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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS ANNOUNCES \$4 BILLION PLAN TO MAKE  
NEW SCHOOLS ALL-ELECTRIC, ELECTRIFY 100 EXISTING SCHOOLS**

**Kizzy Charles-Guzman, Executive Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice:** Good morning, everybody. Good morning.

**Audience members:** Good morning.

**Charles-Guzman:** We can do better than that. Good morning.

**Audience members:** Good morning.

**Charles-Guzman:** Yes. Awesome. My name is Kizzy Charles-Guzman, I'm the executive director of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. I want to welcome you and thank you for having us here. I am so thrilled to be here today to announce an incredible investment in our public schools, in the health of our students and our communities, and in environmental justice. This is something that is so close to my heart because as a former New York City public school student myself, and as someone who worked with so many of you in this room on air quality and environmental health issues since 2008, we know that we have to do better for our air, and our hearts and our lungs. So since 2008, we've been working on this. We knew then that New York City burned a billion gallons of heating oil every year, and that just 1 percent of the buildings generated more soot than all of the city's cars and trucks combined. Think about that for a moment.

So we passed stricter regulations and a lot of policies to clean up our air, but this administration knew that we still needed to go further because every ounce of toxic pollution that we remove from the air we breathe prevents premature deaths and heart and lung disease. And we know that children and communities thrive in healthy environments. We're tackling upstream, and my team is so fortunate to have so many agency partners here today who share that perspective. The School Construction Authority's here, Department of Education, Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Department of Environmental Protection, our deputy mayors, the New York Power Authority, and especially the person that I would like to introduce now, Mayor Eric Adams, who will take us off on this historic investment.

**Major Eric Adams:** Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you Kizzy, just for your work in this area. What grades are here? What grade's over here?

**Audience members:** Second.

**Major Adams:** Second?

**Audience members:** Third, four and five.

**Major Adams:** Third. And over here?

**Audience members:** Fifth.

**Major Adams:** Fifth. So we have second, third and fifth, right?

**Audience:** Fourth and fifth.

**Major Adams:** Fourth and fifth, got it. I remember being here with your amazing principal and team when I was borough president. I think you have a great food program, right? Growing healthy food and talking about food. This has always been an amazing school. Do you know who the school is named after?

**Audience members:** Yes.

**Major Adams:** You tell me.

**Audience:** Dr. Ronald E. McNair.

**Major Adams:** Okay. And on this side, who was he? Yes?

**Audience member:** Dr. Ronald E. McNair.

**Major Adams:** Who was he?

**Audience member:** He was an astronaut and he had a black belt when he was still alive before the incident.

**Major Adams:** Wow, you know even that. And to the educators that's here, people often talk about the power of school naming and why it's important to have schools that are named after significant people in the communities that students can understand. That is the answer to it. Every time a child comes into the school and walks into the building and they see that name, they're going to ask who is he and what has he actually carried out to allow himself to be named? Two weeks ago, I named a school after David Dinkins. Do you know who he was? Anyone knows who David Dinkins? He was... Okay, over here, I see your hand. You know? Who was he?

**Audience member:** I know him by his face, but I don't know what he (inaudible).

**Major Adams:** Okay. You know back there?

**Audience member:** He was a Black mayor.

**Major Adams:** All right. He was the first African American mayor in the City of New York. Do you know who was the second? Who was the second?

**Audience member:** (Inaudible.)

**Major Adams:** Close. Who was the second?

**Audience:** You.

**Major Adams:** Alright, love it. Love it. But that's that rich energy. And those of you who are educators, you know teaching is a calling. You yearn for that energy every morning. Even when our scholars don't get it 100 percent right, that experience of growing that they get just by asking and answering questions means a lot. And the lesson plan must not only be the academics, but what would make them emotionally intelligent and how do we develop their full personhood? And this school does this so well. I was so proud of the school when I was the Brooklyn borough president because it was innovative, it was always cutting edge, it was always stating that we could bring quality education into our communities. This school gave our children a private school education in a public school facility, and we need to give it up for the entire team.

And just believing. Just believing. And so, I want to thank Kizzy. Kizzy spent so much of her energy on environmental justice and she's just a real leader in this area. And that's why we're here at P.S. 5 in Bedford Stuyvesant. And I live near here on Lafayette Avenue, and so I know the school so well. This is about how we deal with climate chaos around the world. You have two mothers, I like to say. You have the mom that gave birth to you and you have Mother Earth. And we must love both those mothers because one gave birth, the other sustains us. And each time you see these storms that you're seeing... You saw what happened in Florida? It's because of global warming. You saw what happened last year when we had the heavy rain? It's global warming. And so, part of what we are doing today is to make sure we create an environment for the future.

At one time, we will have these hurricanes like Hurricane Ida and others. They will come every 100 years, but now they're coming often over and over again. So we have to be better prepared both proactively and also to prevent and be prepared for the future. It's clear we must make big changes in how we protect our environment, our children, our future and our families. Today we are announcing Leading the Charge, a \$4 billion program to electrify our city schools. This is so important. \$4 billion is more than \$4 million. That is a whole lot of money. It buys a whole lot of Game Boys. It's a lot of money that we're spending. And there are four main foundations to this new program, education, environment equity and our economy. Education. Every New York City school we build going forward would be fully electric. No more boilers, no more burning dirty fuel, no more contributing to asthma.

Anyone has asthma in here? Yes. All this is connected to the environment. And that is why we are here because there are high rates of asthma that's in this community and we chose this community first. We will create a healthier learning environment for our students. How many of you knew that bad fuel contribute to asthma problems? Right, that's so important. We have to connect the dots, connect the dots. The environment impact will be major. That's the second phase. Education was the first. The second is environment. Our city will never again build a new school that burns fossil fuel. Never again. This will be the single most impactful energy initiative under this administration to reduce emission emissions for city government operations. This is so important. Your school is first that we are doing it in. Give yourselves a hand. What we are going to do in our school system is the equivalent of removing 26,000 cars from the road. Cleaning our air, cleaning our environment.

And the third is equity. It is also part of our agenda. New York City would complete or start the conversion of 100 existing schools to all-electric heating by 2030. That is so important and it's an important initiative, replacing harmful fossil fuel burning boilers.

I was just downstairs in the basement. The boiler is loud. It burns fossil fuel which causes a bad environment. We're going to replace that system and we're starting with this school, Dr. Ronald McNair Elementary School. We are starting here first.

The McNair Elementary will become New York City's first existing school to eliminate the use of fossil fuel and provide all electric heating. We're going to ensure that cleaner air, healthy environment for our students and our communitie. Because not only does it impact the school, it impacts the community that we are living in right now like my neighborhood on Lafayette Avenue.

This would keep you and our hospitals of... From you having to go to the hospital and it will save lives. So the whole concept of leading the charge will boost our economy, expand the green workforce, and we're going to continue to support the training and development for the next generation of the green workforce.

By the time you graduate from school, there are going to be jobs in the green environment that many of you are going to be experts in. We're going to add a \$14 million program to hire and train a group of skilled trade workers, some of your family members.

How many of you have older brothers and sisters? So, they're going to be ready to do this job in the green market. We're excited about it. So this is more than new schools and building retrofits. We're making big investments in our future, our children, and our health.

We already committed \$2 billion to get this work underway. We're excited about it, and I want to just thank all the agencies involved, particularly the New York Power Authority and their president, CEO Justin Driscoll. Justin, thank you so much. You guys are continuing... and ladies are continuing to lead the way.

And we're doing something that's important. We're honoring Dr. McNair, who this school is named after. He was an astronaut. The second African American man to go to space. That's so important.

How many of you want to be an astronaut because of that? Love it. Love it. Look at that. He was a pioneer, devoted his life to science in a quest for knowledge. His mission was not just to explore space and break barriers, but to protect the Earth.

Listen to his quote. "We should allow this planet to be the beautiful oasis that she is and allow ourselves to live more in the peace she generates." So today, we honor him. But most importantly, we not only honor him, we honor you.

We say that you matter. You matter by having strong educational leadership, you matter by having the tools in your school, and you matter by ensuring the environment is cleaner for you. Just as we love and you love your mothers, we all love Mother Earth and we are going to protect her now and in the future. So I thank you for allowing us to start here at Dr. McNair's school. Thank you very much.

**Charles-Guzman:** Goodness gracious. Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for your leadership and for understanding and pushing us, right? The prevention is better than the cure. That's what we are here to do. I want to repeat something you just said, Mr. Mayor, because it is so important. Every new school we build moving forward will be fully electric. Our city will never again design and build a school that burns fossil fuels.

This is a big deal. Until recently, we would not have seen possible to electrify a school system that not too long ago was burning coal. What's different today is that we know that the climate crisis requires us to stop investing in equipment and infrastructure that hurts our health and hurts our planet.

And that is why we're leapfrogging our investments and we're going to focus on delivering the next generation of green, clean, and healthy school buildings. We're also leading by example, building on the work that we did with the Clean Heat program.

We will phase out the use of number four fuel oil in our schools four years ahead of what's required by local law without any capital investment in prolonging the life of those dirty boilers. We are starting with environmental justice communities to improve the air in areas that suffer from high rates of asthma attributed to air pollution. This is a huge step forward in decarbonizing our buildings and will help us reach our ambitious climate goals while also creating healthy and comfortable learning and working environments in the near term.

It will also help us grow our green workforce, as you heard, for the future and lead by example in how we're going to focus our capital investments on climate smart solutions and environmental justice.

All people, regardless of their race, their disability status, their age, their socioeconomic background, have a right to live, work, play, and learn in communities that are safe and free of harmful environmental conditions.

To the students in the room, I want to say we got you. This administration is taking our role in fighting the climate crisis very seriously. We got you. I'm proud that your school will be the first one to take the step to stop using fossil fuels.

To our agency partners in the room, I say thank you. I know this was hard. Thank you for the long sessions working through intricate details to make this historic commitment happen. And to our community partners and our advocacy organizations, I say we hear you. Thank you for your tireless efforts on behalf of our communities. We appreciate you. We can address climate change in our city with a focus on justice and health.

Thank you for your leadership, Mr. Mayor. And now, I will pass the mic to none other than the principal, Ms. Lena Gates.

**Lena Gates, Principal, P.S. 5 Dr. Ronald E. McNair:** Good morning.

**Audience:** Morning.

**Gates:** First of all, to our mayor, Honorable Eric Adams and his staff, to our Superintendent Brendan Mims, who is here with us today, to all of our elected officials in the building, to our community representatives, and to our School Construction Authority who helped this to happen to P.S. 5 today, and to our wonderful teachers and staff, I want to say good morning and thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to bring this project here to Public School Five, the Dr. Ronald McNair School.

What this project is going to do for us, first of all, it's going to make sure that this environment where our children are learning is going to be a safe and clean environment for them.

For our community, it's going to clean up the air in our community. Also, providing a safe environment for our community. And what it's going to do, again, for our schools is going to help us to begin to teach our children and instruct our children about what this whole project means. About clean air, about what their future is going to be like when they take on this responsibility.

These are the children that's going to pick up this project and they're going to move with it. We're doing this for them. Thank you very much. Thank you.

**Mayor Adams:** We are going to open to a few questions, but before doing so, today, this morning we lost a real giant in our city, Dr. Calvin Butts of Abyssinian Baptist Church. He was not only a spiritual leader, he was a dear friend and mentor. He was struggling with cancer and he transitioned this morning. And throughout my entire journey, Dr. Butts has just mentored me in some of the most difficult moments in the city. Speaking with him recently as we dealt with the issues around the migrant crisis and other crises, he has been a constant leader.

So the city lost the real giant, and our hearts go out to his family, and it goes out to the members of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, not only in the village of Harlem, but throughout this entire city. Thank you very much. We'll open to a few questions.

**Mayor Adams:** Katie. Students, that's Katie back there.

**Question:** Hi. I just wanted to ask what is the estimated cost for this and the projected timeline? I know going forward, the school will have this, but if someone from the DOE or School Construction or DEP or someone wants to talk about just the task of retrofitting buildings for this. We have a lot of old buildings in the city, so (inaudible.)

**Mayor Adams:** That's a nice shirt and tie.

**Anthony Feore, Deputy Commissioner of Energy Management and Chief Decarbonization Officer, Department of Citywide Administrative Services:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for the question. Anthony Fiore, Department of Citywide Administrative Services. So the total cost of the project to retrofit 100 schools to improve the lighting, improve the ventilation. We're committing \$4 billion as the mayor said over the next several years. Retrofitting these schools, it's a difficult task, but we are set to do it. We've spent many, many hours amongst all of city government operations. And I have to say I've been in city government for 23 years, there's never been a moment where city government has come together like it has now. It's an all hands on deck moment and we're coming together to effectuate these projects.

**Question:** Just to follow up on that, why only 100 and how were those 100 chosen?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. Students, that's Steve. He comes to all my press conferences. He's on radio. What station?

**Question:** WCBS.

**Mayor Adams:** WCBS. So when you hear his voice, you're going to say, we know that guy. 100 is a start. And what we did was we looked at those areas like here that were dealing with real asthma issues and other health-related issues to come up with the first 100. But our goal is every school. Every school, as I stated, by 2030, that's the goal. But this is just the start and our goal is to continue to move forward.

(...)

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. Okay. So students, this is the ... I should have all you students come up here next to me because this is the time that people like Katie ask me difficult questions. This is called off topic. They enjoy this part because this is the time they get to beat me up. So I want y'all to watch the off topic. So when you have to go in front of the classroom and read a book report or an essay, this is how I feel right now. Okay. See?

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** How are you, Kelly?

**Question:** I'm doing well. Early voting is the about start.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** There was an internal NYPD memo going out about heightened vigilance at polling centers. I wanted to get your response to that.

**Mayor Adams:** What school did you go to when you were a child?

**Question:** Well, I went to school in Florida.

**Mayor Adams:** Florida?

**Question:** I have a child here now who will be going to school.

**Mayor Adams:** Love it. Okay. No and smart on the part of the New York City Police Department. We monitor social media, we monitor communications throughout the city. Whenever there's chatter that indicates that something is going to happen, we like to place officers on high alert. If there's an incident that happens in another city somewhere and we pick up chatter, we like to use that intel to place our police officers on high alert. And it appears as though there was some chatter by extremist organizations and groups that gave an indication that they wanted to do something that's disruptive. And so the Police Department was on top of it. So, that's what we do all the time. If there's an incident, we like to stay on top of it right away.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I'm sure you've seen the many shops that are very openly selling marijuana without licenses. How big of an issue is this and what plans does the city have to address it?

**Mayor Adams:** When we legalized marijuana, some people didn't get the actual memo. They believe that you can just start selling it openly and there's a clear plan on how you could legally sell cannabis. And what we are doing now, we have to catch up to the law that's on the books to what is happening in the stores. Like a police officer can't just walk in and conduct an apprehension or an arrest or confiscate the item. There's a process. So we are partnering with the marshals, the sheriffs, and going in.

The head of the sheriffs, Anthony Miranda has been doing a series of things on going and doing that initial purchase, making sure you build the case so we could go and crack down and shut down these operations. Now in January, we're going to go back to Albany and modify some of the laws that we can go in and not have to go through these long procedures that we can immediately confiscate. And in those cases where you have habitual abusers of the system, they would be apprehended. But it's an issue. It's not at a crisis level. We are going to address it.

We targeted those trucks that were selling on the streets, using the marshals, using the sheriffs, and we're going to continue to crack down on these locations. We're asking people who identify a shop to immediately notify the local precinct, so we could start an operation there.

**Question:** On a separate topic real quick, if you don't mind.



**Mayor Adams:** Yeah. You know I like this guy.

**Question:** I appreciate that. We saw recently that private security's been hired to go into the subway system and look at fare evasion. Want to see how much that's costing the city. And how do you reconcile your cause that the subway system is relatively safe when we see extra security going down there?

**Mayor Adams:** Because as I stated that we are dealing with two issues. We're dealing with the actual six felonies we have a day. We want to turn those six felonies into no felonies. We're also dealing with how people are feeling. We have 3.5 million riders, and I'm going to keep saying this over and over again. 3.5 million people use our subway system and they get to and from their destination with no problems at all. But if you are seeing disorder, if you are seeing people loud, disruptive, cursing, acting disorderly, it's going to play into what you're feeling.

And one way of making sure you feel safe as well as going after those who commit crimes are the uniformed presence. People have stated... When I'm on the subway, I'm on the subway, a lot of us on all this week, I'm going to be on today. People stop me and they say we feel better when we see that uniformed officer walking through the trains. We see some form of security personnel. You have a number of MTA police that are with us. We put 1,000 new officers on the trains. And so we know that uniform allows people to feel safer and we want to do everything possible. I heard New Yorkers, they stated that "Eric, yes, I use the subway every day, never have an incident, but I feel unsafe based on what I'm seeing." And so we have to address what people are feeling, and that's the goal.

Now what's fascinating is that the last time we had real ridership was in 2019. Our index crimes are lower than 2019, 2018, 2017, and the last 10 year period. So the numbers bear out that the officers are doing an amazing job. But that means nothing if people don't feel safe, and the best way to do that is to have the omnipresence of our officers.

(Crosstalk.)

Come on, man. I said I like you. I didn't say I love you.

**Question:** Mayor Adams, I wanted to ask you about a followup story my colleague had wrote this week about the arsenic that was found and then retracted from the water in the Riis Houses in Manhattan. So the testing company that NYCHA subcontracted out to, they had initially said they'd only use them once before but my colleague's subsequent reporting found out they've been used multiple times. Do you have any reaction to what could be a misunderstanding, the misrepresentation of how often they use this testing company? And do you have any more questions about the accuracy of these tests, not just at Riis, but at other NYCHA developments even other city testing if it's getting subcontracted out?

**Mayor Adams:** We should never use that company again in the City of New York. And really I believe in the State of New York. I know that we won't be doing that. That company caused a great deal of anxiety in the city, in all of our NYCHA facilities, and in general, but specifically in

the Riis Houses. It was unacceptable. All of us remember that weekend of the constant uncertainty of having to deploy the resources there.

We are drilling down exactly how did this take place, and I just really hope we get to the point where NYCHA is fully under my control. I want to be held accountable for it to make sure that we can hire and have the right people there. We're looking for a new chair, a new head of NYCHA, and we're going to find the right people in partnership with the oversight that's in place right now to make sure things like this don't happen again.

**Question:** When can we expect the report on the investigation and any other information?

**Mayor Adams:** These are my favorites, so I'm just sort of...

**Question:** You're the boss.

When can we you expect that? I know there is an investigation and I know there's some other information that reporters have been asking about related to this. I don't know when we can expect that.

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah. Jessica Katz, my chief housing officer, she's doing a review, and NYCHA is doing a review. And as soon as we get it... We want it to be thorough. As soon as we get it, we're going to make it open to the public so folks can see exactly what happened during that incident.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I'm not sure if you know about this, but owners of a lower East Side restaurant called Pinky Space says their outdoor dining shed that they spent \$45,000 was torn down by the DOT without warning. That some of the restaurants are worried that that will happen to them. They just want to know why.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm sorry, what happened? It was closed, It was torn...

**Question:** It was torn down. I guess the DOT showed up, they tore it down, and they didn't give them an explanation.

**Mayor Adams:** What is it called?

**Question:** It's called Pinky Space.

**Mayor Adams:** Pinky Space?

**Question:** On the Lower East Side. There was no warning, it was just taken down by the city. So they wanted to know why.

**Mayor Adams:** That should not have happened unless it was a real imminent safety hazard. Let me look into that. We're clear. Those that are abandoned or those that are dangerous, there's a

sign that's placed on them with a warning, and then those who own them have an opportunity to repair or to dismantle. I have to look into that because if someone came in and removed it without notification, that is not the procedure of my understanding, but I'll look at it. I thought you said it was Kinky Shed.

**Question:** Pinky Space.

**Mayor Adams:** Pinky. Okay, Pinky. Okay. We just didn't want anything kinky going on inside that shed. Yes, thank you.

(Crosstalk.)

**Mayor Adams:** I like that. That's a first. Go ahead students, who has a... yes.

**Audience member:** Can you come and see our aviation room?

**Mayor Adams:** To where?

**Audience member:** Can you come to see our aviation room?

**Mayor Adams:** I would love to. Are you going to take me there? You're are going to take me to the aviation... Is this is where you learn how to simulate in flying?

**Audience member:** Yes.

**Mayor Adams:** I would like to do that, but I know you find it hard to believe, but I used to have hair that long. Okay? Thank you.

**Question:** The electric (inaudible), is this going to be done in only Brooklyn or all the five boroughs?

**Major Adams:** All the five boroughs. Our goal is to look at all of our schools and electrify all of our schools. So all of the five boroughs, not just Brooklyn. Okay? Thank you.

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