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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS, DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES KEVIN KIM ANNOUNCE NEW INITIATIVE TO EQUITABLY GROW CANNABIS INDUSTRY IN NYC**

[...]

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you, president. Good to see you. And Medgar Evers is the joint. This is one of my most popular colleges in our CUNY system — fighting as a state senator to give it its four year status. And some of the great leaders that have not only taught here, but that have emerged from here to do great things. Here on Bedford Avenue it has been an anchor for the development of this community and it really caters the educational opportunities based on its student body. And I'm sure the borough president Antonio Reynoso would tell you about how many great things happen here in this space.

**Mayor Adams:** We have entertained world leaders, we have had major conferences and we are on the cutting edge of moving the student body forward. And nothing personifies that more than this conversation around cannabis. It is a way to light up our economy and launch Cannabis NYC. Something that Commissioner Kim is extremely excited about. The economic opportunities are amazing. And what we are announcing here today is the first of its kind initiative to support the equitable growth of the cannabis industry in New York City by doing it here in Medgar Evers College.

**Mayor Adams:** If you were to do an analysis of the greatest number of individuals and students who were impacted negatively by an extremely aggressive law enforcement fighting of cannabis, you will find that many of the students were here. They came through this institution and now to be on the cutting edge, a part of the economic opportunities says a lot. And let's be clear, what we're doing here is promise made promise kept. We made the promise that we are going to use this law to reinvest in those who were justice-involved, and that's what we're doing.

**Mayor Adams:** We're creating the nation's most equitable cannabis industry — is part of the Blueprint for Economic Recovery. We have witnessed, across the country, states and cities that are getting it wrong, and we are not going to make those same mistakes here. Today, we're planting the seeds for the economic growth in the economy of tomorrow. The regulated adult use cannabis industry is a once in a generation chance for underserved communities, especially Black and brown communities, to be a part of this new industry here in our city.

**Mayor Adams:** For too long, these communities have faced high rates of drug-related incarcerations and they have been denied opportunities to build wealth. That's a terrible combination and today we're dismantling that combination. Now they have a chance to get in the industry and from the ground up be part of the development of this industry. Cannabis NYC, a brainchild of our commissioner, will help New Yorkers apply for licenses and understand how to open and successfully run a business. We will work with our state and local partners to make this happen in applications to the State Office of Cannabis Management for adult use — retail dispensary licenses open this Thursday, August 25th.

**Mayor Adams:** We want to have a major role in assisting in that opening. New Yorkers can call 888-SBS-4NYC or visit [www.nyc.gov/cannabis](http://www.nyc.gov/cannabis) to get the information they're looking for. These licenses will go to New Yorkers who were directly impacted by the war on drugs who have run successful businesses in the past. It's about setting the foundation of equity and giving those who have been justice-involved, those with a cannabis conviction, a chance to succeed. We're going back and reaching out to those who were impacted by this in many ways. We're not just saying let's move forward.

**Mayor Adams:** We need to go back to make people whole. You could be a young man who was jailed for drug possession or a mother who needs work or a second job or wants to start her own business. Cannabis NYC is here to help you and we are going to get the message out loudly and clearly. And this is about creating jobs, successful small businesses, and bringing equity for communities that were harmed by criminalization for many, many years. And we think about the dollars. We're not talking about small numbers. This industry is predicted to have \$1.3 billion in sales by 2023 and jobs — 19,000 to 24,000 jobs created over the next three years. This is an exciting moment to make sure that everyone is part of this industry. And this is just at the beginning. Cannabis NYC, in the coming months, will be expanding services as more licenses come on online and we will help support and service those who are looking to go into this business, including no cost training on how to operate a successful business. Because we don't want the dreams, the aspirations of those who want to go in this industry to go up and smoke. We want it to be firm, solid — get the foundation.

**Mayor Adams:** Running a business is hard and it becomes easier when you have a neighborhood college that has a welcome mat to give you all the support that you deserve to ensure your business is a success. We're excited about this. I want to thank all those who are involved, particularly our amazing borough president, Councilman Riley, the commissioner, and the president of this great institution for allowing us to use this as a moment to uplift people. Something that Ms. Rice, Arva Rice has fought for, for years with the Urban League is to come together of all the entities to make government work and to get stuff done. Thank you, madam president.

**Commissioner Kevin Kim, Department of Small Business Services:** Thank you, Mayor Adams, for your leadership to allow today's historic announcement to be created. So thank you again. Thank you, Dr. Ramsey and Medgar Evers, for hosting us in this beautiful space. I want to also acknowledge Borough President Antonio Reynoso and Council Member Kevin Riley, who have been great partners to SBS. Thank you for joining us and also to all the advocates here, welcome and thank you again for joining us as well. Social equity is always at the center of our work at the New York City Department of Small Business Services, and it is at the heart of the city's approach to the emerging regulated cannabis industry.

**Commissioner Kim:** That's why ahead of the state's first retail application opening this Thursday, we are proud to announce today the launch of Cannabis NYC with the city's first ever services all at no cost and in multiple languages to help aspiring justice-involved entrepreneurs apply for the state's first retail license. By awarding retail licenses in this first round only to justice involved applicants, the state is ensuring that the roots of this industry are based in equity and the city is proud to partner closely with the state to achieve the shared goal.

**Commissioner Kim:** So our message today is very, very clear, if you or a close family member had a marijuana arrest or conviction before March 31, 2021 and you've been an owner or a partial owner of a profitable business for two years or more, you may be eligible to apply for this first round of licenses. SBS is here to help assess your eligibility and provide one-on-one assistance in completing your application. And this is only the beginning because applying for a license and even getting a license is just the first step.

**Commissioner Kim:** From trainings on how to operate a successful business to educational webinars and resources and help with applications on future categories, please turn to SBS. Our Cannabis NYC initiative will continue to grow with one of its main goals to help New Yorkers who have been involved in the unregulated cannabis industry for many, many years transition into the licensed market that will lift up communities throughout our city. We know that New York City has a moral and economic responsibility to support this industry's equitable growth. So please, as the mayor said, call our SBS hotline at 888-SBS, the number four, NYC, or visit [nyc.gov/cannabis](http://nyc.gov/cannabis) to get started.

**Commissioner Kim:** Thank you very much, and now I would like to introduce our next speaker, Ms. Arva Rice. As president and CEO of the New York Urban League. Ms. Rice has been at the helm of an organization that has supported the city's African American community in pursuit of economic and social justice for over 100 years. We have been fortunate to benefit from her counsel in standing up an equitable cannabis industry in New York City. Ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Arva Rice.

[...]

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you too. I want to bring on out two of our partners, both Councilman Riley and Borough President Antonio Reynoso. Borough president, then we turn it to the councilman.

[...]

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you.

**Question:** Good morning mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** How are you?

**Question:** I guess it's the afternoon. Sorry. I'm good. Thanks. I wanted to ask, I mean I understand it's the state's regulations, but a colleague of mine had done a story months ago where she spoke to experts. And unfortunately the kind of Venn diagram of people who are justice, who

were previously justice-involved for marijuana convictions, and also have that two years of business experience, is very small given the limitations that they had because they have prior convictions. To get the financial backing and to open up a business can be very difficult for people who have prior convictions. Can the city do anything? I don't know if SBS can do anything to ensure that people who were working in what was then an illegal market — will now be legal — can still have an opportunity to legalize what they've been doing and what they've been experts at for years.

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah, and the commissioner can state that. But anyone who has run a small business would tell you that operating a small business where you have to pay a high level of insurance, a high level of utility costs, a high level of bookkeeping, is really different from running your business as a street corner pharmaceutical expert. It's a different business. If we set people up for failure, then we are doing an injustice, and that's not what we're going to do. When you run a legal business there are many things you need to be aware of, and that's why we are doing this partnership with the college so people can get the basic understanding of how to run a legal business. Commissioner?

**Commissioner Kim:** Thank you for that question. I think what's most important to note today is that this first round of applications is just that. There are nine total licenses that the state is issuing. The cultivation and the processing licenses have been issued, but there are other licenses: on-site consumption, delivery, microprocessing, and so on, that will be open to every New Yorker. So this is just specifically involved. And the reason why I noted that only justice-involved people would be eligible for this is that many other states who've gone through this process did not really intentionally put social equity at the forefront like New York State has. That's why for us here at New York City partnering with the state to achieve that social equity goal is really important to note.

**Commissioner Kim:** This is just for the first round. It's approximately 150 or so that they're aiming for, but then soon thereafter there'll be other licenses that will be open to all New Yorkers. The final point is that there are a lot of businesses that are going to be formed that don't touch the plant. That have nothing to do with growing or selling marijuana. There's security, there's accounting, and there's delivery and whatnot. So what we are doing at SBS is preparing them to, as the mayor said, be ready to open up businesses, successful businesses, no matter what shape or form that will be still part of the cannabis industry, but not necessarily touch the plant.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Can you clarify the nine? Is that for the city only?

**Commissioner Kim:** No, that is the state. So this is all state issued licenses, and there'll be nine licensed categories.

**Question:** Can you just explain a little bit more the relationship with Medgar Evers and how it's going to work with this program?

**Commissioner Kim:** Medgar Evers is just a very important part of our New York City infrastructure. As the CUNY system as a whole is as well. And so the education program that they set up has been instrumental in getting New Yorkers educated and understanding what the

opportunities are. And so this is just a continuation of that. I think the state has also invested in Lehman College and Queens College, two other CUNY institutions. So that we are going to be poised well here in New York City to be able to do the proper outreach and education to make sure everybody who wants to participate in this emerging market can.

**Mayor Adams:** And this is a new industry. And when you start a new industry, people need to know all the components of the industry. Not all of it is, as the commissioner stated, is selling or growing. There's an entire industry that is starting in this city for the first time. And it is imperative to have these on ramp to these industries and CUNY's the best way to do it. Particularly when you're talking about diversity among the student body and teaching each part of the industry. So now you have students that are coming in and they're saying, "We're hearing this about this cannabis. What are the job and career and ownership possibilities?" Medgar Evers and CUNY is going to be providing that. Now, this is a very important partnership because we're going to be helping with the curriculum. We're going to be helping modify it as the law changes. People need to be aware of that. This partnership is crucial.

**Question:** Thank you. On the enforcement side of things, once the legal market actually launches, once businesses are up and running, can you go into a little bit on how enforcement against illicit sellers will work at that point? Will it be stepped up in order to make sure there isn't illegal sales or how will that look?

**Mayor Adams:** You can never have a legal market with an illegal market. They can't go together. We're not going to have the heavy handed policing that you witnessed in the past where someone has a joint in their pockets and we all of a sudden going to tell them to put it in public. Now we're arresting them from public view. That is not happening. We're not going back to that but we're not going to allow trucks to be on our streets openly selling marijuana. Coming from out of the city, selling marijuana on our streets, not paying taxes, not abiding by the rules. And you don't even know what the product is. We're finding that some product now is being laced with fentanyl. We have to be extremely careful what our citizens are consuming, and you can't have local bodegas selling these products. We must make sure that it is regulated and safe. That people are actually getting what they're paying for. And those who openly violate or those who are shipped in large quantities here, they're breaking the law. And we're not going to allow that to happen while we have a legal market.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, last week we did a story about a drug den that had taken over a Chelsea neighborhood. A lot of quality of life concerns from people, everything from drug paraphernalia, drug use on the streets in front of the school, people who had substance abuse issues actually pooping, I don't know any other way to say it, on their front door steps in front of the school, all over the place. Police told us basically they tried to do what they could, but their hands are tied. What do you say to New Yorkers? We've been getting a flood of response from communities all over the city, residents saying these quality of life crimes are really making them consider moving out of New York.

**Mayor Adams:** We saw that story and that was a good story. And I do not subscribe to the theory that one's hands are tied when it comes down to quality of life issues. You see what we're doing with ATVs, paper plates, license plates, and all others. I'm a big quality of life person. Met

with our team over the weekend, zooming in on this. We are extremely forthright with it. But, Lisa, we need our partners. Laws are being put in place. Everything from decriminalizing public urination. That's just unacceptable. And so we can't have this duality where we're asking the police to deal with quality of life issues and then on another end we're decriminalizing those quality of life issues.

**Mayor Adams:** We have to be on one message. As we rolled out our encampment policies, you saw the attacks we received when people said people should be able to live in encampments on subway system. They should be able to live in encampments on streets. So we are ignoring that because I know what everyday New Yorkers want. They want a safe, clean city and I'm not going to accept the Police Department, our Police Department saying their hands are tied. We're looking at that particular incident and we're looking at other incidents where we're seeing quality of life problems.

**Question:** You've talked about the State Assembly's role and changing the laws. They're not even scheduled to be back in session until January, but a lot of people feel that this is a crisis that's accelerating and their concerns now with school opening in a couple of weeks and kids having to walk through all of this.

**Mayor Adams:** What's beyond my control, we are controlling. What's outside my span of control, I can't really speak on. I think our lawmakers, our judges, our prosecutors, everyone who is a part of the criminal justice system, they have a role. Record number of arrests for violent actions. Record number of arrests for guns, decreasing shooters, decreasing homicides zeroing in on those predatory crimes. The Police Department is doing their job and it's clear. Now everyone else needs to be playing off the same playbook that New Yorkers are expecting us to play off. I don't believe we are. I said this over and over again. We are passing laws to protect people who commit crimes. When do we start passing laws that protect people who are the victims of crimes?

**Question:** In the Senate primaries tomorrow, you have endorsed about a dozen people, mostly moderate candidates running against progressives. The question is why and what are you trying to accomplish?

**Mayor Adams:** Exactly what Lisa just said. I want people in Albany that understand the prerequisite to prosperity's public safety injustice of, as you said, moderate, not conservative. I want people that know they're aware of how to have that balance. I think that there's some people, some people in Albany that really are not identifying the reality that is planned out on our streets. I hear the public every day. I watch them when I'm on the subway system. I know they're tired of someone punching someone in the face, having them in critical condition and then the person who punched them on parole, walks out. Something is wrong with that. And I need people in Albany that they believe like I do. We need to protect innocent New Yorkers.

**Question:** One more if you don't mind. Congressional primaries are likely to result in a loss of power and experience in the New York delegation. Are you worried about it? Some say it will make it more difficult to get what you want done from Washington.

**Mayor Adams:** I think we have some great Congressional lawmakers. As you know, I endorsed Hakeem Jeffries. He has been an amazing lawmaker. I believe the New York delegation has been

great. Hopefully we could hold on to Congress and successfully move an agenda forward that's good for the American people. We did it during COVID. I cannot tell you enough of how much the congressional delegation helped New York City and other parts of the country. So we want the victories we need. And I'm hoping that we continue to have the right people in Washington to do it.

**Question:** Is it true [inaudible] on immigration? The estimate from City Hall says about 6,000 migrants arrived in the city. Maybe a hundred are arriving from Texas on bus each day. Does the city have solid numbers in what your administration's doing to track the migrants who could be arriving through planes, other buses, other forms of transportation? The second part is how much longer can the city afford to give out benefits to these migrants, like free health insurance and housing, and the status of a press for aid from the White House?

**Mayor Adams:** First, the only way we are able to communicate with the number of migrants that are coming in is through the bus company. The governor of Texas has not given any information at all, no matter how much we try to coordinate crisis calls on coordination. And he has been really just a person who's mean spirited in the area of helping people in the time of need. We are going to do our moral and legal obligation.

**Mayor Adams:** Legally, right to shelter. Whoever comes to this city, if it's day one, we are legally and morally responsible for giving them housing. When we hold events, like we held through Health + Hospitals over the weekend, it wasn't just for migrants. It was for anyone. If someone walked up the block and said "I needed insurance," which we had been pushing, we have been pushing the insurance that we have through Health + Hospitals. This is not new. We give it to them. If someone walked up with a child and said, "I need a knapsack," we're not going to ask you what's your immigration status. We gave it to them. Helping people in need is part of what New York is doing. So if anyone wants to give it a spin that this was about just helping migrants, that is not true. There were backpacks given away all over the City for New York. Residents, migrants and everyone else. It's about helping our neighbors and that's what this administration is doing.

**Question:** So how can the city keep doing that? Are you expecting the White House to answer your request for aid?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, first of all, we have no other choice, as I stated. We have a legal obligation. So it's not up to us to decide if we want to ensure people have shelter. And the partnerships we have developed with nonprofits, it's not only city dollars. Sometimes people think this is only city dollars. We have a host of nonprofits. Luis Miranda from the Hispanic Federation called me yesterday and said, "how do we help?" We have a group of seniors, the grannys that are calling, helping out. So this is not just city dollars. When you see these items being given to people, it is not coming from the city conference, it's coming from the countless number of nonprofits, religious group, volunteers groups. People are chipping in to help their neighbors.

[...]

**Mayor Adams:** We are waiting to get the dollar amount. The White House gave us the pathway to receive the assistance. We're going through the process in doing so, and we are optimistic that we're going to receive some assistance.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, when you go for dinner, for drinks, a night, who pays? Do you pay? The city pays? If it's you or the city, do you get treated? Can you provide the public with the receipts?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. A couple of things. What's going on with the New York Times? The front page of the New York Times, breaking news. Eric likes going to restaurants. Juan, you had to say to yourself... Let me finish my question. Let me finish, let me finish.

**Mayor Adams:** You had to say to yourself with monkeypox, COVID, crime, economy, all of the issues going on in this city. They are writing a story that Eric goes to a restaurant that they stood out in front of. I have to ask myself, is something going on with the New York Times right now? The stories that they're writing about me, I know people write stories, you get a lot of clicks when Eric Adams' name is in it. But the front page of the New York Times talked about me going to restaurants?

**Mayor Adams:** I pay every bill. Not the city. I pay every bill. You say, "Well, why don't you give receipts?" What mayor have you ever asked to get receipts for his private dinners? You can't have a rule for Eric and then a rule for everyone else.

**Mayor Adams:** Some people allow that, I don't. I owe no one a receipt of a private dinner that I have with people in this city. I'm not going to start being treated differently. I won't accept that. That was a silly story. You know it was a silly, silly story. Front page of the New York Times? Come on.

**Question:** It was a private dinner, but are you conducting public affairs? Are you conducting city affairs? Are you working as mayor while you are having dinner? Because then it's not just a private dinner. You're meeting with different people and you're governing the city from a restaurant.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm never on private time. You know that? I'm considered mayor all the time. I don't clock out at being mayor. If I'm sitting down with my son having dinner, he's asking my opinions. If I'm sitting down with Bill de Blasio, Cuomo, friends. I mean, who doesn't have their favorite restaurant? This has to be one of the most silliest things I've ever heard. You're telling me you don't have a favorite restaurant, Juan? You don't have a favorite restaurant that you go to? Everyone in here has a favorite restaurant. I have a favorite restaurant.

**Mayor Adams:** Now let me tell you something else that they didn't report. They didn't report when I finish my meals at the restaurant that I go in the subway system to meet the conductors and motormen and ride over and throughout the night to make sure we are doing the job we deserve. They didn't report how I go to the areas of the city to make sure what happens during the midnight hours. Because if I'm hanging out with the boys, I'm going to get up with the men. I'm up every morning doing my job. I have a favorite restaurant called La Baia. I have a favorite restaurant in the Bronx that's owned by Fernando Mateo. I have a favorite restaurant in Brooklyn called Sugar Hill. Have a favorite restaurant all over the city.



**Mayor Adams:** I mean, this is so silly. They're saying that Eric goes out to restaurant. Breaking news, duh, yes I do. And I don't hide in doing it. The reason they knew I was at La Baia, because they stood outside La Baia. I think they were too afraid to go to the South Bronx and stand outside those restaurants.

[...]

**Question:** Since we're on the topic of the New York Times story, I just wanted to follow up with one thing. In addition to La Baia, the story focused heavily on Zero Bond.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** I'm curious. That's a member's only club, right, and you are not a member.

**Mayor Adams:** Right.

**Question:** How are you able to get in there and who pays for that?

**Mayor Adams:** What happened, Chris, in many of the member only clubs, there are many that are opening. Members only club does not mean non-members can't come in. You go in with a guest. Member only clubs say we can bring a guest into the club. I go in with guests. You know?

**Question:** Who do you go with?

**Mayor Adams:** Oh, come on. Come on, Chris. Listen, next thing you know, if I tell you who I go with, y'all going to do full-page stories on them. Nobody's going to want to hang out with me anymore. Because people are going to follow them, they're going to watch them. They're going to say what are they eating?

**Mayor Adams:** I'm just blown away how people are so attracted with my life. People just enjoy everything that I do. Did you see Eric's socks today? They have polka dots. That's going to be a whole full page story. You know? Y'all write these stories about me that'll just... You have to look at them and laugh. I have an active, lovely life and I enjoy going out at night. I walk in the kitchen and speak to the waiters, the dishwashers, the cooks. I shake their hand, you go talk to them and they said, "We never had a mayor that stops saying and asks how are you doing? How do you feel?" I get on the elevator, I speak to the elevator operator.

**Mayor Adams:** I engage with New Yorkers. The difference between Eric and others that have held these positions is that every New Yorker matters to me. The person that drives the limousine and the person that sits in the back of the limousine. When you get one of the most powerful papers in the country, if not the globe, have a front page story of me going to restaurants, you have to laugh about this stuff. Breaking news, I like restaurants. Let me answer this sister's question because she wanted to ask me about school budget cuts. Because she's been following me around for the whole...

**Question:** It's a two part question.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, ma'am.

**Question:** Why won't you restore the plus to public schools by \$459 million?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. I don't know what you got that number from. Our schools are going to open on time. Our children are going to get the best education they have ever received before. I'm dedicated. I'm committed. I'm a public school mayor. I grew up through the public school. If I do an analysis, I'm probably one of the few that have actually gone through the public school.

**Mayor Adams:** Our children are going to receive the quality education that they deserve. And you know what we need to be clear on that a lot of people miss? \$38 billion budget, year after year after year. 65% of Black and brown children, Madam President, never reached proficiency, never. But they just want to keep doing the same thing over and over again. It's not going to happen under my administration. We're going to get the money to our students, the money to our students, where they need it. This is in the court system. The court will decide. Whatever the court decides, I'm going to respect.

**Mayor Adams:** Go ahead, Katie.

**Question:** The school-

**Mayor Adams:** Go ahead, Katie.

**Question:** Back in June, I asked you about improving the New York City lifeguard program, better supplies and that kind of thing. I know you're going to go back and talk. Because when you look at the city's lifeguard program, they still use hand signals to message to each other. They don't have radios, they don't have ATVs. It's only for enforcement. What's the update on that? I know we're nearing the end of summer, but I'm sure this is a question that we will go into the off season about how to improve things for next season to ensure we have enough lifeguards. And then also to ensure that maybe they'll get into 2023 in terms of equipment and messaging to make sure the beaches particularly are safe.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. We communicated. I thought there was some great ideas. We're looking for the next school season, next swimming season, the beach season, to make sure that we're prepared. Everything from a pipeline of the lifeguards to looking at some updated equipment, to ATVs, to radios. We are really looking at how we can get this better next pool season.

**Question:** Have you spoken with the...

[...]

**Question:** Okay, thank you. Just super quick, Mr. Mayor. Governor Hochul announced earlier today that the state is ending basically all COVID restrictions in schools. Once you come back in Fall, there will be no test to stay, no mandatory quarantining if you interact with a positive student. What do you think of that decision? Do you think that's the right move ahead of fall semester?

**Mayor Adams:** Great question. First of all, I respect the decision of the governor. We are going to have our own approach to COVID. Because you know, New York City is unique because of

the dense population. But we think it's the right step in the right direction. We're going to look at them and make the determination with our Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, what we're going to do school by school to make sure that our children are protected as best as possible. But it's to step in the right direction.

**Mayor Adams:** As I said, I stated from the beginning, Chris. If you go back, that we had to learn to live with COVID. I was not willing to surrender this city to COVID. We made the right decision. And the reason many people don't know about it, because we're winning. COVID has not engulfed our lives anymore and we are moving in the right direction. We're going to continue to do so.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you. Good to see you all.

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