

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Speaks in Support of Legislation Authorizing the NYCHA Preservation Trust

May 23, 2022

Jessica Katz, Chief Housing Officer, NYCHA: Good morning, everybody. We're going to get started. Good morning. Thank you all so much for coming here. What a beautiful day. It's a beautiful day today to fight for the future of NYCHA. I'm Jessica Katz. I'm the city's chief housing officer, and I'm so excited to be here with our residents and our partners to send a clear message. It's time to pass the NYCHA Preservation Trust, now.

Katz: We cannot wait and hope for a windfall of billions of dollars that has been promised for decades without coming. Our neighbors who live in NYCHA buildings have waited long enough and they deserve better.

Katz: The Trust will bring the money, the repairs, and the rights that every New Yorker's home should have. And even more, this legislation guarantees that these apartments will remain permanently affordable for future generations.

Katz: It is on us to fight for that future. And the Trust is how we will get there. Albany has the opportunity to deliver the biggest windfall to NYCHA residents since it was created 85 years ago, and this is about the residents, which is why today I'm excited to hand it over to one of the many resident advocates who tirelessly fights for her tenants, Barbara McFadden, the TA of Nostrand Houses.

[...]

Katz: Thank you so much, Ms. McFadden, we really appreciate your passion, and your leadership, and your willingness to fight for the future of your tenants. When we envisioned the Public Housing Trust, we wanted to make sure to absolutely protect the tenant rights that everybody in NYCHA currently enjoys under public housing in Section

Nine. So we really made sure that the bill encoded those rights within the bill itself. But you don't have to take my word for it. I want to introduce, from the Legal Aid Society, Adrian Holder, to speak a little bit about their vision for the Trust.

[...]

Katz: Trust the Trust. Next up we have Community Service Society, who's one of the most dedicated organizations supporting NYCHA, and I'm proud to welcome CSS's Emerita Torres.

[...]

Katz: So next we have the honor of hearing from Bishop Taylor from Urban Upbound. Who's worked with NYCHA residents for years. Bishop Taylor.

[...]

Katz: Thank you so much, Bishop Taylor. NYCHA needs \$40 billion in investment, and we've been promised that from Washington year after year and decade after decade, and it's time, honestly, to take matters into our own hands and make some decisions. There is no silver bullet for NYCHA, but this is as close as we're going to get. The Public Housing Trust provides the resources, the procurement relief, and the resident rights, and the resident decision making to opt into the Trust as you see fit. So we're really optimistic that this is going to put NYCHA on a new track moving forward. My next speaker, that I want to introduce, is a housing wonk turned elected official. So we're really excited to have folks from the advocacy community come into practical leadership and it's lovely to see a housing nerd in the halls of government with me.

[...]

Katz: Thank you so much, Brad. In the process of crisscrossing the city speaking to public housing residents, I'm always struck by how much time you all devote to just the bare basics of upkeep of your housing. I really want to thank you all for coming here today, and taking your sunny morning that you could have been doing anything and coming here and advocating for this, and also for all the other expertise that you share. You've all had to become experts in property management, in plumbing problems, in

asbestos abatement, and I just want to create a piece of legislation that delivers for NYCHA residents, that lets you go live your lives and not have to be experts on every little detail of the way that your buildings are operated.

Katz: I want to thank you for all the tireless volunteer hours that you all put in. That's why we really wanted to make sure that those strong resident voices were incorporated into the Trust, and that resident decision-making was baked into the very legislation right from the beginning. A wonderful example of our tenant leaders who are going to help get this across the finish line is our next speaker, Rangel Houses' TA President, Bernadette McNear. Thank you.

[...]

Mayor Eric Adams: Lovely. Thank you. It doesn't have to be long. Trust the Trust.

Crowd: Trust the Trust.

Mayor Adams: Let me get that t-shirt. To all of you, Bishop Taylor and the years out in Queens, Brookline, here in Harlem, the large numbers of housing residents, a city within a city, and this doesn't have to be long, and I'm not going to be long.

Mayor Adams: When you talk about living in NYCHA, holding down our city for so many years, you're looking at 50-plus years, 40-plus years, 35 years, and there's only one thing that has been consistent. Everyone tried to just be philosophical while people were living in a destructive environment. As I walked through, not only campaigning but my days as bar president and state senator, looking at all of these bills coming to Albany, everyone was stating year after year after year on the campaign trail of what we ought to do, what we need to do, but no one was doing it. No one was doing it. We went to the residents and asked.

Mayor Adams: Some of the residents said, "Hey, we want this model." Then let's do that, as we saw in Brooklyn last week. Other residents said, "We want this model, the Trust." Why can't they have a menu of items that they would like to see on their facility? Why can't they have their options? We shouldn't take these options off the table. Let them decide what options they want to use.

Mayor Adams: One thing that's clear, we need to stop playing with this. We're not getting money from the federal government this year. They're not. They already told us, "We are not concerned with NYCHA residents." They did not pass that \$35 billion that we needed, so we must do it on our own. Here's a way to do it, the Trust. Let's get the Trust passed.

Mayor Adams: I want to thank our colleagues in Albany. There are those in Albany who support this. They believe it's the right thing to do. Now let's get it over the finish line, so we can finally stop the years of neglect with NYCHA and keep kicking the can down the road. You heard me say over and over again that all of these problems that we're facing in our city, there are many rivers that feed the dysfunctionality that we have in our cities. We need to dam each one. This time, we have a real stream of resources that can come through, through the Trust. Let's make this happen.

Mayor Adams: Here's three reasons, as Brad stated, that I'm 100% on board. Number one, you can vote in and out. If you don't want it, then don't do it. Don't do it. You know? There's nothing better than options. Number two, participating in the vendor selection. You'll participate in the vendor selection. Far too often, you have no say-so in these vendors who come in, do shoddy work, and then they're able to continue to go from one facility to the next facility. They've have been eating off of the dysfunctionality of NYCHA. Now you participate. Three, serve on quality assurance committees to look at the repairs, to make sure the repairs that they are stating were done are actually done.

Mayor Adams: Now, when you add that into what we are going to roll out, a real dashboard ... my chief technology officer is putting together a real dashboard so they can see in real time what is happening ... they should be signing off. Tenants should be signing off on tickets. They should say, "Yes, I agree that the job was done."

Mayor Adams: We're going to align the repairs, so that you will have one person that will align. If the carpenter, if the painter, if the plumber should come in, you shouldn't have to be home over and over again to get people coming in a disjointed system. It is so disjointed. Listen, listen. All I can tell you is that I heard you. I know we can do a better job. Because if you were living in a luxury condominium somewhere, you wouldn't have these conditions.

Mayor Adams: I'll never forget this one story. When I was a lieutenant in Brooklyn, the 88th Precinct, we went into one of the houses, and I had a rookie officer that I was

training. We were responding to a job in one of the facilities. There was urine in the elevator. The rookie cop said, "You see this, Lieutenant? You see this urine? These people don't deserve anything. This is what they do." I said to him, "Listen, one person pissed in that elevator. One person. One person, and the people who live in this building are just as upset as everyone else.

Mayor Adams: "If you judge the entire residents of these buildings based on the action of one person, then you demonize, and you're not going to give them the professionalism that you're supposed to give them. Instead of you complaining about that one person that pissed in the elevator, get a piece of paper and wipe it up, and show that you are concerned about the tenants that live here."

Mayor Adams: Let's not judge NYCHA by the numerical minority that don't understand. Many people who are abusive in your housing don't even come from your housing. When the police respond and treat you like the person who urinated in the elevator, when the carpenter responds and treats you like the person that urinated in the elevator, when the painter responds and treats you as a person that lives in the elevator, when elected officials treat you like the people who pissed in the elevator, then you get a response from people who don't respect the overwhelming number of NYCHA residents, but they treat you like the person who did something that was inappropriate.

Mayor Adams: As your mayor, I'm treating you as the people who have held down this city for years, and not like the person who did something wrong. That is where we are at right now. Ignore all the noise. Ignore all the distractions. We've heard it all before. You have a mayor that has your back, and we're going to get this done. Let's get this done. GSD, get stuff done. Thank you.

Crowd: Trust the mayor. Trust the Trust.

[...]

Crowd: Can I sneak in here? Mayor, can I sneak in?

Mayor Adams: Yes, you can.

[...]

Question: But you had been skeptical of RAD during the campaign. We're two weeks away from the end of the legislative session, and you're just having this rally to endorse the Trust. How likely is the legislature actually going to approve the Trust, given some had criticized your strategy in Albany thus far into your [inaudible] team? And what is the delay? Why did it take you so long to get on board with Trust?

Mayor Adams: A couple of things. One, it's not only the process, RAD Trust, it's who's doing it. Because you could have a great system, but if you have the wrong people implementing it, then you have a bad system. And so it's about what I've always stated. No matter what it is, give the residents the options.

Mayor Adams: I'm always clear on that. Give the residents the option. Now, people criticize our strategy in Albany. I was the former State Senator. So we were successful in earning income tax credit, successful in the childcare, successful in doing what was the impossible by many people of getting crime issues placed. Do we want more? Yes, but we were able to move the needle where people said it was impossible.

Mayor Adams: We had a successful record in Albany, yet people said we didn't have the right strategy. I always thought good strategies mean you get wins. I got wins. And I know Albany. The last week is when stuff gets done up there. And we are at the point now where people have deliberated, and now they're looking at these last few items, including mayor accountability.

Mayor Adams: So you can say that we haven't been up there. We've met with over a hundred lawmakers. We had a great strategy because I know how to process and navigate the complexities of Albany and my team did a great job.

[...]

Mayor Adams: Of course, Courtney, where you been? I haven't seen you in a good little while.

Question: I've been around. This is actually for Jessica. Just for those that haven't covered this before, can you just remind us exactly how this is turning NYCHA Section Nine into project-based Section Eight and how exactly that happens, and how residents will have power over whether their development should or not enter the press.

Katz: So I'll start with the technical piece. The creation of the Preservation Trust creates a nonprofit public benefit corporation that is public, that will continue to own the properties and that will allow HUD to provide what's called a tenant protection voucher to these units, which is a substantially higher income than what the current public housing revenue stream is.

Katz: So it creates a new not-for-profit corporation that's wholly publicly controlled that also creates a new income stream. As well, it comes with a set of procurement changes that allows NYCHA to spend the money more nimbly than it does currently.

Katz: The second big issue with the public housing Trust has been creating this menu of options for people. So making sure that folks who want to go down a certain path are able to, and that is now encoded in the legislation itself. The tenants will be able, not just the TA presidents, but the tenants themselves will be able to take a vote and decide which type of program they would like to select in order to make their development and to improve their development.

Mayor Adams: Good stuff. Let me tell you something. We have to really give it up for Jessica.

[Applause]

Mayor Adams: She is so authentic about moving the needle. Her work, we're going to roll out our housing plan, but she is just unbelievable when it comes down to fighting on behalf and having the right plan for NYCHA residents. And so really appreciate you, one of the most important pieces of our amazing administration on how we move this leadership forward. Thank you so much for what you're doing.

Mayor Adams: Now, traditionally we have people, when I'm doing these off topics, we have asked people to leave, but I don't want y'all to leave. I want my NYCHA folks to stay here just in case they get a little bit too rowdy, y'all can get on them. If they try to come at me hard, y'all can get on it. They got my back. Just hang right in here with me. Go ahead. Yes.

Question: On topic. So there's been decades of disinvestment in NYCHA, how are you going to ensure the money is there for the Trust forward for years and decades to go?

Mayor Adams: You're right. I use this analogy all the time. Imagine flying a plane and there's no cockpit to see how you're moving. We've been running this complicated piece of machinery called NYCHA, in New York City, without a cockpit. We don't have any dashboards. We don't know what we're doing. And people have benefited on the fact that we are not analyzing in real time what is happening in our city.

Mayor Adams: So while we get the resources through this Trust, we also have my CTO building out these dashboards so we can see what is happening in our cities. How long does it take to do a repair? Where's the money coming into NYCHA? Where's the contractors that we are using? How long the boilers have been online. We have to start analyzing this stuff in real time. And that is the difference.

Mayor Adams: Listen, if you don't inspect, what you expect is suspect. That is what I've been saying over and over again. So we have to monitor those dollars when they come in. I think to mismanagement, waste of money, and in some cases it may be even fraud. And we have to be able to identify that. Yes.

Katz: I'll also add that all the while for the last many decades that there's been such severe disinvestment in public housing, we've seen a very stable income stream for the section eight program. So that has been a very well funded, stable process of funding through the federal government, and that's where this funding stream comes from.

Katz: We also have the support of HUD for the Trust, who's written a letter of support, and we had that regional HUD administrator, Alicka Ampry-Samuel, also in Albany with us, helping to fight for the Trust. So we feel confident that there will be a much more substantial increase in resources that comes from this legislation.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Yeah. So how does this, or does it, unlock the \$40 billion in federal funds? How do you access that? Can Trust work with that or will it do that?

Katz: Right, so what happens is that the current income stream will be converted to section eight tenant protection vouchers, and that has a much higher income stream, which would allow the housing authority to receive debt. So NYCHA is only property

owner in the world that can't take on a mortgage to fund the repairs that they need, and this will allow them to do that.

Mayor Adams: How are you, Marcia?

Question: I'm good, how are you Mr. Mayor?

Mayor Adams: Good to see you.

Question: So I have two questions having to do with the latest subway shooting. Number one, the sister of the person who was killed was very angry and says that you should start doing your job to protect people. I wonder what your reaction to that was.

Question: The second thing, given the fact that it's six weeks from the Sunset Park incident, and there's another subway shooting, does it give more urgency to your desire to find a new technology that will detect guns that are coming onto the subway system? Because that's the whole thing, you got to keep the gun law.

Mayor Adams: First, let me respond to the family. There's nothing more horrific than losing a loved one to a violent act. I've knocked on doors as a police officer, as Sergeant, Lieutenant, and I've had people, when I notified them that they loved ones were the victims of violence, I've had people curse at me, yell at me, scream at me, say, "It's your fault. If you would've done your job as a cop, as a Sergeant, a Lieutenant". I know that pain, that pain is real, and I've witnessed that pain throughout my career. It is my responsibility to keep New Yorkers safe. My heart goes out to that family. I am sorry that they lost their loved one. We have to continue to make sure that we are not losing loved ones.

Mayor Adams: And no one knows that better than the residents here, the gun violence that's pervasive in our city. We need people on the side of the good people of this city. I keep saying that over and over again. We're doing everything for people who commit crimes, we need people on the side of the good people of this city. And that family's one of the good people of this city. And I spoke with the head of Goldman Sachs, David, yesterday and gave him my condolences into the Goldman Sachs family, and so I understand their pain and I have to make sure this city is safe and I want that obligation.

I thank God I'm the mayor right now and not those that don't understand the urgency of this moment.

Question: The necessity to find some program to get the guns off the subway. I mean, you've been testing it at City Hall. Isn't there time to install it?

Mayor Adams: That's so important, what you stated, because I want to bring technology, not metal detectors, but technology that could identify a gun. I want to bring that, move it around in the subway system, so that we can identify guns. Now what's interesting, is that all those people who are complaining that I want to use technology to identify a gun, it appears as though that we are living in an alternate reality.

Mayor Adams: I'm trying to figure out why all the good people saying, "Eric, do this", but the loudest that are living safe are saying "don't use technology. Don't get police officers who are part of my anti-gun unit, who took 2,800 guns off the street." Everything that we are doing to stop the violence, there's this small number of well-oiled Twitter users that are attacking everything we do to keep our cities safe.

Mayor Adams: That's noise. As soon as we get the product at the level that we know we can do the job, because there's a lot of vendors we're looking at, we're going to implement it. We're going to implement it. We got to get it right. And I've said this over and over again. We have to get it right. It has to go through a testing period. It has to make sure it passes the constitutional muster. We have to make sure that it's right, because we don't want to put it out there and take it back. But one thing is for clear, I'm going to use the technology to keep New Yorkers safe.

[Applause]

Question: So what about bag checks?

Mayor Adams: Hold on.

[...]

Mayor Adams: We'll come back to you, Julia. You know, you and Marcia, how I feel about the two of you.

Question: Can you talk just a little bit about the emergency order on baby formula and the story you posted about your future run for president.

Mayor Adams: Okay, first let's deal with the baby formula because me running for president is another baby idea that people keep playing with. The baby formula, the women's caucus sent out a letter, and we are trying to find out... Number one, we're going out after price gougers to identify if there is price gouging? I did this during the COVID, the start of COVID when people were price gouging other items. We want to stop that. So we're going to send testers out there to make sure people are not price gouging.

Mayor Adams: And then whatever we can do on the city level. We are going to sit down with our doulas and others, to tell us what can we do on the city levels. Because it's a real crisis for mothers, and we want to want to make sure we are doing the right thing. And we have not figured that out on what we can do. The women's caucus called for us to implement some things. We want to sit down with the women caucus and tell us, how do we partner together? Because it's not about pointing the finger. It's about lending a hand for these mothers that need the baby formula. I've said this over and over again about "Eric is running for president." I've already been the president. I was the president of Brooklyn.

Mayor Adams: You know, I've already endorsed Biden. Biden is my president. And I'm in support of Biden being my president. And lastly, listen, you could run the country from New York. New York is the place to be. I'm happy being mayor, getting crime under control, improving our schools, improving NYCHA, getting my economy back and up operating. I noticed you get a lot of two clicks online when you keep writing the story about me doing things. Got it, got it. So if people got to write those stories, I'm okay with that. Everybody has a job to do.

Mayor Adams: I'm happy being in New York, doing my job here in New York. And I'm looking forward to doing it for the next three years and six months.

Question: Okay. Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Yes, Julia.

Question: I want to actually follow up on what this resident said.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Would you consider reviving or bringing back bag checks at the subway? And also people are describing what happened yesterday as their worst nightmare on the subway. How do you deal with that perception?

Mayor Adams: Yeah. No. And it is the worst nightmare. I use the subways a lot. I'm in the system a lot. And it's unimaginable. You're sitting down, going to brunch, going to visit a family member. A person walks up to you and shoots you for no reason. Not a dispute, which is horrific to do it when it's a dispute. But that is the worst nightmare. And that is why I have been so dogmatic about, one, getting the illegal guns off the street. But then, getting the shooters. So once you take the gun off, and the person who had the gun. You have to have that person who had the gun, placed in jail, make sure he goes through, or she goes through the criminal justice system. All of that has eroded. It appears as though the citizens of New York and the Police Department, we're on one side, and everyone else is on the other side. We need everyone to be on our side.

Mayor Adams: Right. And the bag checks, we're already doing spot bag checks. We're trying now to negotiate with the Port Authority to allow us to place scanners at the bus terminals, because many of these guns are coming from the south into our city. So we have to stop the flow of these guns. And so we are still doing spot bag checks. And we want to extend that to our Port Authority Bus Terminals, because we think we can stop the flow, or deter people from coming in, bringing these guns. Especially in Georgia, and in the south, they're coming up through I-95 right into our city.

Question: Where are the spot checks taking place, on the main...

Mayor Adams: They're random. We don't want to advertise where they are because then people will know, "I'm not going to do station. Go to another." So they're random.

Question: Yeah. Mr. Mayor, in that same vein... To clarify on your vision for the gun detection technology.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: There are thousands of entrances and exits in the subway system. Would that also be kind of a random procedure to put that device at random points of entry?

Mayor Adams: Yes. Great question. Because what we're doing is— Where's Rachel? Is Rachel here? Can you have somebody grab my glasses? I want that Obama look. You know?

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: So what we're doing, that's why it's taking so long with these devices, because we want the mobile ones. We want to be able to just pop up at a station someplace, people don't know it's there, and be able to, as people go through. Similar to what we do when we do car check points. So we are working on all the legality. Because in car check points, if you try to go in a different direction, when you're in that checkpoint, that's reasonable suspicion.

Mayor Adams: And so our goal is to move it around, outthink those have a criminal mind. And it's just a small number. That's what a lot of people don't realize. There's a small number of people who are violent in this city. The fact is, is that we are not putting them through the court system. We're not making sure they don't return back to our streets. So they're able to do violence over and over again. We zero in on those small number of people, you'll see a difference in crime in our city.

Question: If I could follow up on a separate topic, a new report from New York Focus on the officers who took neighborhood safety team training, found 13% have at least five complaints, 70% have at least one complaint. You said those officers would be squeaky clean, in your words. Looks like they aren't. Why is that?

Mayor Adams: Okay. Now see, there's a difference between complaint and substantiated actions— Hold on one moment. Let me transform myself.

Crowd: Yeah, yeah!

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: Trying to find that. So there's a difference between complaints and substantiated complaints. So let's drill into those complaints. Because what I have noticed during my days of policing, that if an officer is someone that's committed to a facility, or a house, or a block, and they are aggressively doing their job, not allowing tenants to be harassed, not allowing people to sell drugs on corners, the bad guys have figured out, let's just call in a complaint on them. So if it's substantiated, that's one thing. If it's just a complaint, that's another thing.

Question: Mr. Mayor, Mr. Enriquez, who was shot on the subway, seems like the type of person you were trying to get, to get back on the subway, and go back to work. And I'm wondering about your thoughts when about it, but also you've already police in the subway. You've already been talking about gun technology. Are there any other changes that could come that could keep people safe [inaudible] with the shooting? And then the second question is, were there supposed to be policing on that car or were there police on that subway car where Mr. Enriquez was shot?

Mayor Adams: No, there was not a police officer on that car. And we're going to look and see if one was assigned to that car. Because, we're looking at constantly evolving. And let's be clear, the goal is to make sure we have that omnipresent in our subway system. There's nothing more comforting than seeing that police officer on that platform, in the car, walking through the car. And that is what we are going to do, similar to what I did as a transit police officer. We need more visible presence of our police officers. The actions of—

Mayor Adams: This is the type of employee I want to get back to work. Yes. Does this send a chilling impact on that? Yes. I'm going to meet with all of my corporate leaders and tell them that we need to forge ahead. We're going to do our job, and continually transform how we're patrolling, identifying these problem spots, dealing with the housing issue, dealing with all the disorder that we are experiencing. But yes. The call is to come back to work. And the subway system being safe is a major driver to doing that. And when you have an incident like this, it sends a chilling impact. There's no getting around that. And we're going to make sure our subway system is safe in the process.

Question: Is this coming as a direct result of this shooting?

Mayor Adams: I spoke with the police commissioner last night, we're going to be meeting this week to evaluate our deployment. I'm a big deployment person. We need

to make sure we're deploying our personnel properly. And we're going to do an analysis and see, where did we miss? What did we miss? It would become easier if we are able to use some of this technology that we're looking for, and to make sure that we zero in on those areas that we missed. And that's the goal, and we're going to continue, we're going to get it right.

Mayor Adams: Now, shooters are decreasing. Murders are just decreasing during the month of a April compared to last year, these neighborhood safety teams are doing their job. We are going up against bad guys who have figured out the loopholes in systems. Those who are unwilling to stop violence, they've made it clear by their actions that they're going to continue to be violent in our city. And they're going to attempt to hurt innocent New Yorkers. And we have to meet that challenge with the same level of determination that they are determined to hurt innocent New Yorkers.

Question: Mr. Mayor, what more do we know about the shooter? And you said you spoke to your police commissioner last night. Have you talked this morning or have you gotten any other updates?

Mayor Adams: I speak with the police commissioner or her team every morning. And we communicated, she had a conflict in our schedule today. We're going to be talking later on today. We communicated via text this morning. But we don't have any new updates on the shootings. We're looking at a few leads, and once we're able to release something, we're going to do that.

Mayor Adams: Yes, yes. Thank you.

[...]

Mayor Adams: Where is he? Can Bernard please come to the nightstand? I mean, to the microphone, you are in demand.

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