

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AND SIGNS
EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING CENTER FOR CREATIVE CONFLICT
RESOLUTION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. Very much appreciate it, Jacob. And I really want to thank you for, first of all, having us all here, this place that you created, that you had a vision of and brought to life here in New York City. And this is kind of what New York City is all about, the place where people – whether you are born in New York City or you come here from someplace else, people take their dreams, put them into action, bring them to life, and I can feel it here. It's a great energy in this place. So, I'm really appreciative that we're here because this is the kind of business we need, this is the kind of restaurant we need, this as a kind of family run business we need, this is the heart and soul of New York City and we've got to make it work. We've got to make it work for a small business owner. We got to make it work for the people who are employed. I hear you have about 20 employees. Is that right?

Jacob Poznak: That's correct.

Mayor: 20 people's livelihoods, 20 people's livelihoods depend – there, see?

[Laughter]

They're waving over there. Your livelihoods depend on this place succeeding, but we're also all neighbors here in New York City and it has to work for the people of the community. And this is something we were working on long before the pandemic with our Nightlife Office and a lot of other initiatives, to actually hear when there's a neighborhood concern, to respect it, treat it with respect, hear it, bring people together, act on it, because a neighbor who's got a problem deserves respect, and the goal should be to resolve that problem. A small business is trying to stay afloat and employ people, be part of the fabric the city, deserves respect. We want them to succeed. How do we bring those two ideas together? And this is the moment to do it because I keep talking about what we need to do to recover in this city. We need a recovery for all of us. I know – I care about Midtown and, you know, big businesses, I want them to come back strong. But really, I want a recovery for all five boroughs, all neighborhoods, New Yorkers of all walks of life. I want a recovery for working people. I want a recovery for small business owners. To do that, we all have to hear each other, and sometimes when there's an actual dialogue and there's a real process of mediation, when there's a way to bring people together, it leads to much, much better outcomes, but it's a different way of thinking. It's the right way of thinking, particularly when we're trying to come back and have that recovery for all of us.

So, a place this big, a place this busy, a place this crowded – yeah, there'll be conflict sometime. Guess what? That'll happen. But it's like the classic saying you hear for years and years in the city, it's not how many times you get knocked down, it's how many times you get back up. There will be conflict. It's how well do we handle it? How well do we have a dialogue and bring people together and overcome it? The Center for Creative Conflict Resolution, what a powerful idea, a place that helps people find common ground, a place that everyone can turn to equally, creative, I love anything in government with the word creative in it because, generally speaking, government agencies are not known for their creativity and we need a lot more creativity. We need a lot less bureaucracy, a lot more humanity, a lot more creativity. So, the fact that here's an initiative of government that actually is meant to be creative and thoughtful and listen, is powerful. So, to everyone at OATH, I know this has been a labor of love, the concept of putting together initiative, MEND NYC, like bringing us together, mending differences, creating unity is beautiful. It's perfect at this moment and what does it mean in practice? An end of conflict, businesses avoiding fines or penalties, neighbors getting results that they can believe in, this is what we need to do, and this is actually something I hope will grow and grow in this city and become a model for a lot of other places. I think thousands and thousands of New Yorkers are going to benefit from it. So here to tell you more, I know again, it's been a labor of love for her and everyone else OATH, Commissioner Joni Kletter.

Commissioner Joni Kletter, Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings: Good afternoon. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. It's really an honor to have you here and that was very well said, and we really appreciate all of your support. So, thank you so, so much. I am here today with Ray Kramer, who is the Executive Director of the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution and Ariel Palitz, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Nightlife. Director Palitz actually started a pilot program for mediation services two years ago and the center was able to adopt that program and bring to it the necessary resources which brought us to mend today. As the Mayor said, for neighborhood nuisances and quality of life complaints that emanate for local businesses, MEND NYC provides resolution and fixes, not fines. Through using restorative methods to resolve conflicts, we can help restore our city and bring communities together by giving people the opportunity to proactively engage in mediation services, to use compromise, to resolve their conflicts, and come up with solutions together. This agreement between Mr. Poznak, the owner of Moonrise Izakaya, and Mr. Brown, a neighbor, is a great example of how we can use mediation over enforcement where applicable. Mr. Brown and Mr. Poznak are signing an agreement that they created through our MEND NYC program, after Mr. Brown contacted MEND about loud noise emanating from this restaurant. Mr. Poznak was eager to participate in this program in order to avoid having enforcement agents being called in. As a result of the mediation, Mr. Poznak agreed to move his speakers and he provided his contact information to Mr. Brown so that Mr. Brown could contact him in the future if any problems were to arise again. As a result, any New Yorker with a quality-of-life issue regarding a local business should reach out to MEND. Any business local business that has a dispute with a neighboring business should also reach out to MEND and we can work on resolving that dispute. To contact us, go to nyc.gov/mendnyc. I'd now like to invite the parties to say a few words about what the agreement means to them, and then ask them to sign the agreement here. Thank you.

[...]

Well, everyone, look, this an example of the shape of things to come. Again, special appreciation because a lot of work went into this at OATH, and thank you judge for your great work. Also,

the work that's been done by Ariel and everyone at Nightlife Office. I've seen conflicts melt away. I've seen how people actually can get on the same page and move forward. It's something really, really powerful. Now, we want to see this the norm. Yes, we're a city of people had really strong opinions. We all know that, but sometimes people have strong opinions, like that's actually the way to get people talking and find out, you know, a way forward. We want to see a lot of city agencies take advantage of this Center and the MEND initiative and let's solve things together and that's going to be part of our comeback. That's going to be a part of a recovery that makes us proud. So, this is a good day. Now, I'm going to sign this executive order, I'm going to plant a seed as I prepare to do it. You know, it would be appropriate to have a celebration of such an important moment. We're here at Moonrise. I want to purchase something. So, you're going to decide what's the appropriate thing for us all to have as part of our celebration and I'm going to buy that thing and then we're going to share it. Okay. You got to think about that. Okay?

Poznak: Okay.

Mayor: Because it won't be over until we toast. Okay. But in the meantime, I know you want me to patronize small businesses. In the meantime, this executive order will establish the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution, make it a formal part of what we do in New York City and it's going to allow us to do this kind of work, restorative justice, mediation, finding common ground, all over the five boroughs. So, this is a historic moment.

[Mayor de Blasio signs Executive Order]

[Applause]

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