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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS SIGNS TWO BILLS PROVIDING SUPPORT  
FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NEW  
YORK CITY**

**Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, Health and Human Services:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, and I'm the deputy mayor for health and human services. And I'm so glad to be here today at the Manhattan Family Justice Center to celebrate the signing of two critical bills to support our city's victims — survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. I often talk about growing up with my single mother. She's 92-years-old right now, but what I don't often talk about was that she was a victim of domestic violence before, when I was six with my three older brothers, when we grew up in Queens. It was places like this that we needed if it hadn't been for the fact that she had a job, so she didn't have to lose her job. She was able to keep our home. She was able to keep us in schools. Thank Gods for the nuns at St. Catherine's of Sienna School and all of our neighbors that came over and supported our family.

So this topic is so important to so many families in this city. I want to thank City Council — the City Council, and especially the sponsor of this bill, Council Member Cabán for her hard work on this bill and commitment to supporting survivors in our city. Where's councilwoman...? Thank you. Thank you so much. I also want to acknowledge the incredible work of my colleague, Commissioner Noel in this realm. Without her, a revolutionary space like this, the Manhattan Family Justice Center wouldn't be possible. Now I want to take a moment and recognize all of the advocates in the room.

We are so grateful for your partnerships in fighting this community and providing essential services that help survivors heal. Danny Salim, deputy director of solution based casework, Arab American Family Support Center; Carmen Acosta, director of children's services, HELP ROADS; Michael Polenberg, vice president, government affairs, Safe Horizon; Jennifer Friedman, director, Bronx and Manhattan Legal Project [and] Policy Sanctuary for Families; Lisa Mueller, director of development and communications, Sanctuary for Families; Nathaniel Fields, chief executive officer, Urban Resource Institute; and Carmen Beltre, manager, Violence Intervention Program, Inc. VIP. I'd also like to acknowledge Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg, who is a critical partner in the work of keeping survivors safe and holding their abusers accountable.

The two bills that Mayor Adams will sign shortly show our city's commitment to giving victims and survivors of gender-based violence, the tools they need to find safety, stability, and healing. Domestic violence is a driver of homelessness in this city, we know for many families. The Housing Stability Grant that we will sign into law today will keep a key support for us to keep survivors safe and stable in their homes, which is so important for them and their children. Now I want to introduce and thank our next speaker, Mayor Eric Adams, who cares deeply about this issue and has made supporting our victims of domestic and gender-based violence a priority in his administration. Thank you.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you. Thank you so much, deputy mayor. I'm really excited about these bills and want to thank the Councilwoman Cabán for bringing this forward and really want to thank the speaker at looking at really these important issues that have been ignored for such a long period of time. And just as a deputy mayor... I think many, far too many can tell the narratives and the stories of domestic violence. And growing up as children, we did not have resources like this. It was just a commonality. Even the early days of policing, responding officers would just merely tell the abuser to just go for a walk, only for them to come back and continue to abuse. And when you look at this, we realize that everyone deserves a safe space, a safe place. And as we walked through the area earlier, you saw that it was a safe space.

Far too many New Yorkers no longer feel safe in their home. They believe, instead, is a place that has too many memories of being abused. And the options are narrow, particularly when you're dealing with the economics involved. And if you have children, the consequences on leaving a home without any financial support makes it extremely difficult. Domestic and gender-based violent can happen anywhere in our city and it can happen to anyone. We have a sacred duty to protect survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. And this is something that we believe strongly on in this administration and in this City Council. We believe that it is exactly the type of bills we're signing today that is going to continue to bring about that support. Intro 153-A establishes a housing stability program for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. And Intro 154-A requires the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence to create an online services portal and guide.

Domestic and gender-based violence is a public safety issue. Far too often it shows violence; many of the assaults and homicides unfortunately stem from domestic and gender-based violence. And 2021 alone, there were 260,000 domestic violence incidents reports filed by the NYPD. And you think about it as an average of 700 a day — over 700 a day. And to those who suffer domestic and gender-based violence, I want them to know that as a city we are here. We are not going to have a blind eye or deaf ear to what you're going through. And so I want to thank, again, the councilwoman, the bill sponsor and chair of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

This is something that she strongly believes in fighting for and we are happy to be here to sign these bills and Speaker Adrienne Adams and our Commissioner Cecile Noel, who works tirelessly to make New York City a safe haven for survivors and all the advocates, as was mentioned by the Deputy Mayor coming together and help carve out and shape out these bills so we can get the results we are looking for. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** Now I would like to bring forth our speaker, Adrienne Adams, a sister from Southeast Queens, someone that many of us in government look to as a role model and a person who has been committed to this issue of domestic and gender-based violence for her whole life. Speaker Adams.

**City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams:** Well, good morning, everyone. Thank you so much, Mayor Eric Adams and Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom, for hosting us today for this wonderful ceremony to officially sign the support survivors legislative package into law. I also want to thank my colleague and the lead sponsor of the bills, Council Member Tiffany Cabán, for her leadership and advocacy on this important issue. I want to acknowledge and thank all of the survivors whose experiences and voices form and drive this work forward. Domestic and gender-based violence has always been a major issue in our city and in our nation. As we know, it has only been exacerbated by the impacts of the pandemic. Last year, our city recorded more than 89,000 domestic violence complaints, the highest number reported in recent years. Nationally, one in four women and nearly one in 10 men have experienced sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

These statistics do not include incidents that go unreported due to the stigma, fear, and shame caused by this violence. For many years, the Council has prioritized the health and wellbeing of survivors of domestic and gender-based violence by providing resources through our funding initiatives and support of community partners. Ensuring survivors of violence can access recovery is essential to public safety and it must be a priority. This Council, in particular, has been focused on expanding support for crime victims who are often underserved and do not receive the support and recovery they need. All too frequently crime victims are referenced in policy debates on public safety, yet not enough is done to actually provide survivors of violence with access to the services they need. That is why we created a new speaker's initiative for community safety and victim services providing \$100,000 to each Council member to allocate for safety programs and victim services in their districts. The Council has also championed the establishment of New York State's first trauma recovery centers in New York City to provide services to crime victims who often fall through the cracks of traditional services. We're progressing in our process to establish these trauma recovery centers to serve communities in our city that experience the most violence.

As we continue this work of supporting survivors, it's important to uplift and amplify the voices of those most impacted, because the solutions to our city's challenges reside in them. When considering legislation to improve how our city supports survivors, we listened to them and we listened and heard about what they need to access safety and stability. Introduction 553-A establishes a new program to provide survivors with low-barrier grants that help with maintaining housing, because we know housing support is a major challenge that victims of domestic and gender-based violence face. And introduction 154-A consolidates available resources into one place that is accessible, so survivors who are seeking help can easily find the services they need.

In the aftermath of violence, the trauma that people experience can present challenges to recovery, and it is critical that services are made easier to access. These new laws will help improve lives and make a tangible difference for New Yorkers who have suffered so much

trauma already. It will help them heal and recover from the violence they have experienced and access safety. I'm proud of the work of this Council. I'm proud of the work that we've accomplished to address longstanding challenges facing our city.

We have prioritized solutions that protect and support communities, and we will continue to focus on advancing efforts that improve public safety and the lives of all New Yorkers. I give special thanks to my longtime friend, Commissioner Cecile Noel, for her long standing dedication to this cause. Thank you again to Council Member Cabán for her leadership on this legislation. Thank you again, Mayor Adams, for signing these bills into law. And thank you all of the survivors and advocates who helped advance these laws. Thank you.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** Thank you so much. And those keywords, safety, stability, and healing. Now, I'd like to introduce the sponsor of this legislation, Councilwoman Tiffany Cabán. I'm so happy to stand with you today for the signing of these bills. Thank you for your tireless advocacy for this community, and I look forward to working with you as we stand up these programs.

**City Council Member Tiffany Cabán:** Thank you. Good morning.

**Mayor Adams:** Morning.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** Morning.

**City Council Member Cabán:** Again, a really proud and exciting and a moment filled with gratitude. I think, like all of the people standing behind me, these are issues that are deeply personal as somebody who has been impacted and comes from a family impacted generationally by intimate partner violence. As someone who started my legal career doing VAWAs and UVisas for undocumented survivors, someone who represented clients in integrated domestic violence court on their family and criminal court matters, as a public defender who represented criminalized survivors day-after-day, year-after-year, it is an honor and a privilege to continue centering that work as a legislator in the city.

I'm grateful and thank you, Mr. Mayor, for inviting me to say a few words about these two groundbreaking bills. When I first became chair of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity... Thank you, speaker. I shared that my focus this term would be on shifting resources and power away from patriarchal systems of violence and punishment, and toward the compassionate life giving systems that we've sidelined and devalued for a really long time. I'm really proud to be delivering on that promise with the two bills that our mayor is signing today.

Earlier this year, the Council heard testimony from courageous survivors of domestic and gender-based violence who told us their personal stories and identified very clearly the institutional and policy based factors that contributed to their lack of access to the services that we owe them. And while there are many great resources in this city, there are few that trust survivors of violence to know exactly what they need and equip them with the funds to make decisions in their best interest. And it's what we should have always done and it's exactly what

these bills do. They remove barriers survivors laid out, and proactively establish the programs and resources that survivors said that they needed.

And as a former public defender, like I said before, I've seen how time and time again... Bless you... Our governments and court systems have cynically used violence and trauma experienced by survivors as merely a pretext to ramp up policing, prosecution and incarceration, leaving survivors without access to the actual services and productions that they say that they need to heal to be safe and to thrive, and so no longer.

Make no mistake, these bills will save lives. The online portal and written resource guide available in all major languages and in braille will make it much more likely that survivors will know about and take advantage of the great lifesaving programs that are already available. And the low-barrier, urgently accessible grant program will directly address one of the most significant barriers that survivors face in leaving dangerous situations, and that's economic precarity. This first, as far as I know, first-in-the-nation piece of legislation put forth by a city, this grant program, this low-barrier life saving program and urgently accessible grant program, will directly address one of the most significant barriers survivors face in leaving dangerous situations like I mentioned.

It can be used to offer survivors funding for housing, medical counseling, legal, and other immediate expenses and services, which could range from moving costs to mobile phone costs to costs associated with developing a safety plan and more. But all of this only happens if the program is fully funded. And the micro-grants program that ENDGB stood up at the start of the pandemic — which incredible job, they did really, really incredible work really fast, and have laid really the framework and groundwork for this. They stood up at the start of the pandemic, distributed almost \$500,000 to 377 unique survivors in just two months. By that math, for one year of effective programming, we should put minimum 3 million into this fund.

I want to thank all of the advocates, the mayor and his team, the Mayor's Office to End Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence, the Council's legislative staff, my legislative director, Madhuri, who's here with us today, without whom all of these bills wouldn't be possible. And I look forward to working with all of you to fully fund and implement these laws, and I can't wait to celebrate many survivor success stories together. Thank you very, very much.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** Okay. Thank you so much Council Member Cabán. I think it's time for us to sign the bill.

**Mayor Adams:** See if there are any questions on this before I sign the (inaudible). Any questions on these bills?

(Crosstalk.)

**Question:** Thank you. Councilwoman Cabán just mentioned the proposed funding for this program. She mentioned the dollar figure \$3 million. Are you ready to commit to a figure like that to fully fund the program?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, anytime the Council and the mayor's office... We sit down and we use the budgetary process to determine how we allocate funding. We have a great partnership with them on items like these that we agree on. We're going to identify the dollars to make it happen.

**Question:** Does it sound like the right figure to you though, just off the bat?

**Mayor Adams:** Oh, it's not up to me. I got a budget director. The speaker, she has her budget team, they're going to sit down and hash that out.

**Question:** Yeah. I have questions from victims of domestic violence about cases around accessing services, and one was about being eligible. I spoke to a victim of domestic violence who has three children, is working, but is not eligible for food stamps because of her gross income. She's asking if the city can be more flexible about the eligibility requirements to help victims cover their expenses. That's one.

And the second one is about ACS. In my African immigrant community, ACS is not Administration for Children's Services, and we cannot talk about domestic violence without talking about ACS. But there is no trust. They see ACS as the agency taking African children away. So how can we rebuild trust so victims who really need help can come to city agencies and the government and get that help?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, you gave me two questions, so let me peel them one at a time. First, we would like to look at that case study that you're talking about, that someone was not allowed or did not reach the right threshold to get the assistance they need. Because we always need to modify these systems and make sure people are not slipping through the gap. And so if there's a particular case, I would like to see that case. And then our team, Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom and her team, will look at what do we need to do to modify so we don't lose families like that. I don't know the specific case and the fact patterns around it. We have to look at that to better answer that question.

ACS. I don't believe there's a more difficult job in making decisions when it comes down to safety of children and families than the job of ACS. Those men and women who are employed there, they are damned if they do remove a child that is in an unsafe environment. People say, "You are just taking children from Black and brown families and immigrant families." Then they're damned if they don't make the right calls. They're on the front pages of our papers. "You were aware of this and you left the child inside that household." It's a tough, tough job with the caseloads that they have.

I know this: the commissioner over there is committed. The employees are committed. They don't want to break up families but they don't want to leave a child in an environment that's unsafe. We all know what happens when you do that. On my team is Ama Dwimoh. She was the creator of the unit in the Kings District Attorney's Office of crimes against children, and she has been forthright on how we could continuously get it to get it better.

But we have to be clear. State law mandates every case of abuse to a child must be investigated by ACS. It's a law. They have to go in. They have to do an investigation and if there are signs of

abuse they have to take action. It's a tough job to do. You can't get it wrong. If you get it wrong, you could decimate families and you can also leave a child in an environment that's unsafe. We are trying to get it right all the time, but it is not an easy task to do. But they are committed and they're dedicated.

(Mayor Adams signs bills.)

**Question:** Hi Mayor Adams.

**Mayor Adams:** How are you?

**Question:** Good, thanks. So I wanted to ask you a question based off my colleague Yoav Gonen's story last night about your apartment at McKeever Place in Brooklyn?

**Mayor Adams:** Right.

**Question:** It's a two part question. Why did you live or at least pay rent at the McKeever Place apartment from 2013 to 2017 when you owned a four unit townhouse nearby? I went, it's very nice. And also when you were at the apartment, who else lived there with you?

**Mayor Adams:** Well at first there were a... I always lived in Brooklyn, always voted in my locale where I registered for, and there were some public safety issues that caused me to be concerned about being on Lafayette. And I'm not going to go into details of that, but there were some public safety issues.

**Question:** Who else lived in the apartment when you...

**Mayor Adams:** I'm not going through my roster who lived in houses.

**Question:** Good morning, mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** How are you?

**Question:** Good. Talking about the budget, the comptroller has expressed a lot of concerns along with a bunch of other lawmakers that this will impact your ability to get stuff done if 50 percent of all vacancies are going to go unfilled. Basically, what is the rationale behind this budget and can you still get city services done at the pace that they need to get done?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay, what's very interesting, and I could be wrong, but I have to check on it. I believe we have a 6 percent citywide vacancy rate, the mayor's office. I believe the comptroller has a 17 percent vacancy rate. And so if he's stating with my 6 percent I'm going to have a problem doing services, what is he going to do with 17 percent? And he also has people who are working from home remotely. And so I just think that he needs to focus on his office in delivering services because there's a lot of services he must do. We are dealing with a multi-billion dollar budget. When I ran for office, I used the term PEGs, Program to Eliminate the

Gaps. I stated that we have to deliver a better product by using taxpayers' dollars better. I am keeping my campaign promise. I believe that inside our agencies we have to find efficiencies.

We're going to do everything we can to find those efficiencies to find the best cost savings as possible. And then we're going to move to plan B and plan C to deal with this budget gap. December is going to come out with our tax receipts and that's going to make a real decision on what else we must do. These are real difficult days and I don't know if people really realize that. I was reading one of the articles where somebody said well, we're just posturing. I wish I was just posturing. We are in financial trouble, and the country's in financial trouble, and I have to be financially prudent to make these smart decisions.

**Question:** On the NYPD, you mentioned a campaign...

(Crosstalk.)

**Mayor Adams:** Hold on. You got to give him two. I just like this guy.

**Question:** Thank you. You mentioned campaign promises. One campaign promise was cutting the NYPD's overtime budget in half. The opposite has happened. It has gone over what it was at that point. Is there any bloat within the NYPD that is worth tackling? I know they're immune from these budget cuts.

**Mayor Adams:** They're not completely immune. We're doing it in layers and we have a crime surge that we must address. A lot of patterns that we must address. We made an amazing arrest last night. We believe it's going to close down one of our patterns of... Voters tell me every time when I'm on the trains, when I'm on the buses, when I'm walking the streets, they are concerned about crime. And the omnipresence of a police officer assists that. We have been successful in decreasing homicides, decreasing shootings, decreasing felonious assaults. We're seeing a trend where we're decreasing in some of those crimes with repeated offenders. We have to keep doing the right things, and once we can stabilize this ship on what I believe are some of the problems we had in the past, then we can look at really digging into bringing back some of that overtime. But right now I have to make sure the city's safe.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** How are you?

**Question:** Good. I wanted to ask you about crypto.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** There's been a lot about crypto in the news. It's lost something like over a trillion dollars.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.



**Question:** One of the biggest companies has imploded. You were one of the big supporters and believers in this industry. Do you have any regrets about that? And what do you think, do you think that the city should still be promoting this industry?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, first I believe in technology. The whole thought of using crypto, blockchain currency, you call it cyber wallets. We need to move into this space. This space is coming if we like it or not. And when I hear people say, "Well, look how much money an individual lost in cryptocurrency," you know how much money I lost in the stock market? Some of my retirement investment, I'm afraid to even look at it nowadays. All of these industries have ups and downs. The 'Junk Bond Kings,' the fraud that they did in the stock market and penny bonds. So there's always people who are going to exploit these forms of industries.

I believe in the new markets and the new currencies, and I'm encouraging my young people to learn about them. We had a crypto summit that was partnered with the owners of the New York Nets where we brought young people in to learn about these industries. These industries are not going to go away because they reach low points. This is an industry that we must embrace, and I'm looking to further lean into blockchain and other technologies.

**Question:** (Inaudible.)

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, my money's already there. I took my first three paychecks.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, good morning.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** Have you received approval for state or federal aid for the \$1 billion migrant crisis?

**Mayor Adams:** No. We are still in conversations. And we're going to have a plan A and a plan B. That's how I operate. We need help. We spent a lot of money. This was a national problem and it was a state problem, and we need help from the state government and we need help from the national government.

**Question:** (Inaudible.)

**Mayor Adams:** I'm sorry?

**Question:** Are you hopeful that you'll get it?

**Mayor Adams:** I'm always hopeful. We say in the Baptist church, I'm prayerful.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, just going off of that last question. That \$1 billion that the city hasn't gone yet from the feds was built into the November plan. The City Council's been critical that that was put into the plan while they have identified \$1 billion in tax receipts that was not put into the plan. You mentioned tax receipts before. What do you think of that criticism?

**Mayor Adams:** I think that's the best part of this form of government. We have these checks and balances. We have these conversations. They have their fiscal experts, I have mine and the team over there in OMB of... We need to be prepared for the economic tsunami that is coming towards our city. No one is saying that is not true. They are saying how do we get prepared for it? We're having conversations with that. But there's no one in the City Council, fiscal experts, everyone has stated we're about to be hit with a tsunami. Everyone is stating that. And so because we all agree on that, now we have to figure out how do we address it? And so if December, the tax receipts are better than what we anticipate, the real estate taxes, how are they going to impact that? The income taxes, or how Wall Street is doing. If they're better than what we anticipate, then we could adjust. But right now we need to be prepared for the worst part of this tsunami.

**Question:** Following up on the budget question, you touched on this a little bit when Steve asked his question. But given that these latest rounds of cuts are exempting uniform agencies, uniform positions, I'm wondering what type of message you think that sends to the other agencies? Many of which are already complaining about steep staff shortages like HPD, which reports have revealed are suffering from such steep shortages that they're having a hard time even doing their day to day jobs. What type of message does it send to those agencies that the NYPD seems to get off the hook each time and at what point does it become necessary to actually take a look at NYPD cuts?

**Mayor Adams:** No, we are, Chris. We're looking at NYPD, sitting down with the commissioner who's fully committed. As I stated, what we have saved just in the parades this year. You don't see the parades they way they used to be covered because we looked in and said, "Listen, we have to do a better job. Why do we have five cops standing on the corner just hanging out?" We are utilizing and deploying police better. I said this on a campaign trail, and I will continue to say, we had a deployment problem. But one thing we cannot ever compromise on and that's safety. I said it over and over, public safety is a prerequisite to our prosperity. That's our economic stimulus. If we are unsafe, we will not be able to survive as a city. And NYPD, just as any other agency, is going to be examined to make sure that they're using their dollars correctly. So no one is escaping. We're going to do it in the levels that is not going to hurt the delivery of services and the safety of the city.

**Question:** Good morning, mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** What's up, Jeff?

**Question:** You or anyone in your inner circle put in a good word for Lisa White or help her get hired in that deputy commissioner position at the NYPD?

**Mayor Adams:** DCPI handles those questions. NYPD handle their personnel. But all of my agencies, we say you got to get the best people for the job, and we've done that. We've been successful in doing that.

**Question:** So coming back to the domestic violence.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** I also spoke to another survivor who's talking about culturally competent counseling.

**Mayor Adams:** What is it called?

**Question:** Culturally competent counseling.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. Mm-hmm.

**Question:** That's one. Second, sometimes as victims of domestic violence, we have the feeling that we have to throw somebody under the bus to get the services that we need. And we know the impact of mass incarceration in Black and brown communities. So when it comes to domestic violence, instead of thinking about jail or the DAs, is the city also thinking about providing support to the abuser? Because in domestic violence there are two victims, the most recent one and the one whose trauma was unaddressed.

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah, studies have shown that a person who is an abuser may have come from growing up in households where abuse exists. And what you see today as you walk through here, this is an evolution. It wasn't always this way. My mom didn't have this. The families on the block didn't have this. And so it's a constant evolution. And we're also partnering with those organizations and groups who are coming up with new good ideas like culturally competent counseling, and we are open to that. Everyone wants to get this right. And it's not about trying to criminalize anyone, it's about creating a safe environment for the family.

This is a complicated conversation because when families are in the midst of an imminent danger to a family member, we must respond. We have to remove that danger right away and then get the assistance that's needed to help that family become whole. We want to keep families together, but we also must protect family members. And I cannot tell you, I responded to a lot of domestic violence incidents as a police officer. It's a tough, tough call to make. It's a tough call to make. But one thing is for sure, you can't get it wrong. Thank you.

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