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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPOINTS DR. OXIRIS BARBOT AS
COMMISSIONER OF THE CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL
HYGIENE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much, thank you Grace.

[Applause]

Grace, thank you for the great work you do and your colleagues do making sure that mental health services are available for all and really bringing it to the grassroots, and that makes a huge, huge difference. I want to thank you for this really, really important work, and I know – I know it's something, as you said, you dreamed of being able to have this kind of impact and you are having this impact, so thank you so much. And to everyone, welcome. Grace pointed out very importantly that the kind of work that's being done to ensure that healthcare reaches the grassroots of our city in a fair and equitable fashion. That work has been happening now for years and years and it's something that we needed for decades to have happened in this city, but it really didn't happen with the kind of urgency that the people of this city deserved until leaders like Dr. Oxiris Barbot came along and started to change things and started to ensure that all types of healthcare, mental health and physical health, reached to the grassroots. And if you get to know her you will quickly find that her focus has always been on the most profound concept of public health, public health that really reaches the public, public health that reaches the grassroots, that reaches across all boundaries, fairly and equally, this has been her life's work.

So as I've spent time and Chirlane and Dr. Palacio, we've all spent a lot of time in conversation with Oxiris Barbot about the future of this city and the future of healthcare, and ensuring that we have more equity, ensuring that we reach deeper, we reach a lot of people who are harder to reach, ensuring that mental health really is treated with parity. These conversations made 100 percent clear to all of us that Oxiris Barbot is the right person to lead the Health Department of New York City into the future. You know, when you think about what the Health Commissioner of New York City does, there are so many elements to the role, but I think one way to think about it is the Health Commissioner is the doctor for all New Yorkers, the ultimate voice when it comes healthcare, the person that all New Yorkers look to, and this is – we've seen this in

moments of crisis, all New Yorkers look to their Health Commissioner for the answers and we knew we needed someone who was an authoritative voice, who knew this city, who understood the needs of the people, who was first rate as a doctor, first rate as a manager, first rate as a communicator, and all those things are true of Dr. Barbot. So, I want to start today's event by saying congratulations, doctor, you are our new Health Commissioner.

[Applause]

I want to note that this is a historic moment in terms of a government that looks like New York City and represents all the people. Dr. Barbot becomes the first Latina and the first Puerto Rican woman ever to serve as our Health Commissioner. And I want to say that, again, as I got to know her work, and her life, and her history, I understand how much she has been shaped by her own personal experience, she'll speak to that, but I just want to congratulate not only you, but your family – the family that shaped you and I know is so proud today. Your resume is extraordinary and it's always been focused on getting healthcare to people who need it most. We all know, as a lot of people get a medical degree and they go off and do very well for themselves and there is no sin in that, but there's other people who get a degree and only think about how they can share those talents with others regardless of the ability to pay, that's Oxiris Barbot's life.

Started out her life in the Patterson Houses in the South Bronx – and Doctor Barbot is another example to all New Yorkers regardless of how much money you have, or how much opportunity your family has had, anyone should be able to reach the highest heights in this city, that's what we believe in, and certainly a message to all 400,000 New Yorkers who live in public housing, and particularly to their children, that you can aspire to the highest heights and get there. So this proud daughter of the Patterson Houses has shown people a great example and she has served this city a long, long time, was medical director in our schools for many years making sure our young people got the care they needed and modernizing a system that deeply needed it. She was the Health Commissioner at one of the places we all know is one of the toughest locals in this whole nation when she was in Baltimore for four years and she oversaw their reduction in the racial disparities that were so clear in healthcare, particularly when it came to infant mortality and really helped to protect lives in new and innovative ways. And as First Deputy Commissioner of our Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has helped us to steer us through some of the bigger – biggest crisis that we faced, of course Ebola, Zika, Legionnaires', all of the challenges that we have faced.

So I will conclude by saying it's a really special moment when you can identify someone who has all the skills and the abilities, all the experience, but also has the common touch, understands the lives of our people and understand how to reach them and how to help them, that's a special talent. And that's why we wall became convinced that Dr. Barbot was the right person to lead this extraordinary agency, this legendary agency. It's also crucial to a vision of fairness and you'll hear it in her voice, I know, fairness and equity have framed her life's work and we aspire to be the fairest big city in America. We need people in these key positions who feel that as a burning passion and I know Dr. Barbot does.

Just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to talk to – turn to my partner. She is my partner in all things and she was my partner in this process of determining how we could find the right person for this job and move forward, and one of the things that Chirlane raised in every meeting was the need to keep moving forward on the Thrive agenda and deepen it's impact and we're very, very happy that we know that is going to happen under the leadership of Dr. Barbot. My honor to represent – to present, I never said – to represent and present, our First Lady Chirlane McCray.

[Applause]

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you so much, Bill. Good afternoon, everyone. I am delighted to be here and join in the welcoming of Dr. Oxiris Barbot as our new Health Commissioner. I have great respect and appreciation for Dr. Barbot and how she approaches her work. I especially admire how she is always grounded in the evidence and in our communities.

Back in March, I witnessed her abilities when Dr. Palacio and I went to Puerto Rico to offer New York City's help to address the emotional devastation swept in by Hurricane Maria. Dr. Barbot led the Health Department team that traveled with us, and when she talked with the health care workers who were struggling to meet enormous needs under nearly impossible circumstances, I witnessed her strength and her compassion.

Dr. Barbot knows how to fight hard for the resources her patients need. She's had to do it for most of her career. She knows what it takes to push through barriers of language, of culture, of cost and geography to deliver the care every patient needs. And she knows how to bring people with different agendas together to achieve common goals.

She has proven that time and time again while running a federally qualified center in Washington, D.C, while serving New York City school children, and as Baltimore's health commissioner.

Dr. Barbot is one of those intellectual and thoughtful people who doesn't live in the clouds. She can take complicated ideas and break them down so they can be easily understood and implemented. And like the best public servants her focus, her passion, and commitment comes from her lived experience and the experience of the patients that she serves.

Dr. Barbot has dedicated her professional life to overcoming the disparities and injustices in our country's health care system which she saw so clearly in the early years of her career in Washington, D.C. She's also deeply committed to treating the whole person, understanding the long overlooked connections between body and mind, and recognizing the growing importance of collaborative care.

Dr. Barbot has exciting ideas for organizing the Health Department to better realize the realities of health care in today's New York City. The work of Thrive NYC is near and dear to her heart, and I know she will be an excellent partner as we continue to dismantle stigma and improve access to holistic health care in our neighborhoods across the city.

Her life and her life story have prepared her so well. I am excited to work with Dr. Barbot more closely in the years ahead to serve all New Yorkers. As we look to build on Dr. Bassett's powerful commitment to health equity and the opioid epidemic and address the mental health crisis, there is no leader better suited for this job. A few words in Spanish –

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

Gracias, and thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much.

[Applause]

And now to turn to our Deputy Mayor, Dr. Herminia Palacio who understands there's a lot of talent in the Bronx because she comes from the Bronx, understands there's a lot of talented Latinas in public service because she happens to be a Latina in public service, and believes that doctors who have been at the frontline in the work of public health under tough conditions are the right leaders to address the challenges we face today because that's exactly what she did for years and years in her work. Our Deputy Mayor, Dr. Palacio –

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Herminia Palacio, Health and Human Services: Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor and Madam First Lady. I am delighted to join you as you announce Dr. Barbot to be the next Commissioner of Health in New York City.

As a doctor and as a health professional, I was admittedly kind of picky about the recommendations I brought forth for your consideration. But it's very clear – you've already heard from the Mayor and the First Lady, and you'll hear in her own words, that Dr. Barbot's professional trajectory, her commitment to advancing health equity, her incredible experience as a pediatrician, her public health expertise, her understanding of New York City and of the Health Department make her the best person for this job. And at a personal level it is a great pleasure to see a dear colleague, a fellow Latina, and a sister from the Bronx take on this important role.

Her leadership means a lot to all New Yorkers because she will be the Health Commissioner for all New Yorkers but it's also really important to take a moment to note that her leadership will also mean something incredible for the young Latino and Latina New Yorkers here in New York City because for people to take the Mayor up and believe that they can achieve these types of positions, it helps so much to see themselves reflected in these positions.

I have complete confidence in Dr. Barbot's ability to manage the Health Department. I have seen it, felt it upfront. From making sure that it does routine things like issue birth certificates to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers born every year to ensuring that restaurants are safe and clean to preventing chronic diseases to increasing mental health services, making sure that they're integrated with physical health paradigms, to fighting the opioid epidemic to

investigating outbreaks and to responding to public health emergencies – this is a big role and a great fit for Dr. Barbot.

She boasts an impressive career and an inspiring personal journey. She brings the right skills at the right time to protect the health of New Yorkers. So, Dr. Barbot, I thank you for your partnership and leadership, and I so look forward to working with you closely in this new role.

And I, too, if you permit me, will say a few words in Spanish –

[Deputy Mayor Palacio speaks in Spanish]

[Applause]

Mayor: Alright, well now that we've said all these nice things about you –

[Laughter]

The woman of the hour, Dr. Barbot – congratulations.

[Applause]

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you, First Lady McCray, Deputy Mayor Dr. Palacio for the kind introduction and for the opportunity to serve my city and to lead the nation's premier Health Department. Thank you also to Principal Wiley for hosting us – I think I saw him back there. And to Grace Peluso, thank you for your work. And all of this is truly – it means a lot to me. It's an immense honor to be Commissioner of Health for the City of New York, the city of my birth, and to be the first Latina to do so.

As I reflect back, it feels as though every step of my journey has prepared me to lead this Department at this time when critical public health and social services are under threat at the federal level. Medicine and public health have served as my battle grounds for social justice. Throughout my career, I have sought to combat a stark reality that all too often a zip code may determine how long or how well someone lives. I lived in the 1-0-4-5-1 zip code until I was six, when my mom and I moved out of the Patterson Houses in the South Bronx. My mom [inaudible] was very young when she came from Puerto Rico in 1963, a young bride, not speaking any English. Ten years later, she met my step dad [inaudible] an immigrant from Guyana. And like many immigrants today, they struggled to get their footing and make a life for themselves and for their children. As most immigrants, they did it and they did it well. My parents, who have been together for over 45 years are here –

[Applause]

– Along with my brother, Wesley; my sister-in-law, Lynn, my niece, Layla; and my compadre, Robert. The most important things I learned from them and my accomplishments represent our efforts as a family.

While I managed to make it into an elite university, the experiences of my early years shaped me the most. Living in public housing, facing economic insecurity, lacking easy access to good healthcare, growing up in an immigrant household and navigating systems in a foreign language. It has always been very important to me to help people in situations and communities like the one in which I grew up. As I was preparing these remarks, I identified three themes that have played an outsized role in my career.

One – helping children and families who are poor, uninsured, or on Medicaid and unstably housed. Providing health education and advocating for services for my gay brothers and sisters. And three – supporting young people suffering trauma. I'd like to briefly elaborate on the last point, helping children and adolescents facing trauma.

So, as the Mayor mentioned, I was a medical director for the school system for seven years before I was tapped as Baltimore's Health Commissioner. As medical director for the schools, I brought to the job important experiences I had as a doctor and as an individual. As a pediatrician, I knew well that children express trauma in different ways. Some are internalizers – those we label as stoic or resilient. And some are externalizers – those that we label as difficult and sometimes even worse. But regardless of how they express themselves, all need support at some time. And this is very personal to me – when I was nine years old, my father killed himself with a handgun, and –

– No one in my family or at my school talked about it. Back in those days, those were things that just weren't talked about. And I remember my teacher pulling me aside and saying, is it true? And me even back then thinking, like – who in their right mind would joke about such a thing? And really, in retrospect, I wish that my teacher had gone through better training in recognizing the various ways in which children grieve and not assume everything was okay, or that it was somehow a terrible joke. I wish that she had not been afraid to ask the hard questions about how I was feeling.

Throughout my career, I have forced myself to ask the hard questions because people and communities suffer in silence all too often. During my first years as First Deputy Commissioner, I was thrilled, absolutely thrilled at the investments in mental health that the Mayor and the First Lady were doing through ThriveNYC. One of the first initiatives we launched was school mental health consultant program, a framework that I helped to conceptualize and design, which uses mental health workers to connect the school community to resources and services. This is the program that Grace is a part of. Grace has done a really great job connecting schools like this where the majority of students are Latino with free mental health resources and providing workshops in English and in Spanish for students and parents. For many of them, learning how to talk to children about difficult topics, how to address bullying, or getting introduced to the healthy practices like stress reduction and mindfulness can be life changing.

At DOHMH, everyone knows how committed I am to looking at health from the community perspective, prioritizing immigrant health and achieving our Take Care New York 2020 goals. As a Health Commissioner, I will continue to put all communities, and particularly immigrants, at the heart of my work. This is key to tackling our biggest challenges, from the opioid epidemic,

to chronic diseases, and mental health. I will also take an active role in the City's Mental Health Council and make sure that we fully integrate ThriveNYC in the Department's work, because we can only truly achieve our goal of closing health inequities by prioritizing mental health along with physical health.

I am proud, I am honored, and I'm very excited to work with all of the dedicated staff at the Health Department to protect the health of New Yorkers and make New York City the strongest and healthiest city in the United States, where everyone can realize their full health potential.

And now, I would also like to say a few words in Spanish –

Mayor: Completing the set here –

[Laughter]

[Commissioner Barbot speaks in Spanish]

[Applause]

Mayor: Oxiris, thank you. And I just want to say, I think what a lot of us are feeling – it's very sad to know you had to go through that as a child and that your family had to go through so much, but I want to honor you for the strength that you've shown and we hope that today we're going to be able to reach a young child in the position that you were in, give them the help they need, give them the understanding they need. But I want to thank you for taking that pain and turning it into something that's going to help so many other people.

Let's thank her again.

[Applause]

Okay, we're going to take media questions on this announcement and then we'll take media questions on other topics. On this announcement first – yes?

Question: Congratulations and thank you for sharing that story with our viewers and everyone here. Public housing – I'm glad you mentioned it, you came from Patterson Houses. A lot of families in Patterson are living in a health crisis. They don't know if they have lead, they have mold. What are you going to do as the Commissioner; the new Commissioner to make sure it's a priority helping the children in public housing right now?

Commissioner Barbot: Our agency is committed to continuing partnering with the leadership at NYCHA, continuing to partner with tenant associations. We have worked very closely with many tenants associations and NYCHA throughout the city on everything from addressing issues related to asthma, related to smoking, related to improving access to care for chronic diseases and I pledge that we will continue that work. Certainly there is a lot more work to be done and we welcome the opportunity to be as broad in our agenda as possible to ensure that every person living in NYCHA has full access and the opportunity to reach their full health potential.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: A follow up on that question. Did the Health Department [inaudible] not willing to whistle [inaudible] virtually every [inaudible]?

Commissioner Barbot: You know, when I testified before City Council I was very clear to say that every landlord in this city has a right to contest any of the commissioners orders that are issued, and that we take those orders or those contestations very seriously and if we have any doubts about their veracity, we follow up on those. The important thing here though is to know that in no way did it affect the way in which those apartments were remediated and the important thing is that ongoing exposure to lead was reduced.

Mayor: And obviously now we have a simple strategy that we are just going to act on those. Even if there's a disagreement on the technicalities or the specifics, we're just going to go act on them. That's the order of the day.

Question: Second follow up. Should the Health Department have noted the vast disparity the difference between what NYCHA was doing and what private landlords were doing in terms of contesting the [inaudible] orders.

Commissioner Barbot: Our focus has been and will always be on ensuring that we focus on the children, and we focus on identifying any potential sources of exposure, ensuring that those exposures are abated and we continue following those children thanks to the Mayor's leadership now until their leads levels are below five. And we will continue to pursue that aggressively.

Mayor: Going to the back, anyone in the back there first? Okay, go ahead.

Question: Landlords – you've mentioned that. Public Advocate Letitia James –

Mayor: Now, wait. We're on Health Department, so I want to make sure – we'll go to other topics. But I just want anything about this announcement first. I just want to see if anyone has about this announcement.

Question: [Inaudible] get a clarification for what role these consultants, the school consultants are supposed to play. What's their training, are they allowed kind of to give mental health advice to the students? Or are they merely a bridge to resources around in the neighborhood?

Commissioner Barbot: So under the investment that the Mayor and the First Lady made. We hired over a hundred mental health consultants each of whom have training in mental health; they have a mental health background. And their role is to work with principals and teachers and parents in schools to identify what are the most pressing issues in their opinion that are related to mental health and also identify resources either within the school system or within the community that could be brought to bear to the children in those schools and so it may range and maybe Grace can add to this as well. From anything to partnering with mental health clinical providers in the community to link children to therapeutic services to running groups in schools to address issues related to trauma or what we like to refer to as universal services, which really

go to the core of social emotional learning to teach children early on the importance of self-regulation, the importance of help seeking behavior, and how to destigmatize talking about mental health as early as possible.

Mayor: Go ahead.

First Lady McCray: We have as you well know more than 1,800 schools. And so every school is different, every community is different. Some of our schools have clinics and mental health resources within them. Many do not, and these consultants are able to make sure that the schools are connected to community resources; they're able to be that bridge. But most importantly they are able to assess what the needs of the school are so that we have a foundation that we can build on going forward.

Mayor: Okay, yes.

Question: [Inaudible] how would your experience with [inaudible] change [inaudible] someone like this at the [inaudible]?

Commissioner Barbot: You know that's a great question. I think first and foremost being able to talk about it and understand the variety of feeling spots, insecurities that were coming up and what was normal and what would sort of go away. I was fortunate that I have a very strong family and so even though we didn't talk about it we had opportunities to be connected to individuals, to other folks that I was related to. I think in this day and age there are families who may not have that strong support system in their families and I think that's where schools play an incredibly critical role. Often times our children spend more time in school than they do with their families and so having adults who are skilled and knowledgeable about how to approach those things and not just once but on an ongoing basis because again to the First Lady's point. Everybody reacts differently and some people may react – some children may react sooner, some children may react later. But the point is to create systems of adults who are mindful of those needs and can reinforce security on an ongoing basis. Because the bottom line is that unless kids have strong emotional support and mental health, they're not going to be at their best for learning. And that's really where this is critical in those early years. We also know from research that is done that adults who suffered trauma at an early age often times are the ones who have some of the poorest health outcomes either related to chronic diseases like heart disease or mental health issues like substance use. So it's not only addressing issues in the now but really trying to break the cycle of how these early trauma experiences can inform someone's health trajectory.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: [Inaudible] some of the most innovative health models in the United States including its universal payer hospital model. I was curious in your time Baltimore if there's been any strategies [inaudible] hospitals that you think New York [inaudible]?

Commissioner Barbot: One of the priorities that I have had as First Deputy Commissioner is really working more explicitly as to how we bridge public health and healthcare delivery.

Because there are certainly opportunities that I think we can do more on and so actually one of the things that I did a little bit over a year ago was I convened all of the hospital systems in the city who were working on Medicaid reform. And I brought one of the hospital leaders from Maryland, Dr. Sam Ross to talk to those leaders here so that there could be that early learning community to say even though we don't have an all payer system like the State of Maryland does, there's still opportunities within this payment reform system that we can leverage to get better health outcomes faster.

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: So if you could just go back to the consultants plan. I know that there is a shortage of mental health counselors and other officials in schools [inaudible] 4.9 per every 1000 students. Do you think that hiring more counselors would be better suited for students and consultants would then [inaudible] it just seems like an additional step [inaudible] perhaps hiring more counselors?

Commissioner Barbot: So part of—

First Lady McCray: Go ahead, no go ahead.

Commissioner Barbot: —part of this is creating a network of adults that can leverage the skills that they have, because often times individuals might be well meaning but not feel like they have the right skill set and part of what the consultants help to do is do that training so that teachers can handles things that teachers should be handling if they had more training, right? They may want to do this but they don't like they have the skill set. They idea here is allowing adults in schools essentially work at the top of their licenses so that when you get to a situation where a child and a family is in need of therapeutic services you free up some of that time for the folks who will do the therapeutic services and not necessarily have them be working with families who could be just as well served by folks who are not necessarily in the therapeutic realm.

First Lady McCray: When we launched Thrive, roughly three years ago, I – knowing how important it is to act early, to get to young people, especially very young people – the kind of assistance that they need early on – I immediately wanted us to focus on our schools. What I found was because there was no infrastructure, because we had no data, no metrics, that it was really not possible without first actually hiring people who could go into the schools and make the kind of assessment that we need to then create a, you know, to have that foundation and then figure out “okay, how do we improve what we have?” We've learned an awful amount, we've learned so much from this process, from the consultants like Grace, and as I said earlier the schools are all different, they don't all require the same thing, so we are working on this intensely, it is a priority for us as a city and, you know, there's more to come.

Mayor: One other point that I think it's the heart of your question, I mean we – look, we're constantly looking at all the pieces that we need in schools and certainly counselors, there's a need of counselors and we're going to see how we can address that but I do think what you're hearing here is kind of a, a kind of force multiplier concept that, you know, you could put another counselor into a school but they're still going to have very limited connection to most

students but the teachers, combined, are going to see all students, and there's a lot – if the teachers were more empowered and they were more skilled in the way you're hearing, we would actually catch a lot of problems earlier and then get those kids to the specific, trained professionals. The truth is we should try and do all of the above and there's many ways that we can but in terms of really having reach, this actually might be a way to get the most done.

First Lady McCray: There may be another way to say it is it's there's no one solution to this – that we have to get our teachers trained, we have to make sure we have more resources in terms of clinics and CBOs that are in the communities of these schools. We have to make sure that they're more counselors but, you know, this is a process that we've begun and that we intend to continue with.

Mayor: Please.

Question: I think you said this before but when were these consultants hired? Did they start at the beginning of Thrive or are they just being hired today? Did this sort of consulting system exist prior to Thrive or is this a completely new concept that you're bringing in, and given that—

Mayor: Wait, can we just stop on those and then you'll do a follow up

First Lady McCray: We announced that we were going to hire counselors when we launched Thrive but of course that – it's a process—

Mayor: Consultants.

First Lady McCray: Consultants, what did I say?

Mayor: Counselors.

First Lady McCray: Consultants, I'm sorry. That was November 2015 when the roadmap was launched but of course it's process to find the—

Mayor: Consultants.

First Lady McCray: —consultants and to train them so I can't give you an exact date when they were all on board but we can get that to you.

Mayor: And did you say also, before going on to your follow-up, did you say did they exist previous to Thrive?

Question: Were there consultants like this?

First Lady McCray: No, no, no.

Mayor: No, this was initiated with Thrive, correct?

First Lady McCray: Yes.

Question: What is the company or is there a non-profit that's providing [inaudible]?

Mayor: Is there a non-profit providing them?

Question: [Inaudible] these are city employees that are—

Commissioner Barbot: Yes.

First Lady McCray: That's right.

Commissioner Barbot: Correct.

Question: And they move between schools?

Commissioner Barbot: Each one of them oversees 10 schools.

Mayor: Do you have another follow or is that it?

Question: I have a lot of other follow-ups but that's okay.

[Laughter]

Mayor: It's good to have lots of other follows. On this announcement still, I want to see if there is anything else on the announcement of Dr. Barbot. Yes, Jillian?

Question: This might be sort of a bridge question. It's about mental health. I wanted to see if you and the First Lady and perhaps the Health Commissioner could comment on the remark made by Senator Kevin Parker on Twitter, yesterday, telling a Republican staffer in the State Senate to kill herself. Just given, you know, what we're talking about here today I wanted to see what you think about it?

Mayor: Yeah, it's – there's no situation where anyone should joke about suicide. Period. It's just inappropriate and that's all you can say about it.

Question: Do you think something should happen there? Should it be discipline, should it be losing his committee assignments? Should he—

Mayor: He should apologize – he may have apologized, I don't know. He should apologize right away, I mean, I think it's just a very insensitive comment and deserves an immediate apology.

First Lady McCray: I'm glad he apologized and I'm going to personally encourage him to take our mental health first aid training course. I think it would be really helpful if he had a better understanding of the – of how hurtful what he said was.

Question: As a follow-up to Jillian's question on the subject of the senator, he has a long history of making misogynistic remarks, he's punched a Post photographer, and he told a, as you just pointed out, a Republican senate staffer to go kill herself yesterday. Is this someone who should be in the Senate in Albany? Should he resign?

Mayor: He should address these issues. He really should. I mean, it's really important to recognize that this is not appropriate behavior and it needs to be addressed. But that is obviously, a human question and I think Chirlane makes a really good point. There are things that he could help him understand, and gain more sensitivity so he won't do things like this in the future.

Question: The placard in his car that apparently triggered this whole thing—

Mayor: Again please.

Question: The placard in his car that apparently triggered this whole mess, it says it was issued by the City Department of Transportation. Should he lose his placard?

Mayor: My understanding, and I don't know all the facts, is that he was parking in a bike lane. No one should be parking in a bike lane with a placard. That's an inappropriate use of a placard. Now that we have standards about what, you know, what will allow someone to continue with a placard and what doesn't, and it's not shocking that, you know, from time to time people might make a mistake. But what I should do, because I don't know them chapter and verse, so we should get you a sense of what those standards are and how this fits into them.

Question: Do you think he should be ticketed for that?

Mayor: Someone who is using a placard inappropriately deserves a ticket, absolutely. Way back. Let's get back to this announcement so go ahead.

Question: Oh this is a follow-up on this—

Mayor: Okay go ahead, finish on that.

Question: Is this, the State Senate, the Democrats taking over the State Senate, I mean, do you think that there could be some sort of public statement or, punishment, or investigation because of his remark?

Mayor: I think it should – everyone should say that it was absolutely inappropriate, it should never happen again, he should apologize, and he should seek the kind of support that will help him not do things like this again, that's my view.

Question: And piggybacking off of that, I know the City was going to release a report on placard abuse.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: [Inaudible] update on that.

Mayor: We don't have it today but there's going to be a lot more to say in the next few weeks.

Question: [Inaudible] 2019?

Mayor: Early 2019. Okay, anything more on this announcement, then we'll go into other topics. We have a somewhat bridge but I just want to give one last chance if anyone has questions for Dr. Barbot as our new Health Commissioner before she moves on. Going once, okay, go ahead.

Question: I wanted to ask you about legalizing marijuana in New York State – the idea, it seems, that there's some movement towards doing this from the Governor, and I'm wondering sort of how your agency will be involved in sort of researching or – what this means for the Health Department – and your opinion on it.

Mayor: I'm going to start and then have the Commissioner speak to her opinion and what the department is doing. We're going to be – tomorrow – bringing out the results of our task force that we put together because we've talked about this now for several months. We obviously all see this coming and we need to really be prepared and really think about what it's going to mean and how to address it.

So, we've had a task force with a variety of City agencies and that report is going to come out tomorrow and we'll speak to it tomorrow. But without going into all the details of what will be in the report is there anything you want to say broadly on your view?

Commissioner Barbot: I would say that this is an emerging public health issue and that as a country we're learning about what the consequences are, what the behaviors are. We have been in contact with partners in different states to learn from their experiences and to be prepared when and if the day comes so that we are in the best position to protect and promote the health of New Yorkers.

Question: As a pediatrician, do you think this is a bad decision – that is dangerous or could potentially be dangerous for children?

Commissioner Barbot: As a pediatrician, whenever we are talking about substances be they marijuana, be they tobacco, be they alcohol – I think that we have a responsibility to ensure that there is appropriate and adequate education, that there are appropriate measures in place so that if and when someone needs support that they can avail themselves of those services. I think the most important thing that we are learning in this is that the more education the better.

Mayor: Well said. Okay last call on Dr. Barbot. Dr. Barbot – I'm going to say it again, guys, I've been really articulate on this point. Last chance to ask our new Health Commissioner anything – yes, Melissa?

Question: [Inaudible] talk a little bit about the health consequences. I think it's along the lines of Grace's question – the health consequences of using marijuana. I know everybody – the train has

pulled out of the station, it sounds like it's happening but do you have concerns beyond just trying to help people who have a trouble, may have an addiction, about the actual physical health consequences?

Commissioner Barbot: You know one of the things that I hope is that we, as a country, will be able to do research on marijuana. Given that it has been a controlled substance there hasn't really been much research. We are learning from our partners in other jurisdictions about, for example, the consequences of driving while buzzed or other situations where children have been exposed to edibles. I think there is a lot of information that we still have to learn. But the issue here is that we have got a very strong department and we are mindful of all of those potential circumstances. And working closely with our members of the task force, I think we'll be in a position to really talk about those results tomorrow.

Mayor: Last call – question for Dr. Barbot or on the announcement of Dr. Barbot. Okay, Dr. Barbot I wanted to give you your first instruction – you should leave now and take your family to lunch and celebrate.

[Laughter]

Quick transition.

[...]

Alright, here we go. We're going to other topics. Yes?

Question: Mayor, can you comment on the NYPD 2017 Use of Force report that was released today showing that the officers are using their Tasers more frequently than their firearms?

Mayor: I have not read the report but I can speak to the broad point. We obviously want to see de-escalation in every sense. This has been the whole concept of retraining our entire police force. I believe what the NYPD is doing overall is remarkable because of neighborhood policing, because of retraining, they're using force less and less.

And whenever there's a situation that's difficult and dangerous and an officer can effectively use a Taser instead of a gun, of course that's preferable and so I'm very glad to see that's happening more and more. Way back?

Question: You said that you would make a decision where to add the next fast ferry service by the end of the year. Are you planning to make the announcement before the start of the year and do you have a location –

Mayor: We are going to stretch the year a little bit. We're very, very close. There's a possibility of an announcement before December 31st but I think it's honestly going to be in the first or second week of January at this point. We've been dealing with a number of different issues but I believe the success we've seen so far is impressive with the ferries. We got a lot of parts of this

city that want a ferry service. Obviously it connects to our budget process so that's another thing we're trying to be really careful about – about the financial ramifications. But that –

Question: [Inaudible] list of locations –

Mayor: I might.

[Laughter]

But the point is it's literally a matter of a few weeks before we're going to unveil the next vision of this. Grace?

Question: The Public Advocate, Tish James, put out a Worst Landlords List today and NYCHA is number one on her Worst Landlords List. I know that was a list that you started when you were public advocate –

Mayor: Yes, I did.

Question: What's your response to having the public housing authority – and by extension, many argue, you – at the top of that Worst Landlords List?

Mayor: I care deeply about the people who live in public housing which is why we are doing so much to change public housing which is why we have put out a plan now that I think will revolutionize public housing. We finally got the kind of labor deal that will allow us to provide seven-day-a-week service. We have invested \$5 billion and I think that gets to the point here.

I started the Worst Landlords Watchlist to point out landlords who were not doing their job, and didn't care to do their job, and weren't investing in their buildings – and if we hadn't shame them, they were never going to do anything. And honestly, the difference is here, from the very beginning of this administration, we have been reinvesting in NYCHA and trying to change NYCHA from a problem that's been here for a long time. So, are there profound problems at NYCHA that have to be addressed? 100 percent. But why that watchlist matters is to push a lot of landlords who would try and do nothing but for the attention. We're in the polar opposite situation. We don't need to be pushed, we want to make the changes.

Yes, Dave?

Question: Mayor, by doing this, do you feel then that dilutes the impact of the Worst Landlords List? By putting NYCHA at the top?

Mayor: Look, I respect the Public Advocate, soon to be Attorney General, and she has her own interpretation. She and I have a long, positive history together. As she came into office, I'm like – here it is, it's all yours, and I knew she would use it in a kindred way. I would disagree only in saying I think the original concept was to find the places where action wasn't happening and force change. We obviously now have five years of showing that we are incessantly trying to change NYCHA, and with real effects. I mean, you saw the repair blitz over the last few

weekends and the impact that's making. You saw the difference in terms of heat and hot water this year versus a year ago. Real change is clearly happening, but I also say it's her right with her office to do what she sees fit. I wouldn't have done it but I do understand it.

Question: So, coincidentally, as you were meeting with Dr. Carson yesterday, we were interviewing a woman who lives in the Thomas Jefferson apartment houses. She lives there with her two 18-year-old disabled daughters, they have cerebral palsy. Their apartment completely flooded yesterday [inaudible] two inches of water. This isn't the first time it's happened. They've been on a waiting list to be –

Mayor: Which houses again? I'm sorry.

Question: Thomas Jefferson Houses.

Mayor: Okay.

Question: They've been on a waiting list to be transferred for five years now. They're very limited because their children are disabled. If there's only one percent vacancies with NYCHA housing, they're basically trapped, they have nowhere to go. What is the City doing for families like –

Mayor: Look, this sounds like a real hardship situation where we would make a priority to get her to something better. You're right, there's a huge waitlist for NYCHA. There's very rarely vacancies, but there still are some. A mom dealing with that kind of situation we would want to get help immediately to. She would have – obviously she would be a priority. So, can you just make sure our folks get the details so that we can follow up and I'll make sure we communicate to Vito Mustaciuolo about this today and he'll personally follow up on it.

Question: Mayor, I want to ask you about an incident that happened at a Manhattan HRA office yesterday, we had a story about it today. There was a dispute with a client who was angry, who swept a computer off of a worker's desk, then got into an altercation –

Mayor: You're saying the client hit the computer off?

Question: [Inaudible] off the desk, then gets into a physical altercation with the HRA employee. Peace officers are called. There's a scuffle – a peace officer's wrist is actually broken, the police are called and they decline to get involved, according to the HRA reports on the issue. They declined to make an arrest. The client was yelling about the Jazmine Headley –

Mayor: I can just tell you since I haven't seen your report and have not gotten a report on it, I can't get into any detail. Look, any client should never in any way physically attack a worker or hit a computer off the desk. That's totally inappropriate to begin with. But as to the actions of the City's employees, I'd need to know more information before I can comment on it.

Question: And if I could just ask you about another topic –

Mayor: Please.

Question: The OATH Commissioner Fidel del Valle is taking a leave of absence.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Have you reviewed video of the –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Can you tell us what your review found?

Mayor: I reviewed the video. I spoke to Commissioner O’Neill. I spoke to the First Deputy Mayor who led the process on this. And then I sat down with Mr. del Valle, who I’ve known for a long, long time. And I think you asked me last week, was this at all consistent with anything I had seen from him – it was not. And I asked him, how this possibly could have happened and what came out in those conversations was that there’s a very profound family medical crisis going on, and we talked it through, and came to the conclusion that it’s time for him to take a leave to just deal with that situation. It is a profoundly difficult situation – to focus on that. I think that unfortunately was the underlying reality. It should never – he should never had taken out those frustrations and that pain on those officers, but we understand sometimes that happens with human beings. He is apologizing to both of those officers who handled the situation with tremendous dignity and professionalism. They did not deserve to be put through that, that was wrong, that should never happen from anyone – public servant or every-day New Yorker. But knowing that there is an underlying reality, which is very difficult and painful, I think the leave is the appropriate course of action.

Rich?

Question: Mr. Mayor, correct me if I’m wrong, I think the phrase you used the last time I asked you about legalization was, I’m not there yet. Are you there now?

Mayor: As I said to you a few minutes ago, we’re going to have a report issued tomorrow to talk about a very extensive process that the City went through. Obviously we’ve seen for the last months the likelihood that could happen this coming year, even before the Governor’s recent speech. And I instructed the City agencies to really look carefully at all that this would mean for New York City and for the people of the City, the health impacts, and the safety impacts – everything – but also look carefully at what has happened in other jurisdictions that would be at all like our experience, even though there’s no place totally like this, but you could learn something, of course, from what’s happened in the last few years. We’re going to put out that report tomorrow and I’ll give you my interpretation of the report, but I’d like to do it in the whole context of all of the facts, all of the details.

Question: Do you still harbor questions?

Mayor: Again, I'm going to – I think tomorrow's not too long – I know you want it right away, but I think tomorrow's fine.

Question: You mentioned that you're going to have more information on placards coming soon, but it's been a topic that people have been talking about for a long time –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: What's been the obstacle? And what has caused what seems to be a delay in getting some more information?

Mayor: I think what has been the obstacle is finding a plan that we think will really work on a consistent basis. You're dealing here with a lot of traditions that are not good traditions. You're dealing with a lot of human nature. There's a lot of creativity out there that's not appropriate but it still exists and we've got to figure a way to really stop it and make it stick. So, different ideas have been run up the flag pole, some of them I've sent back and said, try again, but what we really want is something we feel will have a lasting impact.

Question: Two quick NYCHA questions – before you met with Secretary Carson yesterday, he went on a tour where he said to reporters that federal receivership was a real possibility. Was that your understanding of his position in the meeting?

Mayor: He – look, they've been very clear that it's a live option, but they've also been very clear about the fact that they understand that local control is always preferable. I think it's in some ways a straightforward equation then. Local control means there's accountability. Local control means that the people who actually know how to get the work done, get the work done. The minute you have a situation where the leadership is far away, I've said to people very openly, all bets are off, you don't know what you're getting. And I think HUD understands that there's a virtue in having local control, but they also have a right and an ability to use receivership if they feel that there isn't a clear enough plan. I believe we're going to be able to give them a clear enough plan. I believe that what's happened just in the last weeks with the labor deal, with the 2.0 vision, the fix plan – all of those pieces are the kinds of things that have been needed for years and years and also were the kinds of things I think would have been discussed if there had been a traditional monitorship. They're happening anyway, now. So, I'm very hopeful that we're going to be able to get on the same page.

Question: You had a position of Regional Director for HUD –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: The current Regional Director has said she would move in with a family and spend some time in NYCHA. Do you think that's helpful?

Mayor: Look, I take her on her word that she is acting out of concern and compassion for folks who live in public housing. But I – we had a good talk, she and I, yesterday. The – I think she

was saying that if it came down to receivership, that's something she would think about. Again, my goal is that it not come down to receivership.

We'll do a few more.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah, I believe she hinged it to that idea and, again, I hope that's something that never comes to pass. We'll do a few more.

Question: [Inaudible] yellow cab [inaudible] last couple do you think that they should be exempt from this new State congestion pricing that's going to be taking effect?

Mayor: No, I've been very clear about this. I think this fee is part of how we solve a tremendously difficult problem here in this city that's facing all of us. We have to reduce congestion, we have to reduce pollution, we have to improve mass transit, we have to save the subways – that surcharge is part of doing it. I think we know there's a very strong market for yellow cabs in this city, we see it all the time, and for the other for-hire vehicles. Remember, this is a city that has been growing in population, the number of jobs is growing, the visitors are growing. There is a huge market for all those types of for-hire vehicles and yellow cabs. I fundamentally believe they'll have lots of business which is really what it comes down to. Would this affect their business negatively? No. But I am very sympathetic to what the drivers have gone through. I am very sympathetic for these families that have lost their loved ones and that to me we are now on the pathway to getting to the underlying problems. Put a cap in place that makes on the for-hire vehicles. Raise wages, for all drives, go to the heart of the matter. I think that's much more important to addressing their concerns. Go ahead.

Question: Asian parents, and civil rights groups filed a lawsuit against you and Chancellor Carranza over your decision to change the criteria right during the Discovery Program last summer on the grounds that prevents Asian American students from vying for those seats. It violates their equal protection rights. What is your response to such an argument? And what are your next steps as far as the lawsuit is concerned.

Mayor: One, it's a lawsuit so I'll – I will not speak in great detail in a litigation context. I'll give you my broad values on this. We have a situation right now where the majority in this city is not represented in those specialized schools in any way shape or form. I think I am remembering correctly from the last class admitted to Stuyvesant which is the one that sort of is regarded as the jewel in the crown. It was one percent African American, two percent Latino, something like that. In the city that is almost 55 percent African American, Latino combined. That's an unacceptable state of affairs. That doesn't mean we're anti anyone. I am in favor of every kid getting a great education. I want to see access for all kids. But right now it's not happening for the majority. Now, we want to expand the number of specialized high school seats. We want to expand all the other very good high schools. We're from a family where one child went to a specialized high school and one child went to another great high school, turned down a specialized high school actually, went to another great high school that was right for her. There's lots of great high schools in this city. So those have to also be continued to improve and

maximize opportunity. But I think it's very troubling that people are portraying this as anti-someone when it's supposed to be in favor of inclusion. There is an op-ed out there. I believe it was in the Times a few months ago and it was written by an Asian American scholar and the title was powerful. It said the plan is not anti-Asian its anti-racist. That's the bottom line to me. Go ahead, yes.

Question: Have you had any discussions with any of those groups or would you reconsider any changes?

Mayor: Happy to discuss – litigants is a different question. Let's put aside those involved in litigation because that's a – I am not going to negotiate. We have the law department to talk to them. But with community leaders I want to sit down with community from Asian communities and talk about a vision of inclusion both in terms of maximizing options for their children but also in terms of really leveling with them about the fact that a huge number of kids are being excluded right now and that can't be good for anyone. Also there's another piece here that the single test, the single three hour test that determines access to these schools I philosophically do not believe in that high stakes testing. And I think there's a lot of parents of all backgrounds; white, Asian, Latino, African American who also don't believe in a single test having that impact. I think there's a lot of great Asian kids who didn't get in on a single test and have a whole range of skills – white kids, black kids, Latino kids. The single test onto itself is part of the problem. It needs to be addressed. We're coming forward; go ahead we'll do three more.

Question: Yeah, so onto Jason Rechnitz case. We're up to a couple of dozen emails now that have been [inaudible] in the trial. Emails that were FOIL'd by most of the folks here in the room. And one produced by City Hall at the time. What happened to those emails? And what's been done to ensure that emails showing official action at the Mayor's office are appropriately preserved.

Mayor: On the second point. We need to do a better job of coming up with a clear policy. I think everyone in these last years has come to understand that the policies that existed previously were not sufficient. That the age of email has changed behavior profoundly and we need to address it. I've said publically, I'll say it again. For a lot of us that has meant using email a lot less, and trying consistently to tell people if it might be an official matter to move over to the official email. I think that's the single best way to deal with it. But we need a more systematic strategy.

I want to be clear with you and with all of your colleagues on anything backward looking, that I'm at my limit at this point. We've talked about this for two years. I'm really not going to talk about the past any longer. I think it's been covered and covered again and looked at. So, I have nothing else to say on what happened before. But we will work on the new policy. Go ahead.

Question: This is a two-part question. Do you believe you are a good landlord? And Lynne Patton that she is going to “work hard and make sure more money is given to NYCHA next year than this year, prioritize public housing as much as possible, and [inaudible] upon the President, President Trump.” Could you react to both of those?

Mayor: Well, I commend her for that comment. Look, we've been having these discussions with the federal government and we kept saying we're ready to contribute, we'd like the federal government to contribute too, and the answer always has been that the federal government is not willing to put any more money into NYCHA even though NYCHA was started by the federal government and even though it was the federal government that stepped away from public housing and started this crisis to begin with.

So, if Lynne is saying that she's going to be a strong voice inside the Trump administration to add money to public housing and add money to NYCHA, that's a very good thing and I commend her and I'm hopeful. I also think the reality in the Congress is hopeful – having a House leadership that cares about public housing, having Senator Schumer in the role he's in. There's talk now about if there is to be a major infrastructure package, including public housing as infrastructure. That could be very good for NYCHA so that's very hopeful.

Again, NYCHA is the landlord. NYCHA has a long way to go. I am the boss insofar as I name the head of NYCHA, no question. But it's still an entity that has to run the day to day operations. NYCHA has come a long way. NYCHA has a long, long way to go.

Question: [Inaudible] good landlord? Because you're saying they shouldn't be on the worst landlord –

Mayor: They are different from those other landlords because they are incessantly investing in the buildings. Respectfully, I know you want single-word answers. I'm just not going to give you. And it's not fair to the people of NYCHA – and if you want to bring up your camera, I'll tell them directly. You cannot take the problems of 400,000 people and try to reduce it to a word. We're trying to address a profound problem. It's not going to help 400,000 New Yorkers to be given simplistic answers. It's going to help them to get the truth.

We put out a plan last week to fundamentally change the situation. That's what we need to dwell on right now. The landlords on that watchlist are not investing in their buildings, are trying to evade their responsibilities. Everyone here is addressing the problem. You have the final word Yoav.

Question: Thank you. I wanted to ask you about what's happening with the Hotel Alexander. As I understand it's currently or previously had some S.R.O residents in there. It's being converted to a homeless shelter but the residents were given very little notice and are alleging that they're kind of being pushed out to make room for this shelter. And I wanted to ask you what you know about that situation and what the City's involvement has –

Mayor: I know some, I don't pretend to know every detail. I know that some of the residents brought a legal action, it went before a judge, and the judge rejected it. The tenants who have been there long term are staying. That's part of the plan. They get to stay. The other folks who have been there, to the best of my understanding have been there a relatively limited period time as a transient hotel, effectively, and they're being offered opportunities to go to other similar locations.

But what we have here is – I don't want to mistake it. We have a very small number of people, in my understanding, who were sort of long term residents. They all stay under the same condition. The folks who were transient were just folks who rented a room on a limited basis.

We obviously need quality capacity to take care of folks who happen to be homeless and this is going to allow us to do it. So, from everything I'm seeing, this has been handled appropriately. I don't know exactly how much notice has been given but I do know that people's needs were – there was a real effort to accommodate their needs.

Question: [Inaudible] the landlord is going to be operating – who owns the building where the homeless shelter is going to be, is a landlord that the City actually filed criminal charges against previously for not maintaining the facade in which a two-year-old girl was killed by falling debris. Why would the City do business with someone they're filing criminal –

Mayor: I can't speak to that history. I'll be happy to get back to you because I just don't know what has happened since then. We are careful in terms of some of the people we will and won't work with. We have a profound need of course to address the issue of homelessness and we have a good provider going in to run the facility.

But that's a very fair question and I'll have to get you an answer on that.

Thanks, everyone.

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