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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING AND EXPANDING SPEED CAMERA PROGRAM IN SCHOOL ZONES

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, to say the least, the clock has been ticking. We all know school starts tomorrow. We have, for weeks, been concerned as public servants and as parents about our children's safety on the first day of school. And for weeks and weeks there was inaction in the State Senate in Albany. We pleaded – all of us pleaded repeatedly with the State Senate to take action and protect our kids. Those pleas on behalf our children fell on deaf ears.

So it was time to take matters into our own hands. And I want to thank and congratulate everyone here today for all the good work we did together to get us to this moment to make sure our kids would be safe tomorrow and all the months ahead.

The fact is this effort I think was extraordinary. This is an issue that really came down to the basics – were we going to do something to protect kids? I want to tell you, the voices that we heard – and I want to thank them here because their work was extraordinary.

I want to thank Families for Safe Streets for their extraordinary [inaudible] –

[Applause]

And I want to thank Transportation Alternatives for all they did to protect our children.

[Applause]

Your advocacy and all the other family members who went to speak to the senators in Albany, everyone who has been part of this movement, I want to tell you have changed the course of history because for a long time the idea that was the conventional wisdom was that speed cameras were politically unpopular. But you made it a matter of life and death because it is a matter of life and death.

You explained to the people of this city and this state that this was about protecting children, and you changed the entire discussion. And now, what has become clearer and clearer to the people of New York City and New York State is that speed cameras save young lives.

The numbers are astounding. In the school zones where we have the speed cameras, speeding violations are down by almost two-thirds – 63 percent reduction in speeding around our schools. The statistic that should be the single most important to us because it means human lives – 55 percent fewer fatalities when speed cameras are present. Saving lives.

So, to me it was a no brainer that we needed these speed cameras and the fact that we needed to go farther with them. And we asked – I asked as mayor, the Council asked for Albany to not only renew the speed cameras program but to expand it. This is what all of the advocates and the family members have fought for. This is what we fought for.

And I want to give credit where credit is due. The Assembly agreed and voted for that legislation and we need to really give them credit. They stepped up. The Governor said he was ready to sign it. There was only one piece missing from the equation – the State Senate.

Look, I cannot understand any kind of politics that stands in the ways of protecting kids. I cannot understand a political calculation that somehow puts partisan interests ahead of the needs of kids. But we know we, here in New York City, are not going to let that stop us. We're going to take action here today.

I want to thank Speaker Johnson and the Council for their extraordinary work. Let's give them the round of applause they deserve.

[Applause]

And I want to say that even though this is not the way we would like to see government function in the end justice has been served. By the stroke of a pen today we're going to set things right and further the movement to protect our kids going forward because this is one of those moments in history where a lot of people are waking up and they're realizing there's more we can do. And together, we're going to do that.

Let me say a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

It's as simple as that. Now our kids and our parents, our families will know cameras will be there to protect them. Giving credit where credit is due, I want to turn to the Speaker of the City Council, not only to thank him and the members of the Council but the staff of the Council too, who really worked hard to innovate a solution. This took a lot of creative thinking but we found the right way to get this done. And he is also the sponsor of Intro. 1089. Speaker Corey Johnson

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[...]

Amen, thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And for everyone, this hearing, we're going to move it along quickly because it is very important we get the signed legislation to Albany so it can go into effect immediately so that we can protect our kids tomorrow. So, I'm just going to do a few official functions here as part of this so that we can complete the process and make this law.

First, to define the bill – Intro. 1089 revives our lifesaving school speed camera program just in time for the first day of class. It restores the City's authority to find drivers who speed in school zones. It extends the Department of Transportation's power to enforce speed limits around schools at more dangerous times of the day. And it allows us to put cameras near many more schools beyond the 140 served today. And that's important, isn't it?

That's important.

[Applause]

I want to thank everybody who has been a part of this process in my administration including two people who really have led the way in Vision Zero. And a lot of people in the beginning did not understand how crucial a role they would play. But Police Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill and Chief Tom Chan who is here with us have been real leaders in the effort to achieve Vision Zero. I want to thank you, Chief, and thank the Commissioner.

[Applause]

Of course, our Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. For her and for her team, Vision Zero is something that they have brought to life all over the city. Thank you, Commissioner for all you have done.

[Applause]

And no one cares more about protecting our kids tomorrow than the man who has the responsibility of making sure 1.1 million kids are safe and are educated as best we can. Our Chancellor, Richard Carranza. Thank you.

[Applause]

So, what we're going to do before we hear from other speakers up here, we're going to move forward the process of testimony and signing the legislation so we can send it right away to Albany. We are literally racing the clock right now because we want to get this in play immediately.

So, we're going to hear public testimony. I'd like to call to the microphone, there, of course Amy Cohen of Families for Safe Streets, Zane Walker of Families for Safe Streets, and Beth Finkel of AARP.

[...]

Thank you.

[Applause]

Well, Beth is exactly right. This is a beginning. This is a beginning and we have a lot more work to do ahead, and I think everyone in this room is motivated to do that work. But what we're doing today helps protect kids here and now. I really want to say a profound thank you to everyone who just spoke.

Zane, I want you to know you're right. This is an example of government actually doing what we're here to do.

I want to give a lot of credit to the Council, a lot of credit to the Governor. Everyone figured it out. Everyone said we're not going to let one body of government stand in the way of the thing we needed to do. And it is a moment we can all learn from.

And Amy, that was an incredible passage that Sammy wrote and he is a leader. We're feeling his presence here today and this also is because of him. So, with that, everyone, it's time to sign this bill so we could get it to Albany immediately. If anyone wants to come up, gather around. And then we'll hear from the other speakers.

[...]

Mayor: Okay, we want to hear from a few more of the folks who are here and everyone here today has been part of achieving this important act for protecting our kids and we are all going to be a part of going farther going forward. I want to turn to the man again who's responsible for all of our kids every school day and he needs to say his remarks and get back to preparing for the first day of school. So we are going to give you a hall pass after this, our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I want to also add my voice to all of those who have thanked the families for their incredible stories and we feel your loved ones with us. I want to give great thanks to Mayor de Blasio, thank you to our governor, Governor Cuomo, and to our incredible Speaker, Speaker Johnson. You know I almost was going to tell joke – what do you get when you put a governor, a mayor, and a speaker in a room? You save lives.

Mayor: Amen.

Chancellor Carranza: And that's exactly what's happened here. And our Councilman Rodriguez thank you for being here and everyone else that is here today. The cameras are not just a symbol of safety, they save lives. Students leave their homes tomorrow on the first day and travel to school and back from school to home. We can rest assured that this important safety measure will be in place to keep our children safe. We are excited to kick off this school year,

my first school year here in New York City. And I could feel no more confident than knowing that we have this valuable device to help assure the safety of our children. Nothing is more important to the safety – than the safety of our children and this is an important tool that will help us accomplish just that. Thanks again to the City Council for acting quickly to make this happen. Thank you to our Mayor for his leadership and thank you to the Governor for seeing the better of policy. I want to wish all students and families in the New York City school system, a safe and exciting start to the school year.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much Chancellor, you are now excused.

[Applause]

With that I want to turn to another great Vision Zero believer, our Transportation Commissioner, Polly Trottenberg.

[Applause]

Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation: Is this on? Yes it's on. I want to thank you Mr. Mayor for your leadership, thank Speaker Johnson, Chairman Rodriguez, and the City Council, the Governor and as you pointed out our allies up in Albany, both in the Assembly that passed the bill and in the Senate, we had a lot of allies there as well. You know I look at today and I say today is one of those days where there's a will, there's a way. I look out at so many of my friends and allies, Families For Safe Streets, and Transportation Alternatives, so many of us who have spent a lot of time up in Albany trying to make the case about how these speed cameras were so needed and today, even though we weren't able to succeed in Albany, the City is taking action. And it's an important moment and I'm so grateful to the City's leadership. And DOT will have the cameras ready to go tomorrow for the first day of school and then look forward to the next round, an expansion because after all we want to cover all of our schools, we want to make sure all of kids are safe. So thank you all for your great leadership.

Mayor: Thank you.

[Applause]

I also want to say in the Department of government sometimes does work, she will have the ready cameras ready tomorrow so thank you very much Polly to you and your team. And the Commissioner's partner in so much of the work that she does, the Chair of the Transportation Committee in the City Council, Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very much Mark. As we conclude this hearing I want to note that we have all achieved something here today but also we hear tremendous unity to take the next step together and to work for the day when we are sure every child, every family will be safe. Thank you all for all you have done, God bless you and this hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.

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