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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS ANNOUNCES CHILD CARE BLUEPRINT

Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, Strategic Initiatives: Oh boy. Good morning. Good morning. Yes. Clap it up.

Deputy Mayor Wright: I'm Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright and I want to welcome you to Union Settlement for this very, very special day. Union Settlement was founded in 1895 and has been an amazing resource and haven for East Harlem, providing mental healthcare, EITC services and countless other programs, including early childhood education programming. So thank you Union Settlement.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Right here, Union Settlement, with its over 350 employees, work with scores of volunteers to make our social safety net really complete and making sure that it's a springboard for progress for everyone. It is only fitting that we release our blueprint for early childhood education and child care here in this space. We are really excited. It really does take a village to raise a child and it takes a village to create a comprehensive early childhood education and child care program. And I really want to start off by thinking all of the people and organizations that made this possible, all of the advocates who are here with us today and pushed for resources in this legislative session, including the Campaign for Children, C4C members, the Chinese American Planning Council, so many others.

Deputy Mayor Wright: We started this work in the transition for the Adams administration. Our Economic and Workforce Development Committee led by Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, our Human Services Committee led by Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, our Education Committee led by our Chancellor Banks, as well as scores of volunteers who worked to put this together. Our agency commissioners, we have eight agencies that worked collaboratively. The Robin Hood Foundation came in with a major philanthropic investment. Bloomberg Philanthropies has helped to support our work with delivery associates, thank you so much. And the CUNY Professional Development Institute, Sherry Cleary, I'm going to give you a shout out. Where's Sherry? There she is. I also want to shout out experts Barbara Carlson and Jocelyn Rodriguez, where are they? Absolutely shout out Shanna Midelton and Sherif Solomon from the administration.

Deputy Mayor Wright: You will hear from our mayor and other leaders as we talk more about this plan, but really a team effort. Everyone who's in these seeds contributed in some way and we are very grateful. And we know that this is the first big step of many more. Without further ado, I want to introduce our mayor who charged us with this important investment and step and body of work many months ago, Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Brought my own posse. Let's be clear. America runs on child care. America runs on child care. And it doesn't matter if it's mothers or grandmothers who are providing some type of child care for their grandchildren or children, the neighbor next door or a child care center. This country and this city wouldn't function without child care and we're clear on that. The more qualitative the product is, the more opportunities we are going to give children. We have been zero focused on this from the chancellor, to all of the deputy mayors, to our partners, to the men and women who are behind us providing child care services to children. And so no parent leaves home without their keys, cell phone and making sure their child is given the proper setting so that they can have a healthy start, in not only their day, but their entire life.

Mayor Adams: Here's a fact and it is astonishing as we started to dig into this. 375,000 parents quit or downshifted their jobs because they had no other way to take care of their children. And when you do an analysis of that, you'll see that this is a historical problem. Mom did three jobs to take care of her six children and that problem has continued throughout the generations and it's just time to do better. All the research shows that quality child care is essential for every child from day one. Our children need the building blocks of education, healthy food and active play. Everything we continue to zero in as an administration. Education, healthy food and active play. They go together so our children can build the towers of the future that we want them to have.

Mayor Adams: Today, we're going to make those building blocks available to everyone. I'm really excited about this announcement and what we fought long and hard for. Our Child Care and Early Child Care Education Blueprint is a historic investment in the future of our children, the future of working families and most importantly, the future of our city. It makes sure that children have a safe place to grow, learn, and socialize. Socialization is crucial for our children as they develop the skills of how to interact with different cultures, different families and different lifestyles. Parents don't have to choose between TV as a babysitter and earning a living. This has been a choice that they have to make year after year after year and we are saying no to that.

Mayor Adams: Children child care providers receive the support they need to provide, high quality affordable services. This is essential for our children. It's essential for families and it's essential for our city as we continue to grow our economy. We often think it's disconnected, child care and the growth of the economy, but it's not. It all goes together and it's part of the system that we are doing in this administration. The responsibility of care, unpaid or paid, falls mostly on women. We know that. We have to be honest about that and we have to acknowledge that. When we remove child care, we're removing women from the workforce and the opportunity to continue to have the independence and growth that they deserve. So we're going to tackle our child care needs head on. We're going to meet it head on and make sure that we provide services and support to those who need our help the most. We're going to increase access to child care for more than 41,000 children across the city.

Mayor Adams: We would create additional child care and early child care education seats. We would serve 6,000 children in DOE-contracted programs. The chancellor is happy to hear that. He's a big believer in this, and create 17,000 more seats through tax abatements. We will measure our success not in seats, but how many children we placed in seats. Previously, we went around boasting the number of seats we had and many of those seats were empty. We are not playing that game. We're not going to play the game of giving the appearance that we have a fully-fed child care system, but when you dig into the crevices, you realize we are counting seats and not children. Seats don't become cities. Children become cities, so we are focused on children.

Mayor Adams: We're going to energize our providers. You cannot recruit from within the sterilized environment of a beautiful space. We have to get into the community, speak with our healthcare providers, speak with our pediatricians, speak with our tenant leaders, association leaders, our clergy. Everyone must be focused on recruiting children to be in a safe space in their development and that is how we're going to accomplish this task. In the next two years, we are clearing wait lists and providing child care vouchers for over 18,000 children, including those in 17 high needs neighborhood. And a word that we say often, for the first time, we need to do a list of all of our first times. For the first time in this city's history, we will be providing vouchers for 600 undocumented childre. Because a child's future should not be based on documentation. It should be based on the destination of allowing him or her to be ready for the future.

Mayor Adams: New Yorkers are always strapped for time, so we got it. We know this city is too bureaucratic. We know that we leave too many resources on the table because by the time you fill out all the forms that you're sent from agency to agency, disgruntledness settles in and we want to fight that hard. So we will streamline the application process for seats so that parents don't have to run from one department to another and fill our confusing forms over and over again. We're stopping that. We're streamlining. We are going to make technology work for us, so that we can work for our families.

Mayor Adams: We want to make sure that we are attracting talented individuals to the field of child care, so we are partnered with CUNY to provide career development and professional training for up to 7,400 additional providers and we're hiring additional staff to eliminate unnecessary delays in background checks. All the time that's taking to do a background check, we want to really alleviate that long wait and we're going to continue to conduct thorough and rigorous background checks on our providers. So we are not going to take away the quality of the product, we're just going to make sure we do a better job in getting it done.

Mayor Adams: Finally, we are creating a new Office of Child Care and Early Education at City Hall to coordinate all of our efforts in establishing an advisory council. No symphony plays well without a maestro. That maestro would be at City Hall to make sure we're all playing on the same tune and not off-note and off-key to protect our children. This office will cut across multiple city agencies and create more streamlined processes for everyone. This blueprint is not a one and done. It's not about a fancy cover. It's about covering all of our bases. It's not about just saying what we're going to do now on an announcement. It's about continuous follow up. We will continue to revisit and revise based on parents' and providers' feedback.

Mayor Adams: This administration is not afraid to pivot and shift if we see something that's not working. We're not going to stay just because we announce something. We're going to continue to know if it's not producing the product that we want. We are unafraid about pivoting and shifting to get the product that New Yorkers deserve. As Deputy Mayor Wright states, it takes a village to raise a child, but let me modernize that. It takes a city to raise a child and this is a city of raising children. Not just any city. This is New York City. This is a place from we're going to getting nothing done, to a place we're going to get stuff done. New York. GSD. Get Stuff Done. Congratulations, team.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you so much, Mayor Adams. We are really thrilled that two of our key leaders who really are going to be the tip of the spear of getting it done and executing and implementing are here today. Deputy Chancellor Kara Ahmed who leads the early childhood education division of the New York City Public Schools, as well as our Commissioner for the Administration for Children's Services, Jess Dannhauser, who'll speak in a minute.

Deputy Mayor Wright: As the mayor said, this is a really important first step. I also want to point out that 96% of the people who run child care programs are women of color. They are Black, brown and Asian. So this is going to have a tremendous impact on that community as well, which is critically important and that we are really going to be targeting these vouchers to people that also are unhoused currently and in other high need communities. With that, I want to turn it over to Commissioner Dannhauser.

Commissioner Jess Dannhauser, Administration for Children's Services: Thank you so much, Deputy Mayor Wright. You, Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom, Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer brought us all together with a clear purpose to get this done and we are so thrilled to be here today.

Commissioner Dannhauser: Hi, I'm Jess Dannhauser. I'm the Commissioner at the Administration for Children's Services. I'm so pleased to be here at Union Settlement. This will also be a site of our Family Enrichment Center soon here in East Harlem. So we are thrilled to be here to partner with them around child care around all of the access we are providing to families at ACS. It's an honor to be with Mayor Adams, with Deputy Mayor Wright, Chancellor Banks, and all of you to officially release the city's new Child Care Blueprint.

Commissioner Dannhauser: This plan will resonate with all parents. I remember as a new parent how relieved we were to find child care for our daughter and that I could continue my career in public service and my wife could go to seminary to pursue her dream and her call to be an Episcopal Priest. Even more importantly, it meant our baby was safe and it expanded the community we could rely on to help our daughter learn and grow. This plan is also about equity, though, for parents who haven't gotten this. Parents who are striving to pursue their dreams while struggling to make ends meet, they deserve the same. The peace of mind that their child is safe, the opportunity to pursue life's goals, and the community, the city of support we all need in raising children. And this blueprint will provide thousands more parents with exactly that.

Commissioner Dannhauser: I'm proud that ACS will play such a critical role in expanding access to affordable child care across the city. In collaboration with the mayor's team and our city agency partners, we are currently in the process of reaching out to the parents of every child on the voucher wait list and then providing child care assistance for those who are eligible. Beginning today, including right here in East Harlem, we will also target eligible families in 17 high needs communities across the city. These neighborhoods experience high poverty, high unemployment, and for years have had limited access to child care. And thanks to Mayor Adams and the City Council, for the first time, ACS will going to provide child care assistance to undocumented children through city funded vouchers. Altogether, ACS will be issuing over 18,000 more child care vouchers.

Commissioner Dannhauser: At the same time, ACS has lowered the federally-required family fee to child care to the lowest level permitted by federal law. And we successfully advocated to the state to increase the maximum rate we can pay our providers. These efforts will make child care more affordable and give providers financial stability and more adequate resources to serve our children well. This-much needed blueprint is a game for children and families all across New York City. Thank you, Mayor Adams, for your commitment to make New York City a better place to be a child and to be a parent. Thank you.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you, Commissioner Dannhauser. And our final scheduled speaker is the most important one quite frankly, one of our parents. I would love to introduce Shavon Sherrod, who is a parent of a child right here in the center. And this is what it's all about. We want to make sure that our community, our family, gets the need and deserve. Shavon?

[...]

Mayor Adams: And I don't even know how it's possible for us to talk about children without having our chancellor speak. Come on and say a few words, chancellor.

Chancellor David Banks, Department of Education: Good morning, everyone. I just think it's critically important that we recognize that early childhood education is essential for everything that we are trying to do at New York City Public Schools. If we don't establish the foundation on that birth to five continuum, we will continue to fight an uphill battle. And so many of the issues and the challenges that we see in our schools today are a result of us not getting it right from the very beginning.

Chancellor Banks: Sherry Cleary, I want to thank you because you were one of the first people when I became chancellor, before I became chancellor, that everybody told me if you want to learn deeply about what's happening in early childhood education, there's no better person that you can learn it from than Sherry Cleary. So I want to thank you for helping me to put our New York City Public Schools in a better place. And it was Sherry, in fact, who was the one who made the recommendation of the person who went on to become our Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education. Who I didn't know, but Sherry was the one who said it, it's the best person that you can pick. Stand up again, please, Dr. Kara Ahmed, who is leading this work for

us. And I appreciate you and I appreciate your leadership. And I know how hard you are working and fighting.

Chancellor Banks: We say this all the time, bright starts will help to produce bold futures. And we've got to get it right. And all the work that is happening here, that the mayor has entrusted his team to lead and Deputy Mayor Wright and so many others to drive this work on behalf of our youngest children. We get it right with them, we give everybody else the best chance to be most successful. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: Michael.

Question: So a few questions on topic about this. What do you guys have in place for quality control? With daycare, early childhood centers, there's a broad range. Some places, in my experience, the kids are just sitting in front of TVs, some places the kids are learning their ABCs. How are you going to keep an eye on standards and make sure the right things are going on at these places?

Mayor Adams: So I have been communicating with the deputy man in the Department of Education. This is a big issue for me. And we are going to come up with some clear standards on what we expect. We're also doing a real analysis of where seats are located. What this team is doing is extremely impressive around how do we start with a standard of expectation? Now you could always add on. Mom used to always say, "Listen, when I ask you to do something, the meat and potatoes, you got to do. You want to put gravy, that's fine." So if centers want to do extra stuff, they can.

Mayor Adams: But we are going to ensure that there's a minimum expectation that we want for our children. And you're going to see that with some of the systems that we are rolling out and how we are going to monitor that expectation. Now, you've been at many of my press conferences. I said it over and over again, got to inspect what you expect or it's all suspect. So we are going to be inspecting on the ground and make sure we do those spot checks to get those qualities that we're looking for.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: How are you?

Question: I'm good. How are you?

Mayor Adams: You should get the every press conference award. You got all of our conferences. Only time Michael comes is when he's up to something.

Question: I could be up to something too, you know. On the campaign trail, you put out the You Care plan for universal child care. How come this doesn't get to universal child care?

Mayor Adams: We're getting there. We're going to get there. We're going to keep moving forward. People thought it was impossible for us to drop down a dollar amount. This is a huge victory from Albany to get to the dollars that we are, I believe it's \$10 a week, what we're doing with immigrant children. So we're going to continue to evolve. It's really challenging for many people to fully comprehend that I've only been mayor for six months. But you're seeing just a clear movement of a plan as we are peeling back another layer, peeling back another layer.

Mayor Adams: So our goal is universal. We think every parent that wants a seat for their child, we need to get it. But we continue to add on these numbers and we're going to continue to focus. We want Albany to help. We want some of the federal dollars. We want to re-look at some of the things we're doing, Head Start. Because I learned from talking to the chancellor's team, we have all of these different buckets and you may think that everyone could apply for any bucket. No, immigrant children are not qualified for Head Start. So we have to create our own ways of doing this and that's what we're doing.

[Crosstalk]

Question: In looking through the plan, I noticed there's some aspects of it, and don't quote me on this, but I think the minimum floor ceiling on wages, things have to be... there has to be legislation on the state level. I notice some of the legislation has already passed and in place, but what needs to be implemented as far as a legal perspective to achieve the goals that you've laid out in the plan?

Mayor Adams: Anyone want this one?

Commissioner Dannhauser: Thank you. Really importantly, the state raised the maximum from 100% of the federal poverty line to 300%. So now a family of four making about \$83,000 a year can qualify, so that is a huge win. What we're asking the state to also consider is to eliminate the minimum wage floor, which is very surprising. It was surprising to me to learn as I became ACS Commissioner that if you don't make minimum wage, you don't qualify for child care. So our gig workers, folks who work in lots of different parts of the economy don't qualify, even though they are struggling to make ends meet the most. And so we're calling on the state to engage with us on that important issue.

Question: What range do you want people to be eligible under as far as wages? Who qualifies for the plan?

Commissioner Dannhauser: We think 300% of the federal poverty line is the right place to be, that family of four around \$83,000. So we're really thrilled about that. Again, we're also dropping costs for families. So for a family who's making less than the federal poverty line, they're going to pay \$1 a week. If you make over 100% of the federal poverty line, it'll be 1% of your income beyond the 100%. So that drops it from what was around 10%, so this will make it a lot more affordable for families.

Question: Thanks.

Mayor Adams: We'll do a few off topic. So we're going to excuse y'all. Yeah. I don't want to deal with this combat.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I want to ask you about the subway saxophonist who was arrested a few days ago.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: I know you've said that police have a job to do in the subway. Is there any discretion for someone who's A, been there for years? And B, seems to spread happiness? As folks lamenting that this guy was just there to be a positive influence on the subway ecosystem. How did it result in that video that we saw?

Mayor Adams: The homeless people living in encampments, they have been there for years. People not paying their fare, they have been doing it for years. People disrupting and littering have been there for years, that's a problem. We have a subway system that is out of control and the mandate was, "Eric, we need to bring back control." So a passenger called and said, "This person is taking up space on the platform," which can be very dangerous by the way. So the police went and stated, "Sir, you can't take up this much space. You have to get this organized. Because if you do, people can be hurt." He disregarded them. They asked him three times, totally disregarded them. They said, "You know what? We're not going to take action. We're going to call our sergeant." The sergeant came, "Sir, we just need you to do it within the transit rules." He disregarded them.

Mayor Adams: So now I need to ask us, we can't have it both ways. We can't say we want order in our subway system. And then when police officers take action, we're saying, "Well, we don't want that type of order." No, I'm not sending my police officers mixed messages. Be polite, be kind, give people an opportunity to correct a condition, but if they refuse to do so, take appropriate action. Now, if you look at the video, the police weren't yelling, he was yelling. He was yelling. He was screaming. He was creating disorder. He went to the district. He was issued summonses. He was given back his items and he went on his way. So I'm saying to New Yorkers that are on the subway system, that is not the place for disorder. That is not the place to do whatever you want as a passenger.

Mayor Adams: Transit has rules, let's follow the rules. And my officers and your officers are going to do it in a professional, courteous manner. So I'm proud of those officers. They weren't abusive. They didn't yell at the person. They took a long time to get to the point that now we have to take action. That is how you do proper policing.

Question: I got two questions on the former mayor, Rudy Giuliani. First, do you plan to ask the DA to lessen charges against the guy who tapped his back, slapped his back, whatever we're calling it?

Mayor Adams: I looked at the video and someone needs to remind former Mayor Giuliani that falsely reporting a crime is a crime. And from what he stated about being punched in the head, felt like a bullet, what he stated, there was a lot of creativity. And I think the district attorney, he has the wrong person that he's investigating. To falsely report a crime is a crime. If that video wasn't there, then this person would've been charged with punching the former mayor. He'd been charged with all of these offenses that did not materialize. I saw that video and I'm sure all of you who saw the video, you have to ask yourself, he stated if he didn't feel so heroic or whatever he would've fallen to the ground. There was a lot of creativity there. Falsely reporting a crime is a crime.

Question: Are you going to ask the DA to look into that aspect? You think there's absolutely no merit to this, is that [crosstalk].

Mayor Adams: Well, when you look at the video, the guy basically walked by and patted him on the back. I don't know if he said congratulations. I don't know what he said to him, but it was clear that he was not punched in the head. It was clear that it didn't feel like a bullet. It was clear that he wasn't about to fall to the ground. So it was clear that he had a lot of creativity and sensationalism that caused this person to be arrested. Falsely reporting a crime is a crime.

Question: [Inaudible] looking into that, are they, do you know?

Mayor Adams: Well, I'm having a conversation with the police commissioner about, do we feel that was a falsely reported crime because you can't... See here's my fear. If you don't have a video and someone of prominence making allegations against you, you should not have to wait for a video to determine you did nothing wrong. He's a former mayor. I think he's irresponsible for a former mayor. And when I heard the report that he was punched in the head and other things, when I heard that, I said, "Why would someone assault the former mayor?" Now, what if we didn't have the video? This person would have been accused with a serious crime when all he did was pat the guy on the back. You can't do sensationalism to carry out your own agenda and you can't use the police to carry out your own agenda. Okay.

Question: On the monkeypox vaccine, there's a lot of distress about the limited supply the city has, appointments got booked up immediately. Is there anything you can do to get the CDC, get the federal government to bring more vaccine? Do you know if there's any more supply on the way?

Mayor Adams: Yeah. They gave us 1,000. As soon as they gave us 1,000, we issued out 1,000. And so we are now trying to get more here in the city to give them out. As soon as they give it to us, we are going to give them out. We have a good, seamless system in place, but we gave out every one that they issued us and there was actually a waiting list to get more. So we want to get more and we're speaking with the CDC to actually do so. Okay, thank you.

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