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### **MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CITY TASK FORCE TO CURB TOPLESS INDIVIDUALS, COSTUMED CHARACTERS IN TIMES SQUARE**

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced today that a multiagency City task force will be convened to address the growing problem of topless individuals and costume characters in Times Square. Over the past several months, serious concerns have been raised about both the appropriateness of topless individuals in Times Square, as well as aggressive solicitation by topless individuals and costumed characters that oftentimes becomes harassment of New Yorkers and visitors alike.

The task force will be co-chaired by Police Commissioner William Bratton and City Planning Commissioner Carl Weisbrod, and will include representatives from the New York City Police Department, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, the Department of Transportation, the Law Department, the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Department of City Planning, Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, NYC & Company, and Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Alicia Glen. The Task Force will also include external stakeholders from the Times Square community and local elected officials. The group will study the legal and oversight issues associated with regulating topless individuals and costumed characters, and report back findings by October 1 of this year. Final membership of the task force will be announced soon.

“Millions of families and visitors come to Times Square every year to see and experience the bustling metropolis of New York City – the Crossroads of the World,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Yet that experience has been diminished by the proliferation of topless individuals and costumed characters who too often harass people and expose families to inappropriate acts. To ensure all are welcome, and to continue the great success that is Times Square, the City will aggressively pursue every avenue for regulating these behaviors. This task force will identify the best legal and regulatory ways to move forward and keep Times Square the popular destination site for visitors and families from New York City and across the world.”

“I am delighted to sit down with the Mayor and others who care about Times Square to hash out solutions to what has become a difficult situation. I’d like to keep this area safe and welcoming for New Yorkers and tourists, without trampling on people’s rights or setting bad precedents. I know with the right people in the room, we will be able to accomplish this. I applaud the Mayor for being thoughtful and inclusive in his approach to this problem,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**.

“Mayor de Blasio’s task force is a sensible first step toward making Times Square a more welcoming destination for the millions of tourists who visit it every year as well as local residents and businesses. As the Senator representing Times Square, I’m committed to working with the Mayor, the City Council, the Times Square Alliance and other stakeholders on this important issue,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman**.

“I commend Mayor de Blasio for convening a task force on Times Square,” said **Assembly Member Richard Gottfried**. “The ‘Crossroads of the World’ is more popular, and more crowded than ever, and I look forward to working to consider how to improve Times Square for residents, workers, and visitors alike.”

“Times Square is known around the world for its bustling, quirky and slightly chaotic atmosphere. But action is required to ensure that it remains a safe and enjoyable experience for the visitors, workers and residents who populate its streets. I look forward to serving on this task force with stakeholders and City agencies to develop and implement a lasting solution to this problem,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson**.

“We welcome this opportunity to join the Mayor and all the area stakeholders in this effort to find smart and sustainable solutions to the issues that have proved so problematic in the Times Square bow-tie and on the pedestrian plazas throughout our district,” said **Vicki Barbero, Chair of Community Board 5**.

“We are thrilled by the Mayor’s quick and decisive action to thoughtfully address what are admittedly complex issues in Times Square. We look forward to helping his administration in any way we can so that one of the city’s most iconic and economically important assets can continue to generate both jobs and goodwill for New York City,” said **Tim Tompkins, President of the Times Square Alliance**.

“We have strongly advocated for the institution of measures that assure a safe and enjoyable environment for our many theatregoers and the families who frequent our neighborhood, and are thankful for Mayor de Blasio’s initiative in addressing the proliferation of hawkers, naked ladies and costumed characters. We look forward to working on the Mayor’s Task Force to address these challenges and ensure Times Square maintains its status as the world’s premier cultural attraction,” said **Charlotte St. Martin, President of The Broadway League Inc.**

“The public and private investment in Times Square was intended to create a world-class tourist destination and center for business. The Partnership for New York City supports the Mayor’s commitment to prevent misuse of such a special public space and keep it the attraction it is meant to be,” said **Michael Simas, Executive Vice President of Partnership for New York City**.

“Times Square is not only an iconic landmark that attracts tens of millions of tourists from around the globe, it is also the symbol of the city’s transformation over the past three decades and as such, should be safe and accessible for New Yorkers and our visitors. We look forward to working with the administration and all stakeholders to identify the right strategy,” said **Peter Ward, President of the New York Hotel & Motel Trades Council**.

“The healthcare workers of 1199SEIU thank Mayor de Blasio for his commitment to address the pressing needs of the Times Square area and provide the attention it deserves. We have thousands of members who work in and visit the area, and our headquarters, auditorium, benefit funds and art gallery are located here. We support the Mayor’s efforts to continue making this iconic neighborhood safer, more vibrant, more accessible and even more desirable for New Yorkers and tourists alike. As healthcare workers, we especially applaud the Mayor’s homeless outreach efforts to ensure our city’s most vulnerable are getting the shelter and support they need. We look forward to joining the Mayor’s efforts to revitalize the safety and integrity of one of New York City’s brightest assets,” said **Helen Schaub, Vice President for Policy and Legislation at 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East.**

“It took decades to reinvent Times Square as a place where New York City residents, businesses, visitors, people of all ages and backgrounds, felt welcome. Now, however, that accomplishment is threatened by a number of factors that are undermining the work done by the public-private partnerships that rescued Times Square. I am grateful to Mayor de Blasio for recognizing the issues impacting our world famous public space as he and his team seek to diagnose the problems and restore Times Square to exuberant 21<sup>st</sup> Century greatness,” said **Mary Ann Tighe, CEO of NY Tri-State Region at CBRE, Inc.**

“The success of Broadway has long been linked to the City’s ability to maintain a clean, vibrant, low-crime, exciting Times Square for New Yorkers, suburban theatregoers, and visitors from around the world. The rise in inappropriate behaviors targeting visitors to Times Square diminishes Broadway itself, jeopardizing jobs and a critical part of the city’s arts economy. We at The Shubert Organization fully support the Mayor’s initiative to quickly address this growing problem,” said **Robert E. Wankel, President and co-CEO of The Shubert Organization.**

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