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

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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. Well, continued good news in the fight against COVID. As of today, from the very beginning of our vaccination effort, 8,885,457 doses – almost 9 million doses given in New York City. And incentives are helping, more and more people are hearing about the incentives and getting inspired by them. The vaccine contest is helping us to drive up the numbers. Remember, this week, the prize is the staycation packages and we had 10 winners last week who are very enthusiastic about their prizes. One of them is Salvador from Elmhurst, who said –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Beautifully said, Salvador. In English, it's to be able to walk around the city and enjoy a safer summer and also protect other people. I think that says it all. Get vaccinated, fully enjoy the Summer of New York City. Protect your family, protect your city. Everything comes together when you get vaccinated. Remember, the big prizes we announced yesterday – \$2,500 in the cash card for 10 winners every week through July. Spread the word about that. I think a lot of New Yorkers who are not yet vaccinated will want to be a part of that, for sure.

Okay. Now, something very big happening this week and something we're all looking forward to is a New York City full celebration of Juneteenth. Here is a moment to really reflect on history and act on history. It is a day specifically celebrating the emancipation of Black slaves in this country, but it really needs to be so much more. It needs to be a day for fundamental change. We're going to be doing a lot of celebrations, including the official City celebration tomorrow 6:00 PM at St. Nicholas Park in Harlem on the James Baldwin Lawn. There'll be kids, families, New Yorkers coming together, marching bands, DJs. It's going to be a wonderful event of celebration. And you see about that event and events all around the city, you can go to [nyc.gov/Juneteenth](http://nyc.gov/Juneteenth).

But we want to honor Juneteenth today with action, with a focus on structural change. So, we're announcing today the Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan. The focus of this plan is building generational wealth. The Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan is about addressing the core issues that have particularly coming up in the last year and needed to come up. And I want to thank our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, leaders of color in this administration who led the way, came up with specific actions we could take right now to make an impact. So, we know that Juneteenth is the perfect time to make an impact, because Juneteenth reminds us that at that moment in the 1860s, officially, the laws changed, but the reality didn't change, and the racial wealth gap has continued from that moment – in fact, has grown. Right now, in America, the net

worth the average white family has grown to 10 times that of the average Black family. And the answer is redistribution. The answer is purposeful focused efforts to right the wrongs. That's what we're doing with the Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan.

The key components – you're going to hear from my colleagues on the details, but key components, Universal New York City Baby Bonds. This is a way of creating a universal New York City scholarship account for every public school kindergartener, starting next year – an approach that is exciting and powerful. It's going to be built out citywide, but it begins in this next school year in September, 2021, with our kindergarteners. And this is based on a powerful pilot that we launched in 2016 in School District 30 in Queens. We found it to be really effective. I want to thank the folks who helped to make that happen and we're believers in it, and really where the spark club plugs. The NYC Kids RISE effort and the Gray Foundation and the Gray family for their investment. This is an idea that's working. It's an idea the City Council feels strongly about. Special thanks to Council Member Danny Dromm. And I know the whole Council has been advocating for this approach. It's time to put it into action. That's part one.

Then, a CUNY scholarship fund to focus on kids right now ready for higher education. Over 2,800 four-year CUNY scholarships for African-American and low-income students. And last, and very, very importantly, the Brooklyn Recovery Corps at Medgar Evers College. Medgar Evers, the only historically Black college in New York City, something we're all proud of, particularly us Brooklynites. For Medgar Evers, over 200 students a year will get paid internships, work experience, career prep. This is taking the principles, the ideals of Juneteenth, putting them to action. I want you to hear from two folks who spearheaded this effort to create this plan. First – and you've heard them speak before passionately about history and how to act on history. He is the Co-chair of our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity and our Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson.

**Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson, Strategic Policy Initiatives:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for this really wonderful and exciting initiative. It is fitting and important that New York City commemorate Juneteenth, which represents the ending of slavery. In the early 1700's over 40 percent of households in New York City had slaves. The only city with as many slaves was Charleston, South Carolina. New York City had a slave market on Wall Street, right next to the East River. And the largest cemetery for slaves in the entire United States is just a block above us here at City Hall, it held the remains of 20,000 slaves. New York City also prospered off of the slave trade even after the State abolished slavery in 1827. Wall Street continued to make money, financing the slave trade to Cuba until the Civil War. Wall Street was also heavily involved in financing the maintenance of slave plantations in the south and across the Caribbean. In fact, a popular food in the Caribbean and here in New York is Bacalao, or salt fish. Bacalao is made from Cod fish, which is a fish found in the waters north of Long Island, nowhere near the Caribbean. So much Cod was salted and shipped to the Caribbean to feed slaves that it became a major part of Caribbean food to this day.

New York City also has a history of resistance to slavery. Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, whose family escaped slavery in Maryland, was raised in New York City. He shocked the nation when he called upon slaves to refuse to work and rise up in rebellion against slavery in 1843. Reverend Garnet was the first African-American to speak before Congress. He was invited by

President Lincoln to speak in 1865, during the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which bans slavery. The Statue of Liberty, which sits in our harbor was commissioned and paid for by French anti-slavery activists in 1865, at the end of the Civil War to commemorate the defeat of slavery. If you go to the statue, you will see broken chains at its feet. Those symbolize the breaking of chains that held slaves. The statute is known today as a welcome sign for people who fled oppression in Europe over 100 years ago. And this is fitting as well – at the end of the Civil War, nearly half of the Union army consisted of immigrants and volunteers who came from Europe and the Caribbean to fight slavery.

Juneteenth celebrates what was and continues to be a worldwide struggle against oppression, no matter where it is. Our ancestors believed that education would be the key to Black liberation because knowledge, once attained, cannot be stolen or beaten out of anyone. We can use knowledge not only to improve our lives. We can use knowledge to change the world. That is why it is so right to invest in education today in honor of Juneteenth. It is an investment in making New York City a true symbol of freedom. There are many places in the city holding Juneteenth events and, for a guide, please go to [nyc.gov/Juneteenth](http://nyc.gov/Juneteenth).

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Deputy Mayor Thompson. As always, when you give us these history lessons, they are energizing and they remind us of so much to learn and then act on. And that has been the spirit of our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, learning lessons and acting on them right now. Leading the task force as executive director – has been a very, very dynamic leader who's helped make sure that all the great voices in this administration are heard and their ideas are turned into action. She's been an impact player for addressing injustice and one of the real driving forces behind the plan today. My pleasure to introduce Sideya Sherman.

**Executive Director Sideya Sherman, Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity:** Thank you. Good morning. The first enslaved African-Americans arrived in New York City as early as 1626. They, along with generations of African-Americans who came after them, were integral to building our city and our country. This was not only through their labor, but through their fight for freedom and commitment to realizing our democracy generation after generation. Juneteenth commemorates that rich history and serves as a lesson in perseverance to all Americans. While we have made much progress, the legacy of slavery still impacts our society to this day. Slavery along with redlining, segregation, and even contemporary disparities are why we still see significant gaps in wealth between African-Americans and other Americans. That's why I'm so pleased to be here today to announce this unprecedented investment in education for our young people.

For over a year now, the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity has been focused on making sure that the communities hardest hit by COVID come back stronger. That means taking action now and making both immediate and long-term investments that will help us recover equitably. Today's announcement does just that, we are investing in the future of young people at each end of the educational spectrum and we're ensuring that they have the financial supports and assets that they need to succeed. CUNY has been a vehicle for upward mobility for Black students and students of color for generations. Yet many low-income students still struggle with financial stress. With this \$50 million investment, students in low-income ZIP codes, NYCHA communities, and those in neighborhoods that have been hit hard by COVID will have an

opportunity to access four-year college scholarships that are paired with advising, money for books, transportations, and support for emergencies. We are also making an investment in Medgar Evers College, New York City's only HBCU. Through the new Brooklyn Recovery Corps, students will have their academic pursuits paired with an opportunity to help our city recover.

With this announcement, we are also focused on investing in college students – while we are also focused on investing in our college students, we also are focused on investing in our most youngest scholars. Children with college savings accounts are four times more likely to go to college and graduate. In 2016, as the Mayor shared, this administration launched a pilot savings program in Queens School District 30 in partnership with the nonprofit organization NYC Kids RISE. It was a success. Over 13,000 students in that district now have college savings accounts with over \$6 million in assets. 39 schools have incorporated college and financial counseling in their curriculum and families have been connected to a variety of critical resources and services.

Even more important, the entire community has coalesced around preparing kids for college and career. For example, at PS 234, there's a money tree hanging in the hallway, reminding kids about their savings, and how we're all invested in their future. At Astoria Houses, the TA President [inaudible] organized her own fundraiser for kids and her development, raising over \$1,000 to deposit in the scholarship accounts of each kid in Astoria Houses. Building on this momentum, the Save for College program will expand to reach all school districts this year. This means, every kindergartener will have a college savings account starting with an initial deposit of \$100 and an opportunity for over \$200 in reward, as well as community scholarships that occur as they matriculate through school. These savings accounts are connected to 529 plans and will grow over time. Communities will also be connected to financial empowerment and college and career services.

We are thankful to the Gray Foundation for their support of this program and to the team at NYC Kids RISE for their partnership. I also want to acknowledge and thank the fantastic team at DOE who works tirelessly every day on behalf of New York City children and families, but has been integral to ensuring the success of this pilot and the future expansion. And thank you, Mr. Mayor, for your continued support of the task force. And we look forward to seeing the impact of this investment.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Sideya. And well done and congratulations to you. Now, I want you to hear from a powerful voice, everyone. He has already distinguished himself as a voice for racial and economic justice as a new member of the United States Congress. But before that, he was a public school principal. In fact, he campaigned for Congress on ideas exactly like this, and we're so happy to have him join us as we start to make this a reality. My pleasure to introduce Congress Member Jamaal Bowman.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Congress Member. Listen, I really appreciate what you said, and you've really given your whole life to this fight. It must've been a stirring moment for you to vote

on that holiday. But you're right, that's just the beginning. And I especially thank you for acknowledging Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson. I also want to acknowledge his co-chairs, Deputy Mayor Melanie Hatzog and our First Lady Chirlane McCray, and, of course, Executive Director Sideya Sherman. You're right, the right people make a difference and everyone was looking for ways to create economic justice, racial justice in real terms, and it's now happening in New York City. Thank you for your support. And please – you are going to be one of the people that makes it happen nationally, so thank you for all you're doing.

And with that, listen, I want to turn now to another member of Congress who has distinguished himself for years – distinguished himself by focusing on some of the New Yorkers who have the greatest needs – in this case, our public housing residents and their kids. He understands the power of financial empowerment, also fighting for big changes in Washington. Pleasure to introduce from the Bronx, Congressman Ritchie Torres.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Congressman, and for you as well. It must have been a stirring proud moment to make that vote for the Juneteenth holiday. Thank you for doing that and thank you for reminding us of the connection to Tulsa as well, because this something we're all finally hearing that some of the truth of, and this is a way to answer, begin to answer the pain that still has not been resolved. So, thank you. Thank you for joining us today and thank you for all you do. Now I want you to hear, everyone, from someone's on the frontline of creating new generational wealth. She is the new president of Medgar Evers College, the first woman to lead the college. She understands how powerful these investments in our young people are. My pleasure to introduce Dr. Patricia Ramsey.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, doctor, and listen, everyone, you've heard how powerful this is from the leader of Medgar Evers College. Now I want to hear from a student, recently graduated from Medgar Evers, also a great leader of the student body and Student Government Association President. You're going to hear firsthand what this means from Brooke Smith. Welcome, Brooke.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Brooke. Congratulations to you, and I can tell you have a very bright future ahead. One more person to join us today, she is the Chair of the City Council Committee on Youth Services, a powerful, powerful advocate for investing in our young people, my pleasure to introduce from Staten Island Council Member, Debi Rose.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much. Thank you, Council Member. It's a bold step we will all take together and thank you as always for your leadership and advocacy. All right, everyone, we're going to go to our indicators in just a moment, but one more important update, totally different

topic, but it's important to know because it's about to happen in our city. On Monday, this coming Monday at 9:00 pm, Department Transportation will close down the left lane of the Manhattan bound side of the Brooklyn Bridge and when that lane opens back up, it will be brand new. It will be for bikes only. It will be a beautiful and radical re-imagining of a New York City icon. This construction will be complete by the early fall. It will be part of a very ambitious plan. We are moving right now to create a record shattering 30 miles of protected bike lanes this year, and here's someone to speak about it and represents both sides of the bridge and has been a really noted fighter for transit accessibility, my pleasure to do introduce State Senator Brian Kavanagh.

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Senator, and this is good news for New York City for sure, thank you. Now I've got to go over the indicators and they're good today. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report 68 patients, confirmed positivity 8.22 percent, hospitalization rate 0.42 per 100,000. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report 186 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing city-wide positive for COVID-19, today's report seven-day rolling average 0.57 percent, let's push that down further. A few words in Spanish on the things we're going to do to celebrate Juneteenth and to act on racial justice and economic empowerment.

[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:** We will now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we are joined by Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson and Co-Chair of the Task Force for Racial Inclusion and Equity, Executive Director and Co-Chair of the Task Force Sideya Sherman, and the Department of Transportation Commissioner Hank Gutman. Our first question for today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Hope you can all hear me.

**Mayor:** Yes, Andrew. Good morning.

**Question:** Mayor, I'm certain that the gathered audience for this call is waiting to hear your assessment of who won the debate last night. Did you hear what you needed to hear to rank your ballot, and if not, why not?

**Mayor:** No one won in my estimation. I did not hear enough. I'm going to keep examining the candidates and make a decision as quickly as I can. Go ahead, Andrew.

**Question:** Go into a little detail. It was a pretty substantive discussion of, for example, homelessness and mental health, and the candidates' solutions to this problem, which persist and has persisted throughout your eight years in office. Did anyone say something that for you resonated as perhaps something that might be leading us on the right path?

**Mayor:** No, honestly, I thought it was a pretty uninspiring debate. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Dana Rubinstein from the New York Times.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. Last night, this is also a debate question – Andrew Yang said some interesting things about mentally ill men on city streets, and he argued that they are you know, chasing families away from New York City and while they have rights. So, do we, I was curious if you had any reaction to his remarks?

**Mayor:** Folks with a mental health challenge need help and we need to give them that help within the law. I think that's the challenge always is to be compassionate and effective in our response and also to follow the law. There's so much more to do, but the best way to handle this ultimately is to invest intensely in mental health services, reaching people from the beginning of their lives. That's why things like mental health screening for our school kids who are going to make a real difference, get to the root cause of this problem. Go ahead, Dana.

**Question:** Thank you. That's all I've got.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Nsikan from WNYC.

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

**Mayor:** Hey, Nsikan how are you?

**Question:** Good. How are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good.

**Question:** So, we've conducted an analysis of City Health Department data that shows the racial gaps in new coronavirus infections are widening as the vaccine rollout marches onward. I was wondering if you have any general thoughts or, you know, or do any of the health representatives or the task force have any general thoughts about this and what are the direct plans for addressing these widening gaps?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Nsikan, the idea here is to just double down on constantly doing more outreach we've announced in the last days that we're going to be doing a direct effort with community-based organizations, house of worship, NYCHA resident councils, to specifically reward local organizations as they bring in individuals to get vaccinated and put money into the community. I think that's going to make a big difference. I think this has just gone take incessant persistent work to overcome some of the concerns and hesitation, and continually get people vaccinated. Go ahead.

**Question:** Great, and then you and Governor Cuomo often bring up hesitancy as the reason for vaccine gaps. According to the CDC data, the five boroughs have among the lowest rates of vaccine hesitancy in the state and country. So, for example, the hesitancy rate in Manhattan is 6.5 percent, in Brooklyn, it's eight percent based on these federal surveys. That's a pretty small difference, but Manhattan's vaccine rate is nearly 20 percentage points higher than Brooklyn's. So, I'm wondering why you site hesitancy as a primary cause behind the city's vaccine disparities. Does this City have data to support your hesitancy connection, and will the city release more data on access to the vaccines such as how many doses have been delivered to individual providers around the city?

**Mayor:** Yeah, we're going to continue to provide more data as we organize it. Happy to show people all the efforts and the amazing efforts of our vaccinators to reach deep into communities. I'll turn to Dr. Katz on the CDC analysis, just to see if he has a comment. But my quick comment is with all due respect to the CDC, that's not what we're experiencing. Our data comes from millions of encounters with New Yorkers, almost 9 million individual vaccinations, obviously, but all the encounters also, including right within the Health + Hospitals, where people are saying they're not yet ready, although a lot of people have changed over time and become ready. So, no, I'm sorry, that CDC survey doesn't ring true to me. Dr. Katz?

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals:** Sir, yesterday I was in clinic seeing my patients at [inaudible] and I had three patients who had not yet been vaccinated, and one of them said, yes, I promise I will do it but I want to do it in one month. One said, no, I'm just too frightened of it, and I feel like I'm already protected because, Dr. Katz, you told me that I had the antibody, and one of them said, you know, okay, I will do it next week, and the reason I mentioned this is because we have vaccines available just downstairs, so I know there's no accessibility –it's walk-in. All three of them could have gotten it. My other patients were all vaccinated. It was just these three, and so I'd say of the three, two clearly are hesitant. One just feels too afraid. I'll keep talking to her. I totally support your approach. It's just time. We have to keep talking to people and keep showing them that the vaccines are safe and effective. Thank you, sir.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Gary from UNIVISION.

**Question:** Good morning, Mayor. The city is looking forward to the upcoming parade of heroes and it is important to our essential workers, but we have heard criticism about the money spent on city or state level on fireworks, parades, concerts – when the social workers are waiting for a bonus instead, or a better salary, and our small businesses are still struggling. My question is why is the money not being spent on those things that I just mentioned and help our community?

**Mayor:** There's a huge amount of money being spent on those things you mentioned. We've laid out tens of millions of dollars of small business relief on top of what the federal government and the state government has done all sorts of various specific efforts to help people directly in communities around the city that are far, far greater than the very small cost of a parade. But the



parade is important to honor the people who saw us through and we're getting tremendous enthusiasm from the health care heroes, the first responders, the essential workers knowing that they're all going to be acknowledged and thanked. So, I think it's the right thing to do. Go ahead.

**Question:** Thank you, that's all, Mayor.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

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

**Mayor:** Hey Michael, how you doing?

**Question:** I'm doing all right. I wanted to go back to Dana's question regarding what Andrew Yang said last night. He talked about bringing more psych beds online you know, in the context of what he was saying about street homeless men. Do you think that's a good idea? Is that something the city should be exploring?

**Mayor:** Michael, we've added some specific types of beds. We are always need to have beds ready for people for whom they apply. But the nuance that I think was missed last night is you can, in uncertain circumstances, require someone to be put into a health care setting, but in many other circumstances, you can't. That's the law. If we want to work together to change federal or state laws, that's a valid discussion. So, yes, we of course need all the possibilities available to people in need, but we also have to recognize how we treat people under the law, and again, the best thing is to do the patient persistent work, which has been done by our homeless outreach workers of getting people off the streets, through communication and getting them into safe havens and ultimately shelter and affordable housing. Go ahead, Michael.

**Question:** You continue to be very circumspect about how you're going to rank the candidates and I'm so not going to ask you about that again. I know you get a lot of questions about that. What I wanted to ask you about though, is, you know, there, a lot of policy proposals have come up in the campaign and, you know, a lot of ideas flying around. I was wondering if you could tell us, you know what the candidates are saying – what, from your perspective are, you know, the best ideas, the ideas you'd most like to see happen, you know, top two or three, four or five. I don't know. You pick?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Michael. I think there has not been clear enough vision presented by these candidates, honestly. I thought last night's debate was a wasted opportunity, and I do appreciate some of the focus, for example, on reaching our youngest kids with childcare. I think that's been a healthy part of this discussion, although I haven't seen proposals that were particularly sharp from my point of view, but it's also a little painful to listen to candidates call for any number of initiatives that we're already doing, which suggests they literally don't know what's going on. So, you know, I would just say to you, I haven't seen as much as I would've expected.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Stacey from FOX 5.

**Question:** Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I'm wondering – sort of following up on the previous questions, but on the topic of crime, 10 people shot last night, three people dead. I'm wondering how concerning that is to you, and whether you've heard anything from the candidates that makes you feel confident that they could turn the crime situation around in the city.

**Mayor:** Stacey, it always concerns me. You know, when you're Mayor of New York City, you get reports constantly anytime there are shootings or God forbid someone's murdered, and this is something I work on with the NYPD literally every day in a variety of ways. It's been painful this last year and a half to see that all the work that was done has been disrupted by a global pandemic and a perfect storm of factors. But what we've done is rolled up our sleeves, gotten back to work with new approaches, new strategies, including what you heard about yesterday. Very important on the fraudulent license plates, one of many, many approaches being taken. That's why gun arrests have gone up. That's why cooperation with communities has increased. That's why investments in Cure Violence Movement, Crisis Management System has intensified so many pieces of the equation. We never stop. We keep fighting back. So, I'm confident that we are turning the tide consistently, and we will ultimately get back to where we were pre pandemic as to the candidates. Again, I hear a lot of proposals for things we're already doing. I hear some things that I'm not sure are realistic. I wish there was more of a knowledge base among the candidates of what it takes to actually do this, but I'm quite confident that the strategies we put in place in good work of the NYPD will turn the tide. Go ahead, Stacey.

**Question:** Okay, thank you. My next question is unrelated. I know you are supposed to speak today later at the National Urban League Governor having an event there—

**Mayor:** Stacey? We lost Stacey. Stacey are you there?

**Question:** Oh yes. Did you hear any part of my question?

**Mayor:** No, I lost you. You said National Urban League and we lost you.

**Question:** Yes, yes. I said, I know you're supposed to speak at an event at the National Urban League groundbreaking later today, the Governor holding an event there this morning, and I know it's been a long time since the two of you appeared together for sure, and I'm wondering when the last time is you spoke with Governor Cuomo.

**Mayor:** Oh, it was a while ago. I can't give you the exact day, but it was a while ago, but look, I've made my views very clear, and we're all waiting to see what comes from all these investigations. I think there's a lot out there. But in the meantime, you know, obviously the city and state continue to work together on many, many fronts and we always will.

**Moderator:** Our next question goes to Nolan from the Post. Hey, good morning, everybody. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Nolan. How have you been?

**Question:** I'm alright, Mr. Mayor, I think I'm going to cast my ballot today. Have you figured out who your pineapple was yet?

**Mayor:** Ah, I like it. I like it. Very topical, Nolan. No pineapple report for today, Nolan, but by Tuesday, June 22nd, I will figure out five people to rank. That much I know.

**Question:** And you'll tell us?

**Mayor:** I don't know about that, but I know I'll figure it out.

**Question:** So, I'm going to talk about education in the city. Obviously, we've done a great number of announcements. The Post is written a series of stories about the problems in a Queens school district, District 29, where many of the schools are below the city averages, and many parents tell us that they've been leaving the public school system because they don't think their kids can get a good education there. What's being done to fix the problems in District 29?

**Mayor:** Constant work in all school districts, Nolan. Look, before the pandemic, what we saw was the positive impact of investments in Pre-K and 3-K and now 3-K will be in every district in September and then universal in the next few years for every single child. We saw the impact of having AP for All, including in schools, in many districts that had never had advanced placement courses at all. So many investments we made the teacher training made a huge impact. We saw constant progress. You saw it in graduation rates. We had the highest graduation rates in New York City history. You saw it in improved test scores, improved college readiness, but it's ongoing work because for decades, schools, particularly in communities of color were not invested in properly and didn't have clear direction and support, and we're turning that tide rapidly. I am absolutely convinced now that we finally have the huge victory in the campaign for fiscal equity case because of what the state legislature did in April, that we're going to be in much stronger position than we've ever been to bring true equality and fairness to all school districts. So, I think a lot is going to happen now that we have much more that we needed. Go ahead, Nolan.

**Question:** So, what do you say to that Cambria Heights mom, Keisha Ellis, who talked to the Post, her kid goes to P.S. 147, where 70 percent of the students couldn't pass the basic English proficiency, despite the school spending \$25,000 a year per pupil. She says to us that the teachers there recommended she take her son out of the school and put him in a better school because they didn't think he would be able to excel in the environment there. What do you say to a mom like that, who's being told by DOE staff, that she needs to find a school that's not her neighborhood school?

**Mayor:** Nolan, respectfully, I don't know exactly what those staff said to her. I feel for her, if the education that her child got in our schools, wasn't what she wanted or needed. I feel for her as a parent, and that means more work needs to be done. I have seen so many schools improve markedly and quickly, and I've seen the overall school system improved greatly in recent years. So, I know it can be done. I would say to any educator, any school official I'm hoping and praying and believing that no New York City public school official would ever say that to a

parent. They would say, how can we fix the situation for you here? Let's work together to do it. That's the right way to do it, and that's what we expect of our educators.

**Question:** Our last question for today goes to Gersh from Streetsblog.

**Mayor:** Gersh, are you there? Gersh? We lost Gersh. Okay. With that, we will conclude – Gersh will be back, I guarantee – and everyone we'll just conclude with this. An important set of announcements today, honoring Juneteenth in action, not just word, and then tomorrow a great celebration again, St. Nicholas Park, James Baldwin Lawn in Harlem, 6:00 pm to start the Juneteenth weekend and then great events all over the city. Take part in that. This is a very special moment for our city and now for our nation as well. Thank you, everyone.

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