

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Makes an Announcement with LGBTQ+ Advocates

April 4, 2022

Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70-Aa5LJ-4c>

**Kalima McKenzie Simms, LGBTQ Programs Manager, NYC Department of Education:** Good morning, everybody. My name is Kalima Mckenzie Simms, and I'm the manager of LGBTQ programs at the New York City Department of Education. I'd like to first acknowledge all the LGBTQ advocates here today who are on the front lines promoting equality and justice for all. I'd like to also acknowledge deputy chancellor of school leadership, Desmond Blackburn, Dr. Jawana Johnson, chief of school culture and wellbeing, and council members Bottcher and Ossé.

**McKenzie Simms:** The Department of Education understands and acknowledges that every student deserves to be heard, seen, affirmed, especially our LGBTQ young people. We are proud to host proactive LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, robust policy that supports our transgender and gender nonconforming students, and we encourage gender and sexuality alliances at schools. We believe we can end hate and foster empathy and understanding by creating a space where everyone can freely discover who they are.

**McKenzie Simms:** The work we do can even keep our students alive. A staggering 50% of transgender youth who are not supported in their community are more likely to attempt suicide. It's hard enough being a kid and a teenager. Let's not add to their pain by telling them they have to be ashamed of who they are when they come to school. I know this firsthand, because when I was growing up as a young person discovering my identity within the LGBTQ community, these topics weren't spoken about in my community. They weren't spoken about in my school. They were extremely taboo. And because of that, when I started to discover who I was, I was forced to be living with

shame because I thought something was wrong with me, because no one was allowed to talk about it. And that is not how any young person should grow up.

**McKenzie Simms:** I'm proud to work for the Department of Education and a city who understands at the end of the day that we are all human beings and our different identities are what makes us and our city a one of a kind melting pot.

**McKenzie Simms:** And now I would like to introduce Mayor Eric Adams.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you.

**McKenzie Simms:** Thank you.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you, Kalima, and really for that personal narrative around what life was like. I remember being a captain in the sixth precinct in downtown Manhattan, going over to Christopher Street to the park or the pier talking to some of the young people, who when they decided to talk to their parents about who they wanted to be, and their parents, some of them were thrown from their homes. They were runaways. And I think that you're right. It's a matter of life and death that we are joining this conversation.

**Mayor Adams:** And I want to thank the advocates here. Alan, you have been an advocate for these issues for so long, and this is the city of Stonewall. This is the city where we are proud to talk about how you can live in a comfortable setting and not be harassed, not be abused, not only as adults, but also as young people.

**Mayor Adams:** And so I'm the mayor of this city, the city of the LGBTQ+ community, as we see people in government and out of government understanding how your voice is respected here in the city. And that's what this movement of "Don't Say Gay" is about. This political showmanship of attempting to demonize a particular group or community is unacceptable, and we are going to loudly show our support and say to those who are living in Florida, "Listen, we want you here in New York. We want you right here in New York City." And it's more than just saying that. It's also standing up and aligning ourselves with the men and women of the LGBTQ+ community and stating that we are in unison with you and your right to have self-identification, your right to live the lifestyle and live the lives that you choose to live without any form of harassment.

**Mayor Adams:** And New York values free speech. We value making sure that people don't feel abused, no matter what ethnicity, no matter how you self-identify. This is very important to us, and we're proud to be a part of this. And we're partnering with WPP to put up billboards in major markets across Florida to let everyone know. We're targeting Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, and West Palm Beach. We believe we're going to get about five million impressions, and they're going to be up for an eight-week period celebrating diversity and acceptance of New York City. We will show this in the billboards, and the billboards you have here right now. Very clear statement, and we're proud of it. Other folks want people to hide their color. We like to show our color, and that's the rainbow that's representative of this community.

**Mayor Adams:** We want to remind everyone that New York City is full of people who will be celebrated now and in the future. And as I stated, this is the city of Stonewall, and we will continue to stand fast and be supportive of this community that has contributed to the diversity of our city, and we believe that this is the city that will always allow that diversity to take place. So thank you, and I'll turn it back over to you.

**Mayor Adams:** I'd like to now introduce Kevin Jennings, chief executive officer at Lambda Legal.

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you so much. I'd like to now introduce longtime LGBTQ+ advocate, Allen Roskoff.

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

**Question:** Yes. Mayor, last week, Governor DeSantis of Florida said something along the lines of, "New Yorkers, people in high tax democratic states are fleeing and coming to Florida." What do you say in the context of this situation, where his state is, according to you, making itself unwelcome to certain people?

**Mayor Adams:** I never thought in my life I would be quoting Arnold Schwarzenegger, but they'll be back.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. A lot of the folks around you right now last month were speaking out very forcefully against the three hires of pastors who had made anti-gay remarks in the past. I want to see how you reconcile those hires with this message, and if folks like Mr. Roskoff want to speak to this reconciliation as well.

**Mayor Adams:** Well, this community has, I think, as the councilman stated, that they have always turned up the heat on topics that they believe are important. I've joined them in many of them, as Allen alluded to. Days on the Senate floor fighting for marriage. And this is not a community that's going to be silenced. If they see something they don't like, they're going to let you know.

**Mayor Adams:** But my rich history, as we sat around the room and talked with former Senator Tom Duane and others of how long we've worked together. So we can work through anything, but we will never go to the days where we will publicly demonize a group, and that's what's happening now. And so they've always said they're concerned about the hires that we made, and we're going to continue to move forward. And these are not just citizens. These are personal friends on the fight to deal with the progress in LGBTQ+ community.

**Question:** Mr. Roskoff, would you like to speak to it?

**Allen Roskoff:** Of course, we were very disappointed and outraged over the appointments, but we decided to move on and work with the mayor, who we believe made a big mistake in making those appointments. But there's a lot that we can do together, and we remembered the mayor's history on behalf of the LGBTQ community. So we're moving onward. Thank you.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, previously, earlier at the press conference, Mr. Roskoff brought us a list of ideas that he wants you to pursue during pride month in schools, putting up these posters and acting more as part of the curriculum. What do you think of those ideas? Is that something you can-

**Mayor Adams:** I think they're good ideas. We have our rep here from the Department of Education. I'm sure Alan is going to sit down with them, and those that we can do, we look forward to doing so.

**Question:** Can you commit to right now [inaudible]?

**Mayor Adams:** No. Next question.

**Question:** Obviously, spending millions of dollars on this campaign, so people might see a time when you're doing belt tightening of the city budget and wonder, "how does this benefit New York?" You might be sending a message to people in Florida, but is there really any benefit accruing to New York that makes it worth the expense?

**Mayor Adams:** I just love that question. This is costing New York City taxpayers nothing. Space is donated. Billboards are donated. Advertisement is donated. Outside people who live in this city that understands we cannot treat people unfairly are standing up the way New Yorkers do. New Yorkers lead the entire country on conscious and what is the right thing to do. So taxpayers are not paying one penny for that, and I hope that you report that, that it costs us nothing. It's the right thing to do because we're New Yorkers.

**McKenzie Simms:** [Inaudible]

**Question:** So on another point. When you met with Mr. Roskoff and other LGBTQ community leaders next to you last month, they laid out the list of demands that they wanted you to act on, including creating a city hall office dedicated to LGBTQ issues that would have an actual budget. Do you have an update for us on if you're going to act on any of those demands?

**Mayor Adams:** No. Another question?

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Good morning, Mayor. So in terms of addressing gun violence, you said what you want Washington to do. NYPD is responding. Is there a role that everyday New Yorkers, I guess, can or should be playing in terms of preventing some of the gun violence that we're seeing?

**Mayor Adams:** Love that question. Love that question. I was ridiculed over the campaign, because when I was in the State Senate, I put out a video that we are going to remake to show parents what to look for in their household. People thought I was wrong, but every day there are guns that are hid in the rooms of our children. A company followed what I was doing, and they put out a bus that they took around the country, showing how to look for drugs, how to look for weapons, how to look for other tell-tale signs. And other individuals picked up on what I'm doing, and we're going to relaunch that.

**Mayor Adams:** Many family members don't realize what their children are doing every day, and no one is educating them. It's a void. And we are going to encourage our schools, our churches, our houses of worship, how to play a role in knowing what your child is doing. The guns in your homes, the drugs in your home. Your child may be wearing red all day. That could be a sign that they are in a gang. They could be doing gang dance, gang drawings. No one is empowering parents who are seeing their children every day participating in illegal behavior, and we're going to start empowering parents with real information. We leave that out of the equation and believe that only law enforcement can do it, and that is just not true. Parents can play a more active role if we empower them with information, and that is what we're going to start doing.

**Question:** So last month there was a huge reduction from the city's pandemic emergency food provider [inaudible] in the program known as [inaudible]. The program was intended to be temporary [inaudible], but there wasn't any advance warning when [inaudible]. So I'm just wondering if you could explain what happened to the program's [inaudible] budget, and is there a plan to [inaudible] to address concerns about the amount of food being provided [inaudible] that is much needed by people going to the pantry.

**Mayor Adams:** Let me look into that, Fabian. We'll get back to you. I'm not sure what happened with it.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, as you know, the state budget is still being negotiated, and there is the idea of extending 421-a for another year on the table. What do you think of that proposal?

**Mayor Adams:** I think they should. I'm a supporter of the modifications that are needed, and I think we should be able to come to a closure on it. We need housing. We need to continue to have more housing. And I think that if we make the modifications, that they can come to a deal. And so I'm hoping they're able to do so.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, on the city budget side, the council just put out a proposal asking for another three billion dollars to enhance the street's master plan, put in many more miles of bus lanes and bike lanes and pedestrian plazas. I know we don't necessarily want to negotiate the budget right here, but how receptive are you to that big increase when I know you're looking for a lot of budget decreases?

**Mayor Adams:** We don't want to negotiate the budget here.

**Question:** In general, the idea of-

**Mayor Adams:** We don't want to negotiate the budget here.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor Adams:** We don't want to negotiate the budget here.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor Adams:** I'm a biker, but we don't want to negotiate the budget here.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, just following up on that question about the \$3.1 billion request from the council. So is that something, if you say you don't want to negotiate, that you will add that?

**Mayor Adams:** No, I said we don't want to negotiate the budget here, not that topic. I'm a biker. I'm a Metrocard user. I believe in public transportation, but this is not the place

to negotiate the budget. We will negotiate the budget with the City Council, and they will roll out what the budget is going to be.

**Question:** What is your allocation? Because the budget, the mayor's budget doesn't actually specify the number allocated for them.

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** Start that question again, because I lost you because your mask muffles. Ask the question again.

**Question:** The budget doesn't actually specify the dollar amount allocated to the street master plan. So the council asked for 3.1 billion, but what have you allocated to it?

**Mayor Adams:** We'll have Jacques get back to you and give you the exact number.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. Three weeks ago, you told parents to trust you that you would unmask our toddlers. 10 days ago, you stood right here and you said that the masks would come off on April 4th. That has not happened. You reneged on your promise, and not only did you renege on your promise, you had your lawyers race to court on Friday night to overturn a state-

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** No, no, no, no. Let her finish, because you let her start. Go ahead and finish, ma'am, okay? But you've got to come to a conclusion. Okay. Come to your conclusion and turn on your phone so you can get my answer correctly. But come to a conclusion.

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** Okay.

**Question:** You told us March 17 that you would, "Trust me. I will unmask your toddlers." You had your lawyers race to court on Friday night, arguing that there would be



irreparable harm if children under five were allowed to take off their masks today, along with their older siblings in school. So my questions are what is the irreparable harm to children age two to four taking off their masks just as they do in Long Island, just as they do in Westchester? And when will you unmask our toddlers?

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you. As I stated, as you indicated, I made the announcement that we were looking to announce today, which is Monday, to take the mask off the two to four years old. But I also stated if we see an uptick, we will come back and make the announcement of what we're going to do. We're going to pivot and shift as COVID is pivoting and shifting. There's a new variant. The numbers are increasing. We're going to move at the right pace, and that's the role I must do. That's what I stated. I'm living up to my promises. If I have to pivot and shift and have other adults do something different, I'm going to do so. I'm going to continue to do so. I answered your question. If you want to follow up, we can do a follow-up, but I answered your question.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you.