



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO CALLS FOR FAIR CANNABIS LEGALIZATION  
THAT PROMOTES EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Greatest city on Earth, we all agree. Wayne, thank you, and thank you for all you have done to make sure there is fairness and justice and I think in the work you've done you've seen the horrible toll and the price we have paid for injustice. I want to thank you for working with people who needed help coming back from the results of a very unjust system and that is work we're going to be doing for a long, long time, but I want to say thank God there's been people like you who have done that work when it wasn't easy and made a difference in a lot of people's lives. Let's thank Wayne for all he has done.

[Applause]

This is an issue of tremendous importance. We've got a lot of people here. I want to thank everyone who is here with us and I know everyone here cares deeply about this issue and everyone here can tell you personally about the meaning of these changes. I also want to thank some of the folks who are here. Obviously some folks up here will be speaking at this press conference, others will not. I want to just acknowledge and thank first of all members of my administration that played a very big role in the report that we're publishing today and the recommendations that we are offering, the recommendations that we think are the basis for real change, Dr. Herminia Palacio, our Deputy Mayor. I want to also thank Jonnel Doris, my Senior Advisor and Director for the Mayor's Office of MWBEs, and Dom Williams, my Chief Policy Advisor who really took the lead in this effort from the beginning to look at what was happening all over the country and to figure out what we could learn from it so we could get it right here. So thanks to all of them and a special thanks to Dom who I worked with very, very closely on this, and the elected officials, I want to thank Assembly Member David Weprin, who is the chair of the Corrections Committee in the Assembly, and State Senator Luis Sepúlveda. Thank you to both of them for being here and their support.

So this is important moment because we're talking about a change that must happen and it must happen the right way. This is the essence of what I feel, and Chirlane and I have been talking about this for a long time, talking about how to get this moment right and I want to thank Chirlane because as we have talked it through it's really helped me think about what fairness and justice looks like in the changes that are needed up ahead. What we do know is the time has

come to rewrite the rules, to break the mold of the past, to repair and redeem the lives of people who are treated unjustly. That's what we can do this –

[Applause]

In that spirit, today I announce my support for the legalization of marijuana.

[Applause]

But here is what I want to say. We have one chance to get it right. This is unlike so many other things that we have dealt with. We have a chance to get it right here from the beginning because we're at the starting line. And if we just legalize marijuana and don't deal with the underlying issues, we will look back and say what a lost opportunity it was, because there are issues of justice that must be addressed, and there are issues of opportunity that must be addressed, and legalization done the right way will marry opportunity with justice. That's where we need to go. We have a chance to create a brand new industry that will lift up every day New Yorkers and we have a chance to choke off corporate America in the process and not let them get their greedy hands on this industry here in this State.

[Applause]

Governor Cuomo has been very clear that legal cannabis is coming in this State. As a result of the obvious changes coming, in July I formed a task force to chart the best path forward for New York City. To not let just something happen to us via State Legislation, but to try and shape what would be a fair and positive outcome for this city. A huge number of City Agencies participated and I want to thank them from the outset, take a look today at this report and you'll see how much care, how much energy and intelligence was put into these recommendations and this analysis. It's a very detailed vision of how we get it right but it's also informed by the times that our society got it wrong, because we all lived through that history and we do not have to repeat it. We've seen new industries emerge and we've seen what could happen when they go down the wrong path.

So legalization is at a crossroads really. There is two routes, either corporate cannabis will take control or the will of the people will win the day. That is the choice that we have before us and we know what happens when the corporate sector runs the show. Big Tobacco – Big Tobacco flourished as an industry after World War II. The corporations knew that cigarettes were deadly but they kept pushing them anyway, and they pushed them particularly towards kids. It was a systematic effort to deceive. Billions of dollars put behind it. Untold hundreds of thousands of lives lost as a result. Big Oil – Big Oil is known for decades the harmful effects of climate change but they tried to systematically build an economy hooked on fossil fuels and to make sure that people did not learn what the companies knew about the dangers we faced. And Big Pharma, major pharmaceutical companies sold opioids as safe and non-addictive. They created a deadly wave of overdoses in this country.

I'm saying this upfront because not – nothing has happened yet in Albany. Not a single vote has been taken. We are present at the creation. We can do something to avert all the disasters we've seen go before or we can sit back and repeat the same horrible pattern and wonder how many lives will be lost this time. So I say, brothers and sisters, we can't let Big Pot in the door to begin

with. We can't let the corporate sector dominate this debate and Lord knows they would love to. Instead we can follow a simple, powerful, principle. It doesn't matter what your faith is this holiday season, we celebrate all people, all faiths but I'll borrow from one faith when I say that the principle governing our approach should be the last shall be first, and the first shall be last. We have a chance here to ensure the same kind of companies that caused all of those problems don't get the chance this time and the people who are afflicted by unjust laws have the opportunity for economic progress. Have an opportunity for redemption. Those who bore the past burdens should reap the benefits of the future, not corporate executives.

Now, let's be clear, and I want to blunt about this, history is painfully filled with examples of the powerful writing the laws. When you hear people say that the economy is rigged, in many ways they are right. The laws, including the tax code, are written to benefit the powerful few. We know that in this case the laws to date have caused a many people to suffer and often the suffering has been profoundly unequal. Communities of color and low-income people bore the brunt of the so-called war on drugs. So if we know that the laws in the past were written in an unfair and unequal way, we should beware that it doesn't happen again.

[Applause]

This administration came here to right these types of wrongs. We already stopped as you heard, the majority of arrests for smoking marijuana and low level possession in this city. Now the State of New York has a chance to right the laws the right way, not for the powerful but for everyday people. Not for the powerful but those who were so long powerless. Here's an example, in the new law that will be written, let's automatically expunge past convictions for low level marijuana crimes.

[Applause]

Let's give New Yorkers a clean slate and a fair future. Let's slam the door on Big Marijuana and open the way of opportunity for every day New Yorkers. The majority of licenses to sell and produce legal weed must go to those whose lives were damaged by illegal weed.

[Applause]

And we know exactly how to create a system that reflects that reality. We know where to go geographically, we know that people of color suffered, we know low income people suffered, we know exactly where to find the people who bore the brunt and give them the majority of the opportunity. Let's use some of the revenue that comes in from legal marijuana, the taxes and the fees, let's use that to fund health care awareness campaigns, youth education, job training and low interest loans for the businesses that will be created in the communities that need them.

[Applause]

I've said clearly we want New York City to be the fairest big city in America. The legalization of marijuana can help us take a big step in that direction or done wrong, can set us back once again. It's up to all of us to decide, it's up to all of us to ensure that the people who do the voting in Albany vote in favor of fairness. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

So as we go forward, we have to be brave about this everyone. We have to be brave about the fact that there will be very powerful forces trying to bend the law in their direction. We can't back down in the face of that. And now I am going to turn to someone who in all my 27 years of knowing her has never backed down from a fight and has always understood the path to justice. And again I want to give special thanks to my partner in all things, I've said from day one, the most important advisor in my life happens to also be my wife and happens to be our First Lady. And she said to me early on, that if corporate America wins the day here we would all have done a horrible disservice and that we have to learn those lessons about Big Tobacco, Big Pharma, all the painful lessons that we can't afford to repeat. So I want to thank her for setting that tone so clearly and helping me understand so clearly, our First Lady, Chirlane McCray.

[Applause]

**First Lady Chirlane McCray:** Who says men don't listen?

[Laughter]

Thank you so much Bill and I want to join you in thanking all the members of this really exceptional taskforce which did so much hard work on this report which lays out a fair, safe, and thoughtful approach to the legalization of marijuana. I believe legalization is the right path for our city and our state but it is not without risks. As we move forward we need to answer crucial questions about – that go beyond whether to legalize or not and those questions are not limited to what are the public health consequences and who would profit? But so far, the public conversation we've been having is not nearly as nuanced as it needs to be and there is far too much at stake here to get it wrong. As Bill pointed out we have plenty of examples of what wrong looks like. Wrong is more than 100,000 alcoholic related emergency room visits in one year in our city. Wrong is state spending on tobacco control and prevention falling short of CDC recommended levels, even as cigarette smoking remains the country's leading cause of preventable death. Wrong is losing four New Yorkers each day to drug overdoses and a nationwide opioid epidemic fueled by corporate greed.

Now marijuana is a different drug than alcohol, tobacco, or opioids with its own set of safety and health risks as well as its own medicinal properties. But just like any substance, legal or not, marijuana can be misused. It can lead to dependency, especially in young people who start early. I know from my own experience that it can be habit forming. We must do everything we can to protect our city's young people and educate all New Yorkers about the safety and health risk involved with marijuana use. With legalization comes the opportunity to do so proactively and strategically. That means keeping corporate drug pushers out of the equation entirely and making room for the people and communities that have suffered the most under the war on drugs, including communities of color. And it means continuing to improve access to behavioral health services in our city including substance use treatment.

Our country has never had a well-funded, integrated behavioral health system, leaving countless people to struggle on their own. ThriveNYC is changing that by taking on the stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction and improving access to mental health care in neighborhoods across the city. But we still have a long way to go. There is no question that

Thrive's groundbreaking work will be essential to any smart and safe plan for legalization. We owe that to New Yorkers, especially the younger generation. We owe it to them to address the risks, and opportunities of legalization with a careful public health, economic, and civic attention that they deserve. That's why this report is so important and I urge state lawmakers to use the recommendations as a guide for their work in the months ahead. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much Chirlane.

[Applause]

I mention this report that has come out today and I want to say again to all of the members of the administration who put a lot of time and energy over the last six months into this. This is I think a very powerful guide to how we need to address the issues facing us when we think about legalization. A lot of work was done to look at what happened in other states, to understand from the grassroots the kind of changes we needed to get it right. And one of the key architects of this report, along with her great team is the Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, Liz Glazer.

**Director Elizabeth Glazier, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice:** Thank you Mayor and thank you First Lady, and hello everybody. We're so pleased to be releasing these recommendations today that identify what we believe are going to be the goals and challenges that will guide the city's preparation to potential legalization. They're grounded in principles of safety, and health, and most importantly, equity, and they're the result, as the mayor has mentioned, of the work of 25 agencies who were brought together last July with deep expertise in public safety and health, in business regulation, taxation, and an array of other fields, and I just wanted to acknowledge Susan Summer, who was – who brought these teams together and worked hard to produce this report. These principles that guided us were first and foremost to address the kinds of disparities that we've experienced in this city. Among the examples that you can read about in this very detailed report are recommendations for the automatic expungement of conviction records with some notice to DA's who may want to object. Second, to protect the health and safety of all New Yorkers, mindful that legalization must be accompanied by strong prevention and education resources for youth and others and strong regulation of advertising. Smoking in public, we recommend, would still be prohibited but we would turn to civil, not criminal enforcement. Third, we have to make sure, as the mayor has powerfully stated, that we have the appropriate kind of regulation and promote economic opportunity, that we offer opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses and people with past convictions through an era of mechanisms that we detail in this report. That we have statewide product safety guidelines and presale testing, that we permit localities to make decisions about home delivery or whether to allow home-cultivation and that we launch a community investment fund to dedicate new revenue to neighborhoods that have been harmed by past policies.

This report is a reflection of a sea change that's going on around this country and in the city in just the last few years. 10 states have already legalized cannabis as well as the District of Columbia. On our borders, Canada was legalized, New Jersey's on the cusp, Connecticut is considering, and in our own city we've worked hard to roll back the disparities that have come with marijuana enforcement. There's growing recognition and impatience with a world that produces such disparate effects in who is touched by our criminal justice system. African Americans and whites use marijuana at the same rates, but in New York City people of color are

89 percent of those who are arrested. The work of this mayor, of our Police Department, of the DA's, and many others has had dramatic effects. From this December to last December we've seen a 95 percent reduction in arrests but it's not enough, and we look forward to working with our fellow New Yorkers in the months ahead as we begin to craft what a smart, legalization regime would look like at this moment of creation.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Liz, and thank you again for your great work and your team's great work on this report. Now I want to introduce one of our key partners in this work of justice and want to commend him – as of this summer, the Manhattan DA's Office no longer prosecuted marijuana possession and smoking cases. He's been a leader on this issue, District Attorney of Manhattan, Cy Vance.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you, District Attorney.

[Applause]

Throughout this week I should just note the whole administration is focusing on the borough of Manhattan, doing a whole variety of things to address issues in communities across Manhattan. This obviously is an issue that deeply affects this borough and all five boroughs, and I want to say the borough president who's been working with us closely on this for years fought against arrests for small amounts of marijuana, so I know this is an important day for her as well, Borough President Gale Brewer.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you Borough President, and I want to echo the point about the many advocates and activists who are here, and I hope are listening if they're not here, that your work was not in vain to say the least. A lot has moved because so many people helped to sound the alarm and show that there was a different way and I want to thank everyone who's been part of that work and implore you all to use everything you've got in Albany in the coming months so we can get this right.

I want now to take a little sojourn out of Manhattan and turn to the District Attorney of the Bronx. She has been a leader in reducing unnecessary prosecutions and supporting decriminalization. Borough – oh, excuse me – Bronx DA Darcel Clark.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Finally I want you to hear from two of the representatives of the community we're in right here, first of all someone who has really spent a lifetime fighting for social justice, Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you very much councilmember, very powerful comments. And now one more speaker, and he is almost in his new office and when he gets to his new office we're going to hear his voice loud and clear as well on issues of justice, particularly for our young people, State Senator-elect Robert Jackson.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Thank you.

[Applause]

Okay we are going to take questions from the media – questions from the media on this report and on the marijuana issue, we'll then do a brief break and then come back with comments on another and open-field questioning on other topics, but first on this issue, go ahead Dave.

**Question:** Mayor, not to sound like a Debbie Downer on this but as this has proceeded along over the last year, I mean, I don't think any New Yorker can walk on a street anywhere and not just be knocked over by the stink of marijuana. I mean it's everywhere, everywhere we go. Are you in any way going to address the fact that—

**Mayor:** Hold on, hold on, we don't need people leaving yet, let's stay through the Q & A here, hey, team, we got a little bit ahead of ourselves.

**Unknown:** They got to go to work.

**Mayor:** Stay where you are, everyone stay where you are, unless they have to go to work. If they have to go to work go on, but everyone else hang out until we get through this.

**First Lady McCray:** They're going to work.

**Mayor:** Okay, work is good!

[Laughter]

Anyone that has to go to work, go to work. I'll start and if anyone else wants to weigh in you're welcome. Dave, first of all, I respectfully disagree with the way you're characterizing life in New York City right now. I walk around New York City a whole lot and I am not "knocked over" by the smell of marijuana. I'm sorry, life continues here in our city—

**Question:** Do you have a response?

**Mayor:** I am telling you it's just not an objective statement.

**Question:** The New York Times has called it the new scent of Manhattan

**Mayor:** Again, God bless the Times – guess what, they're not always accurate either.

[Laughter]

So, I walk around Manhattan a lot, I walk around the outer boroughs a lot and I do not believe that's accurate. I do believe that a lot of people smoke marijuana in public, and, as is clear here, we still believe that is wrong, we believe that the legalization should still prohibit smoking in public because for a lot of people that's a very uncomfortable situation. For a lot of parents that's very uncomfortable in terms of their children and how they want to teach their children. So there still need to be sanctions for smoking in public, and that's very clear in the recommendations of this report. Those sanctions should not include arrest, unless there are extenuating [inaudible] – like other serious crimes happening simultaneously. But I believe this is the right balance to make clear that overall we need legalization with a whole host of measures in place to ensure fairness, but with clear sanctions against public smoking. Please.

**Question:** Under the plan, will smoking marijuana in public still form the basis for a terry stop by the NYPD, maybe the DA's can address this?

**Mayor:** Liz or DA's, want to speak to that?

**Director Glazier:** So, the attorney's office really just, if you have reasonable suspicious we—

**Unknown:** Put your – mic up.

**Mayor:** Yeah, yeah. Make it – is it on? On is good.

[Laughter]

**Director Glazier:** A terry stop is – the basis of it is that you have reasonable suspicion about somebody so it's not specifically tied to marijuana.

**Question:** So someone smoking pot in public it would not be allowed under your plan, would the police be able to stop that person, question them, ask for ID, you know, inquire further about other suspected misbehavior or crimes?



**Director Glazier:** So I think it's very, very fact specific. I would defer to my friends in the DA's Office but it's very, very fact specific.

**District Attorney Vance:** It is very fact specific but if, as the Mayor hopes and I think others hope, marijuana is legalized then it would no longer necessarily be the position that the police would be seeing criminal conduct occurring in front of them.

**Question:** Who would issue the civil ticket then?

**District Attorney Vance:** Police would.

**Question:** Okay, so while they're issuing that civil ticket would they be able to enquire, stop the person—

**District Attorney Vance:** I think the police are able to take reasonable steps to enforce the law, but if marijuana is legalized that would not include arrest. But I would say this, Mr. Mayor, I if I can—

**Mayor:** Please.

**District Attorney Vance:** New York City – New York today is the largest black market for marijuana in the country. I mean we have to realize that's what we are now and as we see the dangers of fentanyl and other powerful substances being mixed into drugs and affecting members of our community, I think we are far safer to have a regulated marijuana industry which only sells marijuana that is safe and has reasonable rules around age and around locations where it can be used, that's a step forward. We are kidding ourselves if we think that we're not using pot in New York at a huge volume, because we are. So let's get it done right.

**Mayor:** Amen. Okay, wait. Let's get some others in, you'll get a change to come back. Go ahead.

**Question:** In terms of licenses, do you have an idea about how many you would like to see citywide and what about – do you want to break it down by neighborhoods and how could neighborhoods say they want more or fewer?

**Mayor:** So, I'll start from sort of the common sense point of view, from my point of view, and then let experts jump in who are part of the task force. To me the building blocks here are to keep Corporate America out, so to not create a licensing situation that opens the door for those who have the most money and power to grab up a lot of the licenses – and again that's unusual, that's breaking the mold. Typically when anything happens in this country, Corporate America is well positioned to dominate. We have a chance to rewrite the rules. We're starting from scratch. We have all the power in the state government. Let's exclude Corporate America from this equation, period, can be done. And then second, we know where the harm was, we know where people were hurt. Let's focus the economic opportunity where people were hurt. We know exactly which neighborhoods, we know exactly what kind of people, especially folks who are incarcerated for the most minor offense – people lost years of their life – they should have special economic opportunity. That's something we can give back to those who lost so much. So

to me that's what you do – you build licensing structure that focuses on where the licenses can do the most good. Anyone want to add? Okay, go.

**Question:** What are the kind of numbers in mind? Are there going to be 10 in the neighborhood, 50 in the neighborhood, 5 in the neighborhood?

**Mayor:** Obviously that's going to be a legislative process but does anyone want to speak to – I mean, I don't think I have a number in mind because that's something we have to work through, but what – I'm concerned that it not be an open-ended thing where any kind of company can do anything they want, but I don't think we have a numerical vision yet.

**Director Glazier:** That's exactly right.

**Mayor:** Okay, go ahead.

**Question:** This is a two part question, going off of how common the use of marijuana is currently in the city and has been for decades. I'm curious for the...

**Question:** The use of marijuana is currently in the city and has been for decades. I am curious for the whole panel if you've ever smoked marijuana if you could raise your hand.

[Applause]

**State Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda:** And I actually inhaled, by the way.

**Mayor:** Senator, Senator you are profile encouraged.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, you've been speaking for years I believe about your opposition to this, specifically because of corporate America or concern over children starting to use too young. So what changed your mind? Where was the change of heart?

**Mayor:** Yeah, and I – look, I've been very public about the fact that, I can't even remember whether I inhaled because it was so long ago. But I tried marijuana in college, it wasn't my thing. I haven't used it since. But I think the issues, the bigger issues are – we're we going to create something that actually was going to be fair, we're we going to create something that addressed the problems or just opened the flood gates. And I'll use the example with the opioid manufacturers. That's very recent. They got to create something very dangerous with very little in place to stop them. Then they got to promote it and even when they knew it was addictive they got to lie about it and now we have an opioid crisis of epic proportions. That happened in all of our lifetimes recently. And there was nothing in place to stop that. In my view is here's a situation where we can actually write rules first. So one of the things I hesitated about was trying to understand could we actually get the rules done first before the legalization could occur. Could we actually put things in their proper order? And the more research my team did, the more I came to believe there really was a way to set ground rules that could work, that could focus on safety, and health, and fairness. And I think the other part of the equation was to understand what happened every place else because honestly we're not only the biggest city in America, but we're the most complex place in America. And before I felt comfortable saying we should legalize, I needed to know what happened in the other big cities around the country that went through it. As

you heard the research came back very consistent and Dom and Liz, and others who looked at – and we’ve had this conversation now over months. They really looked carefully, sent people out to those cities, talked to public safety officials.

The consistent response was it did not negatively affect the safety dynamic. There were health issues that needed to be addressed particularly through education but that could be done. And that gave me the confidence to say that we could do this here. But I will emphasize, there should not be a single final step, until the rules are in place, and until we know how to do this fairly. If we just open the flood gates, we’re going to regret it. Go back there.

**Question:** What resources do you see being made available to smaller players and independents? Because I think the reason so many corporations have thrived in this space already is because the tax environment, the regulatory environment necessarily so are very complex and that just smells like corporate something that they would be better at.

**Mayor:** Correct.

**Question:** What resources do you see putting in place to make this vision happen?

**Mayor:** That is a great question. I’ll start, and Liz or Jonnel or anyone who wants to jump in, Dom, anybody who wants to speak to this. The first thing I’d say is you’re right on the money there. When you create an opportunity and you say anyone has a chance here, come on down, but you have to have a few million dollars in your pocket to begin, and you have to have a battery of lawyers, immediately you exclude folks who have suffered, it becomes a total catch 22. We need to I mentioned what we’ve already thought of. We think that the city is going to have to step in with direct support for the new businesses like loans and helping them go through licensing and things like that. I think laws can be written to make it simpler to participate versus harder. I think it has to be a very conscious effort to do it. So that gets back to my central point. Everyone in Albany should make sure they get it right. So they’re writing a law that allows a repeat that happened before. Don’t pass that law. Stop; actually think about how are you going to empower the communities that have suffered. And if that means lowering the bar to entry and breaking that pattern you described, and that’s what we need to do. Any of my colleagues want to speak?

**Jonnel Doris, Sr. Advisor & Director, Mayor’s Office of MWBE:** Sure, Mr. Mayor. You know we have a concept –

**Mayor:** Introduce yourself for everyone.

**Director Doris:** Jonnel Doris, the Sr. Advisor and Director of Mayor’s Office of Minority Owned Business Services. We joined with our colleagues on the task force to really look at the equity applicants and other states and the programs that they had and we made sure that in our recommendation we did put forth that first and foremost we need the financial assistants to these particular businesses and secondarily our business services to help build their capacity and also deal with new regulatory environment. It’s going to be difficult for anyone to come in to this environment as a small business and survive without the assistance of the city and all of our resources that we have. So we did talk also about the fee structure. Making sure that it is – doesn’t exclude or prohibit these businesses from participating and a series of other resources

that we wanted to make available to these businesses. So certainly Mr. Mayor, we have contemplated [inaudible] send a report for the equity applicants.

**Senator Sepúlveda:** Mr. Mayor, if I may.

**Mayor:** Please, please.

**Senator Sepúlveda:** At the state level, we have been discussing legalization for some time now. And I can tell you that I don't believe that there is going to be any legalization unless there is a component for MWBE's to benefit from this.

**Mayor:** Amen.

**Senator Sepúlveda:** I think the big companies like MedMen and so forth understand that this is a major problem, they've offered to create some sort of banking system where they each contribute about a million dollars – \$10 to \$11 million to finance in minority communities, provide funding so that they can start this business and I know they recognize that that's a problem. The \$11 million for this project is a pittance. But the reality is that we at the state level and I believe my colleague Assemblyman Weprin can speak to that also. But we at the state level will not allow this to become legalized, unless our communities benefit, because we've suffered the most from marijuana convictions.

**Mayor:** Okay, excellent, thank you. Go ahead.

**Question:** On the issues of safety, and health, District Attorney Vance was mentioning safer marijuana that's not mixed with other drugs or potentially a harmful substances. There is so much unknown about the health benefits or health risks of marijuana. What questions or concerns do you have? Obviously it's still illegal under federal law, so there hasn't been very much study. But what are some of the issues that – questions that you'd like to be answered about health benefits or risks?

**Mayor:** I'll start and then if any of my colleagues either DA's or Dr. Palacio, anyone who wants to jump in. Look, again this is something Chirlane and I talked about a lot. And we – as parents we thought from the perspective of parents who are really concerned about the young people and the exposure to any substance, including a substance that might not be what they think it is. But it's all against the back drop of this massive black market we have right now and the wide spread usage we have right now. So I think this maybe under the category if it's better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness, like better to engage and try to get a working legal structure that addresses real health and safety issues, real public education campaign to go with it. Because I actually believe the moment a legalization allows for a fuller discussion, you could do a public education campaign right now, and I think a lot of people might blow it off. But I think if you have real honest conversation in this city, and this state about the health issues and the things that people need to think more clearly about, it could have a real deep impact. So that's something that we want to do. But also I think your question gets to a law enforcement piece about everything we need to do to go after folks who might be lacing marijuana with even more dangerous additives. And we take that very, very seriously. And that of course would remain illegal, and something we could go at. So DA's, Liz, Herminia?

**Manhattan District Attorney, Cyrus Vance:** I think one of the challenges that has to be addressed with legalization of marijuana is developing a science to determine when someone is intoxicated by marijuana. That exists for alcohol at a very sophisticated and accepted level. It doesn't exist for marijuana. So the science needs to improve, people should like if you're driving intoxicated by alcohol, you're going to get stopped and arrested. If you're driving intoxicated by marijuana you should be stopped as well. But we don't have the science yet that needs to be developed and there should be a full push nationwide as this legalization movement grows to answer the question what does it for someone who is 6'0 foot tall, 180 pounds to be intoxicated by marijuana.

**Bronx District Attorney, Darcel Clark:** And I think also with the legalization we will know at least what is being put out there. Right now, we don't, because it's illegal. So just like we're dealing with the opioid crisis we have it being fentanyl being laced in heroin, in cocaine now and other different things. As a matter of fact, counterfeit pills are being made that looks like an opioid pill that you could get by prescription but is full fentanyl. So with the regulation we will at least know what is being sold and at the same time continue on the law enforcement side to deal with those people who continue to exercise their right to sell in the black market.

**Mayor:** Now this way.

**Deputy Mayor Palacio:** Yeah, so I did want to add an echo something that the Mayor I think stipulated very eloquently. So around health effects we clearly want to understand and do prevention around youth justice. We want to do it around alcohol and other substances just because we know that the earlier people start to use substances at more risk they are. But I wanted to say something that we haven't captured yet, which is unnecessary, unnecessary incarceration has public health consequences, right. So we're not having this especially in a vacuum.

[Applause]

When you are taking people who ought not be in jail, whole communities who ought not be in jail. That is impacting individuals, that is impacting families, that is having consequences around their missed days of work, consequences around their ability to get work, consequences about their ability to continue their education. These are public health issues.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Thank you, okay. Who hasn't gone yet? Jill.

**Question:** Mayor, you recently in the last year or two [inaudible] for marijuana is legal for recreational use. Would you ever [inaudible] at marijuana store [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** No, no.

**Question:** Can you just kind of on the subject, use their businesses as [inaudible] by the Manhattan DA earlier with large amounts of cash, and large amounts of marijuana. What's the plan to sneak that take?

**Mayor:** Excellent question, and I'll just turn to Liz or Dom both of whom looked a lot at the question of the experience of the states, and again what was crucial here was did legalization effect public safety in a meaningful way? And that question was asked of law enforcement officials for example in Colorado, and Washington. Those are two states we really focused on the presence because of Denver, and Seattle. They're not quite New York City, but they're still big cities and there were some comparability and what we kept getting back was no, there was not been a negative impact. But you're right. It means there are still law enforcement considerations and changes of approach that might be necessary. So anyone want to speak to that?

**Chief Policy Advisor Dominic Williams, Mayor's Office of Policy and Planning:** Cash is concerning obviously and that's why we want to be able to regulate, and regulate. If you go to any of these states you'll see stores that have cameras, you'll see security. All of these states went for the experience of starting to regulate and then seeing that they needed to have stronger regulations around security. We want to be able to do that upfront and that's why we need to have the ability to build out a structure of what a store needs to look like, what a facility needs to look like and deal with the cash and large amount of product sort of ramifications.

**Mayor:** Let me see who hasn't gone yet. [Inaudible] I'm not high. I'm looking at what you're wearing and I feel like I'm high.

[Laughter]

Surely there must be some explanation.

**Question:** For the next party actually.

**Mayor:** Oh, good, okay.

**Question:** I wanted to ask. A lot of your progressive allies arrived to this point years ago. I am thinking about Mellissa Mark-Vivirito. And they shared a lot of the same concerns as you did but they didn't see them as insurmountable and in fact today's report shows that they are not insurmountable. And I am just curious whether there is a personal element to your stance against legalization that might have been keeping you from arriving at this point sooner?

**Mayor:** I think it's very different when you're the Chief Executive Officer of the City, and when you're responsible for the public safety and the health of 8.6 million people. I am not taking away from anybody who came to the conclusion sooner. I respect them all. But I think the considerations here required a lot of careful examination. And I can tell you a whole lot of people on this team put a whole lot of time into trying to understand these issues and what the experience of other places has been and how to get it right. And it took a lot of time to discern what would be solutions to some of the mistakes elsewhere.

For example in a lot of other jurisdictions there were nowhere near the kinds of guarantees that people who suffered from the war on drugs would benefit economically. In most places, corporate America, the door was open wide to them. There was no restrictions put in place. A lot of places did not expunge records automatically. So when we look at the experience around the country, there is a lot to learn including what should have happened that didn't. And also to

me it was very different to talk about this four, five years ago before we had the experiences of Washington State, and Colorado over a serious period of time to learn from and I think we're just more complex, more difficult place than any place else. I mean this is the ultimate, right. We're the greatest city in the world. And we're the most complex city in the world, the most diverse city in the world. What we need to succeed might be different than other places. But at least we wanted to have the advantage of seeing real life experience over a period of time in some other big cities. So all of those factors for me went into to making sure we get it right and taking the time to do so. Who hasn't gone yet? Yeah.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, what happens to people who are already on parole or probation for marijuana violations and [inaudible]? Secondly, I know you just talked about personal, but when you've been explicit IN talking about your father's addiction and your wife has talked about her issues of smoking marijuana for your children. Can you talk a little bit more about those direct personal issues, and how they are related to your decision to support legalization –

**Mayor:** Marijuana is different than other drugs, clearly, and that's important to this discussion. But if you've seen addiction up close and personal, and not only was my father addicted to alcohol, he was addicted to cigarettes too and lost his life because – I mean that's what sent him into a spiral. And it was very, very painful and it went on for years and years and years. It was kind of the dominant reality of a lot of my childhood.

If you see someone suffer like that – and I remind you this is a guy who fought for the United States in World War II in some of the toughest battles of that war, and came back alive missing half a leg – that was horrible enough and the trauma he went through, but then all that left him vulnerable to another tragedy.

And for all of us in my family watching that, it was extraordinarily painful and you can't take addiction lightly when you've seen it. You know, you just can't. So, yeah, that's something I think about all the time, you know, that anything we do we'd better be damn certain we're not accidentally opening up a dynamic where more people will suffer.

But again marijuana is different. I can separate in my mind the difference but what Chirlane said is powerful. You know, of all the things we're talking about here, alcohol is the least regulated but possibly the most destructive.

So, it's a great question because it really gets to the heart of the matter. I can because I saw someone victimized by the tobacco industry. I can tell you, over my dead body, will big corporate marijuana do that to New Yorkers.

But I also can say to you, people are being victimized every day by the alcohol industry and there's next to nothing being done at the federal level to stop that. Maybe in this moment we can start to wake people up to the fact that any drug can cause dependency, and that people need to understand how to approach any kind of drug with care and that some people are more prone to addiction. I mean this is something Chirlane has talked about. It totally connects with Thrive.

We've got to educate people. We've got to let people have a place to turn to if they're having a problem. And we can do that while legalizing properly. But if we let the corporate sector in the

door, this is going to be, you know, billion-dollar pushers convincing more and more people to use a drug then we're going on the road to hell.

**Unknown:** [Inaudible] parole

**Mayor:** Hold on, hold on. I'm sorry, he has two questions and I've got – Erica, I hear you. I hear you, Erica. He has two questions and I focused on the second. Forgot the first.

On the parole question – Liz, DAs, do you want to speak to – obviously the intention is exactly the same. We want to see people not be victimized by broken laws of the past. So, how do we want to go about that? Liz –

**Director Glazer:** So, the issue here is what will Parole and Probation do when somebody who is under their supervision tests positive, right? Because virtually no one is on parole or probation for a marijuana offense. I think that Parole and Probation have already begun to look at this and it's not an automatic cause for having your parole or probation revoked. But I think there's a long, long road to go and I think both agencies both at the State, that's Parole, and in the City, Probation, recognize that.

**Mayor:** Do you guys want to add?

**District Attorney Vance:** One thing we can do is we can make the technical violation of having marijuana in your system a sanction only by some very limited sanction by Parole or Probation – not that it would violate you if you're on parole to go back to state prison for a long period of time but there would be graduated sanctions which would be very limited in time. And that's a near term way to focus differently on technical violations around possession or use of marijuana.

**District Attorney Clarke:** I agree with Cy on that. As a former judge I know – I could tell you how many times that people came before me on an application of violation of their probation for the re-use of marijuana. So, they're limited but it does happen. So, it's something that we do have to look at to make sure that it's fair even if it is going to remain, that's not something that they, you know, spend an ornament amount of time going back to prison just because they have an addiction or whatever.

Also when they changed the Rockefeller laws, there were ways to deal with that as well – that people who were convicted under the Rockefeller laws were able to make applications before the courts to have their sentences reduced and different things of that nature. And that might be a way of dealing – with parole and probation to deal with how violations by use of marijuana will work.

**Mayor:** Okay, go ahead.

**Question:** I'm wondering if you can –

**Mayor:** A little louder.

**Question:** I'm wondering if you can be as specific as possible about where revenues would go, and also what tax rates are being considered at state and local levels.



**Mayor:** Again, we're not the legislators. We believe that revenue needs to go to the kinds of things I talked about – education campaigns, specific efforts that would foster economic opportunity in communities that have suffered. There are other things that can benefit from the revenue but those are examples. But as to being very specific, we're going to engage the legislative process now. This was our framework of what we think the Legislature needs to account for but now we're going to get under the hood with them and figure out a lot of the specifics.

**Unknown:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Hold on, I just want to make sure everybody – media seems to be on this side. We're doing media questions. So, if there's any media on that side, let me know. Okay. Go ahead.

**Question:** Hi, two-part question. You mentioned –

**Mayor:** Just do the first one [inaudible] we got a lot going on. Just do the first and then I'll give you a chance to do the second right after. But just do one at a time for clarity.

**Question:** What about people in federal housing or federal subsidized housing such as Section 8 who are being penalized for using medical marijuana. How will [inaudible] into this program so they don't get evicted from their housing for using their medicine?

**Mayor:** So, I'll start and Liz or Dom can jump in. The federal law is very clear in the case of the Housing Authority. I assume it's the same for Section 8 – is that your understanding? And we can't do away with the federal law. What we can do is have specific locations where it is appropriate as a way to give people an alternative where they can live under the laws of New York State and New York City, but not be put in an untenable situation. If you're in a federally backed housing situation, unfortunately the federal law is the ultimate determinant there. Anyone want to add to that?

**Question:** [Inaudible] housing?

**Mayor:** Say it again.

**Question:** Will you relocate people –

**Mayor:** No, no, no, I'm not saying that. I'm saying the folks there, they should not relocate. We're not in a position to relocate them. There's 400,000 people in the Housing Authority. It's not to take the people out of the housing, it's to take the weed out of the housing, and have another place where you can smoke it in an appropriate fashion. Do you want to talk to it?

**Director Glazer:** And just to say, this is really something that every state, except one, that's legalized has done to have places where people can go and smoke, who can't for whatever reason smoke in their own – yeah.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Okay, did you have a second question? I'm sorry.

**Question:** Yeah, my second question is to the gentleman third from left on the panel. I'm sorry because there are no nameplates – he mentioned something about [inaudible] are actually working behind the scenes to try to get the – been lobbying to get the license to be \$1 million. So that kind of flies in the face of them making a small donation to helping people get equity in license.

**Senator Sepulveda:** There were lobbying –

**Mayor:** Senator Luis Sepulveda. Go ahead.

**Senator Sepulveda:** They are lobbying. They've made it a full [inaudible]. They're attempting to do it but there is, you know, within the legislators that represent communities of color, we've made it clear to them that with the integration, vertical, horizontal integration, we want to make sure that they don't gobble up everything. And so –

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Okay, okay, we're not doing a back and forth. Come on, you asked your question. Let him finish. Do you have anything more to say? Okay. Go ahead.

**Question:** Mayor, how do you expect the legalization of marijuana plays into the hiring process both for the City and City workers who may be drug tested, and also for private employers. Do you expect to offer any guidance to them to change the way they drug test?

**Mayor:** I think it will lead to a series of changes and we certainly think there should be major changes. Liz, Dom, someone want to go over some of the specifics on employment? Someone go.

**Director Glazer:** So, again, we have learned a lot from the experience of other states who have done this, and just in sort of broad strokes the notion here would be, you know, that we would prohibit pre-employment and random drug – not we – that the legislation would prohibit pre-employment and random testing. There would of course be exceptions for certain kinds of employment where there are federal strictures about that or certain kinds of other sensitive jobs. And again we have sort of a path to follow that's been tested in a number of other states.

**Question:** [Inaudible] aware of this but does the City frequently do pre-employment drug testing for employees [inaudible].

**Mayor:** What's the current standard? Anyone know exactly?

**Chief Policy Advisor Williams:** There are some places where there is testing but it's not like a uniform –

**Mayor:** Right, but basically health and safety –

**Chief Policy Advisor Williams:** Around different [inaudible] health and safety.

**Mayor:** We can – let's have the team follow up and give you the specifics on that.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, you talk about putting safety for [inaudible] especially with permanent messages in schools but in this community in Washington Heights there's a lot of fear from parents. As you know there's a big hookah consumption. Everybody, no matter where you go, there's hookah being sold and some of them have told us, if the marijuana be put on the hookah it'll become more attractive to youth because the whole thing, it's a very attractive process. You go into any restaurant at night, or a bar and it's there. And couples are doing it, and young –

**Mayor:** No, I hear you. And look, we've taken some steps with the Council on regulation of the hookah bars, and I would remind people this is going to be a living, breathing situation. If we see new problems emerge, we're going to go address them and regulate further. I would say to take, sort of, the essence of your question and how it relates to this – that's a real issue, it's not a reason not to legalize. It is a reason to figure out how to make sure that that doesn't become a new problem.

Underage usage is going to be illegal. Period. So, I would say, honestly, from an enforcement point of view, if a bunch of underage kids went to a hookah bar to use marijuana, that would be a pretty straightforward violation and that bar would be in a lot of trouble for allowing underage consumption. And that's a matter of enforcement by NYPD, by Consumer Affairs, and other agencies. Is that what you were going to say? Anything to add?

**Director Glazer:** Very much so. I think the issue is very much as the Mayor has said, and as DA Vance has said. We're living with these issues right now and how do we actually make it fairer and safer? One of the ways we do it is by regulation, and again we have a lot of experience now to learn from from other states.

**First Lady McCray:** I want to add that education plays a huge role in all of this, to help young people and their families – adults and young persons alike – understand substance use and the dangers and making sure that young people are in an environment where there's not that kind of peer pressure or risk taking that can lead to bad habits. We haven't done that before.

**Mayor:** Amen.

**Question:** [Inaudible] wouldn't welcome the city or any other community being more restrictive than what the State may allow. Obviously the State doesn't have a plan yet but I wanted to know how it would play out if the State grants the City authority to exercise local control.

**Mayor:** So, I have a lot of respect for the Assemblymember. I would just make a broader point here. Obviously we want to see in the State legislation a host of core issues addressed, particularly the equity questions – the kinds of things that if the State legislation isn't right, we can't save the day at the local level.

If the State legislation lets the corporate sector on a vast level, in my opinion, we're all screwed at that point. But what I think is fair is to say create the basic ground rules on the State level and then give localities the ability to figure out a lot of the specifics.

If you talk about the way you would regulate – you know, there was a question earlier about the Section 8 housing and public housing – that’s a major, major issue here that we’re going to need to have the ability to come up with creative solutions our own way. That’s not going to be true in a number of other parts of the state. So, there can’t be a one-size-fits-all.

We have a whole host of public safety issues that will be different here in the biggest city in America than they would be in a smaller city or a rural area. So, I think a basic State framework that then allows for a substantial amount of local discretion and local control is the smart way to go.

**Question:** [Inaudible] State plan more conservative and then having the City kind of take on a more progressive framework?

**Mayor:** That – look, I wouldn’t be surprised by that but I would say, and I think that’s been true in some other places. I believe that’s true to some extent in California, for example. But here’s the bottom-line. It can’t be that the State passes a law that ties our hands in terms of social justice. If they pass a law that does not allow for economic fairness, then it’s a self-defeating proposition.

If they pass a law that does not allow for enough local discretion, it’s a self-defeating proposition. So, could there be things where New York City has a more progressive view than the State Legislature? Absolutely. But the legislation must be inherently progressive or it will backfire in my view.

Who hasn’t gone yet?

**State Senator-Elect Robert Jackson:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Yeah, please.

**Senator-Elect Jackson:** Robert Jackson, State Senator-Elect. So, with respects to that. Not only is this being discussed in the Senate – and as we know the Senator here is in charge of the Corrections Committee and Dave Weprin who’s down there on the left in the Assembly, but you have members of the Black, Puerto Rican, Latino, and Asian Caucus that’s going to make sure that that happens as far as what the Senator talked about. The issues and concerns that impact especially communities of color that has been negatively impacted. As per what the DA said, the numbers speak for themselves. We’re going to be in there fighting to make sure that that flexibility is there in order to make sure that corporate America does not run this business.

**Question:** [Inaudible] anything that the City can do if the State’s framework doesn’t help –

**Senator-Elect Jackson:** Well, obviously, if the State says this is what it is – but I don’t think that members from the caucus and members of the Senate and Assembly especially from New York City, they’re going to speak up on it and that’s why we’re going to have this report as a basis to educate our colleagues in the State Senate and the State Assembly.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Question:** What do you foresee in terms of labeling – pardon my ignorance – if there kind of a strike that would be used? Is there a recommended dosage? What would you want to see with that?

**Mayor:** Those are real issues and I think that's part of having a real public education and information that's accessible to people. So, any of my colleagues want to speak –

**Director Glazer:** That's a critical part of what a regulatory framework would look like – how to measure what potency levels are, how to ensure and limit what potency levels are, and how to do labelling. And so this is all part of what – again, what other states have gone through and we have a lot to learn from them and would have to be part of any regulatory scheme.

**Mayor:** But to –

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** We're certainly recommending clear labelling with maximum information. So part of this is to make sure that the public has information and understands the health impacts, etcetera, and to make sure that those in the business are held accountable for their products, that their products have to be exactly what they say they are. Because again, we are concerned about additives. We are concerned about anything that misrepresents the product.

This is classic law enforcement and consumer protection stuff to make sure that the labels are accurate and visible and available. Okay, we're doing media questions. Any other media questions?

**Question:** What's the [inaudible] mechanism for folks who don't pay a fine whether it's because they're underage and they're smoking in public – they're smoking at all or if they're in public and they're smoking?

**Mayor:** I'm going to start and Liz can be more expert than I. But the bottom-line is whenever you go to summonses – and there's been a huge amount of reform and I think great efforts by our law enforcement colleagues, the City Council, etcetera, to move us towards the kind of reality where for example we turn to summonses wherever possible and appropriate as opposed to arrest. And that does not mean you can ignore the summons, I really want to be clear about this. If you ignore the summons, you ignore it at your own peril. First of all, you end up having to pay more when you eventually pay if you don't pay upfront, but if you keep not paying then you do run the risk of arrest.

Would you like to speak to how it works?

**Director Glazer:** You've become a lawyer.

**Mayor:** I've become a lawyer. Congratulations, everybody, I saved three years of law school right there. So yeah, you can be arrested if you ignore the summons.

**Question:** After how many – I'm sorry, after how many times –

**Mayor:** So, which expert wants to say how long between you getting your summons and you ignore your summons and you're in danger of arrest?

**Director Glazer:** So, right now, with civil summonses, it's after three.

**Question:** And that would be the recommendation for marijuana? If you fail to pay after three times you'll be arrested?

**Director Glazer:** We haven't set that out in the report.

**Mayor:** Using it as an example.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, in your heart, how tough of a decision was this on marijuana for you and are you convinced that you're doing the right thing?

**Mayor:** I am convinced I'm doing the right thing and I'm convinced I'm doing the right thing because we took our time. I have not the slightest compunction about the time we took because it kept – the whole discussion kept building to recognize more and more realities that had to be addressed. And I was feeling a lot of frustration over what felt to me to be a very superficial discussion – it was like you're either for or against – and there wasn't a lot of discussion of what it was really going to mean for every-day people and for kids. And some of my view crystalized live on the radio with Chirlane when we were being interviewed by Charlamagne tha God –

[Laughter]

That's a powerful name right there. And the whole conversation about corporate America came forward and the dangers of the corporatization of this industry, and that really, for me, crystalized one of the things that I had not felt resolved about. And obviously, as I said, the experience of the other jurisdictions – really being 100 percent certain that they had not seen a major increase in health and safety problems. In fact, what we got very consistently from them was – almost nothing changed. So, I'm very comfortable. It required an extraordinarily careful, thoughtful process and now I am 100 percent convinced.

Okay, anything else on this? Media questions? Anything else on this report?

Okay, we're going to take a brief break. Let me just say to everyone behind us and anyone who's going, I want to wish you a very happy holidays, everybody. Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa, Happy New Year –

[...]

**Mayor:** Let me just do a quick statement before we go into other topics, but this is something that's causing real concern this time of year and I want to address it. I'm going to ask my colleagues in the media, please to spread this message. This is about public safety and people need to hear.

My message to all New Yorkers is, please take special care on our streets this time of year. We have had a situation in recent days where we've lost New Yorkers because of traffic crashes and

we know, tragically, that it's related to the time of year in large measure. This is a time of year when because of the days being darker, darkness being during the rush hour, the cold weather, people are trying to move along and are bundled up, they can't often see as much as they do in other times of the year. It's a dangerous time and I'm asking for all New Yorkers to recognize that – the minute the days get this dark, there's always a danger of more traffic crashes. So, pedestrians have to be very aware, but especially drivers.

This is a time of year where drivers need to take extra caution, and I want to make it very personal for everyone. Every driver holds everyone else's lives in their hands and when you're driving that car you have to think about the meaning of what you're doing. And God forbid that you did something that you did something that caused a crash, God forbid you were distracted looking at a cell phone or something else and that caused you to harm another human being, you've got to think that that could be your family member, your loved one that could be the person victimized.

So, I'm asking everyone to please recognize the particular dangers this time of year, to drive carefully. It's the holiday season, the last thing we want is for any New Yorker to lose a loved one at this time of year.

We know that real change has happened and more will come. We know that Vision Zero has driven down the number of fatalities and we are going to keep driving them down, but we also know the danger is always there and it's all of our responsibility. So, please, help people get that word out so we can have a very safe holiday season.

With that, I want to turn to the media for questions on any other topics – that topic or any other topics, If you've got anything. Go ahead –

**Question:** So, the departure of Alicia Glen – why – the Amazon deal is certainly not done – or on going – why now? Why is she leaving?

**Mayor:** She is leaving for very personal reasons. It's been five very, very intense years. She's served with tremendous distinction. She's gotten a lot done and this is a conversation that she started with me some months ago, telling me that she felt like the time was coming. We obviously talked about the right timing, how to make sure that things got done that needed to get done. I would say the Amazon deal, the basics clearly are there. There's details to work out but she wasn't the frontline negotiator, James Pachett and his team at EDC have been doing the frontline negotiations and they will continue to. You know, a lot of the other big pieces that we have been working on – of course, the affordable housing plan, now up at 300,000 apartments – that's working really, really well. She played a crucial role in putting together the NYCHA 2.0 plan. I think she's at a point where she's achieved a whole lot and she's ready for something different. But she will be here for the next few months to ensure we have a proper transition.

Let me see if there's other questions – I know we've had a lot of press activity this week and we've seen you guys a bunch of times. Go ahead –

**Question:** What are your thoughts on Mount Sinai hiring a [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I think it's a good outcome and the kind of thing we would have wished for from day-one. And obviously what happened with Rivington House was a real mistake and should not have happened, but this is a good outcome in that healthcare will be provided for the community.

Yes?

**Question:** Pretty much anyone who's serious about the 2020 presidential elections has made a statement along the lines of, I'm going to talk to my family over the holidays, I'll talk to you in January. I don't think you've made one of those statements – do you care to comment?

**Mayor:** I've been very consistent. My focus is New York City. And I have the honor of doing one of the best jobs in public services in this country. We've got a lot to do and we're focused on everything we're going to do in 2019, 2020, and 2021. So, that's where I stand.

Go ahead –

**Question:** I think it was Friday – we understand that you spoke briefly with incoming Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez. Just wondering kind of what your relationship is with her? How many times you've spoken? Met? And just kind of where you're at –

**Mayor:** Well, including that meeting – it was Chirlane who had most of that meeting with her. I was there for a few minutes, but that's the second time I've seen her in person. We've talked on the phone a few times. I think very highly of her. I feel very aligned with her values and I think she's a very promising leader who's going to help achieve a lot of progressive change. So, I feel very good about the relationship.

**Question:** Mayor, can you talk about the number of children – some 800 or 900 – that are still [inaudible] trying to reunite them with their families. You've been very vocal about this.

**Mayor:** I have been and this is a stain on our nation that this ever happened – that there even was a family separation policy and then in the aftermath of that policy the federal government has not even been able to effectively reunite these families. It's unbelievable. And it's all about the values of the administration in Washington, that they even thought about having family separation policy and destroying decades of American consensus on asylum, and then on top of that they were so shockingly disorganized they couldn't even figure out how to reunite families – that continues. We have tried incessantly to get the federal government to come clean and just talk to us about how many kids are in this city and what's being done to reunite them – cannot get an honest response from Homeland Security, from Health and Human Services. I mean, it's really distressing. And that also breaks the norms of anything I've ever seen in government where federal agents at least knew they had to communicate on a basic level with New York City. The only thing that's going to change that situation is an election.

Is there anything else?

**Question:** Mayor, do have any update on the situation at the HRA office that I asked you about yesterday where in the scuffle an HRA peace officer was injured earlier this week?



**Mayor:** Yeah, the bottom line is a client did something very inappropriate and, as you indicated, was disrespectful to one of the people who worked there, pushed their computer apparently off the desk. HRA peace officer came to intervene. The client attacked the peace officer. That's 100 percent – all of that is inappropriate and there's going to be real consequences for that individual for what they did to hardworking HRA employees who do a very good job, the peace officers who do a very good job and we depend on. And the peace officers effected an arrest, as was appropriate.

**Question:** Are you concerned about the peace officer saying the NYPD was called and they declined to make an arrest? Are you concerned about –

**Mayor:** If you want to know what the NYPD – respectfully, if you want to know what the NYPD did, ask the NYPD. And my understanding from the NYPD is that the situation was well in control and that the peace officers, who have the right to effectuate an arrest, were doing so appropriately and of course the NYPD is going to respect that.

**Question:** I'll apologize for being trite but as we head into the Christmas season, your thoughts and wishes professionally and personally?

**Mayor:** Well, you know, I'm really into peace on earth – I'll be trite right back at you.

[Laughter]

You know, I think it's a time for people to be peaceful. I think it's a time for New Yorkers to recognize we're a place that has achieved amazing level of harmony in recent years. We're not perfect but we've achieved more harmony than I think a lot of us ever thought possible and it's something New Yorkers should be really proud of, that people of different faiths, different backgrounds really work together, live in peaceful coexistence in this city. So, I want us all to not only have that in the holiday season but really continue that in 2019. And I think our country needs that good example from its largest city. So, I wish people a very a peaceful, wonderful holiday season with their family and friends. That's the other thing – as New Yorkers, if there's one thing we don't have enough of, it's time. And I hope people use the holiday season to do something that's not work and not running around. If you have any ability to avoid the rat race, to actually have a chance to spend time with your loved ones and chill out a little bit – that's what I wish for, for everyone this holiday season.

**Question:** Are there things that you're thinking about that you want to do better as a person and as a Mayor?

**Mayor:** Yeah, across the board. I think of each year as – you know, end-of-year – as a time of renewal, I really do. I spend a lot of time at the end of the year thinking about how I can do better. Very, very proud of my team, very proud of this administration for what we've done but I know we can do better, I really do, and I want to work on being the best Mayor I can be. I want to find ways to do better than we've done in the past on some issues. You know, it's kind of beautiful that the calendar gives us a moment of renewal. I'm a big baseball fan and I always say one of the great things you learn from baseball is, if you strike out you get another chance to come up to bat later in the same game. Well, I feel like that about human life too – if you ever do

something that you're not satisfied with or you feel like you didn't get far enough, a new year offers a new start. So, I look forward to getting a lot more done and reaching higher in 2019.

Last call everyone.

Alright, a very, very Happy Holidays. We'll see some of you, I hope, appropriately dressed tonight. Yoav, might want to go home and change but the rest of you will be appropriately dressed, I'm sure.

Happy Holidays, everyone.

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