



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 11, 2015

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT PRESS
CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, Randi. I know your heart is still with us here and you have a whole country to cover. And I want to thank you for standing up for public education all over this country, and for being a voice for these kinds of changes and reforms that are going to make a huge difference. A lot of us are products of public education, and we believe – we believe it’s been the wellspring of so much good in this nation, and must be for our future. But that means constantly improving, updating, reforming, bringing our efforts fully into the 21st century. And that’s why this is such an exciting effort – because it’s about updating our whole concept of how we educate young people, getting rid of a lot of the stereotypes that might have dominated the discussion in the past and really figuring out how we go somewhere together. So, Randi, thank you for your extraordinary leadership on this issue and so many others. And I think your bravery in coming here despite the weather is a testament to the kind of leadership you provide.

Now, I want to –

Unknown: There were great union pilots.

Mayor: Okay, you see? You had faith. I like that.

[Laughter]

That was good. That was good. Quick with a phrase – okay, I’m going to talk about my colleagues in just a moment, but I just want to frame this. Some of you may have heard me say education determines economic destiny now more than in any other point in previous human history. A lot of us when we were growing up know that folks might not get the best or the fullest education and still could succeed economically. That is less and less true today. Today it is about what kind of education, what kind of training you have. In fact, if you look around this city – you look around this country – so many employers are desperate for better trained talent, which is why Lilly here in the advertisement could come out of a quality training program and go right into a great job – because that training is worth its weight in gold.

We need to understand if you take the concept that education determines economic destiny, and there's a lot of jobs going wanting, there's a lot of employers looking for better trained people – okay, let's start to put these pieces together. Now let's add another element to the equation. You all know I am fighting every day against the growing problem of income inequality. If we're going to address income inequality, we're not going to do it with minimum wage jobs, we're going to do it with getting more and more people to the middle class. And that means more training and more education. And that means getting to jobs like the one Lilly has – that's a solid middle class job. So, these strands all come together and it means we have to think and act differently. And a career in technical education is where the strands all meet. And I'm very, very proud that New York City is being used as a model here for this effort. New York City – I want to be honest, we have not always been in the forefront on this. We're finally getting where we need to be, and I'm glad it's going to help spark more partnership with other places.

But this is about coming to a reckoning about the importance of career and technical education in today's world, and a redefinition of what it means for today's world. I'm going to speak about that in a second, but let me thank Michael first. Michael – talk about walking the walk. 12 years

–

[Applause]

12 long years at Grady High School – good years, but long years. I've heard something I don't think the public gets to see very often. Michael often in the middle of conversation will start telling stories of the kids he taught, and the challenges they faced, and how he worked with them to overcome them. And this is very, very personal for him from the best sense of the word because he understood. He saw the transformative power of good career and technical education for a lot of the kids that he taught. He also understood all the things we weren't doing that we needed to do. And one of the powerful things that Michael and Kathy have in common is they both worked on these issues for years. I'm going to give my own editorial comment – they were voices in the wilderness, calling for the changes that we needed. Both served on the commission – I think 2007 or '08 – a commission that came up with a lot of great ideas about how to reform CTE, and sadly those ideas were minimally implemented. So now, it's time to take these concepts and put them into high gear.

Now, it's really important to recognize the folks who came to these conclusions years ago were educators and business leaders – educators and business leaders who came to the common assumption that we needed to change how we educate our young people to conform to the reality of today's business environment. I would have thought that would have been an easy societal consensus that we would have jumped on and moved on quickly. We didn't for a lot of reasons. I think one of them is the weight of history. Now I remember when I went to high school – the high school I went to was actually just when I was going to a combining of what had been a historically a college prep-oriented high school – what was then called a vocational high school. And I remember everybody – like one of these things that no one liked to talk about – but everybody in the world thought there was a profound difference between a college-prep high school and a vocational high school. They made tremendous assumptions about class, and race, and possibilities of those who went into one or the other. And when I was growing up in the town I grew up in, the decision was to overcome that by combining them and starting to dispel

those differences, which I think was a good decision. But we all have that stereotype still hanging in the air.

And it's interesting – in other countries, including some of our competitors internationally, there's a recognition that people who learn tech skills, or people who work with their hands in a very sophisticated manner and do things absolutely necessary in this society, are people who do things that you learn through a career in technical education, and not necessarily in a traditional four-year college – or that you might learn and then add to a traditional four-year college degree. That there's a lot of people who do crucial work – work that gets paid very, very well – work without which our society wouldn't exist – and that that is literally equal. There are other nations that treat all forms of education as a continuum, and they treat them as equally important, and the young person who is lauded is the young person who is on a path. It's not – that's a good path, that's a bad path – that's a better path, that's a lesser path. No – it's a path. Their nation needs it. The young people need it. Their families need it. And all paths are equal and equally respected. And that's what we intend to create here.

Now it's such an honor that we have colleagues from the other cities that are part of this, that share these values, that are moving together with us in this effort. I'd like to ask the representatives to stand from San Francisco, and Pittsburgh, and [inaudible] will you please stand up? Where are you? Let us applaud them.

[Applause]

Thank you.

###