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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION, CITY COUNCIL EXPAND CITYWIDE INITIATIVE TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE, LAUNCH GUN VIOLENCE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Big crowd today. Okay. Well, we're here to talk about something that is really a great step forward for this city, and it represents an extraordinary collaboration between the City Council and the Mayor's Office and, most importantly, people at the grassroots all over this city who want to stop violence, who want to make communities safer. We are blessed by the fact that New York City is the safest big city in America. We continue to make it safer all the time, but we never ever rest on our laurels, we're never satisfied – we have to keep doing new and better things to continue the work that's really been going on over 20 years to achieve this level of safety, and continue to improve upon it. And we also know that in some neighborhoods there's still too much crime. Some neighborhoods are still too hard hit and we will not leave them behind. We will reach every corner of this city with everything we've got to make people safer.

Today we take a big step forward in reducing gun violence in some of our city's most troubled neighborhoods. We're proud to announce an investment of nearly \$13 million to prevent shootings before they occur. This is what all of us in government should focus on – stopping problems before they occur. These are the kind of investments we need. They're a smart use of the people's money to solve problems in their infancy.

As part of an initiative known as the Gun Violence Crisis Management System, we're going to take programs that have initially been in place in five neighborhoods and expand them to 14 police precincts across the city – 14 police precincts that account for 51 percent of all shootings thus far this year. So, think about that for a minute – in 14 of our precincts, we have a majority of our shootings. We know where to pinpoint our efforts. We've been doing that with additional police resources already this year, but this grassroots effort, this effort to reach people, especially young people, and change the course of things is going to have a profound effect and is going to add a lot to our effort.

There's a lot of people to thank and a lot of people I want you to hear from to understand how important this is and where it's taking us and how it connects to so many other public safety initiatives we're undertaking.

And a lot of people to thank and appreciate. First, I want to thank, of course, our hosts, Harlem Hospital, for having us in this wonderful facility. And I want to thank – we can clap for them.

[Applause]

And I want to thank Liz Glazer, the director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, who's done an extraordinary job working with the stakeholders across the board and working closely with the city council to develop innovative approaches. I appreciate her bringing her experience as a former prosecutor, someone who's worked at all levels of law enforcement, to this work.

I also want to acknowledge the hard work of the city council in general and, particularly, the City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, chaired by Councilmembers Jumaane Williams and Fernando Cabrera.

[Applause]

The task force was created at the end of 2011, because there had been a series of shootings in the city and members of the council wanted a different kind of response, and delivered recommendations in 2012. Started down the path last year. Now these recommendations are really taking shape and reaching far across the city. This is a very important moment in the development of the work of that task force.

You're going to hear from our speaker – and I want to thank her for the extremely effective and consistent partnership on issues of public safety, all she did to help us get more cops on the street and the initiative that the council took to move towards more of a civilianization approach so we could get more men and women in uniform out, helping to keep our people safe. The council has played a big role here and we have all the councilmembers to thank, but particularly Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. Thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

And the speaker will be up in a moment and she will introduce all of the councilmembers that are here – and we thank them all for being here.

I want to thank the members of my administration because they believed in connecting all these dots. One of the challenges in government – we've seen it time and time again – is some good efforts are being made by different agencies that are not connected at all. And a lot of times, what that means is we're just not effective enough. And a lot of times, what it means is that the taxpayer's dollar is not used well enough. This team believes in constantly collaborating – something our police commissioner believes in deeply as well, he's one of the strongest voices for that kind of collaboration in all of law enforcement in this country – and so a real, cooperative spirit animates this effort. I want to thank all of those who've been a part of it and

contributed so much: Deputy Mayor Lilliam Barrios-Paoli; Health Commissioner Mary Basset; Probation Deputy Commissioner Clinton Lacey; DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong; I want to thank everyone at the Department of Education who's been a part of this effort; I want to thank the City University of New York, represented today by Jeff Butts, that's been a part of this effort; and, of course, I want to thank our host, HHC, and its great president, Ram Raju, and –

[Applause]

Hometown – hometown team's clapping for Ram.

[Applause]

And someone who we turn to to keep our children safe, and who plays a crucial role in this endeavor as well – Chief Brian Conroy, the NYPD Commanding Officer of the School Safety Division. Let's thank Chief Conroy for all he does.

[Applause]

Now this is a comprehensive approach – that's what we believe in. It aims to prevent violence before it happens. It aims to prevent violence in close coordination with a host of other public safety strategies and policing strategies, but in a sense to get this stopped before the police even have to become involved. This is something I know Chief Conroy and Commissioner Bratton and everyone at the NYPD believes in – if we can stop violence even before it begins to take shape, that is the best thing we can do, not only for our communities, but for the people who protect our communities.

This relies on the notion of violence interruption. You may have heard of this around the country – the Interrupters – in many cases, folks who have had a history of involvement with gangs and overcame that part of their lives and went on to be peacemakers; or other community leaders and activists who believe in healing and bringing people together. This approach, all around the country, has been proven as an effective tool – and you'll hear from police leaders around the country that this, to them, is an exciting piece of what we can do to stop violence in coordination with a host of other strategies. The violence interrupters are a community-based solution – community members talking to other community members and convincing them that violence is not the right path.

There's no one who can convince particularly some of our young people of the consequences of their actions more than someone who went down the wrong path and then recovered from it. I met some of the former gang members, and they're now people who work for peace every day, and their voices are powerful as they speak from real experience. [Coughs] Excuse me. And they know how to help us find young people at risk and defuse situations before they get out of control.

I want to give you one example – Kiki Brown, an interrupter who worked with SOS Bronx. And Kiki knew about three gangs on a certain day that were unfortunately headed towards conflict. It is an important point about Kiki that that day happened to be her birthday, and she could have

looked the other way, and she could have gone out and celebrated, but she believed in her commitment to the community. So, she cancelled her plans immediately, went out, and one by one met with gang members and convinced them that they have to back away from conflict. And because of her efforts, there was finally peace, and that moment that could have resulted in the loss of life never came to pass. It's amazing that one dedicated, trained person can literally stop violence at the neighborhood level and save lives in that fashion. It's an incredibly powerful tool, and that's what this initiative is all about – fostering and supporting. It's one of many stories that you're going to hear. SOS Bronx is doing incredible work and today you'll hear from Ife Charles, who's running this extraordinary effort. Let's thank Ife.

[Applause]

And this notion is, you work with all sorts of allies – and this is why HHC is a part of this, too – our hospitals, our clergy. There's so many different community allies who are brought into this effort. The whole idea is an entire community responds and convinces people to take the right path. And it works. It's worked all over the country.

Another powerful example is recognizing that we can help our young people to see their own possibilities, because I'll tell you – people go on the wrong path when they think there's no hope. They go on the right path when they see possibilities ahead and fulfillment ahead. One great example is the Match Program. Now, this sounds on first blush like it must be impossible, but it's working. The Match Program provides daily tutoring in algebra to high school students, including at-risk high school students. And it's led to a 44 percent reduction in violence for the kids involved while improving grades. Why? Because once kids see they can take something that seems insurmountable, and they can take it on and they can win, it gives them the faith in going down a positive path. We need to do that for our young people. When we don't give them a positive option, we should not be surprised if despair takes over. And that is governing everything we're doing – everything we're doing in our schools with pre-k and afterschool, everything we're doing in our housing developments where our 107 recreation centers this summer are open until 11 pm or later every day, for the first time in 30 years – because we want every young person to know there's some place positive to be. And I want to thank this City Council again, for allowing us, through their collaboration, to make that initiative come to life.

We believe that we have the finest police force in the United States of America, and they do extraordinary work every day. And there's a lot we need to do to support our police, and one of the things we need to do is help solve the problem before it occurs, at the grassroots, with the full participation of communities. We do that more and more – we're going to see crime continue to stay low and then go down in this city. Again, I am blessed to have a partner who believes so deeply in these initiatives, and makes something happen, provides leadership, and we would not have this initiative today if it weren't for the speaker of the city council. It is my honor to introduce Melissa Mark-Viverito.

[Applause]

[City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito speaks]

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you, Speaker. You know, these things happen because people provide leadership. The speaker's provided leadership in the council, and then within the council there's been real energy and focus on the issue of fighting violence. I have to tell you, I've talked to Jumaane Williams many, many times over the last years, and I think almost every conversation included him reminding me of the important work of this task force, and the need to continue to expand it. So, I'm happy that someone who cares so deeply about this work at the grassroots has achieved so much in this task force and is now seeing it really reach all across the city. A lot of the credit goes to Council Member Jumaane Williams.

[Applause]

[Councilmember Jumaane Williams speaks]

[Applause]

Mayor: Couple of quick points. I want to thank Jumaane Williams for giving us a new verb – New Yorkize. I think in this administration we're attempting to New Yorkize many ideas and we thank you for making it clearer for us. On the point about treating this crisis as a public health crisis – this is why Dr. Basset is here – because there's a lot of ways to look at something. And if you – again, I think Jumaane said it perfectly – if you think, 'Well, we have a great police force, they have to handle it all by themselves,' we're not going to get where we need to go. We have to think of this as a health crisis, because we're losing so many lives and so many people are being injured. And that's why the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is a part of this, our schools are a part of it – so many agencies participating with a common vision, that's what's so powerful about this approach. Another fact – Councilmember Williams asked me to clarify a budget item. You were correct. This additional \$13 million is on top of \$3 million that was base-lined originally as part of the work of the task force, so it brings us to almost \$16 million in impact and we think it's going to show us a lot about how we move forward from here. So we're very very excited about the model that this is going to provide us and how we can use it all over the city.

There's another co-chair of this task force who worked so hard in his district in the Bronx as an agent of healing. He does that in his – I don't know which is the day job and which is the night job. His day job is councilmember, his night job as a pastor, but all to the same point of healing and bringing the community together – Councilmember Fernando Cabrera.

[Applause]

[Councilmember Fernando Cabrera speaks]

Mayor: And we're going to have one more speaker come up, and I think she is the real expert here, from leading at the front these efforts. So, we're going to have Ife come up in a second, and I'm going to favor you with a few sentences of Spanish, and then we're going to do – I know

you've been waiting for that all day. [Laughter] And then we will do on topic, and then we will do off topic.

Ife Charles is Coordinator of Anti-Violence Programs at the Center of Court Innovation, which oversees SOS Bronx. And SOS Bronx has played a key role in reducing gun violence on the ground, and you also played a key role in Crown Heights, and the successful efforts in Crown Heights that really in many ways has been a proving ground for this approach. So, Ife has been at the front line, has been an innovator, has actually achieved results and proven that this approach works. And we're going to hear from the general of the army here, who has shown that this is the way forward. Ife Charles.

[Applause]

[Ife Charles speaks]

[Applause]

Mayor: You know, a leader is someone who takes us to a better place. That is Ife Charles, thank her again for what she's doing.

Before I go to the program I just announced, Melissa Mark-Viverito's going to just add a quick point.

[City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito speaks]

[Applause]

[Mayor speaks in Spanish]

Mayor: With that, we welcome first on topic questions.

Question: Can you just tell us how the violence interruption actually works. Is there a shooting – how the violence interruption actually works, if there is a shooting, the police department calls you guys, you figure out who it is, find someone –

Mayor: I'll start and I want to offer Ife, Jumaane, chief – anyone who wants to jump in, after I start. No, the idea is before the shooting even happens. You know, I think what Ife said powerfully is it's a village. We want to recreate the notion of a village – that people see what's happening and stop something before it goes down.

So in effect you train people from the community, you hire them into this program, again some of whom have real experience; it gives them a kind of legitimacy. They back from the abyss, and the notion is, with their ability to gather intelligence and intervene, they literally interrupt something that might be on the pathway to violence because they had legitimacy and the understanding of how to talk to those who might be on the wrong path. And before it ever gets to the shooting, it stops. Who wants to add?

Councilmember Jumaane Williams: I just want to also make sure I clarify something before the press had a field day with the fact that formerly incarcerated or people who used to be in the life – that is not a new thing. If you look at other industries, if you look at people who hack into computers, there are people who are routinely hired who have the expertise and who have done something wrong and learned from it and want to come back and dedicate it to the community. So there's no difference here.

I'm hoping two things happen. One – and Ife will be able to expand – the violence interrupters do have a caseload. It is a job so they are working with people who they believe are most likely to be involved in the shooting. They go out all hours of night when we are sleeping and deal with the caseload. In addition– we are hoping – that when there is a shooting, the crisis management system goes into effect. When there is a shooting victim that comes into the hospital – that's why the hospital is important – the doctor, the people involved can reach out to the interrupters who could then reach out to all services that are needed, and we can go deal with that. Because like any other public health issue, when there is an incident, it can spread. We want to prevent the spread of those. So I believe that there are two prongs. Ife, I don't know if you want to expand.

Mayor: And Ife maybe you can give a little example to answer the question, exactly how someone may play this out in a given incident like Kiki or anyone else.

Ife Charles: Definitely. So I always try to share the example that the violence interrupters and the outreach workers are like first responders. And so to answer your question, a prime example of what would happen on a given day. We had a situation that took place – and this is why we said there are no boundaries when it comes to bullets. Harlem and the South Bronx are very closely connected and an individual situation that took place in South Bronx, there was a connection to that in Harlem. What happened was that one of our folks on the street team, which is either violence interrupter and outreach worker, drew their connections on the team – on the streets. And that is something that we need to be clear about.

The streets talk a different language for different folks. And the incredible messengers that we have hired – which are the violence interrupters and outreach workers – that language usually initiates a conference with someone else to say, I think something is about to go down. And so what happened at that particular incident is that word came to us because of connections on the street and the outreach workers and violence interrupters in the South Bronx started talking about, this doesn't just sound like a South Bronx issue, let's reach out to Harlem to have a discussion, let's find out what is going on. And there was some connection.

Kiki and some of the other members on our team ended up having conversations with the folks in the South Bronx that were about to initiate the fight. And was able to them as that they would say in their language, fall back on this, you don't need to start anything right now. There are going to be some consequences if you move on this.

And then the Harlem side, that is why it is important that there is cross-communication. There's got to be cross-pollination with all the information from the street teams whether in Brooklyn or Queens. So that is how that issue was diffused. Other incidents such as that were in Crown

Heights when on Fourth of July [inaudible] when a group of young people were out there very angry, just trying to probably express themselves in not a positive manner. The Brooklyn team went to them and within thirty minutes, had this team of folks about 100 young people just stepping away and going back to the original.

All because the folks that we hire, are folks who know the streets, have been there and have credibility. You and I can't go out there and do that. I go out there, I'm mom on the block right? And they'll have that kind of respect for a moment. However, someone who has been there, done that, who knows the life, knows the language, they have more strength to say to them, that's not what you want to do, look at me.

[Applause]

Mayor: Let me ask the chief to add, from a police point of view, what this means for the NYPD.

Chief Conroy: Good morning. As Police Commissioner Bratton and the mayor have often said, that police work is a collaborative effort, and what's great about this program is that it is a community-based organization. The police have, obviously, an important role in reducing gun violence from an enforcement angle, but it's not the only answer, and we are very aggressive in going after gun violence and going after crews and gangs.

Operation Crew Cut is a perfect example, it's a big success, that takedown right here in Manhattan. But we need to work together with all of our city agencies, all of our community groups to build that trust in the neighborhood to continue to reduce violence, even more than it has been already, over the last 20 years, I mean – as the mayor mentioned. So, this is great news.

Also, for my personal thing, [inaudible] has the command officer for the school safety division to have a school component here for conflict resolution inside the school and the Match Program, as the mayor mentioned, is another great component. We've had tremendous success in reducing violence inside schools over the last several years. But even one incident is too many. So we want to continue that, of course, and all the kinds of different ways we can look at to achieve that goal is certainly welcome. So, thank you.

Question: [inaudible] assuming the five precincts. That's where this program has already been implemented?

Mayor: Begun to be implemented, yeah. Because last – it started last year, so it's still fairly early in this experience.

Question: So this leads into my next question – wondering whether or not there is any evidence that this is proven –

Mayor: Crown Heights. Come on over, Ife. The exemplar was Crown Heights, which even started before the City Council fully engaged. So, let's just get a little bit of history of Crown Heights and how long it's been.

Charles: So, the Crown Heights Mediation Center was the first CV implementation in New York City. And we started in 2012. And we did our internal research, and the project is still being – a lot of these programs are still being evaluated, and research is still being done. But an internal research was done, and we can find that on the website of www.courtinnovation.org, that has the research document, and what was shown in Crown Heights, within a particular catchment area – I'm holding this, from two years ago, reading the article – is that there was a 66 percent reduction in the shooting incidents that took place within our particular catchment area, once the program was implemented.

And what you need to understand is that we are not going into the entire 77, because we cannot do this. I think about this – when we think about a disease, we want to quarantine a particular area. The area that is deemed with the highest incidence of shootings, we want to saturate that area with public education materials, we want to have outreach workers and violence interrupters highlighting and identifying young men and women between the ages of 16 and 24, that can say, these are the folks that are out there that might be involved in wrong behavior, and then we constantly work with them. Think of a sponsorship program. Think of a young man and a young woman who might have been addicted, and he or she is now in some sort of recovery, and has a sponsor.

That is how I look at our outreach workers and our violence interrupters. In addition, a clearer picture – is you have Red Cross and the fire department. If there was a fire, the fire department comes in and they put that fire out. That's what the violence interrupters do. And then the support from Red Cross would be related to our outreach workers. So that is how this model is about – quarantine an area, and then saturate the area with some sort of antibodies to help eradicate the violence that will continue.

[Applause]

Mayor: [inaudible] Jumaane.

Councilmember Williams: I can't really top that, but I just wanted to make sure that we had it. The areas – the five areas, in some of those areas, there were people doing this work before they were properly funded, so I want to make sure that we acknowledge that as well, and the funding didn't get to everybody, although there were people doing the work before last year, and there is some anecdotal evidence when you look at the data that has been working in those areas, and it's about the census tracts that we looked at for the expansion – about 10, 20,000 people, maybe a little bit more.

And so, for the expansions we looked at three years' worth of data to figure out where we're going to expand. I do want to make sure I say thank you to all my colleagues, and particularly to the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus. The co-chair is here, Andy King. They were also very supportive, and one of the number one issues in the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus to make sure it was properly funded.

And lastly, it's important that we mention, when we're speaking to the young people and we're asking them to put something down, we want to make sure they can pick something else up. And

this year, for the first time, there was a hundred job spots from DYCD that were given to five existing areas, and they were able to give that out to the young people on their caseload. We're hoping that we'll be able to expand that to the other areas next year.

Question: [inaudible]

Councilmember Williams: [inaudible] evaluation aspects – so, sorry. [Laughs] That's where CUNY's involved, so – we're all very big on evaluation, to make sure that we are evaluating what's going on, and we look forward to when John Jay in particular finishes that out. I know we shouted out, but I want to give a shout-out again to Liz Glaser, who's been phenomenal in moving this forward, and [inaudible] will be the coordinator of the entire system. Thank you.

[Applause]

Question: Just more on the violence interrupters, first of all how many are there going to be? Can you just clarify, is this actually a job they get hired and paid for or are they more like volunteers? And when you say they have a caseload, how are the people identified who are – or is there caseload based on past law enforcement contact or how are they actually chosen?

Mayor: Let's give Liz a chance to speak to the – if you like, or do you want – Ife is going to talk to it, okay. I'm trying to pass the ball around here. Okay.

Charles: The violence interrupters and outreach workers are paid staff. They are – because of their street credibility – they do not get caseloads assigned to them. They run a caseload anywhere from 10 to 15. The outreach workers, based upon the relations with the violence interrupters – remember the violence interrupters are the firefighters, they put out the fire. They go to the situation and because they live in the community, most of our violence interrupters are from those particular catchment areas. They then – once they put that fire out or put that fight out – they identify the young man or young woman who is most likely the leader within that particular group and refer them to the outreach workers.

That is why there is an important communication between outreach workers and violence interrupters. They work hand in hand, it's like the treatment plan, I know I'm going back to this, but it's a treatment plan. You have your surgery and then you have the treatment team behind that, to follow up and that's how that works with us.

So they have that caseload – 10 to 15 – additionally, Jumaane Williams just reminded me about this, we don't do this work by ourselves. The wrap-around service providers that have been assigned to us to work with us to help us in that treatment recovery plan are very important and I neglected to mention Fortune Society, who was one of those agencies that were working with us in the past.

So that is how – I hope I answered your question as far as how many people, the normal staffing pattern is usually four outreach workers to four violence interrupters and then you have a program manager and any administrative support that you have, but that's what the staffing

pattern looks like and that's why it's important for us to focus on a very small concentrated area rather than to exhaust ourselves by covering something larger.

Question: [inaudible] how many there will be hired in all [inaudible] will be deployed and hired in all of—

Mayor: Total number of youth workers. Does someone have that figure? We'll come back to a clear answer.

Question: So then, how is the success of the pilot program measured? Other than anecdotal —

Mayor: Well I think the example that I gave was you saw a reduction in shootings and that's one of the best ways to measure.

Question: Whose data is that? NYPD?

Mayor: No that is — of course NYPD. That's where we get our data on shootings. So you know, Crown Heights — I want to say just broad here for a second — In Crown Heights, because of these efforts you saw a reduction in shooting in the direct area where the youth workers were involved. It's very similar to what you've seen in the last couple of months. When NYPD added additional resources to some precincts that were having trouble, you saw in reports recently how the numbers in shootings went down.

I was at Ingersoll houses on Friday night, one of our recreation programs in a NYCHA development, where over the last month shootings and murders have gone down compared to previous time frames because of the presence of those recreation programs. So, in the end, the information we have, we always want to keep deepening it, we always want more examples, we always want to look at things over a deeper time frame — a longer time frame — but I think we know already from the Crown Heights example and from examples around the nation, that this has a direct impact on the number of violent incidents and the number of shootings.

Councilmember Williams: In East New York, the 71st precinct, there's been a tremendous lowering of the shootings. And a matter of fact, Man Up Inc is the cure violence provider over there. They went a whole year without a shooting at one point within their [inaudible].

[Applause]

Mayor: We're staying with media questions right now, but I also want to make sure that when we're finished, the media talks to some of the people who are assembled here, who are doing this work on the ground. Yes?

Question: Can you talk about how these programs are going to expand into the new neighborhoods, is there a ramp up process or a time frame and how long will it take to have these programs fully deployed in the new neighborhoods so the interrupters and the wrap-around services —

Mayor: Well the funding obviously is here to get it done in this fiscal year, but who wants to speak to this specific ramp up?

Councilmember Williams: There is a ramp-up period, unfortunately some of it we can't do anything about. Getting the money to the groups, that has been the one thing we've tried our best to make a little easier, it's hard to do with the rules and regulations, so that's probably the biggest hindrance to actually getting the ramp-up, but we have the funding this fiscal year, so hopefully we'll get it to them and get everybody ramped up.

There are some areas that don't necessarily have an organization ready, so they're looking for the organization in the area or one that can expand to their area. And this is not about people trying to change the mission to do the work. We want to make sure we find people who are ready, and willing, and have experience doing that work. So yes, there's a ramp-up period. We did get some things on the ground for this summer. We believe by next summer, usually when spikes go up again, everything, in all the neighborhoods, is going to be clear.

And it's important to mention that, which is the most important, and hopefully you guys mention it when you talk about it, the agencies that are going to be coordinated under Monte are going to start long before next summer, so they're going to be providing services to those areas hopefully immediately, so that's an important facet. It's not as sexy as the other things, but I think it's one of the most important things that really shows the change in shift in how we're doing.

Mayor de Blasio: On the question of timing—sorry, we're just doing media questions now, my apologies—on the question of timing, we can get you an answer on the groups that have not had any contracts with the city, how long it will take to finish that process. But the ones that do have contracts already of any kind with the city, pretty much can get the funding immediately, so we'll get you the breakout on that.

Question: [inaudible] don't have organizations out of these places where you're expanding. So you're still looking for organizations to run these programs in some of these new precincts where you're expanding the program?

Mayor de Blasio: Yeah, but I want to emphasize, we have—New York City is blessed, for decades, with a history of youth-oriented organizations, youth workers, this is a very, you know, deeply developed element of the nonprofit world in New York City, so we think we're going to be able to find good partners in each of these neighborhoods.

Question: You spoke a little bit earlier about some of the other programs that you've been rolling out due to combat gun violence in certain precincts and neighborhoods, and I was wondering if you could speak a little bit to what do you think they've been successful so far this summer? I mean I know last week, I'm sure you saw the last week – showed a bit of a spike – last week compared to the year before in shooting incidents.

Mayor de Blasio: Well, I think we have to look at, obviously shootings are a particular measure, we're looking at all crime. So the couple of things, I would say—the overall approach, you know, at this moment, we're about 3.5 percent down in crime overall compared to last year this

time. We're down 23 murders today compared to last year at this time. Those are good indicators. We are concerned about the shooting numbers, but we've seen some real movement over these last weeks as we flooded the zone, as we got more officers to the precincts in greatest need. Again, the youth programs, we believe, are already proving to be very effective in the NYCHA developments, so what we've got so far in NYCHA, what we've got so far in the target precincts, shows a turn starting to happen, and we believe that that's the set of strategies we're going to be reinforcing deeply in the coming weeks and months, so we believe you're going to see continued improvement on the shootings.

Question: Is there any effort to get private money to help finance this?

Mayor de Blasio: We accept private money. Does anyone want to speak to the specifics of our desire for private money? We know, with these public resources, we can get started, but we certainly want to deepen it.

Councilmember Williams: It would definitely be helpful, particularly, that money would be able to help get the money to the ground quicker. So the government money is held up in paperwork sometimes, so if people are out there, that want to help with this, definitely, private money is helpful, in that we can get the money to there quicker. But I don't think that we have anybody—

Mayor de Blasio: I mean, I think the Center for a Court Innovation, for example, has been a great partner with the city. We're certainly going to encourage resources to flow into it. But I think our central focus right now is to take the public resources we've put in and apply them aggressively so we can have an impact in these 15 areas.

Question: Following upon that point, how is the program different from the Young Men's Initiative?

Mayor de Blasio: Well, I'll start, and anyone who wants to add in, feel free. The Young Men's Initiative has a lot of important components, and all these things, ultimately, are working in the same direction. But the notion of this interruption strategy, as you heard from Ife, this is something that is still pretty nascent in New York City. It's proven to be very successful in other places, it's proven to be successful in Crown Heights. It's time to take this strategy and apply it more broadly. So I think the Young Men's Initiative looks at a whole host of ideas—you know, how to keep people in school, how to prepare them for jobs, a whole host of possibilities.

This is a very targeted strategy to get at young people who may be trending in the wrong direction, who may be tempted by violence to literally interrupt that path – to stop violence. And start the process of healing and bringing them back. Because there are a lot of redemption stories out there – there really are. They don't make the front pages all the time but there are a lot of them. And the work – NYPD does this all the time and all the other agencies represented – we are trying constantly to get people to the right path. And this interruption approach is crucial because it stops violence and it gives people a chance to get to a path for redemption.

Question: Mr. Mayor, obviously this has been in the works for a while. But because of the tensions that we see between the community and the NYPD, a lot of people might be cynic and they say, 'Oh, is this a way to exclude the police.' What would be your answer to that?

Mayor: Well, you just heard from the chief. This is part of a strategy that Commissioner Bratton believes in deeply, and the NYPD believes in, and I believe in, because it is complementary to the police. Everyone can do different things. You know, we know that, for example, for some young people it's a teacher in their lives that puts them on the right path, or is the one that can help them overcome their problems. For some it may be a member of the clergy. But for kids who already, unfortunately, have gotten involved in gangs and crews, sometimes the only voice that will be relevant to them is one that can speak from the same experience. And I think what Ife has done, and her colleagues have done, to turn people who have already found redemption, who already turned their lives around – I've spoken to some of these young people, it's an extraordinary thing – they found their way back from the abyss, and now they want to help others. And that's something I can't do, Ife can't do, the chief can't do – only someone who's been down that road can do that for them. Like so many other – I love the recovery analogy, because so many other recovery approaches that we know, substance abuse and others – the only person that can really talk to you in an effective way is someone who's experienced it themselves. So, it's absolutely complimentary, and I can say one thing from my constant dialogue, and constant work with key figures in the NYPD every single day – they love nothing more than a crime that never happened. They love nothing more than a cycle of violence being interrupted and they are looking for every ally that can help them get there. Let's go to off topic.

Question: [inaudible] on the radio [inaudible]?

Mayor: He's absolutely right. There's no question about it. Commissioner Bratton, to his great credit, talks about democracy a lot. He frames all this work we do as part of the nature of democratic society. In a democratic society, we invest in our police responsibility for enforcing the law. When a police officer comes to the decision that it's time to arrest someone, that individual is obligated to submit to arrest. They will then have every opportunity for due process in our court system. Now, you know, as Commissioner Bratton says constantly, arrest is one of many tools. There's a lot of other tools that police officers have. Look at what Mr. [inaudible] said the other day – arrest is obviously not always the best tool, is not always the goal. But once an officer has decided that arrest is necessary, every New Yorker should agree to do what they need to do as a citizen, and respect the police officer and follow their guidance, and then there is a thorough due process system thereafter.

Question: Philadelphia's making a presentation for the DNC today, can you tell us why you think the convention should not be in Philadelphia, and also, [inaudible] made the comment that he felt New York did not have the spirit and people will be too blasé about the convention, and also, that the subway was too hot. So, if you could just respond to his comments.

Mayor: Wow. I see bait. I should really take that bait, shouldn't I? [Laughter] What, Marti? No, I shouldn't? Oh, ok. I won't. Good try. [Laughs] I – I offer only peace and love to the city of brotherly love. The – Mayor Nutter's a friend, he was with us at Gracie Mansion for our U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting on Monday. I have nothing bad to say about Philadelphia. I have

only good to say about New York. And we believe – and there's a lot of feeling for this, and I want to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito, gave a powerful presentation to the Site Selection Committee the other day – we're united. The response from elected officials, from community leaders, from business, from labor, has been extraordinary. What we said to the Site Selection Committee is, we have the finest police force in the country. You'll be safe. The MTA knows how to get more people around better than any transit agency in the country. We have great hotels and restaurants. Barclays is one of the newest arenas in the country, and one of the best – 24 hour nightlife – thank you Melissa. We have the whole package. And obviously, we have a lot of people in this town who provide a lot of support for the Democratic Party, and the resources will be there for the convention. So, we've got a lot of pluses, and we know it's a competition, and we are working hard to win it. But we're going to go about our business by talking about what's good about us, not what's bad about other people.

Question: Some German artists contacted some media outlets to claim responsibility for changing the flags on the Brooklyn Bridge. They've offered what appears to be proof that they did it. Two parts – one, do you think there's – do you believe them? Does the police department agree with that assessment? And secondly, do you feel like they should be prosecuted?

Mayor: Well, you should, first of all, turn to the NYPD for an answer on the first point. The judgment on whether their claim is real or not rests with the NYPD, and I know they're looking at that video, and they're going to come to a decision about what they feel about it as part of their investigation. They've talked to me but, again, that's being looked at still, and there's not a firm decision yet. So, you'll get an answer from them once they've completed their investigation. As to the question of whether they should be prosecuted, I am not a law enforcement professional, but from everything I know, that looks like trespassing, and that looks like other types of charges. Again, I'm going to leave it to the NYPD to answer in specific, but if they have violated a law, of course they should be prosecuted.

Question: There are reports that there is a MRSA problem at the Fire Academy – that several of the probies have contracted it, and that they're –

Mayor: You're saying, the disease? Ok, well, I'm going to bring Dr. Bassett forward. That is news to me, and let's look into that, but let's have Dr. Bassett come forward.

Commissioner Bassett, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you. I am afraid that I am not aware of this report yet. So, I'll have to get back to you. You're talking about a multi-resistant staph aureus infection, which is something that we do track, so I'll be able to get you that information.

Question: [inaudible] it is, and the problem with MRSA –

Commissioner Bassett: Well, this is a well-described problem in medical facilities, and one that we track at the health department. It's one that's not easy to solve for hospitals and other settings where the bacteria becomes entrenched – so, but the specific instance that you're speaking about, I haven't been briefed about yet. So I'll have to get back to you.

Mayor: I want to make sure that we don't speculate. So, you know, we're going to get you a formal answer in the course of the day and I'd say to all your colleagues, when we hear reports like this – and on thing – Chief, you'll appreciate this – Commissioner Bratton always reminds me, the word preliminary is a very important word in this work we do – a lot of times reports are not accurate, a lot of times reports are only partially accurate. We're going to take the question you've raised – Dr. Basset will look into it, we'll talk to Commissioner Nigro – and we'll give you an answer in the course of the day.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the city announced subsidy programs for homeless families and children this morning. Can you talk about, in part, do you think that it's serving enough – getting enough homeless families out of shelters? From my understanding, it's about 14,000 of the 55,000 families. And can you also talk about the breakdown in city and state funding of those programs?

Mayor: Yeah. This is a start. I think a central answer to your question is we've got a lot more work to do, but it's a start. We've got to really redouble our efforts to help people out of the shelter. This is something I spent a lot of time working on as a councilmember, previously chair of the General Welfare Committee in the council, as public advocate, now as mayor. We're not going to accept the situation where so many people end up in shelters – a lot of things we can do about it, thank God. The biggest thing we're going to do is build and preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing. That's going to start to change the dynamics in this city about the availability of affordable housing, which is really the central problem – the cost of housing and the availability of affordable housing what's fueling this crisis. We're also, within that, going to have a very substantial number of supportive housing units, meaning units for people with particular challenges who need services attached – that's a big piece of the affordable housing plan. Of course that's going to take years to get all that online. In the meantime, we have proven tools: anti-eviction legal services, rental subsidies. And you see in these new approaches some of these tools being brought into play very quickly. The state has been a good partner in this. They recognize the crisis. They're putting resources in. This is the beginning of what I think will be a larger collaboration. So, the answer is, these are important steps that will start to bring down the numbers of people in shelter, but they're only first steps of a much bigger strategy.

Question: There was a report this morning alleging that you are more willing to side with Reverend Sharpton as opposed to Commissioner Bratton. What are your –

Mayor: Idiotic. And look, I – I have a high-pain threshold when it comes untruths being told in print, but this is ludicrous. It's inappropriate. It's idiotic. I don't know how many times I've said we have the finest police leader in the United States – and I believe that in my heart. I think Bill Bratton is doing an extraordinary job. So, I'm kind of sick of this notion of let's make everything about personalities and conflict. We are blessed to have Bill Bratton as our commissioner and he's doing a great job. And he and I are absolutely united in our approach to fighting crime and bringing police and community together. We share a vision of bringing police and community together. That's why stops are down. That's why marijuana arrests are down. That's why you see efforts like the Interrupters being fostered and supported along with the cooperation of the NYPD. So I would wish that people would not talk to unnamed sources and would actually ask me. I'm quite available to answer the question.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Wait, I heard the first part, but do that second part again?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Okay. On the first part, I feel very good about our presentation. I don't get into the speculation business. I can't get in the minds of the site selection committee. It's not their job to show their hand to us. They make sure to keep their council until they've seen all the cities and go through their deliberations, but I can say – again, a thank you to Speaker Mark Viverito, Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand – you know, so many people participated with real energy and passion – you know, the 70 plus members of the host committee that have already signed on. So, I think we put our best foot forward. And I think we proactively addressed a lot of the obvious issues that that committee would want to look at. It's the same as for anywhere. What will the delegate experience be? Will there be enough venues for all the things they want to do? Can the arena handle what they want to do? How does the transportation and the security work? I think it's impossible for anyone who puts together an event to come here and not be impressed by the NYPD, and not be impressed by all that we do in terms of logistics and transportation. So I feel very good that they got a lot of the answers to the questions they had and that we left them with a very good imprint of what we could provide. To my fellow New Yorkers, I think it's straightforward. There's no question that this convention would be a huge economic boost. You're talking about people coming in from all over the country, all over the world. That has a couple of effects. It's not just the short-term spending because, remember, the convention build-up is a big process. So a lot of hotel rooms, a lot of spending on vendors, a lot of impact over months and months and months leading up to the convention. But then you're also talking about tens of thousands of people coming to the city, many of whom will be here for the first time. And I think I can speak on behalf of New York City and Company, which has done an extraordinary job developing tourism in this city – now over 54 million visitors last year – what happens is people come to New York once, they keep coming back. So we want people to have that first experience and we always want to show off New York to the world. We did that very effectively during the Super Bowl. We're going to do it again during the convention. So there's a lot of multiplier effect. But lastly, and I think in some ways as important or even more important, we're a five-borough city. We're a five-borough city in reality, but it hasn't always worked that way in terms of how the government has treated the boroughs, in terms of investment by the private sector, in terms of reputation. I said last year all boroughs are created equal. And if we're going to live that out and really show the world once and for all it's a five-borough city, I can think of nothing more powerful than having one of the great events that happens in this country every four years in Brooklyn. I think it will be a transcendent moment for the city and showing us what we're going to be in the future. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you.

[Applause]

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