



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 7, 2016

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

RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO AND FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY HOST PRESS CONFERENCE TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON GENDER EQUITY

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for joining us today for this very important announcement. Now, I'm glad we're here at the Chelsea Recreation Center – it is the perfect setting for us to talk about a fundamental human right. For many of us, going to the gym is an established part of our routine – one of those things we do almost without thinking about it. It's certainly a part of my routine. But just imagine what the experience of going to the gym would be like if you didn't feel comfortable using the bathroom. It would put all kinds of restraints on the timing of your workout, and drinking water to stay hydrated. And what if you needed to wash your hands? Or wanted to splash some cold water on your face? None of that would be possible. And so, you would probably go to the gym less frequently or maybe not at all.

Transgender and gender non-conforming New Yorkers don't have to imagine what that would be like. Every day, no matter where they go, they are burdened with worry that when they need the certainty of privacy for personal needs it will not be there for them, and that is just wrong. As Honorary Chair of the Commission on Gender Equity, I am proud to be part of a team that is working hard to create a future where New Yorkers have the fundamental freedoms they need to be their true selves. And I am pleased to note that Azi Khalili, our new Executive Director of the commission is here with us today for this news.

[Applause]

I'm pleased that she is here for this news, which is so perfectly aligned with the commission's founding vision to address bias and inequality. At this very moment, Americans are being bombarded with communications that go against everything New Yorkers stand for with speeches and commercials coded to instill fear and exclusion. Well, that kind of language and that type of attitude doesn't cut it in New York City. New Yorkers know that to safeguard our individual rights, we must stand up for the rights of others, and we will.

[Applause]

It is now my great pleasure to introduce someone who has been a passionate supporter of LGBTQ rights and the LGBTQ community since before I even knew him. And he's not a supporter with only his words – he is a supporter who takes action, as you are about to see. It is my great pleasure to introduce Mayor Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, I want to thank Chirlane not just for what she said in her remarks, and not just for what she's done as First Lady, but for decades upon decades of activism on behalf of human rights and civil rights. I can say one thing about my wife – very early on, even going back to high school, she did not take well

to discrimination against anyone, and she stood up and she fought for the rights of everyone. Let's thank her for all she does.

[Applause]

So, yes, Chirlane's right, we should be talking about New York values. New York values are needed right now. New York values are important right now in this discourse we're having all around the country. Chirlane's right, somehow, hate is making a comeback, and we're not going to allow that to happen. We're going to stand up to hate. We're going to talk about the fact that the greatest city in the country is also the most diverse, and the most inclusive, the most tolerant, the most understanding, the most embracing – those are New York values, and those values work, my friends. There's a reason this city is admired all over the world. There's a reason that so many good things happen here – because it's a place for everyone, and we have to stand up for those values. We have to spread those values – they're needed more now than ever.

So, let's talk about the history of this place. Here – we respect the rights of all. We respect the rights of all New Yorkers regardless of religion, or immigration status, or sexual orientation. We think an attack on one is an attack on the rest of us. We think defending the rights of one community is defending the rights of all communities – that's why we have one of the nation's strongest human rights laws, and it's made us a beacon – a beacon for people who believe in tolerance and understanding. We are proud. We are the proud home of 25,000 transgender and gender non-conforming New Yorkers. They are part of the fabric of life in this city, and we honor them, and we embrace them, and we believe in them.

[Applause]

Now, as Chirlane said, I'm proud to have some real history on issues of fighting for human rights. When I was in the City Council – chair of the General Welfare Committee – and our committee, years ago, passed a bill that was profoundly important, prohibiting discrimination against transgender New Yorkers, well before it was in vogue in other parts of the country, this city prohibited discrimination. And that's something that we needed to do to send a message all over the City of the kind of place that we needed to be.

Now, it's important that those ideas are backed up in every way, particularly when it comes to our public places, and particularly when it comes to all of the buildings that are owned by the people – meaning, owned by the City of New York.

Let's face it, for too long – and Chirlane described it powerfully – too many transgender and gender non-conforming New Yorkers have been harassed. They've been made to feel out of place and uncomfortable. They've been asked to show ID in a demeaning way. And you can imagine what that must feel like. Too many people have been looked at with suspicion, and that doesn't help them to feel a sense of belonging, or to fulfill their God-given potential. Today, you're going to hear from two courageous activists who will share their stories. Sean Coleman from Destination Tomorrow and Bianey Garcia from Make the Road New York – and for them who have been fighting for these basic rights, and for the entire transgender and gender non-conforming community, we're here today to take another step forward. Through an executive order we're ensuring that transgender and gender non-conforming New Yorkers can use single-sex public restrooms and other facilities in City government buildings and areas consistent with their gender identity. Period. That's important. Period.

[Applause]

This executive order required a law to be posted clearly for the public and for City employees to see. I want to emphasize we have 350,000 employees of the City of New York. And one of the most important things that this executive order does is it sends a very clear message to all our employees that this is how things should be done. There will be extensive training for city employees because there are people – those who work for the city are

supposed to be in the lead of enforcing our laws. And we want everyone that works for the city to understand these laws and stand up for their fellow New Yorkers. So, we'll make sure that training is there, and our Commission on Human Rights will play a key role working with city agencies to ensure compliance. It's important at this time to remind all New Yorkers that any New Yorker who encounters discrimination of any kind should call 3-1-1, and get connected to the Human Rights Commission, which does such important work fighting discrimination every single day.

[Applause]

And you're going to hear from the Chair of the Human Rights Commission in just a moment. She's going to talk about the crucial work the commission does. But I also want to thank members of my administration who are here today; my Counsel Maya Wiley who's been in the forefront of this work, thank you Maya;

[Applause]

Commissioner for the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Lisette Camilo thank you;

[Applause]

Commissioner for the Administration for Children Services, Gladys Carrión thank you;

[Applause]

First Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Parks, Liam Kavanagh, thank you;

[Applause]

Chief Technology Officer Minerva Tantoco, thank you;

[Applause]

And I want to thank Azi Khalili, the new executive director of the Commission on Gender Equity, welcome.

[Applause]

And also to all the members who are here from the Commission on Gender Equity – and all the human rights commissioners who are here and all the advocates and organizations – a lot of people work for years for changes like this. And it's a day like this when they need to be remembered and appreciated. So, for all the advocates, let's give them a big round of applause right now.

[Applause]

One more acknowledgement – a special thank you to Dan Tietz of HRA. Thank you very much Dan for being here as well.

[Applause]

Now, the work of fighting discrimination, the work of extending civil and human rights – that's an everyday thing. That never goes away. This city is the birthplace of the LGBT rights movement. We're proud of that fact. We're literally the birthplace where it all began at Stonewall. And yet that work doesn't have an end point. And we should be comfortable with that. This is part of human reality. The work of ensuring greater equality is an everyday thing. That's why the founders of this nation talked about creating a more perfect union. They didn't

say there was an end point. This is work we keep doing, and we're proud to keep doing it. And we never rest-on-our-laurels so as long as anyone is being discriminated against.

You know, all over this country we see a very negative current, and it's our job to take it on. All over the country we are seeing more and more legislation being introduced that aims to take people backwards – to separate, to divide. Just over the last few weeks, more than 175 LGBT – excuse me, 175 anti-LGBT bills have been introduced in over 30 states. I want to repeat that because it has everything to do with the discussion going on in this country right now – a country that to the great credit of people all over this country who demanded, for example, marriage equality, who have demanded a more inclusive and tolerant nation. At the same time, there are those who seek to set us back. 175 anti-LGBT rights bills have been introduced in over 30 states just this year. That's the stakes we're dealing with right now. And that's why it's so important to keep standing up stronger than ever to show that no New Yorker – no American – should ever be discriminated against. We are going to take this step today to show once again that New York is a beacon, a place where everyone can live in dignity. And it works because everyone lives in dignity.

That's what we believe in here. And in that same spirit I want to say it in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

It sounds good in all languages – giving people their rights.

We've had strong voices in the City Council, standing up for human and civil rights, and particularly for the rights of transgender New Yorkers. I'd first like to introduce Councilmember Corey Johnson.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very much. Thank you both for all the wonderful work you've done. Now, I need to just engage in a moment of democratic process here. How many people believe it's time for me to sign this executive order?

[Applause]

I can't hear you.

[Cheers]

Okay. Now, a desk is supposed to appear somewhere. It is appearing over there. Okay, here we go.

[Mayor de Blasio signs executive order]

Okay, let's gather members of my administration so we can do the on-topic, followed by off-topic questions. Members of my administration, gather around. Alright, everyone, come on, gather closer. Liam, come on over. Carmelyn is here. Maya's here. Alright, everyone, spread out – there we go.

Okay, first we're going to take questions on this topic, then we will take questions on general topics. Hold on – let me just find water in here. I've found the water. Technical difficulties –

[Laughter]

Okay, on the topic of today's announcement – Mara?

Question: I'm sorry if I missed this in the release, but, Mr. Mayor, how many bathrooms are there?

Mayor: How many bathrooms are there? That is a good question. Okay, we're going to open this one up. Who from the City knows? Lisette Camilo knows. DCAS knows everything.

Commissioner Lisette Camilo, Department of Citywide Administrative Services: DCAS – yes. Of the 55 buildings that the Department of Citywide Administrative Services manages and cleans, there are about 22,000.

Question: 22,000 that will be under this program?

Commissioner Camilo: Yes. I'm sorry, 2,200 – over 2,200.

Mayor: 2,200 in City buildings?

Commissioner Camilo: 2,200 in DCAS-managed buildings, which is 55 buildings.

Question: So, 2,200 –

Commissioner Camilo: Of the 55 –

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Camilo: I don't know about that – the number of bathrooms. But there are over 4,000 bathrooms.

Mayor: Now, we need to – so, you're asking – every place – how much does it cover – not just the DCAS-run buildings? So, we need a bigger answer, and we will get you that answer, unless anyone knows right off the top. Do you know, Carmelyn?

Commissioner Carmelyn Malalis, Commission on Human Rights: Sure. So, the executive order applies to all buildings and facilities that are owned or operated by the City. Now, there are certain City institutions like the DOE that already has a Chancellor's guideline that's consistent with the executive order. And then other City institutions, like CUNY, you know, the Health + Hospitals Corporation – what's another one? I'm trying to think –

Unknown: NYCHA.

Commissioner Malalis: NYCHA – that they are not technically under, you know, the jurisdiction of executive orders, but they have already committed to implementing the policy in the executive order, and the Commission and DCAS will be working with them to do that.

Mayor: Okay. Laura?

Question: It says here that City agencies must comply with the order immediately or [inaudible]. What are the circumstances under which someone would seek an exemption? And what would be the circumstances under which [inaudible] granted? Can you say a little more about that?

Commissioner Malalis: So, the exemption applies to an existing provision under the City human rights law. Exemptions are available in the context of, you know, if there's a gender-based exemption needed, or an age-based exemption that's needed. And the language of the statute speaks to if it is in the – you know, to strengthen public policy. So, sometimes that could be for safety reasons or other reasons. So, we wanted to make sure the executive order was consistent with what we already have under the City human rights law.

Question: I don't understand that – what does that mean? A City agency can opt out of the [inaudible] in some way? What are you –

Commissioner Malalis: No. So, I'm going to step back for a moment and say – so, the executive order becomes – goes into effect immediately, which basically means, if you look at the executive order, that within three months all agencies that are under the executive order must post the policy of the executive order in conspicuous places. Within one year, all managerial staff should be trained in gender diversity and inclusion – within two years, all frontline staff – and then that repeats every two years. Now, for very narrow circumstances under the City human rights law – the City human rights law allows for entities – and it's not just in the City's system – it's whoever is subject to the City human rights law in the City in the city allows for exemption for folks who apply for those if they can show that there is truly a public policy need for an exemption based on gender or age. So, it's not specific to this executive order. It's just making it on-par with what is already existing under the city's human rights law. I think the important thing to note here is it must be requested and only if the Commission grants the request will you be exempt. That will happen in very rare circumstances. That's the real bottom-line. It will be very, very rare because it will rarely be in the policy interest of the city to exempt an agency from this executive order.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: We don't do too many backs and forth. This is the last one, go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: Is there an example – can you think of an example under which [inaudible]?

Commissioner Malalis: So, it's hard to be abstract because we haven't had an agency formally apply. But I would say, if you think of our prison system – our Corrections Department – obviously is covered by this executive order. So, yes, it's impossible that there may be a security interest in securing certain bathrooms purely from a safety standpoint. That may – we don't know – but may merit an exemption. But again, they'd have to demonstrate that there was a sufficient safety issue to merit the exemption.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, what is the current situation in the schools regarding this issue, and how does this executive order change things in the schools?

Mayor: So just to –

Question: Bathrooms and facilities – what facilities are we talking about?

Mayor: Locker rooms for example is one – locker rooms are an example of something separate from simply a narrow bathroom. But let me start and then Carmelyn or Maya may want to add. Again, there are human rights laws that have existed and different agencies have taken some of their own actions. We wanted something that was both unifying across agencies, and made very clear to our employees in particular that this was something that had to be implemented – and we would do the training to go with it. So, this is about making sure this really is implemented on the ground effectively, but you want to speak to schools and [inaudible]?

Commissioner Malalis: Sure. So, with schools – so, to elaborate on that the Department of Education already has a Chancellor's guideline that is explicit in this area that basically directs that schools should allow

transgender and gender non-conforming students to be able to use facilities consistent with their gender identity. So, it works – you know – very, very comfortably with that existing guideline because it's consistent.

Question: [Inaudible] change things in schools?

Commissioner Malalis: Well, one of the things that I think it adds – it probably compliments it – in that, I think a very important part of the executive order is the policy, but another very important part of the executive order is the training. We want to make sure that managerial and frontline staff have the training and – you know – that's one of the reasons that the Commission has worked very closely with DCAS to make sure as part of the mandatory training that agencies undergo – this is part of that curriculum.

Mayor: We don't want people discriminated against. And the fact is that having a broad policy is one thing, but making sure it sticks is another thing. So, really making sure that all of the folks who work for the City government understand how important it is to respect people's rights and not put them in very – you know – degrading and humiliating circumstances. And that's what you heard from some of the folks who spoke before. That's what they've been put through throughout much of their lives. And we got to end that. So, this is about a single unified policy with the training to go with it to really change what happens on the ground.

Question: Mr. Mayor does this then also allow for non-gender specific bathrooms – or is that already an okay policy?

Commissioner Malalis: So again, I think this is probably something that compliments – there are different ways, I think, that folks have been trying to be supportive of gender non-conforming and transgender communities. And one of them is to create – you know – gender neutral spaces. And so, this works very nicely with it. This was really recognition for the fact that there are many places that do not have – you know – single stall gender-neutral facilities that can be converted to a gender-neutral space. And so there is the recognition that a lot of the facilities are actually – you know – single sex, but multi-user. So, we wanted to make sure that even in instances where – you know – there may be agencies or if you're looking at Greater New York, that there are facilities that are gender-neutral single-stall that folks who don't have those arrangements – that we also have welcoming environments for transgender and gender non-conforming people if there aren't those gender-neutral spaces.

Question: [Inaudible] this enforcement based on a complaint?

Mayor: Well, let's be clear, first of all, the training and the policies across the board – the point about people calling 3-1-1 if they feel discriminated against is if anyone feels that the policy does not follow, we want them to let us know so we can do something about it. So look, I believe the vast majority of people hearing that this is the rule will respect this rule and will work with their fellow New Yorkers, but some people may not get the memo right away. And that's why it's important to have enforcement capacity, it's important to have a strong Human Rights Commission. And we welcome any concerns that people have – that they call 3-1-1 with them. Yes?

Question: Do you guys have an estimated cost for this in terms of the signage that you have to put up?

Mayor: It's pretty minimal.

Commissioner Malalis: Well, I was going to say – you know – the beauty also about taking this approach is there's no cost. Signage doesn't change. What changes is that people have to allow people to use the bathrooms. You know, if there's a sign that says Women's Restroom then all women including transgender women need to be able to use that restroom. If there is signage that says – you know – this is the Men's Restroom that means that transgender men need to be using that – you know – should be allowed to use that restroom. So, there's no cost because the signage doesn't change under the [inaudible].

Question: I guess I would ask [inaudible] for average New Yorkers they might not really know that this is a thing even – and they would go about their lives in the same exact way. So, I'm just wondering are you guys going to plan any sort of campaign to tell people that this is what's happening?

Mayor: So first, let me go back to your first question to clarify that the training we're going to do of city workers is something we do on an ongoing basis for many, many reasons. Agencies are constantly retraining their workers on any number of things. So, this will be folded into that – that's not a separate expense. We're certainly going to do a lot to publicize it. We don't have a specific campaign yet, but we're going to do a lot to publicize and that's what we're doing today to – to let people know and make sure that folks know if they feel they are being discriminated against if they have the option of calling 3-1-1, so we can do something about it. Emily?

Question: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Malalis: So, again – so this is separate from the executive order because the executive order deals specifically with city agencies and building facilities owned and operated by the City. In December, the Commission on Human Rights published its legal enforcement guidelines for guidance in the area of gender identity and gender expression discrimination. You know, restroom use, single-sex facilities was one of the examples given as ways that – you know – whether you're looking at housing providers, businesses, employers – one of these areas that we wanted to make very transparent how people should be thinking of discrimination against transgender people, how it manifests itself in these different areas. As part of releasing that guidance, we've been putting out a lot more information. We've been having a lot more conversations actually with different business organizations or business institutions. We're going to continue doing that. One of the reasons that we put out guidance specifically in this area – you know, something I note is that the two other guidance we had put out last year – we put out guidance on new provisions of the law. Here, we didn't put out guidance because it was a new provision of the law because gender identity and gender expression discrimination has been prohibited under the City's Human Rights Law since 2002. We put it in this area because there were just a lot of questions. It was, in fact, to respond to many of the questions we received from individuals and from businesses – and how it manifest itself – and how folks can be – more inclusive environments, how they can protect their rights, etcetera.

Question: I don't understand how the situation with private businesses – is it legal for a restaurant or other private business to deny access to a bathroom? What is the situation?

Commissioner Malalis: Under the City Human Rights Law, yes – it could be considered a violation of the City Human Rights law if a restaurant or any sort of business for that matter was denying a restroom to somebody that was consistent with that person's gender identity or gender expression.

Question: [inaudible] tell somebody you can't use the bathroom?

Commissioner Malalis: It could be considered a violation of the City Human Rights Law, yes.

Mayor: Again, that's the same kind of thing – I want to keep emphasizing and always asking you guys to include the news you can use in your news – that if anyone has that experience and feels in a private setting they've been denied access to a bathroom that they deserve to use, we want them to call 3-1-1 and report it.

Question: Question on the total projected cost – do you have any sense of what that would be, will be, and also could you talk about what the training with entail? Do you have specifics on that?

Mayor: We see very minimal, if any, costs because the announcements as Carmelyn said are already up, and the training is happening anyway on a variety of levels for agencies, so really very, very little if any meaningful cost.

What was the second question?

Question: On the training, do you [inaudible]?

Commissioner Malalis: DCAS administers the training for all employees, and we already have a number of LGBT modules. We're expanding, and we're working with the Commission of Human Rights to incorporate the specifics.

Question: [inaudible] pointed out earlier that many cities or towns are going in the opposite direction [inaudible] I was just wondering if you think that doing this in New York, you're hoping other cities will follow your lead?

Mayor: Look – and by the way, those bills that I mentioned are not just about the right to use a bathroom or a locker room. A lot of them are trying to take away other rights as well.

I think New York City has an obligation to lead. I think we have an obligation to show that everyone should be embraced and everyone should be respected. And, look, I think in a dramatic moment like the one we're going through in our country, change comes from the grass roots. Change comes from the ground – and if people who believe in human rights don't stand up for them, it lets those negative voices dominate, so we're certainly not going to let that happen. As I said, we have very clear New York values.

Last call on this topic before we do – we're doing media questions only – last call on this topic please.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the school situation – are there specific kids who are allowed to go, say, into the boy's room or the girl's room because they have declared a different gender identity, or is it – can anybody use the boy's room or girl's room – I just imagine chaos.

Mayor: Well, no, I don't agree with that. I think this is clearly about people expressing their identity, and I think ultimately it's a matter of common sense respect for the identity that people declare. You can speak to this [inaudible]

Commissioner Malalis: Yes, I think that's right. This is not about singling people out – in fact it's about the reverse of that. That making sure that people who have a certain identity that they're able to use whatever facility they want without somebody policing them, without somebody having to ask for their identification, or having them to raise their hand and identify themselves that way.

Mayor: Rich, what I would say is think about the reality you heard from some of the folks who spoke. Think about the reality of having a clear sense of identity and then being denied access to the place you need to be, and being shamed and excluded. I mean, that's what we have to get at here, that's what we have to change. And we want people to know they can go about their lives and not be excluded, that's why this is so important.

[Applause]

Question: [inaudible] level of maturity in high school. I'm just saying that – you know what I'm talking about.

Mayor: Yes, but let me say this again, of course again, we understand that the folks who work in our schools – they are experts on young people, obviously by the nature of their work. They know how to communicate with them – but what we don't want is a situation where someone knows what their identity is and then can't go to

the facilities they need to go to. And imagine the conflict that causes – imagine the anger, the frustration, the [inaudible] all the problems of someone being sent to the place they don't believe is the right place for them. So, I think our school personnel will be able to work with our young people. I think they understand our young people, but this is about affirming the right for someone to follow through on their own identity.

Maya Wiley, Counsel to the Mayor: I think one point that should not be lost here, that Commissioner Malalis stated is that there has already been a Department of Education Chancellor's rule on this. This has been in place for a couple of years. We are not seeing a situation in which there are huge problems because the Department of Education has chosen to honor the identity of any of its students. So the fact that this is not brand new in the Department of Education should give parents and students a lot of confidence that this is actually going to promote human rights with dignity, not problems and turmoil.

Mayor: Thank you, Maya.

Let's do some other topics.

Question: As you know there was an aerial survey of deer on Staten Island a couple of weeks ago, and I just wanted to get an update from you on when you think the city will put out a plan for the Staten Island deer population, and if you agree with the Borough President that those deer are going to have to die [inaudible].

Mayor: I believe it's a very serious issue. I know it matters a lot to the people of Staten Island. I know it's a real safety issue involved as well. I don't want to presume how we handle it yet until we finish the work of assessing the situation – as you know we have to work with state and federal partners on this. We are focused on it, and we will have more to say very shortly, but I don't want to pre-judge until we've analyzed what's happening.

Question: Mr. Mayor, in the last few weeks there have been a number of instances – or incidents where people with emotional or psychological problems have acted out, most recently yesterday in Queens where a man who had a history of psychological problems, and was not on his medication, stabbed somebody to death – you know, set people on fire. I wonder if you could share your thoughts and concerns about mental illness, and public danger, and steps, if any, that can be taken.

Mayor: We have to do things very differently. We really have to do things differently. For decades, mental health problems have been stigmatized, and gone untreated. And the response of government on all levels was simply to tolerate that. We need to do a much better job – again, City government, State government, federal government – all of us – at identifying when someone has a problem and getting them the help they need.

Now, the ThriveNYC program that my wife has lead is focused on reaching children early, identifying problems, connecting the mental health – keeping them connected to mental health. And then, the initiative we put together that focuses more on folks with any history of violence – the HUB, which is about finding people who have serious mental illness problems, and have been identified as folks who need ongoing treatment, and also have a history of violence – that is an area where we have to do a lot more person by person, family by family. And that's why the HUB was set up, to literally create a specific plan for each person.

This horrible tragedy over the weekend is not only very painful, but also very complex, because the individual had no history of significant violence. There were some minor criminal offenses, but not involving violence. And we don't have all the details yet, but, from what we know, this is not someone who would have come up on the radar as a particular threat. But this does get to the point that that family deserved more to help figure out how to handle the problems that that young man was having. And that is why, first, we have to de-stigmatize mental health problems. Second, we have to make treatment available very widely and very easily – that's why we have a new plan called NYC Support, where any New Yorker will be able to call 3-1-1 – get connected to care on a regular basis – not just one shot, but connected to care and being able to stay connected to care. But

this stuff is complicated. The difference now is – I can say on behalf of this City – we’re going to take it on head on. We know it’s not going to change overnight – we know this – and anyone who wants an overnight solution has to look at the fact that this was, bluntly, ignored for decades. But we are going to go at this problem head on.

Question: Do you think it’s complicated by the fact that the State, for years, had a policy of deinstitutionalization?

Mayor: Yes, of course.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Because – Marcia, I think it’s a very good question. If instead of deinstitutionalization the way it happened, in which we had institutions for people with mental health problems that were really horrible – they were substandard and they were dangerous. And, at the time, the theory was people would be brought to a better location – the “halfway house,” or some kind of other community-based location – well, guess what? They weren’t. They weren’t given the support they needed. There wasn’t funding for those halfway houses and those community locations. And so, what happened is, people were left to their own devices. Many families didn’t know how to handle the problems that their family members had. It was the origins of the modern homelessness problem, unquestionably. And when you add it up, we had a chance in the 1970s and ‘80s to stop what has now become a very dangerous pattern of lots and lots of people disconnected from mental health, and, in too many cases, violent, as well. That’s when we could have gotten on the right path. That opportunity was missed decades ago. Now, we have to put it all back together again, but it’s going to take real investment in mental health, a very preventative attitude to reaching people as soon as we see signs of a problem. It’s going to take a lot of de-stigmatization. It’s going to take a lot of resources. But, I’ll tell you one thing, the First Lady’s plan is about \$850 million over four years – it’s going to be some of the best money we’ve ever spent, because it’s going to help keep people from ending up in violent situations, ending up homeless, ending up in Rikers Island. So, this is the way of the future – to get to mental health challenges early in someone’s life, and actually connect people to treatment.

Question: The police department was supposed to be having training to help de-escalate these situations or use Tasers – and in this case this man was shot. Do you know where that training is or –

Mayor: The training has been continuing. You remember, we honored at the State of the City a wonderful officer who, off-duty, saw someone about to jump to their death and commit suicide – and had gotten the training and intervened and was able to talk that person down and save their life. So, a number of officers have received the training but that’s continuing throughout this year to reach more and more. The Tasers are also being implemented on a wider basis than we have previously. So, you’ll see more and more ability for officers to call in the Tasers as an option. My sense in this situation was things move very quickly and they didn’t have that opportunity, but that will be something that becomes more apart of policing in this city, to give officers that option.

Question: [Inaudible] testifying to Congress later this month about the Homeland Security cuts [inaudible] President Obama. When you spoke about these last month, you said you’d hope to speak to the president about this. Can you give us any sense of how that – if there’s going to be conversations between you and the White House? Or how that’s going?

Mayor: No, but I certainly look forward to that soon, and I am certain my testimony will get their attention. So, we look forward to rectifying this issue. I have a lot of respect for the President. I work very well and closely with the White House but on this one, they’ve made a mistake and they’ve got to fix it.

Question: Mr. Mayor it appears that NJ Transit is heading for a strike. I wonder whether the city is – obviously that could mean more car traffic in the city – I’m wondering whether the city is preparing contingencies for that, and if so, what you’re thinking is.

Mayor: Yes, we are. Now, as you know in many of these cases there’s federal mediation. I don’t have the update this morning but my strong hope and belief is that there will be a mediation option that will avert the strike. But yes, we have to be ready in any instance. So, we’re certainly going to be ready in terms of NYPD and traffic enforcement’s ability to handle more traffic, if we have to. But right now the most important is that every effort should be expended to try and stop that strike from happening.

Yes.

Question: On a less serious note, this [inaudible] have you identified who that was, will there be a reprimand for the prank?

Mayor: Of course there will be a reprimand. It was a silly thing to do and I imagine we’ll able to figure out who it was and they shouldn’t have done it. You know, someone needs to get out more often in my humble opinion.

[Laughter]

Last call. Going once, twice – thank you everyone.

[Applause]

###