

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces Nearly \$6.7 Million Investment in new and Expanded Services for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers

June 17, 2022

Sean Coleman: Good morning. Welcome to Destination Tomorrow, the Bronx LGBT center. It's an honor to be chosen to host this press conference. Normally we'd have to go into Manhattan for any LGBT-related news. It is great to know that this administration recognizes the outer borough also has a thriving LGBT community and a rich history. We are actually standing in the space of the first Bronx LGBT center, the Bronx Community Pride Center. When that center closed in 2012, it was my mission to make sure the Bronx residents would not experience a gap in services, those services that they had become accustomed to. At that time, Destination Tomorrow was just three years old. Just getting our feet wet, we walked into this work expecting a warm reception, expecting to be embraced for the work that we had been doing, and what we had projected to do. What an awakening we were in for.

Coleman: But we persevered and today we are the LGBT center of the Bronx. We got our old space back and have added two more locations, as well as the new DT South in Atlanta, Georgia. We persevered like our LGBT ancestors, Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. Folks love to throw their names around at this time of the year. But what they won't tell you is how those two trans women of color were treated, how they were ostracized, booed off stages, and left behind in a movement that began as a riot led by them. I walk with that knowledge, knowing that I am acceptable, as far as and as long as I am useful. Useful to an agenda that doesn't include my black body, but needs my black narrative. I understand the assignment. I understand especially during Pride, the focus on making sure Black and brown LGBT folks are taken off the menu and moved to a seat at the table.

Coleman: So here we are working with the new administration, dealing with the same challenges from before. What does equity look like in our community? How do we create equitable solutions? Mayor Adams, you and I are a lot alike in so many different ways. Both Black bald men from Brooklyn, both passionate about community, with ideas and solutions we believe can begin to address some of these challenges. We both have to figure out how to show up in this world without our passion coming off as aggression. We have to create solutions that are rooted in what's best for all, even when all are not rooting for us.

Coleman: As Black men, we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders while being asked to give more, do more, say more, and don't forget to smile. I understand the position you're in, working to see all of us, while also working to ensure that those that have historically not been seen, come forward. So on today, I just want to say thank you. While I know you won't always get it right, Mr. Mayor, I pray you realize, you have LGBT family to guide you and offer suggestions on the way forward. Forgiveness is divine, ignorance can even be tolerated, as long as your intention is good and your goal is to do better. I'll take this as a first step toward doing better. So on this morning, I'd like to introduce our mayor, the brother from Brooklyn, Mayor Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, thank you. I know we have a sound person, we have this stationary mic. But I hope you can give me a mic so I can drop the mic, because brother, you laid it down. You laid it down and that's our challenge. That's our challenge, everyone wants to tell our story. And by you giving that history, some of the same folks that have dismissed my history in this movement now stand outside and demonize me. Demonize me, forget about my push to get GENDA in the state Senate. Forget about my push to get marriage passed, forget about the millions I've put into Brooklyn [Community] Pride [Center], Stonewall [House], and other organizations. They just want to dismiss and they want to look at my record. The record they should look at, is the history of how Black and brown people were treated in this movement. Don't want to talk about that, but they have a mayor that likes to talk about those things. And we... Honest conversation will get us to our destination. That's why I'm up here in the Bronx today.

Mayor Adams: Because the days of not seeing you and living through the invisible man concept and woman concept and those who are of your community concept, those days are over.

Mayor Adams: You need new folks at the table. That's going to include everyone at the table. And so Bronx Pride week, we are doing this in the BX. We're not doing it downtown, we're not doing it in the traditional locations, where people have defined what this movement is about and what it looks like. You were at both of the roundtables.

Mayor Adams: At one of the roundtables you raised this issue, we did a follow up roundtable, and this helped us carve this important agenda that we are putting in place today. Just a few days ago, in response to the hateful legislation passed in conservative states, President Biden signed a bill to prevent the rights of LGBTQ+ people from being trampled on.

Mayor Adams: We need to continue to do that. Discriminatory legislation should not be allowed to stand and we need to fight against it. What I have done throughout my entire life, from the days of standing with GOAL, as a member of the New York City Police Department, the history is rich, and fighting on behalf of the men and the women of this important community. But in the meantime, we're telling people who are having fights across the entire country, come to New York. This is a place where we open our arms and accept and embrace all who want to live here. Equity, justice, and responsibility to those who need our help is the most important hallmark of this administration. This is something I believe in and will continue to fight for. When you sat down as a community and spoke with us, we heard, we listened, we implemented and took action.

Mayor Adams: Today, I'm proud to announce nearly \$6.7 million for new and expanded programs supporting the LGBTQ+ community. The initiatives are the results of the roundtables, the conversations, and my long history of hearing about the discriminatory practices within the movement that was just discussed. They mark an expansion of the role of the New York City Unity Project, which is now part of the Mayor's Office of Equity. That's an important initiative that we're going to expand on and give teeth and resources to. So here's what we are doing for LGBTQ+ neighbors in all five boroughs, not just in Manhattan, all five boroughs in general, specifically places like the Bronx.

Mayor Adams: First, we are making a vital investment of \$1.5 million in programs that promote, support, and educate families to accept LGBTQ+ youth. As a Captain and Executive Officer in the Sixth Precinct, I would often spend time in the park on Christopher Street and seeing young people who fled home, because after they came out their families threw them out. And giving them instructions and directions and

spending time and sitting down with them throughout the night on the midnight tours of duty. And stop the harassment of police officers who harass them every night.

Mayor Adams: Being there for them, I know how serious this problem is with young people who identify, and they are removed from their families. Family rejection is one of the main causes of homelessness amongst the youth in this community. Roughly 50% of homeless youth are LGBTQ+ New Yorkers and 90% of the group are Black and brown. These young people are twice disadvantaged, and we want to give them the support they need. They need our help, and this initiative is the starting point of ensuring they get that help. We will educate families and promote family acceptance, which will keep families together and give families the support they deserve.

Mayor Adams: We support our vulnerable youth, and we directly impact one of the main causes of our youth homelessness. It would directly impact if we get this right and we believe we're going to get it right. We're also putting \$3 million towards peer housing navigators and financial literacy for runaway and homeless youth. So important, as you get your home, how to stay in your home, how to navigate the finances to do so. Because when you are prematurely removed from your home, you're not receiving those foundational instructions that allow you to have the financial wherewithal as you move forward.

Mayor Adams: Since LGBTQ+ youth make up such a large percentage of our homeless youth, this program will directly benefit these vulnerable young people. This is a downstream solution to an upstream problem, and we are going to take the solution upstream and fix it when it's available or present downstream.

Mayor Adams: We're committing 1 million to providing the LGBTQ+ community with culturally sensitive legal services. So if you are an LGBTQ+ person and have experienced discrimination because of your gender or sexuality in housing, in employment, or refusal of services, and you cannot afford a lawyer, we're going to be there to help you and support you to navigate the legal process. This is a groundbreaking initiative, and I'll tell you why. The city will be connecting and paying for LGBTQ+ legal service providers who represent the community. They understand the issues that the community is facing, and we want to make sure that they're the legal representation that they need.

Mayor Adams: We're also investing of over 180,000 in transgender, nonconforming, and nonbinary nonprofits to expand and improve the services they provide to the transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary communities. This community has been historically underfunded and overlooked. And that's exactly what you have been talking about over and over again. One of the first of their kind grants will support local TGNC/NB groups, which directly serves members of their community.

Mayor Adams: We will be putting 400,000 towards expanding our HIV and sexual health services and 350,000 towards efforts for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers who have experienced discrimination in their places of worship. Pastor Gil Monroe, and other pastors we have met with, it is time for us to come to the table and lean into what we agree on. I'm going to say that over and over again. It is time for us to come to the table and sit down and have real conversations to come to real results.

Mayor Adams: We'll be reviewing and updating the LGBTQ+ healthcare bill of rights in the transgender health booklets. Individuals, families, communities in the city who believe they don't receive the support they deserve, we're saying it's time for us to come together to combat hatred, to change minds, and force the acceptance, and to provide concrete, meaningful services to those who need the assistance that we are calling for.

Mayor Adams: New York is the city of Stonewall, but it is also the city of these great organizations that are in our outer boroughs that have been on the front line fighting for these important issues. And so we say happy pride month. We're looking forward to the continuing celebration during Pride month, and we're looking forward to continuing to listen, to hear, and to move in the right direction. And out of everything you say, one thing is profound. We won't always get it right, but we will always do right by sitting down and learning. This is a new place for us all. And those who hold on to stagnant beliefs will never be able to face the future that's in front of us.

Mayor Adams: We enjoy the conversations we had with the larger group and the smaller group. And these are the results of those conversations and my life work on dealing with these issues that have faced this community for far too long. And I'm happy to be the mayor of one of the most diverse cities on the globe. And we're going to continue to look after all New Yorkers in the process. And so I would turn it over to open any questions, or did we have another program we wanted to follow? Because you know me.

Coleman: Y'all know it's my house, but every now and then I will relinquish it so our guests can do what it is they need to do. All right. Thank you again for that commitment. We appreciate it. And for the first time in many years we actually feel heard, so I appreciate that. Next up is going to be the commissioner of the Office of Equity, Commissioner Sherman, will come and give us a few words.

Commissioner Sideya Sherman, Mayor's Office of Equity: Thank you. Thank you so much. Good morning. Good morning. And happy pride month. I'm really excited to be here in the Bronx celebrating pride, but really celebrating this announcement that's focused on new and expanded services for the LGBTQ community. And I want to thank you, Sean, for having us and also thank you for your fight to make sure that these important services stay in the Bronx.

Commissioner Sherman: So, New York City has a history of being a place where people can find community, a place where people can find a sense of belonging, and an opportunity to be their authentic self. And now more than ever, as the mayor shared, particularly in the face of harmful legislation that's happening across our country, it's important that in New York City we not only affirm these values but we make investments that ensure that LGBTQ+ New Yorkers can thrive.

Commissioner Sherman: Sean, you said earlier, what do we mean when we say equity? Equity is not necessarily making sure that everybody has the same thing. It's making sure that everybody has what they uniquely need. And so that means having legal services from providers who are from the LGBT community and understand the discrimination you have experienced. That means having peer housing navigators who share your lived experience. And having providers that are able to be culturally competent and work with you and your family to ensure that you can stay connected and that young people don't fall into homelessness. It also means supporting transgender, nonbinary-led nonprofits, particularly by people of color, who are credible, who are authentic in their communities, so that they can continue to do this important work.

Commissioner Sherman: This package that you hear, and this announcement, is really the result of listening. It's the result of listening to members from across the LGBT community and making sure that we are working across our administration to really respond to the specific needs that were heard. This is also the result of our Unity Project, which you'll hear more about later, but Unity is really working across city

agencies and systems to address the priorities and make sure that we have a focused effort on the issues and the concerns of the LGBTQ+ community. And so, on this stage here today, you see members across a variety of city administrations, and this really speaks to the mayor's commitment of making sure that we're breaking down silos and we're working together to ensure that we deliver for New Yorkers.

Commissioner Sherman: So this is a partnership between the Office of Equity and the Unity Project, the Department of Health, HRA, the Department of Consumer Worker Protection, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, a variety of city agencies, DYCD, all of these agencies who have come together to make sure that we address the comprehensive needs that we see across the LGBTQ+ community, particularly when it comes to our young people. And it's only just the beginning.

Commissioner Sherman: So I want to thank the mayor for this long commitment in history and continued commitment to this important work. I want to thank our agency partners. And I want to thank our amazing team at the Office of Equity and Unity Project for all the work that you do to make sure that we have an equitable city and show up for New Yorkers on a daily basis. Thank you so much, and happy pride.

Coleman: Thank you, Commissioner Sherman. We appreciate you.

Coleman: Next up, we've heard about the Unity Project, and now you'll get an opportunity to have a discussion, hopefully at some point we open Q and A with Ronald Porcelli. He's the senior policy advisor for the New York City Unity Project.

Ronald Porcelli, Senior Policy Advisor, NYC Unity Project: Thank you. The NYC Unity Project is the LGBTQ+ interagency coordinating body. At the mayor's office, the Unity Project works on LGBTQ+ policy, programs, communication, and outreach. All around the nation, this community is experiencing and feeling hurt and pain. I have felt this pain. And right now in the nation, there are LGBTQ+ youth that are being bullied in school for who they are, that are worried about being accepted for who they are, and are wondering if they will have a future. And all around the nation, this community comes to New York City and sees New York City as a beacon of light and hope. And this is my story.

Porcelli: These investments ensure that New York City is able to live up to its legacy as the home of Stonewall and the LGBTQ+ rights community. While also ensuring that this

community is empowered and supported. I am very grateful for these investments in these incredible initiatives and the expansion of the Unity Project, and for its ability to continue to serve and empower New York City's brilliant and vibrant and diverse LGBTQ+ community. Thank you. And happy pride.

Coleman: We're going to invite some of our advocates to actually come in and say a few words.

Coleman: Just one? See, in my house, they're bullying me. I'm just playing with you. My buddy Elisa Crespo is going to come out and speak about some of the wonderful work she's doing at The New Pride Agenda. Elisa, please.

[...]

Question: Mr. Mayor, I know this is a big event for the LGBTQ community here, but there's a controversy that's going on in the city. And that has to do with remarks that were made by a Councilwoman Vickie Paladino, who made remarks about the Drag Queen Story Hour that's been going on in some city schools. She called it degeneracy and child grooming. I wonder what your reaction is to that? And what steps are you going to take to prevent her from cutting off funds to schools in her district that want to have these programs?

Mayor Adams: Well, I believe the speaker was clear. The comments were inappropriate. And I think we should lean into not only drowning out comments like that, but also how do we lean into the continuation of education? It's about education. We can spend our entire lives of the numerical minority that puts statements out like that, or the overwhelming majority in this city that states it's about time for us to openly educate people to appreciate the diversity that we have. So that's Adrienne's issue. That's her councilperson. I know what we are going to do. We're going to continue to promote the understanding of the different cultures, the different lives in our city. And that's where I am.

Question: By the City Council?

Mayor Adams: As I stated, that's a city councilperson. I think Adrienne Adams is the speaker, let the city council deal with their issues. I have to deal with my 300,000+ people.

Question: How do you feel about a person who's a city official?

Mayor Adams: I think I was clear, Marsha. Marsha, I was clear.

Question: On that same topic.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Just in general, and if any of the advocates like to speak on this as well, what do kids get out of something like drag queens story time? What is the value that you see and is worth continuing?

Mayor Adams: Same thing they get out of dealing with the history and dealing with the culture of any group. We just put allocations into funding for AAPI community. What we are saying to our young people: we don't want you just to be academically smart. We want you to be emotionally intelligent and appreciate the diversity. And we want to decrease hate crimes in our city, antisemitism, AAPI, attack on the LGBTQ+ community. This is how we do it: education. And so to say that, "Well, what does one get out of it?" One gets out of it that you should not attack people based on who they are. And so I support every form of education that we continue to develop our children. That's why adults are so broken right now, is because we believe we have to demonize people and demonize groups. We need to stop that.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Two questions. The first one, I think you said \$350,000 for looking at discrimination at houses of worship. And earlier in your administration, you hired some folks you caught a lot of flak for. Fernando Cabrera was one of them. Is that money designed to bring religious leaders and people from the LGBT community together? And how do you see that working? It seems like there could be friction there. How is that going to work in a way that's constructive?

Mayor Adams: Well, one, some of the most staunch anti-LGBTQ religious leaders, their choir directors are members of the community. That's the hypocrisy. The "let's act like we don't see." Those days are over. It's about sitting down at the table and understanding the person who has been doing your books for years is of the community, the person who has been in your choir, leading your choir, the person who has been your staunch tithe and offering person. It's time for us to stop pretending. And so what we want to do is use this as a way of engaging those who don't know each other. We have to start communicating. And some of those conversations are difficult. I always talked about my brother-in-law. After I passed marriage, my brother-in-law said I am not allowed back in his church. This was my brother-in-law. He knew who I was, and it wasn't until years later that he finally said, "I was wrong, Eric. I was wrong." And more and more people are realizing they are wrong. And that's the goal of what we want to do.

Question: Yeah, it has to do with Paladino. She claims that-

Mayor Adams: She? I'm sorry. Who is she?

Question: Vickie Paladino. That many of the parents in her district are against the Drag Story Hour. And so that's her claim. Given what she's saying, do you feel that parents in that district, other districts, should have the option to opt out or should have some say in it aside from the process in place now?

Mayor Adams: A principal is in charge of the school. You have community stakeholders. There are pathways to assist in how schools are currently carrying out their level of instruction and education. I think, use those pathways to educate yourself, and also to understand why that principal is doing what they're doing. And you often hear parents, many parents were concerned about sex-ed in schools. Many parents were concerned about the teaching of African American history in schools. And so you have to sit down and learn why we're doing what we're doing. And I am really optimistic of where we're going as a city, of where we are going to lean into those uncomfortable conversations, and come out with better children to get better results.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Just if you've heard, when the decision on guns might be coming down? Any developmental-

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry?

Question: The decision on the gun law-

Mayor Adams: Supreme Court?

Question: Yeah. Have you heard anything more?

Mayor Adams: I'm not sure. The deliberation, I believe, is still taking place. You've heard me mention several times, this is a Supreme Court decision of open carry. I am surprised we're not getting more attention to how significant this ruling will be. A case that stemmed from New York. So we believe it may be any day, but the Supreme Court, they act according to their timetable. But I'm hoping they reconsider in light of what we're seeing taking place across our city and country.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Mr. Mayor, as part of the budget discussions, there was some discussion of changing the number of people on transit patrol [inaudible] from two or three to one person. I wonder what your thoughts are about that? I mean, you are a former transportation police officer yourself. Is it a good idea or a bad idea [inaudible] resources? What are you thinking on that and what do you think we might be looking at at some point?

Mayor Adams: That was not part of the budget discussion. That did not come up at all in the budget discussion. Based on my observations of moving throughout the city, I have come to a clear conclusion we're not deploying police correctly. And one of the areas of focus is in the transit police patrol. What we did after the assassination of two officers on Tompkins Avenue. We had an overabundance of caution. We doubled up police officers in the transit police because we were concerned about a copycat. We never changed that, years later.

Mayor Adams: As a transit police officer, I had single patrol. Some stations, like 34th Street, you need dual patrol because of the size of the stations. But those other stations, there's no reason you have dual patrol, particularly with the great methods of communication. So we are returning to single patrol, what that is going to allow us to do,

that is going to allow us to take a department that we almost shrunk in half now to utilize our resources in the omnipresence that I talked about. But that was not a budget decision. That was a decision that the commissioner and I came to after doing observations.

Question: So you're sure it's more efficient, but also you're going to double the number of people who are going to be able to patrol the subways.

Mayor Adams: Yeah, well, because right now, when we made every patrol a dual patrol, we cut our department basically in half. By going back to single patrol, we are now doubling the size and you're going to see the omnipresence and the confidence that riders are going to see based on that. It allows us to cover more ground. And we have some other things that the commissioner is going to roll out in the next few days on how we're going to look at those dangerous trains and stations.

Question: When does that single patrol start?

Mayor Adams: It started after the assassination of Wenjian Liu and his partner was killed on Tompkins Avenue.

Question: Is that the single or the double?

Mayor Adams: The double.

Question: Okay.

Mayor Adams: After the assassination, they went to double patrol.

Question: When did the single start?

Mayor Adams: When is it going to start?

Question: Yes.

Mayor Adams: As soon as the commissioner announces it.

Question: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Question: I want to get your comments on AOC criticizing the city budget. She's taken a bigger approach into talking more about city politics. So I was just hoping to get your thoughts on-

Mayor Adams: Well, I thought Speaker Adams answered appropriately. AOC is a congressperson representing roughly 800,000 people. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The speaker's decision represents the needs of 8.8 million people. And I think there's professional courtesy that if there's an issue, don't tweet, speak. Pick up the phone. Call your colleague and say, "I'm concerned." I was just in Washington sitting down with my congressional delegation. I'm sure Speaker Adams would love to sit down with the congressperson. I'm not sure of what is this new form of governance that you tweet your concerns. How about you speak it? How about picking up the phone and asking and giving your advice? I'm sure the speaker would take her call. I'll take her call. I'll take the calls of everyone.

Mayor Adams: And so the speaker, just as I believe, we're not into this let's just go on social media and tweet out our concerns. Let's talk to each other. And as a congressional representative, I think it would be better for her to just pick up the phone and speak with Speaker Adams who I find to be an amazing communicator and an excellent leader.

[Crosstalk]

Question: I have a question about the World Cup. First of all, have you reopened talks to bringing a new soccer stadium to the city? And then also, what's the kind of economic projections that New York City would benefit from having World Cup in... Well, it's going to be Jersey. But in 2026, what does it look like for New York City?

Mayor Adams: Huge. Huge. You know, it's predicted anywhere upwards of \$200 million, tourism, jobs, hotel. Governor Murphy and I clearly understand that this is a

regional win. When they announced, they said New York, New Jersey. These are good union jobs, restaurants, transportation, entertainment. This is huge, particularly when you look at the 48 cities that they looked at, we have representation of all of those 48 cities. Our Ecuadorians, folks from Peru, from South America, Central America. Soccer is big. When I travel around the city in Queens and Sunset Park, the Bronx, this is an important part of the culture of many of these groups in our city. And so we are excited.

Mayor Adams: There's a huge economic benefit of having these games here. That's why everyone is vying for it. And it's a win-win for FIFA. They get to put their product on the largest sports stage, and that's New York and New Jersey. That was a big win for us. We all should be celebrating. I thought, surely you guys were going to have me and Murphy on the front pages of your paper. You know? That's a huge win that we were able to put together the plan to do this. We want the final, what is... We want the final game. That's the big win.

Question: Do you wish that we were able to host one of the games in New York though instead of New Jersey? So sharing it with New Jersey.

Mayor Adams: Nah. We're going to get... People are going to come. You can't come to New Jersey without wanting to come to New York. New York is it. You know? We had 353,000 visitors to Times Square on Monday. We're just breaking the barriers. New York is back up and operating because of what we are doing. So if they go to New Jersey, trust me, people going to come right through the tunnel. They're coming to New York. They're coming to New York and they're going to participate in the excitement of New York. We're going to do fine.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

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