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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS SYEP KICK OFF EVENT

Ken Gibbs, President and CEO, Maimonides: In this day and age, we're starting when the mask comes off. I'm Ken Gibbs. I have the privilege of being the CEO at Maimonides, and on behalf of Maimonides, Douglas Jablon, Alla Zats, the Maimonides Department of Volunteer and Student Services, we welcome all of you today. Maimonides has been doing this summer youth program for 25 years. We have over 4,000 graduates from this program. We are the largest employer in Brooklyn, the largest healthcare provider. And we have great commitment to this program because what we see in it, and the mayor is driving forward, is that we have nothing more treasured than our youth, our future leadership. And this is a path into productive working life into the economy, into citizenship, and in this case, into healthcare, which is a giving profession, a caring profession. And as we will hear, the mayor has made an extraordinary commitment recognizing the value of this program.

Gibbs: We're excited to have him and others here today. And before I hand it over, I just want to say that we do nothing alone. And as an example, some of our partners that have been essential in this are the department of Youth and Community Development, and some of the providers, The Center For Family Life, the Chinatown Manpower Project, the Chinese American Planning Council for Brooklyn and Manhattan, the Council of Jewish Organizations of Flatbush, and many others. And so with that, I want to welcome Mayor Adams. I want to welcome Commissioner Howard. I want to welcome Speaker Adams, and I want to hand it over to Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright. Thank you.

Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, Strategic Initiatives: Thank you so much, Kenneth. Thank you so much for your steadfast commitment to young people. Maimonides is an example for all businesses. As you said, you're the largest employer in this community and you have been doing this for 25 years. And so we want to really grow and expand all of our private sector employers to follow your lead that you've set. So thank you. Today is a celebratory day. Congratulations to all these young people. The mayor will be here shortly. So we're going to move around the speaking a little bit so we can make sure that we have the appropriate people speaking at the right time. I want to just say that, when I joined this administration in January, the mayor was very clear. He wanted to invest in our young people. The commitment to go upstream was the biggest commitment he wanted this administration to make.

Deputy Mayor Wright: And as we were looking at the summer, we wanted to make sure coming out of COVID-19, that we had the most and best and biggest opportunities for young people. A promise was made to increase, historically, summer youth employment. And that promise has been kept. And we are starting, this week, to show what that plan put in place. 100,000 young people all across the city, the biggest in history and some additional opportunities and improvements to the program. Thank you for all of the hard work that everyone put into this to make this happen. At this point, I would like to introduce our mayor, Eric Adams, and our leader in this effort.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you. And the irony of the moment is that when I leave here, I'm going back to Rikers Island to speak with a group of young people who did not have these opportunities. And that is why it's so profound that we take our administration upstream, because the goal is not to wait to young people fall in the river of despair and then spend countless number of dollars and hours and missed opportunities, but to go upstream and provide them the services that they deserve. And so I want to thank Kenneth Gibbs and the entire hospital staff here. Even as borough president, I remember the role you played during COVID-19, your entire team and how responsive you were to the community. But, also I want to thank a real visionary on our team, Deputy Mayor Wright, for how she took a program and made it something new and something different.

Mayor Adams: It's more than just going to get a paycheck. How does that experience transform you? I really want to thank you deputy mayor for your vision on making sure this summer youth employment program was something that our young people could ensure that they could have a productive future. But, before we get into the program, I want to just talk about the good news of COVID. As we hear at the hospital, the COVID data is showing that this administration, with a steady hand, has navigated us through the turbulent times of COVID-19, a formidable opponent. COVID-19 is a formidable opponent. And if you don't have the right partnerships like we've developed with Speaker Adams, we like to say the Adams and Adams Law Firm are making these right decisions. It's difficult to navigate this ship through these turbulent waters. But as of last week, hotel demands, they were at 747,000. New York has recovered 94% of the pre-2019, pre-pandemic demands.

Mayor Adams: We are on course. New York city had the highest hotel occupancy among the top 25 markets. We are leading the way. The Statue of Liberty, which is another indicator, visitorships has recovered 80% of its pre-pandemic levels. People are coming to New York to see the lady in the harbor and enjoy what the city has to offer. Times Square weekly and weekend average foot traffic exceeded 2019 averages. They have a high watermark, since 2019, of 445,000 people in Times Square on Saturday. New York City & Company raised its forecast last month of the number of tourists. We are now predicted to receive 56 million compared to only 33 million in 2021. We're moving in the right direction. In 2019, we set a record for tourism and we are going to get close to that this year. And that's in addition to the 85,000 new jobs that have been created since January 1st.

Mayor Adams: I just think, that as we talk about summer youth employment, we want to also talk about the employment of the city. Our city is recovering. We made the right decisions and we will continue to do so. We're not out of the woods yet dealing with COVID. That's why we need the partnerships here at the hospitals. And how we continue to evolve our way of getting

testing and vaccines and medicine to those who are in need. But switching back to why we're here today, we're talking about summer youth employment. If we want our young people to strive for a better city or better life, we have to create better opportunities. That's the goal of this administration. What I'm hearing from parents, that COVID has had a devastating impact on our young people. Many of them are sitting isolated at home. Many of them missed critical years of communicating and interacting with each other.

Mayor Adams: We thought it was a hard impact on adults, but just imagine missing your prom, missing your football practice or your team sports, not being able to interact with your friends and families, but just basically isolated playing video games or being restricted to moving outside. We have to acknowledge that. We must do everything possible to make up for lost time. They've forgotten how to communicate and engage in a very real way. Summer youth employment is going to allow us to move this into another level. What our young people need now is a future that they can see. Future that they can believe in and not the pessimism that COVID-19 brought to our city and our country. It's a future in which they belong and where they can make a difference in a real way. This year's New York City Summer Youth Employment Program is providing New York City's youth an opportunity to learn and make a difference in the world in a historical way.

Mayor Adams: As Deputy Mayor Wright acknowledged, over 100,000 summer youth employment jobs. Something that many of the advocates have been pushing for, for so many years. And we got it done. We accomplished that. From July 5th to the 19th, they are interning at places like this amazing hospital. NYPD, the highest number of summer youth employment in the NYPD since the history of this program. You're talking about building relationship between public safeties and young people. This is what we're doing.

Mayor Adams: They're going to be at the parks and other areas, as well. In the private sector, they're learning from places like Google and other technology companies on how they be prepared for the business of the future. But the best part about it, I'm sure as many of our summer youth was saying, they're getting paid. They're going to make some money. Some moolah. Some cash. Some dineros. Whatever language you say it, they're happy to get it. And as we know from past experiences, those who go into careers with summer youth employment, they continue to move in those careers. Of my understanding, we have a young lady who went through this hospital and now thinking about going to medical school. Being exposed to fields like healthcare and nursing, which have been so important, especially during COVID, as we deal with the nursing shortage that we are experiencing. And I want to really give a real shout out to the New York State Nurses Association at 1199. They're providing such a service for these young people and a service for our city every day. They're partners in ensuring our healthcare move in the right direction.

Mayor Adams: The experiences of SYEP is only one half of the equation. Yes, we're providing paid jobs for young people for careers and moving to an upstream solution, but we're doing something else. We secured \$216 million in baseline funding. So this means every year, these children are not going to have to wonder that they're going to be employed during the summer months, but it's going to be a continuation of this funding throughout the years.

Mayor Adams: But we're doing something else in this initiative, we're going after those children that are in higher needs. Children who are having careers or lives like I had as a child. We've set aside 13,000 slots for youth living in NYCHA, highest level in history, and additional spots for foster care. Many of our foster care children are slipping through the cracks. So we're going after them, to make sure they don't. Those children who are living in insecure housing, students with disabilities, students in DOE transfer schools, and/or receiving public assistance. This makes a total of 20,000 slots for young New Yorkers who need these opportunities the most, up from 13,000, additional 7,000 slots we're targeting for young people who need this exposure, this experience, and this financial support as well.

Mayor Adams: But there's more to it as well. Not only are we going to pay our children, our young people the \$15 an hour, but we're also, which I really want to thank Deputy Mayor Wright for doing, we are going to make sure that our children learn about financial literacy, how to build credit, how to budget, what's the W-2 form, how to interact in the office space. We're going to teach them mindfulness. We're going to teach them self-care. We're going to teach them how to interact in a business environment. As we state now, 60% of the youth that participate in SYEP have enrolled in direct deposit. I didn't enroll in direct deposit until I was adult, long into receiving my paychecks. They're learning early.

Mayor Adams: And then, we are going to take them outside of their living environment. We're going to take them to Wall Street, take them to the UN, take them to City Hall, to see how we get stuff done. We're going to expose them to this entire city, instead of allowing them to believe that their block is the globe. No, the globe goes beyond what their neighborhood shows them every day.

Mayor Adams: We know the best learning experience happens in a traditional classroom setting, but the sterilized environment of a classroom is not the only educational experience, it goes beyond that. And we want to show them the various forms and ways to interact and further explore their possibilities and what they can offer to this city.

Mayor Adams: This city is diverse. As you look at the young people who are here today, that's with us, it's a diverse city, and we want them to experience that diversity as they evolve as young adults. Living in a city of this size, with this level of diversity, we know we have to rely on each other, and that's what we do. So we care about our young people. We care about our parks. We care about our public safety, and public transportation, our public schools, and we care about the good energy that they're going to bring to this conversation and this experience.

Mayor Adams: And all young people, as people say, are our most valuable assets, but we have not invested in those assets the way we should have throughout the years. This administration has stated, we will do so. We will show our young people that we value their talents, we value their voices, we value their experiences. That the present moment is one of opportunity. We're going to seize the moment and we're going to provide the opportunity and the skills. It's far too many young people have not had those opportunities. Those are the young people I'm going to visit today on Rikers Island.

Mayor Adams: But as I start my day off with optimism of what we can do, I'm going to bring that energy across the bridge, on an island that has been an island that was filled with despair for

far too many young people. We can get this right New York. And we're saying today, by investing in our young people, we got it right on this end, and we're going to continue to get it right throughout the years.

Mayor Adams: And so, I want to thank all of our partners, particularly the speaker who helped us carve out of this bill and the funding allocation to make sure we look towards our young people, with the unprecedented investments in young people, in this budget, during these difficult times. This was a budget for families and you had to have the right partner to accomplish that. So thank you very much, and we are going to get to work.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you so much, Mayor Adams. Next up, your partner in the law firm, Speaker Adrienne Adams.

[...]

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you so much, Speaker Adams. And while I appreciate the appreciation from the mayor and others, really the DYCD team is amazing. We went from 75,000 to 100,000. The administrative, the work, the innovation, the community-based organizations, incredible. Did an incredible, incredible job. And I'm so proud and pleased that they have an incredible new leader, Commissioner Keith Howard. I'd like to bring you to the podium.

Commissioner Keith Howard, Department of Youth and Community Development: Thank you, Deputy Mayor. And I also want to thank the mayor, especially for his forward vision, and creating the Summer Youth Expansion. As everyone's indicated, we went from 75,000 to 100,000 SYEP participants, an amazing accomplishment. I also want to thank the Speaker, and your team, and of course, Mr. Gibbs and his hospital, for providing the slots that are needed to give the young people such a great experience. But I also want to thank my team. I want to thank my team, my DYCD team. And if you could just stand up and just be acknowledged. Come on, don't get shy. You worked hard at this. I want to thank you for all the hard work that you've done so far. Mr. Mayor, one of the things that I also want to mention is the \$11 million investment in MetroCards, okay? Which is equivalent to 3,860,000 rides, that we will be giving the young people this year. Very, very significant investment.

Commissioner Howard: So I have a special connection to the hospital, because my mother-in-law was here, and was treated. Unfortunately, she did pass away, but the excellent service, Mr. Gibbs, that you provided, and your staff provided, was exceptional to me and my family. So I really thank you. Health care is at the core of my belief, because my mother was a nurse in the ER for 30 years. So she retired at the VA hospital in Kingsbridge, in the Bronx, so I watched her as she treated, and as she enjoyed what she did, and the work that she did, and the work that she accomplished. So I just want to say that I'm having a really good experience here, because I'm feeding off the energy, and the energy of the young people as well. But one of the things that I want to highlight is one of our SYEP participants, and that's Tiffany Lu. If you can just step out.

Commissioner Howard: Mr. Mayor, Tiffany Lu participated in 2013, assisting in the volunteer office. Today she is a third-year resident in internal medicine at this hospital. So her success, along with everyone else who will be coming through this hospital, is a key to the investment

that SYEP has done for the young people. Please give Tiffany another round of applause, as we call her Dr. Lu.

Commissioner Howard: So I'm going to give you some words of advice, young people, that my mother gave to me when I was a SYEP participant. Save your money.

Deputy Mayor Wright: That's right.

Commissioner Howard: Practice financial discipline. Give \$50 to the household, to help with the bills, and more importantly, and as the mayor has stated, have fun. Learn. Have fun. Thank you.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Thank you so much, Commissioner Howard. We all remember our SYEP days. And congratulations, Tiffany.

[...]

Question: As you mentioned, some economic indicators are pointing in the right way. The city, at the same time, appears to be entering what looks like a new wave. The infection rate hit 14% yesterday. This comes after your administration removed that color coded COVID alert system. So I was wondering, why was that color coded alert system removed, number one, and number two, given this new wave, is there any new plans from a public health perspective to fight back against the recent cases?

Mayor Adams: Yeah. Every morning, as we indicated, every morning, we do our briefings, and what this administration won't do, we won't remain stagnant. As COVID continues to evolve, a new variant, new variants are finding their way into the city. And as it come about, as they come about, we continue to pivot and shift, a term I use all the time. The color coded system was not fitting the new wave and the new variant, and as COVID continued to shift. We're now looking at and bringing in experts from all across the globe, and finding out, how do we continue to prepare New Yorkers and Americans in dealing with the pivoting and shifting of COVID?

Mayor Adams: Our goal is to make sure whatever we put in place is going to stem the infections, keep down our hospitalization, and most importantly, keep down those who die from COVID. When we look at our numbers, we are at a good, stable place. The numbers are ticking up, according to our healthcare professionals this morning, but we're not at the place where our hospitals have been over-impacted, and we're not at a place where it's stopping our growth in the city. So we are continuing to monitor so we can make the right decisions.

Question: The COVID system, do you think it was kind of a flawed mechanic to start with? I know you didn't really follow a lot of those recommendations, because you were arguing that they weren't necessary. So was the color coded system just flawed?

Mayor Adams: No. That's a great question. No. It wasn't a flaw. It's almost as though you're using old weapons to fight a new war. The color coded system was fighting an old war, and as COVID shifted, it became a new war. So we're not going to hold onto something that's an old weapon merely because we had it. No. We're going to create new weapons to fight this new war.

So it was good for the old war of the variants we were fighting. It was not good for the war that we're currently fighting. And I think it was brilliant on a part of our doctors and medical professionals to state we're not going to remain stagnant when we're fighting a new war.

Question: I wanted to follow up with you about the class size bill.

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry, what?

Question: Wanted to follow up with you about the class size.

Mayor Adams: Class size.

Question: So Senator Liu said during and Community Education Council meeting yesterday that...

Mayor Adams: There's a lot of echo here, so you're going to have to give me that Brooklyn voice.

Question: So I wanted to follow up with you about the class size bill.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Senator Liu was speaking at a Community Education Council Meeting last night, and he was saying that he has confidence that the governor will sign it. And that it's not as urgent as the [inaudible] bill. Are you concerned that the governor will sign that bill? What are your thoughts about that and what are the latest conversations that you've been having to the governor about it?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, the team is speaking with the UFT and others. The goal is we believe in smaller class size. And we need to be clear, the union contract calls for, I think around 32 students per classroom. It's in that area, around that dollar. We are down to 21.5, because we're hemorrhaging students in the Department of Education. And so our position is, let's make sure we reduce class sizes and those schools that are in need of smaller classes, because they're hurting academically. And so we're still in conversation with the UFT and with our lawmakers and we believe we're going to get to a good place. And I think the governor is excited about that as well. And so we're looking to make sure we can come out with a win-win. And like state Senator Liu, I believe we're going to get there.

Question: What do you make of the fact that she hasn't signed it yet? Do you think that's a sign?

Mayor Adams: She's given us opportunity to further talk and negotiate to make sure we can find the right level, because this is hundreds of millions of dollars that we're talking about, during the time when, again, our class sizes are decreasing. We are hemorrhaging students in the Department of Education. And we want to make sure that we use our dollars correctly.

Question: Mayor on this Friday night a bodega clerk who didn't have a criminal history, grabbed a knife to defend himself against an ex-con who stormed into...behind his counter in Hamilton

Heights. Do you think it was right the Manhattan DA threw the book at him and charged him with murder in what appeared to be a case of self defense, and also setting a bail of \$250,000?

Mayor Adams: The DA has a non-mandate, where we cannot dictate or mandate how he determines how he's going to prosecute crimes. That is up to the district attorney. And I'm not going to second guess the district attorney for his actions. With that said, my heart goes out for that hard working honest new Yorker that was doing his job in his place of business, where a person came in and went behind a counter and attacked him. My heart goes out to that employee who was in the store, doing his job. And so I am hoping that we take all of that into consideration, as this hard working New Yorker was doing his job and someone aggressively went behind the counter to attack him. So the DA has his job. I have my job as the mayor of the City of New York. And as the mayor of the City of New York, I support hard working innocent people that are doing their job. And I saw him as a hard working, innocent New Yorker that a person went behind the counter and attacked him.

Question: Mayor, can I ask you about the monkeypox?

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: I know there was some issues with the vaccine rollout. I know your health commissioner is having an event on that today. Can you talk about the vaccine rollout and just in general, should New Yorkers be alarmed at this uptick in monkeypox cases?

Mayor Adams: The White House is doing a great job of giving us the vaccines that we need. I believe that the Health Department, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Dr. Vasan, in his briefing each morning, he gives us basically a forecast on monkeypox and we are managing this issue and we're taking it serious. We are not just ignoring it. And so we got an additional, I believe, 6,000 vaccines, and we are going to make sure that next week we should be getting more. And as we get them, we are filling up and making sure that we get them out to out the door right away. We had a number of appointments, and I believe that the doctor and his team was doing a great job. There was a glitch by the third party vendor that created the website, but we pivot and shifted and we're getting the vaccines out the door.

Question: So this for New Yorkers who [inaudible] is this a cause for alarm for people?

Mayor Adams: No, I believe that to me be prepared and not panic. I say that over and over again, we say it with COVID. We say it with any other crises that we're facing. We must be prepared and not panic. And we have the right professionals that are doing the job.

Question: Mayor, hurricane season is upon us. What has, or is the city going to do to help prevent the flooding? And [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: What is going on today that everybody is talking so low. McCoy's our New York, Brooklyn voice. We had a meeting and a briefing with the Office of Emergency Management and our goal is to number one, look at the basement apartments. Also, look at how we are preparing for water drainage, but we need help from Albany, also. Albany must assist us

in a legalization process of basement apartments, so we can assist them. That is one aspect of dealing with the flooding season.

Mayor Adams: But our Office of Emergency Management, they're on top of this. The briefing was extremely impressive. And in fact, I'm going to have them do a public briefing, so we can see exactly our preparation of dealing with storm season that is here. And New York is no ... the storm seasons of yester years is different from the storm season of today. It was not high tides that impacted us. It was rain. The rain, the level of rain was at a level where the sewer system was unable to handle. And we're going to make sure that we are prepared in this coming season, but mother nature's unpredictable. And we have to pivot and shift with mother nature with her unpredictable aspects.

Question: Thank you. Last week, you mentioned that you were going to meet with the Staten Island DA, to discuss the appearance that former mayor Rudy Giuliani might have falsely reported the crime. I was just wondering, did you get a chance to meet with the DA? How did that talk go?

Mayor Adams: No, I said I was going to reach out to him. And yes, I did reach out to him. I communicated with the Staten Island District Attorney that I believe it was unfair for a New Yorker to spend 24 hours in jail for an offense that he did not commit. It was clearly from the video tape, this gentleman, a pat on their back is not an assault. And I communicated that with the district attorney. And as I stated, the district attorney has a non mandate. He will make the determination of how to handle a case, or proceed with the case. I was happy that the gentleman was released on his own from the court. And I just believe that we should not have innocent New Yorkers spend 24 hours in a jail for a crime they did not commit.

Question: [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: I'm not going to share the private conversation with the district attorney. Thank you.

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