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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 21, 2018

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES \$52 MILLION IN PLANNED
CAPITAL INVESTMENT FOR NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/METROPOLITAN**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, Simone, thank you. That was beautiful. That was really beautiful – you spoke from the heart and I think you spoke for a lot of people in the community who not only depend on this hospital and the good people who work here, but love this place and care about this place because of what it means for their family. Let’s thank Simone. That was beautiful.

[Applause]

Now, Simone, your family is getting bigger and it’s a beautiful thing. And as you said, this hospital took such good care of Takenya and such good care of Akeem. And now, I want to do a little token of my esteem and appreciation to support you and your family. And Akeem – and now, this is what every child in New York City needs, the official New York City onesie.

[Applause]

That is the latest in high fashion right there, everybody.

[Laughter]

And I want to say to all of the people who work at Metropolitan, it is so wonderful to be with you. I want to thank you. I think this is the kind of work that often doesn’t get the attention and the respect it deserves, but this is such crucial work and everyone who works in our public hospitals and clinics are lifesavers for this city, and a whole lot of people depend on you and you do your jobs well. And to everyone here, every role – whether you’re a doctor, you’re a nurse, you’re staff of any kind, security – everybody, I want to thank you all and wish you a very, very happy holidays. And thank you on behalf of all of the people of this City.

Give each other a round of applause –

[Applause]

Now, I wanted to be here – this has been City Hall in Your Borough Week for Manhattan. We go around to each of the boroughs throughout the year, and the whole idea is to get closer to the people. You can keep all of the Deputy Mayors and the Commissioners and everyone at City Hall and in their agencies, and they'll still do good work, but there's nothing like actually going to where the action is and meeting the people who do the good work and hearing from them what they need and what's going on. And so, in City Hall in Your Borough, we go out to the neighborhoods of each borough – all of the leadership of the administration goes out – and we try to make sure that people are getting the answers to their concerns and their needs. And also, one of the things we get to do is to make sure that people get the truth, that they don't hear rumors and mistakenly assume those rumors are true. And it is really, really important that we set the record straight.

So, there's been rumors about this hospital. Let me say what everyone knows – there's been rumors that this hospital might close. I am here in the flesh, with microphones, with cameras to say to you, this hospital is going strong, we're investing in this hospital. This hospital will not close, not on my watch.

[Applause]

And you have earned the right to keep doing this great work, that's the point – that not only the community needs this hospital, cares about this hospital, but this hospital has done its job, the people who work here have done their job and they continue to make this a better and better place, and a place that responds to today's community and the needs of people living in the community right now.

So, we have decided to invest. We're investing – and this is an announcement I'm very, very proud of – we're investing \$52 million in this hospital.

[Applause]

And we're investing it right away, you're going to start to see results as early as this spring. We're investing in windows and in the roof. We're investing in a sprinkler system, and heating, and an emergency power backup system – all of the things that a good, modern hospital needs to keep serving people. This is an example of a lot that's happening in Health and Hospitals – it's moving in the right direction. And we're investing in Health and Hospitals because more and more Health and Hospitals is getting better and getting stronger. And it makes sense to invest in an organization that's doing its job and doing it better all of the time. I want you to know, not only is this the largest public healthcare system in the United States of America but it means for all of us is one-in-eight New Yorkers depends on Health and Hospitals for their care throughout the five boroughs.

Now, we all know the world has changed around us. Healthcare has gone through a lot of changes. The economics of healthcare are different than they used to be, but rather than simply say let's throw up our hands because the world changes, why don't we say – let's embrace the changing world and find out how we can do best within it. And that's what Health and Hospitals is doing now.

[Applause]

So, a lot of people from the community, elected officials, patients – a lot of people looked around and said, there are things that could be done better. I know our sisters and brothers in the union movement said sometimes there were things that could be done better, and they said it with their whole heart. They said there was red tape that could be cut, they were right. They said that sometimes there was too much focus on hiring administrators and consultants instead of hiring frontline healthcare workers, and they were right. And as we've looked throughout the last five years of ways of doing things better, we have focused on cutting any area where there was fat and putting the money into the frontline service, putting it into the work of healthcare.

[Applause]

And that makes this hospital stronger and that makes more and more people want to come here, and that strengthens the economics of the hospital and that allows the hospital to respond to the areas where there's more and more interest, more and more need. This hospital in the last few years is doing more and more on maternal health – it's an area that didn't get enough attention – it's getting it here at Metropolitan. This hospital has focused on diabetes care. This hospital has focused on respecting the whole community, and the Pride Center here is a great example, providing services for everyone who needs them. This hospital has been one of the leaders in this city in addressing the opioid crisis and innovating solutions. This hospital is more relevant than ever for those reasons.

And I want to say, as we look at Health and Hospitals – talk about a phoenix rising from the ashes. Just years ago, we were talking about Health and Hospitals on the verge of bankruptcy and people were talking about all of the things that Health and Hospitals couldn't do. Now, they're saying more and more – look at all of the things that Health and Hospitals is doing. Look at the changes. Look at the progress. And I want to give you one example – this is kind of amazing – every year, we say for each part of City government, here's how much revenue we expect you to bring in to support your operations. Well, this year, Health and Hospitals beat its revenue projections – brought in more revenue than projected by \$150 million. It's amazing.

[Applause]

And that money goes right to where it's needed most – patient care. That money creates even more possibility of helping people and making their lives better. So, we are so proud of that.

And so, to wrap it together, I want you to hear from some of my colleagues and I'm going to do a quick summary in Spanish as well. But to wrap it together – look, I have said our goal in this city is to be the fairest big city in America. I want a place of fairness. Fairness means that you are treated equally. Fairness means that what you need – there's a way to get addressed. Fairness means that your family can actually get by and get ahead. And you know if you're living someplace where that's possible and you know that it's a point of pride to live in a place that respects you and your family and gives you opportunity, and you also know when it's not possible and the doors are shut. We want to be a place of fairness and public healthcare is one of the greatest examples of that where people regardless of income, regardless of who they or where they come from can get the very best care, and that they and the next generation can start their life healthy and on the right foot. That's what fairness is all about and that's what's happening every day here at Metropolitan.

[Applause]

So, I can't think of a better way to end 2018 than celebrating with all of you. And now, just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

And now, I want to bring forward a leader in this City government who comes from the grassroots of this city in the Bronx, worked her way up to become a doctor, knows what the people of this city need and she's leading the way as our Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services – Dr. Herminia Palacio.

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Herminia Palacio, Health and Human Services: Good morning. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor, for your commitment to invest in our healthcare delivery system, the healthcare system for a million New Yorkers, many of them low-income or uninsured.

We are under a clear mandate from you. The clear mission to make Health and Hospitals a sustainable and thriving system, and we're here as evidence that we're doing just that. As the Mayor said, Health and Hospitals is on the right path to stabilize its finances for the long-term. I want to give a special shout-out to Dr. Mitchell Katz –

[Applause]

– and Alina Moran for their leadership and for starting us on that path. And I'm going to digress a little bit to share a little bit of a personal story.

So, Dr. Katz and I met a long, long time ago in galaxy far, far away.

[Laughter]

We were young residents together at San Francisco General Hospital, another large public hospital system. Over the many years, Dr. Katz ended up running the San Francisco Department of Health and later the L.A. County Health System. He moved to Los Angeles, I moved to Houston, where I was the Health Director for Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services. But for a boy from Brooklyn and a girl from the Bronx –

[Laughter]

[Applause]

Returning back home to work together, to make sure that Health and Hospitals serves New Yorkers, our place of birth, with this Mayor, who is so committed to fairness and so committed to equity and so much has our backs in this effort – well, it just don't get any better than that.

[Applause]

You know, today's investment is part of our vision to make all of our Health and Hospitals acute-care facilities, strong, efficient, and patient-centered. But it's more than money – today's investment is more than money. This is about making sure that East Harlem – and thank you, Ms. Burns, for sharing your story – it's about making sure that East Harlem and all of the communities – and all communities have access to quality, affordable, compassionate, respectful, dignified healthcare, because our New Yorkers deserve nothing less.

[Applause]

Metropolitan Hospital plays a key role in this community and we are proud to report that it is thriving. It continues to make clinical advances, provide critical services and has received some very well-deserved recognition. Metropolitan was recently recognized as a baby-friendly and safe-sleep champion. Metropolitan is a national leader in LGBTQ healthcare equality. Metropolitan is helping us combat the opioid epidemic, connecting patients with primary care with medication-assisted treatment and identifying patients with opioid-use disorder to connect them to care.

We are committed to Metropolitan Hospital and Metropolitan Hospital is committed to East Harlem.

[Applause]

And with the Councilmember, I'm going to speak a little bit in Spanish. Councilmember Ayala, thank you for your support. And Borough President, thank you so much for your being here.

[Deputy Mayor Palacio speaks in Spanish]

Lastly – a very health, very happy, very safe holiday season – and Happy New Year to all.

[Applause]

Mayor: So, our next speaker – his legend preceded him for years. I kept hearing about this mythical person named Dr. Mitch Katz who could do all sorts of amazing things.

[Laughter]

And yes, as a Brooklynite, I'm very proud of his roots in Brooklyn, but I'm even prouder of the fact that all of those legends proved to be true. And he came in here and he said that Health and Hospitals was ready to take off, was ready to go to a whole new and better place. And he believed that the talent here was extraordinary, the potential here was great, and he has this kind of thing – kind of, if you build it, they will come attitude. And he's been building it, and they are coming, and things are moving forward at H+H. I'm very proud to introduce the CEO, Dr. Mitch Katz.

[Applause]

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health and Hospitals: Hey, everyone. And to the Mayor, I just want to say on behalf of all of the doctors, all of the nurses, all the clinical staff how much this means to us – that we see this \$52 million not only as then needed infrastructure, but as the City’s commitment to Metropolitan’s future, and that’s what makes it so sweet, because we all believe in Metropolitan and we want to see it flourish and go into the future. And it’s not just your willingness to be in front of the cameras and promise, but the \$52 million – that’s a good down-payment.

[Laughter]

Nobody spends \$52 million to then later say, oh, just kidding, right?

[Laughter]

So, you know, that’s tremendous. I want to acknowledge my board member [inaudible] who has done so much for the City, and including in this hospital, trained nurses. We have great partners in organized labor. [Inaudible] and Jill, you know we’re up 330 nurses year-to-year. That counts for all of the retirements and all of the leaving, and we have a new procedure with – the second that a nurse is leaving, we are able to backfill that person. There’s no wait, there’s no delay, there’s no red tape, sir. There used to be like three levels – first, this approval, then this approval, and then this approval. Now we’ve said – no, if a nurse says that they’re retiring, hire. And we also created across Health and Hospitals a pool of nurses in training, because we realized that even if that next day you identify a nurse for that job, well, you have to train. So we don’t want to run short-staffed while we’re training. So now, for the first time, Health and Hospitals has a pool of nurses that are in training where we don’t yet have a vacancy, but as soon as there will be a vacancy because, of course, it’s a large workforce, people retire – we can place that person in there.

So, I want to just conclude by saying, you know, what’s the most important thing in a hospital? It’s the people who work in a hospital. It isn’t really the building, it’s the people. It’s the great doctors who are all here, the nurses, the social workers, the PA’s, the pharmacists, the psychologists, the spiritual counselors, it’s all of the people who register the patients. But the building has to be safe, right? And this is what this \$52 million allows us to do – it allows us to upgrade the electrical system, allows us to have a modern fire-warning system, it will fix the roof, it will make sure we have the appropriate windows. My sole goal for Health and Hospitals is that the system should only be as good as the amazing people in it. And if we can achieve that, then we will have done something really special.

Thank you all so much.

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