

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 15, 2020, 3:15 PM
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS NYPD ACCOUNTABILITY PACKAGE,
INCLUDING INTROS 487-A, 536-B, 721-B, 760-B, 1309-B, 1962-A**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Everybody, this is a powerful day – a powerful day for so many reasons. And it's a moment when you can feel change coming, and every time I have been with my brothers and sisters painting these murals, you can feel it's not just the moment when you paint the mural and affirm the words. It is the beginning of something much greater. You can feel the beginning of fundamental change. And all of us here, all of us who met Gracie Mansion that night a few weeks ago when I heard these leaders say that we needed to emblaze in this city with the message Black lives matter, they did not say it was an end unto itself, they said it would be a clarion call to further action in this city, and this whole city would notice, and this whole country would notice. So, to, all of you, this group here was part of getting all this started all over the city. Let's thank them all.

[Applause]

Reverend McCall, thank you. Iesha Sekou, thank you. Mike Tucker, thank you. Anthony Beckford, thank you. Gwen Carr was there too, and I hope she still could make it here today, as she was planning to. But I want to tell you, people had a vision and the vision is now happening, and it will inspire people and move people every time they see it. And I want to say something, because we are coming up on a very painful anniversary. Reverend McCall noted, in just a few days, six years since we lost Eric Garner, and it never should have happened, and it should never, ever happen again in this city. And there are people who die, who are good people and we never know their names. And then there are those who die, who should not have died, but they did not live in vain. They did not die in vain, because change is happening. And we remember Eric Garner, and he – his very example compels us to further change. And today will be a step in that direction.

Thank you again to all of the elected officials. I know District Attorney Darcel Clark was here before. And thank you to Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr; Assembly Member Mike Blake; Council Member Rafael Salamanca, all of the leaders who are here in solidarity of this moment. I'm going to have more to say about what this means and where we are going in a moment. But first, you should hear from two of the sponsors of the legislation. There are six different bills we are signing today. Two of the bill's sponsors are here and they deserve our appreciation and I want you to hear from them directly. First of all, from the Bronx, and someone who loves this borough passionately, she has been one of the leaders in the City Council terms of fighting for both public safety and justice at the same time. Those two ideas go together, don't they? Public safety and justice have to happen at the same time in New York City.

[Applause]

The sponsor of Introductions 487-A, and 760-B, Council Member Vanessa Gibson.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you, Vanessa. That was powerful and you spoke a lot of truths there. We thank you. Now, the next speaker, the other Council Member who's here, who's played a crucial role in everything leading up to today – I have to tell you, first of all, he does not have the blessing of coming from the Bronx. Okay? Nobody's perfect, right? But he is someone who cares deeply about justice. He is someone who cares deeply about the substance of what we do and the meaning of what we do in public life, and he is a tireless individual. I've watched him a long time, he works very hard and very seriously at the work he does. So, it's my pleasure to introduce the Chairman of the Council's Committee on the Justice System, Council Member Rory Lancman.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Rory. Thank you very much. Speaking from the heart. So, everyone, let me just reflect for a moment before we move over to sign these bills. So, you heard before the notion that change happens from the grassroots, and that is the truth. So much of what we need to do starts with people at the community level, demanding change. That's been true for generations, and the Black Lives Matter movement has to be a constant, going forward, to help make sure we take each additional step that we need to take.

So, this movement, and a lot of people are here were active participants not just in recent weeks, but over years. This, today, is a victory for you, because you worked so hard and your voices were heard. There will always be people who say that these things cannot be done. I remember very vividly in 2013 – if you looked at what we were hearing day after day in 2013, you would have imagined it would have been impossible to end the broken and unconstitutional policy of stop and frisk. We were sold a bill of goods. We were lied to every day, being told that if we ended that policy, there would be crime and chaos everywhere. And, thank God, most of us didn't listen to that hype. We changed something unjust and we became a fairer city. And guess what? We became a safer city at the same time, because fairness and safety have to walk hand in hand. People said that if we reduced incarceration and ended the era of mass incarceration, we would be endangered. It was the other way around, my friends. We now have fewer people in our jails than any time since World War II and we are safer for it and better for it.

[Applause]

So, every time we do these things, we are saying Black lives matter in a tangible and real way. Now, we've only begun and we have to do more, because Rory makes a powerful point – the day has to be – and it may seem hard to imagine, but it is what we are aspiring to – the day has to come where every interaction a New Yorker has with a police officer is filled with neutral respect. That is what neighborhood policing is building. And Vanessa knows, you've been front and center in the effort to build neighborhood policing. It be done, and these bills will help us do it, because they will create more trust and more accountability.

So, six bills today. Number one, banning chokeholds – again, not only as a matter of policy, but as a matter of law.

[Applause]

Number two, disclosing to New Yorkers, how surveillance is done, showing in a free society that the people will know what their government is doing.

[Applause]

Number three – and this is about as basic an American right as it gets – cementing your legal right to record with your camera and interactions with police officers.

[Applause]

Number four, I hear this from people all the time. This is, again, such a basic right, ensuring your right to know the name and badge number of the officer in front of you – this must always be visible.

[Applause]

Number five, creating a public discipline matrix for the NYPD to make clear what discipline must look like, what accountability must look like.

[Applause]

And number six, as Vanessa said, making sure if an officer is on the wrong path, that that is identified; if it can be corrected, that it is corrected; if that person should not be on the police force, that they are removed from the police force.

[Applause]

Now, we can do these things, and we can do them because the vast majority of New Yorkers want to get it right. It's what Vanessa talked about, striking that balance. People want to be safe. They need to be safe. They want to work with the NYPD and they want respect in return. They want dignity. They want to know if something's wrong, it'll be acknowledged and acted on – that's what all of this takes us toward.

Now, look, I also want to be honest when there are concerns out there, it makes sense to talk about and not run away from it. The bill that Vanessa authored, the transparency bill, I know, and I believe in the impulse of that bill, and I'm signing that bill, because in a free society, again, if there's surveillance going on, you need to know that those methods are divulged, you need to know what the standards and the rules are. I know some have offered real concerns, including within the NYPD, that if an officer is doing undercover work, we need to protect their identity and protect their lives too – and that is right. If there are acts of terrorism directly against all of us, we must be able to stop them – and that is right. I believe we can accommodate those real concerns within this legislation. And Vanessa and I have talked about it, but I wanted to say out loud that I think those concerns are real, and we will work together to address those concerns.

And then on the chokehold bill – again, to be real with people, and be open and honest, I know many in the Police Department, including many I truly respect are concerned, because although they agree 100 percent and it's been the policy of the Police Department that we cannot have chokeholds, they're concerned about some of the additional language around diaphragms. I am signing this bill, because I believe we can make it work. I believe we can find a way to hear those real concerns, to keep people safe, to retrain our officers the right way. But I also believe that we need to acknowledge those concerns, because they're saying in the effort to keep us safe, they want to make sure they can do their job on our behalf, and I take that as an honest concern. So, we will work together. We will make these legislations – these pieces of legislation work together. As with all legislation, if something happens that's unintended, we will name it, and we will determine how to act together. But I have faith that we're in a moment of history where everyone is ready to do new things, and do them better, and do things that we thought we could not do before. In that spirit, we move forward.

I will tell you, this is a moment of not just crisis and challenge, this pandemic, this economic crisis, this cry for social justice – layer upon layer of challenge. It is not just pain and frustration and anger, it is also a moment for transformation, and we're going to show that right now at that desk here in the Bronx today. Let's sign these bills.

[Applause]

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