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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 18, 2023

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS PARTICIPATES IN LIVE INTERVIEW WITH
POLITICO**

Sally Goldenberg: Welcome to POLITICO's America's Mayors event series. I'm Sally Goldenberg, New York City Hall bureau chief for POLITICO, and we're joined today by America's most high-profile mayor, New York's Eric Adams. Please add to the conversation online, share your thoughts using the hashtag #thefiftymayors.

So, 2022 brought in a new class of mayors leading, quote unquote, "majority minority cities." Reshaping who is at the nation's power tables and what their priorities are. As we dive into the new year this week, America's mayors are gathering in Washington D.C. for their biannual meeting. Ahead of these discussions, we're here to talk with Mayor Eric Adams about how he's handling issues at home that are of national consequence. Mayor Adams, welcome.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, Sally. Great to see you. As I always tell you, you have the best sources in all of media.

Goldenberg: Thank you. Thank you very much. So, you're down in D.C. today with the African American Mayors Association for a panel discussion, and you belong to a class of big city mayors who are Black, who are involved in this event. Mayors from L.A., Washington D.C., Chicago, and so forth. So, I'm wondering if you could tell us what is the top issue on the agenda, and what will you all be doing together to make it come to fruition?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think the top national issues... Clearly crime is front and center. You heard me say over and over again that public safety is a prerequisite to prosperity, but we need to think about crime and public safety differently. It's not just police, it's more than that. And then, inflation and the economy are the three top issues. But we have some real pressing issues as well, like the asylum seekers, and believe it or not, our fentanyl. This is a major national problem that if we don't get in front of, we're going to see the same things we saw during heroin in the 60s and crack cocaine in the 80s.

Goldenberg: And can you tell us a little bit about what you and the other mayors will be discussing? Or what specifically you'll be trying to accomplish today on the fentanyl front?

Mayor Adams: Well, it's a cross collaboration. We have to properly get in front of this crisis. We did not do it during the 60s and the 80s. I policed during those days, and I saw how crack cocaine devastated our communities because the resources were not there. Across the country, you're seeing a problem with overdose and you're seeing much of the traditional drugs being laced with fentanyl. And what we're hoping to do today is, number one, to come up with a uniform approach with all of our cities. And that's why this conference is so important, because the mayors are really on the ground where these problems are facing the entire population throughout this entire country.

Goldenberg: Thank you. So, I'd like to turn to an issue that's of the utmost importance to New York City as well as the Biden administration, the asylum seeker crisis. You've described it as a humanitarian failing by politicians who are sending migrants to New York from their cities and states. And you've said the Biden administration should be providing more resources. I believe the latest cost that you've estimated is \$2 billion that the city is going to have to spend, that you're going to try to seek reimbursement from the White House on. So, I'm wondering, at what point do you intend to either change your tactic with the White House or amp up the pressure to get those resources, to get the help you're asking? And what would that change in tactic look like?

Mayor Adams: Well, first, we know for sure it's about \$300 million that we've spent thus far. If we returned to the manner in which we were receiving more migrant seekers and... Asylum seekers and migrants, it could continue the balloon in cost. My guesstimate is about \$2 billion because of how we're seeing the numbers. We received over 3,000 a week and a half ago in just one week, 800 in just one day. When you start to look at these mounting costs, it can be extremely significant. And we think there must be a long-term and a short-term plan.

The long-term plan is Congress. Congress has an obligation to come up with real comprehensive immigration reform. That's a long-term plan that does not solve our immediate crisis. And I believe the White House must ensure the immediate needs, that cities that are impacted receive the support they deserve. And that includes a person with the singular responsibility of a decompression strategy and other methods to address the asylum seeker crisis we are facing.

Goldenberg: And is there anything... You've asked the White House, obviously, for resources. If they continue to not provide them in a timely fashion or provide adequate funding, is there anything that you and the other mayors can do? Can you use your collective political power in some way to dial up the pressure, basically?

Mayor Adams: And that's part of the conversation today. As I sit down with my colleagues across the country, particularly those who are directly impacted by the crisis, we're going to call on our mayors and our colleagues who may not be directly impacted, we're going to call on them also to join us. I spoke with the Kansas City mayor today and he stated that although we're not directly impacted, we know this is hurting your cities that are, and we want to be part of coming up with a solution. And that is the purpose of all the mayors coming together here in Washington each year during the winter meeting to talk about how do we help each other during these difficult times.

Goldenberg: Do you feel like the White House and the president get it? I mean, it's happening in New York City, they're talking about it, but they're in Washington D.C. Do you feel like there's maybe a disconnect or... Excuse me. Do you think they understand, excuse me, the magnitude of the issue?

Mayor Adams: I believe they have to because not only is New York City impacted, but Washington. Mayor Bowser has made it clear she's dealing with her own housing crisis, and to allow and have an influx of migrant asylum seekers is impacting her right here in our nation's capital. But the response must be an appropriate response, as I stated. There must be a long-term, a short-term, and a medium-term response to this very real crisis.

Goldenberg: Thank you. And I just have one more question on this and then we'll move on. I know there was talk at one point about possibly using cruise ships for shelter and there's been a number of different solutions, or temporary solutions, I should say, to provide shelter for the... I believe it's 40,000 asylum seekers who have come into the city. And recently, you said there might just at some point not be enough room anymore. Are there other places that you're considering... Other creative solutions that you're trying to come up with to house people either in New York City or elsewhere in New York state? And could you share some of these details?

Mayor Adams: Well, actually, Sally, there is no more room. It's not that we're getting to that point, we're at that point. And I wanted to be clear with New Yorkers what we're facing, how this is going to impact every city service that we deliver to New Yorkers. But at the same time, we're going to continue to do our moral and legal obligation. Whoever comes to the city, you're not seeing individuals sleeping on the streets with families because we're continuing to pivot and shift as needed. And if it means using cruise ships, if it means I'm finding space on state land — in my conversation with the governor, we're going to continue to pivot and shift to address the influx of migrants and asylum seekers that we're seeing.

Nothing is left off the table. That is what we had to do from the beginning of this crisis when Texas governor was sending individuals here. We're going to continue to make sure we address the issue that we're facing while we fight for the support that we deserve.

Goldenberg: And so, it sounds like that possibility of cruise ships is still on the table.

Mayor Adams: Every item is on the table because we have a moral and legal responsibility to do what's right for not only all New Yorkers but whoever comes to our city.

Goldenberg: Okay. Thanks. So, I want to just change topics while we're at, I think, the midway point. We had a story yesterday in POLITICO that evaluated what's a pretty steep drop in revenue anticipated from the city's once thriving commercial real estate market. And commercial real estate, obviously, provides property tax revenue as well as revenue from transfer taxes, but it's really reliant upon the revenue that landlords are able to obtain through their tenants. And if people are working from home making as much money, the city can't charge them as much money in taxes. And that can (inaudible) impact on the city's \$103 billion budget.

So, I'm wondering what policies you're considering to assist commercial landlords, and if you think remote work is here to stay. I know it's not a policy that you're really a big fan of, but do you sort of see it as a way of life right now in the private sector?

Mayor Adams: No, and it's a real shift. We know, post-Covid, that the remote work is something that is going to be incorporated into our lives. And it's not that I'm not a fan of people having adjusted or modified working environments, I just know the impact of it. If you are home all day, you're not going to the cleaners to get your clothing clean, you may not be going to that local coffee shop. And it's a major impact on the economy, particularly those who are providing these service jobs. And so, what we must do is now look at this real reality. We're a long way from April where we had about 30 percent of individuals in their office, we're now up to about 50 percent. Now, we must look at that additional 10 million square of feet of real estate that's not being used.

And I'm a big believer of that we can look into... Turn it into the much-needed affordable housing that we're looking for, childcare. We need to look at the spaces that are available and use the current zoning laws to modify them to address the fact that over 10 million square feet is now available to use differently and we better be prepared to make that modification and shift.

Goldenberg: Thank you. I want to switch to national politics for a few minutes. I know you've been pretty open, in the time you've been mayor, in critiquing the Democratic Party and how it sells its message. I think you've said something like the Democratic Party has, in your words, a good message but isn't selling it correctly. And so, as we look toward 2024 next year, it's majorly a consequential year in national politics, obviously, a presidential election in midterms. What do you think the Democratic Party needs to do and what role do you see yourself playing in that effort?

Mayor Adams: Well, one, I think we need to take back our narrative of being progressives and pragmatic. We have allowed the far, far left of our party to define us. We are not a party of defunding police; we're a party of supporting good law enforcement; we're a party of understanding the importance of childcare. The party that understands housing. We need to talk to those real issues and not at New Yorkers. It's clear that we're losing an extreme and very important aspect of our party. At one time we were getting and receiving... From seven or eight to 10 Asian and Latino voters were voting Democrat. Now, we're down to about six in 10. That should be extremely alarming.

And it's because we are not speaking to the people, we're speaking at them. And I think we need to go back to those working-class important bread and butter issues, I like to say, that are very important for everyday Democrats across the entire country.

Goldenberg: Do you plan to play a role in helping your party next year?

Mayor Adams: Any way the president or the Congress needs me, I'm there. I think we're very fortunate to have Congressman Hakeem Jeffries in Congress leading the Democratic Party. I would love to see him regain the speaker position in Congress. I think he has a lot to offer. I

think he fully understands the needs of the people. And we are extremely fortunate of having Senator Schumer. So, both of them know anywhere I could help the party, I'm willing to do so.

Goldenberg: And do you think... You've discussed the messaging of.... I know you discussed the defund the police platform that you feel is unsuccessful for Democrats. Do you think that there are policy areas where Democrats need to change, beyond selling the message? Are there specific areas where they need to reevaluate their policies?

Mayor Adams: No, I don't. I think their policies are dead on. I think that there are policies that support working people and there are policies that is a party of inclusiveness, particularly as we look at the diversity of our country and our cities. The goal now is to take those policies and communicate in a language that everyday New Yorkers and Americans understand. They often state that we communicate in extremely elaborate conversations and policies and just everyday plain talk... This is a plain talking country and we need to do that. And I saw that in my campaign. There was nothing fancy about my campaign. I spoke to working-class people and spoke to those issues that are important to them such as public safety.

Goldenberg: You mentioned Senator Schumer and Representative Jeffries (inaudible) your relationship and your partnership with Governor Hochul. Could you talk a little bit about Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez? Do you have a relationship with her, and if so, can you describe it?

Mayor Adams: Anyone who wants to move forward the things that working-class people need, I'm in favor of. We may have a philosophical disagreement on certain things, but we've come from the same background for the most part, working-class families. And sometimes you have different roads to get there, but I think when you look at the core of what she desires for her constituency is the same thing I desire for the people of the City of New York. We want them to live in a healthy environment where we could raise healthy children and families. And sometimes we have different roads on getting there. My role may be different from hers, but we have the same destination.

Goldenberg: We just have a couple of minutes. I know New York is expecting a soccer stadium, possibly a casino. Do you think New York is going to get the D.N.C. in 2024? Where does that stand? I know you're bidding on it.

Mayor Adams: And we are excited about our opportunities. We believe that we are in the final few locales that the D.N.C. is looking at. We put our best foot forward and we believe now it's time for them to deliberate and make a decision. We're excited about what we're doing with the World Cup with New Jersey. So, there's some big events that are coming to the city. And you're seeing it because... I like to say New York is not coming back, New York is back. You're seeing a steady decrease — crime is moving in the right directions, double digit decrease in shooters, in homicides. And we moved from a 40 percent increase in February, down to 20 percent with trending in the right direction.

And so, when you look at the ridership in our subway system, 3.9 million, one of the highest peaks from pre-pandemic, there's a clear indication that there's excitement in the city from

tourism to new companies coming to the city. And that's what we need. And I'm excited about what 2023 has to offer us.

Goldenberg: All right. Thank you very much. I know you have to run and I think we're at our time, so thank you for your time today and I'll see you back in New York.

Mayor Adams: Yes, thank you. Take care, Sally.

Goldenberg: You too.

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