

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Holds Rally for Mayoral Accountability

May 9, 2022

Chancellor David Banks, Department of Education: So good morning everyone. Good morning, and it's a beautiful day, that's for sure. Thank you all for being here. We are here today, and the mayor's going to speak in just a second to discuss the issue of mayoral accountability, oftentimes referred to as mayoral control. We like to refer to it as mayoral accountability of the New York City public schools. It's a critical issue, the clock is ticking, and there are decisions that need to be made. We think that there's nothing that is more important than our children across New York City, and we think that this issue is one that is critically important. And we've got a few people here who want to speak to it today, and we will start this event with the mayor of the City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you so much, chancellor, and I just really appreciate those unions who have been in full support of our call to renew mayoral accountability. Particularly two unions that have been on the ground for so many years, HTC, 32BJ, DC37. When you look at them, you look at the fact that they're union leaders, but in fact they're parents. Many of them have children that are in the school system, and they know for the last 20 years, what we have been able to accomplish when you think about how our school system for so long has been bogged down with the injustices and the inequality that has prevented our children from moving forward.

Mayor Adams: And so my good friend Kyle Bragg is recovering from a medical procedure, but we're joined by Candace, who's also just a strong voice in the on the ground leadership, and Sean Francois, and his representation from his union, and just the countless number of men and women from these great unions who are in support of the renewal of mayoral accountability. And so we're proud to be here with these working men and women as we push this important issue forward, because if we are going to allow our children to be prepared for the future, it's going to start with mayoral accountability.

Mayor Adams: There have been far too many systemic failures in our school system throughout the years, and we know it's clear that our city will be successful. We're renewing mayoral accountability, and that's what our focus is today. The chancellor and I have laid out a bold new vision for our children and for the families that attend our public school system, and this is the first time in history where we have two men who grew up in the public school system with two different experiences, one dealing with a learning disability, another dealing with a gifted and talented program. And I say this over and over again, as I stated at my State of the City address, we had two guys from Boston fans. Why can't we have a Mets and Yankees fan run our school system? We grew up in this system, and we know what's needed. And so this is an unprecedented moment for the two of us in understanding the power of the public school system.

Mayor Adams: Public schools that are doing the right thing produce chancellors and mayors and union leaders, union employees. Everyday New Yorkers go through our public school system, and so the bold plans and transformative plans we have for the future would help our kids, support our educators, which is crucial, and listen to our families. I am just amazed at how, in one day, Chancellor Banks is able to navigate the complexities of the different voices in the school system. What he's about to roll out with superintendents is listening directly to the community, and allowing them to participate in the choosing of superintendents. This is the vision that he has and understands.

Mayor Adams: And an extension of mayoral accountability is currently under review in Albany. And we have so many friends up there that are reaching out to us and stating, "Eric, we want to make sure this is done correctly." We will be visiting Albany in the next few weeks to speak with them. Let them hear from me as I walk the halls of my former role as a state senator, and really encourage them to see the benefits of having the combination of Chancellor Banks and this mayor looking towards controlling our school system.

Mayor Adams: And when you think about it, after two years of trauma to our students, uncertainty cannot be part of the curriculum. There needs to be stability and the surety that these young people are going to know what is going to happen in the upcoming school year, and we're looking to make some real changes for all of our students and give them what they need to have a well-rounded education. And when you do an examination, we would've not have been able to accomplish the way we did pre-K and expand 3K without mayoral control, increase graduation rates by 20% under mayoral control, ensure that every student in every zip code receives 100% of fair student funding, mayoral control, makes sure every school has the resources to hire a full time

social worker, mayoral control, and quickly direct resources to support schools in need. And that's one of the hallmarks of mayoral accountability, you have to immediately be able to shift to those schools that are in need in real time, because education is a real time experience. So mayoral accountability allow us to bring the most comprehensive and popular summer program in New York City's history.

Mayor Adams: Summer Rising. This is an unbelievable approach to dealing with the summer loss or that happens traditionally. We know our children experience summer loss throughout the school year because of COVID. Summer Rising is going to move to attempt to close that gap of summer loss, and that's why we believe it is crucial to continue mayoral accountability. Each of these victories are products of sustained engagement with families, elected leaders, and all the school stakeholders. To us, engagement is not just a slogan, it is an applied practice. No one knows it better than this chancellor, because he's doing it every day. And now it's imperative that we get the help from Albany, which we are excited about the energy we are receiving from Albany, to return mayoral accountability to this administration. Because we're still dealing with the inequities, we're still dealing with so much work that needs to be done around our children, as we deal with the crisis of COVID. This is our time to make sure that these improvements continue.

Mayor Adams: And the bottom line is if anyone should be in charge of all schools, it is David and this mayor. We know what this school system needs, we're ready to move it in the right direction, and a public school mayor, a public school chancellor, is what our public school system needs at this time. We have been given the historical opportunity to make a difference in our school.

Mayor Adams: The failing schools in our city feeds the crises that we are experiencing throughout our city. What we fail to do in public school turns into the crises in our public lives, and we want to turn it around. We were elected to get stuff done, mayoral accountability will allow us to do that, and so we are proud to partner with the governor, the speaker, the majority leader. In my conversations with them, they understand how important this is. We need to get this over the finish line so we could continue to make the progress that we deserve in our school system.

Mayor Adams: And so I'm really pleased to be joined by our union representation. They have been clear in their support. They understand how important this moment is, and I cannot thank them enough to be a continuing voice for how do we improve our schools

that will improve the future of our families in this city. So again, thank you, chancellor, and I'll turn it back over to you.

Chancellor Banks: Thank you. And just for the record, the mayor and I are both Mets fans. We are Brooklyn, Queens kids, and it's so interesting. In many ways we shouldn't even have to be here today to have this conversation. The reality is that the mayor and I are both products of this system, and we've dedicated our lives and our careers to the fabric of New York City. The mayor spent the bulk of his career in the Police Department, and I was in the classrooms educating young people. And I remember the system the way it was-

Chancellor Banks: And I remember the system the way it was. And it was a system that was wrought with political corruption. It is the reason why we went to mayoral accountability. The old system did not work and if we did not grant mayoral control, we would be going back to a system that does not function well. And so we have to do everything we can to make sure that does not happen and we're thrilled to be joined here today by two union leaders. And so the political director from 32BJ, Ms. Candace Tolliver, please join us.

[...]

Chancellor Banks: Thank you. And to close us out, one of the great union leaders, the President of Local 3072, Shaun Francois.

[...]

Chancellor Banks: I think the mayor's going to take some questions now, but let me just say this. In the four months that we have been in office, the work that we have been doing at the Department of Education, to engage parents, has been a direct response to what we have heard from elected officials and from parents themselves who have said they have not felt heard. They had not felt respected. They did not have a seat at the table. That is changing every single day.

Chancellor Banks: We've been spending a great amount of time engaging parent and parent groups all across New York City. It is part of the DNA of this administration. It's what the mayor believes in, it's the charge that he gave me, and it is what we are doing

every single day. We are meeting with elected officials. We're meeting with parents, and parent PTA groups, and CEC leaders all across New York City. No one will be able to say that this mayor and this chancellor did not engage parents, that will not happen. We are doing it every single day and we'll continue to do that throughout our administration. At this time, I think I'm turning it over to.

[Crosstalk]

Question: So you had yet to appoint all nine people to the task [inaudible] appointed was forced to resign after her anti-gay writing were discovered by the New York Daily News. If you read proposal to reestablish [inaudible] would likely have passed had all nine members been appointed. In light of that, why should the state legislature trust board administration to effectively exert its control over the school system if it has failed fulfill the basic responsibility of mayoral control?

Mayor Adams: Well, because we want to get it right. As the chancellor stated, it's about parental engagement and the goal was not only to be expeditious, to rush through things, we wanted to make sure we had the diversity. The number of candidates we have reviewed was unprecedented. Some of them were brought to the chancellor was brought to me and we say, no, it's just not fitting. We have to get it right. Because when you lay a foundation that you don't have to come back and revisit it all the time. And we are excited about some of the candidates that are in the queue and I'm sure the chancellor's going to be making announcement in the next few days on those we trickle down to. One thing I know if I haven't learned anything from the last few weeks as being mayor, you better get it right. Because if you don't, you got folks like Michael, who's going to be looking at everything you do to say, why did you miss this? So we are going to catch it before Michael writes the story.

Question: Mr. Mayor. Do you have a plan B? If you don't get mayoral control on June 30, what's going to happen?

Mayor Adams: Yes. We do have a plan B. Our plan B is getting mayoral control. Plan C is getting mayoral control. We believe the law makers are on our side. We believe the union leadership is on our side. We believe the parents are on our side. And every time we walk into school and the children say, "Give Eric and David mayoral accountability," we believe the children are on our side. Sometimes when you create a plan B, C, D, and E, you are setting yourself up for failure and we're not. We have one plan, plan A.

Plan A is mayoral accountability. We believe that people understand how important it is and that is our focus.

Question: If lawmakers and parents are on your side, what's the hold up?

Mayor Adams: Because it's a process. I was in Albany and I want to commend those lawmakers for deliberation. This is a very important issue and we love presenting our case. Let's be clear on the chancellor enjoys presenting his case. Yes, we would've loved to have gotten it through the budget, but since the law makers we've done it before in Albany, when I was up there, they're saying, "We want to hear, peel back each layer of what you're doing." Our case is a good case. We have a good product. And so if the law makers are deliberating, which they should be doing, we say fine to that, we're following the process, but at the end of the day, we need mayoral accountability to move our schools forward. How are you?

Question: I want to ask where the UFT is on this and why aren't they here today? How important do you view their support of this [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Let me peel back each layer. One, you have to ask the UFT. I had a great dinner with Michael over the weekend. Michael has been a real partner in dealing with some of the crisis we have in front of us. This is how we kept the schools open because of the help of Michael and his teachers. You have to ask them about mayoral control specifically. I think that these unions that are here are part of the thousands of parents, as well as employees, and so I think that having a combination of all of our unions are important in this initiative and we look forward to all of that. One thing's for sure, everyone agrees the more clarity that we have the better we are going to be to resolve the problems in our school system.

Question: Would you like more public clarity from the UFT on this?

Mayor Adams: Again, Michael represents the UFT, and I believe that allows union member's leadership to speak on behalf of their membership.

Question: Mayor.

Mayor Adams: How's it going?

Question: I want to see how you feel generally about the potential to restructuring of the past. That's been some of the talk that you may get fewer appointments in exchange for this and how would you feel about restructuring?

Mayor Adams: You lose PEP, you lose mayoral accountability. That's it. We want to be held accountable. We want people to point to us if things fail. We will turn around our school system and PEP is part of that.

Question: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Tell me quickly, are you going to Albany this week or are you just [inaudible] all week? Are you worried that going to places like LA and your comments earlier about how you're a global mayor, are those inhibiting your ability to advocate for things that the city needs right now, especially the crime is skyrocketing and [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: You know, first let's ...

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: First let's peel that off. If I go to Albany, folks write that why I'm in Albany and not in Brooklyn, so, I got that. But the reason I was... What was so important about having the mayor of London here, because when we learned what they're doing, we are addressing the things that the city needs right now. He has an amazing educational plan. He has an amazing housing plan. When I sat down and spoke with him, he's dealing with issues of homelessness right now. And so I'm just lost on the disconnect of learning globally is addressing the things the city needs right now. If the only way this city can function is if Eric is in Brooklyn or on the ground, then we are in trouble, because I have all of these professionals running my Police Department, running my school system, running my department of buildings, running my fire department.

Mayor Adams: So if the only way our city can function is if I'm physically here and not learning what other mayors are doing, then we in real trouble, that's not leadership. I'm not putting out fires. I don't have a firehouse. I'm not in the classroom, teaching

teachers, I'm not at the department of buildings, proving permits. So if the narrative is that New York City can't function, unless Eric is physically here, then we in trouble as a city.

Mayor Adams: London is still function with Mayor Khan here, asking people to come to London. He's going to Simi Valley to get our tech companies to come there, he's headed to other cities to attract businesses there. That is the way mayors must do. And so I don't know where this narrative comes from, that I don't have a professional group of people that know how to run the city. It's a real indictment on any mayor that their city can't function if they're not physically there. So I need to deal with these real problems of homelessness and learn what other cities are doing.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: No, no, no. There was another poll that came out that 63% of people believe in my gun violence plan, 63% substantially believe in my homeless plan. So polls are going to go up and down. What we in what? May, five months into my administration, people are tired of the violence. They're tired of the violence. We're going to turn around the city. So there's no concern here.

Mayor Adams: I understand the complexity of the emotions of New Yorkers. I'm in the streets every day. So no, I do not. And going to LA to learn about technology and bringing businesses here is not going to impact on our ability to do what does do the job. So, no, not at all. New York is going to be fine. We are going to get past this violence, past COVID, past the issues that are in front of us. Listen, I'm just an optimistic guy, and I just know the abilities of New York is in our resiliency, and New Yorkers are opinionated. So it's all good.

Question: I know. While Albany lawmakers are weighing a couple of options, like term limits for members or giving parents more say, where do you stand on those things?

Mayor Adams: All part of the conversations. There's some of the things we're going to talk about when we go to Albany, it's all part of the conversation. The end of the day, we want mayoral accountability. Okay. Okay. Okay, folks, let me get these off topics. Thank you very much. Appreciate you. 32, VJ, ACC.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Thanks so much.

Mayor Adams: Well, let's do a couple off topics. How's it going? Always.

Question: Vaccination status. People want to attend graduations of child high school. Parents have to be concerned on vaccination of outside students. Can you clarify? I mean, we have literally have a lot of people asking, so what they need to do to be able to attend child graduation.

Mayor Adams: Yeah. This morning I was on my morning call with the health department. I don't know where the rumor came from that a determination was made already. That is not true. There was no official report that came from the department of health and mental hygiene. The commission has made it clear. We were roll out an announcement on exactly what we're going to do, but there was no announcement made. And I just spoke with the, with the commissioner.

Question: Would it be different indoors versus outdoors? You think it would be different?

Mayor Adams: When they're ready to do the announcement we're going to do so.

Question: Okay, thank you.

Question: So we got the C40 announcement yesterday. We talk about food deserts in the city a lot because of the lack of good supermarkets. We do have many neighborhoods in the city packed with junk food restaurants. So are you willing to engage private sectors [inaudible] city to help, but also the emissions produced by the cooking, all these.

Mayor Adams: Yeah. You know, and I say this all the time, jokingly, I'm the broccoli mayor. People are not going to appreciate me until later, when they see how far ahead our administration is on what food is doing to us, not only to our body, but it's doing to our planet. And you know, sometimes this is an unpopular conversation and people ridicule, they laugh, they joke, they call me names and I got it. But retrospectively, people are going to look back on this and they're going to realize how forward thinking it is. What we must do is balance out... Food must look good, it must be good for you, and

it has to taste good. So we have to invest in affordable, healthy food. We're not going to get the junk food folks out of business until we we removed the demand of the junk food.

Mayor Adams: And by New York, really investing into good tasting, healthy food, finding ways to open them up in these communities where they're oversaturated with fast junk food that's hurting them, that's the balance we must do. And that is what we're doing. We're starting on the ground up. Having young people engaging urban farms, seeing how to grow food. We did this as bald president, a number of children who said when we did urban farming in school, children used to say, "We've never had a salad before." I mean, that's just unbelievable when you think about the nutritional impact of eating healthy. So we got it.

Mayor Adams: We know a lot of these communities that are dealing with high crime, dealing with health crises, dealing with so many other issues. You have junk food everywhere. So we have to balance that out. And our goal is to really encourage people to get good tasting, healthy food. And that is some of the things we did when I was in Los Angeles, looking at some of the healthy, good tasting food that we want to bring those companies here to New York.

Question: [Inaudible].

Question: [Inaudible] reason you said that you wanted to go to [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: You just said that you [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: A schedule. I wanted to get up as soon as possible. Our team, my IG into government, a fast team is finding out the best time to align my schedule with the schedule of the men and women, our lawmakers in Albany so we could get the best bang for our bucks. And so it's just about scheduling. We would love to get up there as soon as possible, but we have been on the phone. As I stated, I spoke with the leaders of both the Assembly and the Senate. We would like to get there as soon as possible because this is an important issue for us.

Question: Speaking of the healthy eating, a video arose over the weekend of a fruit vendor in a subway station in Brooklyn who was handcuffed by the NYPD. Is that what you want your police focusing on?

Mayor Adams: No. What I want my police to focus on, and what I want New Yorkers to focus on, we have to follow rules. And we have to be concerned about, particularly, specifically food. There's a reason we have a Department of Health standards. If people are just selling food without any form of insurance of the quality of that food, someone could get ill from that. That's why there are rules in the subway system.

Mayor Adams: Now, if I allow anyone to sell anything and someone gets sick, a large number of people get sick, you guys are going to be writing, "Eric is allowing people to circumvent the Department of Health standards." So if we follow the rules, we won't have these incidents. And we're going to evaluate the interaction with the police and always find better ways to do so. But the bottom line is today is ... Next day is propane tanks being on the subway system, next day is barbecuing on the subway system. You just can't do that.

Mayor Adams: And I keep saying I'm not going to send my officers mixed messages. We have to follow the rules. And each time we have an encounter, we evaluate to see how we could do it better. But the worst thing that has happened in this city is that we have been sending police officers mixed messages. Follow the rules. The rule was those officers encountered, they said you can't do this here. There was real engagement and the women decided to do something differently. We can't have anything and everything go in our city, and I make that clear over and over again. We have to follow the rules.

Question: Is that kind of infraction deserving of getting handcuffed?

Mayor Adams: We evaluated to see exactly what happened and do proper training. We are going to ensure that officers have the best minimum encounter to do summonsable actions, but at the same time we're encouraging New Yorkers to follow the rules.

Question: I wanted to ask you about the recent report The Federal Monitor put out. The Federal Monitor [inaudible] NYPD basically saying the police [inaudible] clouded the impact, the racial disparity impact seen at stops. Why is that happening? Do you agree with the premise that it is happening? And what is the [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Must read the report. If you stop someone, you have to fill out the report. That's all. This is not complicated, and it's a continuous training. But if you stop someone, you have to fill out the report. Remember, this is what I advocated for as a police reformer, that it's imperative that we fill out the report. I have to read his report to state why he believes that's happening. That's not what I'm getting. And if something in that report reveals that is happening, then we have to retrain any officers to make sure they're doing it right. Stop someone, fill out the report. This is not rocket science.

Question: [Inaudible]. My colleagues published a story today about [inaudible] few months ago was working for [inaudible] lobbying firm. And there's some people within certain communities in the city, when they realized that just a few months ago, this person was working on behalf of people they think were working against the community, they were so concerned about that. I just wanted to ask you, are you concerned about [inaudible]. What's your message for people within the community who are pushing to fight things that a few months ago he was working in favor of?

Mayor Adams: Fred is an amazing employee. Prior to being a lobbyist, Fred was a governmental employee under the Bloomberg administration. And he personifies get stuff done. I am just really happy to convince him to take a salary cut and come work for government and deal with the scrutiny of the New York City press. You know how hard it is to get people to come in? They said, "Eric, I don't want to deal with these brutal attacks. I didn't say 'bless you' to someone that sneezed. They writing a whole full page story." I know that's going to be a story now. Listen, Fred is great. I'm happy to have Fred. I'm happy to have Fred. We all blessed with that. And are there three New Yorkers that said, "Oh, we unhappy that Fred is there."? There's 8.8 million people in the city, 30 million opinions. Thank God we have Fred. I love Fred.

Question: I think it was five people.

Mayor Adams: Five? Okay. Five out of 8.8 million.

Question: Can you describe to us what kind of updates you're getting about subway homelessness? [Inaudible]. Are you on the phone with the commissioner in the morning? If you could just describe that to us. And then also, do you have anything on the books this week to either meet with the police commissioner again or go check out what's going on in the subway?

Mayor Adams: Okay, it's no secret to anyone that just about every other night I'm in the subway system. Because if you don't inspect what you expect, suspect ... The commissioner speaks with me every morning. Every morning, she updates our team, she speaks with me. Then on the weekend, Sunday, the commissioner and I have a briefing of new things we want to do, how we're going to shift things around. We are in constant contact. We know public safety is a prerequisite to prosperity. We're zeroed in on it and we're focused.

Mayor Adams: But we're going to be rolling something out this week that's just mind boggling. How many crimes a small number of people are committing. I don't think New York is really connecting the dots. The Police Department is doing its jobs. The arrests are up. The number of people who are committing grand larceny of autos, shootings, just a small pocket of people. But the system is bottlenecked, in the court system. People don't feel as though there are reprisals for their actions in this city.

Mayor Adams: So what we're doing to the Police Department is just unfair. Putting your lives on a line to stop dangerous people, yet there's no support in place to partner with us to deal with those dangerous people. We're going to continue to do our job, but let's not kid ourselves, arrests are up, gun apprehensions, 2,500 guns, probably more now, I've been saying 2,500 for a week. God only knows what the number is right now.

Mayor Adams: We are doing our job. And so the commissioner and I, we talk about it all the time and we continue to pivot and shift and adjust. And I cannot thank her enough for just her vision on how we're going to get crime under control. And we are. I'm fully confident that we are. And New Yorkers are going to understand they made the right decision on their mayor and the right decision that I made in picking our police commissioner. Okay, thank you.

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