

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 19, 2020, 4:00 PM

MEDIA CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVER REMARKS AT A VIRTUAL
ROUNDTABLE**

Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Small Business Services: Welcome, everyone. Thanks for being here, again, for this highly anticipated event. The COVID crisis has highlighted the historical challenges facing Black-owned businesses in New York City. Recent analysis indicate that Black-owned businesses are up to twice as likely to close their doors during this pandemic. Now more than ever, it is essential that the City take steps to address the systemic racism that has posed barriers to the startup and success of these businesses and their economic livelihood. The urgency is real, but it's not new. As a former business owner myself, the barriers and challenges facing Black entrepreneurs, I have seen through lived experience. There are barriers that are deep and systemic and require a real commitment in order to remove them. And that's why we, at the City, have been working for over a year to design, develop, and launch a new series of investments and resources designed to remove those barriers to Black entrepreneurs. Since last September, we've spoken to 1,500 Black entrepreneurs to identify their needs, challenges, and recommendations about how we as a City can help this critical community thrive. It all happened before COVID, you know, which is part of our challenge. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic also highlighted the need for us to do this and do it now and quickly.

So, we are thrilled today to announce, with the Mayor, you know, our findings of the report. Top five needs, access to financing, reliable business education, resources and mentors, finding customers – right, growing your business – marketing assistance, affordable space, and networking and community. What we're doing about it today, we already announced – the first thing we're going to do is highlight the size and importance of this challenge, which we did this morning, announcing the BE NYC report with the Mayor. Building on previous administration announcements from the past few weeks, we've also confirmed new inaugural partnerships included with Mastercard, Ernst & Young, Goldman Sachs, and the Brooklyn Navy Yard to respond to these recommendations and collaborate to advance Black entrepreneurship in New York City. These partnerships announced today, and I will work with the founding BE NYC cabinet, many of them are here with us today, is only the beginning. We need the public private philanthropic and nonprofit sectors to join us in this work. Today, we're going to hear from leaders in New York City's business community who can speak to their own experiences building a business, and the gaps and opportunities to help Black businesses thrive.

But first we are joined by Mayor Bill de Blasio, whose administration has been working since its start to close the disparity minority and women-owned businesses face. Mr. Mayor, your commitment and dedication, I've seen firsthand. You have not only spoken about it, but you've been about it. You have dedicated yourself, your staff, and your resources to make sure that

equity is at the center of this administration. And I'm happy to have been a part of it and continue to be a part of that work. So, no other municipality has a 30 percent M/WBE utilization goal and we're taking it to another level today when our BE NYC report. Again, no other municipality in the country has this multi-pronged approach for Black-owned businesses. Mr. Mayor, can you tell us why is it important, and so important to the City and to you personally to really engage in this conversation today? Thank you, Sir, for being with us.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much, Jonnel. I want to tell everyone, first of all, I'm so thankful for all of you gathering with us. We really need to gather –

Unknown: [Inaudible] hear the Mayor –

Mayor: Can you hear me? Maybe not. Jonnel, can you hear? That sounds like a no.

[Laughter]

Hold on, technical difficulties.

Unknown: Alright – alright, excellent.

Mayor: There we go. Sorry about that. Thank you everyone for being a part of this today. This is a really important gathering and a lot of crucial partners all gathered together to make a change here. So, I want to begin with my thankfulness for everyone who's contributed to creating this extraordinary roadmap and everyone who is going to be a part of what we do from this point on to empower and strengthen Black-owned businesses. I want to thank Commissioner Jonnel Doris. I think one of the things that if you're a leader and you know what you're doing, you hire really smart people. So, I hired someone really smart in Commissioner Jonnel Doris. In his current role, in his previous role, leading our M/WBE efforts. I want to thank all the members, administration who have part of this. Obviously, then Commissioner Gregg Bishop played a key role in getting things started. It's been a great team effort. I want to emphasize the passion that the members of my team feel.

It's not business as usual to say the least. When Jonnel told you about that 30 percent goal. I remember the day we announced that goal. I remember the amount of doubt with which it was met – the sense that it sounded good but could it possibly be true? I remember when we set our initial goals, what that would mean in terms of dollar figures in our M/WBE efforts, and kept raising the goal, now to a \$25 billion plan of which \$16 billion has already been allocated. The fact is – you know, the old phrase from the movie, 'If you build it, they will come'. If you set that high goal and if you dream that dream, it's amazing how many times you can actually achieve it. We needed to add a 30 percent goal and we actually are now beginning to reach that goal in a sustained. We've fought some important battles in Albany and won to get the ability to give M/WBEs a lot more business. And we've announced a host of new policies, and we need further help from all of you and Albany to expand our ability to do even more, to reach Black-owned businesses. But today we're talking about the BE NYC plan. And you could say 'B-E NYC', but I like saying 'BE-NYC'. Not only does it sound better, I like it because of the message. And I think the world needs to come to grips with the reality. And maybe in this crisis

moment, some truths are becoming clearer. I am a proud mayor of a city, overwhelming majority of the residents in New York City are people of color. This is a proud people of color city. This is a proud Black city, two million people of African descent. One of the greatest concentrations on the earth of people of African descent in one place with extraordinary talent and ability, entrepreneurship creativity, all here in one place. So, when we talk about BE NYC, we are talking about a community that is the essence of New York City, but often it has not been given the recognition, respect or opportunity it deserved.

And this is how we change it. We use the tools of government aggressively and unapologetically to redistribute resources towards those who have done so much of the work, created so much of the wealth, but rarely got their share of that wealth. And that goes right down to the entrepreneur, small business person, individual who works so hard, but still doesn't get the capital they deserve, or the contracts they deserve, or the attention they deserve. The pattern is abundantly clear. No one in this conference needs to be further educated on this point. You all know it, lived it, have seen it. But it is not an immovable object. It's a moment of history where the disparities are sharper than ever and clearer than ever. Also, where the movement for social justice is strong, tells us that we need to do new things, and we need to do them with great energy and never, ever apologize for the fact that we are seeking economic justice. So, to me, the public sector must play the role that honestly, I wish more of the leading elements of the private sector would do on their own, but we'll help them do it.

And we do have some good examples today of companies, big companies who have stepped forward to be partners. And I do honor them. And I thank them. I'd like to see a whole lot more like them. I like people to not just talk about Black lives mattering, but invest in Black lives and purchase from Black-owned businesses and create lasting partnerships. We all know, again, I may be preaching to the choir here, but we all know that words are very, very easy and they also tend to be in the moment. It may be fashionable now to repeat certain phrases. I want people to do more than repeat a phrase. I want them to sign a check. I want them to shake a hand in partnership. I want them to actually do the hard work that leads to change. And so that's what this roadmap shows us can be done and in our time, it must be done. You know, I often reflect on the fact that we look back at past generations with respect, even in a sense envy. We look back at the Greatest Generation of World War II. We looked back at the Civil Rights generation of the 1950's and 60's. We probably all of us in one way or another say, wow, you know, wouldn't it be amazing to have been as great as them? But I think it is important to remember that this is our time. We have the chance to be our own greatest generation.

I am struck by the fact that if you listen carefully to the last speech Dr. King gave in Memphis, the lines about him and whether he would be able to continue on in his life get all the attention. But there's a much longer section of that speech, which is about the time in history. And he talks about if he could travel through time and see all the great eras of history, would he have wanted to stop and live in one of those? And came to the conclusion he actually wanted to be in America in the year 1968, because there was such possibility for change and justice. Well America, the year 2020, New York City in the year 2020 are an unprecedented moment, a transformative moment by any definition. For anyone who believes that one of the greatest moments in American history, one of the moments where our government actually answered the call of our people was the New Deal. While remember the New Deal came from the Great Depression.

What New Deal can come from this moment of crisis? And that's all of our responsibility to create it and to demand it.

So, I'll conclude by saying to everyone, I have no doubt what we can do. I have tremendous faith in everyone gathered here. You're all difference makers. You're all entrepreneurs who had to build from scratch. Imagine if we put all of our energies together. Imagine if we harness the full power of government to really change the dynamics for Black-owned businesses. To really reach for that day when the number of Black-owned businesses was representative of the number of Black people in New York City. Or the amount of capital aligned to the number of people. That's what we should aspire to. And today is an audacious step in that direction. So thank you everybody for your belief that we can make a change. And for your commitment. Let's take this roadmap and let's take it to the maximum together. Let's see just how far we can take this. And then let's go even farther. And I want to thank Commissioner Doris and his whole team. I know this is a labor of love if ever there was one. So with great confidence, I pass it back to you Jonnel, and I know you will make us all proud. Thank you, everybody.

###