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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ADAMS EXPANDS EFFORTS TO CONNECT PATIENTS
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS TO STABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Neil Moore, CEO, NYC Health + Hospitals Queens: It's good to be here with you today and welcome you to this great event. I would like to introduce the president and CEO, Dr. Mitch Katz, of New York City Health + Hospitals, our healthcare system. And also, to let you know that homelessness is a serious health hazard that is closely connected to the decline in both physical and mental health of thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers suffering from chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension. You will hear from many individuals today, including the mayor and Dr. Katz, in terms of all the work that is being done for homelessness. With that, I'd like to turn it over to Dr. Mitch Katz.

Dr. Mitch Katz, President and CEO, NYC Health + Hospitals: Thank you, Neil. Hey, everyone. One of my good deeds as Health + Hospital Chief was bringing Neil Moore back, a longtime alumni of our system who'd served us so well, and now we love having him at Queens Hospital. My own interest in Housing for Health began 30 years ago as a doctor in public hospitals.

We would take care of people who were homeless, sometimes also intoxicated, sometimes also having other issues. They would come into our hospital, and they'd spend two or three days there. We would run them through a lot of tests, X-rays, and then when they cleared their intoxication, everybody would lose interest: "Oh, there's nothing wrong with them anymore. Discharge them." And it struck me, wow, we spent all of this money, we put in all of this effort, and we didn't do anything to change the arc of this person's life. That's what would really be healthy. What would really be healthy is if you change their life.

And so I became very interested in the idea, well, so if the most effective prescription for my patient is housing, then that's what I need to work on. And I think the project that we're looking at today is the fulfillment of that goal. It's saying that the most important prescription for health for many people is a home. And that when you house people, a variety of other issues go away or become markedly easier to handle. I want to thank Leora Jontef and ask her to stand up. She's been running our housing and real estate, and doing a phenomenal job. This beautiful building, Martin Dunn of Dunn Development made it, and look how stunningly beautiful it is.

We have phenomenal colleagues at HPD. We recognize that this is not a project that can ever be done on its own. You need your city partners, and HPD is a great partner to us. As is the other Katz, Jessica Katz, not related, but I wish she were because I'd love to be from that kind of family. But she's been an amazing partner for us in getting our work done. We're going to hear from one of our patients who lives in this house.

And I want to acknowledge Dr. Jimenez, part of the psychiatric team at Harlem Hospital. Alvaralo Castillo, his case manager, Kamba, who is our incredibly competent social service provider and all of the housing advocates who are here today. Housing, it's not easy to pull off housing. I love that my brother Commissioner Jenkins is here because part of how we make this happen is we work with all of our city colleagues and figure out all of the steps. It isn't any one group that can make a beautiful building like this happen, but I'm so proud to be part of that effort. So thank you all for coming. And now I have the honor of introducing Jessica Katz, who's done so much great housing for New York City, Jessica.

Jessica Katz, NYC Chief Housing Officer: Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. It's great to be here today with the mayor and my fellow Katz, no relation, on such an important topic because housing is a health issue. I've spent my entire career working on supportive housing. So I've collaborated closely with health partners over the years and every health professional I've spoken to has always said they wish they could prescribe housing. All the medical care in the world will fall short without stable housing, and that is what we are delivering today and across our administration. I'm so proud that we are able to work with health and hospitals as part of housing our neighbors, our administration's strategic housing and homelessness blueprint. The blueprint is a new take on housing as we engage every city agency, not just the ones that have housing in their name, to look at housing holistically. Because housing touches everyone and we need every partner to help us stably house New Yorkers, which is why we are here today.

The T building has a long history. At one time it was a TB hospital and today it is supportive housing. A project that I personally worked on in my previous role at HPD. Repurposing our health facilities to be housing like the T building, building on open land on health and hospital campuses, expanding access to supportive housing and bringing on new housing navigators are all key steps in ensuring that people going through our health system have access to housing when they're ready to be released. The Housing is Health Initiative shows how our approach to health support has progressed over the years.

Buildings like this have outlived their former purpose which allows us to shift to management of chronic illnesses and ensure stable housing as a new health focus. So I congratulate the entire H + H team for their work. Mr. Mayor, Commissioner Jenkins and Dr. Katz, thank you for your dedication to making housing a key part of the health conversation. Dr. Katz has spent his entire career taking the "housing is health" roadshow up and down the west coast, while I was trying to hammer that same narrative home over back here on the east coast. So I was very happy when the two Katzs could meet up and get the band together and it's an honor to work with you and your team on this project. Thank you.

Dr. Katz: Now, I have the tremendous honor of introducing my boss and I love that this "Get Stuff Done" is right here. And besides this, I think the second thing he preaches the most to us, which you can see in the fulfillment of this project, is the ending of city silos and the really close

work of Health + Hospitals with the Department of Human Services and Homeless Services and HPD and the Mayor's Office of Housing and all of us together. Mr. Mayor, that's pretty great stuff done. Is it not? Please sir.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you so much. And oftentimes people believe the hallmark of this administration is going to be a pursuit for public safety, but I think it's just one of them. I think the most significant impact we are going to make is around health. Health is crucial. I talk about it so much that my family no longer wants to sit down at Thanksgiving time with me, because I just believe that proactive healthcare is just so important. And as our chief housing officer stated, we have the symbol together with those people who have worked for so long around these important issues such as healthcare and housing. And it was unbelievable when we sought to do our analysis that we witnessed the disconnect. It was no secret that people who were on our streets dealing with mental health illnesses and other chronic diseases were basically coming into the emergency room using that as their primary care.

And we were turning them back out into the street only to have them return again a few weeks and in some cases a few days later. It just made no sense, it was feeding the healthcare crisis, it was just creating the economic instability that comes with a failing healthcare system. And to connect the housing with and near hospitals is just such a giant leap forward – and we could not do it alone. If we were asking Dr. Katz to do this by himself, it was just not the right thing to do, it was an unfair thing to do. So we brought the team together and we used all of the resources and assets that can make this happen. H + H does not sell land but they have land. And by partnering with DSS, partnering with all of the advocates and all the resources we had available, we turned this beautiful building, and it is a beautiful building, into a place that people can move and cycle into permanent housing. And so the whole initiative, Housing for Health. If you have a home to go to, you could take your medicine on time, you could follow up on your response to your doctors, you can use telemedicine to visit and speak to your doctor for mental health issues as well as health issues. You begin to start the process of having stability. The numbers are clear. If you don't have a permanent house, you are several times more likely to have to go to the emergency room. This is foundationally just wrong, we've ignored it for far too long. And this administration, we're going to look at those problems that have been ignored and continue to magnify them because they're not responded to correctly.

And it's not easy because we're pushing against the norm, we're pushing against the whole concept of let's just pretend as though it doesn't exist. We say it does exist. From homelessness to crime, to healthcare, to education. These are challenging issues that we are willing to face and we are willing to face head on. Housing for Health is a holistic approach to dealing with healthcare. Healthcare is a full body approach and we must attack the problem holistically. And we pointed this out as part of our housing blueprint and the goal today is to partner with Health + Hospitals and we converted an unutilized building here, an unutilized city property on our hospital campuses. You visit hospitals and you notice that there is just so much land that's available yet we have so much that is needed to build housing and to not match the two together is just a failing policy and process.

And so since January, 2020, we have placed more than a thousand patients into permanent housing and

medical respite beds. And this initiative is going to look to bring an additional 650. And that's only the beginning, we're going to be looking at other locations to make sure that we are fixing a problem and not kicking the problem, the proverbial problem of the can down the road. So I am really proud to be here. This is a major part of our agenda and initiative.

Housing for Health provides a roadmap for the future, something that's going to be duplicated I believe all over this country. And to all those who were involved, the visionaries, those who have executed and all of our partners who are sitting here in the audience, part of the various agencies that believed in this plan, thank you so much. We took a vision and made it an actual realization for so many families and I believe it's going to have a major impact on our health systems. Thank you so much.

Dr. Katz: Thank you Mr. Mayor. And thank you so much for supporting our efforts. It's now with great pleasure that I introduced to you one of the residents of the T building, Jesus Cerda, to talk about his experience. Jesus.

Jesus Cerda, NYC T Building Resident: Good afternoon. My name is Jesus Cerda, I am 27 years old. And it is a pleasure to be here today and express and tell my experience. I moved from the Dominican Republic to the United States when I was 14 years old. And since then I have been in many unstable homes until now. I entered the shelter system a couple years ago. I was emotionally drained and stressed out that I couldn't sleep. I was out for many days, and encountered many challenges and ended up having a mental breakdown. I ended in the psychiatric unit at Highland Hospital. Upon my discharge from the hospital, I was sent back to the shelter, feeling hopeless and scared. I went through many social stressors while in the shelter and didn't have a good support system. I was impressed with the housing opportunity with my care manager, a housing specialist at MetroPlus. They told me that I qualified for an apartment at the T building.

Despite being a long process, I moved into the T building in July. I could not feel happier. I finally have my own studio apartment. It is truly a fantastic feeling to have tranquility, the ability to cook my meals and focus on my next steps in life. I finally feel happy and in control as I have improved my quality of life. I am pursuing a bachelor's degree at Hunter College. I want to thank MetroPlus, NYC Plus hospitals in the City of New York for supporting me when I needed help. It feels great to be home. Thank you so much.

Mayor Adams: Are we doing questions? Are we dancing together?

Dr. Katz: You're going to take on all the tough questions for you and if there are any really easy things I can answer, but you do the tough ones. Okay?

Mayor Adams: Thank you. What a story. Those are the real stories. Those are not numbers, those are not stats. And I believe his journey, his painful encounter is going to be the talking point when he speaks to others about giving them purpose. I really appreciate you sharing your story and good luck on your master's degree. We need some employees in city government, so we'll be coming after you to fill some of these jobs.

Cerda: Thank you.

Mayor Adams: So let's open to a few on-topics. Okay? Yes.

Question: Just wanted to follow up with Jesus, if I could? Could you just tell us what it feels like to have your own apartment? To be here? And contrast that with what it was like when you were bouncing around from shelters to hospitals?

Cerda: So right now that I have my own street apartment, I feel tranquility, I feel calm and happy, which improves my mental health. Because if you feel bad and unstable and you don't know what could happen to you the next day while being in a shelter, that can affect you mentally and physically. But being here and being in control of what surrounds me, it allows me to be in peace, feel good and that helps me mentally. And since I moved, I haven't felt the pressure or stress. So that's a good thing. Thank you.

Question: Mayor, your buildings commissioner has resigned. Did he call you directly? Did he send you a letter? Can you walk us through how that unfolded?

Mayor Adams: The team communicated with him, he communicated with the team and made the determination for the good of not distracting the city and to deal with the review that's taking place now. He made that decision. I respect the decision and for his family and for the commissioner. We wish him well as he goes through this review.

Question: Is it true to learn any of the allegations that he had been gambling and that his phone was seized and that he was part of a larger investigation?

Mayor Adams: I do not take reports that are in the media as what actually took place. I have not heard from the reviewing body, they have not communicated to me, so I don't know what the allegations are. Because people printed or rumor about it, those things, I don't know. Until we hear from the reviewing body, I would allow the reviewing body to do their job, which is part of the system we're in.

Question: So Mr. Mayor, in regard to housing, actually in the tent facility at Randall's, opposes the story of the Senegalese guys who are moving in there. Is this a sign that New York has enough room to house all comers and is welcoming all asylum seekers to the city? And how is the city confirming that these individuals are asylum seekers?

Mayor Adams: What happened was that we're using the HERRCs to all asylum seekers and migrants, no matter where they're coming from. We're using the HERRCs to do the process as we continue with the appropriate measures, making sure we give the housing that's needed. And this was brought to our attention, some of the imams reached out to us and stated that some asylum seekers and migrants were living in terrible conditions, and we responded accordingly. So no matter who the asylum seeker is or the migrant may be, we are going to follow the same process. And so when the imams, and I want to take my hat off to them, because they were providing services. When they reached out to us, we responded accordingly. And New York has already been a place where we had our share of asylum seekers and migrants. We had large numbers prior to what just recently took place on our board of states. And we are going to continue to do our job, our moral and legal responsibility. Okay, thank you.

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