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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES PLAN TO CREATE 15,000
UNITS OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you so much, Freddie. Thank you. Let's give him another round of applause.

[Applause]

Freddie's story is such a vivid reminder of why we should never give up on ourselves or each other. It is also inspiring proof of the transformational power of supportive housing.

[Applause]

Thank you everyone for joining us here today.

For the past 11 months, I have been traveling throughout New York City, throughout the five boroughs, talking to New Yorkers from all walks of life about mental health. And if there is one thing I have learned, it is that mental illness does not discriminate.

[Applause]

We are all susceptible. But that doesn't mean that everyone suffers equally. The challenges are especially tough for people with serious mental illness, like schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder. Imagine trying to find the right treatment – which is hard enough in the best of times – while grappling with a disease that just throws your whole world out of balance. Then add in the fact that our society does not treat diseases of the brain like other diseases.

[Applause]

When someone has a mental illness, we respond too often by pushing those people away and marking them with disgrace.

[Cheers]

For many New Yorkers – for many New Yorkers, especially those without financial resources and social support, it all adds up to catastrophe.

This mark of disgrace, this stigma has been found to have a serious negative effect on an individual's sense of hope and self-esteem. The stigma alone can increase the severity of symptoms.

And as the disease worsens, it gets – it becomes harder to get help. In the past year, 41 percent of adult New Yorkers with a serious mental illness said they needed treatment at some point, but did not receive it or delayed getting it.

When mental illness goes untreated, too often people end up losing their friends, their family, their jobs, and their homes.

Helping these New Yorkers put their lives back together will require a thoughtful and comprehensive approach. And that is exactly the kind of approach we are taking with ThriveNYC, our Roadmap for Mental Health, which we have started to roll out and will announce fully in the coming weeks.

[Applause]

The roadmap includes a broad array of initiatives designed to promote mental health, prevent mental illness, and make it easier for those who are suffering to access the treatment they need.

But for those whose lives have already been devastated by a serious mental illness, the first step to recovery is securing a safe place to call home.

[Applause]

And that is really just common sense. If all of someone's energy is focused on survival, there is no time to work on recovery. A home provides much more than shelter than the cold and rain – that's true for all of us. But for people who are dealing with a serious mental illness, a home is a lifeline.

[Cheers]

It provides the precious stability they need to heal, to recover, and become productive.

Now, I saw this for myself when visiting the shelters throughout New York City over the last 11 months. Residents told me about the terrible hardships they had endured as a result of their disease. They told me that they remained hopeful, despite everything they had been through. And they told me that their hopes depended on finding a place to call home – a safe and stable place to live and launch a better life.

Today, we announce a new initiative which addresses a root issue at the heart of both – both serious mental illness and homelessness. It will provide thousands of our most embattled neighbors with their best chance yet at transforming their lives for good. It is bold, it is ambitious, and it is laser-focused on achieving tangible, long term results for the people of this city.

I could say the same things about the man it is now my pleasure to introduce. Ladies and gentleman, it is my pleasure to introduce Mayor Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, thank you, everyone. Thank you so much.

And I have to first give some credit where credit is due. I remember when Chirlane started talking about what we had to do to change our approach to mental health in this city, and how much it was going to take – how different the approach was going to have to be if we were going to actually reach people in need; if we were going to knock down the stigma that still surrounds mental health.

Even in 2015, in the biggest city in the country, the greatest nation on earth, we still are grappling with the stigma every single day, in every single family, on the question of mental health.

And my wife had the audacity to believe that this city should lead.

[Applause]

And she pushed us all forward. She believed that there were solutions we could reach even if the conventional wisdom said they couldn't be done. She listened to the voices of families all over this city. She learned the stories of people like Freddie, who needed help and understood the transformative impact that that help would give. By the way, I would like to say, Freddie you are a very poised public speaker and a sharp dresser as well, thank you.

[Applause]

So a lot of people here have worked for years and years towards the day when mental health services would be given the respect and the resources they deserve. You've worked years and years towards the day when we finally got to talk in serious ways and in serious numbers about supportive housing. You all deserve immense credit for your fortitude and your foresight and for sticking with it. And you have a champion in City Hall, and she is our First Lady. Let's thank her.

[Applause]

Yesterday, Chirlane announced the part of one of a series of new initiatives to address mental health. We're very proud of what she announced yesterday. Again, something that somehow was ignored and shoved under the rug for years and years – maternal depression; talked about it enough to know it was there, but we never grappled with it. We didn't look it in the face. And as Chirlane said powerfully yesterday, the guilt and the confusion that so many women felt after child birth without the knowledge of where to turn or how to address it; or how to get support or how to get affirmation that that is something many, many people experience and they have a right to help when they experience it. Well, the key initiative announced yesterday on screening and support for women to help identify and treat maternal depression, that alone will change the lives of tens of thousands of women in this city over the next few years. It will be a key part of our ThriveNYC Plan, so, Chirlane, thank you for that as well.

[Applause]

ThriveNYC, our very bold plan to address mental health issues in this city; if you've seen the beginning today marks another step. You will see a much bigger unveiling in the coming days. The goal is to reach people in so many different ways – to address these issues that have gone unaddressed and in so many cases unspoken of.

Well, today, we focus on addressing a problem that has already a solution, but the solution wasn't embraced sufficiently. We know – and Freddie's example makes it clear but there are many, many others – we know there are men and women and even in some cases families in our shelters and our streets that have struggled with mental illness, and substance abuse. We know they have needed a place to live that came with support and could make their lives again, so they could move forward. We've known it. We know this is one of the ways to get to the root of the matter, as Chirlane always says not to deal with the superficiality or the symptoms but get to the root of the problem. And we know the fact that people struggle with mental illness when they're homeless in many cases. It's part of the homelessness crisis of today and its part of the moral crisis of today. Freddie talked about his example; it reminded me of something Cardinal Dolan wrote so powerfully about a few months ago. In this society we need to think of each of our fellow New Yorkers as a human being; as someone dealing with their challenges like every one of us; and sometimes –

[Applause]

– sometimes people get overwhelmed by those challenges, but that doesn't mean we give up on them. That doesn't mean they're any less good a human being. Cardinal, I thought very powerfully talked about his own life journey where as a child he used to think ill of someone who appeared to have fallen out of society. He talked about dressing up as a quote-unquote "hobo" for Halloween when he was a child. And then he realized in adulthood what that meant. Whether he intended or not it was making light of someone's struggle. And to his great credit he talked about that very openly; about how we have to think about reaching each and every human being because they can be and must be reached. And you what happens when you reach someone, in so many cases they turn around. And as Freddie said they get back on their feet; they reconnect with their family; they become ever more productive in our society. And then a lot of them turn around and help others who face the same challenges – talk about a virtuous circle.

[Applause]

So that's why we're announcing today a major new investment to address these issues head on. This will include an additional \$1 billion dollars in city capital funding, and will allow us – yes –

[Applause]

– which will allow us to create 15,000 units of supportive housing.

[Applause]

And these units will all come with on-site services of the type that Freddie just talked about, the things that actually turn people's lives around.

[Applause]

The mental health care, the physical health care; the alcohol and substance abuse programs; all the things we know work, but they only work if they reach people.

[Applause]

This will be permanent housing designed specifically for New Yorkers who don't need just shelter, but need the support to get well. We want them to get well; we have to help them get well; we know they can get well; we are devoted to helping them on their path to wellness.

[Applause]

15,000 supportive units will mean 15,000 lives changing; 15,000 new ways to take action. Now, let's be clear, the City of New York is acting. We're acting decisively. We are not waiting on Albany.

[Applause]

We appreciate – and I want to affirm we have a number of leaders who work in Albany who are standing here with us today – you're going to hear from some of them – who have been standing up on this issue. And I'm going – I want you to hear about them. In a moment, I'm going to thank them. There has been an unprecedented outpouring of support from our State Senators and our Assembly members, not just from New York City, from all over the state – from both parties on the need to address supportive housing. And I want to thank them for that.

[Applause]

Sometimes there are stereotypes that the two parties can't see eye to eye or that upstate and downstate have differences. I'll tell you one thing, if there's issue that unites Republican and Democrat, upstate and downstate it is the need for supportive housing all over this state.

[Applause]

So, I appreciate deeply the strength of that leadership, but we're not waiting because we have to address this issue now, and we want to show that the City of New York is present and accounted for to make these changes.

[Applause]

We're investing more than any other administration has ever invested in supportive housing because that is what today's reality demands; because we can't ignore what people are going through; you can't ignore folks who suffer from mental illness; you can't ignore folks with a drug or alcohol program; we can't ignore victims of domestic violence. We have to reach them.

[Applause]

And there's that saying that success has many mothers and fathers, I want to thank a number of people that are here who contributed to developing this plan; who supported the notion that we had to act now; who are fighting for us in Albany; who are providing the services every day. There's a reason we could get to this vision because so many people laid the ground work. So, I'm going to thank them all, from our administration, First Deputy Mayor Richard Buery; HRA Commissioner Steve Banks; DHS Commissioner Gil Taylor; Veteran's Affairs Commissioner Loree Sutton; ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrion; Health First Deputy Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot; Deputy Commissioner of Development at HPD Eric Enderlin, and Budget Director Dean Fuleihan. Give them all a round of applause for their help.

[Applause]

I mentioned – I mentioned those who are fighting in Albany. I want to single out the leaders here who serve in Albany for whom this is a passion – I really want to – I really want to say this, this is not just another part of the agenda for them. They feel this; they care about; they know what it means to the people of their communities and they have been real core allies in this fight. I want you to thank Senator Liz Kruger, Senator Kevin Parker, and Senator Marty Golden for their extraordinary efforts.

[Applause]

And from the Assembly – an extraordinary number of assembly members have joined this effort and we thank them all. I want to thank Assembly member Jo Ann Simon for her leadership, a longstanding advocate on these issues; from the City Council, where we've had tremendous support and Chirlane met with a group of councilmembers today to keep them updated on the progress of these efforts, Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez and Councilmember Ben Kallos, thank you very much.

[Applause]

I want to thank – there are so many advocates here; so many people who provide services; so many community leaders. There are faith leaders and clergy leaders here. So many people have been doing this work for years, often unsung heroes. I want to sing your praises. I want to thank you for the hard work year after year after year.

[Applause]

This wonderful facility – I want to thank everyone at Breaking Ground, the largest supportive housing provider in the nation, thank you.

[Applause]

I want to thank Laura Mascuch, the Executive Director of Supportive Housing Network of New York.

[Applause]

And someone I've turned to for support and guidance for a long time, Jennifer Jones Austin. Thank you for being here with us.

[Applause]

Now, just a couple more points, and then I want you to hear from some of our colleagues.

We have been fighting the homelessness crisis on every front. This is a key part of that effort going forward, but we have been fighting to protect tenants from eviction with the biggest commitment ever of legal aid and legal services to stop eviction. We have been fighting to get folks to better options with rental subsidies, or to keep them in their apartments before they lose them with the right rent subsidy.

[Applause]

And we will keep doing all of that, but this is the next logical step – to create the permanent supportive housing needed to help people get their lives back on track. And I'll tell you, this place where we are today is proof of it – 652 apartments here, and so many success stories like Freddie's. It is a reminder of what we can do – of how we can reach people and how we can succeed.

[Applause]

You know, before people came to this place, many of them, their lives were broken. You heard Freddie talk about it very bluntly – their lives were broken. There is no other word for it. They didn't have hope.

Here is a statistic that should give everyone urgency and belief: 99 percent of the residents here in this place remain stably housed, despite all the challenges they have faced.

[Applause]

And that is not only good for those individuals and their families – that is good for all New Yorkers.

[Cheers]

That is upholding the values of this city.

[Applause]

And you know what it also means? In so many cases, it means one fewer person who tragically ends up in a city hospital, or a prison, or a shelter. We have to think about it in those terms too – one fewer person each time. Each time we reach someone with supportive housing, it is another person who is not on the streets or not in our criminal justice system.

[Applause]

And that is humane, and that is first and foremost about our belief in what we owe our fellow human being. I'll tell you something – I'm a taxpayer too. And I believe my taxpayer dollars are a lot better spent reaching people and turning their lives around, then continuing to watch them fail over and over again.

[Applause]

We want fewer and fewer people in Rikers Island because of a mental health or a substance abuse problem.

[Applause]

So we are resolute. We are going to take this step, we are going see it through to completion, and we are going to fix what is broken. And I am very proud today to say that New York will lead the way in showing that we can address this problem head-on.

[Applause]

A few words in Spanish before I introduce a few of our colleagues –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

[Applause]

My wife is watching out for me, and asking about some of the notable elected officials I did not acknowledge yet – that is because they are about to speak.

[Laughter]

But she is my conscience.

[Laughter]

First, someone who has worked on these issues for many, many years with real passion, and has tremendous expertise. And we thank her for her great partnership, the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Thank you to everyone. We are now going to take questions on this topic and then we'll take questions on other topics as well – on this topic first. Yes.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I mean, a lot of people are talking about NY/NY 4 today. The Governor put out a statement last night, or his spokesperson put out a statement last night, saying he's committed to supportive housing, he's committed to ending homelessness in New York. Are these negotiations still going on? Every one – people, the press were anticipating that you two would making an announcement together, so why go out – go out on your own and do this?

Mayor: It was necessary to act. It's as simple as that. It was necessary to act. There have been different ideas put forward now over the course of this year. I went up to Albany in February and testified in favor of a NY/NY

4 plan but it became clear in the course of the year that we need even more and we need faster action and it was time for New York City to act. It's as simple as that.

[Applause]

Question: Can you explain what you think the holdup is? Is the governor himself reluctant? [Inaudible]

Mayor: Look at what's happening in the legislature now, I can safely say, it is rare to see – I'll let my colleagues from Albany speak for themselves, but I think it's rare this level of agreement within the Senate, within the Assembly, is an extraordinary number, overwhelming number of members in the Senate and Assembly that have signed onto the notion of a much larger NY/NY 4 agreement. Even compared to what was thought about in the beginning of the year because we've seen what's happened and I've talked to you guys about it a lot. We see a changing reality of homelessness that we have to address. And so the legislator has been extraordinary, they have been providing a lot of leadership here. It's time for action, so I don't want to speak for anyone else, in terms of how they make their decisions. I think we're seeing a lot of leadership from the legislator, we knew it was time for New York City to act and my hope is this will lead to a better outcome for everybody.

[Applause]

Question: Mr. Mayor [inaudible] Mr. Cuomo's been asked about homelessness and NY/NY, he said that he thinks the city should do more. Is this you showing the governor that the city's doing more or – and do you think it'll sway it him at all, you know adding more to NY/NY?

Mayor: The city just did more.

[Applause]

Mayor: I think it speaks for itself. I think – I think resources on the table, commitment on the table, a solid, specific plan, as Senator Golden said, not just for the capital dollars, for the operating dollars. We are taking responsibility for everything that can be asked of us. We want the state, now, to get into this and provide support for New York City, by the way, for the whole state. As I said, this is a statewide consensus; it's time for the state to step up.

[Applause]

Mayor: And I want to note – I want to note, we are very proud – in fact, a lot of work went into this plan. We are very proud of the fact that not only do we think it's the right thing to do but we believe you're going to see, over the years, this is the enlightened thing to do, because it's not only going to turn a lot of lives around, it will also save a lot of money in the process, we're convinced of that.

[Applause]

Mayor: Because, again, everyone who ends up in a city hospital because they didn't have the right support, everyone who ends up in a prison, everyone who ends up on the streets, there are massive human costs, first and foremost, but there's real economic costs as well. So, this is about actually trying to address the issue at its root.

Question: Do you anticipate some of this supportive housing will be on Staten Island –

Mayor: All five boroughs.

Question: As a follow-up, do you think that anyone who wouldn't support it, on Staten island, where there has been some push back in the past, towards this type, is a pain in the ass, as the Manhattan Borough President put

[Laughter]

Mayor: Gale Brewer is a little more colorful than I am. Look, I think it is the right thing to do, I think you see, again a bipartisan consensus, you've heard the voice of the cardinal. I think many many elected officials believe it's the right thing to do and the consistent thing to do. I understand why people are very troubled when they see our fellow human beings struggling on the streets. I understand that. This is the answer. People should embrace this answer. It's as simple as that.

[Applause]

Question: I was just wondering what it was that since February, you said you testified Upstate. So what – what conditions on the ground or what have you – conversations, persuaded you that more units were needed and –

Mayor: We looked at the numbers. We realized that there was a way to get this done on a bigger scale. Again, we had had a lot of discussion – I made a very public request of the state back in February. We weren't seeing the kind of forward motion we needed, it was just time to act.

Question: I'm sorry, just as far as the timeline of when the units are going to be rolled out. Is it towards the middle –

Mayor: Some will be online next year. It is a 15 year plan. Obviously with everything we do the goal is to move as quickly as possible but some will start to be available for New Yorkers in need next year.

Question: -- was also going to ask about the timeline, since New Yorkers seem to feel, right now their concerns about the numbers of homeless people on the street. Is there anything that you can do to help the people that are on the street now? Would we have to wait as long as 18 months –

Mayor: Right now. We're doing it right now. This is one piece of a much bigger plan. Everything we've talked about, in terms of safe havens, Gale Brewer referenced, we have 500 safe havens opening up, largely with the help of houses of worship all over the city. That's going to get a lot of people off the street.

[Applause]

That is a – I want to emphasize, that is a different approach than was employed essentially in the past. That is a smaller, more intimate – to many homeless people, a safer, more inviting environment. The fact that they will be located in houses of worship is crucial in terms of the faith it gives homeless folks and making the choice to come off the streets. Those safe havens are coming online right now. Obviously we're helping people not become homeless in the first place with the anti-eviction legal services, with the rental subsidies. All of this will continue, but this new piece, starting next year, is going to start to take a lot of folks who have not had stable housing and get them to it. That's going to allow us to turn to the next person, and the next person, and the next person and get them help.

Please.

Question: Seeing as it's difficult to site some of these places, as Gale Brewer pointed, have you thought of doing something like getting like a cruise ship or something like that that could be a short term solution, where you wouldn't have to deal with community opposition?

Mayor: I – I think we will get this done, because we have a lot of support on the ground. Again, there is a lot of bipartisanship on this issue. The faith communities are very strongly involved. I have confidence that we will find locations.

Question: [inaudible] properties have been identified yet, and where would they be?

Mayor: The plan, obviously, just being announced today – you know, it is going – we are going to start that work tomorrow. But we do know – we do know from recent experience, there is a lot, again, of faith communities that want to help us find locations, and others. So we are confident we will find locations.

Henry.

Question: Can you explain the finances of this – how much is going to come from the [inaudible]?

Mayor: I think it is Dean Fuleihan time. He has been waiting in the bullpen this long.

[Laughter]

Dean Fuleihan, our Budget – give this man a round of applause, because he helped to make this happen.

[Applause]

Director Dean Fuleihan, Office of Management and Budget: As the mayor identified, over the 15 years, the total development cost is \$2.6 billion dollars. The city contribution to that is \$1 billion dollars. Of that, they are already in the housing plan. This was a key component – this actually allows the affordable housing plan, that component of it, to move forward. So that actually was most of that billion. There is another roughly \$384 million dollars that will be added to the plan over the – over that 15 year period. That's the capital component. And we are picking up in this 100 percent of the operating on these 15,000 units.

[Applause]

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: On the question about finding the [inaudible], the amount that was already coming from – of the billion dollars that was already coming from the housing plan, is that money that is being divergent [inaudible] –

Mayor: No. No, there is 6,000 units that were in the plan all along related to supportive housing. The rest is outside and beyond the affordable housing plan. Remember, now, the affordable housing has about eight years to go. This plan will go farther, because we are announcing today a 15 year plan. Do you want to –

Question: Can you just say more about who the private sources of funding are for the gap between the [inaudible]?

Director Fuleihan: There are two – they are private developers. It will be similar to what – to the way the affordable housing plan is done. At every single level, there will be private developers. There are also low income tax credits that this is perfect for, and that will be a significant part of this.

Question: [Inaudible]

Director Fuleihan: You know, that will be part of each one of the development negotiations going forward.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Director Fuleihan: Yes, but the question was the – what – how much from – I will try to get you a breakdown of the low income tax versus the private developer.

[Applause]

Mayor: Alright. Yes.

Question: [inaudible] the city has stepped up its contribution from 12,000 units initially to 15,000. What exactly do you want to see –

Mayor: No, the 12 was originally going to be split 50-50, so it's six and six – six city, six state. We are going far beyond that.

Question: So now, what do you want to see from Governor Cuomo and the state?

Mayor: You know, again, with the leadership of Senator Parker, Senator Kruger, Senator Golden, Assembly Member Simon, and many, many, many of their colleagues – I cannot emphasize enough – it is a stunning number who have signed onto a vision of more than doubling what we have put forward – and that is for the whole state, not just for the city. I am going to defer to all of these members of legislature – I think they have a vision, and we are showing we are very, very committed to that vision. So I think that is a great model, and it is time for Albany to act, obviously.

Yes.

Question: Do you know the dollar amount in terms of the operating costs?

Mayor: The operating costs. I have something here, but I want the man himself to do [inaudible] –

Director Fuleihan: In the – in the first year of the – the next fiscal year of the city, it will about \$8, \$9 million dollars. It will grow through '19 to about \$55 million dollars, because there are offsetting savings. It's about \$30,000, roughly – it depends on the units – about \$30,000 dollars a unit, which is much better than what we end of doing in, obviously, in a shelter or in a jail.

Mayor: Yes. And that's –

[Applause]

Mayor: And I want to emphasize – then I am going to ask Dean and everyone at OMB to provide our colleagues in the media with a clear break out of what it costs when someone goes to Rikers, what it costs when someone goes to any other type of outcome that is not fair for them, and how much better this is.

Director Fuleihan: And those are city savings. There are actually state savings that are part of this. There are clear Medicaid savings on this, and there are also SSI savings. Once you are helping an individual, there are – we can then draw down on SSI for them as well, which is an additional enhancement [inaudible].

[Applause]

Question: [Inaudible] understanding of the numbers. If the initial plan called for 6,000 units and about \$600 million dollars, how – how are you generating the 15,000 units with only \$400 million dollars [inaudible] –

Mayor: We will get you a full break out, because, again, it is – some of it is the use of tax credits and other methodologies, so we are 15 years – we will get you a full break out later on in the day.

Anybody else on this topic? On this topic – go ahead.

Question: I asked the press office to provide some of this information, and they have been telling me it is going to be in the next capital plan, so I –

Mayor: Right, a lot will be in the next capital plan, but we can get you some break out such as it is. As Dean says, some of this happens in the doing of it – some of the specific numbers come into place. But the facts that we have today that we can give you, we will give you today.

Okay, on this topic. We are still on this topic. Everyone's clear? On this topic, media questions only. Go.

Question: How much demand is there currently, and if you had these 15,000 units online right now, how many people in the homeless [inaudible] have applied for these homeless [inaudible] and have not been able to get in? [Inaudible] –

Mayor: You mean, like the current waitlist in effect – okay, to Gil, Steve – who has a sense of that?

Okay, Steve right behind me.

Commissioner Steve Banks, HRA: What we do know and what the Coalition for Supportive Housing study shows is that for every slot there are five people vying for that slot, and this is a tremendous breakthrough to begin to provide the resources for the people who can't get access to essentially the life sustaining kinds of housing that's going to be made available through the plan.

Question: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Banks: No, it's – if you look at the populations that this serves – this isn't – supportive housing isn't for everyone. We've been adding people who are survivors of domestic violence, veterans, people who are street homeless – those are new categories, but the categories in the prior supportive housing initiatives included people that have HIV/AIDS, people that are chronically homeless, that have mental health needs, that have substance abuse needs. So it's – of that population within the shelter system – there are about five people for every one slot that's available. So this will make –

Mayor: [Inaudible] – for every one current supportive housing slot?

Commissioner Banks: Correct. So it will make a tremendous difference by filling that gap.

Commissioner Gilbert Taylor, Department of Homeless Services: And also to add it would be a tremendous resources for street homeless clients who are in our safe havens who are waiting for housing resources to come in. So for the sheltered and unsheltered, this is going to make a difference.

[Applause]

Mayor: And just one further elaboration on that – the goal, of course – we know, again, some of what people see every day and believe is someone who is quote-unquote “street homeless,” permanently street homeless is actually someone who does have some kind of shelter, not obviously necessarily what we want them to have, but is out in day time hours. There's also several thousand people who are permanently on the street. For that particular group of folks who we need to reach better, that's where the safe havens come in, and we've proved, and we've seen in a lot of evidence that they bring people in better. They're much more appealing for folks to come in.

[Applause]

But then as Gil said, once someone is receiving through the safe haven the mental health services, the substance abuse services, and they're stabilizing, you want to get them into a longer term housing solution. As these units come on live it's – online more and more it's going to mean that people can come into a safe haven and then get that help more quickly, and that's a very powerful tool.

Okay, who has not gone yet? Have you gone yet? Well you're going now anyway, go ahead.

Question: How difficult was it to create this announcement or create this policy without a Deputy Mayor overseeing homelessness. And do you have any status update on that search?

Mayor: You know what we do with personnel. When we have an announcement, we'll certainly let you know, but I think the team's done a great job and continued the work seamlessly and obviously came to a very powerful proposal.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: How many units of supportive housing does the city have now? Do we know that answer?

Unknown: 32,000.

Mayor: Thank you, chorus.

[Laughter]

Steve, Gil, do you confirm that number?

Unknown: Yes.

Mayor: We have a consensus, 32,000 today.

[Laughter]

Go ahead.

Question: Your office just put out a release with more than three dozen elected officials expressing support for this plan. None of those elected officials are on Staten Island. Do you have any support for this on Staten Island?

Mayor: Again, this is a brand new plan and I think we're going to have a lot of support all over.

Question: Mr. Mayor, your message to New Yorkers who are concerned about homeless – what do you say to them today?

Mayor: This is going to change things for homeless people. And this is going to change lives in our communities. Look, I understand people's frustrations. Obviously, they see people suffering and we don't want that for our fellow human beings, and we understand that that creates a pain for people in every sense. It creates a sorrow. We don't want that. We want to help people; we want to get them to a good solution. This is going to allow us to do it. We're not waiting on anyone else. We're going to get the job done here in New York City.

[Applause]

Okay, on topic. Last call, on-topic? Going once; going twice – off-topic. Off-topic.

Yes, sir.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Say it again.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Chancellor Farina has spoken very clearly about this. We are very deliberative in anything we do related to metal detectors. It's going to be a school by school examination of what's going on. Safety comes first. By far the number one consideration in this will be what keeps our kids safe, and I say that as a parent – and a New York City public school parent, along with Chirlane McCray – until June we had that status. But we also know there are some schools that have had a changing situation where they've become safer and safer, and where principals have asked for consideration to remove metal detectors. We're going to look on that but it is going to be based on the facts, and a very, very careful evaluation. There's no blanket policy.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: There's no place for any weapons in public schools. Now, thank God it is a lot less –

[Applause]

– thank God it is a lot less than in the past, but it's unacceptable and we obviously have very strong penalties whenever a weapon is brought into a school. But I think there's a – you're asking two very different questions. Our schools are a lot safer than they used to be; we have to make them safer still. But that is a different question than whether any given school might believe it would better off without a metal detector. Again, that's going to be a decision made based on facts, and based on real statistics and real evidence. But if that evidence isn't available, of course, we're going to keep the metal detectors in place at any school.

[Applause]

Question: Just to [inaudible] earlier this week about Syrian Refugees coming to New York City. You know, earlier in the week, we didn't really hear that much from you about it earlier in the week. I'm wondering if it was a decision that you had to think over a little bit, and then – what could New York City actually do to spur refugees from coming here or to welcome them? I know that not that many have come into the United States so far – [inaudible].

Mayor: A couple of different things I'd like to say about this. First off all, to the question, how many have come – there's been a grand total of eight individuals from the Syrian crisis who have come to New York City as refugees. The only way this works is with very careful screening, very extensive screening, and that is a prerequisite to any refugee coming into this country, to New York City or anywhere else. And the Secretary of Homeland Security has spoken very bluntly to that fact – a multi-layered, slow, deliberative screening. I wanted to make sure before I spoke that we had gotten all our facts together, and were absolutely certain about how this city wanted to approach it. And I am satisfied that we are ready to support victims of one of the worst humanitarian crises of our generation. That is the right thing to do morally; that it is consistent with New York City's values; and that it can be done safely, but it will take time and it will be a very, very deliberative process. And that's something I obviously talked through with Commissioner Bratton and our entire public safety team. Another thing that has motivated me is my anger and my disgust at the statements of Governor Christie. This is a nation of immigrants, and we are sitting here in the city that has the Statue of Liberty in it, that is the epitome of welcoming immigrants over generations.

[Applause]

By the way, those immigrants were in many, many cases fleeing violence and persecution. This is not a new reality in human history, and I'm certain some of those immigrants were Governor Christie's forbearers. So I find it absolutely hypocritical for anyone to say, let us shut our borders to people who are victims of violence; the innocent people who are fleeing a humanitarian crisis. That is un-American.

[Applause]

Two – two other points on this. In 1938 – we'll get you the background on this – in 1938, there was a poll. Very important year in world history – there was a poll of Americans on whether they would be willing to accept more Jews fleeing persecution in Europe. Two-thirds said no. In this survey in 1938, two-thirds said no, we should not accept people fleeing persecution. The results were devastating. We are not going to make that mistake in our time. And voices of intolerance and voices of division are not going to cause us to do something that's against our very values. And finally, and allow me to be blunt and graphic, I'd like to know what Governor Christie says about this – this is the cost of not bringing in people who are innocent victims of a humanitarian crisis. This child's death was on the front pages of newspapers all over the world. This image gripped the world, literally. Governor Christie specifically said he did not think it was appropriate for small children to be brought in. Is this what he wants to see happen to people? Is this what he wants to see happen to children? We don't accept that here in New York City.

[Applause]

Yes.

Question: Mayor, can you be a little more specific, though? How many refugees [inaudible] the city take, given what [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yes, of course.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No, it's a very good point. First of all, I want to emphasize, we are a city of 8.5 million people. To date, we have accepted eight refugees. That is one in a million. Second, when refugees come here, they come under a specific sponsorship plan of one kind or another. This is something we have seen with previous refugees from the Vietnam War and other crises – there is a specific plan organized by the government. They don't just show up on our doorstep. There are sponsoring organizations and individuals. And that means identifying ways to support them upon their arrival. So this something that has to be done deliberately and carefully, but it can be done. It's very different that the efforts we make to take care of our own people in need, like what we're describing today. But, again, this is one of the great international cities of the world, and we stand for a set of values and we have to therefore reach out our hands to people in time of need, but it is a very, very different kind of help that gets provided to someone who is a victim of a humanitarian crisis thousands of miles away then what we do for our own neighbors right here.

[Applause]

Question: National Geographic is airing a show tonight in which they renamed Staten Island Heroin Island NYC. I was wondering if you had any thoughts about that characterization.

Mayor: I think we have a real challenge and the NYPD is very, very focused on it. And our school system is very focused on it. It's deeply disturbing, but we're putting the tools in place to address it. This is not something we would have predicted ten years ago, but it is something that's now part of the reality in Staten Island and other places in the city, and we have to address it very, very vigorously.

Question: Mr. Mayor, if they were completely vetted, would you take one of these Syrian families at Gracie Mansion?

Mayor: Well, I will do everything I can to make sure that any families that come in have a good accommodation. So I don't want to speak to that specific idea, but I can tell you this much, we will make that if anyone is thoroughly vetted, we're going to do everything we can with the federal authorities to find them a good place.

Question: Do you support the attorney general's efforts on the online betting – DraftKings, you know, trying to take them to court [inaudible].

Mayor: I missed the end of that.

Question: [Inaudible] are you supporting Schneiderman's efforts?

Mayor: I don't know all the details. I support the efforts of Attorney General Schneiderman overall. We have a very close working relationship. I think he's doing a lot of great work for the state. And I think he's certainly pointing at an area that needs a lot more regulation. But, again, I don't know the details of all he's doing. Yes?

Question: Mayor, with former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver now on trial [inaudible], do you still agree with your previous statement calling him a man of integrity?

Mayor: Well, he like every American, is innocent until proven guilty. I am obviously very troubled by the thing I've heard and they're very different from everything I had seen and heard previously and everything I experienced. When I spoke, I spoke about my relationship over many, many years with him, and the way he comported himself in that relationship. I'm very, very saddened by what I've been hearing. But it's not fair of any of us to prejudice until the justice process takes its course.

Question: [Inaudible] Do you play fantasy sports [inaudible]?

Mayor: No.

Question: Subway crime violence, subway crime like robberies and felonious assaults are up and arrests are down – your reaction to that.

Mayor: My reaction is I think the NYPD has done something extraordinary over the last two decades in bringing down subway crime. What we used to experience in the subways was mayhem. Today we have not only order, we have the highest subway ridership we've ever had – well over six million people a day on many days. We have right now 6.64 crimes per day in our subways. That means still roughly a one in a million chance of being a victim of crime. The kinds of crimes that happen – every crime we take seriously, but the typical subway crime is the theft of electronics, an iPhone and other electronics. That's not a minor matter, but it's not at all what we used to experience in the subways. I think NYPD is doing a great job. I want to give you two examples just in the last few weeks. The arrest of Joshua Armstrong in the subway – seven prior arrests. He was stopped for a quality of life violation and found to have a fully loaded .22 caliber revolver. The arrest a few weeks ago of Gregory White, four priors, occupying more than one seat when he was arrested, ended up confessing to a homicide that had taken place earlier. So NYPD is very focused on our subways. They're getting at the bad guys, they're keeping crime under control, and I have confidence they will do better with every passing month.

Question: Mayor, Commissioner Bratton had a fairly harsh assessment of City Council, who are specifically, when it has to do with the NYPD, saying it was kind of limiting the NYPD's ability to do its job. Do you share that assessment and do you have any problem with one of your commissioners speaking so harshly about the group that you've worked very closely with?

Mayor: I don't share the assessment. I have had a very good working relationship with the City Council. I think the council has raised a host of very serious issues. I don't agree with the council on some of their proposed solutions, I've made that quite clear. But I think it has been a respectful and serious and substantive process throughout. Commissioner Bratton was speaking honestly, and I respect that, but I think in the end, we are continuing to work every day with the city council towards real solutions to serious issues. And that

combination that I know Commissioner Bratton believes in more than anyone, because he's lived it his life – bringing police and community closer together while driving down crime, we all share that goal. And if you look at the last couple of years, nine times out of ten, we've gotten to that goal together – the commissioner, the council and I have gotten then, and nowhere is that more apparent than the addition of 1,300 new officers. You'll see that take full effect over the next year, and that's going to have a big impact on public safety in this city. The civilianization of, I think it's almost 700 officers, who now – that will be an additional 700 officers on the street on top of the 1,300. Those initiatives were a joint effort between all of us, and as a result, as you saw just a couple of days ago, we now have a 500 plus officer anti-terrorism force, our Critical Response Command. That came out of the partnership of the mayoralty, the council, and the NYPD. So I think things are working, and we are going to get a lot done together

Unknown: Last question.

Mayor: Jonathan.

Question: Mr. Mayor, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will be in New York tomorrow to deliver a national security address, and also making several other appearances. Do you have plans appear with her or meet her while she's in town?

Mayor: I don't have such a plan, but I have gotten at least a little sense from the reporting of what she's going to talk about in terms of stopping the efforts of ISIS, and I commend her. I think it's abundantly clear that ISIS must be defeated, and can be defeated. And I remind people – it's a very painful moment – look, we're all feeling what happened in Paris. And I – again, I felt it very personally in January when I went after the previous attacks. But what you look at the history of different movements that sought to win their goals through terror, they are so frequently defeated. There were – I know enough history to say there were times, not even that long ago, when we used to talk about a particular terrorist group and feared what would, you know, what would become of all of us and how far they would reach. And one by one, they have been systematically undermined and defeated. ISIS must be defeated, and I believe ISIS will be defeated. And I think Secretary Clinton, to her great credit, is saying bluntly, the only goal we can have here is the full defeat of ISIS.

Thank you, everyone.

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