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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN NEWSROOM

Jim Sciutto: New York City says it is now going further than any other jail system in America by banning the imposition of solitary confinement on prisoners. Starting this fall, there will be more time allowed outside of cells as well as more access to mental health staffers and attorneys. Joining us now to talk about this, other issues facing New York City, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mayor, thanks for taking the time this morning.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, Jim.

Sciutto: This has been an issue, solitary confinement, you've been pushing for some time. You see this as a mental health issue in large part. Explain why ending this makes sense now.

Mayor: You know, a few years ago this city was gripped by the tragedy of Kalief Browder, a young man who committed a very small crime, was held in Rikers Island for way too long, and kept in solitary confinement. He later took his own life. It's one of many examples of why solitary confinement corrodes the human soul and creates immense mental health challenges, when we're supposed to be in fact rehabilitating people and preparing them to reenter society and live a peaceful life. It literally is counterproductive. It makes us less safe, not more safe. So, we made the decision that it was time to end solitary confinement in our jails once and for all. And we really believe this is ultimately how we can better rehabilitate people and have a safer city in the future.

Sciutto: Speaking of New York, safer city. Like many urban areas in this country, it is seeing a rise in violent crime. Shooting incidents, for instance, in New York City, up 73 percent last month, when compared to the same time last year. Now, the Police Commissioner, as you know, blames a perfect storm of circumstances for this, but one piece, bail reform, which basically reduces the number of people who are – who can't get released because they can't afford even a small cash bail payment. In your view – some amendments have already been made to it, in your view, should that policy be reversed?

Mayor: Not reversed, Jim. No, it's a good reform, but I think it should be tweaked. And it's something that needs to be continued to work on because really with any law, you always look for unintended consequences and improvements you can make. But the Commissioner's right, a perfect storm, COVID, every city in the country, regardless of what laws they passed, experienced the same thing, growing violence. It's unacceptable. We have to turn it around. We lost a young boy, he would have been 11 years old yesterday, Justin Wallace. I was with his family on Sunday and they were showing me the texts he sent planning his birthday party. He was killed in an act of senseless gun violence. I have to tell you, the NYPD did an amazing job

and has apprehended the suspected killer. But this is what this violence means, it is taking the lives of not only adults, but our youngest New Yorkers. That's unacceptable. So, to end it, it's going to take continued smart deployments of police officers. It's going to take a deeper engagement with communities. Again, we had a rough time last year, we're rebounding police and community. It's going to take investments in communities to address some of the root causes and getting our court system back. This is only the first time, the last few weeks, that our courts have been operating in New York State since over a year ago. All of these things coming together is how we turn the tide.

Sciutto: You have heard the criticism from Republicans. They say, this is a Democratic problem, that this is a result in part of targeting police, right. And I wonder what your response to that argument is.

Mayor: Jim, we have the best police force in the country right here. Our officers, even in the height of COVID, were out there doing an extraordinary job, getting more guns off the street. This is important. More guns were taken off the street this year in New York City than any time since 1996. Our officers are out there doing the work, but we do need to rebuild the relationship between police and community, which took a big hit last year. For six years, we reduced crime in New York City through neighborhood policing, through actually creating that deeper bond, that communication, that mutual respect between police and community. Last year was tough for everyone, but we're rebuilding it now. And I think that's the way forward. I don't think it's a Democrat, Republican problem. I think it's about getting police and community on the same page going forward.

Sciutto: One way you're going to attempt to address the gun issue is by an increased partnership between the NYPD and the ATF here. But you see other changes happening. You saw in California, a federal judge there reversed a state law banning assault weapons. You have a very conservative Supreme Court, as you know, now with the liberal view of the Second Amendment. I wonder, are you concerned that cities and states will lose their ability to enact their own gun control measures going forward?

Mayor: Yeah, I am. We had an extraordinary day yesterday having the ATF, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, here in New York City. Now keeping their agents posted with the NYPD at the frontline here in New York City, common effort to stop guns. It's inspiring to see what can be done when the federal government, local government works together. But at the same time, you're right, Jim, there's a gathering storm. If the tools that have been used to stop the trafficking of weapons and to keep the most dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals and terrorists and the mentally ill, if those tools are further weakened, then you can predict more violence in America. So, I'm very worried about that. Our law enforcement officers are out there fighting this fight, but the laws on guns give way too much power, bluntly, to the criminals because it's too easy to get a weapon in this country. So, I've talked to so many law enforcement people who say, regardless of politics, they'd like more tools to work with.

Sciutto: And, by the way, I hear that from police officers as well. Just final question very quickly, because I like to end, when I can, on good news. There's going to be a big concert in

New York, August 21st. This is sort of a reopening of the city after the worst of the pandemic. I'll put you on the spot here, who are we going to see perform?

Mayor: Jim, I can tell you this, literally, it's going to be a once in a lifetime lineup. It's going to be one of the great historic concerts in Central Park. You do not want to miss this, if you're in New York City or can come to New York City, it's going to be amazing. And we're going to be announcing artists as they each come on board. Clive Davis, legendary music figure in the industry from Brooklyn, New York, is assembling the greatest all-star team you've ever seen. So, there's your teaser. More to come, great homecoming for New York City in August.

Sciutto: We'll be watching, and Broadway opening up soon as well. Mayor Bill de Blasio –

Mayor: This month –

Sciutto: Thanks so much for joining us.

Mayor: Thank you, Jim.

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