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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, CHANCELLOR CARRANZA ANNOUNCE
FOUR TIMES MORE CHILDREN RECEIVING 3-K FOR ALL OFFERS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Kisha, you're like – you are an accomplished speaker. I'm impressed. I am convinced.

Kisha Rivers: I was so nervous.

Mayor: That was you being nervous?

Rivers: Yes.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Wow, I want to thank Kisha – you just said it absolutely beautifully. I want to thank you because there are so many people here I want to thank. Everyone who works here and all the educators – everyone who cares so deeply about making early childhood education available to our children, we just heard, I think possibly the finest explanation you're ever going to hear of why this matters so much. What it means to a family, what it means to a child, what it means to a parent, what it means in terms of lifting a burden on that family, economically, but also the ability to know your child is going to get a great start and a great education.

So Kisha, that was absolutely fantastic. Now I want to give you the best compliment I can possibly give you, I'm a parent too, and I got to see Nyla in action in the classroom and she is confident, and she was communicating with the teacher, and she had very definite opinions, as you indicated, so you are a damn good parent. So let's give Kisha a round of applause.

[Applause]

Mayor: And when you see Nyla and the other children, it is just living proof of why this matters so much. I'm amazed, you know, I didn't know – we didn't know exactly what 3-K would feel like. There was a day, back in September, where we walked in, I walked in, and then Chancellor, a lot of us walked into a classroom, it was the first time in the history of New York City that

three-year-olds were in a classroom in a New York City public school. We didn't know what it would be like.

And that was here in the Bronx, and I remember feeling like it was a revolutionary moment, and those kids were amazing even on the first day. You know, all ready, and ready to start soaking up the education and the information. I think as a society we underestimated our young children and what they were capable of learning. And what we are seeing in 3-K is actually going beyond our wildest dreams in terms of how much kids can learn and how quickly. So you're – you're in the vanguard with the first wave to make this happen and Nyla is proving what's possible.

I want to just thank everyone who has been a part of this effort. I want to thank our Deputy Mayor for strategic policy initiatives, Phil Thompson, who is helping to lead the way. I want to thank from ACS, and I really want to say ACS is playing such an important role as we build out 3-K and they are doing a great job, I want to thank Deputy Commissioner for Child and Family Well-Being, Lorelei Vargas. And I want to thank from the District and from the school, Superintendent Richard Cintron, the Early Childhood Director Caryln Rahynes, and the Site Coordinator, Gladys Burgos. Let's give them all a round of applause.

[Applause]

So this is what's so amazing that before the age of five – and I've got an expert sitting next to me who you will hear from in a moment – before the age of five, everything's possible, but again our society and our school system was backwards for the longest time. We left out of the equation the time in a child's life when they could learn most quickly, most intensively, when they can have that strong foundation. Literally was an afterthought in so many ways. And we've tried to now get things right, first with Pre-K for All, and now continuing to the day when we're going to have 3-K for every single child in this city.

Well, what we're seeing already is making a huge difference. We already are hearing from the kindergarten teachers, the first grade teachers, who see the difference that the kids who came out of Pre-K experienced. I think we're on the verge on something much bigger. When two full years of that precious early time is fully tapped into, when you finally see an entire city of children getting that early start, it's going to transform our school system. So this is a very, very exciting time, and it's also about what we value. We believe in a city that is fair for everyone. The goal of this administration is to make this the fairest big city in America.

A way to think about it is if we succeed in our goal, we want a New York City where our children are born into fairness, where it's not something people assume will never be theirs, or something they will have to struggle and fight for just to be treated fairly, we want our children born into fairness. We want them to know, and their families to know, that they will have just as much opportunity as any other child. And you can see it here, and I loved what you said about the fact that if you had to choose, and you had all the choices in the world, this is where you'd want Nyla. That's the reality we want to create for the families of New York City. That they know they're getting the very best.

Let's look at what we know so far about 3-K For All and the demand for it. It's been outstanding. You know, when we started in just two districts, brand new idea, we didn't know how people would respond. But here's what we found, we're still in year one but the word has really spread, and now parents are speaking up and the demand is going through the roof. So here in the South Bronx, in District 7, applications have gone up 50 percent since last year. Demand is skyrocketing and we know that it's going to keep growing and we know that as we make this program stronger, more and more parents are going to want to be a part of it.

Here's what we can tell you today, the news of what's happened right here all over this city, over 3,000 3-K offer letters have gone out as of today – 3,000. And that's on top of two – excuse me, on top of an additional 2,000 for kids who are in the early learn program. When you combine those two excellent early childhood efforts, over 5,000 kids will be in 3-K in September.

So this is something that did not exist – if you went back in time a year ago today it did not exist in New York City, no such thing. By September there will be 5,000 kids. By the year 2021 this will be in every single school district in New York City – all 32 districts. And it will be a game changer. Now, this – I've said to people, this is in some ways even tougher as a goal than pre-K because, you know, pre-K we had some before. We made it fully universal. This is building something that's never existed before. But the early results have been outstanding. And we're encouraged to keep going.

So, the goal ultimately, and it fits so powerfully with the Equity and Excellence vision, is that the day is coming soon where every single parent knows that their child has a 3-K seat that it's free, that it's high quality, that it's going to tap into their intellectual potential, and that those children will go home and tell their mother exactly where to put the plant and exactly what to feed them. It's going to have a city of nudgey children, but they're going to be very educated children, and we'll be proud of that.

Let me just offer a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Now before I turn to the Chancellor, we have a special thing we want to do here. And is Michelle here with us? Okay, and Michelle is the mother of Reagan and we're going to go over for a second because we're going to have a special moment. Okay Michelle this is going to be our kind of Academy Award moment here. No wait its Moonlight – hold on. So that is your name right? We're going to make sure – see we're going to make sure from the beginning. Michelle's name is here. Michelle I would like you to receive this letter, open it, and tell the people of New York City what it says for you and your family.

Michelle: Dear family, congratulations. I am pleased to inform you that your child has received a 3-K for All offer for the 2018 to 2019 school year at the following program: Learning Through Play Pre-K Center at 535 Union Avenue.

[Applause]

Mayor: Congratulations.

Unknown: Thank you so much. Thank you

Mayor: Congratulations. Are you ready to go to school? Really?

[Laughter]

Michelle: Her brother was here last year and he had a really good time, learned so much. The teachers – everybody is so professional. I'm really excited for her to come here next year. Thank you so much.

Mayor: I love it. Congratulations. Yes, congratulations. Alright so you saw it live. And with that, I turn to the man who knows a whole lot about the extraordinary capacity in these wonderful children we're about to unleash, our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

[Applause]

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you Mr. Mayor, thank you everybody. This is an amazing, exciting day. And if you saw the eyes of our young scholar you'll understand why. Who doesn't want to come to school where it's happy and it's joyful, and you get to play, and you get to experience, and the adults are encouraging and loving. This is what we want students to associate with school right from the very beginning. So it's an exciting day as our Mayor mentioned. Three thousand families in four boroughs getting 3-K offers today.

And I want to commend Mayor Bill de Blasio and this administration for their emphasis on early learning. The literature is complete and it's robust and it shows that the earlier students are engaged in a structured environment, where they're not only playing and having fun, but they're learning how to – the fundamentals of reading, believe it or not the fundamentals of computer science. And where students are able to socialize with other students and actually get to build things and construct and deconstruct and then rebuild like what just happened in the classroom. That is what joyful learning is all about, and we want students in 3-K to have the same experience when they get into twelfth grade where they have that same exuberance for learning.

That would not happen – and please don't lose the significance, this is now the fifth state that I've lived and worked in, and I can tell you this is not happening at this scale anywhere else in America. But it's happening right here in New York City, and I want to thank you Mr. Mayor for your leadership and your vision for that.

[Applause]

As I mentioned I had fun playing in the classroom, I could spend all day and I could get really dirty. But the fun that our students are experiencing is exactly what we want. And I think that's an important thing to remember. That this isn't about socializing students as students per se, it's about having them become learners and explorers and let that creativity just blossom. Is that what your daughter experienced?

Rivers: Absolutely.

Chancellor Carranza: That's what we want. So I couldn't be prouder to be a chancellor of a school system that is this progressive, is this visionary, and we are going to continue to work very, very diligently to make sure that we have the seats and we have the opportunities for all of our 3-K students in the City of New York.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Mr. Mayor I just said, sign 'em up. It's a lot of fun.

Mayor: And now the rough translation. Sign 'em up.

[Laughter]

I like it. I like it. So – thank you Chancellor.

[...]

Mayor: So, let's start with any questions about the 3-K initiative and what's happening today around the city with people getting these acceptance letters. Let me see if there's any questions first about 3-K and then we can broaden out to other education matters. First, 3-K. Okay, go ahead.

Question: Is the plan still that by 2021 you will have this citywide and its 62,000 seats? And obviously I know that depends on getting a lot of federal and state money but that seems like a really huge jump that in two years you're going to get to 5,000 seats and then two years from now you're going to have 62,000 seats. What is going into place to make that leap happen because that seems like a huge leap?

Mayor: It is a huge leap. You're not crazy.

[Laughter]

It's a huge leap. If you see a cold sweat on the forehead of Phil Thompson or Richard Carranza, you'll understand why. It's – look, I want to compare the two. When we walked in the door in 2014, there were 20,000 kids in full-day pre-K in the city. We went up to 53,000 and then basically up to 70,000 in the course of two years. Numerically – very tough and literally, I mean the first jump we had come in part way through that school year and had to do it for September, and then the second jump was a year later.

So, that was very punishing timeline but we got there. This is from scratch so on one level harder and uncharted territory, so definitely harder on that level but we also came up with a longer timeline to actually have the ability to build it properly.

So to reiterate, by 2021, September 2021, every school district – all 32 districts – will have kids in 3-K. The full universality will be the following September. Everything is a two-year phase in. Two-year phase in here in District 6, in District 23. Every district once it starts will have a two-year phase in. So, we'll be in all districts in September of 2021. By September 2022, it will be a fully universal right for all kids.

We believe it's working, that the expansion is going smoothly, that we will find the space and the partners. We've spent a lot of time with the School Construction Authority confirming that the space will be there. They are confident and they have the resources. So, yeah, we're on track and we're going to – same thing as pre-K, we're going to need a lot of partners, we're going to work with a whole host of community partners to get this to work but we feel confident.

I'd also say on the funding front. I feel better than I did at the time we announced it. I don't know what the results of the November election will be but I think there's a very strong likelihood of change in Albany in terms of the State Senate. That would be good for achieving what we need.

And you know so far the federal dynamic had played out differently than we expected and I also would not be surprised if we see a lot of changes on the national level between this coming election and the one after.

So, we remain confident we'll be able to put it together. Either one of you want to add? Okay, go ahead.

Question: On the funding issue – are you having conversations in anticipation of that potential shift in the State legislature? Are you talking to people in Albany, laying the groundwork, I guess, to try to get – I mean, whether there is a change or not, it's a lot of money –

Mayor: It is a lot of money. It's definitely a lot of money. It's the best money we'll ever spend but it's a lot of money. The answer is two-part. Yes in the sense of the two people who are going to have to lead the way, Speaker Carl Heastie and soon-to-be, I believe, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, fully understand this is my number-one priority for the City of New York and that we'll be coming to them looking for help.

And the Assembly led the way with us on pre-K last time. That was a longtime priority of the Assembly and they were tremendous allies in getting it done in 2014. So, you know – and Michael, feel free to jump in – but I think the bottom line to me is I think the leadership knows where we're going.

Now, look, in the early build out we have put together the resources to achieve. It's those years up ahead where we're going to really need that additional funding. So, we are building the framework and making clear it's working and then we're going to go to Albany at the right time and I think we'll find a receptive audience.

Assemblymember Michael Blake: I think just to your question, for context, this is when politics impact policy. When we had a Democratic governor, Democratic Senate, Democratic Assembly

that's when Rockefeller drug laws were able to change. So, you have – for that kind of context, when we talk about we need one seat to move in the Senate for us to have clear control, separate from what's going on in that one seat right now, we've been very clear education is the priority for us. We've conveyed that from pre-K, we've conveyed that for My Brother's Keeper which obviously we have close coordination with the Young Men's Initiative when it comes to community schools, renewal schools. We have been very consistent that this is our priority and so, you know I know we're in a government space but the reality is this November dramatically impacts the ability of us helping kids across New York City.

If you want your child in this city to have access to 3-K for all, if you want your child to have more access when it comes to education funding, we need a State Senate, and that one seat will help us do that.

Chancellor Carranza: Mr. Mayor, if I could just add just a couple of comments on that. So, as I've been able to go around the City of New York and actually even spend time in Albany, what I've been sharing with folks is that Excellence and Equity is not just a tagline. This is a true, real life example of creating excellence and doing that through a lens of equity. And part of what we're going to ask all of our constituency, all 1.1 million students and their caregivers, is to continue to really champion the idea that this is not an expense this is an investment. This is an investment in the very future of this city, the very future of this state.

And as we continue to talk about why this investment is yielding great results – and I think you will see as these students move up now into other grades and we've worked now to build a pre-K, 3-K second grade continuum with the goal that we'll have universal literacy, you're going to see that students will be much better adjusted academically but they will be socially well-adjusted as well. And I don't think there's anyone in our city that would argue that if you invest in that, to build a better more engaged citizenry that that is a worthy investment.

So, we're going to continue talking about this as an investment rather than an expense. But we need to have our policymakers on board with us as well.

Deputy Mayor J. Philip Thompson: I just wanted to add, I was a college professor at MIT for the last 18 years and what the Chancellor said about love of learning and joy of learning, I think is the absolute key to really having great and successful students. It's not where you come from, it's where you're going, where you want to go.

The second thing I wanted to say is that the Mayor can't say this about himself – I don't know if you follow basketball but LeBron James is carrying the Cleveland Cavaliers on his back. And Richard and I are both new, and I have to tell you the Mayor has been carrying this and he has made it really clear to everybody what his priorities are and he is on top of it. And that's very helpful in a big government where there are a lot of things going. There's no unclarity about, you know, where the Mayor wants us to go and it makes my job easier because really what I have to do is like the Cleveland Cavaliers – get ready to get the pass.

[Laughter]

So, we all know the pass is coming.

Mayor: Strong analogy. Just one other political point and I don't mean just partisan politics I mean just the politics of how what people want shapes policy. I mean you heard this beautiful testimony. We found in 2014 that folks in Albany – and Michael can attest to this – started to hear so strongly from their constituents about pre-K which is part of why the critical mass was reached.

The more the word spreads about 3-K it will create an organic demand that elected officials will have to respond to. It literally, you're going to have a whole lot of parents saying, "I need this for my child, it's supposed to be free, it's supposed to be there for me, why are you not giving it to me?" And I think that's going to become pretty irresistible.

Assemblymember Blake: No question. I mean, look, I think another clear example again going back to what you said earlier, the community schools – people have seen it's working –

Mayor: Yeah.

Assemblymember Blake: And we have parents that come to our office repeatedly saying, "We like this. We want to see this happen more. Renewal schools are working." And in that same aspect you wouldn't have the demand of people applying if this wasn't working and I think us just being honest about that – we are responsive to that as a elected officials and it's going to increase. More kids deserve to have that chance and more parents are going to demand that.

Question: [Inaudible] with the Governor?

Mayor: A while back, not recently but again the time where we're going to need the focus is coming up in the future and I will be – I am very hopeful it will be with an alignment in Albany particularly with the Senate that will make it a more positive conversation.

Question: A question for the parent and then also for the policymakers. You mentioned that this might cost as much as rent. Can you put some numbers to this? How much does a typical 3-K seat cost for one seat and how much are you expecting Albany to come through with future funding? What's the size of the ask going to be?

Mayor: So you do the first part and I'll do the second part. What – if you feel comfortable saying what kind of costs you've seen for private early childhood education?

Rivers: When I was first looking for care for my daughter she was six months old. I went back to work very early. And the schools that I was interested in putting her in, they were about \$3,000 a month or more. Luckily, I was able to get her into a seat in the Bronx and it was a little bit cheaper. It was about \$1,200 but that's still around, about some people's rent. So it's very costly.

Mayor: Exactly. On the second point, I think the simple answer is between the State government and the federal government we would need several hundred million dollars. We can fill in the blank as we get closer to 2021. But that's the kind of magnitude we're talking about.

Okay, anything else education related first and then we'll switch to other topics. Education related?

Question: Thank you for taking this. Chancellor, you've been here for a month-and-a-half now. You've talked to a lot of folks. Diversity and integration have been a big issue. Can you tell us any specific ideas you have for things you can do as Chancellor to help integrate the schools? And related to that, some parents are saying, let's drop the screening altogether for middle schools and high schools. What do you say to them? What's your rationale for keeping it?

Chancellor Carranza: Well, I think we have to be very, very clear when we talk about Equity and Excellence – it's not just about integrating schools and removing barriers. It's also about building really strong schools and neighborhoods. So, we want students in every corner of our city to have really good choices in terms of programs, in terms of the schools but we want them in their neighborhoods. So, it's really building great schools and supporting and enabling and empowering the development of great schools while at the same time, as a system, eliminating barriers.

So, what I've been talking about and I've had experience in other places that I've been is I think a test score shouldn't be the single determiner of a student's ability to have educational opportunities. And I'm going to air-underline a very particular word – we are a public school system. So, that means schools belong to the public. So, the public should have writ large an opportunity to have educational experiences in any of the schools in our educational portfolio.

So, with that there are multiple ways of identifying student talent. There are portfolios, there are, obviously, we have talked about auditions, there are interviews, there's a vast list of ways that we can de-emphasize just a single point of identifying admission to some of these schools.

That being said as well, there are also some systemic issues that we should really think about. So, how are school zoned? Where are they zoned? Where are the programs put? When we talk about choice, do you really have choice if, you know, parents are spending thousands of dollars tutoring their children for one test. Is that really equity in a city as diverse as New York City? I don't think so.

So, those kinds of conversations are the kinds of conversations that are happening right now in various districts across the city. I am incredibly supportive of that. I'm giving them their space to have the democratic process work its way through. And people have different kinds of ideas as they come through.

But at the same time, concomitantly, we have a district wide diversity advisory council that is very actively engaged and we're expecting that by December. They're going to give us a list of short term and long term recommendations to really talk about the systemic challenges and opportunities that we have. So there are multiple things happening on multiple fronts but I just want to be very, very clear that I would not have come to New York City had not the Mayor of this city also had a very strong interest in making sure that there are no barriers to all students in this city.

So, I think there's – it's a moment in time and I'm very excited about what's happening around this issue.

Question: Just to follow – lots of the middle schools for example already have multiple measures as a screening process and you end up like with District 3 with mostly white schools at the southern end the opposite at the other end partly because of the multiple-measure screening processes. So, just saying it's not going to be based only on the test score isn't really going to change the situation –

Chancellor Carranza: Well, I would challenge the multiple measures and what those multiple measures are but I think the very fact that we're talking about screening is an issue. Why are we screening kids? Why are we screening for admission? And that's a question that I have posed to my colleagues out in the field as well. Why are we screening children? I don't get that. We're a public school system in one of the most diverse cities, not in America, in the world. Why are we screening kids in a public school system? That's, to me, antithetical to what I think we all want for our kids.

Question: Is there something that you as Chancellor have the authority to do to take away the screening mechanisms?

Chancellor Carranza: Again, I'm exploring all of our options working with all of our communities and all of our elected CECs and take this very, very seriously. And at the appropriate time I think you will see some actions that come out of City Hall and the DOE that will be very, very much on this particular subject. But again we're giving people the space to have that conversation.

Mayor: I think we saw a new thing here in terms of gestures. I had never heard of air-underlining before. You ever seen that, Michael?

[Laughter]

Assemblymember Blake: No. And I don't even know the other word –

Mayor: Concomitantly.

Chancellor Carranza: Concomitantly.

Mayor: Yeah, God bless you. I just want to say –

[Laughter]

This may be a historical moment because we know what air-quotations, but air-underlining this? It could have happened for the first time ever right here. Congratulations, Chancellor. Okay, education related and then we'll move to others. Anything? Yes?

Question: I would like to know will they have special need classes for 3-K students?

Mayor: Special need kids included?

Chancellor Carranza: So, again, 3-K, everybody starts with no pre-existing condition. So, when students come to us, part of the process of educating students especially early is to help develop their skills. And in that process if there is a question or if there is a concern or if a parent has raised an issue about, “Well, I think my child can or cannot,” then there’s a whole process of evaluating them to access what is it, is it developmental, is it process-oriented, is it education oriented? So, again, we don’t have any specific inclusion 3-K programs. It’s open to all but we’re always looking to identify any special needs that students may have.

Mayor: Okay, let’s go to other topics. Yes?

Question: Mayor, my paper is aware that your office, NYPD, Sanitation, other City agencies have been talking to Heritage of Pride, the organization that [inaudible] the annual Gay Pride events every year. There’s a push along to get them to shorten that parade. I know that parades have been asked to get their time down below five hours. Can you discuss the extent to which cost is informing the City’s push to get all of these parades much shorter and specifically the extent to which cost is informing the City’s efforts to get the Gay Pride to be much shorter?

Mayor: The actual answer is no, I can’t because I only – the extent that I have ever been involved in any of this is on the notion that if we have a route that can be shorter in terms of the impact it has on the surrounding community that we should be looking at that. But I have not heard any of the details related to this parade and I would want to get briefed on it before I spoke to it.

So, I think – I think the impetus originally was as much about neighborhood impact, congestion, other factors as it was anything involving cost but again that began before this administration. We do believe there is a fair balance to strike but I can’t speak to this one because I haven’t been briefed on it.

Question: If I could just quickly follow-up, it is fair to say then that cost is certainly an aspect of this conversation?

Mayor: Again, I need to know about this. Each one could be different so I need to be briefed because I can answer that. Will?

Question: I just have two questions for you. The first one is involving the MTA overhaul plan which is going to cost around \$19 billion. It was announced today.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Possibly. And you said, or your spokesperson has said, you will not contribute to that plan. Why won’t you contribute any money to that plan to overhaul the subway?

Mayor: So, a couple things. First of all, the plan itself we've only seen it initially obvious, but I think the plan itself is a step in the right direction to have a big comprehensive plan that acknowledges there has to be fundamental change to the MTA.

The fact is a long time ago the investments could have been made that would have averted the crisis we're in now. I wish they had been. But no time like the present. So I do think that Mr. Byford has put together a plan that actually talks about fixing the signals and getting the proper equipment and downplays the kind of things that were getting way too much attention like the lights on the bridges and all the stuff I think was extraneous.

I want to caution, as much as I'm really happy to see a plan that actually gets at the essentials and puts a real price tag on it, it's still the MTA and we've seen what's happened with the East Side Access and we have to hold their feet to the fire that this plan is implemented a lot better than what we've seen in the past and certainly my board members will do that.

But the real answer to the MTA situation is a long term funding stream and we as a city, as a state keep putting this off. We should stop putting it off. It's time to decide. It's time to make a decision on how we're going to finance it once and for all. I believe the millionaire's tax is the best solution. I think it's the most fair solution, the most sustainable, and it has a lot of popular support as we saw from the poll last month.

There's only a few other options on the table for a long term sustainable funding source. So, that's where we have to go. The statement that my spokesman made is simply recognizing that we're going to fight for a long-term funding source and not more stop-gaps.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Please.

Question: [Inaudible] that the millionaire's tax does not seem to be having much traction in Albany so why are you so insistent on that as a funding method for this plan when it doesn't seem to be going –

Mayor: Well, I'll tell you, I just disagree with that assessment and I'll urge my friends – and I'll turn to Michael in a second because he's a witness – I would urge my friends in the media not to follow the conventional wisdom so quickly. You've seen now public polling showing a level of support. You have to acknowledge the chance, the strong chance of change in Albany. We had five retirements of Republican Senators in the space of two weeks for God sakes. I mean this is looking pretty clear right now.

If you have a different State Senate that changes the entire balance of power and all the possibilities. So, I just disagree with any conventional wisdom that says the millionaire's tax is not just as viable an option. You know what the other one – competing options are. There has not yet been a groundswell for them but one of them has to be chosen.

Whichever way you slice it. And I think – I’m actually quite optimistic for this reason. What’s happened in the last couple of years is that responsibility has finally been assigned for the MTA. It’s now fully understood that the responsibility for the MTA resides in the State of New York, ultimately the Governor. That’s good. That’s good for today and that’s good for the future, whoever is Governor. We finally know who to hold responsible just like everyone holds me responsible for our schools.

And that’s actually causing some of this change. It’s a good thing. We didn’t get that plan in the past because there was such a vague sense of responsibility. You notice that once there was actual responsibility assigned suddenly we get a plan. That’s good. Now, let’s deal with the price tag. And there’s only a handful of options of how you can pay that kind of money. They will take action by the legislature in any situation.

But the good news from my perspective is the legislature, I think, is about the change and that’s going to open up possibilities.

Assemblymember Blake: This is a continual issue and priority for us itself especially in our district where the 2-5 line literally is the border of our district. When we think about why we’re confident of change, first let’s be clear, there’s substantial support around the millionaire’s tax. The pushback has been in the Senate Republicans. We have to be very clear about that. Last year I think is the perfect indication of when you continue to put pressure how things change – Raise the Age.

Mayor: Right.

Assemblymember Blake: Kalief was our constituent.

Mayor: Right.

Assemblymember Blake: His mother was our constituent. This was not something the Republicans wanted to do. We consistently pushed. We pushed and we pushed. As Vice President Biden would always say to us regularly, “Your budget shows someone’s values.” So when you think about when the budget process comes back next April presuming as we think we should, if we do the work, that we will have a different State Senate. Then you’re going to be in a space where you have an Assembly and Senate that’s both on the same page of we need to do this millionaire’s tax. We’re in a very realistic scenario. If we want to address these issues, it takes funding. And the reason why this has not happened has been purely because of the Senate Republicans.

But as the Mayor said, when you are in a space were in two weeks five Republicans decide they’re not running again, I think they see what’s happening. But now it is our job to make sure that we educate people about the necessity of that. Will this move right now? No. Can it move immediately in the beginning of next year? Absolutely.

And every year, look at the last few years, the last piece I think we’ll be tying to this – look at My Brother’s Keeper. My Brother’s Keeper was an initiative a lot of people didn’t really know

about outside of what was happening at the White House with President Obama. Speaker Heastie was adamant – we are not going to move forward until we get this a part of the budget. And so I think when we look at the MTA and what’s happening with transportation, we understand the way to get that done is through a millionaire’s tax and the way to get that done is making sure we have a new composition in the Senate next year.

Question: [Inaudible] question was regarding the State Democratic Convention. You attended in 2014. You are not going this year. Is that your choice? Were you invited? Why will you not be at the convention?

Mayor: Yeah, look, the – I’m a progressive and I’m a very proud progressive and I am going to be involved in efforts in this city, this state, this country to create a more progressive Democratic Party and a more progressive country.

That said, you know, there was not an invitation to play a meaningful role at the convention. I got a lot of other good things I can do with my time. And so, I’m not worried about it. I’m going to continue my work either way.

Question: Hillary Clinton is reportedly going to be endorsing Andrew Cuomo. Obviously you have a track record with her and when you endorsed her for president you had said that she was a progressive who was able to get things done. I’m wondering if, one, you could just comment on her endorsement of Andrew Cuomo which you don’t seem to be doing at the moment. And number two, the idea that – the ability to get something done was sort of a criteria that you looked for on the national stage in the person you were endorsing. Does that also apply to a gubernatorial candidate?

Mayor: So, I provided that praise to her because of everything she had achieved in her career and I respect her a lot for it. I’m not a pundit. I can’t predict the impact of any endorsement. Obviously, there is a long positive relationship between the Governor and Secretary Clinton so it’s not surprising at all that he would want her endorsement and that she would give it. What was the last part of your question?

Question: [Inaudible] criteria of being able to get a progressive idea done and accomplished, would also apply to your thinking about the governor’s race.

Mayor: It applies to my thinking about all electoral dynamics but I think you know again, I’ve said at some point I will weigh in on the 2018 elections in this state but it kind of harkens back to some of the stuff Michael was pointing out. I will always look at what someone’s belief structure is and their ability to act on their beliefs. And I will always think about what it means for the people of New York City.

But again when I’m ready to say something about that I will. Let me see, other – yes, go ahead.

Question: After the City announced their \$60 million plan to install those kiosks for syringes and needles up in the Bronx, we headed out to a park out there and found an unbelievable amount of syringes and needles. It may be difficult to see from where you are but every place

that you see an orange marker there are syringes, everywhere. So we saw that yesterday the same day that the NYPD announced the problem with K2. There is seemingly a very widespread substance abuse issue in the city. Can you talk about what you plan to do about this?

Mayor: Sure, first of all, that image – thank you for showing it to me – that’s unacceptable. I just want to start at the beginning. We don’t want anybody in this city having to see that or experience that. We don’t want children, seniors, anyone to have to go through that. So, I want to be very clear what the Parks Department is doing is their effort to try and address the quality of life in that park. That is entirely different from everything else we’re going to be doing.

In terms of the NYPD and enforcement, we’ve made very clear we don’t tolerate anything like that anywhere. You know, there used to be all these horrible encampments in this city where drug use was open and people were living permanently and they were tolerated for decades. We closed all of those down and we’re not allowing any of them to reassert.

That’s an effort with the NYPD and Park Department, Sanitation, everyone. That same standard has to be applied everywhere. Also, the Health Department – look, someone who is addicted has a problem, has a challenge. I mean this is something my wife, Chirlane, talks about a lot. The problem – the human problem of addiction. Unfortunately humans have a propensity to addiction and they can’t just say one day, “Oh, I’m not longer addicted. I’m walking away.” It takes treatment.

So, those individuals who are using drugs in that park, they need help, they need treatment. We have to get to them. We have to do a better job of reaching them and getting them to treatment. But we don’t accept any status quo like that. I want to be crystal clear about that.

Question: [Inaudible] problem last summer. We saw people literally stumbling all over the streets. It seemed to go away for a little while but now it’s –

Mayor: Well, I think to your bigger point – look, we got to put this in perspective. We’re the safest big city in America.

The NYPD continues to drive down crime of all kinds. We are a much safer, more orderly City than we were even just a few years ago, and we’re going to keep doing that. There is a drug-use problem in New York City, in this whole country. Opioids is the first thing I will – I will certainly talk about K-2 in a second, but the number-one challenge is opioids, and that’s what we’re putting a huge amount of energy into. But you know, opioids is really troubling not only because of the horrible human impact – so many lives being lost – but this is everywhere, every part of the country – it’s city, it’s rural, it’s everywhere. So, that’s our first focus. This has really intensified in recent years. We have to turn that around. K-2, we did have a bad stretch. It was addressed very aggressively. This situation in Brooklyn is being addressed very aggressively too. It comes down to a small number of dealers. It comes down to some particular locations. And we’ve made clear, if stores – and this has often been the case – stores actually are the centerpiece of this drug dealing. We’re going to close them down. If we have the legal ability to in any situation, we’re going to shut them down, and we’re going after everyone who’s a part of that

network. So, we don't take it lightly. Very aggressive measures last year, and before, stopped those outbreaks, those outbursts, if you will, of K-2 usage. We're going to do that again.

Other questions?

Question: Mayor, I just wanted to ask about the direction you're giving the NYPD to stop arresting people for smoking marijuana in public. I'm just sort of curious how you got to that decision on Sunday last week? When you took questions on Friday, you had said you were looking for the outcome and you'd let the NYPD determine how to get there. How did you get there on Friday, to Sunday, giving them a more specific directive?

Mayor: Well, it's a couple of things. It's an ongoing conversation is the number-one thing to say to you. Commissioner O'Neill and I, and his whole team, and my team – we've been taking about this over many weeks. And the more I looked at the facts, the more I felt it was time. We all agreed that the 30-day process would yield how we would address two fundamental problems, disparity in arrests, which we don't accept – it has to end, just want to be crystal clear here. We do not accept disparity in arrests, we have to do something about it. And second, too many arrests in general. You know, we've had over 100,000 fewer arrests in 2017 than we had in 2013 overall – all crimes – and we got a safer City at the same time. We've got to keep reducing the use of arrest where appropriate. So, that's what the conversation revolved around. The Commissioner and I were very comfortable with the notion that that 30-day timeframe would allow for the NYPD to come up with a specific plan. But the more I thought of it, the more it was important to say to the people of this city that I think the notion of arrest and giving someone a record, and the negative impact that has, and unfortunately the disparity realities that still exist – it didn't make sense to arrest for public marijuana use anymore. Now, clearly, there will be exceptions – I want to be crystal clear, the NYPD's vision will come out – but clearly there are exceptions. If you have an outstanding warrant for something else, if you're committing another crime at the same time – there are certain obvious things that will be addressed here. But it just became to me a matter of what I thought was fair and what made sense. The more we talked about it the more I thought it was important to just say out loud, this is where we need to go.

Question: Have you been taking to – is it mainly the NYPD? Or statistics that you're looking at? Can you give us just a little sense of maybe who might have – who or what might have influenced this?

Mayor: You will not be surprised to know I look at what everyone's saying. I've had conversations with NYPD. I certainly heard from District Attorney Vance, who has, I think, provided some important leadership on this issue – looked at what advocates were saying, looked at what elected officials were saying. But the most important point for me was the facts keep coming back with two outcomes we didn't like – more arrests than we thought were necessary – and too much disparity. So, that was the essence of it. When I felt that that was confirmed, that we had that situation it was time to act. Now, remember, we, over years, learned that we could get more safety with fewer arrests – that's nothing something I would have said in 2014, we had to prove that. And we also started with not having arrests for low-level possession in 2015. That was a major reform. I was pleased that we made that reform. I was expecting even greater impact

from that. So, it's a variety of different things taken together that led me to feel it was the right thing to do.

Assemblymember Blake: So, our district has, because of Morrisania and Melrose, the largest concentration of individuals at Rikers. I'm on the Corrections Committee. I want to put this perspective, when 86 percent of arrests are black and Latino, especially since we're here in a school, if we would focus on a book bag rather than a dime bag. That's how things change. I want to commend the Mayor, Commissioner O'Neill, who, again – for context, Jimmy understands what's happening here. He was obviously our C-O at the 44th Precinct in our district. This was destroying black and Latino lives in New York City. And when we just think about the humanity of this – why on earth are we going to continue down a road where someone's life could be destroyed forever because of seconds. Let's look at what we're watching the last few weeks, where in seconds you can see an experience with someone – now, I want to be clear, most officers are doing the right thing across the City, in the same way most citizens are doing the right thing – now if you're in that one scenario where something can spiral in seconds – it can happen because of what happens when interactions where someone having marijuana, or a summons, or an arrest, and it's the totality of the experience of what we're talking about. And so, when we talk about why this has to happen, this is about justice. We can't be here in a school talking about equity and we're not also talking about equity when it comes to criminal justice. And so, the Mayor – I want you to publicly know I appreciate you, we appreciate you. Obviously, we're following the lead of our DA, in particular DA Clark in terms of ideas and guidance. But to your question, why now? Because 86 percent of black and Latino people were being arrested and their lives were being destroyed because of seconds.

Question: To follow-up on Jill's question, what indicators are you going to look at after this goes into effect that leads you to believe the effects are working out the way you hoped it would be?

Mayor: So, first, the NYPD has to come up with the specific policy, and then we want to make sure it's implemented fairly, which takes time. You know, people have to be trained in how to approach the policy, and we make sure that it's effective and it's fair. The quality of life issues are real at the same time – it is also a true statement that a number of times there were community complaints that lead to enforcement – that's going to continue. The enforcement in my view should be summons rather than arrest, but there's still going to be enforcement, and the enforcement has real consequences. And I made the point the other day, at the same time we're preparing for the likelihood of legalization of marijuana in this state, but I want to remind everyone, in the states that already legalized – some years ago – public smoking is still officially illegal, and there is a consequence, whatever it is – a fine, or whatever it might be. So, you know, we've got to sort out the best way to handle all of this, but the measure's I'll be looking for, I'll be looking for fairness. I want to continue to reduce the amount of disparity, and I want to make sure the sum total is that there's fewer unnecessary arrests, but that we have to, of course, keep the quality of life good, and we have to keep order. So, I think we can do that. And again, you know, I really want to emphasize, and it gets to Jill's question too – I had a whole set of assumptions like anyone else who had come in the door four years ago. When you see how much can be achieved with different approaches, it changes your mind. So, you know, I'm amazed how much NYPD officers achieved without resorting to arrest. In fact, what you hear from

officers is they want the right to use their discretion, they want to be treated like the professionals they are, they want to be trained in a variety of tools, and then they determine the tool that makes sense in a given situation. That's proven to be very effective. And to Michael's point, it's also improved the relationship between police and community. So, the measures I'll look for – fewer unnecessary arrests, less disparity.

Yoav?

Question: Back to the drug use in the Parks in the Bronx – the head of the Parks Police Union told us that there isn't a clear policy on what the parks officers should do when they encounter someone using drugs open in the park, whether it be arrest, summons, or just simply kick them out of the park. What are they supposed to do in those situations? And is there going to be an enforcement piece that comes along with adding these drop boxes to the park?

Mayor: Yeah, I'm not familiar with the instructions given to the Park Police. I'll just speak broadly that the idea is a combination of enforcement and health. First of all, we have an obligation to everyone else in the community to keep the community safe and clean and to keep the parks usable. So, nothing is going – no ground is going to be ceded, I want that to be abundantly clear. And that's certainly the instructions the NYPD operates under. I can come back to you with a clear sense of the specific instructions our Parks officers are given. Second, folks who are addicted have a problem. We have to get them to treatment. We've got to go to the root of the problem. So, I understood your question earlier – and, by the way, I just asked Eric, because I was confused – I thought you said something about \$60 million.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Okay – \$60 million is the entire HealingNYC plan – that's naloxone, that's all sorts of other things. So, just – this is a very small piece, this Parks initiative. I just wanted to set the record straight there. But the bottom line here is combining the prevention efforts, try and help keep people away from drug use to begin with, the treatment efforts, the enforcement efforts, to protect the quality of life. I do not accept the notion of a park full of needles, we're just not going to allow that.

Unknown: We have time for two more.

Question: If I can just ask one – it's unrelated, actually, but as far as the Chancellor – it sounded like he was saying there is some consideration of possibly eliminating the screening at public schools. Is that something that you're actively considering as well?

Mayor: I'm going to simplify – the Chancellor had a lot of sentences there, along with [inaudible]. I'm going to simplify. We need to fairest possible admissions system, and I 100 percent agree that we have to increasingly focus on multiple measures and decreasingly focus on test results, and we have to make sure admissions is fair across the board, which is a question of fairness before you even get to the question of diversifying schools – that the process is fair to all families and all kids. We also want to see more diverse educational settings. So, we're certainly going to look at the screen schools, because that's something that deserves to be evaluated.

Okay, let me do this line, and then we'll be done.

Question: Mr. Mayor, regarding the Rockaway Beach closures, why did it take so long to inform people that those beaches were not going to be open. And then, secondly, in December you held a town hall out in Belle Harbor, you told the residents there that you were going to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers, look them in the eye, and tell them that those projects need to be finished by 2018, not 2020. So, what happened?

Mayor: So, I will tell you –

[Laughter]

Why does this keep happening – could you protect the light source please?

[Laughter]

I went to Washington, I met with the head of the Army Corps of Engineers – very productive meeting. I talked about that town hall meeting, I said people in the Rockaways feel very vulnerable, especially because they experienced extraordinary destruction after Sandy, and a loss of life that was exceedingly painful – a huge destruction of communities, and people feel vulnerable, and they don't have a sense of what's going to happen next. I said, we need to come to a vision together. I want to say, he was tremendously responsive – General Semonite was very responsive, very concerned about the needs of the Rockaways, and he promised me that by this summer we would have a definitive timeline. Now, we're waiting to lock that down with the Army Corps and then come out with an announcement. But the only way we're going to solve the underlying problem is with the Army Corps. You know, there's been talk about what the City could do on its own. We are absolutely convinced that there's nothing we can do on our own that will have a lasting impact. That can only happen with the Army Corps work because of what they're able to do, you know, the sheer capacity they bring, but also the resources they bring. We need them to solve this problem. So, hopefully, quite soon, we'll have a very specific announcement.

On the question of the decision, this was decision that no one felt great about, I want to be very honest about it. The reason it took a long time, we were hoping against hope we could find another outcome. As you probably have seen, we got hit bad by a few storms this spring that sealed the verdict in many ways. I think, had that not happened, we might have been able to find another alternative. But, in the end, the last discussions I heard were the Parks Department strongly recommending the closure, and they did it, and the question of safety – that their lifeguards felt adamantly they could not protect people appropriately with such a thin beach. And, you know, that made it sadly a very simple decision – we have to think about safety first. But, we're going to work to get that fixed as quickly as possible, and I do think a lot of people will adapt. I think you'll still have folks, of course, going out to the Rockaways and using other portions of the beach – they've gotten more and more popular. I think the businesses will still have a lot of business. We want to help those businesses. But this came down to a question of safety.

Did that get both parts? Yes, I think I got both parts of your question. Go ahead –

Question: Question for Assemblyman Blake, and also for you, Mayor – what is the state of discussions about marijuana legalization in the State Legislature, and, Mayor, have you spoken to any State legislators, or the Governor, who represent parts of the City about marijuana?

Mayor: I'll start and pass to the Assemblymember. I think the handwriting is clearly on the wall. And the Governor, look, makes a perfectly fair factual point – Massachusetts has it, the Governor of New Jersey is actively fighting for it, I presume will ultimately get it. So, the world is changing around us. But I think given – a lot of us are familiar with the sequence when the Governor puts an idea out there and a lot of things start to move. I think it's inevitable in New York State, not necessarily the whole country, but in New York State. It can't happen this year, I would argue because of the current Senate. It could happen in a new Senate. So, that's why we're preparing.

Assemblymember Blake: Very active engagement on this. Just last week, we had another press conference in particular. The Drug Policy Alliance has been the champion of advocating for this. We've been following their lead. Assemblymember Robert Rodriguez in particular, who's been consistently raising awareness – Bronx Defenders and others have also been a part of this. This goes back again to the politics and the policy of the State Senate. But this is also part of a broader conversation of why we're pushing so aggressively on the need for this to be legalized. There are too many communities that are in fear right now in different aspects. And so, our broader conversation is, let's try to remove that fear. And until you have a conversation around legalizing marijuana across the State, across the board, which, let's also be clear, there are elements that are illegal across the State – I mean, it's in specific manners, especially upstate, but the conversation has been consistently going, it is something that needs to be going forward. There's obviously only the five distribution sites that exist [inaudible] try to see if we could go further than that. But until we flip the State Senate fully, we can't fully get this done.

Mayor: Last call –

Question: Mayor, the City Council – they're going to introduce – a member is introducing a bill today that would ban plastic straws and coffee stirrers in the City. I'm curious what your thoughts are on that concept?

Mayor: So, I have not seen the bills, so I want to just make a line here – haven't seen the bills, can't speak to the bills – bill or bills, specifically. As to plastic straws, their time has come and gone – I believe we should get rid of plastic straws. I think it's the natural next step after getting rid of plastic bags. We don't need them. For a long time we had paper straws, the world went on just fine. If I had it my way, you'd be enjoying your last plastic straws in New York City.

Thank you, everyone.

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