

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Discusses Funding Childcare in the State Budget

March 28, 2022

Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, Strategic Initiatives: Good morning. Good morning and welcome to the Kuei Luck, Kuei Luck Early Childhood Center. I want to acknowledge all of the people in the room. My name is Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright. I'm the Deputy Mayor of Strategic Initiatives. And Kevin Kung, the owner of this center, and the parents that are gathered here that are dropping off their kids this morning, and this really warm and beautiful space. Really here to talk about the critical importance of childcare. Childcare is essential. It's essential to our families, it's essential to the development of our children, it's essential to our ability to get back to work. And that's why Mayor Adams said before day one, one of the most important things that his administration is focused on is increasing accessible, affordable, quality childcare. It is a crisis and we need solutions. So without further ado, I want to introduce Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you so much. The entire team—let me keep my mask on because those are the rules, right? You know, just so important—Sheena, thank you. You know, we talked about this often and just joined here with Kevin and his entire team. And Chancellor Banks, who, when he talks about education, people don't realize those beginning years while young people begin to develop their language, they speak. Their socialization skills, how they interact with other children and learn different methods. And right now in Albany, there is a real battle taking place.

Mayor Adams: And we want to thank our colleagues, they're fighting for access to quality childcare. I don't think there's a greater benefit for families than having the ability to know that their children are in safe spaces. Look at this space here. This is a beautiful space—watching the children as I walked in, watching parents drop their loved

ones off, as they come in and start this early interaction with schools and interaction with education. A good meal, safe environment, they have been nurtured, really developing what's expected of them as they continue to evolve as young adults.

Mayor Adams: So today, our entire team is in Albany walking the halls, and at the top of our agenda is to fight on behalf of this critical issue of childcare. As we move to the place of closing the budget, many of our partners in Albany understand how imperative this is, particularly for women. Oftentimes when it's a childcare issue, the mothers will have to remain home or actually leave their job. We witnessed this during COVID. It was extremely impactful for families. And so our call today for more funding will allow for providers like this one to be paid more, more seats, and to create a safe space for our children. You will enhance existing childcare programs throughout the entire city and throughout the entire state, actually. And so we must get this done.

Mayor Adams: Nothing holds back opportunities or access to employment more than a lack of childcare throughout our entire city. And that's why it's crucial to move this to the next level. So I'm committed to expanding childcare. We acknowledge this in our budget. That's why in the preliminary budget I proposed a tax incentive to spur actions by the private sector to create new spaces to help support childcare expansion and adjust childcare deserts across the city. Real quality childcare locations, like this location here. In far too many places in our city you're not seeing the accessibility to quality childcare, and we want an expansion of that. Our property tax abatement proposal will help support the creation of approximately 11,000 new childcare seats and our business income tax proposed credit will help support the creation of over 6000 infant and toddler seats.

Mayor Adams: So this issue is real to us as part of our upstream mindset that if we want to start the process of developing great adults, it starts with developing great children and that's done inside a childcare environment. Childcare is not a child sitting home all day watching TV. That is not childcare. Childcare is bringing them into an environment where they're able to expand and develop themselves their full

personhood. Song, dance, language, seeing different faces, different cultures, understanding that the diversity of living in a city as diverse as New York.

Mayor Adams: All of these drawings you see on the wall of those are expression of the artistic experience. And I really enjoyed this location, because you see the diversity as we fight with some of the adult problems. If we want to stop antisemitism, anti-Asian violence, anti-LGBTQ, and African Americans, others bring our children into environments where they can learn from each other and grow together, that is the first seed we plant. And we would nurture it by ensuring they get the educational opportunities they deserve.

Mayor Adams: So thank this entire team. Thank you, parents, teachers, owners, and our amazing chancellor, and my counseling people who are here as well. Thank you. Let's make this happen, Albany. We need your help to get this done. Thank you.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you, Mayor Adams. Next up is Chancellor Banks. And I want to really acknowledge Kara Ahmed, the director of early childhood education for the Department of Education, Shanna Midelton, senior adviser, and Jeff [inaudible], who've been really doing the hard work in the administration of putting together a really bold plan. Jeff, thanks.

Chancellor David Banks: So good morning, everyone. Thank you all for being here. To our great mayor, Eric Adams, thank you so much for your continued vision, and just support for young people from birth. And your message around support for young people is so critically important that the Deputy Mayor Wright, Deputy Chancellor Ahmed, Mr. Kung, Mr. Gab, Ms. Shah, and guests, and everyone who was here, thank you all for being here this morning.

Chancellor Banks: What we are seeing here today reinforces the need to strengthen early childhood education, not only in 3-K and pre-K, but in fact beginning at birth. It is critically important that we provide young children with critical literacy and language support from the very start. We know that the first three years of a child's life have a profound impact on their future learning and can change the trajectory of their growth. That's why it is our responsibility to provide all children and their families with access to high quality early childhood education, which includes working parents and parents attending school who are relying on us to provide rich learning and care for their child and their children every day.

Chancellor Banks: But to do that we're going to need help from Albany. And this is an investment in our children and the future of New York City and New York State, and yes, in our nation. It's an investment that we know will show a positive return for all of us. We must give all of our children a bright start so that they can in fact have a bold future. Thank you so much.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you, Chancellor. And the wonderful owner of this incredible establishment, Kevin.

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Wright: And the reason we are here, the two parents of this lovely young lady, Agnes Cha and Joseph Gim. Thank you.

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Wright: And I would also like to bring forward our Council Member Lynn Schulman.

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Wright: Now we're going to have some field questions.

Mayor Adams: Before you do, you know, Kevin's story really, really resonated with me. My mother was a childcare worker. She worked in the kitchen and I remember seeing those parents in South Jamaica, Queens being able to have that quality care and have that breakfast and lunch. And you know, when you looked at, watching her go there every day, going, visiting her there, it just—you're right, Kevin—it's just really plants the seeds of the choices that family must make. And so I thank you for this space. This is just a warm inviting space that will bring long memories. You can see the energy and your beautiful daughter.

Mayor Adams: We'll open the floor to questions.

Question: About how the city—if you get the money from Albany—how, what's the mechanism to spend it? Does it go to the DOE? Are you funding individual childcare centers? Do they go to the parents themselves as a subsidy? How would the money be spent?

Mayor Adams: A combination right now. The DOE handles a lot of the childcare needs. It is going to combine with the money that we're putting in the proposal we're putting in place and in the budget. And so it's going to go to the facilities and locations and we already have a network of childcare locations but it will allow us to expand those seats that we want to expand.

Mayor Adams: One question for you. This is very much needed knowing that there could be upwards of 17,000 new seats you said created if all the funding goes through. What happens if it is not approved? What do you do with all those kids who need it? Infant, toddler seats are new seats because they need that care.

Mayor Adams: You're right on, you know, all those seats that we're looking to expand are going to be in jeopardy. And that's why it's crucial right now. Our partners in Albany, we need their help. We are optimistic that we're going to get help from Albany. The number is how many seats we are going to obtain. We're going to do our share here in the city. But it is going to create a greater crisis if we don't get the help that we need. And we hope, we are optimistic that we're going to get some help from Albany.

Question: If you had a magic eight ball how many seats would you ideally be able to create if all of the sudden a blank check—

Mayor Adams: Who can answer that?

Deputy Mayor Wright: There are half a million children under five in the city and you know, there are seats that kind of cover about maybe 10 percent, 15 percent of that. So we've got a long way to go. A lot.

Mayor Adams: We're going to do off topic. So we have free you up from that. Okay, thank you. Thank you so much.

Question: Mr. Mayor, yesterday your focus was entirely on crime and you tweeted a video of a mother and a toddler being held at gunpoint. I'm wondering where and when was that video taken? And with regard to your defense of the anti-gun units, can you address the concerns that those units will do more harm than good in minority communities?

Mayor Adams: First, it was about two weeks ago. 23-year-old male with a long rap sheet, including criminal possession of a weapon. If you, if any New Yorker saw that video, it had to send shockwaves through you. A mother and daughter carrying a little bag. Two men approach them with a gun. That daughter is traumatized. And when I hear the silliness of those who talk about well-trained police officers zero in on guns and say what harm is going to do to Black and brown communities, ask them what harm those two gunmen did.

Mayor Adams: I am so tired of people spending all of their energy, protecting criminals and not protecting innocent New Yorkers. I keep saying this over and over again. When are we going to talk about innocent people? When are we going to focus on people who are not committing crimes, who are doing what's right? And so for those small number of people who keep raising a unit to take guns off the street is wrong, I'm going to use this term over and over again until everyone gets used to it, that's just noise. And I'm ignoring silly noise. I'm going to utilize the police department to fight crime. And I'm going to show that no one is abusive, because that's what I did for 35 years. I'm going to continue to do that.

Question: [inaudible] made in that case? Was an arrest made? You said you knew about—

Mayor Adams: One suspect was arrested. We have to seek the second suspect. But if you look at the rap sheet of the individual that was arrested, he's part of the revolving door criminal justice system. Many people don't realize there's a small number of people that are violent, will continue to be violent until we stop them. It's not a large number of people. They are part of the revolving door criminal justice system. They continue to go into our communities, particularly Black and brown communities. Last week, a three-old-girl was shot, Black and brown community. Seven-year-old girl was shot, black and brown community. 29 people—44 people were shot, over 90 percent were black and brown.

Mayor Adams: So they're talking about protecting those who carry guns. How about protecting the people who are doing right? How about protecting the three-year-old girl to seven-year-old girl to countless number of Black and brown people that are shot in the community by the same people that continue to get arrested, come back out and get arrested again. You know, someone says, "Eric, we know, we're watching you. At these press conferences, you seem angry and frustrated." Because New Yorkers is angry and frustrated. And I'm a New Yorker.

Question: I have a question about the mandate, the vaccine mandates. Two firefighter unions want to meet with you, they said that on Saturday, just to discuss possibly extending that exception to them or allowing something where they can come back to work. Your thoughts on that?

Mayor Adams: I meet with everyone. You know, listen, everyone knows me. I meet with everyone. I meet with ex-gang gangbangers, marches, protesters. I meet with everyone. I look forward to meeting with anyone including our unions.

[Crosstalk]

Mayor Adams: Everything is going to be in layers. I stated before I'm going to roll it out when my medical team tells me what needs to be done. And then I will roll out according to that. And so once we get those announcements, I'll announce them. And until I get there, we're going to do it in layers and continue to do it in layers.

Question: Just real quick, give me thoughts on those reports—there's a federal investigation into the Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin and some improprieties, how he may have spent state funds. One of his campaign donors has been arrested for the straw donor scheme. Just wondering if you have any thoughts at all on that?

Mayor Adams: No.

Questions: Follow up to [inaudible]. His question when it comes to the vaccine mandate. What's your message to those people who were saying you allowed athletes and performers to play and we were laid off? The 1,400 that got laid off, they would like to have their jobs. Like, is there any consideration to reinstate them at their jobs?

Mayor Adams: I really want to manage the expectation of the media. I spent two days talking about this. I answered every question that was given to me. What is not going to happen under my administration is the continuation of questions over and over again. When this universe where Eric Adams name and Kyrie Irving may get a lot of clicks, that's fine. You do your job, I do my job. I'm not engaging and continuing questions on the same things over and over again.

Mayor Adams: The Kyrie story, the performance stories, the athlete stories, that's over. Read my former comments, it's all there. I have a city to run, not staying in one place, stretching out stories. If you need to create a way to write this story, you have to do that without my participation. I answered every question on this topic. There is no more questions for Eric Adams to answer. I have a city to run. Not a sports team.

Question: And sorry to ask you if you saw the Oscars last night, but what did you think of Will Smith's performance?

Mayor Adams: I was in a subway station last night, I don't have time for TV. Thank you.

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