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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS LAW REQUIRING DIAPER CHANGING STATIONS BE AVAILABLE TO ALL NEW YORKERS

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well done, brother. Thank you.

Juan, I am so impressed. I am so impressed. First of all thank you for serving your country and also thank you for showing parents everywhere, and especially dads everywhere, what it means to be devoted to your children.

And four daughters – I am impressed, brother. That’s a lot of work but God bless you. God bless you.

[Applause]

Okay, so breaking news everyone. It’s the 21st century and men change diapers now, okay.

[Laughter]

Juan is evidence of the fact that sometimes men have to change a lot of diapers. And it’s only right that men play a full and equal role in parenting.

Now, I will tell you I changed a lot of diapers. I do not look back on it nostalgically. But I know it was an important thing to do for my children. And I cannot tell a lie and say I carried as much of the load as Chirlane did. Thank you, honey.

[Laughter]

I wanted to say it before you said it.

[Laughter]

But what should be is that we strive every year for greater and greater equality. Whoever the parents of a child are, everyone’s got to chip in. Everyone’s got to do their share.

But think of what's been the reality in this city and all over this country up to now. Literally the way our society has organized things – it's a message to men to not do their fair share. If you can't find a changing station anywhere that you can use, it literally just bakes in those gender stereotypes and inhibits men from doing what they need to do more and more which is step up.

So, today is a day to celebrate the idea that all caretakers need to be respected, all caretakers need to be able to do this precious work. It's not always glamorous but there's nothing more important in the world than taking care of a child. And the legislation we're here to sign today will make a big step forward.

I want to thank everybody who is here, all of the advocates and believes and people who fought for this for a long time. Give each other a round of applause.

[Applause]

I want to thank the Executive Director of our Commission on Gender Equity, Jacqueline Ebanks. Thank you for your good work.

[Applause]

Very good clapper over here.

[Laughter]

And also everybody is a part of making these changes for a fairer city and that includes the Buildings Department. So, thank you to the Commissioner of Buildings, Rick Chandler.

[Applause]

The Buildings Department's getting cool, everyone. Change agents over there.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yes.

So, I remember when Chiara was young and Dante was young, and when there was an emergency, when that diaper needed to be changed, Juan's right, you have to move quickly. It is in everyone's interest that you move quickly.

But a lot of times there really wasn't a good option. Sometimes there wasn't any option. You know changing a baby on a table out in some common area or on a chair or over a sink – this is not the way that any parent should have to do things.

But it's the reality today and so parents just have to make do. And it's not fair and it doesn't help parents be the best they can be.

So, this law today makes very, very clear that with any new spaces built in this city or anything heavily renovated that has public restrooms, they have to have diaper changing stations that everyone can use.

It's real simple. Regardless of the gender of the parents, they should be able to use that changing station so all parents can share in diaper duty.

And this is part of what we need to do for a fairer city. I've said it from the beginning of this second term. We will endeavor to make this the fairest big city in America.

Here's an important step toward it – respecting the equality of all parents, respecting all genders, making sure everyone can contribute.

This is consistent with a lot of other things we've done whether it's pre-k and 3-K or Paid Family Leave or lactation rooms in City buildings and gender equity when it comes to bathrooms, it all goes together in terms of creating a place of fairness and inclusion and respect for all.

These changing stations, you're going to start to see them more and more around the city available to all in malls, in theaters, in so many other places where there's public restrooms. And we know that when it comes to parenting, government can't do it all. Government can't do everything that parents need to do but we sure as hell can respect parents, help parents be the best they can be whether they are moms or dads.

And I want to urge all New Yorkers to get involved in this. When you see a new space being built in this city or being substantially renovated, and if you don't see a changing station being included that accessible to all, call 3-1-1 and report it and the City will make sure that that changing station is put in place for everyone.

I'm just going to say a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

I know you agree with me.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: He's like, why is he speaking Spanish? I can't understand him.

[Laughter]

Now it's my great pleasure to introduce my partner in this work and my partner in all things, and we became parents together and we went on the journey together and we learned together the joys and sorrows of changing diapers.

Our First Lady, Chirlane McCray.

[Applause]

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you, Bill. Thank you Juan, thank you, for your service, thank you for taking care of those four girls. And thank all of you who have embarked on one of the boldest and most daring adventures of them all, being parents. It is so wonderful to see so many fathers here today. It was wonderful to see all of you, but I am really happy to see the fathers. We want to make sure that New York City has your back.

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

From the very beginning this administration has put the experiences and needs of families' front and center. And that focus has paid off in real ways for New Yorkers with pre-K for All and expanded paid family leave through ThriveNYC and the baby shower resource fairs we've hosted across the city. And with the support of our commission on gender equity we've made it easier for New Yorkers to raise happy and healthy families across the five boroughs. Today I am delighted to celebrate another step forward for New York families. And this one is personal for me. Because I remember like Bill, all too well how difficult it could be to find a clean and safe space to change the diapers. And Bill and I had plenty of stories about our babies. I have especially vivid images in my mind about Bill changing a diaper on the hood of our very weathered blue Ford tour station wagon in the winter. No, there were quite a few times when we were on the road and we just didn't have a lot of options. And that needs to change. Parents will always have to be resourceful as any one of these folks standing behind me can attest. But we can meet them half way. We can provide all parents and care givers with convenient access to sanitary spaces to change their babies' diapers with whatever dignity this job allows.

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

And we can make sure that resources aimed at helping families recognize that fathers are full parenting partners.

Audience: That's right –

First Lady McCray: That's right, amen. Just as we cannot end domestic violence, or sexual harassment without engaging men as allies in reform, we can't make life easier for families if we push dads to the side. And label any challenges that our families encounter as women's issues. And now I'd like to bring home the message with a short poem.

A long time ago, way, way back in the past,
the very thought of men changing diapers would leave most people aghast.

Well times have changed
and I've got news for you:
Dads are doing ALL the jobs
that women were expected to do.

They're kissing the boo-boos, they're singing lullabies,

They're up late at night when their baby cries.
And dads – gender non-conforming parents as well,
All know what to do when they smell that smell.

But when they're outside the home, the options are poor,
Should they use the sink, that stall, or the dirty floor?
Well now that we've arrived here in 2018,
it's time diaper changes are both private and clean.

For parents searching for such a place,
we are answering the call.
Wherever they construct public restrooms
they'll build changing stations for all.

Thank you.

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