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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everybody. I want to talk, in a moment, about the first day of the new school year. And it certainly symbolizes a new beginning every year. It's a time of great hope and possibility every year. This year, it's going to take on so much greater meaning as we fight back from the coronavirus crisis, as we make sure our kids have the bright futures they deserve. We're going to have a lot to say about that in a moment. But first I want to talk about a great New Yorker who we lost in the last few days, Claire Shulman, former borough president of Queens. This is a true New York story. Claire Shulman always wanted to do something to help people and she had a passionate what-you-see-is-what-you-get way about her. And she would make things happen wherever she went. She started out as a PTA president in Bayside, and she let people know that the school had to be better for her kids and everyone's kids. She became a nurse and served people in need, and she brought that compassion forward and everything she did in her life – this is someone who came up from the grassroots. She wasn't part of a political dynasty. She wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth. She was just someone who wanted to serve her fellow Queens residents, and she did so with extraordinary tenacity and an understanding of what life was like in the neighborhoods of Queens. Extraordinary tenure, 16 years as borough president, making sure that Queens got its fair share and making lives better for so many people in her beloved borough. So, for everyone in Queens today who knew Claire Shulman or heard about what she did for all of you and for all of New York City, we mourn her passing, and her family is in our thoughts and prayers today.

Now, as I said, Claire Shulman got her start in the PTA, so let's go back to education. She was involved in the PTA. I was involved in PTA in my kids' school. So many parents get involved because we care. We want to see the best for our kids. And every day here at City Hall, every day at the Department of Education, we think about the children that we serve. We think about the families we work for and what we owe to them. What we owe to them is the very best possible start of the new school year. And what we owe to them is every effort, every effort imaginable to make sure our schools are healthy and safe for our kids, for our families, for our educators, for our staff, for everyone as we move forward. So, I want to show you a little bit of what's being done. We have just under a month until school begins. But I want to show you what's already been done and is being done as we speak to get our schools ready. So, I have a little video I want you to watch.

[...]

So, that just gives you some indication of the preparations underway already. I want to thank everyone who's a part of this, all the custodial service staff that's working so hard, and I've met a

lot of these men and women. They care deeply about our kids. They are doing this work because they know how important it is to get it right. Everyone at the School Construction Authority, who's working hard all the time to improve our school facilities. Folks have been working now for months and months, and we still have weeks ahead to continue to improve and focus every inch of the school on safety and health. Now, look, the message in that video is whatever our schools need they're going to have. We're going to send them the supplies in great bulk before school begins and then constantly resupply as needed. This is about everything, everything a school can need, whether it's the hand sanitizer or the wipes or soap, you name it, face shields, surgical masks. Whatever our educators need, whatever the staff needs, whatever our kids need, we're going to make sure it's there. So, this is about being ready. It's about moving past fear to resiliency, getting ready to have a school year where our kids get served in a safe way and putting in place the precautions needed.

Now the point that we keep making, whatever the school needs, it will get, and we are establishing a new hotline for principals. Principals will get the information later today. The hotline will be up and running this week so that principal can call if there's anything they need. If they need additional PPEs for their educators, if they need additional cleaning supplies, it will be immediately delivered. Any principal can call with any request and there'll be action right away to get it to them. Everything our educators need, of course, will be provided for free. Their health and safety is crucial here. So, I want people to be clear – and I know the Chancellor feels this deeply – that we need our educators and our staff to know that all of this support will be in place for them ahead of school opening and then if anything comes up where there needs to be rapid response, we can do rapid resupply to schools, just a phone call away. Now the Chancellor is not only going to give the order. The Chancellor himself is going to go out and do unannounced spot inspections of schools to make sure that everything's in place before and during the school year. We're going to have ongoing monitoring by a number of Department of Education officials, unannounced safety checks to make sure that things are right for the whole school community.

Now, let me turn to another very important matter as we fight the coronavirus. Obviously, everything we're doing right now is to beat back this disease so that we can start moving forward as a city, so people could get their livelihoods back, so people can have the assurance that we're getting safer. This is about, of course, our schools, it's about small businesses, it's about every part of our lives. What we need to always do is if we see a problem act on it very, very quickly. I talked to you a few days ago about a concern we had about Sunset Park, Brooklyn. And since then there's been a massive outreach effort. 7,300 doors have been knocked, 77,000 robocalls, 35,000 live calls talking to residents of Sunset Park. Over the last few weeks, we've done 5,200 tests, almost 800 of them through mobile vans, just in the last few days. Here's what we know at this point. We do not see a cluster situation at this point in Sunset Park, based on the information we gleaned over the last few days from this intensive testing. We do see individual households with specific problems and those households are being engaged intensely to ensure that they quarantine, that they safely separate. And what we're finding is actually a very, very strong response. The vast majority of households, readily working with our Test and Trace team to safely separate because they understand the extent of the challenge and they're working with us to keep the disease contained so it doesn't spread in the community as a whole.

Now we've got to continue this focus on testing in Sunset Park. So, this week at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, there will be free testing available to all members of the community, including antibody testing, and the City will provide a shuttle bus in Sunset Park to get folks to the Brooklyn Army Terminal for free testing. There will be pick-up and drop-off at 6th Avenue and 44th Street, as well as 7th Avenue and 60th Street. It will be going from 9:00 AM to 6:30 PM every day, this week. And everyone will be kept safe, obviously, with face coverings when they're on that bus. And the important thing here is, if you live in Sunset Park and you haven't yet been tested, or you haven't been tested recently, please take advantage of this free testing. It will help us all. We'll keep giving you updates. But we do know, again, that we do not have a cluster situation there at this point based on the information we have. And we do know that with our intensive outreach, to those who – families that have at least one person who's tested positive, we're seeing about a 90 percent compliance rate with safely separating. And again, we are doing constant follow-up with those families to make sure that continues to be the case.

Now, meanwhile, right in the same neighborhood, you know, we gave a lot of warnings in the last days of last week. I think a lot of people heard that there was a problem in Sunset Park. So, you'd think it would be the last place that anyone would choose to do an illegal gathering that would put other people's lives in danger. But unfortunately, that's just what some people did. A small number of people in the scheme of things, but enough people to be worried about. Several hundred gathered in indoor spaces. Exactly what we cannot have. Two illegal raves, in fact, in Sunset Park. The Sheriff's Office stepped in quickly, broke up these raves. They are holding accountable those who organized them. It's just unacceptable. I want to be abundantly clear. You cannot organize a large gathering that's going to put people's lives in danger, or you will suffer the consequences. And I want to commend everyone at the Sheriff's Office. They've been vigilant. They've really been heroes throughout this crisis. They broke up these two gatherings quickly. And I'll say to everyone, we all understand that people are feeling cooped up and looking for things to do, but whatever you are looking to do, you have to do it the safe way. You cannot take the chance of endangering other people's lives.

Now, we'll get some updates as we continue to battle back this disease. We do see day by day, week by week, some real improvement and some specific steps towards our reopening. And a couple of things today that are notable because they are things that people love and they're starting to come back to life. A little step towards normalcy. And so, the State announced some additional standards over the last few days. For some people, this is truly a passion – bowling, bowling alleys will reopen at 50 percent capacity and that's happening today. And then next Monday, museums, aquariums, and other low risk cultural spaces can open at 25 percent capacity. And this comes with a whole host of precautions. There's timed ticketing, staggered entry, everyone has to wear face coverings, constant cleaning. So, the State rules are very stringent, as they should be, but it is a good step forward to give people some other options, but safe options so we can keep moving forward.

Let's go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold 200 patients, today's report 57. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals ICUs, threshold 375 patients, and today's report 264. And three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold 15 percent, today, once

again, one percent. That is my favorite testing number besides zero and again, commend all New Yorkers for the progress we've made. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Chancellor Carranza, the Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps Dr. Ted Long, Sheriff Joe Fucito, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Courtney from NY1.

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

Mayor: Good, Courtney. How are you doing?

Question: I'm good, thank you. So, my first question today is about a situation we've been reporting on in Midtown and Hell's Kitchen. I know other outlets have been reporting on it as well. Residents have complained that there's been an increase in homeless people on the street. We obviously know there is a high concentration of hotels that are now housing homeless individuals in that area. Wondering if you're aware of any problem there, if you witnessed any of it yourself, or you think the City has to respond to it?

Mayor: Thank you, Courtney. No, of course, I'm aware of it. Want to make really clear, I'm concerned anytime I hear that there might be something causing a problem for a neighborhood. We've had a lot of City personnel out to monitor the situation, to address it. I'm certainly going to go look for myself as well. What we know is that as a result of the coronavirus, we did have to move some shelter residents out of congregate shelter into hotels. This was not something we normally would have wanted to do at all. And it did cause some challenges, but we're addressing them case by case on the ground. Anyone who sees a problem, they should call 3-1-1. It will be addressed immediately. And, Courtney, it's important to note that as the situation, the health situation has continued to improve, we're going to start the process of figuring out where we can get homeless individuals back into safe shelter facilities and reduce the reliance on hotels. Hotels is certainly not where we want to be in general and we're going to start that process immediately. Go ahead.

Question: And then the other question – unrelated – is about the DNC. Obviously, that starts tonight. We saw you have a role a few years ago. We see your election countdown on the table. Do you plan on having any role this week? Do you plan on speaking any panels or because of the, you know, widdled down version of the DNC you're not involved as much as perhaps you would like to be?

Mayor: Yeah, Courtney. No, it's actually about what we're dealing with – this, for me, is not a time for politics at all. I really do appreciate the hard work that's going on in the Democratic Party, to unify our party, to come up with a more progressive vision for the future, and I think great work was done on that by the platform committee to help ensure that Joe Biden and

Kamala Harris are in the White House, and we have a Democratic US Senate. There's a lot of great work going on, but that's not my focus. My focus is what we have to do here in the midst of this ongoing crisis. So, I really have not been interested in being involved in political work right now. This is the work I have to do. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah, good morning, everyone. I wanted to start by following up on Courtney's question about some quality of life issues being blamed on homeless people who've recently moved to areas like Hell's Kitchen. You said that the City is addressing those issues on a case by case basis. I mean, given that, you know, these kinds of issues might have been foreseen, is there a more comprehensive plan that you have in mind beforehand? Is there something more comprehensive you can say to New Yorkers in these neighborhoods who are concerned right now?

Mayor: Yeah. Shant, I do know – I've heard deeply their concern and I want to make sure we're addressing their concern. We also, of course, by law and morally have to take care of anyone who, God forbid, has become homeless. You know, I always say, there but for the grace of God go we. So, what happened was, again, a crisis that forced us to have to use hotels, we're now starting the process of reducing the reliance on hotels. And the more we can do that – and I think that's the big plan that you a note, Shant, is make sure we can start to get people out of those hotels, relieve some of the pressure on those communities, but do it in a way that's really safe for everyone involved, and starting with those who are homeless. But on the specific quality of life issues, it's incumbent upon every City agency involved to get out there and solve them. And they are solvable problems. And that's the instruction I've given to every agency. There's a piece of this that different agencies have, obviously. Some of it is social services, homeless services, some is Department of Health, NYPD, Sanitation – I've instructed all of them to address these issues as they come up and make sure that neighborhood residents see that these concerns are being addressed.

Go ahead.

Question: Yeah, thanks for that. Yeah, as far as relocating homeless people out of hotels, do you have any kind of timeline, even if it's a rough one? And then taking, for example, Hell's Kitchen, which I think has about eight hotels where homeless people are being housed. Yeah, in those terms, can you say, like, by end of year, it'll be down to four? Or anything like that?

Mayor: Now, we'll be able to say more as we, one, continue to monitor the health situation – that's the crucial part here, Shant – and identify space that will work in our existing shelters. We've got to make sure, you know, that – we obviously had a problem, because of having a lot of people in close proximity as the coronavirus hit. We are not going to allow that problem to occur again, but we do need to start the process of getting out of the hotels. So, we'll I'm more to say on that, as both the plans are more deeply developed and as we see what the health situation shows us.

Moderator: The next is Roger Stern from 1010 WINS.

Question: Yes. Mayor, as I know you well know there, you know, there's been a tremendous amount of violence over the past few days. Yesterday, a man who is lighting a candle in tribute to a shooting victim was himself shot dead. You have the President tweeting to the effect that you know, if the Mayor can't fix this, I will. What do you have to say about all this?

Mayor: Roger look, first of all, let's start at the beginning. It's just painful. It's horrible when you see a situation like the one you talked about, someone's there at a memorial and see an act of violence like that is very, very painful and it should not happen in this city. We are dealing with a perfect storm. I keep telling everyone, I think every-day New Yorkers understand it. We have been put through hell on the city. Everything fell apart simultaneously because of the coronavirus. We're now building it back up and the NYPD is moving officers where they're needed, engaging with the community more deeply to fight crime, increasing gun arrests, but it will take time, and we need the whole picture to come back into focus. We need the court system to get working again. We need a lot of things to work so we can really stop this problem. But it's painful. The President blusters and the President tries to draw attention to himself and rarely has much to back it up. The bottom line is, the NYPD is, obviously, as they have done for decades upon decades, they are the people who can help us address this issue and end this violence and that's who I'm relying on. Go ahead.

Moderator: Roger, do you have a follow-up?

Question: Yes, I do. Last week I met with a young man who manages a bakery in Chinatown. He had hoped to talk to you about ideas. He had to help the people there, was offended that he felt that you just sort of turned and walked away as it was trying to talk to you and thought you were there more for a photo op than anything else? Anything you'd like to say?

Mayor: Well, I appreciate your asking Roger, because, with all due respect to that young man, I think he's in a lot of pain, because everything that he's been through and his community has been through, but I listened to him very intently. And I also heard other people right next to them from the community who took a very different view of what should be happening to address the problem in the community. And I listened to everyone and saw that there was clearly a difference between people in the community and I thought it was not productive to end up having a debate between community members there. I said, I had heard both sides and we would work on the issue. But, no, I heard him very clearly. And I understand people are in a lot of pain, Roger. And I understand people are quick to be upset about everything nowadays, because everyone has been through so much, but it's just not fair, that's not what happened at all. And if people want to, you know, in the larger public discourse – I think nowadays everyone wants to be offended by everything. It's just not accurate. I heard him and I heard other people from the community. I talked to a number of people. They happened to have different viewpoints. I respected all the viewpoints, but no, no one was disrespected. They were heard. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and to the Chancellor. My questions are about the school reopening. My first is specifically about District 75 students. I haven't seen much in the

reopening plan that speaks to the specific needs of those students, particularly those who have one-to-one aides, need more classroom space and other accommodations. So, can you speak a little bit about that? If you have a – even an inclusion class where half of the students require a one-to-one [inaudible] or something like that. How does that work out? So, if you want to talk a little bit about that.

Mayor: Yeah. And, Katie, you've asked this – and I appreciate that you've asked this kind of question several times. It's a really important area. Doesn't usually get enough attention. But for any families, any parents with kids with special needs, nothing could be more important. And they're dealing with so many challenges before the coronavirus and even more now. So, I do really appreciate that you've raised it persistently, and, Chancellor, why don't you speak to that?

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Yeah. Katie, thank you. So, there are a number of detailed plans that are happening and they're mostly those D75 schools and in particular schools that have the specialized programs. In addition to that, for example, D75 five schools had two additional models that they could implement, which would give additional time in-person for students that are the most fragile. Every building's floor plan when those dimensions were given to principals, there was special attention paid to those classroom situations where you would need more space. And we've given not only principals, but also the building engineers the latitude to adjust those plans to accommodate for those individual needs. There are literally tens of thousands of these kinds of scenarios. So, to incorporate every single one of those individual scenarios into comprehensive plan, it's obviously just not feasible, but that work is happening at the school sites, and we are supporting what's happening from a centralized perspective, as well, with additional wherever they need to be able to get into in-person learning.

Mayor: Go ahead, Katie.

Question: Yeah. And then, also a little bit about back to schools, if a student chooses the all remote option or even a hybrid, who's their teacher when they're remote? Is it someone from their school? Is it someone random? This question has come up a lot in terms of, you know, who will be teaching? And if a teacher chooses the remote option for health reasons, who will they be teaching, that sort of thing? I think there's still a lot of unanswered questions.

Mayor: There are. And I'll start and then pass to the Chancellor. Katie, this is – everyone acknowledges it's a work in progress. It's a – that said, a work in progress where a lot has already been put together and more will be over the course of the next month. And then some of this will be determined in the actual doing of it, like so much of the rest of life. We are in a full-blown crisis. This is – as I say, this is a wartime situation. Not everything will be perfect, but our job is to do the best we can for our kids and our families. And I have a lot of faith in our educators. They know a lot about how to be resourceful and creative. But, with that said, you're absolutely right, the more answers we can give people the better. So, Richard, why don't you at this point in time, talk about where we are as we continue to develop these plans?

Chancellor Carranza: Sure. So, Katie, again, some critical information that's just recently now become available. For example, the number of students that have chosen remote learning, for example, critical number for principals to be able to program their schools. Also, the number of

teachers that have requested medical accommodations, also critically important because now we know who can be in person, who won't be in person. Your assumption is right that if a teacher as requested and is granted a medical accommodation need, they will be in remote learning mode. They'll be working, but there'll be a mode of instruction will be from a remote location. So, our goal has always been that students that are remote learning will have teachers from their school or a teacher from their school. There'll be some continuity. Obviously, that is our goal, but that's not a guarantee, because it's going to depend on how many teachers at that school are in remote mode. How many are in person learning? Obviously, if you have less students per class, you need additional staffing. So, we are in the throes of all of those detail planning processes right now. We're working very closely with our unions, both our administrator union, CSA, and our teacher's union, UFT. We're working through all the logistics about how that's going to work, but our goal continues to be that students will have instruction in remote learning mode from teachers or a teacher in their school, wherever possible.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Luis from New York [inaudible]

Question: Hello. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: How are you, Luis?

Question: Very Good. How are you?

Mayor: Moving forward, always, brother.

Question: That's excellent. Considering how the end of September is just six weeks away. Will street fairs and other similar items be given the okay for October. I mean, as long as our health metrics remain as good as they are today?

Mayor: Luis, look, we'll look at that, but I think the likelihood, again, is that we are really trying to focus people away from gatherings. And I also think the vast majority of organizations that host them don't want to do them in this environment. We've seen a huge number of organizations make their own decision, that they don't want to do gatherings this year and want to wait until we've moved forward further in addressing the disease. So, we'll say something formal on that shortly, but that's what I'm seeing on the ground.

Question: Okay. Regarding the Governor's loosening on New York City's reopening restrictions, aside from the obvious fact that our health metrics have been stellar for weeks any idea what else might've moved the Governor to take this recent turn in direction?

Mayor: Look, as I've said many times and it's something that really should be noted, acknowledged, the State and the City have been an overwhelming agreement in terms of each of the steps we've taken. And I know the Governor and the State take a very cautious approach and I commend them for that. I think the specific actions last few days were about pinpointed re-openings with lots of protections in place. So, that's where we need to continue to focus, being

very careful that if we open anything up that we've put all the right restrictions on it and limits on it. And if we can't do that, then it's probably not something to open right now.

Moderator: The next is Julia Marsh from the Post.

Question: Hey, good morning. Happy Monday, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Happy Monday, Julia, how you doing?

Question: Good. A couple of questions for you this morning. The first is about the Parks Department. As you know, the budget was cut by \$85 million, many green spaces are overgrown and strewn with trash, especially in the outer boroughs. So can you address what the [inaudible] city's doing to ensure these spaces are maintained, especially during COVID when it's one of the few safe public spaces to get some exercise and fresh air?

Mayor: It's a very important question. I appreciate it, Julia, it's a tough one. Julia, the budget cuts you've seen already, unfortunately may only be just the beginning. And I'm praying and hoping we can all avert further cuts, further layoffs, but that, you know, we've, I think all come to realization there's not going to be a federal stimulus right now. Which is really sad to say. We have got to focus on getting long term borrowing from Albany so we can avert the kinds of layoffs that would make the situation you'd talk about even worse. So I know Parks Department is going to do everything it can within the limits to keep parks clean. We obviously over the last couple of weeks, a lot of personnel were drawn off to deal with the impact of the storm. Those folks will now be able to return to other things. But I am, I'm certainly deeply concerned. I mean, I love our parks, spend a lot of time in our parks. It's going to be a struggle to keep them as clean as we want them to be if we have to go through with more layoffs. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. And then on a different topic, I just want to go back to something you said earlier. You said on the President's tweet that he blusters and the bottom line is the NYPD is going to do what they've done for decades and that's who you're relying on. But the union actually endorsed the President for reelection. So what's your responsive if the membership is actually siding with the President here and then you're relying on the NYPD to you know, control the crime situation?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a fair question, Julia. I have never, ever mistaken the rank and file of NYPD for their union leadership. Union leadership constantly says what's wrong with New York City, for years, decades, they have been the greatest naysayers in New York City. They're always talking about what's wrong. They never talk about what's right. They never try and be constructive. But the members of the union every single day, put on that uniform and protect people no matter what. And they have been thrown the biggest curve ball in history, a perfect storm of problems all at once. And yet men and women of the NYPD show up every single day and work hard to keep us safe. And you see amazing heroic stories all the time. And I do think we should pause for a moment every time you see one of those amazing stories, just a few days back, four officers went into a burning building in Queens and rescued people putting their lives on the line. They're not wearing, you know, fire protection. They just went in to save lives because that's what our police officers do. So they are as committed as ever – dealing with a lot

of challenges, but they're out there and they have been – they went through everything in this city, the 80's, 90's, everything that was so tough. And they fought back and they helped this city become the safest big city in America. And I want to affirm the number of gun arrests have been going up steadily over the last month. The NYPD is working more deeply with community members and leaders. They will turn this tide.

Moderator: The next is Mark Healey from Rockaway.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: How are you doing?

Question: I'm doing well. The question is for Chancellor Carranza. For students in integrated classroom teaching programs, how will the DOE implement the services of both content, teacher, and special-ed teacher when the student will be home for a part of the time?

Chancellor Carranza: So, thank you. Good question. So we are right now, developing with the UFT and CSA, what that team teaching approach is going to look like. So it's obviously going to be more than one teacher. It could be up to three teachers working in a group so that they have a handoff. What we have established is at the beginning of every day, school day, there will be a dedicated time for collaboration and coordination amongst teachers that are doing the in person and teachers that are doing the remote learning as well. So that we have a continuum of education, which is our education speak for everybody's on the same page in terms of the learning plan for the student. So those are being worked through as we speak. And that's part of what we're trying to make sure is clearer as we get to the first days of school.

Mayor: Go ahead Mark.

Question: We had Donald Conyers on our podcast last week, Mr. Mayer. And I was curious as to why you chose Mr. Conyers to be the First Deputy [inaudible] and Chancellor Carranza chose Donald to be the first ever deputy, First Deputy Chancellor and why do you think that his position is needed at this time?

Mayor: So I'll start Mark and pass to the Chancellor. I mean, this is a model that this Chancellor developed, which I think is the best structure we've ever had. You know, in the time, since we've had mayoral accountability, mayoral control of education, what we needed to do was strengthen the work of our superintendents, strengthen our sense of what was needed in each local community. And this is the work that the First Deputy Chancellor is charged with achieving. And Donald is someone who has literally devoted his entire life to the public school kids of New York City. He was a public school kid in New York City, himself, amazing success story. But he really understands this school system upside down and backwards. And understands what each school needs, each principal needs, you know, to be able to succeed. So I think that's why he is in this crucial role at this crucial time. Go ahead, Richard.

Chancellor Carranza: Yes. Mr. Mayor. So for all of the reasons that you said, I want to be really clear that when our previous First Deputy Chancellor Cheryl Watson-Harris was selected

as a superintendent of Dekalb County in Georgia, created the vacancy, we advertised a position. There were a number of applicants both internally and from across the country. Donald Conyers for all of his sterling resume, competed, interviewed, went through several interview panels with not only other administrators, but parents and students. So he competed for that position and he earned that position. Now the First Deputy Chancellor position is a critically important position because especially with Donald's experience having been a former principal, being a teacher, having been a superintendent in New York City, he understands the implementation of policy and how to make sure that schools are not only getting what they need, but there's also an air of accountability in terms of us being able to hold ourselves accountable, to make sure that we're serving our schools as well. So it's a critically important role. I think sometimes as New Yorkers, we become a little blasé about, well, it's just the school system. No. If Brooklyn, just Brooklyn, one of the five boroughs was its own independent school district, it would be the fourth largest school district in America, just Brooklyn. We're not even talking about Queens which would be four or five. So it's an immense, immense organization. And you need to have people whose eye is very much focused on the implementation of policies. And as the First Deputy Chancellor Donald's role is to make sure what's happening in schools is actually being implemented. And that the organization is functioning in support of students.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Sydney from Gothamist.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. So on Friday, the NYPD had admitted that they deployed facial recognition technology in their investigation and to Derrick Ingram, a Black Lives Matter activist whose Hell's Kitchen home was besieged by dozens of police officers, police dogs, helicopters. It happened earlier this month. You had previously said this arrest was not approved by high ranking police officials. So I'm wondering who exactly signed off on the use of the facial recognition technology for this case? And do you feel it's ever appropriate to use that technology on activists engaged in public protests?

Mayor: Sydney, I really appreciate this question because I think it speaks to a lot of important matters. Very quickly, I'll say one, no facial recognition has no place as a tool to, in any way undermine or effect a public expression, public protest. Absolutely not. We need to be very sparing in our use of facial recognition technology. In a very complicated world, in a world where unfortunately we have dealt with violent acts of terror here in New York City, there is a place for facial recognition, but with really clear checks and balances and very limited use. So that's the first point. In this case, obviously there was an individual who had committed a crime. That is pertinent here, but it does not take away the fact that we have to be very, very careful and very limited in our use of anything involving facial recognition. And those standards need to be reassessed. And it's something that I will do with my team and with the NYPD. Second, that arrest -- that attempt at an arrest should not have happened the way it did. Will not happen like that in the future. Was not approved by higher level leadership, anything like that should be approved by higher level leadership and handled the right way. So I'm very unhappy with everything that happened there, should not have happened. Won't happen in the future. Go ahead.

Question: Thank you. And I had also asked who signed off on the use of the technology if you want to answer that. And then on a school's question and this could be for the Chancellor and

you, or both of you would be great. Why are teachers not mandated to get the COVID-19 test? My understanding is they're just being asked and I'm wondering why it's not a mandate?

Mayor: Just finishing from the previous before I turned to the Chancellor. Sydney, again, we'll get you an answer on the specifics of that situation. But what I'm saying again is I know for a fact it was not approved at higher levels. And I want very, very clear standards going forward, not just for a situation involving protest, but in general. A very clear sharp standards of when and how facial recognition can be used when there has been a criminal act. Again, there was a criminal act that was being addressed here, but not the right way at all. So we'll come back with more information on that as we proceed.

On the question of testing, we want to respect the members of the unions here that are our educators. We've been working with the unions to figure out the best approach to testing. So far I'd say the discussions have led to a simple model that says it is available for all educators and all staff for free. And that we are strongly encouraging them all to take that up and that we want to do that on a regular basis going forward. But we're continuing those discussions to figure out the right way to actually put together the plan. One thing I can say for certain, any and all testing that our educators need, we'll have it available for free. Go ahead, Richard.

Chancellor Carranza: No more to add, sir. That's exactly where we are.

Mayor: Okay. So, as we wrap up today, look, I just want to say, first of all, again, a thank you to all New Yorkers. As we start another week, we start with amazing facts on the ground of how far this city has come back from the coronavirus. And every one of you, it's just those simple things. Every time you practice social distancing, every time you're putting on the hand sanitizer, every time you're wearing a face covering, it's working. Let's stick with it and let's see it -- every one of those small acts as a step toward our future. Really is amazing. It's almost unfathomable, but it's true how every single little small thing that every single one of eight million people has done day after day after day has added up to this result that we're now one of the safest places in America when it comes to fighting the coronavirus. And that should allow us to focus now more and more on our future. Because we are proving it can be done. And we are proving that we'll be able to move forward in the city. And that reminds me again, of how we have to focus on our kids. They are truly our future. They've been through so much. Now is the time to start giving them back what they need. The education, the love, the support, the mentorship that can only happen in a public school building. So, I want us to be about our hope, not our fear, our belief in our kids, our belief in our future, and recognize that the things we're doing really, really are moving us forward every day. And, in that spirit, we're going to prevail. Thank you, everybody.

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