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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES NEW MEASURES TO PROTECT  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR LOFT RESIDENTS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you, appreciate it. Thank you.

Eve, thank you. Thanks for having us over.

[Laughter]

Thank you for having us to your home. Thank you for having us in your office.

[Laughter]

It's all of the above. Eve, thank you. You, first of all, I really appreciated what you said because I think this another example of people standing up to protect what's great about this city and to protect both places that people can actually afford to live including so many New Yorkers who live in lofts, and have been part of communities for decades and contributing to those communities.

So, you know, what you spoke about really hit home for me about protecting homes for New Yorkers who have been part of the community but also protecting our artists and our cultural workers who make such a big difference in this city.

So, thank you. I know you've banded together with a lot of other loft tenants to make sure people's rights are protected and thank you for that.

Look, this is really about keeping New York City, New York City. It's as simple as that. This is about making sure that the people who make New York City great can afford to live here.

When I think of Eve and so many other artists and folks who make the cultural sector in this city so amazing, they give New York City so much of our identity, so much of our meaning. Part of why people flock here from all over the country, all over the world is because of our artists, because of what they contribute.

And I hear all the time from folks in all of the arts in the entire cultural field that it's harder and harder to live here and they have to think about whether they can hang on or not. And we don't want to lose one of the most essential parts of New York City.

By the way there are folks who live in lofts and do all sorts of other things too, and they need an affordable place to live as well. So, this is about protecting neighborhoods, protecting one of the things that makes New York City great.

I want to thank everyone who has gathered here. You're going to hear from the elected officials but I also want to thank our Buildings Commissioner, Rick Chandler, who has been deeply involved in our efforts to create more fairness for loft tenants.

And I'll tell you at the beginning of this that this is one of the wrongs that had to be righted because the needs of these tenants were increasingly ignored and it wasn't right. It was undermining housing for a whole important group of people in our city who deserved it.

I think about the fact that New York City is defined by the arts in so many ways. And I talk about the arts community in many, many different ways. It is of course something that's part of our identity, something that makes us proud as New Yorkers. It's one of the reasons that tourists come here. It's one of the reasons that people like to start their businesses here.

There's so many ways to think about it but I also want to think about the moral implication of all this. Having a thriving arts community protects openness of expression, protects our democracy, and makes sure that a whole range of views are represented, and that all people and authority are challenged in a good way.

That is particularly important at this moment in history. So, you know, this is part of the magic of New York City having artists here who it doesn't matter if they are doing things that make them a lot of money or not, they're contributing with their ideas and their energies.

I wish we didn't have the phrase "starving artist" but it was created for a reason. A lot of people who did the best and most creative and most cutting-edge art were not rewarded immediately and, certainly in some cases, not even rewarded in their time. There's got to be a place in this city for people who are creative, even if it doesn't make them wealthy. And this is what we defend today. But let's also talk about what's changed in this city, because we have an affordability crisis that's affecting everyone. But think of what it does to people in the cultural community.

Again, you know a lot of people in the cultural community are doing things they know are not going to make them a lot of money. A lot of people are working their way up and they're not trying to do the thing that's necessarily commercially the most appealing, they're trying to do that which their conscience tells them to do. And that's always been possible in this city. And I guess part of why we became great that we replaced that was open and available and affordable.

So what we're seeing now kind of you can make a parallel to the actual things that the artists create. You know when you see artists create great works. Overtime they become trendy, and then they become very valuable. And that is what's happened to New York City. But the people the people who make the city great, suffer because of the affordability crisis. And they're getting priced out, and so we have to find more and more ways to address it. The lofts in this city –

regulated, rent regulated lofts have declined nearly 30 percent in the last 15 years. That's a very troubling reality.

We need all of our rent regulated housing to be protected, all of our affordable housing. But think about when it comes to lofts, that 30 percent of them that used to be protected are no longer protected. We've got to address that. The sad reality is and this is where I talked about writing the wrong.

The sad reality is we lost those protections not by accident; it was a series of choices made – made at the state level and made by the previous mayoral administration that really favored the private sector over the needs of tenants. And decisions of the previous administration again at the state made it easier for landlords to turn over their spaces and get market rates and take these live-work spaces out of regulation. And you can imagine that every time that happens, New York City changes just a little bit. And it happens again, and again, again we can't let it keep happening. We have to do things differently now.

So we know that we have to make changes and today we're proposing a set of changes that will strengthen the hand of loft tenants that will move to provide them a maximum amount of protection for lofts going forward. We're going to take the actions that we can take at the city level administratively but we're also going to work for the law changes that would help us to ensure the protections of lofts going forward. And we're going to be relying on this great coalition of tenants who have worked so hard and all of these great elected officials who understand what it means for our communities.

We have to make sure that it's harder for landlords to take these extraordinary spaces and take them to market rate. Because once they go to market rate, they will never be affordable again. And this is where we have to understand this about why New York City is different than a lot of places in the country. Because we have rent regulation, we have a chance to keep things affordable. But once a loft is out rent regulation, forget it. It's never going to be affordable again. That's why literally we're fighting for every single loft.

So this is for a lot of different people but particularly for those people who do so much to make this one of the artistic and cultural capitals of the world. Some are famous; some are not famous at all. But they make New York City what it is. And we have to protect that, and every New Yorker. 8.5 million people depend on that vibrant arts and cultural scene. We have to protect it, now a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to turn to some of the elected officials who are doing such important work to protect these tenants, and protect these valuable spaces. I want to start with the Chair of the Housing Committee in the State Assembly. We've turned to him on so many cases to protect affordability. My pleasure to introduce Assembly member Steve Cymbrowitz.

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