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**TRANSCRIPT FROM TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS
DELIVERS REMARKS KICKING OFF 2023 HOPE COUNT**

Commissioner Gary Jenkins, Department of Social Services: Thank you all for coming out tonight to help make sure we are reaching every New Yorker in need, especially our most vulnerable neighbors on the streets and subways. I'm Gary Jenkins and I'm the commissioner for the Department of Social Services. With the worst of the pandemic behind us, we are excited to welcome you back to lead this tremendous effort, where New Yorkers from all walks of life and across the five boroughs come together to help the city estimate the number of New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness at a point in time. You represent the best of New York City, the very values that make New Yorkers, New Yorkers. This year we have launched new remote trainings and made technological enhancements to the HOPE app as we continue to modernize and bring hope into the digital age.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our incredible outreach workers who are out there day and night engaging vulnerable New Yorkers with care and compassion and encouraging them to come inside. Yes, none of what we do is possible without their unparalleled dedication to serving and supporting New Yorkers in need. Under the leadership of Mayor Adams, we continue to make substantial strides in our effort to address the challenge of homelessness. New York City has made a historic investment in specialized shelters for New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Through our around the clock outreach efforts and the subway safety plan, we have connected thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers to shelter services last year alone.

We have launched bold initiatives including Street to Home pilot, which helps place unsheltered New Yorkers directly into supported housing. We know there's a lot more work to be done and we are only getting started. Tonight's survey effort will help us build on this progress as we continue to deliver on our commitment to prioritizing the needs of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. Again, we deeply value your support, and truly thank you for being here and taking the time to help us do this important work. And now it is truly my absolute honor to welcome Mayor Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thanks so much Gary and deputy mayor and her team. We could talk about the close to 3,500 people that we engaged with on the subway system. We could talk about the 1,000 that are still in the location. We can talk about the safe haven beds. We can

do all of that, but that is just not the reality. And I'm just sharing with you how real this issue is for me. Always, let's just remove this media for a moment and just talk to ourselves as New Yorkers. I grew up in South Jamaica, Queens. We used to go to this small storefront church. We used to call it the Cheers Church. Everyone knew your name and everyone was glad you came. We'd go during the day and then take a break during the afternoon and have a meal and then go back at night.

My family did not have that middle part. Mommy was raising six children and she would scrape together something. We would just sing during that break and pray. And then one evening after the evening service, a car caravan of women pulled up to our house. They started unloading boxes of groceries and they placed it on our countertop and we sat there and we prayed. And that evening I went downstairs because I was just amazed we were going to have real milk and not the powdered milk, real eggs and real cheese, not that cheese that came in that brown cardboard boxes. I don't even know what that was. When I looked in the boxes, they were all open, half a box of spaghetti, half a box of pancake mix, half a jar of mayonnaise. They could not afford to buy us groceries. They went in their cupboards and they gave us half of what they had.

What happened to us? I may be nostalgic, but I don't remember homeless when I was a child. I don't remember people sleeping on the streets. I don't remember growing up in South Jamaica, Queens that we were walking past people with mental health illnesses. I just don't remember that. And January and February, when I became mayor and I went out into the streets those cold nights, not with the media, not with my security, but by myself, and I went inside the tents, the cardboard boxes, and I talked to the people. I saw human waste, drug paraphernalia, schizophrenic, bipolar, and people were just there and we act like we didn't see them. We were walking by every day and normalizing people living in these conditions.

I just couldn't do it. That is not the child my mother raised. And when we were growing up and we were carrying garbage bags full of clothing to school every day because mommy thought we were going to be thrown out, people helped us. Salvation Army used to cook meals for our family. Everyone on the block during Easter time would chip in to buy us shoes and clothing. People would leave canned goods on the black back porch and turkeys during Thanksgiving. Christmastime they would wrap up gifts.

People used to slip money under my mom's door so that she could somehow be able to pay the rent. Thank God we had illegal numbers because she used to get a hit every once in a while and we were able to eat. This was our reality. So you're not looking at a mayor that's merely saying, "We have a homeless problem so let's get rid of them." No, no, no. You're looking at a mayor that lived the life that people are living right now. And you are in the spirit of those who put that turkey on our back porch. You are in the spirit of those who brought us those shoes on Easter.

You are in the spirit of those that wrapped up those gifts. You are in the spirit of those who didn't listen to all the noise but stated that we're better than this as New Yorkers. There's nothing humane about allowing people to live in the conditions we're seeing in New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Detroit. All over our globe people are living on the streets, and that's why as borough president I slept out with homeless New Yorkers to continue to dramatize that we deserve better and people deserve better. I'm committed to this. I don't always get it right because we're all

trying to figure out how to get it right, but I know these people behind me committed their lives to doing this. I have a commissioner that lived in a homeless shelter as a child.

That's why we do this work, and we need you, and people going to reject us. I'm on the subway sometimes, I learn new four letter words from people telling me to get lost, but also know people who say, "Yes, this is the third time you ask me, mayor, I'm going to take you up on this time." And I hope 2023 is more than a word, it's more than a year. It is saying, as Norman Siegel who has volunteers every day or every other day going out, as we do every Wednesday handing out food on 34th Street. As a young lady I met that give socks to homeless all the times, as the churches that have opened up, as the synagogues that have opened, as the mosque that are open, the Iman up in the Bronx having the African migrants and the asylum seekers. Every day New Yorkers are stepping up, and tonight we going to step out.

We're going to count those brothers and sisters who are living on the street and we're going to say they matter. And I just thank you for doing that. I thank you on behalf of not only those who are on the streets right now, I thank you on behalf of my five siblings and my mom. She's proud of me. I may have lost her physically, but I feel her every day that she says, "Baby, you the boy and the man that I wanted you to be." And every day I do this job because I want her to be proud of me, not only as the mayor but as her son.

Commissioner Jenkins: Thank you very much, mayor. And we are as your team are blessed to have you as our leader so thank you so much. Here you go. So next up, we are pleased to have our HUD regional administrator, Alicka Ampry-Samuel.

Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: I think I'm going to say about two sentences because I'm really ready to just bust out crying, Mr. Mayor. Thank you so much. As the regional administrator of HUD, I am just here to lend my voice on behalf of our secretary and on behalf of President Biden and our agency to say that we are 100 percent committed to making sure that we provide whatever resources that we can, utilizing the tools that we have right now to be of support to the City of New York. And one other thing I have to say to all of the volunteers, thank you, thank you, thank you for your commitment.

In 1998, I graduated from college and moved back to New York and was a outreach street team worker with Goddard Riverside Project Outreach. And I understand how important it is that the work that you do every single day and we don't get a chance to acknowledge you, that you are supposed to be acknowledged every single day because it's hard work. So again, on behalf of HUD, thank you so much and we are here to support you and we're in this together.

Commissioner Jenkins: Thank you very much, regional administrator. To close us out, we are going to have our New York City Department of Homeless Services Administrator Jocelyn Carter give some remarks.

Jocelyn Carter, Administrator, Department of Homeless Services: Good evening. I just whispered to the commissioner, "Such pressure," to follow Alicka and the mayor. Oh dear. But my heart is full and I'm just... The word that comes into my head when I walked into the door is

grateful. Grateful that you guys are here tonight. Grateful to be back in person. Grateful not only that you signed up, but that you showed up tonight, because sometimes we said we want to do it and then things happen and it's cold and it's... "I'm going to stay in my bed." But you actually got up and came out because for you, just like me and just like my commissioner and the mayor and everybody behind of me, you know that those who are on the street need us. Every person counts and every person on that street is somebody's somebody, a husband, a son, a father, a cousin, a mother, and they count and we need you.

I say every single day that we cannot do this alone. We can't do this alone. And we do it with our community partners, our outreach workers. But tonight we are doing it with you, and thank you for doing that. Thank you for being here. Thank you for committing to being with us tonight. Thank you for recognizing that we need help, that you're with us not against us, that every person counts. And thank you all. We count on you every day. I thank you on behalf of the neighbors that we work with. We are the safety net but you are a help tonight and thank you everybody. Let's go do this and get your training and have fun tonight. And it's been a tough three years, but we're here tonight and we've made it and we'll continue to do so, so thank you everybody.

Commissioner Jenkins: Thank you, Administrator Carter. And I'll be remiss if I did not acknowledge my fearless Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom who is here, and we have my brother, Commissioner Jess Dannhauser is here as well. So thank you very much. We going to get to work. All right.

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