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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT AMERICAN
LEGION ROUNDTABLE ON CITY'S BOROUGH-BASED JAIL PLAN IN
CHINATOWN**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, thank you so much Councilmember. Thank you, everyone, for being here. I'm looking forward to this opportunity to hear from you. I want to say at the outset, a profound thanks for everything that you do for this city, for this broader community, for this neighborhood. We are blessed to be in a city where people get involved and make a difference and create organizations in sort of unprecedented numbers and levels to make people's lives better. So I want to start by saying thank you and I value the fact that you're taking your time here today to offer thoughts on what we're trying to achieve and how to do it best and I appreciate that.

I want to join Margaret in commemorating the extraordinary service of Peter Woo and again a World War II vet and what he did in service to this country and what he's done in service to this neighborhood, I just would like us at the outset just have a quick moment of silence for Mr. Woo.

[Moment of silence is observed]

Thank you very much. And I want to of course thank the good leadership of this post for welcoming us and for all you to for the community, thank you very, very much. As we start in this dialogue I just want to [inaudible] some of the colleagues from the administration who are here right next to me, Liz Glazer my director for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice – I'm not going to do them in order because I'm looking at the list – council – excuse me – Commissioner Marco Carrión, Community Affairs Commissioner; Commissioner for Corrections Cynthia Brann; Chief of Staff to Deputy Mayor for Operations Aloysee Heredia; and Deputy Director for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Dana Kaplan – all of them been deeply involved on the issue of how we reduce mass incarceration, get off Rikers once and for all, and work with communities on the plans going forward. Also want to of course thank the Congress member, Borough President, State Senator for all they are doing to serve the community and we're in dialogue on numerous issues all the time. Saw both of you yesterday, talked to you just a few days ago, we're always talking and I appreciate what they do and there's always an open line of communication.

So I'll be very quick but I want to put this in context, we all together have done a lot to make this city more just and more safe. The last five years with the neighborhood policing philosophy has required deep engagement with communities. Communities have stepped up and engaged with the police, that has made us the safest big city in America. We've obviously together made a series of reforms and the people of this city wanted reform, they wanted to see for example the end to the broken and unconstitutional use of stop and frisk. The people of this city unquestionably want the era of mass incarceration to end. I have said over the last couple of years mass incarceration did not begin in New York City but it will end in New York City. We will be an example to this whole country.

So that's what brings us here, the recognition that we have to leave that reality behind – it was poisonous to our society to see so many people, and primarily, of course, young people put in jail in a way that only held them back, when what we have to do is consistently work to avoid anyone going to jail who doesn't need to. I want to note, and this is powerful to the equation that in 2017 the NYPD arrested 100,000 fewer people than four years earlier. So there's a number of things we are doing and all my colleagues are working on to reduce the number of people going into jail, reduce the time that they spend there, but we cannot make the reforms we need if we keep a broken place at the center of the system. Rikers Island was not built for rehabilitation. Rikers Island goes back 80 years, and it was built to penalize not rehabilitate and redeem. It will not work for the future, and we know the only way forward is to have modern jail facilities focused on rehabilitation and redemption. We know they have to be in the boroughs closer to the families and the people can be part of that rehabilitation process. We know they need to be close to the court houses. This is the way forward and we created a schema that I believe is one of fairness. It's based on the recommendations in Judge Lippman's Report, who I think is an outstanding reformer and really lead the way and said here is a vision for the future that can work for this city. And then I want to say that both Council Speaker Mark-Viverito and then Council Speaker Johnson believe strongly in this vision and encouraged the administration to move forward and we found a lot of unity on this.

So that's what brings us here today. This is part of a vision of getting off Rikers, having four community based jails of similar size. We know they must be safe for the surrounding communities and we have a track record that shows us that can be done very well. We know there must be a lot of other positive changes in the process to support the community. There's any number of issues, any number of community concerns that we want to address simultaneously as we take this action. That is a matter of fairness too. Every community in New York City does things that help all of New York City. Every community geographically takes on elements that we need for everyone, but we also recognize that's important to give back in that process and to help the community in a variety of ways, to help community organizations, to address longstanding community needs, to have real tangible and verifiable community benefits, and we certainly want to speak about that today because that's crucial to the equation.

Stating the obvious and then looking forward to the dialogue, the locations where we have existing jails since the Lippman Report have always been the logical place to focus the discussion. But that does not mean again that we see it statically – we have to see the overall needs of the community and we have to address them positively and creatively and I think any and all issues should be put on the table, both concerns about things that have to be addressed but also needs of the community that have to be met in the process, and that's what we intend to do

today and in meetings ahead and certainly through a ULURP process that will involve very, very extensive community involvement. So I want to thank you, Councilmember, we've worked together on many things and I know you will tenaciously stand up for the community and we will continue this dialogue but I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak directly to leaders of the community and to hear from them.

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