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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY, FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON AND DEPUTY MAYOR RICHARD BUERY ANNOUNCE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Deputy Mayor Richard Buery: Welcome, everyone. It's so great to see so many of you here today. My name is Deputy Mayor Richard Buery, and I'm so proud to be here with these amazing parents – who we'll hear from in a minute – and also, of course, Secretary Hillary Clinton, and the first lady of New York City Chirlane McCray. And on behalf of Mayor Bill de Blasio, I want to welcome you all here to the launch of the New York City Children's Cabinet's Talk To Your Baby Campaign.

Still, first, I want to thank our amazing hosts here at the SCO Family – SCO First Steps Program – Laura Henseler and Joan Kuo, who we're going to hear from more in a minute. I also want to acknowledge one of my colleagues here, Greg Worrell, from Scholastic, who's one of our critical partners who I know is in the audience. Sophia Pappas from the department – New York City Department of Education, who's the director of early childhood education at the New York City Department of Education.

So a year ago, Mayor de Blasio created the New York City Children's Cabinet – a group of 24 agency leaders from health, to child welfare, to education [inaudible]. And I want to acknowledge some of the leaders of the Children's Cabinet who are here today; first of all, our amazing health commissioner, Dr. Mary Bassett; I want to also acknowledge Gladys Carrion, the commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services; and also Gabrielle Fialkoff, who's the director of the Mayor's Office of Strategic Partnerships.

Even though all of these agencies are involved in the Children's Cabinet, or often working with the same families, too often we're not working together. And so, in forming the Children's Cabinet, Mayor de Blasio challenged us to do things differently. He directed us to find way to collaborate to improve the lives of New York City's children and their families.

So, one of our first areas of focus has been our youngest New Yorkers. As you know, one of the mayor's signature initiatives has been the expansion of pre-kindergarten for all. Last year, at this time in New York City, there were 19,500 four-year-olds enrolled in full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten. Today, there are 53,000 children enrolled in full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten. And next year, our promise is that every four-year-old in New York City – every four-year-old who wants a seat in the full-day pre-kindergarten program will have one.

We know what transformative impact this will have in young people's lives. But we also know there's a lot that happens before young people are four-years-old and before they come to pre-kindergarten. The science tells us that a baby's brain is growing so rapidly between birth and age three that what happens in those first three year truly lay the foundation for all future learning and development. So that's why we want to close the inequality gap, close the achievement gap – and you know that we do. That's why it's so important that we start as early as we can.

So, today we're launching the Talk To Your Baby Campaign. We're keeping it really simple and to the point. Talk to your baby anytime, anywhere, anyhow – that's the whole message. The campaign will share information on the importance of talking to your baby, and give parents and caregivers the tools to do so. It includes subway ads; online ads; a really great video on [inaudible] TV; thousands of postcards distributed in English and Spanish through every city agency, through all the libraries – everything we can think of; and we're going to be giving parents free books, and we're going to hear a little bit about that in a minute. And I have to thank our partners at Scholastic, and at the Clinton Foundation, and at Too Small Too Fail for that. We're also creating the text platform where parents can get tools on how to talk to your child, how to talk to your babies.

We are so proud. I am thrilled, and a little bit start-struck today because we are –

[Laughter]

– I'm trying to be all cool as I sit here next to Hillary Clinton.

[Laughter]

I really want to – we're so proud that Secretary Clinton could join us here today. We really want to acknowledge your long-term leadership over the better part of four decades on this important issue. The Clinton Foundation has played such an amazing role in galvanizing national attention about the importance of early brain development, and language development, and the importance of building connections with children. Your leadership and what that spotlight gives to these issues really cannot be overstated.

With these simple steps – talking, singing, and reading to your baby can truly have a profound impact on young people's lives [inaudible]. Now, I grew up not too far from here in East New York and I've seen firsthand how too many children do not get that start. I've also seen among too many of my friends growing up how it becomes really hard to overcome those gaps in the early years. But why I'm so excited, because I know that we can change that. This is a message for parents across the city – here in Brownsville, on the Upper East Side, in the South Bronx, and Greenwich Village, and Staten Island – talk to your baby anytime, anywhere.

So I now have the honor of introducing Chirlane McCray. Chirlane and I worked together last year – I'd say with some success – to get the word out about pre-kindergarten for all, and I'm really thrilled to partner with you again on the Talk To Your Baby Campaign – Chirlane McCray.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you, Richard.

Deputy Mayor Buery: Thank you.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you, Richard, not just for that lovely introduction, but also for leading the charge to provide every four-year-old in the city with free, high-quality pre-kindergarten. I also thank your partners in that effort – the New York City's Children's Cabinet. I'm just so delighted to see here today Mary Bassett, our commissioner of health, and Gladys Carrion, our commissioner of children's services. I also want to give a big shout-out to Gabrielle Fialkoff, senior advisor to the mayor and director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships. Gabrielle and her team are responsible for the partnerships we're announcing today. And I thank the SCO family of services for hosting this gathering, and introducing us to those adorable babies and their adoring parents.

It was such a treat to sit in on story and music time. We really didn't want to leave. And I couldn't help but think back to my own experiences as a new mother. Every day was an adventure. There were moments – many moments – when Bill and I wondered, why is there no how-to manual? Why don't we have an army of nurses or teachers? And I think all parents can relate to that. And there were moments when I was filled with joy – so much joy – that I didn't think it possible to be happier. Many of those moments happened while I was reading

Chiara and Dante a story, singing them a song, or telling them how much I loved them. I wish – I really wish that I could say that I was following the example of my mother, and she was following the example of her own mother, but that's not the case. Although many parents and caregivers have performed the ritual of talking, reading and singing to their children for generations, it does not always happen and it does not always come naturally. And most parents do not fully understand why these adult-child interactions are so important.

Now, thanks to modern science, we understand why these traditions are so important. When we talk, read, and sing to our children, we are building their brains. And the bond between the child and the child – and the caregiver grows stronger. These are key elements of a strong intellectual and emotional foundation. And it's a foundation our children will build on as they make their way through school, and as they make their way through life. It's also a foundation that will help them to be resilient when times get tough. And we all know that life always has something to throw at us and this foundation really helps them be able to come back to that place of stability.

We want to make sure that every child in New York City experiences the benefit of these kinds of interactions. Now as Richard announced, we are launching a campaign to provide busy, hardworking New Yorkers with the information and the tools they need to be the best parents they can be, because traditions are not transferred by magic – they have to be learned. Which brings me to a wonderful new resource for the parents of babies and young children. I am very, very excited to announce a significant new partnership with Scholastic. Together with the Clinton Foundation, we will provide more than 200,000 high-need families with what a baby book bundle over the next two years.

Scholastic is providing us with three books – three children's books – and one of them is edited by me. It is called Love Is, and it features beautiful photos of New York parents and their kids connecting through play.

[Laughter]

And yes, I had so much fun working on it. The bundle also includes the Talking is Teaching book for families. This tool was developed by Sesame Street and Secretary Clinton's Too Small to Fail initiative. Talking is Teaching makes plain to parents the importance of building your child's brain, and it models ways to talk, read, and sing to your children. We are all eager to get the bundle into the hands of our families and help them start building their home library.

And everyone on Team de Blasio is excited to begin using a brand new resource that the Too Small to Fail team recently has developed for communities. To tell you more about this resource and the Sesame Street materials, I'd like to introduce my friend, Secretary Hilary Rodham Clinton. Secretary Clinton has long been at the forefront of the movement to make sure our young children have the nurturing and stimulation they need. In fact, her foundation's work in Oakland and in Tulsa inspired our Talk to Your Baby campaign. And we are so grateful to count her as a partner in this effort. Secretary Clinton.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: Thank you so much, Chirlane. And thank you for the extraordinary work and leadership that you're doing on behalf of this initiative and other important initiatives, especially regarding mental health, and particularly for our children and young people across New York. And Richard, thank you for those kind words, but for also bringing us together and making it possible for us to spend a few minutes talking about a really important issue – an issues that goes to the heart of what every person can do to make a difference in a young child's life. And in a few minutes we're going to hear from those parents around the table. We had a chance to see some of the children in their classroom as they were reading and singing. And as Chirlane said, we launched at the Clinton Foundation our Too Small to Fail initiative, and a public awareness effort to try to raise the importance of the very simple act of talking, reading, and singing to infants, and babies, and toddlers. And we did it because we were struck by the brain research that Chirlane just mentioned. You are literally building your baby's brain to better prepare that little boy or little girl to do well in school and do well in life. And so, we decided that we wanted to partner with communities, partner with the

media, partner with pediatricians, and others who could get that message out. And we have multiple initiatives in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Oakland, California; Fresno, California; and now we're thrilled to be partnering with the initiative that the de Blasio administration is announcing today.

The research is very clear that when the adults – parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings who are in a child's first school, which is a child's family – begin to interact with that child from the very earliest stage, you are building a very strong foundation. And then hopefully, your infant, your baby, your toddler will have a chance to come to a facility like this where the caregivers and teachers are trained to continue to do that. So from every experience, your child will be learning words, developing a vocabulary, making it possible to better prepare that child for school.

Now, little over a year ago, Chirlane, and the mayor, and I were up in Harlem talking to a group of children, teachers, and parents at a Head Start program that served a mostly bilingual community. And we had a great discussion listening to parents. And there was this point that I wanted to underscore, and that is we had several parents whose first language was not English – mostly Spanish – who asked, well, is it alright if I speak to them in Spanish? Because I want them to learn English. It's a great question. And the answer is, yes, absolutely because even though you want your child to end up learning English – in fact, you'll be way ahead of me because your child will be bilingual – I'm barely monolingual – so, by talking, and reading, and singing in Spanish you're helping to build that brain. And that will actually make it more possible for your child in school and in the community to pick up English.

So, this is a conversation we want to have with as many people as we possibly can reach. And I really commend the Children's Cabinet – what a great idea. Another great idea from the mayor to bring people together to collaborate, to try to get out of the silo that we're in. It's wonderful that the health commissioner, and the children's commissioner – that they're here today because everybody needs to be creative and smart about how we better prepare our kids for the future.

So to build on the really good work that is being done around the country, I'm very proud to announce that we are – through the Clinton Foundation's initiative Too Small to Fail – issuing today this Talking Is Teaching Community Campaign Guide. This guide, along with the other three materials, and the great support of Scholastic, will be available here in New York, as it will be in communities across the country because it, along with other materials, will help more people understand the importance of this. You know, some people, you know, they think, well, how can it be so important when it's so easy or it doesn't cost any money? And in fact, it's probably the most important thing you can do in connecting that way with your child. So you can go to our website, Toosmall.org, and see what else is available, and see some of the TV programs that we're working with – Univision is one of our great partners – very well-known series like Orange Is The New Black is a partner, and they've actually put into their broadcast information about the importance of reading, talking, and singing.

So, we're drawing on the lessons that we're learning, and I'm thrilled to be here to support this important effort. And I thank all of you for everything you're doing to make it happen. And I just have to end on a personal note. I have to confess, I was quite envious of Chirlane the other day when she burst into song.

[Laughter]

You know, I love to sing, but nobody wants to hear me sing. In fact, taking all this reading, talking, and singing to heart, I used to sing to my daughter all those years ago when she was a baby, every night. And I was just waxing on. And I would hold her in a chair, and sometimes we'd be looking out the window, and when you could see the moon I'd sing Moon River, my all-time favorite song at that time – until my daughter learned to talk. And the first words out of her mouth – just about – were to put her little finger on my mouth and say no sing, mommy, no sing.

[Laughter]

So, I had to stop singing, whereas the first lady can keep singing. But I did continue to read, and to talk, and have done the same thing with my new granddaughter. So, I am practicing what we are preaching, and I'm thrilled to be here in support of this important effort.

[Roundtable conversation begins]

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