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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS REMARKS AT ASYLUM SEEKER
RESOURCE NAVIGATION CENTER**

Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs: Welcome everyone. Is everyone in the room? Good morning. Good morning, everyone. My name is Manuel Castro. I am the commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. And we just finalized a tour of our Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation Center. This is one of many places asylum seekers are receiving assistance upon arrival to New York City. And in a moment I will introduce Mayor Eric Adams, but first I'd like to thank everyone involved in pulling this effort together. There are so many thank yous to go around, but I especially want to thank Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, who under her leadership we managed to put this together in record time. So thank you, deputy mayor.

Of course, I'd like to thank Mary Barneby from the Red Cross who has been an incredible partner in making sure we have this wonderful space. We not only have this floor, but we are about to expand to a second floor as we think through the various needs that asylum seekers need in our city. Of course, my fellow commissioners: Commissioner Zach Iscol from the Office of Emergency Management, who has been leading this work in setting up the center; Chancellor Banks, and his team, who has been here from the beginning to make sure that those children arriving are enrolled in schools and receive the services that they need; and Commissioner Gary Jenkins from the Department of Social Services, who I work closely with to make sure that those people in our shelter system are connected to services here and elsewhere.

And lastly, well, everyone in the administration has really pulled together to make sure from day one asylum seekers are receiving support, not just in our shelters but everywhere else in the city with our nonprofit providers. And nowhere in the nation this is happening, right? The moment asylum seekers began to arrive at Port Authority, we were there to welcome families. And then the next day that we expected buses, Mayor Adams came with me to greet families. And you all know that the mayor didn't have to do that immediately. He could have waited weeks, months, but he was there because of his commitment to the families and the innocent children that are arriving, and to make sure that we set an example for this country as to how we welcome newly arrived immigrants.

Thank you to Catholic Charities, of course, our partner in this effort. Monsignor Sullivan who is here with us today. He gave mass this morning. And all of our nonprofit providers who you saw in our nonprofit resource hallway, you'll get to speak to all of them after this, but now I give you Mayor Eric Adams to share a few words.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Good job. It's so imperative to have a former dreamer — is that the helm of this issue while people are seeking the American dream. Having this commissioner who understands what it is to find their way into this country and navigate the complexities and now is able to be here at this time to help the countless number of people who are seeking the American dream. And we are not going to be like those municipalities and states where we fly people to Martha's Vineyard, where we put people on buses and have them fail to get the basic items they need.

This is a crisis. And during crises there are two types of New Yorkers — they're those who play I gotchu, and stay on the outside and complain, and then they're those who roll up their sleeves and just get stuff done. That's who we are. And anyone who states that this administration does not have a handle on this crisis, they must have been sleeping under a rock. This coordination from local nonprofits, elected officials, all of my team from education, all the human services coming together because the reason we're doing this is because we're all immigrants, all came from somewhere. We all know this narrative and story and it's crucial for us to make sure as you have walked through here, we provide those services that are needed. So it doesn't matter if you came here on the Mayflower or on a bus at the Port Authority, you deserve the dignity and respect that this city continues to show. We're going to show the compassion, the commitment, the understanding, and the helping hand.

And I too want to add my voice and thank Deputy Mayor William-Isom during the midst of this crisis while addressing COVID, monkeypox, addressing polio, addressing our own housing issues that's on our streets, mental health crises, ACS. While addressing all these things, she was able to put together this location to help our new arrivals. It shows that we're going to provide services, those who are new and those who have been here for many, many years. The Navigation Center will allow newly arrived asylum seekers to access the services or support they need, including legal services, school enrollment, and healthcare — foundational items to help families move forward — with the help of all our agencies and our nonprofits, including Red Cross. We want to thank Red Cross for the coordination of this space.

Just the last few months, an unprecedented number of new arrivals entered this city, over 11,000. Over 8,000 are currently in our shelter system. That 11,000 does not include those who are living with family members and loved ones in this city. We will continue to welcome asylum seekers with open arms and provide them the services they need. And we are seeking to get additional resources. We are communicating with the federal, state, city lawmakers. We communicated with the White House two days ago to talk about the things that we need here. And we're going to continue to pursue the additional funding. This country was built on immigrants and by immigrants. And we're going to honor the tradition, born here in New York City. We are going to have open doors to them, not close the doors in their faces like we're seeing in other parts of this country.

A lot of American dreams are going to start right here at this center. And we cannot thank all those who are here, particularly my elected officials that are here because they are going to have to make the challenging and difficult decisions of helping us navigate how we move forward in this city. These are difficult times, but as we always do, we're rising up to the difficulties that we are facing.

I'm going to turn you back over to our commissioner, but I also want to let you know at 9 o'clock we open doors. 8:50, the press has to bounce because we have to make sure that the people who walk in here won't become part of any form of media, any form of their pictures being taken. So all that you want to ask, let's do it by 8:50.

(New York State Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar, State Senators Luis Sepúlveda and Brad Hoylman, and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine speak.)

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And if you don't take away anything else, let's take away the fact, as the commissioner stated, this is being done nowhere else in the country, what we're doing.

Question: Good morning, mayor.

Mayor Adams: What's happening Katie?

Question: How are you? I'm going to ask there's — I know there's been a lot of press about the buses being chartered from Governor Abbott, but I know that there's also migrants coming on planes. Can you talk a little bit about what the city's doing? Is there a welcome center at some of the airports? Are there other resources available beyond just at the Port Authority? Because there are people being sent up from other states that way as well.

Mayor Adams: We just learned yesterday about what has unfolded at Martha's Vineyard. We have not received any communications thus far that individuals are landing at Kennedy Airport or LaGuardia Airport. And if that happens, we would pivot and shift to that location. The Republican party, they have created a blueprint that all of them are starting to follow. It's inhumane. For the governor to send immigrants to Martha's Vineyard, without any coordination, is just creating a real crisis. And that is the problem that we shared to our lawmakers in Washington. That this is a blueprint that you're going to see start unfolding.

Question: Mr. Mayor, what did you mean yesterday when you said you want to reassess the right to shelter law and is the city meeting its legal obligation to provide shelter to everyone?

Mayor Adams: Well, anytime when you talk about legal issues you need to have your attorney speak and so I brought my attorney.

Brendan McGuire, Chief Counsel to the Mayor: Good morning. If you read what we said, we did not say that we are reassessing the right to shelter. What we said was that we're reassessing the city's practices with respect to the right to shelter. No administration, no team has done more to guarantee the right to shelter than this team. Faced with over 11,000 asylum seekers since

May, they've safely and efficiently provided them not just shelter, but all the related services that the consent decree, upon which the right to shelter is based, guarantees.

There is no ambiguity in this administration about what the law says and what the right to shelter says. What we are doing — because this is an unprecedented development, as the Mayor said, and a reality that nobody who has been litigating these cases or who has been considering the right to shelter over the last 40 years in the city, a reality that nobody could have foreseen. It is important because we don't exist in a vacuum to reconsider the practices that the city developed that flow from the right to shelter. So it is those practices that we are reassessing. So there are operational practices, there are communication practices, there are various practices that have arisen with respect to the right to shelter over these decades relating to the homegrown, unhoused population here in New York.

Obviously none of those practices developed with anyone contemplating that there were going to be over 10,000 individuals bused into New York with no connection to New York from overseas. And so we have to reassess all of the way in which those practices have developed to determine whether we are making these decisions as efficiently as possible. And obviously always in accord with the right to shelter. There's no ambiguity there. So it's an important distinction. We are not reassessing the right to shelter. We are reassessing the city's practices that have developed around the right to shelter.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you were mentioning about how these buses keep coming and [inaudible] there's only a finite amount of space in the city. So I was wondering what's the plan from here on in to acquire more space? Have you identified new locations or are there new housing facilities? What will those be and when will be operational?

Mayor Adams: We are continuing to expand. If it comes down to emergency hotels, emergency shelters — we opened 23 thus far. We're going to continue to meet our obligation. But we should be also clear that we are required to right to shelter. This goes beyond that. What you're seeing here today, we're not stopping at the bare minimum of right to shelter. We're going beyond that to make sure people have a right to have a decent life here in our city. And so we are going to meet our challenge. If it means open up more emergency shelters, if it means looking at different locations, we are going to use every tool in our toolbox to solve this issue.

Question: Can you say right now that there is enough space for all the asylum seekers at this moment?

Mayor Adams: Every asylum seeker that comes to New York will have shelter by law, we're required and we are going to do that.

Question: Mr. Mayor, two questions. Do you have confirmation that Governor Abbott is still sending buses? And if so, about how many a day are coming from Texas? And then how many people are also coming from either other locations that say Catholic charities, nonprofits are counting or even just self-reporting? Do you have those specific reporting of where these people are coming from? And then I have another follow up with that.

Mayor Adams: We sent a team down to Texas and looked at the various buses that are coming. Some are Governor Abbott's buses, some are coming from other cities in Texas. So there's a combination. We know that we could document that we had over 11,000 that entered our shelter system. 8,500 are still there. And we know that — a few days ago we received, I believe, eight buses came in to the Port Authority and we could only make sure that we monitor what we have. So we can give you accurate numbers. But again, not everyone is coming into our shelter system.

(Crosstalk.)

Question: Since we know that you value the right to shelter, we're talking about people who are playing gotcha. So I just want to ask you why is it gotcha when people point out that right to shelter may have been violated as opposed to it just being a benchmark, an important marker of the fact that the city's system is strained to the point that it is hard for you to meet the mandate? Why is it gotcha to point out that the system is strained to that point that it's making it difficult for you, and would New Yorkers be sympathetic to that?

Mayor Adams: I think — when I'm in the streets, when I'm hearing from New Yorkers is thank you Eric for what you're doing with over 11,000 people. I'm not hearing from New Yorkers that we failed families that are needed. We're supposed to provide right to shelter, we have. When I had a press conference on this issue a couple of months ago, I stated to all those who wanted to speak, "Pick up the phone and call us." We called everyone to inform them. Our call turned into a press release — to me that's gotcha. And that is not how we communicate to resolve this problem. We need everyone to be aligned, like these organizations are, to get our federal government, our state government to give us the resources. We need people to use their legal minds to see how do we challenge this behavior from these rogue governors. We need people to do something simple: come volunteer. We got a lot of work we have to do. So instead of looking at this administration that is going beyond the call of duty and opening sites like this, come volunteer. That's what we need. We need help. We have not been ashamed to say that. We need help and all those who think we're not getting it right, they should come and show us how to get it right because we believe we are getting it right.

Question: Mayor, I'm wondering at Port Authority, will the city still be providing welcoming services? We've heard from some nonprofits that they don't see the same level of welcome effort from the city. Is that now moving here, will the city still be providing migrant [inaudible] —

Commissioner Castro: Well, we are. What's changed is that now we're seeing between four and six buses arrive per day. In fact, I'm going there after this to make sure that we welcome asylum seekers as they off board. But we've had to scale our operations. The New York City Office of Emergency Management has taken a lead to make sure that people have the support they need and transportation to our local shelters. So I just want to highlight the work —

Mayor Adams: What you said is fine. It's fine enough. Okay. That's the wrap. Any other question you have, reach out to Fabian.

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