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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS LAUNCHES COVID-19 BOOSTER
CAMPAIGN, ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY FOR NYC BUSINESSES,
PARENTS**

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Joined here with Dr. Vasan, white coat and all, and Chancellor Banks, the chancellor... to number one, get my booster shot. I've been waiting for this for some time — to get this booster shot. Dr. Vasan talked about it often on our morning briefings. This new booster shot — COVID booster shot is here. And we are really excited about it. And we are also announcing the launch of a citywide campaign to promote boosters and other vaccinations this fall. And in the next week, print, television, radio, and digital ads will go live across New York City promoting booster shots. This is an important campaign because many people think COVID is in our rear view mirror. It will remain in the rear view mirror if we do the right things and boosting and getting our bodies prepared is one of those important things.

The COVID booster will provide better protection against variants, who — we are seeing now and quite likely against future variants as well. Something Dr. Vasan has talked about often in our discussions, it would decrease the chances of severe illness, help reduce transmission and the chance of developing long-term COVID. I want to encourage all New Yorkers to roll up their sleeves and the sleeves of their children to get their boosters and get the booster now, it's available. This is an opportunity for all of us to fortify the fight against COVID.

I'm getting mine in the next few minutes and we believe that we have done a successful job in dealing with COVID where you have 89 percent of New Yorkers, including children, have had at least their first COVID vaccination dose. The rollout has been important and crucial because we've been so successful. It is time to move on to the next level of fortifying our city.

Our parents will have more flexibility when it comes to their children's health. We're removing the requirement to be vaccinated and to participate in sports and extra curriculum activities. We're removing that requirement for our school children. Although that removal is no indication that we don't believe boosters are important and vaccinations are important. We're going to continue to encourage parents to vaccinate their children and that is the reason we're doing this important campaign.

We will also provide additional flexibility to business by lifting the private sector mandate on November 1st. This puts the choice in the hands of New York businesses and it's imperative that we're asking them to continue to encourage their employees to get their vaccines and booster shots. New York City is going to continue to lead the way by example — our employees — as we continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated and boosted. Our vaccinated workforce kept the city open and operating with over 300,000 employees it was crucial to put it in place and we are keeping that in place. Vaccinated workers have carried out their jobs and they stepped up when the city needed them the most and we think it's imperative to send the right message and lead by example, as I'm doing today by getting my booster shots.

So we believe that this opportunity opens the door for much conversation and that is why this ad campaign is, I feel, important at this time for us to continue to focus on how do we vaccinate and boosting New Yorkers. And Chancellor Banks and his team, during the most difficult times at the beginning of this administration when there was uncertainty to keep the schools open, we were able to do so because of the tests and trace and we were able to do so because of how we coordinated giving out the test kits to families and children and allowed our schools to continue to function as we all see the gap in education from those two and a half years of not having the proper environment for our children. And so we're open to some questions and then I would get my shot and move about today. Hope all of you are boosted.

Question: Oh, good morning, Mayor Adams. I wanted to ask — I know the November 1st is the private sector mandate lifting, do you have any plans to lift it through the city's employees at any point?

Mayor Adams: We're in a steady phase of pivot and shift. We do things, we roll things down slowly. Right now that is not on the radar for us.

Question: At some point it could be?

Mayor Adams: Once we get to that point, I'll share it.

Question: How can you justify this, mayor, that you're removing this mandate for private sector employees, but not for public sector employees? Many of them have been fired from their jobs because of this mandate.

Mayor Adams: I don't think anything dealing with COVID makes sense and there's no logical pathway of — one can do. You make the decisions based on how to keep our city safe, how to keep our employees operating. By taking the vaccine we were able to keep the city open. And so we have to do it according to what's best and the medical science and Dr. Vasan has done an amazing job. That's how we're here. I don't know if people realize that that is why we are here. And so the determination now from our medical team is to state remove the private sector mandates, remove the sports mandates for children, and that is where we are and if there's something's going to change, we're going to announce it.

Question: Yeah. Then you're going to open the city — open the city up to more lawsuits in this regard?

Mayor Adams: Oh, that's where we have a legal team. Our corporation counsel is looking over every decision that we are making and we are in complete compliance with the law.

Question: I wanted to ask if you're considering doing vaccinations at schools as the city did last school year to promote vaccinations and also perhaps boosters?

Mayor Adams: Dr. Vasan.

Commissioner Ashwin Vasan, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: We are relying heavily on our healthcare system to really partner with us and to be the main conduit through which to deliver vaccines. As you recall, most of our COVID response has been funded through federal emergency dollars and those dollars are drying up. And so it is incumbent upon our health systems to step up. It's incumbent upon our community providers to step up, our community pediatricians with whom we're working extremely closely. It's incumbent upon parents to take your kids to the pediatrician and get them vaccinated. But we are also going to be working with our partners at Health and Hospitals to stand up popup sites outside of their H and H sites as well as mobile sites. So, that is a more targeted approach that we're taking. Specifically to schools, again I mean, I think that was really intended to raise childhood vaccination rates at a time when we could stand those things up. Now we're at a point where emergency dollars are drying up and we need our health systems to step up.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I wanted to talk about migrants. Wondering if you...

Mayor Adams: You will tap in in a minute. We're not going to forget you, Bernadette.

Question: Mr. Mayor from, and maybe Dr. Vasan could comment on this, from a public health perspective can you tell us the logic behind doing the lifting the private, but not the public at this point. What's the kind of public health rationale behind that?

Commissioner Vasan: I think it's important to not see any of these decisions in isolation. I know they get reported on in isolation, but they're all connected. And so as the mayor alluded to we're looking at all of our policies and thinking about a glide path towards normal, whatever the new normal looks like. At the time of institution of these mandates, the major effect was to push people to get vaccinated. You always have early adopters and you always have the intransigent few who won't get vaccinated. And the purpose of a mandate in the interest of public health is also to push people to get vaccinated, which it's been extraordinarily successful in doing whether it's the city worker mandate, private sector mandate, the childhood athletics mandate, and anything else. So it's important to not see these things in isolation and then say, "Well, what's the narrow rationale for this one decision?" And see it as disconnected from the rest. Because we are in a process of transition. We're no longer in this emergency phase of the pandemic, but we're also, we haven't yet defined what the new normal looks like or endemicity and this is our process of getting there.

Question: I'd just like to ask if you agree with the president, he said on the weekend that he believes the pandemic is over and I'd like to get your take on that.

Mayor Adams: I believe that, as I stated, the most challenging parts of the pandemic, I believe that we were at some scary moments, and we passed through them. And in order to stay ahead of COVID, which has been extremely formidable — it has pivot and shift so many times — in order to stay ahead of it we have to be smart and we must have a strategic plan of moving forward. And that's what Dr. Vasan and his team — they have done. And there were many scary moments that many of you're not aware of. We're sitting here now is because we made those tough decisions, those nail biting decisions, and we believe we need to continue to do that. And that's why we are moving in this fashion.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I believe that the city's booster rate is below 50 percent. You have a lot of skeptics, especially in minority communities. I know that you're doing this public relations campaign, but how do you target people who say, "I don't want another shot"?

Mayor Adams: Dr. Vasan.

Commissioner Vasan: It's a really good question. One of the biggest critiques of the original formulation of the vaccine is that while it continued to protect against severe illness and death, over time its effectiveness at blunting transmission lessened. That's why I'm so excited about this new bivalent booster, because if adopted widely, not only should it continue to protect against severe illness, it should actually start to blunt transmission. I'm hopeful that through our messaging, we'll actually build back confidence in these vaccines.

But it's not just an intrinsic conversation about what anyone feels about the product and its effectiveness. It's also about people's sense of risk, people's individual sense of risk and the community sense of risk. And we are at a different point in the pandemic today than we were six months ago and two years ago. People's sense of risk is down and I think that's a good thing and it should be reported as a good thing. People aren't as scared of COVID because fewer people are dying, fewer people are getting hospitalized and that's a product of all of us collectively getting boosted, doing the right things, wearing masks during the worst of this. And so we need to calibrate against that community sense of risk as well as people's individual sense of risk as we promote this booster. But from the product perspective itself, this is a good product and an effective one.

Question: And just as a follow up, commissioner, yesterday Dr. Anthony Fauci said that he thinks that there will be another surge and there might be another variant in the fall. What's your reaction to that?

Commissioner Vasan: There could be, we're always surveilling for new variants of concern. The virus is constantly changing. It's changed so much in just two and a half plus years, but as we've seen with previous increases in transmission, we've managed to blunt its impact on severe illness and death through vaccination. And I think that the widespread adoption of this booster will help us blunt, continue to blunt, whatever comes our way, which is why we're encouraging everyone 12 and older, if you're more than two months since your last dose go get boosted today. I got mine yesterday. I feel great. And it will protect us from whatever comes our way because the one thing about COVID, it is quite unpredictable. We have very little scientific basis for

COVID because we don't know that much about it. When we talk about it against flu, we have hundreds of years of science and experience behind it. We have two and a half, two and three quarters years of experience so we have to have a little bit of humility there.

Question: Does the city have any numbers on the percentage of private businesses that got all their employees vaxxed and boosted?

Mayor Adams: No.

Question: There was no data collection there?

Mayor Adams: No.

Question: I wanted to ask you Mr. Mayor, for your reaction to President Biden saying that the pandemic is over. What do you think of that messaging? Do you agree with it? Would you yourself...

Mayor Adams: I think you were writing something at the time so you probably didn't hear when I was saying, I think that the most scary parts of the pandemic may be in our rear view mirror. But as the doctor stated that there's a possibility of another variant and we have to move in a very strategic and smart way. And so he may feel that this phase of what we have gone through, we've seen the worst of it, but we just don't know what's on the horizon for COVID. I think we have to take it in a very serious manner and I've been consistent about that. And that's why we talk each morning if needed, but a minimum of every other day during the week, during the work week, because it's just crucial. We don't know what COVID has up its sleeve. That's why I'm rolling up my sleeves to get the vaccine today. You guys can bounce. Doctor, you can wait for me over there with your white coat. Alright, chancellor, make sure you get your booster.

Question: Mr. Mayor, do you think that the Biden administration failed to prepare for this influx of migrants when they originally lifted the public health related pandemic ban, essentially on asylum seekers coming into the states? Do you think they failed to prepare and that's now what's really driving this critical breaking point that we're seeing in the city with the migrants coming in here?

Mayor Adams: No, I think what we're seeing in the city is a political stunt. I thought what really personified that political stunt is the governor of Florida. He had nothing to do with it. I mean, what was his purpose of sending a planeload to Martha's Vineyard. He just felt as though he wanted to get into this horrendous action. And so we're seeing the political stunt of this. I think that the Republican Party's desire was to attempt to overshadow what they've done with the women's right to choose, on the over-proliferation of guns. I think this is a complete political stunt and that's what has created what is happening here in New York City. And my concern is what's happening here in this city and I believe they created that this is a humanitarian crisis created up by human hands. And it was a political stunt.

Question: Does this stem from a crisis at the border? So should the federal government be doing more to provide assistance there?

Mayor Adams: I think it's crucial that we coordinate as a country to deal with the asylum seekers and the migrants. And that's what we're doing. That's the role I'm going to play as the mayor of the city.

Question: I got two questions, just one follow up to Bernadette. Trump's ban on asylum seekers and the fact that you didn't have people coming in during that time, do you feel like that plays into it? Biden lifted it, Trump put it in place. So pre-Biden presumably nobody was coming in although I don't think that was exactly the case.

Mayor Adams: Right now my focus is on what's creating a crisis in New York City and the crisis that's been created in New York City is coming from a governor who is fueling the crisis and he was intentional about what he was doing. He's been very clear about that. In addition to that, the first time he tried to deny what he was doing. So, that is my concern. And my concern is not to try to figure out national politics. My concern is to address the crises that I have here, right here in New York City.

Question: The other question I want to ask you has to do with what's going on internally. We reported yesterday that Lorraine Grillo's possibly going to leave within a year's time. Have you spoken to her about her plans to stay or go in the administration? And if so, what has she told you?

Mayor Adams: Well, I'm not going to go into private conversations with our team. And just as with appointments, I stated that when we make the appointments, we will announce them. And that's the same thing with those who decide to go on with their lives. Lorraine has spent so many years in government and she has been an amazing anchor and I was proud to have her join the team with her experience. And that is why no matter what people wrote about the administration, I saw very few articles that talked about the talent that I brought onboard.

You may have picked off one or two people who you felt should not have been appointed because of something they did in their lives. But I did not see articles. I did not see reported that Eric didn't bring together an amazing team and Lorraine was the anchor of that team. And she added to the first time, the five women, the deputy mayors of we have done an amazing job. And so whenever she decides she wants to do something with her career, her life, that's up to her. And when that comes about, we'll make an announcement on when she's getting ready to depart if she wants to. That's what we are.

(Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: Listen, I want everyone to stay forever, except for me. (Laughter.)

Question: Mr. Mayor, (inaudible) to deal with this migrant crisis in the city, are you working with any estimate, any number that the city could be seeing by the end of the year, thousands? What's the number that you're working with?

Mayor Adams: Well, we are up to 13,000 now. I believe about 9,500 are currently in our shelter system of 13,000. And we're almost a victim of our success because you don't see this disorder. People believe that it's not having a strain on our entire systems, social safety net systems. We just have been standing up every day doing our job, but we do need help. We need the federal government, the state government to play a role. And you know what's fascinating now that I reflect on that, where's everyone else? I'm not hearing much. A few elected officials have been engaged in this, but everyone should be joining us and putting our heads together to deal with what these governors are doing. This is not just a mayoral problem. This is a problem for the city and the solution can't be "I don't want to shelter in my district." The solution can't be calling out what we need to do. The solution must be everyone must be engaged and do what needs to be done.

Question: Any working number, 35,000 by the end of the year that you were working with? 30,000?

Mayor Adams: I believe the other day, we had eight buses that came in. It is difficult to predict the erratic behavior of an erratic governor. We have no idea what's next for him and what he's going to do. So we have to be ready to make sure we comply with our legal and moral obligation. So who would've thought the first time I stood in the rotunda and shared with you that we were receiving a bus, a bus, who would've thought we would be here to receive the number of buses we're seeing now. I did not think we would have 13,000 asylum seekers and migrants in the city. So this is an unpredictable matter. I think the only perfect analogy is the erratic behavior of COVID is the erratic behavior of Abbott. You don't know what they're going to do.

Question: I just want to ask, I don't come to these very often, but I did, I was —

Mayor Adams: I (inaudible) wondering who you are.

Question: My name is Derick Waller. I would work at channel seven.

Mayor Adams: Okay. There you are.

Question: And I did want to ask, can you send them back? Can you just turn the buses around and send it back to Texas?

Mayor Adams: It would be the wrong thing to do and it would send the wrong message. We are clear that this city, we don't act in that manner. And to send someone back to a 45 hour drive, it's just not the right thing to do. We're saying let's coordinate. Let's figure out this crisis that we are experiencing. And when I look at the large number of other communities that have come from other places to experience the American dream, what would've happened if we would've sent them back? That is not who we are as a country. It's not about sending people back. It's about being humane and this humanitarian crisis was created by human hands.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask you about NBC 4's reporting about the mother who died in a city shelter, their reporting that she had two children. I was wondering that the city was

undergoing an investigation around the circumstances of her death and whether you'll release some details about the status of her children?

Mayor Adams: We always do investigations after a death, no matter what happens, if it's inside one of our facilities. So yes we will. And we will release the outcome of that once — as long as we conform with the laws that are required. The laws are very sensitive around giving out information when it comes down to children and families. And so we're not going to release any information. The children are in the hands of the proper care that they need. And we are just really not allowed to give out that type of information....

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