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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS TAKES MAJOR STEPS TO HELP NEW YORKERS ACCESS HIGH-QUALITY HOUSING MORE QUICKLY, MOVE FROM STREETS TO PERMANENT HOMES

Jessica Katz, Chief Housing Officer, Mayor's Office: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Chief Housing Officer Jessica Katz, and I'm thrilled to be here today because I get to say to all of you, and especially to you, Mr. Mayor. "Promises made, promises kept." When we released Housing Our Neighbors, the administration's housing and homelessness blueprint, we said we are finally going to put people over paperwork. We promised to tackle the administrative burdens that keep people in shelter too long and make it hard for families to stay affordably housed. And today, you will see how this administration is keeping that promise. We are rewriting the rules and looking for new and creative solutions to ensure that this is a city for everyone. We are on the right path to building a city that is safe and affordable for all families.

I want to thank my colleagues and friends who are here today: Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, HPD Commissioner Adolfo Carrión, DSS Commissioner Gary Jenkins, and DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan. You and your teams have worked tirelessly on this package of housing improvements. And I'm so proud of this coalition of dedicated public servants.

I want to acknowledge the elected officials here with us today. Brian Kavanagh, Senator Brian Kavanagh. Thank you so much. And that's it. Mr. Mayor, representing all elected officials everywhere. Mr. Mayor, you have heard me talk endlessly about how we need to clean up our government processes to make programs accessible for New Yorkers. And I'm excited that we get to show how we are making that happen.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you. Somebody has on some nice cologne.

(Laughter.)

It's also good to be here with Christine. It's good seeing you. Was at one of your Win centers, and I think that was in East New York in Brooklyn where those women there, women in need was receiving the services they deserve. And just want to thank Jessica. Met her on the campaign trail and was able to just sit down and speak with her. And she brought a level of enthusiasm on the \$22 billion that we are investing in housing. And for the first time brought the conversation of NYCHA to the forefront. And just her assistance with folks who were able to bring the Land Trust — something that many tried and worked on, we were able to accomplish.

And it is clear that the housing crisis is this big knot that's sitting at the center of many of the problems that the city is facing. When we did New York City Speaks, across this entire city, people had several issues. But one of the issues that remained constant was housing, housing, housing. If I could borrow from one of the great philosophers of our time, "The rent is just too damn high." And people are struggling. And it's not only low-income. Oftentimes when we talk about housing, we talk about a low-income, but speak to that accountant and that cook. Or if you work in a fast food restaurant and you and your spouse are both being paid minimum wage, they're just hurdles to get over.

And so, we want to zero in on it. And we believe there were many things in the way of just dealing with housing. So we had to take that knot and loosen it and be creative in the process. We have to untangle those things that are preventing people from getting in housing. And when we released our blueprint for housing and homelessness — Housing Our Neighbors was the blueprint — we wanted to focus on some specific issues. But we did not want to talk to ourselves. We wanted to reach outside and talk to people like Shams and others to get input from them, those who are actually experiencing the housing crisis and those who have been working so long, like Christine Quinn, on addressing the issue.

When we developed that plan, we sat down with all the various sectors to talk about what are the solutions we need to do and how could we do a better job as a city? They have all been working hard, and today we delivered on a number of the key commitments that came from the plan. We are starting with a major new effort to fast-track New Yorkers in need to permanent housing, including those who are currently on the streets or are living in our shelters.

New York City has the only, the only city-funded rental assistance program in the country. The only one. But it remains... When you look at it, you speak to people who are reaching out for rental assistance, they're just saying it's too darn hard. And we need to make sure that we are inclusive of allowing everyone to participate in the rental assistance program. So today, we are changing that and getting stuff done for those who need the help. We are changing the CityFHEPS Rental Assistance program so that we can get vouchers to more families and make them easier to use.

We're reducing the number of hours families are required to work to become eligible from 30 to 14 hours per week. And for voucher holders who want to move into single room occupancy units, we're lowering their monthly contribution to a maximum of \$50. And we'll also cover the course of apartment application fees for New Yorkers living in DHS shelters. And it's also just... It just doesn't make sense. When you think about it, a person making minimum wage are told they make too much money for CityFHEPS. Minimum wage, but they're saying you make too much money. That just doesn't add up. And what it does add up to is a crisis, a housing crisis. And we are changing that.

We're going to expand eligibility to include all single adults working full-time on minimum wage. We're also right now focusing on those single adults and families. When you look at it, more than half of city's federal housing vouchers are used in just 10 percent of city neighborhoods. We have to change that. We want to expand and allow people to live all throughout the city. So instead of focusing on certain neighborhoods, we're going to open up the other 90 percent of the neighborhoods. We will use federal housing vouchers and allow people to

use them in more places around the city. We want people to have more choice where they can live. And that is how we desegregate our schools. That is how we give people access to healthcare, transportation, access to healthy food, access to green space, by making sure that people are able to live throughout the city.

In partnership with Enterprise Community Partners and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, we are going to help 1,400 more families move into higher income communities. And so that should be good news for all the folks in higher income communities that say, "We need more housing, more housing, more housing, but not on my block." No, they're moving on your block.

Christine Quinn, President and CEO, Win: Woooo.

Mayor Adams: All of us will be here together.

Quinn: Sorry. Makes me excited.

Mayor Adams: The research is clear, the strategy works. Access to schools in other spaces is crucial to allow people to move throughout the city.

And so finally, we will pilot a new Street to Housing program that will help individuals experiencing homelessness avoid shelter and move directly into affordable housing. We are not spanning the globe to find real solutions. We communicated with our team in Houston — Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom and Commissioner Jenkins and others when we heard about what Houston was doing. A different landscape and a different atmosphere, and it's not perfect. None of these solutions are perfect. There's no magic key to unlock every door for us to get folks into.

But we said, "We want to look at it." And so we are going to look at the Housing First programs in cities across the country. And working with Volunteers of America, we are moving 80 unsheltered New Yorkers directly into supportive housing. This is the pilot program to see how successful it is so that we can iron out any kinks and see the potentiality of expanding this program. After they're already in, we are not going to stop there. We are going to assist them, help them navigate the paperwork to take over the lease and to stay in their homes permanently. And give them the support they need, such as financial literacy and other ways of keep people in their home.

This is radical, but it's practical. And we want to believe that we are a radically practical administration. And so this pilot program is something that we're going to examine and see if we could expand it. When we announced our housing blueprint in June, I said we were going to redefine success and work to tackle the affordable housing crisis. And we are not going to stop at any level to make sure we continue to do so. So we're not taking a victory lap, we're far from a victory. But we're darn sure we are not at the starting line. We're in the race and we're going to run this race in a very smart way to stabilize the lives of New Yorkers. And we're going to celebrate every New Yorker that moves into housing. We said we were going to change the paradigm and not just talk about how many units we built. We want to focus on how many people we actually move into a place that they can call their home.

And these efforts are just the start of a wave of momentum. An announcement we're going to make in the next few weeks and days where we could think about fixing a broken system. And we are engaged and energized to do so. And we cannot have a city with red tape or a few loud voices keep people from accessing quality homes. The housing crisis is a citywide crisis. We all must play a role in solving that problem. And so I look forward to what this administration is going to do. And as it was stated, it's a promise made, promise kept. And every day we're going to continue to move to fulfilling that promise. Thank you very much.

Katz: Thank you, Mayor Adams. These tools indeed are game changers. Today is about the actions we can take here at the city level. But we will need our state partners to stand with us in Albany to push an aggressive agenda next session. Our State Senate Housing Committee chair, Brian Kavanaugh, has been a key ally already. Senator, get ready for us; come January, we have a lot of work to do.

New York State Senator Brian Kavanaugh: Thank you so much. Brian Kavanaugh, chair of the housing committee and representative of lower Manhattan. It is a great pleasure to be here today because as much as we have spent the last couple of years blunting the effects, especially on housing and homelessness of this enormous global pandemic and the crises that came with that through eviction moratoria, through the most extensive rental assistance program in America. We know it is time to return and recommit ourselves to fighting the crises that have been perennial now in this city for many years. And particularly the crisis of far too many people being homeless.

It is a crisis here in New York City. It is a crisis throughout the state. At any given moment, there are more than 90,000 people who are homeless in this state. We know that's not right. We know it's going to take a lot of resources. I've been working to pass state laws with some success in recent years to make some of these programs more flexible, including the state version of FHEPS. And also hoping to put much greater resources on the table.

But we also know that many of these programs are not sufficiently flexible. They are bound by too many restrictions that prevent homeless individuals and homeless families from using them and actually getting into permanent housing. We know that in some cases, getting a voucher has been kind of a false promise to people who are homeless because they have been difficult to use. So it is great to see the city taking so many positive steps today. I thank the mayor for his commitment since he was elected, and as represented in today's announcement, and Jessica Katz, and everybody in the administration. And also, I know we're going to hear a moment from Chris Quinn, who was a citywide leader in city government and has also been a citywide leader in making sure that these programs work for homeless people and making sure our system is more humane and coming forth with the kinds of ideas that are going to get this done. So I wanted to be here to say I'm very supportive of all these initiatives. And that I am very committed to working with this city and working with my colleagues at the state level to get to the point where no one is homeless in this city or in this state because of a lack of access to permanent housing. Thank you.

Katz: Thank you, Senator Kavanaugh. None of this work would be possible without the advocates who push me and all of us to be better. Our next speaker is no stranger to putting the pressure on, former City Council speaker and CEO of Win, Chris Quinn.

Quinn: Thank you. And thank you very much, Jessica Katz, our chief housing officer. I want to profoundly thank Mayor Eric Adams. And he mentioned being at Win. Your visit made such an impact on those moms and those children. So thank you. I have an invitation for another thing, but I'll call you later. I want to thank Commissioner Carrión and my good friend Commissioner Jenkins for all of their work and Senator Kavanagh for what he's done and what we know he will do.

My name is Christine Quinn and I am the president and CEO of Win, Women in Need. We are the largest provider of shelter and supportive housing and supportive services for New Yorkers with children experiencing homelessness. And many New Yorkers don't know that there is such a thing as family homelessness, but at any given time, 60 to 65 percent of the people in shelter are families with children. In fact, tonight there will be more children in shelter than there are seats in the Barclays Arena.

So the reforms that are being put in place will make an enormous difference in reducing that number, and most importantly, getting children into permanent homes. Homeless families need housing. Children need to not grow up in shelter. The women who come to Win want to work. 52 percent of our mothers end up working, but at times they haven't been able to work the number of hours required to get a voucher because they have social service visits to make, because they have mental health visits to make, because they have to meet with their case manager at the Department of Homeless Services, et cetera, et cetera. And for following the rules and working, they were still denied a housing voucher.

And make no mistake, a FHEPS housing voucher is like the holy grail to a homeless mother. This reduction in hours required to get a voucher will enable really countless families to continue to work and to get out of shelter. It is, as Jessica said, a game changer. Recognizing the needs of homeless families, recognizing that they exist, talking to them as the mayor did, and then making changes, is what good government is about, and that is what our mothers and their children deserve.

So on behalf of the 5,000 people who will sleep at one of Win's 13 shelters tonight, I just want to say thank you, Mayor Adams. Thank you for recognizing that not one of those mothers wants to sleep in a shelter. They're not there because they want to be, they're there because they couldn't keep or find affordable housing or they had to flee an abuser. With the change I mentioned and the others, their lives are now changed forever. They now have real hope. And what's worse than having no hope is what the government used to do in this town. It used to give homeless mothers false hope. These reforms are not false hope. They are real hope and they're going to bring our families something to be very thankful for next week. So thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Katz: Thank you, Chris. Thank you for your support and for being a partner in housing New Yorkers. I also want to acknowledge our impacted advocates who have been critical to this work, and who are standing with us today. Shams, Paris, Sarah, Rob, and others, thank you so much for being here today.

We promised at the start of this administration that we were going to center our homeless and formerly homeless neighbors. And your guidance has been invaluable. You and the entire group of impacted advocates have put so much spotlight on these issues and how we can be better. That means supporting you more, making the process easier, and opening up access to housing.

Next up, Alida Tchicamboud knows better than any of us how burdensome the housing process can be, experiencing the shelter system firsthand. Alida, thank you for helping us understand how to improve for New Yorkers and for speaking us today.

Alida Tchicamboud: Thank you so much. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Alida Tchicamboud. I'm an advocate of survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, and gender-based violence. And I'm also someone with lived experience of homelessness in New York City. Today is a really important day. Thank you very much, because I heard all these words. I'm feeling emotional right now because for me it's just like history happening as a survivor.

For many years I worked with elected officials. Though they are good intentioned — but sitting in those long meetings and having all this discussion didn't lead to really concrete solutions. But this administration is really different. Why? Because as an advocate myself, with my colleagues here, we set and then we propose a lot of solutions. And those solutions were taken into action and is happening now. So for someone with lived experience who've been through trauma, I don't know if you can picture it, but this is justice being done.

This is the day that we have been always working all these years because we are being listened to. Our opinion is being valued, because who knows better than someone who has been through? And thank you very much, Mayor Adams. This administration is not only different for what I've said, my own experience, but it's also for everything that's being done, starting today. I work with survivors of trauma and it's really difficult when you are going through trauma. Just as Ms. Quinn just said, you have all these things that you have to handle. And on top of that, when you feel like the administration is against you when they're supposed to help you, just make you go through a second trauma. But this time things are different, because not only survivors are going to be helped with access to supported housing, but they are being assisted. So not only going to put roof on their head, but they are going to hold their hands go through each process. This is what I call being trauma-informed. And this is what survivors need.

And another point that personally, and then the client that I service today, are really touching to me is all these changes that's happening with CityFHEPS. I've seen so many times clients not being able to use their vouchers, just because they couldn't access the difference was just 30 or \$40. For 30 or \$40, just as the mayor said, the husband is on minimum wage, the wife is on minimum wage. But yet, when you look at the numbers, they don't fit for that 30 or \$40. But now all these things are changing. You've said it so well. When you are in a system or in a shelter or whatever organization you're going through, that administration is required to do certain things. But when you are doing those things, you don't have all the time to work full time.

But right now, the 30 minimum hours are being dropped to 14 hours because many survivors only work 20 or 25 hours a week. So I don't know if you are really grasping the whole thing here, but this is really a game changer. And I really wanted to say thank you to Mayor Adams. Thank you so much, Officer Katz, and the entire team, and everybody here, and my colleagues here, thank you very much, because today is an important day for us. And the fact that our voice is being heard and valued, and we are brought into being a solution here to the problem. It's a great day for us. Thank you very much.

Katz: Thank you so much, Alida. And I also want to thank some of the others in the advocacy community here with us today who stand with us and to helping make New York City a better place for formerly homeless New Yorkers, and to have fewer of them. Catherine Trapani of Homeless Services United and Volunteers of America's Myung Lee. Finally, New York City has an extensive array of tools available to New Yorkers, but often people still face barriers to living where they want. The Community Choice program is an important effort to end that and open more doors in more communities across New York City. Ernestine Jackson was able to work through the system and I hope that Ernestine's story is one that inspires others.

Ernestine Jackson: Good afternoon. My name is Ernestine Jackson. I am someone firsthand experiencing using the housing voucher. As a single mother, and my son is 19-years-old, my main concern was to keep him safe in a neighborhood that was crime-infested. So HPD stepped in. They helped me find my counselor, Ms. James, from HPD. She helped me find a new apartment in Downtown Brooklyn. It has better libraries, better schools, better shopping areas. Everything is better.

This program, the housing voucher program, it puts people in better homes and better places. But you do find discrepancies as far as, because you have Section 8 you are, quote, a certain kind of people. But my background — I'm a ex-NYPD employee. I am a chef, professional cook. I am a cancer survivor. I am not what the stigma says about Section 8. This program taught me about the discrimination and how to handle it and where to go when I needed help. I'm not a person that settles. I'm a fighter. I fight for my son, for his safety. And my next dream is to get a house, to purchase a house one day. I like where I live at, but that's not where I want to stay. I want better.

I thank Mayor Adams, I thank HPD for opening up the voucher program to make it easy for people to have access to a voucher, FHEPS or Section 8, whatever you want to call it. It's hard out here and we need to help. My advice to people that's using the voucher, Section 8 or FHEPS, is use the resources that they give you and just let you know that you're not your situation. Just because somebody sees you some kind of way, that's not your situation. It gets better. I have hope. Things will get better. Thank you.

Katz: And before we move to Q&A, I just want to thank all the incredible public servants who made all this work possible today. Working in government can be sleepless and thankless, and everybody works so hard to make all this come together. So a big round of applause for all our amazing public servants.

Question: I wanted to ask about funding for this program. Since you're expanding the eligibility, will there be more funding put into it? And how much? And how many more people do you expect will be eligible now?

Mayor Adams: Anyone in particular want to grab that?

Katz: The CityFHEPS voucher program is funded as it goes, and at times we have seen that it is less utilized than we would like because of all of barriers. So we're really hopeful that given all these changes that we're making today, we'll be able to more fully utilize it, and yes, that will be more funding.

Question: What is the current level of funding?

Katz: We will get you that number.

Mayor Adams: And what we heard the most about people saying they're walking around with vouchers in their pockets or they can't get vouchers because of the hours that they're working or that they're not making enough. And so a lot of these vouchers are sitting on the shelf. And so we're going to look at we currently have allocated, make them more user-friendly. And if they need more, we're going to continue to fill that population.

Quinn: And the city's going to save money because a voucher is cheaper than a shelter?

Mayor Adams: Oh, without a doubt.

Quinn: So it's humane and smart.

Question: You mentioned part of this initiative is that more about (inaudible) higher-income neighborhoods. Will there be more resources put in so they can beat the higher rent levels (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: Yes. You wanted to take that?

Katz: Sure. So the Section 8 voucher program already has that feature, where in a higher income neighborhood you're able to utilize it at a higher rent level. The problem has been helping people find those apartments and helping people work their way through the process. What we're announcing today is some grant funding in order to help people work through the system in order to make that possible.

Question: What's happening to the current 90-day rule that requires residents to stay in shelter for that period? Is that going to be shortened? Cause that's also contributing to this.

Mayor Adams: Yeah and that's something that advocates have talked about. We've factored that in with OMB to look at the dollar amounts, what would that mean. We're looking at every recommendation that was made. And so once OMB tell us how that factors into dollar amounts, we are going to be looking at that also. So everything is on the table of how we can make the vouchers more user-friendly and how we can get more people into housing. Just going back to that question about locations, we were also finding that people with vouchers were being discriminated against. So the Human Rights Commission is going to do some testing. We're going to make sure that those brokers and landlords and others that are not taking vouchers, that they have to be held accountable. And that's some of the legislation we want to introduce into Albany that those brokers and agents that are telling voucher holders that we are not going to show you apartments, that's not acceptable.

Question: Mr. Mayor, just wondering on the Street to Housing program that's highlighted, how will those 80 candidates be selected? Is there any specific criteria?

Commissioner Gary Jenkins, Department of Social Services: Hi, thank you for that question. How it's going to work: when the person is identified on the subway or on the street, we bring

them to one of our welcome centers in DHS. They're going to spend some time there, like a week. We are going to do a survey and we are going to address those individuals and see what the specific needs are. So this one extra tool that's in our toolkit. If they elect to go to one of the vacant supportive housing units, then we are going to work with them. And this is fantastic pilot because all of that backend work will be done while they're in that vacant supportive housing as we give them the supportive services that they need.

Question: So is there an age group or something that's prioritized or it's just whoever the first 80 people are who will opt in?

Commissioner Jenkins: It's the first 80 as we do the assessment with the individuals that's coming in. Again, it's client choice. Once we show them that vacant unit and they want to move into that vacant unit, then we are going to move them in and again work with them and provide the supportive services.

Question: Mr. Mayor, because there is discrimination in acceptance of vouchers, I wonder where you're going to find these places to move people in where people will want to accept the vouchers and what neighborhoods will be offering given the fact that there are a lot of places that say, as you know, not in my backyard.

Mayor Adams: Well, it's a combination. Number one, we need to do a better job of really defining the faces of homelessness. I think your testimony was powerful. As you stated, we have stigmatized homelessness and not understanding it's just our brothers and sisters and neighbors who have fallen on hard times due to a series of circumstances. And redefining the face and having a real conversation with some of our developers, some of our building owners and really engaging in a conversation.

Number two, let's be honest, it was difficult doing business with the city. You would be a landlord and you rent with the city and the city would start playing all these games after tenants are in and people just have a bad taste in their mouths of dealing with the city, and we have to change that narrative. And then three, that is what the Human Rights Commission's job is. You have to send testers out there. You have to send a very real message that you're not going to discriminate against a person based on those criteria that it's illegal to do so.

And again, we are going to sit down with senators like Senator Kavanagh. We have some proposed bills that those who can be a broker or real estate agent, they're licensed by the state. I used to be a real estate agent so I know that. And they're licensed by the state... Yeah, I had many jobs. (Laughter.) So they're licensed by the state and they have a responsibility to follow the rules and regulations. And we think we need to put some teeth in laws that state if you discriminate against someone that's carrying a voucher that you should be held accountable for it.

Question: (Inaudible) legal action against landlords and developers who say, hey, I'm not going to accept a voucher.

Mayor Adams: Within the rights we have in the law and laws that we are looking at, one should not be denied the right to housing because they are receiving assistance from the city. But we have to do our part and make sure that we are good partners with those who are opening their

doors, which many developers and landlords are doing. And we need to make sure it's done correctly.

Question: So why stop at 80 units for this pilot when there's 2,600 homeless (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: Cause we have to get it right. And that's a good question but we have to get it right. When we learned about what Houston is doing, Housing First, we did a real analysis. It sounded great, but we started digging into the weeds and we realized that there are other dynamics to it. And so we want to get it right and if we could expand it, we're going to expand it. But we have to get it right.

Question: What are some of the dynamics that complicate it?

Mayor Adams: Well number one, you want to make sure, as the commissioner stated, not everyone is eligible or meets the criteria. You may be dealing with severe mental health issues and you want to make sure you get to wraparound services that you need. You may not know some of the financial literacy aspect of it, how to make sure that your rent is being paid. So we need to look. Let's start with 80. The worst thing we can do is start with 10,000 and figure we have to shift and pivot and shift without doing the proper analysis. We're going to get it right and make sure that we can expand it.

Question: Are these changes enough to change the dynamics given that rent is at record levels in New York City?

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry that what?

Question: Are these changes enough given that rent is at record levels in New York?

Mayor Adams: You said are we taking that into account?

Question: Are these changes to the program enough given how expensive rent has gotten in New York City?

Mayor Adams: Listen, I think I started out by quoting the philosopher. It's clear, rent is too high. And there are things we can do as government, and we have been doing some of those things: increasing Earned Income Tax Credit, what we're doing around child care, the \$22 billion that we invested into housing. We could do our part. But parts of housing is an open market and there's limits to what we can do as a city. But yes, it is becoming too expensive for low-income, middle-income New Yorkers to live. And we have to continue to find creative ways to meet that challenge that's in front of us.

Question: Do you think that developers should be required to set aside more of their units and multifamily buildings when they get some kind of approval or rezoning from the city for other supportive housing or homelessness? I know this has been an issue that the City Council and City Hall have debated for a few years.

Mayor Adams: What we should continue to push as much as possible. I think the Bruckner project with Councilwoman Velasquez was a perfect example. We're engaging in conversations

right now with Innovation QNS where we could have a substantial number of units that are deeply affordable. I think there's a combination here. Number one, we need to push as much as possible when you receive city subsidies.

That's number one. Number two, we really have to stop this conversation of "not on my block." I don't know if you realize how serious this issue is. I'm amazed sometimes when I see some of the rallies of we need housing, we need housing, we need housing. And then the next time I get a phone call and I say, "Weren't you at that we need housing rally?" And now you're telling me not to build on your block?

Our desire must reach what we're saying. And it's not. Everyone that's elected and every advocate should all be identifying locations in their communities where we can build housing. This should be all hands on deck moment and it's just not. We should not be fighting some of these projects that are good, solid projects that are producing thousands of units of houses and communities where they have not built affordable housing. That's the key. We're saying let's not go to the traditional communities. Let's go to those communities also that have not built traditional, affordable housing. Okay.

We'll do a few... Okay. Thank you. Y'all don't want to be around for this.

Question: Do you think the influx of migrants is going to stop or are you expecting it to start up again? And I'm also curious about the Randall's Island tent. It was only up for about a month. Can you talk a little bit about whether the expense was justified here? Are you doing anything with these items that have been purchased? Are you saving them in case more migrants come back?

Mayor Adams: So let's do this in layers. Number one, we'll see what's planned out in El Paso. The airports seem to be dealing with some issues because of the migrant asylum seekers as they're waiting for flights out. The federal government responded to our call. And then so this is still a fluid situation and we must be prepared. And that is important. So the second, dealing with the necessity of dealing with the Randall's Island. I'm just really baffled of those who don't realize the successful execution of a plan.

We were in line to get 100,000 migrants. And the worst thing could have happened in this city is that we waited until the 100,000 was here and didn't have many layers and plans. We executed a plan and those who sit on the outside and talk about how to execute a plan that never had to execute a plan during a crisis, they need to take note of how we executed a plan. Part of the plan was to be prepared by having the HERRC on Randall's Island. And because we were successful in convincing the federal government that we need to have a decompression strategy at the border, we were able to avert that crisis. That's successful. We are not writing and talking about the migrant crisis right now because our team executed a successful plan. You're no longer talking about it because we did what needed to be done and I'm proud of the team.

Not one child slept on the streets of this city that was a migrant because of the way this administration responded. A very steady hand, we executed a plan. And regardless of all the noise around us, we executed a plan that prevented this city from dealing with a major crisis.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Following up on the migrant crisis question, the IBO over the weekend estimated that it would cost a city give or take \$550 million per year if the current levels stay. Do you agree with that estimate, number one? And number two, what's the latest on the reimbursement from federal and state governments?

Mayor Adams: The Independent Budget Office made that prediction. We'll get exact numbers of what it's going to cost from OMB and be able to let you know. I like to give you as much information as possible around these financial issues, and we are still fighting for reimbursement. We think that the campaign season is over. It's time for people to focus on this issue. We need to be reimbursed. We spent a great deal of money for a national problem, and we are looking for reimbursement and assistance from the state and from the federal government.

Question: And just a follow up, one quick point of clarity back on the off-topic announcement. The 90-day rule. During the housing plan rollout in June, you and the chief housing officer said that that 90-day rule was going to go away immediately. Clearly it didn't. I'm just wondering what...

Mayor Adams: Yeah, I don't recall that.

Question: I think the wording wasn't immediately...

Mayor Adams: Okay, but in any case, OMB does an analysis of these decisions. OMB does an analysis of the decision, and I have a lot of respect for Jacques who's there and he will assist us. We looked at what we could do right now, low-hanging fruit, fruits that's in the middle of the tree and the fruits at the top of the tree. Right now, these were low-hanging fruits that came from advocates and those who are experiencing homelessness. And so we were happy that as it was indicated, that those who are experiencing homelessness and advocates said, we gave them recommendations. They executed on those recommendations, because that's how we operate as an administration.

Question: Mayor...

Mayor Adams: How are you?

Question: Good, thank you. So earlier today, the Legal Aid Society led a rally with advocates essentially renewing their call to end the NYPD's gang database.

Mayor Adams: Gang database? Mhm.

Question: Some people there are saying that they believe they got on the database simply by being friends with or family members with somebody who is actually in a gang. So just curious where you stand on the issue of the gang database. Should it continue? Should it end? Does it need to be changed? What are your thoughts?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, okay. Two things, I'm going to approach that two ways. I think it was too — it was too broad and we need to do a real analysis of who we are putting in the gang... And I'm a strong believer in that, and I advocated for that for many years. We cannot just target people and place them in a database. Remember, it was my legislation that got rid of the stop-

and-frisk database with now Congressman Hakeem Jeffries and I partnered on that. You should not create a database to hold innocent people if they don't fit the criteria. That's number one.

Number two, I have yet to find someone that said, "Hey Eric, I am in a gang." So let's be clear on that. Those who are in violent gangs do not go around saying, "Yes, I do shootings and yes, I'm in a gang." So we have to use the right analysis that we do not unfairly target people, but we have to be honest about those who are participating in illegal gang behaviors, which is generating a lot of our shootings.

Question: Mr. Mayor, over the weekend you did an op-ed piece for USA Today where you excoriated your fellow Democrats...

Mayor Adams: That's the only question you had? Where you going? (Laughter.)

Question: You excoriated your fellow Democrats for having the wrong attitude and not meeting the needs of working New Yorkers, and you talked about how there'd been a drop off in support in the Latino community, Asian communities, and others of support for the Democratic Party. So my question to you is twofold. Number one, what are you willing to do to get these people back into the fold to vote for Democrats? And secondly, what should the governor be doing to try to do the same thing?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think two levels. As I do an analysis of how we campaign, I did not see mailings or communications that talk directly to blue-collar working-class people. We were successful in increasing Earned Income Tax Credit. Why weren't we talking about that? We were successful in getting child care for mothers, decreasing the cost for families, decreasing the cost of child care. Why weren't we talking about that? Southern Brooklyn has one of the largest NYCHA developments. We were able to get Land Trust. Why weren't we talking about that? Public safety, we made changes. People want to dismiss the changes we made in criminal justice reform that I thought were good changes. We weren't selling that.

We need to sell our product. I think that Democrats have a good product. We need to sell our product and do a better job in selling our product. I don't think we did a good job in doing that. We allowed people to hold on to one aspect of criminal justice reform when the whole system needs to be examined and handled, and we should have been selling that. And that's what I would continue to do. I believe we need to create a system that is going to make sure people get justice on both ends of the spectrum. And I'm going to continue to talk about that.

Question: I'm sorry, don't you think that there's a worry on the part of some people in the Democratic Party that are come in with the City Council races coming up next November, you could lose more seats to Republicans because of the failure to address the issues of working people in Queens and Brooklyn. Will people go to Republicans?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think that when you look at the fact that we were... Seven or eight out of 10 people that were from the Latino community and the Asian community were voting Democrat, now it's down to six out of 10. That should be a wake up call. It should be a wake up call. It should be a wake up call that people don't feel we are speaking to them. And we have good plans, we've done good things, but now it's about selling our product correctly.

And I don't believe we did a good enough job to do that. We've allowed others to define us. We have a good product. We are pro-public safety. We invested in police when others did not. The Republican Party did not. We pushed to have sensible gun laws. The Republican Party did not. So if we are not selling our product, then we're leaving a vacuum where others are selling our products. And so I think that this should be a moment of reflection and it's a moment of recalibration to say let's get back on the ground and sell our products to everyday working class people. And that's what I believe.

Question: Mr. Mayor, how much money has the city applied to date for FEMA funding for the migrant crisis? And also have you asked Governor Hochul to declare a state of emergency on the migrant crisis to unlock these federal funds? You said campaign season is over. Were you waiting to ask until after the campaign was over in case there was political backlash on the governor and other Democrats?

Mayor Adams: No. When I say campaign season is over, people seem to be more focused on issues when they don't have to run around from location to location to location. Not campaign season is over because no one wanted to talk about it — because I was talking about it. I was very clear talking about funding in the midst of the campaign season. But it seems like people get more focused when they're not running around from one location to the next.

The governor has been a real partner. She sat in the room with me, with the president. When the president came here to respond to the hurricane in Puerto Rico and in the Dominican Republic, we said can we speak with you for a moment? He came in a room and sat down. The governor was extremely vociferous around that we need to have a real solution at the border and that we need to get funding here. She was a real partner with this and I am sure she's going to continue to be a partner with this about the cost of reimbursement and getting FEMA on board.

(...)

Mayor Adams: Need to make it happen.

Question: Have you asked her?

Mayor Adams: We had several conversations. I'm not going go into detail of all those conversations.

Question: Mr. Mayor...

Mayor Adams: You almost as good as Kate now. (Laughter.)

Question: Good to see you.

Mayor Adams: As well.

Question: Going back to Randall's Island, Comptroller Lander has estimated this could cost the city several million dollars. He's asked basically to see the receipts. How confident are you that this total cost is what the city estimated before to be about \$650,000?

Mayor Adams: Well, okay. He sent a letter on Friday and then he started talking about it like he sent the letter a week ago and we didn't give him the information. Come on. I mean, I'm hoping he doesn't turn out like the relationship with the previous comptroller and mayor. Brad, let's work together, Brad. Listen, you sent a letter on Friday. Give us days to respond to your letter. We're not going to hide the cost of anything. The goal is... he knew it was a crisis. He had many opportunities. Even if we would've placed people in hotels, it was going to cost something. People could not live on the streets, so there's a dollar amount attached to giving people shelter. We're going to release all the numbers because he's part of the process. I brief him after every budget. I sit down with Brad and Jumaane and I go over everything.

So this is not a secret. And we should not politicize a crisis that the city navigated together. He's part of the leadership of the citywide leadership. Let's work together. We had a crisis in the city, this city averted that crisis, and I would think he would be saying — you know what? Thank God that this administration was able to avert a crisis that would've caused us probably so much more. I don't know exactly what was the reason for that letter. And he could pick up the phone. He knows my number. He texts me all the time about other things, about good vegan restaurants. He could text me about this.

(...)

I love this guy. I love this guy.

Question: I saw you in the newsroom the other day. We connected. On Rikers Island, there's another hearing this week. Legal Aid now said it's now calling for a federal monitor. I know you're against that. Since the last hearing, 13 more people have died at Rikers Island. So what case can you make to the judge that the city is still capable of holding onto control at Rikers?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think the monitor made the case. The monitor clearly indicated, and those who read through his entire report, he clearly indicated that we are moving in the right direction. And I'm a bit baffled about people who think that the federal receivership of oversight is the end-all. Is the federal prisons... are those the poster childs of good prisons? Go to 30th Street and Third Avenue. So I don't know why people think, okay, let's turn it over to the federal receivership and all of a sudden all the problems are going to go away. That's not true.

And so it's commendable that the commissioner is saying there are problems here and I want to fix them. That's commendable. That's what we want. We can't be a city that every time a problem comes up, we say, "Well, let's give it to someone else to do." No, no. We want the problems because we want to fix the problem. And so we're saying to the federal judge, we're saying to everyone else, we're saying to Legal Aid, we have been here for 11 months, and the current person who is looking over our shoulders, he is saying that there are some indicators that we're moving in the right direction. I mean, shouldn't that matter? 11 months of a problem that has been in place for decades. For decades. The independent voice is saying these guys and ladies are moving in the right direction. Let's give them an opportunity to do so. It just makes no sense to me that everybody, every problem we have, call the federal government. Oh, we got a pothole. Call the federal government. Come on. Let's run our city. We don't need the federal government to run our city. We can fix these problems.

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