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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DECLARES ASYLUM SEEKER STATE OF EMERGENCY, CALLS FOR URGENT AID FROM FEDERAL, STATE GOVERNMENTS**

**Mayor Eric Adams:** My fellow New Yorkers, we are in a crisis situation. New York City now has more than 61,000 people in our shelter system. That includes thousands of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and thousands of asylum seekers who have been bused in over the past few months from other parts of the country. Almost 20,000 are children and one in five of them is an asylum seeker, and every day the total number gets higher. Every day, from this point forward, we're setting a new record. This is a humanitarian crisis that started with violence and instability in South America, and it is being accelerated by American political dynamics. Thousands of asylum seekers have been bused into New York City and simply dropped off without notice, coordination or care and more are arriving every day. This crisis is not of our own making, but one that will affect everyone in this city, now and in the months ahead.

New Yorkers deserved to know why this is happening and what we plan to do. Today, I want to talk about the challenge we face, what our response has been, what we are doing now, and what we need going forward. First, the challenge. Our city's exceptional ability to respond to a temporary crisis is being used by others to solve a long-standing national problem. More than 17,000 asylum seekers, mostly from South America, have been bused directly to New York City from our southern border since April of this year. Many of these asylum seekers don't know where they are going or what awaits them at the end of the line.

Hundreds of buses have arrived in New York City. Since early September we have seen an average of five to six buses per day. Yesterday, at least nine buses arrived. The majority are adults who cannot legally work in this country. Many are families with school-aged children. Some are in desperate need of serious medical care. New York City has helped them all, but extending that care has come at a great cost to our city and our people. The asylum seekers arriving here need more than a hot meal or a bed for a night. Without the ability to work legally in this country, they need long-term shelter, healthcare, and a great deal of institutional support. It is straining the limits of our ability to provide care for New Yorkers in need, and it is burning through our city's budget.

We expect to spend at least \$1 billion by the end of the fiscal year on this crisis. All because we have a functional, a compassionate system. Our right to shelter laws, our social services, and our values are being exploited by others for political gain. New Yorkers are angry. I am angry too. We have not asked for this. There was never any agreement to take on the job of supporting thousands of asylum seekers. This responsibility was simply handed to us without warning as buses began showing up. There's no playbook for this, no precedent. But despite all this, our city's response has been nothing short of heroic. From setting up welcome centers, organizing housing, healthcare, and transportation, New York City agencies and their community partners have done great work in the face of overwhelming need.

New Yorkers, as always, have responded to this crisis by pulling together as one. From April through October month after month, we have handled the arrival of hundreds of buses providing triage, water and urgent medical assistance. We've set up 42 hotels as emergency shelters. We have opened a navigation center led by Catholic Charities that provides case management, a range of settlement options, health services including medical checkups, vaccinations, medication refills, and mental health services. We have also already enrolled over 5,500 children in school through Project Open Arms — students who are high need and require extra support. We're providing legal information, Fair Fares transit support, and IDNYC enrollment to those who need it.

I want to thank our fellow New Yorkers who have already given so much of their time, care and resources to our brothers and sisters, including the Department of Social Services, New York City Emergency Management, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, Health + Hospitals, Hotel Trades Council, and so many other agencies and New Yorkers that have stepped up. They deserve great credit for handling this crisis with speed and efficiency. Organizations like Catholic Charities, the Hispanic Federation, the United Way, Make the Road, and the New York Immigration Coalition have also provided invaluable help. But although our compassion is limitless, our resources are not.

Our shelter system is now operating near 100 percent capacity and if these trends continue, we will be over 100,000 in the year to come. That's far more than the system was ever designed to handle. This is unsustainable. The city is going to run out of funding for other priorities. New York City is doing all we can, but we are reaching the outer limit of our ability to help. We're putting people up in emergency hotels, but the holiday season is right around the corner and space is limited. We're trying to find better ways, faster ways to get people into permanent housing, but years of delays have kept low-income housing from being built.

We're doing everything we can. We've started a faith-based effort to get our houses of worship to adopt a shelter, help community organization arrange travel for people to their destination of choice, and we're engaging the private sector to get clothing and supplies to asylum seekers and New Yorkers in need, but it's still not enough. In the next few weeks, we'll be opening a large humanitarian emergency response and relief center on Randall's Island that will safely house hundreds of people who have found themselves in New York City at their long journey from our southern border. I will be there to welcome them and to stay with them to hear their stories. But unless we take immediate action, that center will be full in days, and we will have to open another and another and another even as winter weather arrives.

As a result of that reality, today I am declaring a state of emergency in the city of New York and issuing an executive order. This executive order will formally direct all relevant agencies to coordinate their efforts to construct the humanitarian relief centers. We are also suspending certain land use requirements to expedite this process. New York City has already done more than nearly any other city to support this influx of asylum seekers and we cannot deprive long-time New Yorkers of support and services, even as we address the needs of these new arrivals. It's not sustainable and it is not right.

If our city had had coordination or even just cooperation from any of the states sending buses or more support from our partners, then maybe we could have budgeted, staffed and allocated resources for these asylum seekers, but we didn't get the support and information we asked for and now New York City is being forced to bear far more than its share of this national crisis caused by political motivation.

Mayors are already on the front lines of every other crisis this country is suffering from, from gun violence to climate change, but local government cannot be the solution for national crises, especially manufactured crises. We now have a situation where more people are arriving in New York City than we can immediately accommodate, including families with babies and young children. Once the asylum seekers from today's buses are provided shelter, we have surpassed our highest number of people in recorded history in our city's shelter system. And every day going forward that we add more to this count, we break another record.

A city recovering from an ongoing global pandemic is being overwhelmed by humanitarian crisis made by human hands. We have reached some of the help we have asked for. We've received it, but we need more. We are at the edge of the precipice. We need serious partnership and realistic solutions. As I have said before, we need help and we need it now.

So today we're issuing a clear message. The time for aid to New York is now. We need help from the federal government, help from the state of New York. New York City is doing our part and now others must step up and join us. From our federal partners we need legislation that will allow these asylum seekers to legally work now, not in six months. We need a realistic decompression strategy at the border that will slow the outflow of asylum seekers. We need a coordinated effort to move asylum seekers to other cities in this country to ensure everyone is doing their part. Congress must pass emergency financial relief for our city and others.

Finally, we need a bipartisan effort to deliver long awaited immigration reform so we can offer people a safe and legal path to the American dream. We need to help here at home also, from our New York state lawmakers. The state legislature must do its part by providing emergency financial relief. We've worked with the governor's office on identifying additional locations for relief centers and staffing resources and we need those to come through now.

This is an all-hands on deck moment and we need this state to act with the urgency this situation demands. New York City will continue to do what we can. In the weeks ahead, we will be announcing efforts to fast-track long-term unhoused New Yorkers into permanent housing. We must continue to prioritize the needs of long-term residents even as this crisis unfolds. We will

be also announcing a partnership through which New Yorkers will be able to host asylum seekers and the unhoused. Because despite all the bad faith that has caused this crisis and made it worse, New Yorkers have always looked out for our immigrant brothers and sisters. We see ourselves in them. We see our ancestors in them. New Yorkers want to help and we're going to make it straightforward and easy for them to do so. As we did after 9/11 and superstorm Sandy, we will rally together for the greater good in a time of unprecedented crisis.

Generations from now, there will be many Americans who will trace their stories back to this moment in time. Grandchildren who will recall the day their grandparents arrived here in New York City and found compassion, not cruelty. A place to lay their head, a warm meal, a chance at a better future. Thank you, New York, for doing the right thing.

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