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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT NBA
ANNOUNCEMENT**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, this is a really wonderful day for New York City, a wonderful day for Staten Island. And I just have to thank the NBA for all they're doing for us today. I also have to say, you know, as a true sports fan, it is something very special to be introduced by Ahmad. I have heard your voice for so many years, telling me the truth about each play, and what happened, and the analysis, and it is a special pleasure to be here with you. Thank you for all you do for this city and this country, through your great involvement. Thank you very much. Give him a round of applause.

[Applause]

By the way, for you football fans, he was a four-time – four-time Pro Bowler. That is not easy to do, so well done, sir.

[Applause]

To Commissioner Adam Silver, from the very beginning of knowing you, you have shown a really profound commitment to taking the NBA out all over this city, and the WNBA as well, all over this city, connecting to our neighborhoods, connecting to the grassroots, connecting to our kids. You know, when we first sat down, I talked to you about what we're trying to do in this city – make sure that everything we do is about all five boroughs, to make sure that everything we do is about creating opportunity. And I was deeply impressed by your common sense of that mission, your shared belief in that mission, and your desire to make the lead-up to the All-Star Game an opportunity to really bond these leagues deeply to the people of our city. And, you know, you followed through on your words and your ideas with action today, so let's thank the commissioner for all that he does.

I also want to say, it's an honor to have with us the new executive director of the NBA Player's Association – and it's a special honor because every New Yorker loves a great New York success story. She was born in the Melrose Houses in the Bronx, became a renowned lawyer, now the executive director. Let's thank Michele Roberts for all she does.

[Applause]

There's a lot of great executives of our two teams here, players – folks who have done a lot for the city of New York – and we appreciate it. As a Brooklynite, I could not be happier about what the Nets have done already, and the incredible energy that people feel about the Nets. As a New Yorker, I want to say that we love the Knicks. And I said to Derek, before – Derek, there's no pressure on you at all. You know, just, people really, really, really, really want a championship again, but no pressure. And – [Laughs] – you know, I know enough about your career to know you're a specialist in last minute pressure situations, so I think you're going to blend in fine here. Let's thank him for taking on this job.

[Applause]

I want to thank the members of our city government who have worked for what's happening here in Staten Island today, but also, again, this is one example of so many other things we'll be doing with the NBA and the WNBA in the months ahead. I want to thank my Senior Advisor Gabrielle Fialkoff, who's been a leader in this effort. Let's give her a round of applause.

[Applause]

And I want you to thank – Liam Kavanaugh was mentioned before – I want you to thank him again, and everyone at the parks department who's here, who makes these parks in our city so great. Let's thank the parks department for all they do.

[Applause]

Now, our colleagues in public office here in Staten Island are true partners. I can assure you – I'm looking at you, Mr. Borough President – I can assure you that if, at any point, our elected officials in Staten Island believe that Staten Island is not getting its fair share, they will speak up. So, I'm proud to say we are initiating this effort today, for the whole city, here in Staten Island. Let me welcome and thank all the elected officials gathered here today – Jimmy Oddo, Borough President of Staten Island.

[Applause]

State Senators Diane Savino and Andy Lanza.

[Applause]

Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis.

[Applause]

Council Members Steve Matteo and Vinny Ignizio. Let's thank them all.

[Applause]

So, to young people here today – oh, I'm sorry, I missed Joe Borelli. Joe Borelli, my apology.

Joe Borelli as well – Assembly Member Joe Borelli. My apology.

[Applause]

To the young people here today from P.S. 38 and I.S. 2, I'm going to state the obvious – this is all being done for you. This is all being done to give you more wonderful options in your life, because a lot of people believe in you, and want to see you succeed, and know that you need healthy bodies, strong minds, to get there. So, I hope you appreciate that all these folks around you, including these star athletes, are committed to you. They want to see you lead a better life. That's what we do this for.

And this area – I think a lot of people here today know what happened in Midland Beach and other neighborhoods right around here after Hurricane Sandy – but for some of our visiting players and executives, this may be your first time in this area. If you were here on October 27 and 28 last year, you would've seen a scene of absolute devastation – two years ago, I should say, in 2012 – you would've seen a scene of absolute devastation. You would've seen unimaginable uprooting of people's lives.

This community came together in an amazing way to, first, protect each other, and then to rebuild. And it is a symbol of your commitment that you chose – and I, again, want to thank the commissioner – you chose to come here first to say that we know what people have been through and we know it's important to build back not just homes, but all the other things that make life so wonderful. And so I think for people in Staten Island, there's a special appreciation that you chose to put your effort here to help make this community strong again.

[Applause]

I want to give a shout-out to all of the folks in the city government who are working on this, particularly our Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. The chair of that fund is a very influential young lady who could not be here today – she's out in California. She happens to my wife, Chirlane McCray, and she – [laughs] – and she believes so deeply in these efforts to reach our young people. And the Mayor's Fund is one of the vehicles that we use to bring in great contributions from the private sector and from folks who want to make this city better. And we see these efforts turn into something amazing at the community level – and this an example of that.

You know, here – I'm going to say to these famous players and to the executives – look out there, because you may be looking at one of the stars of the future here. New York City has a proud tradition of turning out extraordinary talent. There's a whole generation of NBA players today who come out of New York City. There's greats over the years – Lenny Wilkens and Tiny Archibald and a little-known player known as Kareem Abdul Jabbar came out of New York City. We have an incredible tradition here that we're so proud of, because basketball is a game for all

the people. Basketball is something that people play in this city regardless of background or income – it's a great sport because all you need is a ball and a court. And that's part of why this city has churned out talent – people from every part of the world came here, learned this game, and went on to great heights. And the next generation is before us today – and we want you to enjoy everything great about this sport and realize all the ways it will make you stronger.

The All-Star weekend is coming in February. It's something we're incredibly excited about. We're very appreciative – not just the NBA has taken this view of making this something for our neighborhoods in the grassroots, but the Knicks and the Nets have as well. And we want to really thank them for our commitment. The Knicks are refurbishing the basketball court and they're delivering school supplies and lunches to students – they're really getting out to the grassroots in a real way. The Nets are revitalizing five school cafeterias, which is going to help our young people to be healthier. This is the kind of the thing that really shows people the larger role that sports plays in our lives. We all know that sports builds healthy bodies, it builds a lot of character, but it's also such a crucial part of our citizenship – and it's incredibly important to see these teams giving back in such an important way.

I'll finish with this – you know, if you're a basketball fan, you know some of the greats not just as players, but as coaches – the great John Wooden, of UCLA, who coached Kareem Abdul Jabbar, who's one of the legends of coaching – he had a quote that I think epitomizes today – the way you start with something local, grassroots, and how it builds and builds and builds. He said, "It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen." So this may seem like a little thing, but it's a very big thing in the lives of these young people and it's a big example of what the commitment is of the NBA and the WNBA and these teams to the future of our city – and we are deeply, deeply appreciative. Thank you so much.

[Applause]

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