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MEDIA CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everybody and happy Monday. It is a beautiful, beautiful day in New York City today, and it is a good day to remember how far we've come as a city, the hard work everyone has done together to move this city forward, to fight back against the coronavirus. But even as we remember that, and even as we look at the beautiful sunny skies out, we know a different threat is looming because of mother nature and we all have to get ready. So, I want to talk about Tropical Storm Isaias and what we need to do to prepare, and I want to remind everybody that it is the same approach that has worked time and time again, New Yorkers looking out for each other is crucial in a situation like this. So, what do we have? We have a storm that will start late tonight with heavy rains, high winds, and coastal flooding. Now at this moment, I'm going to emphasize this – at this moment, from what we've heard from the National Weather Service, the impact appears to be limited in terms of New York City. But my friends, we have been surprised before by storms. We've been surprised by the way they can change at the last minute. So, we're in a very vigilant state right now. We are not taking any chances at all, and for everyone who lived through Hurricane Sandy, you will remember that we got a lot more than we bargained for, and we've seen that with snowstorms as well. We want to make sure we're always ready no matter what, last minute shifts in a storm and we're particularly concerned about areas that are vulnerable based on the projections we have now. Lower Manhattan is particularly vulnerable in this situation based on what we've heard from the National Weather Service.

So, Emergency Management is deploying interim flood protection measures. Now these are the kinds of approaches that we learned the hard way with Sandy that we needed to have ready. We've made a lot of big major investments, but we also need temporary measures that you can put up in a matter of days when a problem is coming on. So, down in Lower Manhattan, this is exactly what you'll see from the area around South Street Seaport going all the way down towards Wall Street, these temporary barriers to stop a storm surge, and that's basically from Wall Street to Water Street. This is crucial. This is going to help protect the community right around there that got hit very hard in Sandy, and look, this is why we take precautions because we've learned the hard way, and because we know that it is our job, the City's job, to get ready with measures like this. We also need everyone, if you're in a situation where this storm is affecting your community, your block, your building, look out for your neighbors, particularly seniors. Always be there for them whenever there's something like this bearing down on us and see if they need anything. Now, with that, let's talk about how the City is preparing and what you need to know. I'm going to turn to our Emergency Management Commissioner, Deanne Criswell.

Commissioner Deanne Criswell, Emergency Management: Thank you, Mayor. As the Mayor said, Tropical Storm Isaias is expected to bring heavy rainfall and strong winds. We should see some of that rain beginning around midnight tonight, but the bulk of that rain, we should see tomorrow. We're looking at about two to four inches of rain spread across the city, and there could be some spots with locally higher amounts of rain. It should be – the bulk of the rain we expect to come in between one and 6:00 PM tomorrow. Along with that, we're also going to see tropical storm force winds. They're expected to start as early as 11:00 AM tomorrow, but probably more close to 2:00 PM, and we could see 35 to 45 mile per hour winds sustained for a period of two to three hours with some gusts up to 60 miles per hour. And due to the storm's forecasted track, we also have, as the Mayor mentioned, the potential threat for moderate storm surge in particularly in the South Street Seaport area.

So, what are we doing for this? To mitigate the storm surge, as the Mayor said, we have activated our interim flood protection measures in the South Street Seaport area. Based on the forecasted impacts, we believe that this is the only area at threat for storm surge. The site itself consists of pre-deployed HESCO barriers, which are large sandbags, and then tiger dams, which we put in place time-of that are filled with water to close the gaps. It will span nearly a mile from Wall Street to Catherine Slip and South Street to Water Street. We started installing this at 7:00 AM yesterday, and it should be complete early this evening. You will see a visible presence of construction crews and emergency personnel in the area throughout the day to day as they finished the installation of this protection measure. But we're also taking some additional actions. Again, we don't think that we're going to see severe impacts from this storm, but out of an overabundance of caution, we're put in several pieces in place.

We've been in constant communication with the National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center to monitor and coordinate with our partner agencies what the storm impacts may be. We've been holding daily inter-agency calls with all of our partners, City agencies, and other partner agencies since Friday, and our EOC will activate virtually beginning at 8:00 PM tonight. We're going to deploy operations personnel into each of our boroughs so they can assess street conditions and coordinate resources, time-of as needed. They'll be serving streets and roadways that are typically vulnerable to flooding, including the FDR, Belt Parkway, Cross Island Parkway, and Staten Island Roadways, as well as local streets and coastal areas in all five boroughs. We have activated our flash flood emergency plan, which mitigates flash flood potential, and part of that is DEP and DOT teams have been out clearing catch basins through the weekend in preparation for the storm. We've also placed our Downed Tree Task Force on alert and we're lining up emergency tree contracts. Our utility partners have brought in additional crews to respond to power outages. Verizon has activated their storm crisis team and DOITT has reached out to all of our telecom partners. NYCHA will be adding additional staff to respond to any service disruptions. We will be securing our City construction sites today and preparing City facilities for any potential storm impacts. Department of Buildings is going to bring in additional response teams to assess any damage post-storm. DOT is reaching out to all of our outdoor restaurants so they can secure outdoor furniture, and we are tapping off all of our generators with fuel that are supporting critical facilities.

And so, what can New Yorkers do? First and foremost, know your zone. While we will not be activating or issuing an evacuation order for this event. This is a good time for New Yorkers to

look and see what their zone is. New York City is divided into six hurricane evacuation zones, and you can find out if you live in one by visiting [nyc.gov/knowyourzone](https://www.nyc.gov/knowyourzone). It's also a good time to make sure that you have the ability to stay informed. NotifyNYC is the primary mechanism for communicating out to the public. You can also follow us on social media and listen to your local news station as we provide updates to what the storm impacts are. And then have a plan, make a plan with your family so you will know what to do, how to find each other, and how to communicate in an emergency, and also don't forget to plan for your pets.

And then in particular for this storm, we want you to stay safe. We want you to prepare for strong winds, strong winds will bring down trees, power lines, and they can turn unsecured objects into flying projectiles. So, what you should do is check the areas immediately surrounding your homes or businesses for any unsecured objects that could be potentially dangerous conditions, tree limbs, garbage cans, yard debris. We want you to secure all of these things so we make sure that everybody stays safe. We want you to anchor objects that could be unsafe, such as gas grills or propane tanks or patio furniture, and then prepare for potential flooding. It's never safe to drive or walk into floodwaters. Remember the saying, "turn around, don't drown." It only takes six inches of fast moving water to knock an adult off their feet or 12 inches of water to carry away most cars. And as a reminder, as the Mayor said, we really want to encourage everybody to always check on your neighbors, your family, and your loved ones to make sure they're safe. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner. And Commissioner, thanks to you and everyone in Emergency Management. I know you're doing a lot to keep us all safe and everyone will be providing additional updates throughout the day, but heed the words of our Commissioner, because she's making a really clear message to all New Yorkers, to just get ready for this. We don't want to overrate it, but we never want to underestimate it either. So, better safe than sorry. Let's all get ready for this storm.

Now, I want to go back to something very positive. I started by telling you what a beautiful day today is so far, and we had a beautiful weekend and I want to tell you, I went out in Brooklyn this weekend just to get a look at what was going on with our Open Streets and our Open Restaurants initiative. Chirlane and I walked around Fifth Avenue in Park Slope. It was absolutely amazing, just restaurant after restaurant filled with people, but the right way, outdoors with the right distancing. Folks are doing a good job of obeying the rules, but also were having a great, great time. And it was so good to see the life and the energy. It just felt like a beautiful New York City summer moment. But it also was a reminder that a lot of restaurants have been able to survive because of this initiative. And a lot of people have been able to get their jobs back. And that's what's so important here, helping people through this crisis, helping them get their livelihood again. So, here's where we are at this moment. It's pretty amazing. We have well over 9,000 restaurants in the Open Restaurants program, and that continues to grow. Now, we've looked at these restaurants and the number of people they employ so we could come up with a projection of how many jobs have been saved. And I want to tell you just in the last few months, because of the Open Restaurants initiative, we now estimate that over 80,000 New Yorkers have gotten their jobs back. Think what this means for their families. This means hundreds of thousands of people by extension getting support when they need it most, with everything going

on out there, getting these jobs back, giving people a chance to handle this crisis and get through it. But also bringing back the joy and the hope we have seen with this beautiful initiative.

So, I want to give you more good news. The Open Restaurants initiative, the Open Streets program, has been amazing. So, we're going to be doing this again next year. Look at what we have been able to achieve together to improvise something amazing. These restaurants will be back again next year on the street, as we've seen, tremendous success, starting June 1st next year. And I wanted to say it now because I want people in communities to look forward and see that we're going to keep coming back strong. I want the folks who own the restaurants to know that they're going to have that additional revenue going forward. The folks who work in the restaurants to know that whatever else we have to weather, we have seen that this experiment worked. So, expect to see that wonderful outdoor dining back next year. We may even extend it further earlier in the spring. But we'll start with June 1st for now. And I just want to thank everyone in the restaurant industry for the way they fought back. I want to thank all the community leaders, all the business improvement districts and civic associations, all the local precincts. Everyone who's helped make this work because it's been one of the things that's really given people hope. So, thank you to everyone, congratulations. And let's finish strong this year, but look forward to it next year, hopefully under much, much better conditions.

Now, as we have continued to fight back against this disease, one of the things that we've seen is the amazing heroism of so many people. Remember those tough, tough times in March and April, what our first responders did, what our health care heroes did. But remember all the people who continue to do that work and continue to fight back the disease and take care of their fellow New Yorkers. So, we wanted to do something really good for more and more people to thank them. The Mayor's Fund has a wonderful initiative called the Food for Heroes program. That reached a lot of folks early on, particularly our health care heroes. We want to expand it. We want to provide additional free meals and love and support for the good people who work in our nursing homes, for our Sanitation workers, for folks who are essential workers, and often don't get enough thank-yous and enough respect and appreciation. So, to all those good and noble folks who take care of our elders in the nursing homes, to all the folks who keep this city clean and help us deal with whatever storms come our way at the Sanitation Department, thank you, and we're looking forward to getting those free meals around to make your day a little bit better.

And while we're saying thank-yous, a number of folks keep stepping up and it's been a wonderful thing despite the crisis, how many people have stepped up and wanted to help New York City. So, just some thank-yous today to people in organizations who really went above and beyond. I want to thank the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Minsun Kim and the Korean American Heritage Museum, Miller Druck Specialty Contracting, CubeSmart Self Storage, Starbucks, and Transfix. All of them have stepped up to help New York City. And we are very, very appreciative.

Let's talk about our indicators. First of all, number one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200, today's report, 67 patients. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals ICUs, threshold 375, today's report 262. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold 15 percent, today's report once again, one percent. And that is fantastic. And that is because of your

hard work and New Yorkers sticking with it so we can keep fighting back this disease. A few words in Spanish –

[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: Hi, all. We have with us here today, Commissioner Criswell, Commissioner Trottenberg, Toya Williford, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, and Senior Advisor Dr. Varma. With that, we will start with Marcia from CBS.

Question: Mr. Mayor, last Friday, you and the Chancellor unveiled a big program to reopen the schools come the fall. The Governor and State officials have criticized it saying it was more of an outline than a plan. And that then the unions have pushed back, saying that there was a lack of nurses, there's a lack of testing, and a whole host of other things that they object to that they say will not keep teachers safe. What's your response to that? And how are you going to change your plan so that everybody gets on board?

Mayor: You know, Marcia, this plan has been worked on for months with our union colleagues, literally daily. It's the most extensive approach in the country in terms of protecting health and safety. What I announced on Friday is we will not open schools unless we are below a three percent citywide infection rate. And if we ever go above that for a seven-day period, we're going to close schools. So, we're taking a very stringent approach, focused on health and safety. We provide a very clear roadmap to the State and we're going to keep providing a lot of additional information. Remember we have 1,800 separate schools. So, we will be providing plans for each. And look, I know that step by step, we're going to continue to improve this plan. It is a big undertaking, but it's all about health and safety first. That's how we've approached it.

Question: Mr. Mayor, also, this was a very bloody weekend, another bloody weekend of gun violence and gun shootings. And I know that there's been a constant refrain from your office about the various things that have to go into it, but then it comes down to the police. And I'm wondering, do you think that the Police Commissioner is getting the job done and being able to stop the violence, which continues apace?

Mayor: Unquestionably, Marcia. What you're seeing right now is Commissioner Shea and the whole NYPD making the adjustments needed for an extraordinarily difficult situation, which is based in the coronavirus crisis. It's a perfect storm. It's a perfect storm. We have people without jobs, without school, without anything, massive pent up frustrations. A lot of our criminal justice system just hasn't been functioning. It needs to function fully again. As we correct each of the pieces, as we bring the criminal justice system back online, as we get more people to work, I know the situation will improve. But most importantly, what Commissioner Shea is doing is what CompStat teaches us. Moving officers where the need is greatest and engaging communities to fight back crime. And there's no doubt in my mind, he will succeed and the NYPD will succeed.

Moderator: Next, we have Rich from WCBS 880.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor. Good morning.

Mayor: Hey Rich. How you doing?

Question: I'm okay. I want to follow up a little bit on Marcia's question about the school. I mean, you put out a whole series of protocols on Friday, then it seems like the Governor is kind of taking pot shots at that. I mean, doesn't that – aren't you irritated at that?

Mayor: Rich, I am past the point of irritation. I just focus on the work and I focus on what I need to do for my fellow New Yorkers. And look, I was a public school parent for the entire education of both of my kids from pre-K to 12th grade. I'm thinking about the parents, I'm thinking about the kids, I'm thinking about the educators. How do we keep them safe? I know we're doing that work every day. We're putting really stringent approaches in place, and we're working with the people who represent our educators and staff to get it right. So, I'm focused on the work and I'm focused on the people I serve. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, Mr. Mayor, Dr. Birx, who is you know, in the White House Corona staff, the whatever it is, is now sending out warnings saying that the virus is extraordinarily widespread. Is this too little too late? I mean what goes through your mind when you see the, let's call it an evolution of thinking coming out of the White House?

Mayor: Rich, you sir, are a diplomat to call that evolution. I think five months later is way too late. Look, I was here when we had the Ebola crisis and it was so different working with President Obama and his team, where you had the national government focused from day one, giving clear, smart guidance, helping localities to do what only we can do. It has been such a struggle with this administration in Washington, starting with the fact that we never had testing when we needed it. And we still don't have the kind of testing we need. No, they've never gotten it right. I wish they had listened to Dr. Fauci a lot more and a lot earlier. But we, in New York City, have learned that we're going to make things happen no matter what. And really New Yorkers have given the whole country a lesson, Rich, by being so tough and disciplined and smart about this. And we've proven that if you help people to realize the right way to do things, the face coverings, the social distancing, all the things we've done, that people will buy into it and make it work. And that's what New Yorkers have done.

Moderator: Next we have Christopher from Gothamist and WNYC.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. First question for you is about some parties that were happening this past weekend. There was seemingly a large one underneath the Kosciuszko Bridge in Brooklyn, and another one on a boat that had docked in the Lower East Side. Has the Health Department been tracking how these parties may or may not have been impacting cases in the city? Are there many clusters linked back to large parties in New York City and are contact tracers finding cases that went back to parties like these?

Mayor: Thanks for the question, Christopher. First of all, whenever we find something where people are not distancing properly and not using face coverings, gathering in too large numbers, whatever it may be, the Sheriff's Office has done an amazing job intervening as have other agencies. So, job one is find those things, stop them. Overwhelmingly, we've seen compliance to be fair. Overwhelmingly, New Yorkers, including bars, restaurants, everyone has done this right. But where we see something wrong, we got to go in and stop it immediately. But in terms of what we've seen the follow through, generally – and I'll turn to Dr. Varma – but I'll say generally what we are seeing is not so much, again from outdoor activities. Indoors remains the bigger concern and overwhelmingly we've been blessed here in New York City that we have not seen a lot of clusters and people have handled things right. But I think it's fair to say our greatest concern has remained with indoor activities. Go ahead, Dr. Varma.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah, I think that – Mr. Mayor, I think you covered all of the important points here. We haven't seen any specific activities traced to large gatherings repeatedly. We do interview patients and ask them about attendance at gatherings. We find that you know, in the past few weeks, anywhere from 10 to 20 percent of people report being at any type of gathering that may have been a risk for this infection. But we haven't seen any large clusters specifically associated with any of these events. That said, we need to remain extremely vigilant for any types of these events. And one of the most important things New Yorkers can do is to continue to get themselves tested even if they don't have symptoms because it is always possible that they could acquire infection somewhere, and the sooner we can identify it, the better off we'll be.

Question: Thank you. My second question has to do with the CCRB data that was released last weekend and that has been reported on in a few outlets. The basic takeaway is that one in nine NYPD officers currently serving on the force, has a documented record of misconduct. And there's seven or eight officers who have been found to have engaged in misconduct over and over again, and had been promoted in the process. So, I just wanted to get your reaction to seeing those numbers and seeing these cases? And what do you think it says – how do you feel when you see the stat that one out of every nine NYPD officers has a documented record or misconduct like that?

Mayor: Well, Christopher, I think it's a lot more complex than that. I think – the first of all, we want that transparency and I, for years, called for the Legislature to give us the right to be transparent with these records. And we finally won that right a few weeks ago. I want that out there, but you know, there's a whole different range of kinds of issues you're going to see. Some very major and the major ones and the consistent patterns need intensive follow up. And there are certainly some people who are on the police force, who shouldn't be, just like those people in every other department in the city who shouldn't be. They are few. But when we find that, we've got to act quickly. But I don't want that to be mistaken for the fact that the vast majority of officers do their job and do it right. If they make mistakes, like every other human being, we want to address those mistakes. And a lot of those mistakes are the kind that can be addressed and are not major issues. So, it really comes down to the individual case. I don't take any of this lightly, but it comes down to the individual facts of each case.

Moderator: Next, we have Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hi, good morning. Happy Monday, everyone. I wanted to ask Commissioner Criswell, and you, the Mayor, to perhaps explain – I have in my, you know, basic understanding of surge incidents in New York City, when it involves tropical storms, I've rarely seen one that would affect just the South Street Seaport in Lower Manhattan and not the outer boroughs and other parts of the city, especially those on the coast. So, could you explain if there is a predicted impact to places like Staten Island, the southern parts of Queens and Brooklyn, and even the Bronx, by the Long Island Sound and what are some of the plans you're doing to prevent that flooding?

Mayor: Sure. I'll start and turn to the Commissioner. Katie, it's a great question. Look, every storm is different and we also know some things are eternal. Of all the parts of the city one of the places that is the lowest – you know that has the greatest vulnerability and the most people in businesses, is Lower Manhattan. So, it really, sadly, hits a lot of different standards simultaneously. But it really depends on the individual storm and those temporary measures and the more permanent measures, most obviously things like the Rockaway boardwalk, are meant to be wherever we sense a danger, but some places are particularly vulnerable. Go ahead, Commissioner.

Commissioner Criswell: [Inaudible] it really does depend on the type of storm. And there's a lot of factors that go into it. The wind speed, the direction that the storm is coming from, the time of day. And so, we take all of that information and we input it into our modeling software. And in that modeling software, it shows us the areas of inundation that we need to be concerned about. And so, for this storm, the storm surge is looking to be about one to two feet as a worst case scenario. And the places of inundation really are just in the South Street Seaport area. Will we see some minor coastal flooding in some other areas? Yes, just like we do with severe thunderstorms or other types of storms. But for this particular storm, that's the area of most concern.

Mayor: Go ahead, Katie.

Question: My second question is about schools opening. And I'd asked you this question a few weeks ago about the use of non-school space, particularly in districts that are already overcrowded. So, can you give an update, you know, just especially for parents who want to know if their child is going to be going to school in a library or in some cultural institution – how many spaces have you secured and what will that look like?

Mayor: Yeah, we are definitely building that out right now, School Construction Authority is all over that. We will have more to say in the coming days on that as we secure more spaces. And it really depends, obviously. We prefer spaces, strongly, that are very near the school because it's hard to support the ongoing effort if there's too much disconnect from the school and any kind of auxiliary space. So, moving apace, we are definitely finding some spaces for that and for childcare, and we'll have much more to say on that in the coming days.

Moderator: Next we have Henry from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: Good, Henry – how you been?

Question: I'm good. The Red Sox took one on the chin yesterday. I'm surprised that you've been able to smile this morning –

Mayor: Henry, first of all, it's a damn good game. So, as a baseball fan, I will just say, I relish a good game. Also, it really helps to have pitching if you're a Major League Baseball team, which my team apparently does not have much of, but kudos to the Yankees. I think they are World Series bound from everything I can tell right now.

Question: I think the pandemic has made you a much more generous baseball fan than you have been over the past several years.

Mayor: It's brought peace to my soul.

Question: Quite remarkable, really. That could be the news, but I doubt it. My question here is about the borrowing authority from Albany. Has there been any progress on that at all? Is that a dead issue or is it still alive? Where does that stand?

Mayor: There hasn't been any immediate movement, Henry, but I think it's a very much a live issue. Look, we are weeks away, tragically – just weeks away from having to follow through on what we voted on in the June budget. You know, the Council voted and I constructed with them a budget that we hoped and prayed would not have large layoffs. And we were working very hard with our colleagues in labor to try and avert that. And we're fighting for a fair stimulus plan in Washington, but all of those things are still question marks. And I know folks in Albany are watching the situation. So, I don't think it's off the table. And I think it could be one of the things we need to avert those layoffs. Go ahead.

Question: The Comptroller, the City Comptroller, has come out with a report on the budget that's somewhat critical of the budget making. It talks about at least a half-a-billion dollars in risks. You've got a Financial Control Board, which is going to be controlled pretty much by the Governor. And you've got a situation where the City's credit rating is already on a negative watch. How worried are you that the State might erode some of your budget authority and that the City's credit rating might take a negative hit, which would increase our costs of borrowing?

Mayor: Henry, look, last year, the City's credit rating went up and for decades, this City has become stronger and stronger – up until February – stronger and stronger economically, more and more fiscally responsible and strong. We have the greatest reserves we've ever had in our history, as of February. So, I think in terms of the rating agencies and all, they're looking at all governments right now with concern, but ours has been one that's been particularly strong. I think the budget was a sound budget and a smart budget, given what we're going through. The fact that we said, as painful as it is, and it's something that I do not want to do, but we said out loud very clearly that we will institute layoffs of 22,000. Think about this for a moment, 22,000 people. It's a huge, painful number, but that will happen October 1st if we cannot get the kind of

support we need. That's obviously fiscally responsible, but it's something that I hope to avert for the good of everyone in this city. So, no, I think it's quite clear. I think the Legislature understands very, very strongly what New York City is doing to take the right measures right now. And that's a crucial part of this equation, too. So, we're going to find our way through, we're going to do whatever it takes, but really, Henry, what we need is that stimulus to be acted on immediately in Washington, that could change everything for all of us.

Moderator: Next, we have Sydney from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor, I wanted to see where your Community Affairs Unit stands in its investigation into the woman who has been yelling racial slurs at her neighbor on Staten Island who is a Black cop.

Mayor: Sydney, I'm glad you raised it because I want to get an update, too. I saw the video. It's very, very troubling. Thank you for bringing it to all of our attention. Absolutely unacceptable. And I know a full investigation was being done, including, obviously, NYPD Hate Crimes was looking at the situation, but I don't have the latest update. I will get that for you today.

Question: Okay. I have a second question. I wanted to know whether you submitted a Department of Transportation application before you painted your Black Lives Matter street murals across the city, and what your plan is for other groups that now want to paint their own messages on city streets. Are you planning to outright deny every group that applies to do so since you've already said no to two groups? What's your criteria? And maybe Commissioner Trottenberg, if you can speak to the DOT application process for approving these and how the agency makes a determination on these requests?

Mayor: Yeah, Sydney, let me separate the pieces here. We haven't said no to people. We've said, if you want to apply, you can apply, but there's a process. Look, the fact is that what I decided to do with the Black Lives Matter murals, and this came out of a meeting at Gracie Mansion weeks ago with community leaders and activists who said, this would be such an important thing for this city to declare officially. That is something, again, transcends all normal realities because we are in a moment of history where this had to be said and done. That's a decision I made. But the normal process continues for anyone who wants to apply. Go ahead, Commissioner, why don't you outline that.

Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation: Anyone can apply through our public art program. And we're happy to get you the details on the application process. But I think as the Mayor has said, the City does have discretion as well on picking those projects.

Moderator: Last two for today. Next, we have Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call, appreciate you taking the question. So, two weeks ago, I asked you about the Department of Education's plan for the 150,000 students who rely on safe school buses to get them to school. You said, "school buses are clearly part of the mix, we have to do it safely." But now your administration has put out a reopening plan that acknowledges that buses will only carry one-quarter of the normal capacity and that parents

should drive their children to school where possible, which as, you know, is the opposite of safety given that six children under the age of 12 were killed by drivers last year. So, what do you think will happen to street safety if tens of thousands of parents are driving their kids to school every day?

Mayor: Gersh, we are dealing with a pandemic. We don't have the ability to do what we normally do with school buses because we have to provide social distancing. This is something that will go on for a matter of months but only for a matter of months. And this is a choice that we have to make in light of the realities we face. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. I'll ask an unrelated question then as a second one. So, you talked about Open Restaurants, which is great that you're announcing it so early so the restaurants can plan. A lot of restaurateurs are already tweeting at us saying, well, why stop the Open Restaurants at all and why wait until June 1st to restart it? There are plenty of restaurants saying they'd love to do this all year long with blankets or as, you know, because of global warming the planet is, the city is warmer, you know, in winter. So, why stop this?

Mayor: Yeah. We're looking at that right now, Gersh. What I wanted to say, first of all, we started it to test it. It was an extraordinary success. Then we said, we'll go to October 31st, which I think is clear in terms of whether you could get a whole lot of time in that way if you're a restaurant. We're going to look at whether we can go farther this year. That's still an open question, but I think it's really important for the restaurateurs and everyone in that industry, and everyone in communities to know it's coming back next year so they can plan. And it's been an extraordinary success. We're going to see how far we can take it.

Moderator: Next, we have Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah, good morning, everyone. I had another school related question. A colleague of mine has a story out today describing problems and challenges that students have had with online learning and summer school. Together, those include, you know, the teacher being unknown to students, sporadic live instruction, students not particularly keen to do live online office hours when those are available. I was wondering if you could share your assessment of how summer school has gone and if there are any takeaways for the fall semester. Thank you.

Mayor: Yeah. Thank you, Shant. I haven't gotten a particularly new update compared to what we saw in the spring. And honestly, Shant, there's no one I've talked to in education from the Chancellor on down who relishes more online learning. We are trying to maximize in-person learning for the good of our kids because we know it makes a world of difference. Online is a tool we will use when we need to use it, but it's inherently imperfect. So, do we learn each week how to make it a little bit better? Absolutely. And that direct contact with students and their teachers helps, but nothing replaces in-person learning. Go ahead.

Question: I mean, given that it sounds like there'll be, you know, some form of online learning as part of the fall semester, could you share what some of the takeaways have been for you and the DOE since online learning started? You know, you talked about learning a little bit every week, any specific examples come to mind?

Mayor: Yeah, absolutely – more contact with students with either guidance counselors, teachers, individual contact, even if it's less than it would be in the classroom helps. You know, that any time there is that ability of a student to express what they're dealing with and what help they need, or for a professional to notice the kind of support they need that helps. So, you know, you always want to maximize that, but it will never be as good as in person. That's why our plan calls for maximizing in-person learning so long as we can do it safely.

So, everybody, look, let me finish with this. You know, we, as a city, again, a lot to be proud of, of how people have fought back over these last months. Now, we have a new challenge today, a storm coming. Hopefully what the Weather Service has told us is true and it will not have too much impact, but we are getting ready no matter what. The most important thing, be there for each other. New Yorkers are so good at this. I saw it after Hurricane Sandy, and it was one of the most moving things I've seen in my life, how people were there for each other in neighborhoods, how people saved each other, no matter what was going on and stood up for each other. Let's bring that spirit to everything we do. That's how we're fighting back against the coronavirus. That's how we'll get through this storm bearing down on us now. And that's how we'll bring New York City back. Thank you, everybody.

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