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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS REMARKS AT WHITE HOUSE
CONFERENCE ON HUNGER, NUTRITION AND HEALTH**

Secretary Xavier Becerra, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: We're very fortunate that Mayor Adams is with us. Mayor, when you think about the work that needs to be done. And here of course, now we speak to you because at the federal level we've heard from some potent leaders. But we know that our state and local partners are essential in this effort. So as we think about this, the work that needs to be done to achieve the conference goals, how are you as a leader focusing on driving solutions to some of these critical issues of hunger, nutrition, and health?

Mayor Adams: Well, clearly, first we just have to take our hats off to the Biden-Harris team for understanding the moral imperative that we are facing right now. And these two partners, I am extremely optimistic of where we're going. This issue is not only a professional response for me, but it's a personal response. I woke up with vision loss. Doctor told me I was going to be blind in a year. I was going to lose some fingers and toes because of permanent nerve damage. Just to learn that I had advanced stages of diabetes. And after just learning and reading on folks like Dean Ornish — Dr. Dean Ornish, who I see is here — Dr. Esselstyn, Dr. Gregor, and learning that it was never my DNA, it was my dinner. It was what I was eating every day. And three weeks after going to a whole food plant-based diet, my vision came back, my nerve damage went away, my ulcer went away, my high blood pressure went away. The entire American package went away.

And it just made me realize as leaders, how do we dig into this? And I was able to meet these amazing doctors that knew that we were down the wrong path. And we really had to start with definitions. Because definitions determine exactly what we're doing. We were fed as children, but we were feeding our healthcare crisis. The food we were getting from the struggles of SNAP, that hard cheese, that canned baloney, that powdered eggs. All of those foods that we fought for, we realized that it was feeding the healthcare crisis that we were facing. We're spending 80 cents on a dollar to treat food-related diseases. I mean, it just makes no sense.

And the goal is how do we reverse that? So we must move our mindset from caloric consumption to nutritional consumption. Going to bed with a full belly that is not nutritional is just really feeding your healthcare crisis. So what are we doing in New York? In New York, we're doing something for the first time in history. We started this when I was Brooklyn borough

president. We had a lifestyle medicine with Dr. McMaken in Bellevue Hospital that gave people a choice to have plant-based meals while they're in the hospital instead of feeding the reason that they are in the hospital in the first place. We expanded it now that I became mayor. It's now in 11 of our hospitals. Dr. Vasan, who's here, who's the commissioner of my Health and Hospitals, commissioner of my Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, we are now telling people in hospitals that are going to heal. We give them options.

We are defaulting to plant-based meals. If they don't want plant-based meals, they have an opportunity to give whatever meal they want. But we found over 50 percent of the people when they were defaulted to our chef's specials, they chose them. 95 percent stated we like them. But we're also going into our schools. We have for the first time Meatless Mondays on Monday and on Friday we have Plant-Powered Fridays. While children are learning these good eating habits so they can go home, particularly when English is a second language. Children go home and start informing their parents of how meals are impacting them and we are building it into our educational curriculum so children can understand the impact of that. I signed an executive order. We're spending hundreds of millions of dollars purchasing food that we know the food is unhealthy. So now my executive order orders for good food purchasing.

So what is the purpose that I know I have an issue of childhood diabetes in my school. Why am I feeding my babies food that causes childhood diabetes? Why is the Department of Health allowing the Department of Education to operate separately? Our entire food curriculum should come through the Department of Health. We should be leaning... The debate of previous administrations was what type of pizza you have? How about none? That's not plant based or that's not healthy. And so the goal of what we are doing in New York is leading by example. Kate McKenzie, who is handling my entire operation around food, is using the science. And so the great work our lawmakers are doing is bringing the resources to our cities. We are closest to the problem. We have to think not outside the box. We have to destroy the box.

We have to allow growing food in our schools so children can pick it and eat it in the classroom. We need to make sure everywhere we are feeding people with taxpayers dollars should make sure that food is healthy. And so I just take my hat off to the Biden and Harris team that is bold enough to state 50 years was too long. It's time for us to re-examine the food that we are feeding Americans.

And let me conclude with this. There's no one in this room that does not know someone that's gone through a chronic disease. Chronic disease hijacks your life. You're no longer the person who you are. It is impacting how we are producing as American when we sit down at the terminal at work and we learn about hospice, we learn about the next test. This is so important. And when I saw my mother, who was diabetic for 15 years, on insulin for seven years. And when mommy was able to go whole food plant-based and after seven years of being on insulin, in two months she was off her insulin. That meant so much to me because mommy has six children. She loves them all, but she adored me.

It's time for us not only to heal our mothers and fathers, but let's heal Mother Earth. Our food is destroying our planet, it's destroying our children, it's destroying our families. It's time for us to liberate ourselves again. And I just take my hat off to the two of you. We are going to continue and expand what we are doing in the city to make sure that people can live a healthy lifestyle.

And we are encouraged. And I just want to really thank this administration for just getting it right. And we say in New York GSD, get stuff done. Get this stuff done.

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