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**TRANSCRIPT FROM TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2022: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS,  
ACS COMMISSIONER JESS DANNHAUSER ANNOUNCE ‘COLLEGE  
CHOICE’ PROGRAM TO HELP COVER COST OF COLLEGE EXPENSES  
FOR HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE**

**Commissioner Jess Dannhauser, Administration for Children's Services:** So to open us up this afternoon, I just want to express a quick note of gratitude from ACS to the NYPD and to the Harlem Hospital who's been caring for our staff who was shot this morning on the way to work. The mayor and his graciousness met with him this afternoon. We're happy to report that he's in good spirits surrounded by family and friends. Please keep him in your prayers for us. Thank you all for being here today. This is an exciting moment. First, I want to thank Mayor Adams for his steadfast commitment to supporting youth.

When I was at Graham Windham, a nonprofit provider like the New York Foundling who's with us today, the mayor helped really galvanize Fair Futures and then when he was elected, he put the nail right where he needed to be by putting another \$10 million so that young people can have a coach until they're 26 and not - no longer for the first city in the country, no longer to have a cliff coming out of foster care. Can't thank you enough, sir. I want to thank City College and City College President, Dr. Vincent Brodreau for hosting us today.

Vince has been a friend as well in addition, and with Congressman Espaillat who was gracious who joined us as well. City College has been hosting ACS young people here all summer in their infrastructure program, and Vince understood that young people at ACS are some of the most capable, and so they started this program working with young people at ACS through the support of Ray Singleton and many others at ACS. Most importantly, the most important guests are our young people today. So I'm introducing Asanatu Afreju, who attends the College of Staten Island. Chujuani Singh, who attends Hunter College. Maroa, who attends Brooklyn College. Christina Fabre, who's complaining about the weather because she's in Miami at St. Thomas University. And City College's very own Sanjida Afruz. She's not only getting her bachelor's, but she's going for a master's as well right here. I'm so proud of these young people. Oftentimes, society unfairly stigmatizes youth in foster care. They're seen as vulnerable, but we know they are extraordinarily capable.

They are our future city and we believe in them. They just need access to the types of supports and support systems that their peers have access to. I'm proud that New York has been investing in innovative initiatives and building out a stronger support system to help make sure more and more doors of opportunity are open for young people. And today's announcement builds on that work. I'm thrilled to announce a new program, a rebooted program called College Choice. Essentially, this new program means that a young person in foster care can attend the college of their choice without having to worry about the financial nightmare.

That's right. No matter the school, East Coast, West Coast, public, private, two years, four years, ACS will cover the expenses. In addition, as part of the College Choice program, young people will be provided a \$60 stipend and access to tutoring via provider partner New York Foundling. These resources are critical. We know that young people have dropped out because they didn't have money in their pocket to do the basics. So it is not just the room and board, not just the tuition, that \$60 and extra supported tutoring makes it all come together.

This program builds upon the Fostering College Success Initiative, our former program that provide year round housing, tuition assistance, smaller stipends and academic support. Many of the young people standing with us have been able to attend college because of that program, and you'll hear from one of them in a moment. Simply put, today's announcement takes that program one big step further. Beginning this year for the 2022-2023 school year, students in foster care now have the choice to get these support no matter what college they choose to attend, hence the name College Choice.

This year already 230 students are benefiting from College Choice. Here are the highlights, for full-time college students in foster care, ACS will cover up to 15,000 towards tuition and

mandatory fees that are not covered by a student's financial aid award. None of our students are going out of pocket this year. ACS will cover year round housing costs, sometimes in dorms, sometimes apartments or off campus housing. ACS will offer a \$60 per day stipend to cover food and other expenses. The stipend will also continue six months after graduation.

And if young people leave foster care, we're no longer abandoning them. They will continue in the program. And in addition to the current Fair Futures program, which provides dedicated coaches to youth and foster care, students in College Choice can receive tutoring, career counseling, and other support for the New York Foundling. I'm confident that New York City is making the right choice with College Choice and I look forward to hearing about the successes of our students in this program. Now it was my pleasure to introduce the man who made it happen, Mayor Eric Adams.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Good job. Good job. This was just really one of the areas where I was focused on throughout not only the campaign, but throughout the years in public safety work. I realized that how we have abandoned young people that are in foster care and I was focused and my North Star was to see a program like this was challenging enough to age out at 21. I still call my mother until I was 51 and ask for advice. But to have this support system, I was happy to learn about Fair Futures when I was borough president and stated that if when I become mayor, we were going to fortify Fair Futures.

The thought that these young people are able to have support until they're 26 and to continue to receive that support in college, this program is an amazing program that is coming out of ACS. The mindset of not waiting until a tragedy happens, but the concept of ACS under this commissioner is to prevent tragedies from taking place in the first place. And education is the way. If you don't educate, you will incarcerate and you will devastate the lives of people who are abandoned along the way.

And these scholars behind us are going to go with the vision of not only becoming productive citizens, but they're going to take their life experiences to help others who are on the wayside and have been forgotten about. In order to help those who are going through a lot, we must have leaders who have gone through a lot. And they personify that in a very real way. The dollars that we are allocating to pay tuition, to give money in their pockets to pay for the necessary necessities they need while going to college, and then not just having a cliff once they reach the end of their college life, we have a bridge to allow them to transition into making some of the important decisions that are needed. This is how we are approaching everything that we do under this administration. We cannot just drop you off and say you are no longer our responsibility. You are our responsibility until you are at the place where you are comfortable enough to not

only help yourself, but help those who also are in need. And so I'm really pleased with this program. I'm pleased that we put the dollars in it to make sure that we can fund it properly.

And this is what I promised when I was on the campaign trail and this is what we delivered. This is a major milestone for our administration. And we're going to continue to do those things that are going to lean into creating an environment where we can raise healthy children and families in this city. We got their backs because we are going to need them to have our backs. And our young people are not the leaders of tomorrow, they're leaders of today. We just have to give them the opportunity to lead. And today is a starting point with our foster care scholars as they get the support that they deserve. Thank you very much. Thank you.

**Commissioner Dannhauser:** Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. It's now my honor to also introduce Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez. Chancellor's been an enormous supporter of our young people. We cannot say enough how important CUNY is to young people and foster care as an opportunity for economic mobility. Over half of the young people in this program are CUNY students. We are so fortunate to have such an institution in our city led by such a great leader. Chancellor. Thank you so much.

**Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez, City University of New York:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Good afternoon and so delighted to be here. Mr. Mayor, thank you so much again for supporting our youth and our students, our CUNY mayor, two CUNY degrees to back up two times to back up his work. Commissioner, it's a delight to be here, to have a great partner. Congressman Espaillat, another CUNY graduate from Queens College. And thank you, President Brodreau for hosting us here today. This is so exciting. This is the second time in the administration of Mayor Adams that I have the pleasure of making an announcement with him that it's associated with foster care. And you go back and you look into other administrations and other elected officials, and you might find a thing or things about foster care. But this is a mayor, this is a commissioner who are really committed to this population.

We stood at Kingsborough Community College with VRRAP, a program that was about giving career educational choices and tools to students in foster care. And now we're doubling down, because this is a mayor who believes in second chances. He understands the value of second chances. And we want to provide that for all our students in foster care. This program is the best, it's a Cadillac with all the bells and whistles that any program can have. And I mean that. Look around the country. Look around the country. At Tesla, okay, at Tesla. I don't like the self-driving thing, but it's also a sign.

And I'm so proud that CUNY's part of this program and this conversation, because it is also a sign about how this team here learns from programs that happened in the past. We were fortunate, the Mayor and the Commissioner mentioned the program that we had before that was housing foster care students in our dorms. We learned from that experience. We learned from what works, we listened.

And these two gentlemen here, listen to the feedback of the kids in foster care about how the program could be different and better. And what you're seeing today is the result of that work, knowing that we want to give them choice. I'm obviously a little biased about where they can go, but choice is good. And the majority do come to CUNY, and actually more than half of the students in foster care throughout the city come to CUNY. So they vote with their feet, but choice is good. But they also have all the additional support that we know they need to succeed, in terms of additional dollars, additional counseling, all the things that they need to be able to succeed. Because the students in foster care, and these are a very special population to me and I had the honor of serving as commissioner of social services for the Congress of Puerto Rico, so I know the potential. I know the assets, I know the grit. I know the aspirations they have. All they need it's an additional level of support so we can continue to be proud of them.

And this is stories of second chances. The individuals that there was not safety in that home, we took them on, we embraced them, and now we want to see them succeed. So I'm so delighted to be part of this initiative. I hope it continues to grow. And I want to thank the mayor for continuing to invest in our youth, in our city, and in CUNY. Thank you so much.

**Commissioner Dannhauser:** So I have to take a moment, the chance of mention listening to young people. As a young woman over here, Shaniqua Roberts, who's a dear friend, who pushed us hard around this program. And it wouldn't be what it is without you today. So thank you.

Next we'll hear from City College President, Dr. Vincent Boudreau. As I mentioned earlier, City College has been an absolute stalwart in support of young people in foster care, not only on the college path, but as the chancellor talked about, on the career and vocational path, which so many of them are looking to pursue jobs in new infrastructure. Not the jobs of yesterday, but the jobs of tomorrow. So, pleased introduce you to Dr. Vincent Boudreau.

**Vincent Boudreau, President of City College of New York:** Thank you, commissioner, Mr. Mayor, chancellor, Congressman Espiat. You heard from the chancellor that we have learned over the years about how the work we had done originally to house students from ACS in our

dormitories could be improved. And the thing we learned time and again, is the more deeply, the more thoroughly they could be embedded in the campus, in the culture of the campus, given opportunities in the campus, the better they would do.

And I will say to you, we have not reached the point. We may via this program. We have not reached the point where investment in these students has failed to return a greater and greater yield. So this is as good a destination for city and state and federal support. These young people, this program, as any you can think of, we talked at CUNY all the time. We talked at City College.

We talk across the system about our nation's leading achievements in social mobility. And I want to say about that is you don't get that. You don't get the social mobility that we achieve without paying attention to people who are under underserved, overlooked in other corners of our society. And so bringing young people from ACS onto this campus, onto other CUNY campuses, onto other campuses around the world, is how we institutionalize methodology for getting that talent developed and for making sure that social mobility is not, as some economists have said in American society, a statistical anomaly.

This is the place where social mobility leaves at City College and CUNY campuses and other campuses like that around the world. And finally, this is not just about propelling program participants to the middle class and beyond. We're super proud of that. But the other thing that's important is if young people who have been subject to unfair immigration rules and unjust housing practices, and all the obstacles that bedevil the path to prosperity and security in their lives, if they take those experiences into jobs as social and political leaders, we will have a different conversation.

We'll have a different conversation about justice, about equity and about opportunity. We have here elected officials who have made the hallmark of their administration providing services to the underserved, putting them at the top of the list. And this program is as important an endeavor in that agenda as any that they've done. And so we are thrilled to be part of it and just watch what happens to these students. You won't have to wait long. Thank you.

**Commissioner Dannhauser:** Speaking of great congressional leadership, we're thrilled to be joined today by Congressman Adriano Espaillat.

**U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat:** Washington as I can, whether it's at Rangel Institute or the (inaudible) or Dominican Studies Institute, El Centro, (inaudible).. And mayor, yesterday I was at Harvard. I came back from Boston yesterday. I was invited by the law school, because today they published an essay on their law journal for one of my pieces of legislation. Imagine that.

When I came to CUNY, as Celia Cruz, the great Salsa singer used to say, my English was not very good looking. And there I am in Harvard speaking my Shakespearean English, and none of that could have happened without CUNY. CUNY.

**Boudreau:** City College of the ruling class.

**Representative Espaillat:** City College and Queens College. Don't forget Queens. And of course, mayor, this investment that you're making is consistent with the mayor's philosophy when he ran for office, to lift up the least among us. Those that people forgot about and maybe felt they didn't have a shot, they didn't have a voice, this particular program is helping those young people.

I know one of them, because I met her the other day when we had the secretary of labor here for the Rangel Institute on the Transportation and Infrastructure, and so I know that they will be successful. But it takes that commitment, Mayor and your commitment to that New York, which often is forgotten in the ballrooms, in the ivory towers, or even places like Harvard. It's important that we invest in those young people from those communities. This city cannot move forward, cannot progress, unless they do. It's impossible.

It's impossible. So thank you, mayor for your leadership, chancellor. You're doing a tremendous job. I look forward to continuing to work with you. And of course, City College continues to be the Harvard of working class New York. Thank you.

**Commissioner Dannhauser:** Thank you, congressman. I wanted to introduce Sanjida, but she said no. So we're getting close. We're getting close. So we have two special guests. First, I want to introduce Dr. Robert Melara. He's the chair of the psychology department here at CCNY's Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership. Dr. Melara will introduce our next and most important speaker.

(Robert Melara and Sanjida Afruz speak.)

**Moderator:** On-topic.

**Question:** Oh, I got one.

**Mayor Adams:** Michael.

**Question:** Hey, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing? Two questions on this, how much does the program cost total? Well, I guess three questions. How is it getting paid for? And you mentioned a bridge post graduation too, I'm imagining like work life. Can you elaborate on that? Give us a little more detail on that piece?

**Commissioner Dannhauser:** The total cost of the program is \$10 million, which is the same as the Dorm Project, but we are able to even have more students and more flexibility. One of the reasons for that is the coaches and the ACS staff, including Sonia who is here, are really helping young people maximize what they're eligible for. The city dollar only starts on the tuition when young people have maximized, and there's so much available for youth and foster care. The \$60 a day is city money.

And the other question about the bridge, we will continue that \$60 for the six months, but the coaches will be constantly working with young people around their career plans. Sanjida is going to work for ACS. I already signed her up. (Laughter.) I hope, I hope. And was there one other piece of the question?

**Question:** Where was the money coming from, the \$10 million?



**Mayor Adams:** From your tax dollars. You need to pay more. (Laughter.) You need to pay more. Yes, yes. Okay, we're going to spare y'all the off-topic. Thank you. Thank you so much. Good luck to you. Thank you.

**Question:** Yes. Mayor, with regard to the decision to move the temporary migrant facility from Orchard Beach to Randall's Island. Number one, if you could explain what was behind the decision? But also the New York Immigration Coalition today called it, "A poorly conceived plan to hide asylum seekers in relief camps in remote areas of New York that are prone to flooding." What is your response?

**Mayor Adams:** The pooling of water, we could have mitigated the pooling of water, but the constant pivot and shift to find the right solution to this humanitarian crisis that was created by human hands, we made the decision to move to Randall's Island. And that's what we did. Those who felt as though we didn't do it with the good hearts that we do, there's nothing I could do about that. Some people look at things and always find the negative. I look towards the positive. We're going to get through this crisis. We're New Yorkers and this is what we do. And we made the decision we're going to continue to pivot and shift.

There's a lot of pivoting and shifting that's going to take place. This is a humanitarian crisis. A lot of people who have never dealt with humanitarian crises before realize that you have to make the right decision. We're going to ensure safety. We're going to ensure that we give the support that no one else in the country is doing for the migrant and asylum seekers. And that's what we're going to continue to do.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, good afternoon.

**Mayor Adams:** How are you?

**Question:** Would you tell us about the money probably lost during this process? I imagine [inaudible] start from scratch. [inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** Listen, it's not about money loss. It's using our dollars smartly. We made the decision to shift to Randall's Island, and it's because it's more cost effective to do so.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, two questions.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** Have you talked to other municipalities about potentially housing migrants upstate? And also have you talked to the governor about that?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. We have been in communications with our colleagues in the state, and I also communicated with the mayors in Washington and in Chicago. I just find it ironic that these buses are coming to three cities with three black mayors, that's not lost on me, that are experiencing crises already. And I think that the actions that's taking place is really undermining our ability to deal with the crises we're already facing, so we have been communicating.

**Question:** Whereabouts, upstate? And have you talked to the governor?

**Mayor Adams:** Bernadette, got to move on.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** Hey, Kelly.

**Question:** [Inaudible] reporting that the National Guard is being activated. You called for that, communicated that to the governor. I'm wondering how many national guards will be posted at this new location? What exactly will be their role? And what type of message is that sending to

migrants who have had this traumatic experience and now are going to be around this National Guard kind of presence?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, the National Guard plays a role any time we need assistance. We reached out to the governor and asked the governor for help, and this was one of the areas she decided to help us with. And this is the right message, that we are going to use everything that we have possible to deal with this humanitarian crisis that we are facing. This is unprecedented. Over 15,000 people are seeking assistance and unlike other municipalities, we are doing our role as New Yorkers. And so we're going to use the National Guard, we're going to use our medical facilities, we're going to use everything that's possible so that we can navigate our way out of this crisis that we're facing. And we'll navigate our way out of it. Let's be clear. I know sometimes it's better just to show doom and gloom, doom and gloom, doom and gloom, but that's not who we are. This city is more than the front page doom and gloom that we are seeing. I meet everyday New Yorkers and when they see me even they can't speak to me directly because I'm too far away, they just put their thumbs up. They say, "Eric, we got this. This is New York." I don't know why people want to think we can't navigate this stuff.

**Question:** Mayor, I'm wondering cost. Could you tell us anything about the cost? And then secondly, have you offered to send the migrants elsewhere? Are you having conversations with some of the migrants who may want to leave New York and go to other cities or states?

**Mayor Adams:** Once we get to the exact cost, we will give it to you. We don't want to do anything prematurely so you could say, "Eric lied on the cost." So we going to give you once we get it. We are not... Those who want to be re-ticketed because they never wanted to come to New York in the first place, we are assisting to find out ways for them to be re-ticketed. Some people wanted to go to other destinations, and they were not allowed to do so. It was incentivized to come to New York, Washington, and Chicago. And once people come here, we are doing the evaluation. That's what the HERRCs are for, to do an evaluation and make the determination, "Where would you like to go? Do you have family here? Do you have to go in the shelter system?" So this is a real smart way that our team is addressing this humanitarian crisis.

**Question:** Mayor, usually you get the stuff done. What happened with them?

**Mayor Adams:** What happened with them? We saw pooling of water. I don't know why people keep using the term flooding. No, we saw pooling of water and the Commissioner Iscol made the decision to ... We looked at several other sites already. We could have mitigated the pooling of

water, but the commissioner made the decision. He called me, said, "Eric, it's better if we use Randall Island. It's a higher peak. The parking lot is better used for it." And so we pivot and shift. Listen, we're not afraid to pivot and shift. People stay down roads even though it's bad because they're afraid what the media's going to write about them. No, we pivot and shift based on the needs. That's how we got through all these other crises.

**Question:** Diana Ayala, the councilwoman who covers that district has said she has some concerns about it, that the speed at which it's moving might be a little too fast. It's also in a floodplain. I mean, you just said it's a little higher. I mean it seems like a similar place. I mean, are there other alternatives you're exploring and can you kind of address Ayala's concern about the pace here?

**Mayor Adams:** I respect her opinion, and once we determine if we have another place we want to go to, we'll do that. We're going to continue to pivot and shift to deal with this humanitarian crisis. And we respect her opinion. I love Diana.

**Question:** Will Randall's Island truly be ready in time? We have a crew there now observing pools of water and also basic site survey work going on.

**Mayor Adams:** We are going to ensure that we manage this crisis and based on what's ready we will move into, we will continue to pivot and shift. I can't... I don't... We don't even know how many buses we're going to get from the southern part of the state. It went from two buses to eight buses to four buses. So we have to be willing to address and adjust based on the challenges that are in front of us, and we got the team to do so.

**Question:** What has allowed you to reduce the capacity by half? Orchard Beach was a 1,000. Randall's Island will be 500. What has allowed that change to happen?

**Mayor Adams:** We have some other things that we're looking at and once we formalize those things, we're going to announce them. So we're looking at other methods to really address the influx, and really we're trying to judge based on how many buses come to New York. And so we adjusted based on that and we have some other things in the pipeline.

**Question:** How much will it cost the city to move the migrant shelter from Orchard Beach to Randall's Island? And why didn't you choose Randall's Island before, and where else are you looking?

**Mayor Adams:** Did you say to move?

**Question:** To move the migrant shelter from Orchard Beach to Randall's Island. How much would that cost?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. No one was on Orchard yet, so we're not moving anyone. The structures are going to be built. Once we get the final numbers, we'll make sure we tell everyone.

**Question:** Oh, could you specify...

**Mayor Adams:** You didn't think she was gonna call you?

**Question:** A lot of questions in the room. One is if you could specify from the other sites you're looking at and for Commissioner, so can you please talk about why Randall's Island wasn't the choice from the beginning? We've heard that that was the preference, some people, why it started Orchard and then went to Randall's Island.

**Mayor Adams:** We're looking at a number of different sites and, commissioner, I'll answer that for you, because he made the determination based on his professional ability. That's it?

**Question:** The ... Jumaane Williams earlier had talked about the need for more federal assistance and more assistance from the governor. Just your thoughts on that and also the usage of Randall's Island, what does that look like with this center there? Do events get canceled? Does Randall's Island and Icahn Stadium, does that continue as usual?

**Mayor Adams:** And the commissioner can talk about that. Jumaane Williams is right that we need help from the federal and the state governments. I said this over and over again. This is an American crisis and all of us need to do it together, and I don't want to have to choose between making sure New Yorkers who are in need are not receiving what they deserve in this city. We are going to do our share, but we need a team effort to address this humanitarian crisis. And that is why we have been in communications with the president, the White House, I should say, and my conversation with the president last week.

We have been in conversation with the governor, but we also need, as I said yesterday, the far right is doing the wrong thing and the far left is doing nothing. I mean, everyone needs to be in this game. These people who are saying that, "Don't put folks here, don't put folks there." I sat down with the mayor of Poland, one of the cities in Poland yesterday, and he talked about how everyday people from Poland was helping the migrants. Everyone should be on all hands on deck, everyone. Not sitting back and throwing rocks. A rock not a plan. Everyone should be on deck helping this crisis right now. You can — they asked the question about some questions about events.

**Commissioner Dannhauser:** Yeah, so one of the reasons that we did not originally place the camp at Randall's Island was because of seasonal use and that ends after Monday. So Randall's Island is now available in a way it wasn't when we started this process. It's also more cost effective. We're actually saving money by moving to Randall's Island at this stage. Thank you.

**Question:** When will it open?

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you, thank you, thank you. And the day we announce it.

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