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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY, COMMISSIONER PIERRE-LOUIS AND ACTING STATEN ISLAND DISTRICT ATTORNEY MASTER ANNOUNCE GROUNDBREAKING OF FIFTH NYC FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER ON STATEN ISLAND**

**First Lady Chirlane McCray:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us today, and thank you, Rose, for that introduction.

Nothing in this world can take the place of passion and persistence – and Rose, you have a large measure of both. Although the mission has been a tough one, you have been undaunted.

Thank you also to the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, and our very generous donors who have supported the Family Justice Centers from day one.

On behalf of the entire city, I also thank Gabrielle Fialkoff, Darren Bloch, and the entire Mayor’s Fund team. I am so grateful to all of them for their boundless support.

Now, as Rose mentioned, today’s opening represents a major milestone in a journey that began nine years ago. It’s a joyous day – we’ve come a long way since then. But we still have further to go.

In 2014, the NYPD filed more than 282,000 domestic violence incident reports. That’s almost 800 every single day. And sadly, we know that many, many more incidents go unreported. But this is one of those issues where the statistics, where the cold hard numbers, don’t even begin to convey the suffering.

When we talk about domestic violence, we’re talking about real people – like the young woman who came to our city with dreams of endless possibility, and is now living a nightmare of degrading sex work. We’re talking about a grandfather who is being abused by his “caretaker”. And we’re talking about two young boys – brothers – who live in a constant state of terror, never knowing when their abusive father is going to take out his frustrations on them. These examples may be hypothetical, but it would be all too easy for Rose to put a name to each and every one of them.

Over the past nine years, the city’s Family Justice Centers have served nearly 130,000 clients and 24,000 children. Last year, the centers served more than 37,000 New Yorkers. With the opening of the Staten Island Center, we will now be able to serve an additional 1,000 New Yorkers each year.

All five of our centers welcome anyone who has suffered abuse, be it domestic abuse, elder abuse, or sex trafficking. Under one roof, clients can access many of the services they need to leave their abusers and reclaim their lives. They can meet with a prosecutor. They can look for housing. They can apply for financial assistance. And they can do it all while their children play under the caring supervision of Center staff.

I am especially proud to not that all of our centers will soon offer a resource that is absolutely essential for people who have experienced trauma – mental health services.

As some as you may know, this is a subject that is near and dear to me. Very soon, we will release a plan of action to begin creating a mental health system that meets the unique needs of communities all across our city.

But in the meantime, we have already committed to expanding mental health services at all five Family Justice Centers. Through this initiative, we will provide direct care to clients. We will also train staff members so they can be part of the solution.

Now, speaking of staff, my message – my message to staff is simple – thank you, thank you, thank you.

The work you do is not easy. I'm sure there are days – there will be days, many days – when you walk out of these doors feeling exhausted. When that happens, I want you to remember that Bill and I, and this entire administration, have your back.

It takes special people to work with others who have been through so much abuse. We will work hard to support you and make sure you are able to take care of yourselves, because, thanks to all of you, when we talk about domestic violence, we can also talk about hope – hope that families who live in fear will soon receive the help and the care that they need to break free and rebuild their lives.

So now, it is my pleasure to introduce a man who was committed to advancing the rights of women and ensuring their safety long before I met him – my husband, and our mayor, Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you so much, Chirlane. And I'm – as everyone knows, I feel very fortunate to have such a wonderful partner in my life, but I can tell you on these issues, this is the labor of love for Chirlane – to make sure that all people are protected. And to take the tools we've learned to reach out to people in need and bring them to the help that they deserve. This is so consistent with the work she is doing on mental health because also with domestic violence we see still too much stigma; too many times when people don't feel comfortable coming forward and talking about their challenges. And one of the things that's so exciting to us about having this center here in Staten Island is it makes the help closer to the people in need, and that's what we're committed to.

Well, it's a labor of love for Chirlane, and I have to say for the whole family because last summer, our daughter Chiara was adamant that she wanted to do something special – not this summer just passed, but the one before – 2014. She wanted to do something very special to help women in need. And she looked at the different good works being done in this city, and she decided to do her summer internship at the Office to Combat Domestic Violence. And she went out to communities and talked to women and provided information – let them know there was help, and it would be respectful and confidential. So, our whole family is in this fight. And I heard and Chirlane heard stories every day from Chiara about the women she met – the people she met and their needs, and their fears and their hope that somewhere, they could find help. And we also heard stories about the incredibly noble and committed people who do this work, and I want to say as Chirlane said, we thank everyone associated with the family justice centers, and the work of the Office to Combat Domestic Violence. We thank them. It's hard, hard work, but it's so important, so noble.

There are a lot of people who have worked hard for this day – that this office will be opened here in Staten Island. You're going to hear from some of them in just a moment. And I want to thank everyone on our team who helped to make this day possible – of course, our Commissioner Rose Pierre-Louis. I also want to thank our DCAS Commissioner Stacey Cumberbatch for the good work she does. This work of bringing together a center like this – it's a lot of heart and soul, but it's also a lot of bricks and mortar. And a whole team came together to do it. I want to thank also the members of the Staten Island judiciary who are here with us – thank you for your good service to this borough. Of course, I want to thank NYPD Borough Commissioner – excuse me Commander Edward Delatorre, thank you for your leadership and your partnership in this effort. And FDNY Borough Commander Richard Howe is here as well, and we thank you for your leadership. So, so many

of our city agencies share a sense of mission that fighting these challenges – fighting domestic violence in all its forms is all our business. And so you're going to see. going forward. a true team effort to achieve these changes.

Now, the message today to any New Yorker – any New Yorker who's suffering from abuse – my message is clear and simple – you are not alone. There are people here who can help you. There are people ready to help. Don't feel alone. All it takes is to walk through the doors of one of these family justice centers, and a whole new world opens up; people who care, people who will support you. All of the city's Family Justice Centers have in common now – soon to be in all five boroughs – have in common that their services are free, that they're entirely confidential. It does not matter what your income is. It does not matter what you're sexual orientation is. It does not matter what you're documentation status is. You are welcome. The services are provided for free.

More and more New Yorkers are realizing the power of these Family Justice Centers, and coming to them for the help that they've long needed. In 2014, more than 54,000 visits to the four existing family justice centers. That was a 22 percent jump over 2013. The word is spreading – bless you – the word is spreading, and more and more people are getting help. It's Staten Island's turn. And it's time for Staten Island to have this support available to people in need. And this building will soon be up and running. It may feel empty now, but in a few months, it will be transformed into a precious resource for this community. And it will build on the hard work of our Staten Island Domestic Violence Response Team, which has already been working hard on the ground in communities in Staten Island to reach people in need. You heard about the anti-stalking initiative – started here in June, specifically to prevent domestic violence homicides. This is an appropriate time – you'll hear from him in a moment, but I want to thank him at this point – Staten Island Borough President Jimmy Oddo has been a true partner in this work. He believes fundamentally in the importance of this kind of outreach; the importance of having a center where people can go. He's given domestic violence response teams space at Borough Hall so they can get up and running. We thank you for that. And his staff has joined us in outreach events around the borough including one just this morning at the ferry terminal.

Now, this is one part of a strategy. Another part of the strategy citywide is to make sure when, God forbid, someone has suffered abuse, that they have a safe place to go and be sheltered. So we have added substantially to our shelter capacity for victims of domestic abuse. Now over 13,000 more New Yorkers will have a safe place to turn. Our job – all of our jobs in this society is to bring that number down, and create a day when we don't have so many people who need that shelter, but so long as there is the need we're going to keep making sure there's a place for them to go where they are safe.

And we see – we see even in this most difficult of subject matters – we see real change happening; real progress occurring; we see lives being protected. We've seen a major decrease in intimate partner violence – 27 percent fewer intimate partner homicides from 2013 to 2014 – long way to go that shows that more outreach, more preventative work really makes a difference. I say this in the case of any crime or violence, one incident is one incident too many, but we also have to remind ourselves and all of the hard working folks – everyone in law enforcement, everyone in social services who work every day on these issues it's important for them to see progress is being made. It's important for them to have hope too because they're at the frontline doing the hard work, and it is working.

We stand ready and willing to fight for every person suffering from domestic abuse – every single one from Staten Island to the Bronx, all five boroughs – we will be there for people in need. And we stand ready to give all those who need it access to justice, to safety, and to help. We want to work every day towards the day in the future where every single New Yorker can live in dignity and security, and we eliminate the scourge of domestic abuse.

One other point and it's very timely, a report came out today that speaks to some of the work we still have to do in this country if we really want to stop domestic violence and, particularly homicides, that are related to domestic abuse. A report came out today from Every Town for Gun Safety, and it says we need laws. It's very simple, straightforward recommendation. We need laws that prohibit gun permits for all domestic abusers. It sounds like the simplest idea in the world, but it's not true yet in this country. We do not have laws that prohibit

gun permits for convicted domestic abusers. And one of the things that's crucial to note is some people who have committed domestic abuse who are not in a marriage – they were in some other kind of relationship, but it doesn't matter whether they were married or not. Everyone should be covered by those laws – if they have committed an act of domestic abuse and are found guilty of it, they should not have a right to a gun permit. It's as simple as that. Just offer a few words in Spanish before you hear from some of my colleagues.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, again, this is an important moment both because of our commitment to provide a help, but also because the physical work is being done to make this center something for all Staten Islanders who need it. So, I want you to hear from our commissioner from the Department of Design and Construction, who has done so much to make sure that this center was completed. They worked very, very hard with our Office to Combat Domestic Violence to get this done Commissioner Feniosky Peña-Mora.

[...]

Thank you so much, Debbi. Before we go, we're going to do questions on-topic, then we'll do questions off-topic. But before we go into questions, I just want to make sure my previous point on the way we legislate around gun permits is clear. There are laws against domestic violence abusers – against those who commit domestic violence – who are married, not getting a gun permit. But as we know, tragically, there are many people who commit domestic violence and are not part of a married relationship. Those people still can get a gun permit. So that's the point of the Every Town for Gun Safety report and the recommendation today, which I wholeheartedly agree with. We should have no permits available for people who commit domestic violence, whether they are in a married relationship or some other type of relationship. Domestic violence is domestic violence. Someone who commits that act should not have access to a gun. With that, we want to take questions on this topic first. Mara?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, the Office of Court Administration had [inaudible] showing that Staten Island had the lowest domestic violence conviction rates of any borough in the city, and the highest domestic violence dismissal rate at 77 percent. I'm just wondering if there are any thoughts about why that is?

**Mayor:** I don't have an analysis specifically. I want to see if Rose or the DA wants to speak to it? Or the borough president?

**Acting Richmond County District Attorney Dan Master:** I think those statistics are somewhat disputed by my office and I would be glad to have a memo sent to you by someone in my office. And I would be glad to have a memo sent to you from someone in my office in my Sex Crimes Special Victims Bureau that would shed some more light on that. But I think to go on and on about that here would be inappropriate.

**Mayor:** Thank you. On topic – I just wanted to clarify we're going to do on topic before we do off topic. Anna?

**Question:** Given the importance of this center that you guys have all highlighted, is there any regret choosing a location that depended so heavily on a construction project that had been plagued with delays for years and years?

**Mayor:** Well, I came into this process obviously, were it was well underway. And what's important to me is that we got it done and it will be open in a matter of months – but if the borough president or anyone else wants to speak to that? I know he doesn't usually have a strong opinion.

[Laughter]

– Or Rose or anyone?

**Commissioner Rose Pierre-Louis, Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence:** So, what's integral to the Family Justice Center model is that we are co-located with the district attorney's office so we're able to provide the comprehensive holistic services for victims of domestic violence. So, this particular location was ideal. I want to say, in terms of – once again – the level of collaboration that has happened across city agencies to make sure that, as soon as the space was available, that we were ready to go and once again, that really speaks to the efforts of our DDC commissioner and our DCAS commissioner, and MOCJ. But key to the model, is to be able to co-locate with the DA's office to provide that kind of comprehensive service delivery.

**Mayor:** Okay, on topic. Yes?

**Question:** You've talked a little bit about the opening being in a few months. Is there more of a specific timeline for when the center will actually be open? And will all the services be available at that point, or is a ramp-up?

**Mayor:** Two questions – when it will physically open? And will all services be available right away, or is there ramp-up? Who's got it?

**Commissioner Feniosky Peña-Mora, Department of Design & Construction:** This is the scheduled for opening up in the beginning of the next year – 2016.

**Commissioner Pierre-Louis:** [inaudible] speak to the services? So, a couple of points about services. Currently, we do have our Staten Island Domestic Violence Response Team, which has been in effect here in Staten Island since 2012. We also have our anti-stalking initiative. In April of this year, we hired our – Darren Albanese and Alison, who are our Executive Directors and Deputy Director of the Staten Island Family Justice Center – so they are here on the ground. We have a temporary office. As soon as the Family Justice Center opens, we have contracted staff that will be onsite. The day that we open our door, we will be ready to deliver services. But I think it's important to understand that what the FJC will do is put brick and mortar what currently has been happening in terms of services here on Staten Island, not to mention many of our community-based partners that are here with us today. And we continue to do outreach as well.

**Mayor:** Anything else on-topic? On-topic going once, twice, three times – off-topic. Off-topic – yes?

**Question:** So the Staten Island Republican Party chairman, John Antonello – he put out a statement in response to your decision to rename the Municipal Building after David Dinkins, saying that that was a poor choice, given the state of the city under Mayor Dinkins – it would better to name after Rudy Giuliani, as he argued he much better impact on the city. I was curious first what your response to that would be, and, also, if there's any sort of structure that you would be willing to name after Rudy Giuliani?

**Mayor:** Look, let's – let's just take this for what it is – a mayor who did a lot for this city, played a historic role in this city, and began – fundamentally began the effort toward a safer city, because he achieved the legislation in Albany that got us to the number of police officers and the other changes we needed, including the youth programs that were so foundational to the changes in this city. We're honoring someone who did a lot for the city. Let's just look at that for what it is and respect the work that Mayor Dinkins did.

**Question:** Would you be – is there anything –

**Mayor:** Again, that's all I have to say on it.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, Ydanis Rodriguez is proposing tolling the East River bridges and dropping some of the other tolls a little lower in some of the currently tolled bridges. What's your feeling about that? What goes through your mind when you think about tolling the East River bridges.

**Mayor:** Look, I think – I assume he's talking about in terms of the MTA situation. And what we've said is – let's begin at the beginning – we need to approach the MTA differently in terms of the role that the state plays

to begin with. Obviously, the MTA is the state's responsibility. The governor names the head of the MTA. The governor has a majority of the appointments on the MTA board. And the state's responsibility for – its responsibility is to ensure that the resources are there. And what we've said is, we need to get greater clarification from the state about how they will invest in the MTA. We want to make sure they end the practice of taking money out of the MTA and putting into the rest of the state budget, which isn't fair to the people of New York City or anyone who uses the MTA. And we want greater transparency and accountability. That's the big picture situation with the MTA. In terms of what the Council Member has said, I think there's a longer conversation that has to be had, and a bigger conversation, with all the stakeholders in the metropolitan area about how we strengthen the MTA for the long-term. So far, some of those ideas obviously have been look upon negatively in Albany and would be very difficult to achieve. But, you know, my goal is that we have a bigger conversation about the future and MTA, we bring everyone to the table to sort out what's going to really make it strong for the long term and improve service for all the riders, and make sure that the riders are not paying a fare they can't afford.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, would you lean towards tolls or against tolls?

**Mayor:** I've said it's something that's worth looking at. But, as you've heard, right now in Albany there's no appetite for it. Yes?

**Question:** On MTA – the TWU has another ad out today that's attacking you and the city for what they say is getting a free ride on the MTA. I know you did talk about this a little bit last week, but why do you think the transit union is all of a sudden attacking your administration and the city's approach –

**Mayor:** I don't think it's hard to figure that out. So, I'm going to leave you to do a little bit of simple research about why the transit workers union would so conveniently attacking us and who they respond to. But the bottom line here is it is a specious argument, it's an inaccurate argument, and it's an unfair argument. So, again, almost three-quarters of all the resources come from the city's contribution from our budget, from fares paid by New Yorkers, taxes paid by New York City businesses, the tolls paid by New Yorkers. We've known for decades that the city and people of the city put more into the MTA than we get back. So, you know, I've seen plenty of political games and plenty of political posturing. If we really want to talk about the truth, it's let's look at how much the city is doing already. Now, we've said we're open to discussing ways that we can be helpful with the MTA when we were asked in an appropriate way back in the beginning of the year to make an additional contribution – you saw it showed up in our June budget. But then since then it's been a lot of games and posturing. If anyone wants to have a serious conversation about the kind of ways we can help going forward, we're very open to that, so long as there's real accountability and transparency, the state stops raiding the MTA and putting that money into the rest of the state budget, and we know that the state's actually paying its fair share. Under those conditions, we'd always be willing to talk about what could be done. But the TWU is obviously just posturing at this point. Yeah?

**Question:** How do you get to the point where you're having a fair conversation with Albany? It seems like the tone of the conversation, especially in recent weeks, has gone downhill, and you're now speaking at cross purposes.

**Mayor:** Well, the history between the city and Albany is pretty long, meaning decades and decades of some differences. This is one of the most historic ones. You know, for a long time – and a lot to document this – a lot of people in this city have been very upset that the MTA takes more from us than it gives back, and that the state has raided money from the MTA. I mean, think about that for a moment – New York City taxpayers put money into the MTA, thinking it's going to help our subways and buses, and out it goes into the state budget for some totally different purpose. So, I would argue that this is a tension that is an honest tension because we're not getting our fair share and we're not getting fair ground rules here – that's a fight worth fighting. But again, we remain very open to finding a constructive solution. Yes?

**Question:** Regarding the diversity survey of nonprofits, what's going to happen if an institution like the Met doesn't comply –

**Mayor:** You mean a cultural – cultural organizations? Yeah –

**Question:** Yeah, would they lose their funding?

**Mayor:** No, no, no – we've said very clearly, we want to work with the cultural organizations to maximize their reach to the people of New York City and to all communities. But the way, as you know, dozens of cultural institutions gathered together with us on IDNYC, and they were great partners in that, and they've had an extraordinarily positive outcome of thousands and thousands more people becoming members of these organizations and these institutions who previously didn't necessarily feel that it was something for them. So, I think a lot of people in the culture community understand that this city is constantly evolving, and it's important for our cultural organizations to be connected to all our communities, including a lot of our newer communities. So, that's what we're getting at. We want to have that productive conversation. We want to make sure that there's maximum representation amongst the leadership of these organizations. But it's something that we're doing with the cultural community, there's no mandate involved. Yes?

**Question:** There continues to be a lot of frustration on Staten Island with the city's response to the exploding deer population, particularly with the DOT's refusal to put out deer crossing signs, and the difficulties, and –

**Mayor:** Right, we're putting together a comprehensive plan. We're working with other agencies to do it. And when we have that plan, we certainly will put it out. We know it's a serious problem and we're going to work on it.

Thanks, everyone.

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