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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. So, you know, I talk all the time about a recovery. I talk about a recovery for all of us and what it means. A recovery for all of us means in every part of New York City life is coming back. It means people feel safe and secure and they know we're moving forward as a city. So, when we think of recovery, of course it means jobs and economic activity. It has to mean social justice. It has to mean fairness. It has to mean opportunity, but it definitely also means public safety – a safe and secure New York City in all neighborhoods. Now, the NYPD has been doing an absolute extraordinary job, particularly in recent months, setting records for taking guns off the streets. And we laid out a strategy for this summer, Safe Summer NYC. We talked about the importance of investments in communities. We talked about our court system and what we need to move forward there. We talked about what our cops are doing, pinpointed precision policing. Now, we have tremendous cooperation with the court system, with the DA's to make a difference in terms of gun violence, and some big things are starting to happen. And here to give you an update, someone who is leading the way in this effort to get guns off the streets, and she is doing it with a smart strategy, working with the courts, DA's, cops, together, but also working with communities, bringing all the pieces together. It's my pleasure to introduce our Chief of Patrol for the NYPD, Chief Juanita Holmes.

**Chief of Patrol Juanita Holmes, NYPD:** Thank you, your honor. Good morning, everyone. So, as you know, the crime stats were reported yesterday and there's an increase overall for the month of April, but there's also an increase in the number of firearms taken off [inaudible] by 233 firearms. Also, arrests made by patrol officers. How are we focusing on the increase in crime? So, precision policing is everything. To prevent gun violence, we're targeting 100 blocks that's been identified by the highest rate of gun violence committed. Enhanced patrol strength – we're taking 200 officers from administrative positions and putting them out in a patrol function. The strength with our federal partners, we have the ATF actually sitting side-by-side with us, sharing space, giving us real time, tracing back where these firearms are coming from. And, hopefully, it'll be a prevention for a proliferation of illegal guns on our streets.

We've expanded community solution programs, a strategy that uses community-based organizations, City services, and the NYPD response to connect community members to resources and improve their neighborhoods. With that, we're expanding our ShotSpotter, if you're familiar with that, by 8.78 square miles. Currently, we cover 69 square miles citywide. There are a total of over 1,500 centers for the month of – I should say, year-to-date for the past three months, we had 3,444 activations. With that, 565 were confirmed. What confirms that? Whether we discover ballistics or if there's a shooting victim. Out of the 565, 94 were confirmed shooting victims in 89 incident, 41 arrests were made, and 44 firearms recovered – good numbers there.

We're also relaunching our Ceasefire, a program that uses credible messengers to deliver strong messages to high-risk populations with the goal of decreasing violence without increasing arrests and incarceration. Also, the gun buy-back program – we've actually campaigned for that. I believe we conducted three year-to-date, resulting in 75 more guns taken off the street. And, more importantly, we have a campaign that's being launched in the confines of the 4-0 Precinct, the Bronx borough, on May 8th. And that information is on our social media, whether it's Twitter [inaudible] things of that nature.

Also, I like to mention a couple of takedowns that you're going to see – one yesterday, that'll probably be spoken about by the Bronx District Attorney; another one this morning in the confines of the Bronx. When we take down gangs of this nature, we're taking down sometimes 20 members, even if it's 10 members, and it results in a significant reduction in violence. This is accomplished with our federal partners. I believe the Bronx Southern District in the Bronx is handling the individuals arrested from the 800 YG Crew, and they're facing up to 20 years for some of the gun violence and other charges that were committed.

So, all of this combined is going to have an effect on violence, period, in the City of New York. I just want to say, we hear you. We've increased – probably about 73,000 more 3-1-1 calls, and those complaints are being addressed. And whether it's something simple as noise complaints or to ATV's. Another focus in the city, ATV's, dirt bikes – listen, you use it, you're going to lose it. We've started a campaign on April 20th and we've confiscated over 131 ATV's and dirt bikes. And we've identified five locations of congregation. Two of these locations resulted in a homicide involving ATV's and dirt bikes. So, I just want to say that these are some of the strategies that we're using and it should have a tremendous impact on our crime in New York City.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Chief. And, Chief, thank you for pointing out all the strategies that are being put in place now. These are a lot of strategies that have worked historically, they're being deepened now. But, very importantly, Chief Holmes talked about the incredible work that officers under her command and so many of the officers of the NYPD, working with the courts, working with the DA's are achieving. You're going to be hearing a lot more news about gang takedowns. This is crucial. You know, we always say there's a very small number of people in this city committing the acts of violence. And it's really important to recognize this – 8.5 million New Yorkers, it's a few thousand people that cause the most serious problems. When you start to get those folks out of commission, because of successful prosecutions, it makes all the difference. So, again, you'll be hearing a lot more about this in the coming days, but very, very exceptional efforts are being made to get these violent gang members off the streets and that's going to have a big impact on what we do this summer. So, thank you, Chief, to you and your whole team for all the strategies you're putting in place.

Okay. Now, when we talk about a recovery, of course, we have to talk about vaccination. So, every day I gave you the numbers, and what I really appreciate is that every day they move substantially. We definitely have to do more and more to make it easier, to make more accessible for people to get vaccinated, to make it more fun. We've got a lot to do to reach out to people, but, all that notwithstanding, the numbers keep moving all the time, and that is very, very important for the future ahead, for our July 1st full reopening, for the Summer of New York City, which we are all going to experience together. So, as of today, 6,809,451 doses given from the beginning. And when you think in terms of first doses – first doses, where we know,

overwhelmingly, about 95 percent of folks come back and get that second dose. This now puts us almost 75 percent of the way to our 5-million-person goal for the end of June. So, at this point, about – we have about 3.7 million New Yorkers have gotten at least a first dose, puts us, again, and about 75 percent to our goal in terms of first doses. This is really good progress. We need to consolidate this progress, keep it moving.

Now, to do that, we need incredibly energetic people out there, helping everyone know about vaccination, answering their questions, letting them know it's easy, it's convenient. We need people to go above and beyond the call. And, a few days ago, we got a report from Juliet Papa of 1010 WINS, and she said in Times Square she saw this extraordinary woman out there promoting vaccines. She said, I think I've found New York City's first vaccine hawk, and we were all really immediately interested. Our team went out to find her. We found her, and I want to say in advance, you're going to see a video of her work. Tanika Price, she is amazing. She works at the 20 Times Square vaccine site. She goes out there, she makes a difference. She literally just goes on out there, connects with people, talks to them, brings them in. She's a nurse, doing extraordinary work to protect her fellow New Yorkers. And this is also a great moment to say Happy Nurse's Day, everybody. This is the day we celebrate nurses. They have been amongst the greatest heroes of the fight against COVID. Anybody in your life who's a nurse, thank them today. If you see a nurse today, anywhere you are, thank them, because they've done amazing, amazing work for all of us. So, Tanika Price represents the best of the best, making a difference for our fellow New Yorkers. I want you to see her live, in action on this video.

[...]

**Mayor:** How much do you love that? That is a true New Yorker. Tanika – I wish we were talking to her right now, but I am so proud of you, Tanika. That is what a New Yorker does, you go out, you make it happen. And it's just a beautiful example of someone who cares, someone who's making a difference, and, listen, people just need to hear it's important, it's here, it's easy. And she certainly got some interesting people to come in and get vaccinated. So, well done, Tanika, and we want to see a lot more of that, going forward, in this city. And we also recognize, talking about Times Square – of course, we think about New Yorkers, but we also think about tourists. We want tourism back. We're doing a huge effort to bring tourism back. We talked it about a few days ago, big \$30 million campaign to get the tourists back to New York City. This summer, you're going to see tourism come alive again in New York City, you're going to see a lot of jobs come back because of it. We want to go the extra mile, make it easy for tourists. If they're here, get vaccinated while you're here. It makes sense to put mobile vaccination sites where the tourists are. That is good for all of us that they get vaccinated. It's good for them. It's another reason to be here and know you're going to be taken care of. So, we're going to be setting up these mobile vaccination sites where tourists go. We'll be using the J & J vaccine. We'll be in Times Square, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Central Park, the High Line, a variety of locations. And we're going to be working with the State of New York. We need the State to alter the rule that will allow us to provide vaccination to folks from out of town. But we think this is a positive message to tourists – come here, it's safe, it's a great place to be, and we're going to take care of you. We're going to make sure you get vaccinated while you're here with us. So, this is going to start as soon as we get that approval. We're ready to go this weekend. We want to welcome more and more people into the vaccination effort.

Okay. Now, talk about a recovery for all of us. A recovery for all of us means, of course, bringing back the jobs. And there are so many people who lost their jobs and need any opportunity they can get. And we do see the economy is coming back strong, that's great. It's really extraordinary. We do see jobs coming back, but we got to supercharge that. And we're looking for every opportunity to give people a chance to get back on their feet. Now, last month, we talked about the Community Cleanup Corps., that is going to be amazing. It's not only giving jobs to 10,000 New Yorkers. It's going to help beautify the city as we come back. It's modeled on the extraordinary creation from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Civilian Conservation Corps., part of the New Deal. That's where we got the inspiration for the City Cleanup Corps. That's going to make a huge difference. But now, we take another page out of FDR's book. One of the other great acts of the New Deal was the Works Progress Administration. WPA created the federal arts project. I have heard from members of my own family what this meant. It is so powerful that the federal government in the midst of the Depression and said, we're going to employ artists. We're going to help them stay on their feet, but it's also going to inspire the whole community. And amazing things came out of that effort. It gave people hope in a moment of tremendous challenge, and we all know so many artists struggle. So many artists struggle to make ends meet even in the best of times, but they've been hit so hard by the pandemic. We want to reach out to artists. And we take inspiration from the New Deal, because it was not only about helping people to survive the Depression, it also led to amazing opportunities for great artists. Jackson Pollock, he started his work with support of the WPA. Dorothea Lange, who documented in photography the conscience of the nation, documented poverty of farm workers in California. John Steuart Curry, who created murals that define that era of history – all of them supported through the New Deal. Eleanor Roosevelt looked at some of the sites in New York City, she called this a splendid enterprise that really changed people's lives, but uplifted communities.

So, we're going to take inspiration from that model and bring it to today. So, today, we announce the City Artists Corps. The City Artists Corps. is going to employ artists as part of the comeback in New York City. We're investing \$25 million to employ over 1,500 artists to help bring back arts and culture all over New York City. We're going to hire artists, musicians, performers. They're going to be out in communities doing public art, public performances, pop-up shows through the Summer Rising Program. So many different elements at the grassroots, creating murals, you name it. We want to give artists opportunity and we want the city to feel the power of our cultural community again. Here to tell you about it, someone who feels very, very strongly that the arts are going to lead New York City back in our recovery, our Commissioner for the Department of Cultural Affairs Gonzalo Casals.

**Commissioner Gonzalo Casals, Department of Cultural Affairs:** *Buenos dias.* And thank you, Mr. Mayor, for this extraordinary commitment to artists in New York City. This is an historic investment in artists by the City of New York, probably the largest in a generation. And we're very excited about this announcement. I wanted to tell you three very quick stories of why this is important and why this – what would it mean, you know, for New York City?

Last summer, artists DJ Mohammed and Sophia [inaudible] along with other many artists designed and painted one of the many Black Lives Matter pavement murals that inspire so many New Yorkers. Their work lift up the urgent message that lives of our BIPOC fellows – fellow New Yorkers matter. At the same time, Amanda [inaudible] who is in residency at the Commission for Human Rights created a series of posters that were put all over the city,

portraying Asian-American Pacific Islander individuals with messages, combating Asian discrimination. I cannot tell you how powerful it is to see yourself reflected in society and to see yourself affirmed in such a public way. It's great also to see that Amanda's work ended up being featured in the cover of Time Magazine for the strong message that this community particular still believes in our city.

At the peak of the pandemic, artists [inaudible] and Jaqueline Reyes, working with [inaudible] project, created a network of mutual aid support for residents [inaudible] in Woodside Queens. Just take a moment now to imagine our city with thousands of artists like Amanda, Sophia, DJ [inaudible] Jacqueline, out there in their communities, inspiring, empowering, and really celebrating New Yorkers. This is exactly what is that the core of this program and this is exactly the vision that we want for this program. So, we want to put artists back to work so they can go out and every community in New York City and engage New Yorkers in fun and reaching cultural experiences this summer. Imagine Open Culture streets, Parks, DOT plazas, and so many other public spaces across the city brought to life by this program and by the work that our artists have been doing.

As the Mayor said before, there is no equitable recovery of our city without investing in the cultural sector. When you invest in arts and culture, you're investing in the hospitality sector, the nightlife and entertainment sector, tourism, retail, you name it. You know, the mission not only is an economic engine, but it's also the presence of arts and culture and community makes for safer, healthier, and more cohesive communities. So, we want to make sure that artists are at the core of these positive impact of our city, and we want to help them by putting funds in their pockets to do the amazing work they have been doing for decades. We're still working through details on how these programs will be implemented and we'll have more to say in the weeks ahead. But let's be sure that this is not only going to be the Summer of New York City, it's going to be the summer of arts. And this is going to be all thanks to the City's investment to the City Artists Corps. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Commissioner. You and I got the summer of arts started a little early by throwing powdered paint at each other at the Holi Festival. So, I think we were a little ahead of the curve, but it's the beginning of something wonderful. So, this is going to reach communities all over the city and people are going to feel presence of our beloved artists and performers and musicians again. And I want you to hear from someone who represents a community with a long history of street art, a long history of cultural figures living and thriving in his community in Bed-Stuy. One of the cultural wellsprings of this city – Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. My pleasure to introduce Council Member Robert Cornegy.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Council Member. And Council Member, I remember was such warmth the day we gathered together with all the good folks painting the Black Lives Matter mural on Fulton Street. That was a really special moment and it was community coming out, claiming together the space to create something beautiful and positive. And thank you for your leadership in making that happen. That's just the kind of example we are looking for of the things that will uplift people as part of our recovery. So, thank you so much for your leadership and look forward to painting some more together.

**Council Member Robert Cornegy:** We'll both paint the up-high portions of the murals.

**Mayor:** That's right, that'll be our specialty. All right. Thank you so much. I want to hear from two artists who can really give you the feeling of what this is going to mean to the community of artists and cultural workers, the folks who we – we revere them, but we also have to support them. And here are two voices who have been leaders in the efforts to make sure that all levels of government support the arts, especially as part of recovery. First, the CEO of the National Black Theatre, Sade Lythcott.

[...]

**Mayor:** Sade, I want to eat for breakfast whatever you're eating. You are just filled with energy and positive inspiration, so thank you. And I know you're going to help lead the way, taking this amazing idea, putting into action, and reaching those artists who need the help. So, thank you so much for that.

All right. Now, I want you to hear from another great leader of the cultural community, and she is passionate about the work we need to do to reach the artists who we need to keep in this city and to help thrive in this city. My pleasure introduced the Executive Director of Dance NYC, Alejandra Duque Cifuentes.

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**Mayor:** I love it, I love it, Alejandra. I'm going to say the same thing I said to Sade, I want to eat what you're having for breakfast because you're filled with energy too, and hope and vision, and I want to thank you for that because the only way we move forward is with folks who really see a vision of what could be. We're already the great cultural capital of the world, we can go even farther, and Alejandra thank you for your leadership and for inspiring us to keep moving forward.

All right, everybody, now it's the time of our briefing that everyone looks forward to, our indicators, and the indicators today are worth the wait because they are very, very good. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report 121 patients. Again, we are well below the threshold, and it continues to look great. Confirmed positivity level has gone lower, 34.71 percent. Hospitalization rate continues to go down. This is crucial, 1.5, one per 100,000, all excellent. And now number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, again, look at that excellent downward slope, 1030 cases, and keep seeing a decline there, that's fantastic. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 2.52 percent and going down. So, I always like to remind you, want to be a part of making those numbers keep going down, go out and get vaccinated. Nurse to Tanika and many other great folks are going to be out there to help you do it. This is the right day. If you haven't gotten vaccinated yet, this is the day to do it, make a reservation, or just walk on up to dozens of sites all over the city, including that great site in Times Square. Okay, few words in Spanish, and I'm going to go back to the City Artist Corps.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

**Moderator:** Good morning. We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we are joined by Chief of Patrol Juanita Holmes, Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, and President and CEO of Health + Hospitals Dr. Mitch Katz. First up, we have Jennifer Peltz from AP.

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

**Mayor:** Good, Jennifer, how you been?

**Question:** Okay. I wanted to talk a little bit about vaccines and vaccinations. In light of the Biden administration's announcement this week that some doses will be reallocated from places that are not looking for them to places that are, is that effecting the City's plans, is the city considering requesting less than its usual allocation when the next round goes in, I think as soon as today in orders?

**Mayor:** I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi, but I'll say Jennifer – I'd say the basic answer is no. We're doing the things that we need to do to protect New Yorkers, and that means getting more and more vaccinations done in more and more creative ways. You just saw one earlier today and there's many more coming. So, I think the fact is, we want to have a steady supply. We need a certain amount in reserve to make sure we can always support our efforts, even if there's ever any slowdowns in supply. We're working on our goal and there's a lot more New Yorkers who are going to be able to reach. I thought what a nurse Tamika said was really powerful, but sometimes people just need a conversation, and that's one of the things that Dave's been talking about, about doctors, pediatricians reaching out to their patients and that that's going to move a lot of people. So, we need a healthy supply to ensure that we can reach everyone. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Thank you very much, sir, and that's exactly right. You know, we do plan to continue maximizing our order from the federal government with respect to vaccine supply and that directly connects to the point that the mayor just made, which is it enables us to get more and more vaccine out into, you know, we can think about it as the spokes in our hub and spoke model. That means doctor's offices, including community-based independent providers, neighborhood pharmacies, you know, all of those smaller providers that people know and trust in their neighborhood. And if they're qualified to be able to store and handle vaccine, we want to get them a vaccine so that they can get their patients and their customers vaccinated.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead, Jennifer.

**Question:** Sure. Thank you. A follow-up question on that. Since the numbers of people getting vaccinated have gone down compared to a few weeks ago, are there circumstances where doses are expiring because they're going unused or is that not happening?

**Mayor:** I'll turn to Dr. Katz and Dr. Chokshi, they'll each talk about the different efforts at their vaccination sites. I think the big picture here, Jennifer, is that is a rarity, and we certainly want to keep it that way, and we're going to continue to use, again, all sorts of creative ways to get more

and more people in. Remembering that even though we've seen some slow down, there's still a lot of people coming in to get vaccinated. And again, the fact that we are now at 3.7 million people have had at least one dose, pretty much all of them who have not yet gotten the second dose will, there's still lots and lots of demand. We've got a huge number of people coming in for their second doses alone. So, we got the demand to keep using our supply effectively, but just to give you the sense of on the ground, Dr. Katz filed by Dr. Chokshi.

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals:** Yes, Mr. Mayor, just as you said, the vaccine does not expire when it's kept in the freezer. So, we keep our vaccines in the freezer until the time that we need to give them, so we don't have any worries. The lifespan of the vaccines in the freezer is on the order of months. So, we're perfectly fine. That's not an issue for us. Thank you, sir.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Dr. Chokshi, you want to add?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Thank you, sir. Just to affirm that you know, in New York City, we are not in a situation where vaccines are expiring because, you know, we're unable to use them. We continue to vaccinate at a good clip, and we will continue to do that and store vaccine in freezers and refrigerators, you know, so that we can continue to use it for a weeks and months beyond today.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Juliet from 1010 WINS.

**Question:** Hey, Mr. Mayor, all hail Nurse Price.

**Mayor:** Yeah, Juliet, you get a special honorable mentioned for finding her. I really - you've done a great service to the public to know that we can all see her amazing work. So, thank you.

**Question:** Oh [inaudible] thank you for [inaudible] I'm so glad you found her. She's doing a great job there and she's still doing it. It's fantastic. So, I did want to follow up with that too, do you think there will come a time when you're going to have, let's say a permanent, either vaccination or testing locations in the city in the event people need booster shots down the road for this. How would that work?

**Mayor:** That's a great question. I'll turn to the doctors for their views. I think, look, first of all, in the future, my layman's view is it's going to resemble more how we handle flu shots because it's going, you know, COVID will be a part of the reality like the flu is, but it'll be a manageable part. But if it makes sense, sort of for a transitional period of time, to keep some of the centers open going forward, I think that makes a lot of sense. Dr. Katz then Dr. Chokshi.

**President Katz:** Yes, sir. Certainly, all of the Health + Hospitals' facilities, both our inpatient and our outpatient, will always maintain the ability to do vaccinations. And I think you are right, sir, that they likely will be future boosters needed just as there is with flu, and we'll be prepared to do those, and I'm sure as the city, we will keep open whatever facilities are necessary at different times in order to be able to vaccinate everyone who needs it. Thank you, sir.



**Mayor:** Thank you, Dr. Chokshi.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Yes, thank you, sir, and, Juliet, thanks for the important question. Just as Dr. Katz said, you know, we have been so many ways of permanent infrastructure already. It's our hospitals, but also our health centers, our pharmacies, all of the places where the everyday and miracle of routine vaccination happens even when we're not in a pandemic. But what we've demonstrated over the last few months is that we are able to rapidly stand up these mass vaccination sites as needed when we need to vaccinate more of the population quickly. We did this back in 2009 with H1N1, you know, obviously we're doing it now as well. And if the situation arises where we have to do it in the future, we'll be ready, but I think we'll be more reliant on that permanent infrastructure that we already have in place.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead, Juliet.

**Question:** Okay. Switching gears, and this is for you and Chief Holmes, an arrest was made very early this morning in the murder of one-year-old Davell Gardner, and I was wondering if you could talk about that in light of the conversation we're having this morning now about gun violence?

**Mayor:** Yeah. this is a powerful moment of justice. I went out to Bed-Stuy. I spent time with Davell's mom and grandmother. It was just the most heartbreaking thing in the world. There's just – it's absolutely the saddest thing in the world that a one-year-old killed because of the recklessness of a horrible, violent person, and there had to be justice here. There had to be consequences and thank God is finally happening. And it's a message to everyone that now we're coming out of the pandemic, we're moving forward as a city, the courts are coming back to life, NYPD is getting guns off the streets at a record rate. There's a lot that's about to change and a lot of justice that will finally be meted out chief homes. Chief Holmes, you want to add?

**Chief Holmes:** Yes, as I said earlier, there'd probably be a press conference by District Attorney Gonzalez later today, but that's part of the long-term investigations are great detectives have been handling and there were numerous subjects apprehended, various acts of violence. And two, specifically for the homicide of Davell Gardner. As most of you remember July 12th, that a very dark day when the one-year-old like the Mayor said was met with his demise as a result of simple recklessness of these gang members, we are now taking off our streets.

**Mayor:** Amen. Thank you.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Andrew Siff from WNY – NBC.

**Question.** Like WNYC. There are very good station as well.

**Mayor:** Andrew, you are a quick with the quip.

**Question:** You know, you have to be in this world. Mayor today is Nurses' Day, as you mentioned. I would like to go back to something you said at the start of the pandemic, which is that you'd like to throw the biggest parade in the history of New York City for nurses, first responders, and others who helped us survive the pandemic. You have about seven months left in

office, do you think that credibly, the largest parade in the history of New York can happen in the next seven months?

**Mayor:** I think you're going to see an amazing parade. You're going to see it in the next few months, and we're going to welcome and back the city, but at the same time, we're going to thank our heroes, our health care heroes, our first responders, our essential workers, it's going to be one of the great parades of all time for the spirit of it unquestionably. So, yeah, we're going to have a lot more to say on that soon because we're starting to open up back – you know, open up again and it's time to have that parade. Go ahead, Andrew.

**Question:** Shifting gears, the mayor's race, there's a new poll that indicates Eric Adams pulling ahead of Andrew Yang for the first time with 47 days to go. One of the central themes of Eric Adams' campaign has been safety and New Yorkers needing to feel safe. Do you feel like that might be what's behind the shift, if you believe the polling that this is New Yorkers voicing their concerns about safety?

**Mayor:** Andrew, I'd say, first of all, I've been saying for weeks that this race for mayor still hadn't really consolidated. You know, for a long, long time, it was quite clear that people weren't paying attention yet, and there wasn't a lot of information out there yet. Now, I think there's more and more information about each candidate starting to flow. There's more examination happening from the media and from the public. It makes sense that now is when you're going to see things really start to shape up. I remember at pretty much the same point in 2013 is when, you know, I went from being a candidate back in the pack to eventually becoming the frontrunner. So, I think this is the natural time when people focus and unquestionably folks are rightfully going to be concerned about public safety. I think that's maybe one of the factors, but I don't think it's ever just one factor. The public is looking for a leader to help us continue our recovery. That's the bottom line.

**Moderator:** Next question goes to Paul Liotta from the Staten Island Advance.

**Question:** Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my question.

**Mayor:** How are you doing, Paul?

**Question:** I'm handling something – I'm well, sir, how are you?

**Mayor:** Good.

**Question:** I'm handling something on Intro-2186, the City Council's comprehensive, long-term planning legislation. Just want to get your position on it.

**Mayor:** Paul, you got to ask me a little more specifically. I was briefed on it a while back, but it was at least a month or two ago. So, tell me what you're specifically interested in.

**Question:** Specifically, what do you think it would mean for member deference and for the more residential parts of the city, particularly those zoned for single family housing?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I don't want to give you an imperfect answer, because, again, it's a little while since I last looked at this. I think, you know, we've created an approach to land use in this city. That's pretty balanced right now where the voices of communities really matter and the process, you know, it could be made quicker for sure. I'd like to see ways of doing that, but what it does well is creates a true community voice and a real give-and-take where community needs are addressed. So, I think we have to be smart about preserving the many good elements of it. I know there were some concerns we had about that legislation, but I want to make sure I'm really specific and accurate. So, we'll get back with you on that. Go ahead, Paul.

**Question:** Thank you for that. I'm also handling something on – there's four local school communities that are raising concerns about a hundred men homeless shelter plan in Stapleton within a five-minute walk of each of the schools. I just wanted to get a sense of how you'd like to address those concerns and what you would say to those school communities?

**Mayor:** We want to always be careful around any kind of facility near a school community, and what has to be done right is careful work with the community, all city agencies, obviously, including Homeless Services and NYPD to make sure it's a safe and secure environment. At the same time, we have to make sure that those who God forbid become homeless. Remember homeless people nowadays more and more who end up in shelter are working people who struggle to make ends meet end up in shelter, need to be close to their home communities as part of their pathway back out a shelter, and we've asked every community to have shelters that represent their share of homeless folks in the shelter system. That's what we've been doing now for years, it was an important reform and it's been working. So that's why we've chosen the sites, but we have to always be smart about ensuring they're safe and working with the local community.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Sophia Chang from Gothamist.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Hey Sophia, how are you doing?

**Question:** I'm good. So, about this plan to vaccinate tourists, the vaccines take two weeks to kick in, so how would that work with outbreaks or prevention of outbreaks, and separately, do you plan to track the vaccine status of tourists?

**Mayor:** On the second part, Sophia, no such plan at this moment. We'll certainly continue to look consistently at changing dynamics and the data and the science, and as we've made every decision, our health care leadership will really lead the way in determining if we need to ever look at something like that. But I think the big reality in this country is more and more people getting vaccinated all the time. I saw the number the other day. It's something like two million vaccinations per day, nationally. Even with the slowdown, there's still a huge number of people getting vaccinated. That's what's changed this environment. It's exactly what our doctor said all along – if enough people got vaccinated, it would change the reality of COVID and it's happening. So, that reality in terms of your first part of your question, look, the fact is the more people get vaccinated, the better for all of us. It's an interconnected country. It's an interconnected world. The more people get vaccinated, the better. If people are visiting us here

and we have the ability to vaccinate them, it's a show of good will. It's a welcome. It will be helpful to us in the long run anyway, you slice it. Go ahead, Sophia.

**Question:** Thank you, and there have been some recent reports that vaccination rates among NYPD in police stuff are lower than the rest of the city's rates, and just 39 percent of NYPD officers have received at least one dose. What's the reason for the low rate of vaccination and NYPD and what can the police leadership in the city do to encourage more vaccination within the department, given their exposure to the public?

**Mayor:** Yeah, it's a great question. Sophia, look again, everything is done on a voluntary basis. Everyone's an individual. Every officer has a different view. Like many, many New Yorkers. I think there's some people that just wanted to wait a while. There's some people that still have unanswered questions. We got to keep reaching out and answering the concerns, and I think you'll see more and more people get vaccinated as a result, but certainly one of the things we'll do is keep reaching out through our whole city workforce, keep encouraging folks, making it easy, answering questions, and I think that'll have an impact over time.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

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

**Mayor:** I am doing well, Henry. How you been?

**Moderator:** I'm good. I'm good. I wanted to ask you, going back to your first topic of public safety. About a year ago during the Floyd demonstrations, Black Lives Matter, you talked about removing about a billion dollars from the Police Department and putting them into other public safety and crime fighting strategies that don't involve the police. This latest budget has a slight increase in the NYPD budget. Can you explain why you changed your mind about this or why you didn't follow through with what you said last year?

**Question:** Henry, respectfully. I think you're leading the witness my friend we did follow through, we laid out a series of changes. It was beyond a billion if you look at expense and capital budget, we followed through on all those commitments, we're continuing them. Exactly the point you raised, moving functions to the civilian side, in some cases, re-investing resources in other types of community needs, all that happened and it's continuing. The new budget – the reason you see a very small increase is some new federal aid that came in, you see some new information technology costs, and you'll see some reform initiatives that the City Council wanted in the reform package that required additional civilian personnel for the NYPD but when you add all that together, it's a very small increase in the scheme of things and all the previous commitments continue to be kept. So, I think we're in the right place. Go ahead, Henry.

**Question:** Okay. But the bottom line is that you are spending more, not less. I accept your answer and I thank you for it.

On the vaccinations, the levels of vaccinations are going down precipitously, and in your presentation today, you talked about 3.75 million vaccinations, as seventy-five percent toward the goal of five million, but that 3.7 million is only first to go, it's not a full vaccination number,

and so I'm wondering, given the precipitate drop in people getting vaccinated, whether the city is in a position to reach its goal of five million persons vaccinated by the end of June?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Henry, it's a great question. Look, I don't agree on precipitous drop because we've seen it for a pretty brief period of time, and we're about to put a lot of new approaches into play that I think will help to compensate. From day one 6.8 million doses, so now we have, in terms of our 5 million goal, we're 55.6 percent of the way in terms of those already fully vaccinated, and obviously it's the first week of May. But if you look at the first dose, I want to make sure I articulated this clear. I'm glad you asked it. 74.3 percent of the goal has been reached in terms of first dose. The point I was making is, first dose is almost a guarantee of second dose. We're seeing about 95 percent of people who get a first dose in New York City follow through and get the second dose. We've seen that very, very consistently. So, this says to me that practically we can now account for 75 percent effectively of our goal. Now we got to go out and have secured a last 25 percent, and I feel good about it. I think it's harder than it was. It was harder than we started out because of the challenges around Johnson & Johnson. We absolutely believed when we kept talking about this number that Johnson & Johnson was going to play a crucial role. It hasn't been playing as big a role. That's an issue. That's a problem. But with enough creativity, I think we can still get there.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more questions today. The next question goes to Nolan from the Post.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, everybody.

**Mayor:** Hey, Nolan. How are you doing?

**Question:** I'm doing all right. On a very unrelated baseball note. I wonder if you still back getting rid of pitcher hitters, considering Jacob DeGrom is literally the only source of all offense?

**Mayor:** You know, that is actually a very fair point. It's – talk about DIY, it's like no one else wants to hit on the Mets when he's pitching, so he has to go do it all himself. But I think I still think – I bet Jacob wouldn't mind if the Mets got another bat in there to take the place for him, someone alive and awake who likes to hit a baseball. I think Jacob would really approve of that, and that's going to be another part of our – I want to figure out with our Jacob DeGrom and support plan, you know, a massive city infusion of dollars to find the best available bat and you know, bring them in immediately to the Mets to address this crisis. Go ahead, Nolan.

**Question:** Yeah. Well, I guess to the first question, you said yesterday that neither you, nor the Schools Chancellor were aware about the retitling of Columbus Day. Having been involved in at least two separate Columbus controversies, over the statue and whether or not it would be replaced, and over the placement of a statue honoring Mother Cabrini, how does this go unnoticed? How weren't you briefed about the changes to the school calendar?

**Mayor:** Cabrini is not Columbus. I want to note that, but to the point, Nolan I am as miffed as you are. Honestly, it's obviously something that should have been raised to the Chancellor should have been raised to me. It is a truly massive sprawling bureaucracy. Somewhere before this Chancellor became Chancellor, someone put this in motion, they didn't brief me. They should

have. They should have briefed her. It was not the right way to do things. It just wasn't, and once I heard about it, we immediately addressed it.

I am a very proud Italian American. It was very important that we continue to honor Italian Americans and all the contributions of Italian Americans to the city, which are absolutely extraordinary, and to this nation, but the way we're doing it in this instance, I think is fair, makes the point clearly. But, of course, it should have been brought to our attention. It's not even close. Go ahead, Nolan.

**Question:** So, do you know when the decision was made, do you know how the decision was made? Do you know who made the decision?

**Mayor:** No, no, and no. Our team will happily try and track it back, but the most important thing here is once we saw it, we changed it because it wasn't the right decision.

**Moderator:** Our last question of the day goes to Steve Burns from WCBS 880.

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

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

**Question:** Doing alright. I wanted to ask about crime as it relates to the subways. I know the NYPD Transit Chief at the last MTA board meeting accused MTA leaders of fearmongering over crime in the subway. Governor Cuomo seemed to echo a lot of the MTA's comments. So, I'd love to get your input and Chief Holmes's input, if possible. Do you feel like the Governor is now fear-mongering over crime in the subways that's not as bad as the MTA and he make it seem?

**Mayor:** Of course. Steve, look, leaders are supposed to help people move forward and tell them when something's actually working. The NYPD is doing an outstanding job making the subways safe. They have for a long time. Overall crime in the subways has gone down. Chief Kathy O'Reilly has done a great job, and I think her frustration is very real as a lifelong public safety professional, hearing the Governor and hearing the leadership of the MTA, putting down the work of the men and women of the NYPD who actually getting the job done – I share the frustration, and as a real New Yorker who lives in the city has taken the subway all my life, I wouldn't hesitate at all to take the subway. I will be taking the subway a lot. My children take the subway all the time. If you said to one of my kids, "oh, you shouldn't go on the subway. It's not safe." They would laugh you out of the room, they would tell you, you clearly couldn't be a real New Yorker. They couldn't think of life without taking the subway, and let's get real. Let's tell people it's safe because it is safe, and it's part of our recovery. It's part of how we come back. The more people go back to the subway, the safer it will be, the stronger the recovery will be. Go ahead, Steve.

**Question:** Thanks, and following up on that, the MTA's case here is that first, per rider crime has gone up – if you take the ridership drop into a queue, then the crime rate has gone up, and second that there are things that happen there that aren't necessarily reflected in the crime stats like harassment and people in need of mental health support. So, does the proposition at all give

you any credence that there is a need for more officers in the subway, or is that still completely off the table?

**Mayor:** Steve, we've put more officers in the subway. It's had a very positive effect. The NYPD has made clear that they'll make adjustments whenever needed. The officers that were surged into the subway helped address some real issues, and whenever they have to do that again, they will. But I want to be clear about the overall reality. We went through a pandemic that took millions of people out of the subways, changed the entire nature of things. We're now coming back strong. You see the ridership going up all the time. You see the city coming back to life. You see the economy coming back to life, whole new ball game, go back to before the pandemic one index crime per million riders is where we were – a level of safety we had never seen before in the history of New York City subways. That's what the NYPD achieved. And they're going to continue that progress, especially as people come back. So, you know, let's believe in our city. Let's believe in the NYPD let's believe we can move forward, and to me, that's what leaders should be talking about, how we move forward. That's what our recovery requires, and I'll conclude with that.

Everyone, look – today, we're talking about so many things that prove this city is coming back. Our City Artists Corps is going to be so exciting. The amazing work being done in our vaccination effort, and you saw, Nurse Tanika. That's a true New Yorker, out there at the front line, making things happen, believing in this city. The incredible work of NYPD, and you're going to hear a lot more about that today, getting guns off the streets. This is how we come back. I believe in this city, 110 percent, I believe in the people of this city. I think New Yorkers were heroes in this crisis. Anyone who doesn't believe in New York City, you don't know what the hell you're talking about because this city is coming back. Why? Because we have a magic ingredient called New Yorkers. So, get ready for the greatest comeback ever. Thank you, everybody.

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