhelmingly, you know, white people in red states to believe that everyone else is against them and to create disunity and fear and hatred and division. That's what he does. That's what he's been doing since the 1980s when he called for the execution of the Central Park Five. It's just, this is a one trick pony, this guy. And I said it this morning, he was trained by Roy Cohn, you know, Joe McCarthy's right hand man. I mean, what else do need to know about the guy? So what he's trying to do is get his political base to say, look, he's sticking it to these liberal cities, these Black and Brown cities, these immigrant cities, and somehow that that's going to make people feel like he's sticking up for them. It's ridiculous and it's harmful to the country. It hurts the fabric of this nation, but he will do that all day long if he thinks that's going to win him votes.

**Louis:** Would you consider some counter-programming and maybe along the way, kind of warm up the tourist trade, tell people far from there being anarchy here where we're actually having a pretty good time in the parks and the streets and the restaurants, and we have the lowest infection rate in the country and just wait until were up and running.

**Mayor:** Yeah, I think that's a good point, but not because of Donald Trump, because I think the people who are listening to Donald Trump, you know, I'm not necessarily going to be able to counter program, but luckily the majority of people are looking at things differently and they want the truth. I think there's a lot of knowledge around this country that New York City is one of the safest places right now in terms of the coronavirus. A lot of the comeback you're seeing in New York City is getting a lot of the attention around the country, but absolutely you're right. That is part of what we're going to be seeing with NYC and Company, our amazing organization that has promoted tourism over all these years and done an amazing job of it. Remember just a

couple of years ago, we were talking about 67 million tourists in a single year. That's going to be coming back more and more as we get past this disease. So we're going to tell the story of New York City's comeback and New York City's greatness and what you see with the outdoor dining and all the other dynamic things happening around the city now. And I think most Americans are going to hear that, the folks who are only listening to Donald Trump, we may not be able to reach them, but there's, you know, many, many tens of millions we will reach.

**Louis:** On Saturday, Mr. Mayor, about 20 minutes after you announced plans to build a memorial for Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Governor put out a press release saying that he's planning to put a statue in Brooklyn and appoint commission and so forth, for those of us who as frankly, just taxpayers who pay both of you guys to do the public's business and expect a minimal level of cooperation. Why does this keep coming up?

**Mayor:** Errol look, first of all, let's honor Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and I'm proud as a New Yorker and a Brooklynite that she is one of us and the whole nation is looking at her, but they're also honoring, you know, what New York City gave her and her greatness that came from this city. I'm not worried about who does what statute, we should all work together to get it right, there should be one statue honoring her. We'll certainly cooperate in that. We put out our announcement because we knew it was something that New York City wanted to do. When the Governor put out his, fine let's just work together and figure out a common plan.

**Louis:** On a related note, the Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams has been asking, I think for a couple of years now, to change the name or retitle the Brooklyn Municipal Building, and name it after Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I think that's solely within your power, right?

**Mayor:** I believe that's true and I think that's a great, great proposal and that's something, you know, we'll be acting on. I think the – look, she is one of the greatest New Yorkers of all time, obviously, and honoring her and showing today's New Yorkers, including our children that, you know, a young woman who came out of our New York City public schools, James Madison High School, went on to the United States Supreme Court and became one of the examples of justice and fairness in this whole country's history. What, what better kind of person to honor than Ruth Bader Ginsburg? So I think that's a great idea we'll move on.

**Louis:** Okay, there's a study from the New York City hospitality Alliance saying that 87 percent of bars, restaurants, nightclubs, and event spaces could not pay their full rent in August. Their economic crisis seems to be either deepening or going on without any kind of an abatement. Is there a role for the city in trying to provide some immediate relief for them?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Look, Errol, it's a very painful situation and this is such a big part of our city's life and such a big part of our communities, our economy, you name it. The only solution that's worthy of this extraordinary industry, hospitality and restaurants, et cetera, the only one that's worthy is a federal stimulus because there's no way the city can afford the kind of support they truly deserve nor the state for that matter. Federal stimulus should have happened already. It's still should happen, one way or another, and there has to be one, or we will not see the restart of our economy here or any place else. The city's tried in a lot of ways, but we don't have the resources to do a full scale kind of bailout. We've tried to help with the outdoor dining. You

know, we're obviously we worked with the State on finding out, you know, figure out the right way to do indoor dining. We're going to provide a lot of flexibility going forward and I want to see outdoor dining and the open streets with outdoor dining, next year, I've said that should be made permanent. We can do a lot to help, but the pure financial bailout, that's only the federal government. That's the truth.

**Louis:** Okay. Well, we're going to leave it there for now. We will say good night for now. We'll see you next week. Thanks for joining us, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Errol.

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