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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES RECORD-BREAKING 70,000 FAMILIES
WILL BE OFFERED PRE-K SEATS THIS WEEK**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Alright. Good afternoon, everyone. We are working to get this room a little cooler for your viewing pleasure. And we are thrilled to be here with these beautiful children, which reminds us of why we all do this work. It is great to be at PS 5, here in Washington Heights. There is a special focus at this school, helping particularly immigrant families to flourish, helping children – many of whom are first – I’m sorry, many of whom their first language is not English – learn and grow here, starting at the pre-k level and beyond. This school specializes in helping every kind of family move forward, and it’s the perfect place to talk about pre-k and about making sure that every kid is ready to flourish in school. And this week is going to be a very important week for parents all of this city and for kids all over this city. It’s going to be a week where families get a very important letter.

Starting this Wednesday, June 10th, nearly 70,000 families across New York City will learn where their children have been offered pre-k seats. Almost 70,000 families will find out, starting on Wednesday, June 10th.

Let me thank everyone who is here with us and has helped us to put together today’s gathering. I want to thank the principal of this school, Wanda Soto; the assistant principals, Christopher Anest and Luisa Ariza. And I want to thank Randi Herman, the first vice president of CSA; and Manny Ramirez, the local superintendent. We thank them all.

Now, for the first time in the history of this city, we will have a full-day high-quality pre-k seat for every child who needs one – every single child. And we have been adding seats, starting this school year. We’ll be adding a lot more in the next school year to make sure we can accommodate every child. Here at PS 5, 54 seats were added as this school year began – 54 more seats this year than existed in the past. That’s going to continue all over the city at public schools and at community-based learning centers and a host of other locations to give us the capacity to reach every child.

Now, I’ve heard this all over the city from parents – I can’t tell you how many parents come up to me on the subway, come up to me on the street, and talk about what pre-k has already meant for their family, and what it means for their child – how much they want to make sure other children in their family benefit. There’s such excitement about pre-k, about the fact that it’s available to all, about the fact that it’s absolutely free. And the proof is in the numbers. We have 53,000 kids right this minute – 53,000 kids in our full-day pre-k programs. We had, in the application process so far – this is a stunning number – 69,393 families signed up for pre-k. And the process is just begun. So, we have had extraordinary, extraordinary response. It’s quite clear families want pre-k for their children.

Now this happened – I want to remind you – the only reason this happened so quickly was because of mayoral control of education. I want to remind people very quickly of this history. The funding for pre-k last year was decided on Albany – April 1st. Pre-k seats were up and running for 53,000 kids by September 4th – five months. It was only possible because mayoral control of education allowed our school system to work quickly and efficiently, allowed us to bring all the other city agencies into alignment to get things done. And the same will be true at this next big expansion. We don’t know the final number yet but it sounds like it’s going to be

somewhere around 70,000 kids when we get to opening day in September. Imagine adding another 17,000 seats or more. That's only possible on this kind of scale at this kind of speed because of mayoral control of education. It's crucial that Albany renews mayoral control of education and does it soon.

Now, parents understand what pre-k means, how it's going to pay dividends throughout their child's education – their life. I am a witness to the impact that full-day pre-k had on Dante and Chiara. Dante and Chiara thrived in full-day pre-k and their both doing extraordinary things today. That grounding, that foundation, worked for them. It's worked for so many other kids. That's why there's been this extraordinary response and now, further good news. So, huge number of families applied for pre-k and they had an opportunity to rank their choices. And here is the good news – of all those who applied across the city for pre-k for their children, 70 percent – 70 – 70 percent got their number one top choice of location for their child. 82 percent got one of their top three choices. So we're very, very proud of the kind of results we've been able to have already in this process, getting parents to where they want to be for their children.

Now, every family – 100 percent of families received an offer of a seat at a high-quality program. So literally every family that applied got offered a seat. We made sure that it was as close to their home as we possibly could make it. Again, that's round one. Round two is coming up soon – begins in two weeks on June 22nd, and will last until July 10th. There will be additional seats available and further opportunities for parents to get the kind of match they're looking for. And every family will have a right to speak to a dedicated enrollment specialist – someone who will work with them until they get the seat that's best for them. We won't stop until every child is in the best conceivable option for them.

Now, this is a special moment. And it's a special moment because we have one family that has been anxiously awaiting the results of pre-k in their very special family. One going to in a moment call up to speak to you, Olivio Capellan. And Olivio immigrated from the Dominican Republic and he has been helping his sister Lenny – who you'll hear from as well. Lenny is a single mother and she has quadruplets. And you can see these beautiful children here – Minerva Sofia, Abril Elina, Antonio Jesus, and Oliver Moises. These four beautiful children – a blessing to this family and to this city, but all simultaneously qualify for full-day pre-k. So you can imagine the concern that Lenny has had and Olivio has had about making sure that these children have an opportunity for pre-k. So we asked them to come in early to join us. I would remind you, like so many families all over the city, if they had to find full-day pre-k and pay for it personally, in this city that's often \$10,000 or more for a single pre-k seat. So for these four beautiful children it would be \$40,000 or more for just one year. That's what would have been the impact. You can imagine the opposite – if they have [inaudible] positive learning environment, what a relief to this hardworking family.

So, the moment of truth has come to find out how many of these children may be lucky enough to get into pre-k. Now, at this point it's like Academy Awards-style – I'm supposed to be handed the letters. Who has the letters? Oh, I have the letters.

[Laughter]

Okay. Are you ready Olivio? Let's see if Abril – where's Abril? Abril, would you come over here? Ok. Abril, let's come to you. Okay? We are proud to offer – we are proud to offer a pre-k seat at PS 5 to Abril Capellan. Congratulations – congratulations, Abril.

[Applause]

Now, let's see what happens for Antonio. Antonio – we are proud to present a pre-k at PS 5 to Antonio Capellan.

[Applause]

Now, how about Minerva? She's ready for her closeup. We are proud to offer a pre-k seat at PS 5 to Minerva Capellan. Congratulations.

[Applause]

And finally, Oliver – this is like –

[Laughter]

This is like when one movie keeps winning everything. We are proud to offer a pre-k seat at PS 5 to Oliver Capellan. Congratulations.

[Applause]

The Capellan family deserves the very best, and now these four beautiful children will all be here in this school, getting the start in life that they deserve. And we're very, very proud of that process. And we say to all parents out there that we hope that when you start to get the answers this week, you're very, very satisfied with what you've gotten for your child. If you wanted another option, there will be other opportunities ahead. Let me say a few words in Spanish before I call up Olivio to speak.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's introduce the big winners today here in New York City. First – Olivio Capellan.

[...]

Mayor: Okay, we will do questions on topic, followed by questions off topic. On topic, on topic – yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Deputy Mayor Richard Buery: So, about 15 percent of parents who applied received an offer for a school that was not on their match list, which is roughly comparable to what's happened in the kindergarten system. And again, we're proud in the first year. Because remember, this is our first year of a truly universal program. So, we won't really know who is interested until they actually show up and are [inaudible]. So we're really excited in being able to offer 85 percent of parents one of their choices. And again, just to repeat myself, for those 15 percent who did not get one of their choices – you're going to get a phone call – you're going to get a direct phone call from one of our enrollment specialist. Beginning on June 22nd, they can go online and apply for one of the thousands of additional seats. We've been online since round one. And we are confident that every family is going find a full-day pre-k program that they can fall in love with.

Mayor: So, we have – let me make sure we're getting our numbers right all together here. Okay, 70 percent go the number one choice. 82 percent got one of their top three choices – checking my math. 85 percent got one of the choices they listed. There was – you know one [inaudible] up to 12 choices – they got something on their list. And then 15 percent got a seat but it was not on their choices. Now, remember – and I've been through this as a parent – not for pre-k, we had a different application process. This is a – this year is the first time we're using this universal application process. But it's still got some similarities, for example, to the high school process. There are parents who do, as is urged, and they put 12 choices and they maximize the chance that they will get one of those choices. There are parents who come up with their own strategy, which I do not advise, and put only one choice or put three choices or four choices. Some think that they are advantaging themselves. A lot of those parents end up disappointed and don't maximize the chance. So, realize that in this pool, are parents who did every conceivable permutation, but we are very proud of the fact that 85 percent got one of their listed choices. Now, obviously the remaining 15 percent will have another chance now. On – please. Please.

Deputy Mayor Buery: I'm sorry, Mayor. Just, one other point that I think is important for parents. You will be on the waiting list for every school or early education that you applied for. You don't have to do anything.

You're already on that waiting list and again, as families register – if they pre-register, as seats clear up, there's still a chance to get on one of those – one of your earlier choices.

Mayor: Just again – that's very important. Every school you listed – you're automatically on the waiting list for, even if you didn't get it. If you pre-register for the program you did get, that seat is held for your child and you still can shop for other seats at the same time. If you fail to pre-register by June 19th, the seat that's been assigned to you can be floated to other parents – not necessarily will be, but can be. So the message is, and we'll keep saying this in many, many ways – parents should pre-register with the seat they have been given. It keeps them in the – it gives them plenty of other options but it makes sure that they have one seat that's going to be held for them until the opening day of school. Lindsay?

Question: Can you give the current list of the programs that have wait lists or are full, and how many have [inaudible]?

Deputy Mayor Buery: I think I have that number here. If not, we'll get it to you. So we have 370 programs that currently have seats remaining, right? So that includes the district schools, pre-k – standalone pre-k centers, and early education centers. So there are 370 programs throughout the city that are not fully enrolled yet. And so remember, that there are – because again, we can't – [inaudible] or predict demand. We have enough capacity – we can [inaudible] capacity so that if more and more parents show up than we expected, we'll be able to meet the demands for all of those parents.

Question: [inaudible]

Deputy Mayor Buery: I don't have a number of how many are full. We can get that to you.

Mayor: On-topic – on-topic – on-topic – yes?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: The great unknown – I mean, look, we originally that the vision was, based on previous research, to go as high as 73. We're not convinced it will break 70 because remember, even though this is a very high number, some parents will move out of town, some parents will choose a private program – you know, there's still a lot of give here. But I think it's fair to say, give or take 70 is where we expect it to end. I think the highest number we've talked about historically is 73. On-topic – yes?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: We're building more capacity than that at the rate we're going. What it means is that there would be seats – I mean, there is a finite limit, but it's not one that we can conceive of at this point, meaning we don't have any model that suggests going beyond 73 based on everything we've ever known of pre-k, and even kindergarten. But we're going to keep building capacity. What it will mean is, as it goes higher and higher, we'll have a seat – most likely well have a seat for everyone, but it may be farther away from people's homes than they want. Now, for some parents it may work fine to be, for example, closer to their workplace and have a seat there. But the good news is with this number we have now – the 69,400 or so – every single one of them has a designated seat right this minute. People get in pre-registered, they will lock that seat in, and we build out a lot more capacity beyond that. Yes?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: A limited number – the program that I believe in – obviously, the philosophy I believe in – I think I stated it very, very clearly when I sought this office – was I want to move this system to full-day standard – high-quality, full-day pre-k. I think it is absolutely necessary. I think pre-k today is what first grade, or even kindergarten were in previous years – it's essential. There will be a small number of half-day seats available, but the essence of what we're doing is full-day.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: We're still working on that depending on availability during the [inaudible]

Question: [inaudible]

Deputy Mayor Buery: We work very closely with providers to help them manage their enrollment and make sure our providers can stay financially stable. So, what we found is that we're able to work very closely with providers to help them manage their enrollment. We have – we do a lot of work to make sure that providers are marking themselves in the community. And again, what we've tried to do is make sure we have enough seats to meet demand. We're also making sure that providers have the opportunity [inaudible] based on their enrollment.

Question: [inaudible] high-quality programs. What – could you just remind me what kind of analysis you're planning to do on the first year, and when do you expect –

Mayor: I'll let Richard go into detail. This is going to be an ongoing thing. The first year is the beginning. We want to constantly assess what we're getting out of this effort and how to keep making it better. There's no question in my mind the baseline is obvious. The chancellor spoke about it. The deputy mayor spoke about it. You're going to have kids who are more prepared for school thereafter – are going to have a lot more tools to work with. That I think has been proven time and time again. But we want to see the full extent of it, and we want to keep figuring out how to make it better. You can tell them about the details.

Deputy Mayor Buery: We've made an incredible investment in evaluating the quality of our program. I [inaudible] put it into two categories. One is the [inaudible] to really understand our system, and how are we building the system that works for families. But also a comprehensive evaluation to understand the impact of our work. We're looking at things such as, you know, people with executive functioning skills, which is the ability to complete complex tasks to organize yourself. And so we have a broad evaluation, and we're going to be releasing information about the evolution as we complete it. What's important to remember – that this is the first year of the program. So it's not like on a certain day you get like a final A-plus and everything's perfect. It's going to be a work in progress. And part of the work of building the system like this is it's not about giving ourselves a grade exactly. It's about getting real, actual information that we can use to inform our practice. And we're going to be very transparent as we learn information about how our process has worked – good or bad – and as we learn about things that could be stronger. Whether we're seeing things that we want to see or we're not moving the needle everywhere, we're going to be very transparent with that too because it's all about us learning how to build. What we're doing – no one's ever done this before. Some cities have tried to build universal systems, but no one at this scale. And so we really feel that hopefully we'll have a lot to offer the rest of the country about how to do this well and the investments you have to make to do it well.

Mayor: On-topic – a couple more, yes?

Question: Is there something being to assure that [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, this is based on parental preference, and we have to honor that. We're asking parents, you know, what makes sense for them geographically. And as I said, some of it will be their neighborhood, some may be a nearby neighborhood or even near where they work. But we have to make sure this is done by parental preference. I think by definition there will be a lot of diversity as a result, naturally. But that most important thing is to accommodate the needs of parents.

Last call, on-topic – going once – going twice. Let's do some off-topic – off-topic.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, in this specific case first – obviously it’s a very troubling situation, and my understanding is that the city has offered to make resources available and there’s a question at state level that has to be resolved. Obviously, given what happened to her, I hope the state quickly resolves the outstanding issue so we can address her needs. On the broader issue I’d have to see the legislation. Honestly, it’s an issue I care about. I’d like to see a resolution but I have not seen a particular piece of legislation, so I can’t comment.

Question: Can you give us a status update on where things stand between you and Albany? [inaudible] Where are your priorities?

Mayor: I feel great about my relationship with the Assembly, and it has been a very strong relationship of mutual respect. Honestly, with Speaker Heastie, and I think with the overwhelming majority of the Assembly members – I’m sure there’s going to be some disagreements – that’s normal. But in general, we’ve shared a lot of the same values. The Assembly has been the leader on rent regulation, passing a strong bill already. We are waiting for the Senate to act. The Assembly has been the leader on mayoral control, passing a strong bill. We are waiting for the Senate to act. So I appreciate what the Assembly has done. There’s nothing particularly new that we’ve heard yet today. We are all familiar with the ways of Albany – a lot happens quickly at the end. But I made very clear – we need the three year mayoral control bill and I’m happy to ensure that there are transparency efforts on our part to keep Albany well informed, but it cannot be a bill that ties our hands in terms of doing the work of our schools, and it has to really represent the true value of mayoral control that’s such a clear consensus belief here in this city and has worked well. On rent regulation – I said over the weekend – we absolutely need a strengthening on what alludes – tens of thousands more units of affordable housing and we have to be very stringent about it. We can’t have all cosmetic changes. We need a clear strengthening of rent regulation, or we’re going to see tens of thousands of New Yorkers displaced. By the way, there are some in Albany talking about rent regulation laps, which would be a disaster for this city, and would mean anyone who now has a lease under rent regulation – the future could mean displacement for them, and that’s an extraordinarily dangerous dynamic. With 421-a – as I said over the weekend – I have presented a plan I think is a fundamental reform in the interest of the taxpayers, would help us create a huge amount of affordable housing enough for 160,000 families. But if Albany is not going to improve and reform 421-a, then we should get rid of it. I think it has to either be reformed and kept, or done away with. So I said – either mend it or end it.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well starting this week – and I will check the exact hour and the exact day – make sure you’re up to date – I think it’s going to be crucial – hundreds of officers being moved to where the need is greatest. I want to really make sure we’re all communicating here on this point. I go over every day the shootings and where they happen – the murders and where they happen, and I feel that each one, and I want to make sure we’re addressing any new problem, any new trend very, very aggressively. That’s why Summer All Out is so important. Summer All Out is proven. Last year we put it into effect, and over the course of just five weeks in some of our toughest precincts, shootings went down 25 percent – just in the course of five weeks. So it’s a proven methodology. People start to feel the effect of it this week and this weekend, and we know it’ll make a difference. As I’ve said, the problem I care about – each and every problem, each and every neighborhood – but the problem is localized. It is a handful of precincts, and it is specifically a problem related to gangs and crews. So our officers will focus, like a laser, on those particular challenges. But if you put this into perspective – and I think we have not had enough perspective in this discussion lately – even the case we have now with the exact number of murders we’ve had to date – and I’m going to fight to bring that number down, as is NYPD – but the number of murders to date this year is 32 percent lower than five years ago at this exact same time. 32 percent lower than just five years ago. 83 percent lower than 1993. So, there have been some voices of hysteria missing the fact that there’s an overall trend here, and the credit goes to the NYPD. And the credit goes to people at the community level that have been fighting crime for years and years. We are structurally changing the dynamics of crime in this – the city. And you look at the numbers and it’s overwhelmingly true. If we stayed at the same murder rate we are right this minute, and at the end – we got to the end of this year – 2015 will still be the third or fourth lowest year for murders in the last 50 years. But we intend to do better. We intend to turn that number around, just like we did last year. The difference this time is – we used Summer All Out last year. It worked. We’re using it this year. The difference this time is we’ve got a lot more police time and energy freed up,

because we're not doing some of the things we used to do like the unconstitutional stops and the marijuana arrests that were unnecessary. We are not wasting time, and we are saving time because we have new technology like ShotSpotter, which is working already; like the handheld iPhones and tablets that will allow officers to know exactly what's going on in an instant. So much is changing right now, and I am convinced that's going to lead to more and more effective policing by the NYPD. So, I want people to stay tuned and watch how these numbers evolve.

Question: Kalief Browder committed suicide on Saturday – I was wondering your thoughts on [inaudible] and have you reached out to the family?

Mayor: I look forward to speaking to the family. This is a tragedy if ever there was one. This is very, very painful and a lot of us got to know the details of what he went through and there is just no reason he should have gone through that ordeal. And it's a tragedy, and it has touched so many of us. And it's going to lead to change. I wish we had not lost him. This is a tragic loss. But once his story became public, it caused a lot of people to act. And a lot of the changes we are making at Rikers Island right now are the result of the example of Kalief Browder. So I wish – I deeply wish, we hadn't lost him but he did not die in vain.

Question: [Inaudible] on negotiations [inaudible] school days for the [inaudible] school and [inaudible] concerned [inaudible] by principal [inaudible]. Longer days are [inaudible].

Mayor: Well I would ask you to direct that to the chancellor and her team for a detailed answer. I mean the broad answer is, we've said from the beginning that adding that additional period of school, on top of which we will add after-school programs, is essential to turning these schools around. And by the way I think there is a strong view throughout the education community in this country that one of the ways to address a situation where the quality of education is not what it should be, is to add time on task. So we're doing something, I think, that's been proven. I have not heard about specific problems getting that implemented. I'm confident where there are some problems – there are some problems, that the schools will overcome them. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] \$135 million dollar aerial tramway be built from Lower Manhattan [inaudible]. I was wondering what you thought about potentially, you know, getting involved in developing that. And whether or not you could –

Mayor: I haven't seen the proposal and I would have to look at it. Any proposal for how to move people around is worth examination but I haven't seen the specific proposal so I have to get back to you.

Question: [Inaudible] prisoners [inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: Another article said at this point they could be anywhere. Two part question – is there any indication that they've had any contact [inaudible]

Mayor: I – first of all, I know of no information that suggests that they have made contact with anyone here or in any other way [inaudible]. I just know both of them are from upstate New York. Second, NYPD is in constant communication with state police and coordinating with them on a number of things. So this would certainly be among them.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: There's been no such request that I've received.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Sure.

Question: Has there been a [Inaudible] in Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods after the [Inaudible]?

Deputy Mayor Buery: I don't have specific numbers on the bumps in the [inaudible] in the Jewish community. What I can confirm is that we have lots of Orthodox Jewish families and lots of providers who are part of our pre-kindergarten system. And we're very excited to know that our system is one of the most diverse in the country. It involves all sorts of providers – private and public – and we think it's one of the strengths of our system. I don't have specific numbers on Orthodox Jewish [inaudible] – we don't, as you can imagine, track it quite that way. But we've gotten good feedback. But there are lots families again, but some families will chose not to, and that's okay too. For some families, it won't make sense. For some providers, it won't make sense and that's okay. We just want to make sure that we're providing as many options as we can.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I'm wondering if you know anything about what's happening at the International High School at Lafayette? We had students telling us they were getting credit – they were getting signed credit for taking math classes because there was no science teacher. I'm just wondering if you're looking into it. And if it's true, how –

Mayor: I don't know – I don't want to say if it is true or not because I know an investigation is underway. So we want to get down to the bottom of that. But until we've done our investigation, I can't surmise.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: You can do two here. Go ahead.

Question: Just to follow-up on a question [inaudible]. Just wondering if you think there [inaudible] need for some of the reforms that have been floated by Melissa Mark-Viverito bail fund [inaudible] out of jail.

Mayor: Yeah, the speaker and I certainly agree that we need some type of bail reform. It is something I've spoken about as well. I think his case was an eye-opener to New Yorkers across the board that there is no reason that someone should be held for a long period of time if they can't make bail, and we can help on a modest bail level like that. Obviously a higher bail level is a different matter. That's just a more serious crime, and that's a different type of reality. But for the very lowest levels of bail, we have several reforms that we're working on that would address that.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well again, I think we'll have more to say in the coming weeks on that.

Question: [Inaudible] at the end of the month. [Inaudible] they are approved by Albany but the city has to pay for them. Should they be renewed?

Mayor: I have to – I always wanted to be scrupulously careful when I don't have the details on something. So on the specific subsidies for Downtown, we'll get back to you with a specific response. I want to differentiate that from the broader issue of 421-a, where I obviously have said if we don't make reforms, we should end the program. But on the Lower Manhattan subsidies, which obviously are an area of concern, we'll get you a specific answer. Thanks, everyone.

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