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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: AS SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS, MAYOR DE BLASIO AND
SENATE CO-LEADER KLEIN ANNOUNCE EXPANSION OF SPEED
ENFORCEMENT CAMERAS NEAR SCHOOLS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everyone. It is great to be outside PS 95 here in the Bronx. And this is a real example of the efforts that we are undertaking to protect our children and protect all New Yorkers. It's places like this that you're going to see the results of this extraordinary effort. The next two days, these streets will be filled with children going to school, parents dropping them off. We want to make sure everyone's safe. And that's why we're installing speed cameras in school zones citywide – so we can protect our children and protect our families.

I remember very vividly dropping off Chiara and Dante at school. It's an exciting time at the beginning of each school year. There's a lot going on, there's a lot of people moving around. The last thing you want to worry about is a car speeding by and potentially endangering the lives of children. We want to make our school zones safer than ever and that's why this is such an important part of our Vision Zero initiative.

There are currently 20 school zone speed cameras. Over the next two years, that number will go up to 120 – 120 schools will have speed cameras to protect everyone around the school starting with our children. When I took office I made Vision Zero a priority, because we have to protect New Yorkers. We have to protect them in so many ways, but one of the things we have to really focus on more and more is stopping the scourge of traffic fatalities.

To get that done, we have a lot we could do here in the city, a lot we could do with our partners in the city council, but we really needed help in Albany to go farther. And a lot of people stood up, a lot of people stepped up to help us – but no one did more than Senator Jeff Klein. And I'm proud to be with him today to thank him and thank all my colleagues for all they did.

[Applause]

As the co-leader in the senate, Jeff helped to shepherd through this important legislation. It was not easy – it took a lot of work, it took a lot of persistence – but we got it through. And Jeff's

been a critical partner in our Vision Zero initiative. He did a lot to pass the speed camera legislation and the speed limit legislation – and it's going to benefit his district right here and districts all over the city. So I want to thank him for stepping up for his constituents – not only for the people of the whole city, but also for the constituents of his districts by getting this done.

It was a group effort. Of course, I want to thank Governor Cuomo. I want to thank Speaker Silver. I want to thank so many members of the senate and assembly who stood up and stood up for the people of this city.

And I also want to say that once these important moves were made, then the real work begins – and that work has to be done by great leaders in this administration, including our transportation commissioner, Polly Trottenberg, and Chief Tom Chan, who is the chief for the NYPD for all the work we do to protect people on our streets.

Now, elected officials stood up also for our children, for our families, made clear how much a priority this was for them. I want to thank – and you'll hear from – our borough president, Ruben Diaz Jr. I also want to thank members who each in their own way helped propel forward these initiatives – Assemblymember Jeff Dinowitz fought for us in Albany; Councilmember Andy Cohen fought for us at the City Council; both of them helped us to produce these results.

And finally, many advocates stood up. There were families affected the crisis of traffic fatalities – a lot of them put that pain, put that frustration to work to try and save others – and that is incredibly noble. A lot of advocates stood up, went to Albany, went to the City Council, made this a reality – that includes Greg Thompson of Families for Safe Streets and Paul Steely White of Transportation Alternatives. You're going to hear from both of them shortly.

Now this intersection, at Hillman and Sedgwick, is a perfect example of the need for speed cameras. DOT has identified this as a high-crash corridor. Let me give you these statistics – from 2008 to 2012, this corridor had 42 injuries – I'm sorry, 42 incidents, including 7 pedestrians – 42 incidents, including injuries to 7 pedestrians right outside PS 95. And not only is PS 95 here, there are other schools nearby, there's a senior center nearby. This is why these efforts to slow traffic really reach far into the community and why they're so important.

And the laws are one thing, the enforcement's another thing. So, we rely on the elements of our city government that do this enforcement – the NYPD and DOT and TLC – all the agencies that enforce these laws and make them come to life. We needed stronger laws and we needed consistent enforcement – and we're devoted to both.

The facts are clear – being struck by a car is the leading cause of injury-related death for children under 14. We read about a lot of challenges we have in our society. But imagine that – being struck by a car – leading cause of injury-related death for children under 14. That is a powerful statistic that reminds us of how much work we have to do. Also, the second leading cause of injury-related death for our seniors. So the whole line of the spectrum, from our children to our seniors, deserve these protections.

Reducing speeding and reckless driving is a critical component of Vision Zero. As we know, speeding is the leading cause of traffic fatalities in New York, so we have to go to the heart of the matter. Speed cameras fundamentally change reckless behavior – this is the important point. Speed cameras are a wake-up call. They change behavior. They make people act different.

It is especially important to get people to slow down when our kids and our seniors are around. I also want to say that changing what we call our default speed limit – that means the speed limit when there isn't a different limit posted in a particular area – the speed limit citywide will now be 25 miles per hour because of action taken in Albany. That also sends a message to drivers. Take it easy. Be careful. Even if you think you have to get somewhere fast, it's more important to do it safely.

So, all of this is part of a bigger plan that we think will fundamentally change behavior for the better. The plan includes red light cameras at 150 targeted intersections – also because of legislation passed in Albany that will extend those red light cameras through to 2019. You're going to see a lot of physical changes in intersections – Polly Trottenberg and her team have done an amazing job – more speed bumps, enhanced lighting, improved timing of traffic signals – a whole host of things that will slow people down and make traffic safer.

There's also been a series of town hall meetings and workshops talking to community members and leaders about how to make each part of the community safe. People on the neighborhood level know where the problem intersections are – they know where the troubles are. We wanted to bring them in and it's been a very successful effort.

I want to thank Polly, I want to thank Chief Chan for their extraordinary efforts to listen to the people of this city and use that to target their efforts.

Remember, part of this – if you're going to change behavior – yes, it is about tough laws; yes, it's about tough enforcement – but it's also about rewarding good behavior, celebrating people who do the right thing. So the Taxi and Limousine Commission unveiled last week an honor roll to credit taxi drivers who are doing the right thing, who are helping to make our streets safer – 295 drivers who are honored for their efforts to drive safely.

Let me give you one story – I think it's a powerful one – that shows how important it is to set the right example. Fred Amofo – he's from Queens. He is the city's safest taxi driver. Five years as a cabby, he has driven more than 190,000 miles. That is equal to circumnavigating the earth seven times. That's a lot of miles. He's had over 50,000 passengers. He has not had a single traffic violation or an accident with injuries or a TLC safety summons. He is an immigrant from Ghana who works hard, wanted to live the American dream – he's done it. He bought his own medallion. He drives 12 hours a day, six days a week, 190,000 miles, and an incredible safety record. We need more drivers like Fred and we want to celebrate those who do the right thing. And we're going to be tough on those who do the wrong thing.

Every driver has to understand, they hold other people's lives in their hands. They hold children's lives in their hands. That's why we're going to work every day to get that point across, to make this a safer city, to end the scourge of senseless traffic deaths. And these tools that we

put in place with the help of Jeff Klein and so many of my colleagues are going to make a huge difference.

With that being said, I want to thank our partner in Vision Zero for all he has done. I present to you Senator Jeff Klein.

[Applause]

State Senator Jeffrey Klein: Thank you very, very much, Mayor. It's a pleasure to be here today, and I want to thank you. Your leadership has brought many, many accomplishments, and in your first term – your first year – I want to applaud your successes. Universal pre-k – full-day universal pre-k for four-year-olds – starting this Thursday, we're all very excited, and so did the next layer, of making sure not only our children are safe, but everyone is safe, through your Vision Zero program. I think it was once said that the first duty of any government is to protect its citizens. Well, today, we're making an important first step in achieving that. You know, from my district in Edgewater Park to Riverdale, and every place in between, I hear constantly from people that they see drivers driving too fast. They see people not obeying traffic laws. I've seen it over and over again, especially over the last several years. So I'm very proud, when the mayor asked me, to carry his full package, entitled Vision Zero, which not only included the speed cameras, but also reducing the speed limit in certain areas to 25 miles an hour. I promised we would get it done.

So this is something that's personally very, very important to me, because I think, when you look back, and you see that now we're going to have 140 speed cameras across our city – near schools – we're sending a very important message. We're sending a message that we're not going to tolerate speeding anywhere near our schools. We're going to make sure that we protect the lives of our young people going to and from schools, and it's unfortunate that in this day and age, we have to stop speeding by schools. You would think it would be enough that someone knows when they're entering a speed zone, common sense would tell them they should just slow down. But unfortunately, study after study has shown, especially right here, in front of P.S. 95, they're not listening. They're speeding by schools. I have some of the schools in my district that have the largest speeding by schools. So I think this is going to send a message that if you're going to hit the accelerator, you're going to pay the price with a ticket. And it's going to create a chilling effect, because people learn that they can't speed by schools, they can't jeopardize the lives of our young people, so that's something that's very, very important.

Alright, the next issue, which is just as important, is giving the city the ability to reduce the speed limit to 25 miles an hour in certain roadways. That is something that is sort of the next step after the speed cameras. So, earlier this year, I passed that piece of legislation as well, that would make city streets safer by allowing the city Department of Transportation to reduce the speed limit to 25 miles an hour on all roadways where no signs are posted, and where it's currently 30 miles an hour. To me, this is common sense, because studies again have shown that lowering the speed limit to 25 miles an hour dramatically reduces the chance of a pedestrian car-related fatality to 1 in 10. So I think these two things, the speed cameras, reducing the speed limit, is an important step in making sure that we uphold our commitment to the residents of the City of New York that we want to keep you safe. I also want to thank some of the people here today—

Borough President Diaz, an outstanding public servant, my two local colleagues, we actually have Jeff Dinowitz and Andy Cohen, advocates for safety, we have our local share of the community board. And one of the things that Dan Garodnick and I want to make sure that community boards establish, really, my piece of the legislation as well, that we want to engage the community boards. They're the first line of defense in many cases in determining the safety of our community. So now they're going to have an advisory role in determining speed limits. That's something that's important. I also want to thank our commissioner of DOT, she's done such an outstanding job throughout the Bronx. Working together, I think, though, with the mayor, we can ensure that safety is paramount in our great city. Thank you all very much.

[...]

Mayor: I'm just going to say a few words in Spanish, then we'll take on-topic questions, then off-topic questions.

[Speaks Spanish]

With that –

[Applause]

Muchas gracias [inaudible]. I'm working on, professor. Gracias, professor. With that, on topic, on topic.

Question: [inaudible] cameras being installed around this school and, if not, what's the timetable?

Mayor: Okay. Polly and Chief Chan can talk to all the technical aspects. Are they installed and what's the time frame?

Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation: Not yet. And we will likely at this location actually be using a mobile camera. One thing to make clear is we have a certain number of fixed cameras and a certain number of mobile.

Question: [inaudible] cameras in here?

Commissioner Trottenberg: Very.

Question: Is it going to be [inaudible] next year?

Mayor: [inaudible]

Commissioner Trottenberg: [inaudible] within the next few weeks.

Mayor: There we go.

Question: Can you talk more about the mobile cameras – like, what’s the percentage breakdown? And what’s the advantage [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: The advantage to the mobile cameras is you can take them to different parts of the city particularly as you see, working closely with the NYPD, you start to have some speeding hot spots. We’re still determining what the breakdown would be when we have our total of 140 cameras. You know, maybe sort of in the 100 versus 40 range – 100 fixed, 40 mobile – but we’re still working out the – what the breakdown will be.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Trottenberg: We have so far installed three of the additional, so we’re up to 23. And the reason it takes time is we want to make sure we do it right. There’s actually a lot of work that goes into installing the cameras, the radar equipment, calibrating them appropriately. You have a back office operation, which reviews every time there is a violation to make sure that it was done carefully. And the legislature has required to make sure that we get those summonses out in a timely fashion. So we want to move as quickly as we can, but we want to make sure that we’re also careful and we’re treating motorists fairly.

Mayor: I want to add that the cameras and the speed limits are one part of the package. A great deal more enforcement is going on at the NYPD and that is making a big difference here as well. So I want Chief Chan to talk about the enforcement efforts, in particular how they relate to school areas.

Chief Thomas Chan: Certainly with the opening of school on the fourth, our school safety division will be meeting with the principals and also the staff of the schools themselves from the Department of Education. Our officers from the individual precincts – I will be asking them specifically to target enforcement – speeding enforcement – in and around schools. So while we do [inaudible] cameras [inaudible], our officers can and will do enforcement around the schools themselves and zero in on that during the school year and especially in the next couple of weeks.

Question: Do you have a borough breakdown of where the additional cameras [inaudible] the speed zones and cameras are going to be? And where the existing 20 are?

Commissioner Trottenberg: We do not have that breakdown yet. We have not yet decided where we’re going to be deploying all of them. We are using a system where we look at what are the most high-crash locations. At DOT we also work with our borough commissioners and their counterparts at NYPD to pick the sites where we think we’re going to get the most safety benefits from deploying the cameras.

Question: [inaudible] mobile cameras that you’ll be having. Does that mean different schools will be [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: The schools may change, yeah.

Mayor: I think you should give a little more sense of the speed with which we're going to get it done [inaudible].

Commissioner Trottenberg: We're shooting for the end of this calendar year to have somewhere between 40 and 50 of the cameras deployed. And then again by the end of next year to have a majority of them deployed. But, again, I do want to make it clear, Mr. Mayor, we are going to make sure that we're doing this carefully and so that motorists are getting treated fairly, they're getting their summonses in a timely way, the machinery is correctly calibrated. We want to make sure we don't have any mistakes happening.

Mayor: [inaudible] I'll jump on it, then we'll go back. So the important point here – obviously this legislation was just signed in Albany. We have acted quickly in the aftermath of the signing of legislation. Polly's exactly right – we've got to strike the balance of getting it done right from the beginning, fairly, effectively, for all. But as we try to do – as we try to do on many fronts, we are working for high-quality, speedily. And in the meantime, we expect those enforcement efforts by the NYPD and by DOT to play a major role in keeping kids safe while we build out this camera system.

Question: You're talking about speed cameras. What about all the other offenses? Double and triple parking, illegal turns, going through red lights, going through stop signs by schools. And this is mainly done on arrival and dismissal times. Is it the fact that you don't have enough police officers for enforcement the reason you're going to these speed cameras and other things?

Mayor: I'll start and, Chief, you can join in. No, I think the fact is we are using a variety of tools. Now, I'm a public school parent myself and I think – you know, I always believe we have to be smart about school drop off and pick up. There is a five- or ten-minute window when lots of people are coming in. A parent who stops for a moment to drop off a kid or pick up a kid is not who we're trying to ticket. We're trying to ticket people who are speeding – which, I agree with you, the illegal U-turns and other things that might be reckless and dangerous. So I want parents to understand – law-abiding parents who stop for a moment – that's not our problem, that's not where our efforts are targeted. Where they are targeted is at reckless behavior. And I'd like Chief to talk about some of the different things we do around school zones – with all they've been doing that we're expanding on in terms of additional enforcement.

Chief Chan: With me here today is also Chief Monahan – the executive officer [inaudible]. What happens is at the beginning of the school year, our borough office and also the precinct personnel will confer with the principals and also the Department of Education. And they will target areas – especially around the schools – whether it be double-parking, whether it be moving violations – in terms of anything that will affect our children, because, ultimately, beginning the school year, we want to set an example for our students. But also, we want to make sure that the motorists know that if they're operating their vehicles around the schools, that you're going to see more enforcement. So [inaudible] and we also ask for the cooperation of parents, who are dropping off children, not to double-park their vehicles, and if their children are capable of walking, that they walk a little further – a half a block away – then, therefore, they can walk their students in rather than having a condition where there's double parking. [inaudible] individual boroughs and also precincts will be meeting with our counterparts in the Department of

Education and, again, they will be receiving additional attention and targeted enforcement by the local precincts.

Question: Your Vision Zero plan talks about the importance of [inaudible] speed cameras from Albany. Can you and Senator Klein talk about the likelihood of that happening [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, I want to separate the concept of what we were able to achieve this year, which I think is extraordinary and reassuring, from the larger [inaudible] question. I do believe there are a number of areas where we should get to make our own decisions, and I'll keep working for that – whether it comes to rent regulation, taxation issues, speed camera, speed limit. That's, I think, a bigger effort. I think history's on our side, because over time more and more of those rights have devolved to New York City as they should. So that's something I'll keep working for. But, that being said, to the credit of Senator Klein, to the credit of Speaker Silver, to the credit of Governor Cuomo, we got a lot of the same things done we would want to do if we had the power to do it ourselves. So I think there was an understanding in Albany of the need to respect New York City's rights and prerogatives and get it done the way we would want it to get done.

Senator Klein: You know, remember, there was a time in Albany not too long ago where you couldn't get something as simple as speed cameras done – or red light cameras done. So I'm very proud of the fact that we were able to come together and achieve the mayor's Vision Zero program. You know, we look forward to working on other traffic safety measures. You know, I think our priorities are certainly making sure the residents of the city of New York are safe and secure, but there was a time when we couldn't get any of those things done. And I think, clearly, studies have shown – and we'll see it time and time again, even with the pilot program, which I was responsible in getting done over a year ago, where we just had the 20 cameras initially – that when people get a ticket, they stop speeding. It has a really – it has a tremendous chilling effect. So that's something that's important.

Question: [inaudible]?

Senator Klein: Well, again, I mean, with this mayor, anything is possible. He has had – I think – the best first year in office in being able to work the Albany system and achieving great things for the residents of the city of New York. And I was very proud to be part of it.

Mayor: Hold on, we have two at once and background noise. Okay, you and we'll go to Rich. You first.

Question: [inaudible]?

Mayor: Let's go over this again – go over the numbers of what's now, what's in the next few weeks.

Commissioner Trottenberg: The 23 are operational now. We are going to be putting them – every week we'll be adding more and we hope to get up to 40 or 50 by the end of the year and then the full complement of 140 next year.

Question: What is the speed limit in the school zone and is the chief saying that there will be officers out there with radar guns enforcing that? How are they enforcing if they're not enforcing with speeding cameras?

Chief Chan: The officers from the local precincts will take a look at the individual streets and locations and they will utilize the speed radar equipment that they have, and do the enforcement on the streets itself. But again, the 25 mile an hour law is going to be in effect – it was signed in August – it will be in effect, I believe, in November. So, our officers right now are currently – unless it's posted – it's going to be [inaudible] of 30 miles an hour.

Commissioner Trottenberg: The height differential is always a challenge. A lot of school safety zones are already at 15 miles an hour and you can see that posted around the school. So in those cases, the NYPD will be enforcing at the 15 mile an hour speed limit.

Mayor: On topic going once –

Question: [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: The city funds the cost of the cameras, and I'm happy to say it was included in our budget this year. So, we have all the funds that we need and the costs of the cameras – just so you all know – it's around, depending, somewhere between 90 and 115,000 per camera. So it's expensive technology.

Question: [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: 90 to about 115,000 per camera.

Question: [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: So far this year, having just gotten to the 23 cameras, we've generated about nine million in revenue. Don't know yet what the end-of-the-year numbers are going to look like, but it will be probably more than double that. But, you know, if you want to keep checking in with us, we'll be giving revenue estimates throughout the year.

Mayor: Okay. On topic. Last call – on topic.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: I mean, unfortunately there are a lot of high-crash corridors in New York City and look, 140 cameras – again, we're grateful to Senator Klein. That's tremendous for us but that doesn't cover all the high-crash areas. So, it's a balance – some we want to put in fixed locations but some we want to try to move them around in hopes, again, that we're really improving. We're just getting more, more benefit from the limited number of cameras – and if we move them around, trying to induce better behavior and safer driving in a larger number of locations.

Mayor: On topic, on topic. Going once, going twice. I like that, that's like the auction pose there. Look at that – very good. Off topic.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: No it's not true. We would never – no one would ever tell NYPD to back off. We have a job to do. We all have to enforce the law. We all have to protect public safety. So, those reports are just not accurate.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: No, I have not received an adequate explanation and I am looking forward to the results of the investigation. We take this very seriously. We're doing a full-scale review, not only of the technology related to our 9-1-1 system – that's a story and an issue unto itself where we've made a series of changes from what was left to us by the previous administration. But there's also the question of the day to day operations – we're doing a full review of that and I'm certainly not satisfied and I want to see some real progress on that front. So this particular incident is under investigation, and we're waiting to hear the results of the investigation, but in general we are reviewing all the 9-1-1 operations to figure out how we can do better.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, it's not just because it happened so close to Gracie. Any time I hear of a delay in emergency services it's disturbing because I think of it in human terms. You know, for any one of us that could be our parents, our grandparents. You know, it's not acceptable to have delays in emergency services reaching people. And so, we're going to get to the bottom of it.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, there is a federal law issue here that complicates matters. Clearly, we don't want to spend money that's not going to the immediate work. So we want to see what we can do within the federal law. We're going to follow up on this and see if we can get some flexibility from the federal government so we can save that money and put it to other good uses. Go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: We'll get you an update on all of the above. The bottom line is, as you heard a few days ago, an extraordinary effort is being mounted to ensure the effectiveness and the safety of our pre-k programs. As we indicated – I think it was back on Thursday – we expect a few of them to be delayed in their opening if we're not satisfied by the situation in those sites. I will not be surprised if there are a few that we decided are not appropriate to start for this school year in general. We're going to have updates today and tomorrow as the information becomes available – that will be made public. We obviously are going to endeavor, in any case like that, to reach out to parents and make sure they know immediately what the situation is and what their options are. The contract issues that we discussed the other day does not affect the direct question of health and safety. We're going to continue to move those contracts. You've heard in great detail,

there's a long history of that contracting process, historically, being slow. We want to improve upon it – we certainly want to improve upon it – but our central focus is the work done by the health department, by the fire department, by the buildings department, by the Department of Education to make sure the sites are safe. We're less concerned about the paperwork, we're more concerned about the immediate questions of safety.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: Well I think, first of all, this discussion has not deepened. There's going to be a process in the City Council. There's going to be hearings, there's going to be a public debate, and I think when more and more of the public have experienced what I've experienced and hear the truth about what's going with forces in the middle of the biggest city in the country – in the middle of midtown traffic – I think a lot of people are going to change their minds. So when a full airing of the facts occurs, I think there's going to be a different poll number. But, from my point of view, I made this very clear in the campaign – that this is what I intended to do. There's tremendous support in the City Council for making this change and we're going to move forward.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: I don't know the facts for that case, so I can't comment. Obviously we want to see fairness and appropriateness in everything related to testing. As you know, I also believe that we need to think differently about our whole approach to testing. But when it comes to the marking, it has to be sacrosanct. And so, we're certainly looking into that situation – but I don't have any of the details.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: There were – by the statistics I saw – actually a couple of shootings less this year than last year, so that's a good sign. But, yes there's more work to be done by definition. It's a huge gathering. It takes up most of the week, obviously, and the day itself is the largest – in terms of attendance – the largest event we have in the city each year, or certainly one of the largest. So, it's a challenging endeavor. I think NYPD has done an incredible job but we're going to continue to work to do better. And I do believe that a deepening of the relationship between police and community matters a lot here. Part of what we want to do is proactively understand if there's a problem site or a problem individual. That communication from community members to the NYPD is part of how we get ahead of these problems. We've seen it time and again – how many crimes we've been able to prevent because of communication with the community. So, I think we can do a lot more on that front.

Question: [Inaudible]?

Mayor: I think we're open to anything that makes the situation better but again, it begins with the real dialog with the community. And seeing from the community perspective of this, things we can do differently that will help make everyone safer again. Thinking of the magnitude, it's extraordinary how safe this event is and how well organized it is and how great a job the NYPD does. But that is – and something Commissioner Bratton talks about all the time – this is work

that never ends, of trying to improve our practice, trying to deepen relationships with the community, trying to innovate, trying to figure out new approaches. I mentioned, I was at a concept meeting a couple weeks ago. When you see the leadership of the NYPD working every minute, every day, to try and innovate new solutions, you realize that we've got more ahead where we're going to figure out better solutions. I'm quite confident, and I think that process will benefit from a better, closer relationship with communities.

Question: You're standing across the street from the Jerome Park Reservoir. DEP said when they were cutting down over 150 trees, they would replace them. Now, DEP is trying to back out of it, not going to plant one tree elsewhere in the community. Do you have any comment on that?

Mayor: Well, I need to look into the status of DEP's commitment, I don't know if Jeff or Jeff or Andy have anything they want to say, I want to give you the opportunity to if you want to. But I want to check into DEP's commitment and what they're doing to keep that commitment. We'll come back to you on that. Do you want to add anything? Alright.

Question: Mayor, what's the pace right now of the Build it Back program? Can you talk about your goals by Labor Day?

Mayor: Yup. Well, we said that by yesterday, we wanted to have over 500 reimbursement checks out, over 500 construction starts. We've met those goals. I want to give great credit to Amy Peterson and Bill Goldstein and everyone who was a part of that effort. We're at about 535-40, you have, I think, the exact numbers in the press release today, in terms of reimbursement checks and in terms of construction starts, and soon we're going to announce a new set of goals. Because that was, you know, part one, was to get this program moving. It had been dead in the water as of January first. We wanted to get it moving. We set some high goals, we met those goals, our team did an extraordinary job. Now we're going to come up with a new set of goals.

Question: Mayor, with UPK starting Thursday, the signature initiative of your first year, what are you most concerned about, in terms of, there are always glitches on the first day. What worries you the most?

Mayor: Well, first of all, I feel very confident. We're going to be over 50,000 kids in full-day, high quality pre-k, I feel like the team did an amazing job, I feel great about what so many people did—and you have to understand, this was a grassroots operation, we had the enrollment specialists out at barbershops and beauty salons and street fairs, talking to parents, you know, principals, teachers have been deeply involved, and the up-and-down line, this has been a great team effort, so I feel very confident that we're going to start smoothly and strongly on Thursday. What we know is, there will be some programs that will be delayed, and what we know is there will be some programs that we decide don't make the cut. We've projected that all along. That is not a glitch, that is following through on a specific plan, and if we don't see what we're looking for, we're going to be aggressive in terms of protecting the health and safety of our kids. But other than those few moves that we'll make in communicating with parents, I feel very good about a strong start. We were going to get out—the information—out today and tomorrow to help parents know the current status. If they have any questions about the program they're going

to, we want to make sure that parents have the ability to get information, they can call 3-1-1, that's the easiest way. But no, I feel good. I think we're in a good position.

Question: So, [inaudible] this month, or I guess since July, HUD, in this last month, HUD is no longer allowing the city to draw down on federal funds for reimbursement through Build it Back. And, as far as I understand, you guys are still signing off on checks for reimbursement. Are you at all concerned that the city is taking on a huge risk with not knowing that those funds are going to be given, eventually to you by HUD, seeing as they are no longer—

Mayor: You know, I think, look, I think that HUD raised some concerns. We've been working very productively and collegially with them to address those issues. I'm hopeful we'll come to a good resolution. In the meantime, the reimbursements continue. And you know, I think we'll have more to say about this in the coming days, but I think HUD has been quite fair and, you know, professional, on their approach.

Question: Mayor, in the past few weeks we've learned a little more about former Congresswoman Kathy Hochul's record in Congress on immigration, on guns, on Obamacare. Are you troubled by her votes back then, back when she was in Congress, and are you concerned, given recent history in New York State, that she could become governor of New York State?

Mayor: You know, I know Kathy Hochul's work. I respect her work a lot. She was representing a district that was a very—I guess a swing district is the best way to say it—and I think she stood firm on Democratic values across a host of issues, was not afraid to take tough votes that represented Democratic values, including on Obamacare, and obviously paid a political price for it. So I actually think she has shown a lot of courage supporting Democratic positions, regardless of the political consequences. I think she'll be a great lieutenant governor. I'm certainly going to campaign on her behalf, and I think she'll prevail on primary day. Thanks everyone!

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