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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 22, 2018

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON FOX 5'S GOOD DAY NEW YORK**

**Rosanna Scotto:** Yesterday, Mayor de Blasio paid a visit to the border entry in El Paso, Texas. He and other mayors – about 20 other mayors from across our nation demanded to be let into let into a shelter thought to be housing children separated from their parents.

**Sukanya Krishnan:** While the Mayor was not allowed to enter the facility, he did raise awareness about what's going on there. And he joins us now. Welcome back Mayor to Good Day. Thank you for joining us.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you.

**Krishnan:** So first question is really what did you see? And what do you want raise awareness about?

**Mayor:** The bottom line is we've got kids here in our country separated from their parents and there is no plan to get them back together. And we had a group of mayors from around the country, bipartisan, Republicans and Democrats saying this has to end. We have to have a plan to get these families reunited.

**Krishnan:** Right.

**Mayor:** We have to end the policies that are creating this crisis to begin with. And here is the really good and positive thing. Here is a group of Republicans and Democrats saying in unity lets actually fix this immigration system once and for all. Because we all know what it means on the ground in our cities. We know the confusion it's creating for everyone. That we just don't have the right kind of laws and it actually gave me a little bit of hope that despite some of the madness in Washington and I think some real big mistakes the President has made lately with his policy. There is a growing consensus in the country looking to actually resolve the underlying problem. That gives me some hope. These kids have really drawn out something powerful in people. And you've seen leaders across the spectrum, faith leaders all saying you know as Americans we just don't believe that families should be torn apart. We don't care where you come from.

**Scotto:** So were you frustrated that you went all this way down to the U.S.-Mexico border and you couldn't get into this facility?

**Mayor:** I am frustrated because the federal government should not be keeping the media or public officials from seeing what's happening to kids with taxpayer dollars, in our name, right? I mean these – you go down there and it's basically a tent city, it's not quiet desert but it feels kind of like a desert out in the middle of nowhere, a tent city. And what do they have to hide that they won't let in mayors or senators or congress members or the media –

**Scotto:** Well, I think some people were concerned that it was maybe a photo-op. It was a publicity stunt, and not, you know, a real genuine move.

**Mayor:** Look, the problem is, in a democratic society it's not up to the federal government to decide whether the people can know what's happening in a federal facility. It belongs to all of us, right. And this is being done in our name again with our taxpayer dollars. So there is no – there is nothing American about saying we're going to keep the people out, we're going to keep the media out. That's wrong to begin with. On top of that what was important was to see a group of bipartisan leaders saying we together this doesn't represent American values, and we're trying to work for the bigger changes. That's actually healthy for the country. People have really decried the fact that things don't get done because there is polarization. I am actually really happy to see a group of mayors – big cities, small cities, Republican, Democrat – come together and –

**Scotto:** Going down there.

**Mayor:** Say we actually can stand shoulder to shoulder right here at border and say this needs to change.

**Krishnan:** Mayor, what do you say to all the critics? Because there are a lot of critics that are saying on the day that you went down there, there were 239 kids that were brought up here, and one them that you mentioned taking a bus ride, 21-plus hours – and that you weren't here to deal with the situation came right to our door stop.

**Mayor:** Well, that's where I was the day before, Sukanya. And in fact this is what's so shocking about this whole situation. The young man you referred to his name is Eddie.

**Krishnan:** Yep, Eddie.

**Mayor:** He's from Honduras, he's nine years old. He and his mom came here. They were fleeing a very violent situation. And I always say, like so many of our ancestors fleeing violence and oppression and you know poverty. They get to the border; he's taken from his mom at Eagle Pass, Texas put on a bus with a federal escort 2,000 miles to New York City. He's here now, no idea when he is going to get back together with his parents. Here is what I want to say to you.

**Scotto:** Yeah.

**Mayor:** I went to that very center where Eddie has been, and 239 kids –

**Scotto:** What is it the Cayuga Center?

**Mayor:** That's right, in East Harlem. Until I got there that day, the federal government had not told us anything about the presence of these kids in our city. So we started to learn, immediately trying to find out information, we tried to find out information. We got a lead about the center, and went there. The folks who work there were New Yorkers who are trying to help these kids.

**Scotto:** Right.

**Mayor:** I'd say to them, give us a sense of magnitude. Literally sitting there in the middle of that center they said we have 239 kids here right now. We got to work immediately supporting that center. Our Health Department, Police Department making sure that –

**Krishnan:** That they're safe.

**Mayor:** – The kids are protected and the folks who work there are protected. Because they have nothing – they didn't do this. They didn't create this policy. So all of New York City government has been helping to address that situation, but we've got to get – Sukanya, we've got to get to the underlying problem which is the policy's broken, and we've got to find for a change.

**Krishnan:** Mayor, with all due respect I mean we understand that you went down there to raise awareness, national awareness. But a lot of people are saying that you're kind of saying you know what I am going to raise my own national awareness when it comes to this. This is my second term, and a lot people are saying that you are pushing forth your own private progressive agenda.

**Mayor:** Well, it's not a private agenda at all. It's something I've actually felt by the – I think a clear majority of New Yorkers that what President Trump here did was a huge mistake and unfair to these families, these kids, against our values as New Yorkers, and Americans. And it's not that I went alone either – 20 mayors, bipartisan group from around the country, the U.S Conference of Mayors is saying we've got to change this policy.

I actually think, Sukanya, this is really important point. If things are hurting New York City, you can't always fix them here in New York City. We sometimes have to go to Washington, have to go to Albany, or sometimes have to go elsewhere with others who want to make those changes because you saw the groundswell worked here. This is really important. The President put forward a policy I think was misguided. The groundswell from around this country, Republican and Democrat, faith leaders, all sorts of people actually got part of that policy changed. Now, we've got more to do. But I think people need to be aware when something is wrong, you have to fight to change it.

**Krishnan:** So how are we doing reunification for the 235 kids that are here and how are we going to help them get reunited with their parents now that they are here? Have you started that process?

**Mayor:** Yes, indeed. So, we're making sure they have lawyers because the only way to get this done is to get the kids legal help and the parents. So, we're actually working with colleagues around the country to get the parents legal support so that reunification can happen. But I think the groundswell is important.

What we don't want is because the President signed the executive order, everyone forgets about it because the executive order doesn't actually reunite these families. It stops some of the bleeding, if you will, but it doesn't actually fix the problem.

So, we're going to keep the pressure on and we're going to provide that support to get each and every family reunified. Think what it must feel like, for anyone of us – imagine, your child is taken away and you don't know where and you don't know for how long and imagine what that child is going through. My wife, Chirlane, has been working on this mental health issue here. These kids are going through a traumatic experience.

**Scotto:** I absolutely – let me asking you something. You were down at the border. Was there nobody at the border saying, don't cross the border, they're going to separate you from your kids, don't do it.

**Mayor:** I don't have the sense of that's what happened. I have the sense that a policy was put in place, "zero-tolerance" which goes against what this country has done for decades and decades which is to try and be respectful of people who are fleeing some kind of violence or oppression.

**Scotto:** But these people are not being warned that they are going to be separated that they are going to be separated from their children?

**Krishnan:** The Attorney General was very clear about it. He did say that they would take away children that it is a federal offense and under the penalties of the United States law they will be separated as a result of it.

**Mayor:** But let's be clear, that was not true under Republicans and Democrats for decades and decades so you can say the Attorney General said it –

**Krishnan:** Yes but when zero-tolerance went into effect, I mean they were eventually going to deal with the eventuality of what's happening right now.

**Mayor:** But let's be clear, weeks ago it went into effect. For decades it was something different and people are you know, not everyone is sitting by the television or internet all day long, getting the up-to-date news. I think what is so important to recognize is there was a bipartisan consensus in this country for decades to respect asylum seekers. That doesn't mean everyone gets asylum but they are given a right to make their case because America – I think America has been a beacon to the world on this. People think this is a country of freedom and human rights. And to see it now turn this way, I think hurts us in the world.

**Scotto:** Let me ask you something. You know obviously we solicited questions on Twitter and stuff and you know how that can go Mayor so –

**Mayor:** Hey, it's democracy, democracy in action, Rosanna.

**Scotto:** So one of the, I have to say one of the main themes that keep coming up is why did you go? We have a lot of problems here in New York City. Do you care about the children who were effected by lead poisoning in NYCHA buildings?

**Mayor:** Of course. We just – first of all I care about children across the board. The number one – I say, when I became a parent when my daughter Chiara was born, it changed my entire view of the world. It's one of the reasons we focused first and foremost on the issues of children in this administration. The pre-K initiative, everyone knows that was my number one concern to achieve that for kids and I care a lot about the kids who live in public housing. We just made a huge new investment to address some of the real problems that have been brewing for decades in public housing. We just announced working we're with the federal government, that we are going to put literally billions into trying to get to all of these underlying health issues –

**Krishnan:** Well that was a broken system wasn't that? I mean NYCHA has been broken, the federal government is saying that it has been broken and that people need help and this is a long term sort of fix that needs to be put in place.

**Mayor:** Look, we've made a commitment to –

**Krishnan:** And a lot of fraud by the way.

**Mayor:** There is clearly some people who did the wrong thing. But the more important point here is where you started. For decades, the federal government unfortunately pulled away support from public housing. It was all built with the federal government. They were supposed to support it long term, they stopped doing it. There just was not enough money. One good thing that happened even in the midst of all these problems is we have made a long term funding commitment that the City has never made previously and I think it was the right thing to do, to get at these underlying problems. Now I would like to see the federal government join us. They have not put a dime on the table yet. I would like to see them join us so we can do it for the long term in the right way.

**Scotto:** So what are you going to do today to help these kids who are in our city?

**Mayor:** The kids, the ones who came up?

**Scotto:** Yes.

**Mayor:** 239 at this one center alone. Again the legal support to help them get reunified with their parents, we are making sure that they get the mental health care and the physical health care they need – working with the social service providers but again we also need the policy change. Right now at this moment neither the President not anyone else has a plan on the table to reunify these families and that's another part of why we have to keep pressure on. Like everything else in the

world, you would say to me, give me a plan, give me a deadline – we are saying to the President, when are these families going to be brought back together? Give us a plan to do that.

**Krishnan:** Right, there's an immigration bill that's on, is going to be debated on next week, so for the second time, so that's already in the works. But your optics, you saw it first hand and now you are lending a hand to all of those kids that desperately need our help.

**Mayor:** Yes they do and they are our kids too. We should feel that way and that's what America has been all about – is caring about kids regardless of where you come from. I think the heart of America has really shown positively here that people are feeling this very personally and let's demand that every one of these kids get back to their families.

**Scotto:** Mayor, we appreciate you coming on and telling us about your experience down by the border. How long did it take you to get there and did you have to drive like a few hours?

**Mayor:** It's what we call, in New York City, a schlep, okay.

[Laughter]

**Scotto:** What was that like?

**Mayor:** There's not a direct flight to El Paso.

**Scotto:** What was like that by the way?

**Mayor:** You know the drive down to the border, it's about 45 minutes out of El Paso and it's really – it's a little desert-like and it's very, you know out in the middle of nowhere it feels like and suddenly there's this tent city. It was the strangest thing. It felt eerie. It felt like something you see in science fiction. But it also made the point that something is broken if you are putting a bunch of kids in a tent city in the middle of the desert.

**Scotto:** I know you got a lot on your plate today so we don't want to hold you up too much.

**Mayor:** I'm ready.

**Krishnan:** So nice to see you.

**Mayor:** Thank you, good to see you.

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