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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS ANNOUNCEMENT ON APPLYING FOR
PRE-K FOR ALL**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, Laura. Laura, how many pre-k classrooms – stand here, please – join us – how many pre-k classrooms do you have in this building?

Principal Laura Scott: 20

Mayor: 20 – 20 pre-k classrooms. This is a pre-k wonderland right here – a pre-k palace – and I commend you. I've known Laura for a long time. This is my neighborhood and I was on a school board before I ran for City Council at PS 10. It was a good school, but a school that had its share of challenges. And then, Laura took over and turned it into a great school, and a school that people are thrilled to be able to have their children go to. And we saw all that success, and we realized when this – when Bishop Ford was able to provide space to us for pre-k, it made all the sense in the world that a principal doing amazing work, and whose school is just block away, could team up with this site and provide additional leadership. So, I want to thank you because I've talked to a lot of parents here in the neighborhood who have their kids here, and they are thrilled with what's happening here. So, really, thank you.

I also want to say, because of just nostalgia's sake, this is where Chiara and Dante took their SATs, here at Bishop Ford, and where Dante used to go to his winter baseball clinics. So, I've spent a lot of time in this building – and many fond memories.

This was the first of 59 pre-k centers that we created to meet the demand when we said universal pre-k – actually universal for everyone. We knew we were going to have to do a lot to put together the space and the places that could accommodate all these wonderful children, and this was the first, and it's been a great, great success. It's part of how we were able to get to 68,500 kids in pre-k.

Now, we're very happy to share the news today, that, next year, pre-k will be available for every child who needs it in New York City – full-day, pre-k for free all over this city – more sites than ever, more options than ever for parents, and the opportunity to get your child into pre-k is happening right now. We've started earlier than ever with the application process to give parents maximum choice, to give parents maximum security of knowing as soon as possible where their child will be going. This place is such a great example of what's possible with pre-k because this is a pre-k center – one of the very biggest in the city. And it's not just that each classroom is great, it's also what we've been able to do in this building to provide special opportunities for kids.

So, the teachers here are exceptional, and, like the teachers in all of our pre-k classrooms, they have background and training in early childhood education – so, they're specialists. But you also have things here that this building makes possible. There's a science lab here, there's a dance studio here – those are not things you normally associate with a pre-k, but, here in this building, they exist. And all those 20 classrooms that kids get to benefit from the science lab and the dance studio.

So, my message today to all my fellow parents is – your children have a great opportunity here – an opportunity to start on a lifelong path of learning and enrichment, which can start right away, but you have to apply, you have to get in the game. You can't play if you don't apply, and your chance to apply is right now, and the deadline – the first round for next schools year – the deadline is next week, March 4th. All parents who want to maximize the choices for their children should apply in this first round and get your application in by March 4th.

Our message is simple – if your child was born in 2012, you have a chance right now to change their lives, to jumpstart their futures by applying for pre-k.

I want to thank everyone who's been part of making this happen. You're going to hear from Deputy Mayor Buery in a moment – and I want to thank all the teachers here. I want to thank everyone we've worked with, including folks from the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, who have been a key part of this work. I have – Randi Herman is here, okay, I didn't see at first – Dr. Randi Herman, first vice president at CSA, thank you for your great collaboration in this effort.

I also want to do a special thank you – there are some unsung heroes who made sure that this site would be particularly ready for all the children who are here. Some of our friends at DOT and members of our Vision Zero team worked very hard to make sure there would be a new stoplight and an extra crosswalk for this school to guarantee the safety of all our children and parents. I want to thank them for going the extra mile and getting that done. Now, I'm going to go visit some of the classrooms in a moment, and what you're going to see – and any of you who have participated in visits before, you see amazing energy, you see children soaking up knowledge like sponges. It's a very, very positive experience to see what's happening in our pre-k classrooms. Our kids are learning new words, they're learning numbers, they're learning shapes, they're learning so intensely because, when you're four years old, your brain is developing in a very special way.

And a lot of parents still haven't heard this, and I really hope we can get this message across – pre-k is a time in life when kids can learn in an extraordinary way. I always use the example – think about a child who happens to live in a foreign country – the way they can soak up the language and learn a language so much more quickly than adults can. It's because of that moment in the development of their brain that's happening when they're four years old – they can learn much more quickly. That's why it's so important to be in full-day pre-k – to maximize that moment. And it is a start that then propels children forward to learn more and more. I've said a lot of times – and this is not just about the value we place on education abstractly, this is about a child's future in every sense. Education determines economic destiny more today than at any other point in history – that's why every child needs to start young. No child should miss this opportunity. These days, education is the whole ballgame, and kids who have been to pre-k start on first base, they start with a leg up, they have the ability to go farther than children who haven't had that opportunity.

Also, parents, you get to save money. If you wanted something like this and you had to purchase it at a center or a school somewhere in your neighborhood, you'd be spending \$10,000, \$15,000 – that's what parents used to have to do all the time. Now, it is free and guaranteed all over the city, and that makes an impact on the household budgets of so many families. And it means that mom or dad can go to work because they have the security of knowing the child is in a quality, full-day pre-k program.

So, this is part of how we not only help each child and each family, it's part of how we make some bigger changes. Every time a child goes to pre-k who might not have, it actually makes our entire school system better, because that child is going to be more able to participate and thrive in our schools, and that's going to affect all the children around them too. Every child that goes to pre-k will have a better economic future – that's part of how we fight inequality and change the future trajectory in this city to have more and more people able to participate in the economy of the future. There's so many good benefits here, and we don't want anyone to miss

out on it. We don't want any child who could be in pre-k to miss the opportunity. So, that's why we made it simpler than ever. It's really easy now to apply for pre-k.

And, Richard, the whole team that you've assembled has done an outstanding job. Some of these wonderful people behind us who do great work talking to parents – and, by the way, as they have done in the past, you will find them out in our neighborhoods, you'll find them in the barbershops and the beauty salons, and the streets fairs, you'll find them at PTA meetings, you'll find them everywhere talking to parents. I've heard such extraordinary stories of what happens when parents talk to our enrollment specialists who go the extra mile to find the perfect fit, who really work with parents to figure out – maybe the best pre-k for you is near your work, maybe it's near your home, maybe it's in another neighborhood that you go through every day, or near another family member. So, these enrollment specialists really work to make sure that there's a right choice for every family. So, any parent ready to sign up, you can sign up right now. You can go online – nyc.gov/prek. You can call 3-1-1, as I did the other day when we started our LinkNYC initiative, and I called 3-1-1, and had a very helpful operator tell me about options in my neighborhood. And you can go in person to one of 12 welcome centers across all five boroughs. So, it's easy to do, but you've got to get in the game – the deadline – again, next week, March 4th.

What day is March 4th?

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: Friday, March 4th. Thank you. Friday, March 4th is the deadline.

Quickly en Español –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, a man who has put his heart, and soul, and blood, sweat, and tears into making this extraordinary initiative work. And, Richard, you've deserved a lot of praise, and you got it in a really powerful column – opened in the New York Times a couple of weeks ago that pointed out what this initiative has meant in the national discussion on pre-k. And you and your team deserve tremendous credit for what you've achieved – Deputy Mayor Richard Buery.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. Alright we're going to take questions about this topic and then we'll go to other topics as well.

Yep?

Question: So I know Success Academy talks [inaudible] of not funding their pre-K over the contracts? So I was wondering if, first, you could comment on that case specifically, but more generally respond to the criticism largely leveled by charters [inaudible] that the contract is overly strict, overly bureaucratic, doesn't allow schools to innovate.

Mayor: Well I'll start – we're very proud of the fact – and Richard, feel free to jump in on this – we're very proud of the fact that when we started pre-k, we said we're going to work with religious schools, we're going to work with charter schools, we're going to work with everyone. And that's part of why we reached the level we reached. That's why we have 68,500 kids in pre-k. That's why, as Richard said, we've been able to achieve great quality across this whole initiative. It's why we have such a high level of parent satisfaction. And every other charter school organization we've worked with has signed a contract, all the religious schools have signed

a contract, because they all understand it is a commitment to uphold the standards that we've put forth on behalf of the people. We have an obligation as the government to set those standards. And every other organization has willingly signed that contract. And look, I think we should recognize, we work with a lot of charter schools every day on a host of things far beyond pre-k. And we have very good and productive relationships with individual charter schools and charter networks. But if this particular charter network does not want to sign a contract, we have to draw a line there and say we cannot accommodate any entity that won't sign a legally binding contract. There's plenty of other organizations that would love to have those classrooms and serve those kids. Want to add?

Deputy Mayor Richard Buery: Sure, if you don't mind. So, just a very practical note – if you know, the way that the pre-k program operates is that programs apply – respond to an RFP – they apply to the Department of Education to operate programs. We had hundreds of programs apply. We have 277 such programs – charters, private schools, non-profits, religious schools – who signed contracts. So, everyone else has signed the contract. And these are a wide, variety of programs that the mayor described – from Yeshivas, to Montessori's, to everything you can imagine. And so, with the practical matter – none of those programs that I think found any sort of practical obstacle to running their kind of program as a result of our contract. On a very basic element, because this is a DOE program, there is simply no mechanism for DOE, for the City, to pay providers, unless they sign the contract. Once they sign a contract – and this contract, again, has worked for every other institution. So, I – we love the diversity of the program. We hope that Success will reconsider because we'd love to have those kids in the program. And again, there's no practical reason why they shouldn't because there's nothing about that pre-k program that this contract stands in the way of operating.

Mayor: Other questions on pre-k. Anything else?

Yes, Rich?

Question: What's the projected number that you think you might get this year?

Mayor: Well, look, we're thrilled with the 68,500, and we've had a very strong response already. So, you know, we started the application process a lot earlier this year because we've had such a demand and we want the process to go smoothly for parents. So, right now, this morning at 9:00 am, we were at 48,748 already applied, and it's February. So, that's a very good sign. So, I would be very happy if we got anywhere around the number we had this year. What I do want to do even more of is work with partners like the Congresswoman to make sure that if there's a parent who hasn't heard directly – the case for why pre-k will benefit the child – I want to make sure we go even deeper into communities to explain to all the benefits of pre-k. And that's part of what the virtue is in starting earlier – it gives us more time to do that.

Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well, the number we reached this year was a little less than what we thought would be the ideal, but not much less. So, we're seeking that natural maximum number. It will take us several years because every year is different. And you want to keep seeing how the word of mouth and the greater amount of information out there affects things. But from the beginning, we assume somewhere give or take 70,000 was the natural number. So, I don't think there's any obstacle in terms of how the process goes. The process will be the smoothest by far of the three years because we've learned a lot. The outreach workers are doing better work than ever – they've figured out how to do that work better. The enrollment specialists – we're starting earlier. So I feel great about the process.

Where I think there's an issue always is there's a group of parents understandably – just individual parents – who aren't sure what the benefits are. Some parents wonder – is it the time for their child to be in a full-day

setting if they're four? Are they ready for that? And that's where principals, and teachers, and experts, and fellow parents talk to them and explain what it means – what impact it has on a child. A lot of times we've found parents who are a little reluctant until they come into a pre-k center – when they see what's happening, when they see the energy, when they see how engaged children are – that's the best proof. And I mentioned this very powerful op-ed in the Weekend Review by a professor at Berkeley, right? A Berkeley professor who looked at the New York City program in a national context, and one of the things he said was the research is showing parents believe their children are better behaved if they've been in pre-k. It affects their whole approach. It affects their socialization – their ability to work with others. So, I think that word is going to spread, and that's going to be very, very attractive to parents. But we have some parents we have to reach with that message.

On this topic? Going once? Okay, all I ask of all of you is please put the deadline in your reporting and tell parents how they can apply. That would be a great and appreciated public service. With that, let's go to other topics.

Question: Good government groups – hi, Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Hey.

Question: The good government group, Common Cause, has sent a letter to the Campaign Finance Board, and also the Conflict of Interest Board, asking for a probe into non-profit groups linked to you – the Campaign for One New York and United for Affordable NYC. [Inaudible] shadow government with unlimited fundraising and lax disclosure.

Mayor: Well, look, I'm a big fan of Common Cause. I've worked with them over years and think they do great work. I think that allegation doesn't make sense to me because there's a long history of coalitions forming to achieve policy goals – whether it was the fight for marriage equality, or the fight for increasing minimum wage – not just recently, but in the past as well. And the idea that organizations would come together to fight for things like full-day pre-k for all, or affordable housing that can reach hundreds of thousands of people – I think is understandable and makes sense. What we've said from the beginning is anything that's supporting this administration's goals or anything I'm involved in must be fully disclosed. I've felt like that is the crucial question in anything – is it disclosed or not? We know there's a lot that happens in the public process where there's no disclosure of who the donors are. I don't go near anything unless there's full disclosure. And obviously it has to be legal and appropriate in every way. What has been done here is that any involvement I've had has been pre-cleared with the Conflict of Interest Board, which is the proper way to go about things. And then, I follow Conflict of Interest Board guidelines in anything I do. So, I'm sure all of that will be looked at, but I think this is being done properly.

Yes, Chris?

Question: On that same subject, one of the other issues they've raised was concerns about whether it's appropriate for you to get advice from outside political advisers who also represent clients [inaudible] with the city [inaudible] address that?

Mayor: Sure, the notion that I've always felt – we have to put this one in some historical context. I don't know any leaders who didn't have outside friends and advisors who were important to their thought process and the way that they formulated their vision – and I'm no different. But again, the question is, if anyone has any other kind of role they have to fully disclose it, and they have to handle it, and they have to handle it appropriately. So, if someone is an advisor of mine, I certainly don't allow them to lobby me. If they have a lobbying practice separately, that's their choice, obviously, but anything they do has to be fully disclosed. And we put some obvious limits on the relationship. But of course there's people whose advice I had been turning to for years, in some cases decades, and I'm going to keep doing that.

Question: When you put limits on a relationship, what do you mean by that?

Mayor: I wouldn't – if someone's acting as an ongoing advisor to me – of course it's not appropriate to lobby me. And that's one of those things that we keep some separation on.

Yes?

Question: Following up, does it trouble you at all as someone who has criticized the Citizens United, and the unlimited – the idea of unlimited [inaudible]? Does it trouble you at all to see groups that do have business behind the city giving large amounts, unlimited amounts to [inaudible]?

Mayor: I think these are night-and-day realities. What we saw after Citizens United was very powerful interests using their wealth to try and subvert the democratic process, and not disclosing what they were doing. And I said repeatedly in – you know, I think a lot of – you know, I got involved in that issue, literally the day it was announced and was involved deeply in the years after, and continue to fight for what I think we need, which is a constitutional amendment to reverse Citizens United. But one of the fundamental issues was were the donations disclosed or not? And obviously again, let's be very blunt about what the aspirations were. The aspirations were to undermine, in many cases, the democratic process, and work against the needs and interests of the people. The issues at hand here are campaigns fighting for more affordable housing, campaigns that fight for pre-k for all. I mean, this is an entirely different construct.

Marcia?

Question: Mr. Mayor, this year there has been a 20 percent increase since January in stabbings and slashings. Yesterday, [inaudible] from her chin to her neck – even a plainclothes cop was slashed. My question to you is very simple – what are you going to do to stop the slashings, and stop the stabbings, and make New Yorkers feel safe?

Mayor: Sure, we are adding 2,000 cops in the course of this year. There will be 2,000 more cops on the beat in this city – nothing is going to contribute to greater safety than that more, right? That's the number one thing – we're adding the ability to control our streets even better. But let's put this in context – NYPD continues to drive down crime. Again, you've seen tremendous progress in January and February in reducing shootings, reducing murders. We do see slashing that, of course, worry all of us, but there's not a pattern here as Commissioner Bratton has made clear. It doesn't make it any less acceptable. We don't stand for any crime, and we're going to have very clear strategies whenever we see anything that has to be addressed to put more NYPD personnel on it. But the big picture is – more police on the way, and NYPD continues to drive down crime.

Question: [inaudible] cops are coming sometime later this year –

Mayor: No, they're coming in waves, but go ahead.

Question: The stabbings are happening now, and people are afraid –

Mayor: I understand.

Question: [inaudible] because they're so ugly – it's a slash in your face, it's a slash in your stomach, they're taking it [inaudible], they're feeling upset. What can you say to them?

Mayor: More police are coming, which is the best way to address this problem, and they're coming regularly, Marcia – it's not just at the end of the year. And the police we have are targeting any area where we have a problem – that's the bottom line. This is what CompStat is all about. When we see an area of concern, we put

more focus on it, more police on it. So, I understand 100 percent why it worries people, but we also have to look at the fact that the NYPD continues to drive down crime, which means, when they focus on a problem, they succeed – it's as simple as that. So, they're going to keep putting resources wherever the need is. We had some issues in the subway – we put additional resources in the subway. We're going to keep doing that.

Question: Mayor, back to the Citizen's United thing for just a second –

Mayor: Please.

Question: Do you fundamentally see a difference between, let's say, the Koch brothers, or any business donating [inaudible] American Federation for Teachers, who also want to persuade raises for teachers. You may feel that teachers need to get raises, but just because you fundamentally disagree with what maybe the Koch brothers, or another company, is doing under Citizen's United, what do you see as the difference between that?

Mayor: I think there's a couple of different issues here – one is disclosure. Again, a lot of the worst things that have happened since Citizen's United are undisclosed, vast resources being applied. So, I want everyone to disclose – I don't care where they are on the philosophical spectrum, or what cause they're fighting for. Second, a lot of what's going on is very self-interested. The Koch brothers are not doing what they're doing to help kids get pre-k, they're doing a lot of what they're doing to help their business – it's a very, very different reality. Now, I'm someone who believes in organized labor, and what I see a lot of times, for example, teachers fighting for more resources for education, fighting for laws that will help us serve children more – I don't see the Koch brothers doing that. So, I think there are differences, but the thing that unites all of this is – everything must be disclosed, and lot of it isn't right now.

Josh?

Question: Doesn't it seem like [inaudible]. Why is that?

Mayor: I don't know why it is, but I know that any interaction I have with them that involves lobbying is going to be disclosed, which was not in the past. I remind you, the fact that we voluntarily disclose any lobbying conversation online – something that was not the practice of my predecessors – we're very comfortable with people knowing if I've talked to anyone in which they are pursuing their lobbying – the public deserves to know that.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: It doesn't matter whether it's a call, or a meeting, or I meet someone while, you know, walking down the street. If they're a city-registered lobbyist, and they lobby me, we put that online.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: It's not dark money if it's disclosed. I appreciate your attempt at rhetoric – go ahead.

Question: [inaudible] you know, you said, well, I believe [inaudible]. So, that makes it okay?

Mayor: Again, disclosure is necessary in all things, and achieving things like pre-k for all our kids, or affordable housing – that's very, very important to the people of this city.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Again, I appreciate your approach. Disclosure, following the law, following the guidance of the Conflict of Interest Board, and, in the case of these organizations, in my opinion, doing things that matter for New York City, like more pre-k and more affordable housing.

Question: I wanted to ask you a question about [inaudible] raised in today's Post. Do you support undocumented immigrants voting, or people with green cards voting?

Mayor: There's a piece of legislation that is apparently being put together. I have not seen it yet, so I – I've said before, it's a very complicated issue, but I'd have to see a piece of legislation before I comment on it.

Question: On the radio yesterday [inaudible]. Is it strategic?

Mayor: First of all, I commend you for the phrase Albany-proof. I've said this for years, we're the biggest city in the country – we have 8.5 million people. We will be the 12th largest state in the nation if we were an independent state. We have the third largest governmental budget of any locality in America after the state of California, and the state of New York. It makes no sense that there are so many areas where we need Albany approval. This city deserves more self-determination. We've said that about rent regulation with the Urstadt Law, and there's a host of other areas where I believe that. I understand that that's going to take real effort to achieve some of those changes, but I believe that is the shape of things to come just because of the reality. And, it's true, by the way, of cities in the rest of the country too – cities are becoming more and more the focal point of where, you know, people are moving, where the economy is centered, and we need the ability to get things done. So, I strongly believe that is the reality. I strongly believe it must be changed. But whenever we can come up with a particular plan that we can run directly, of course we want to do that, because we want it to actually work, we want it to get done, we do not want to get it lost in bureaucracy, and certainly not have decisions about our people made, you know, 150 miles away that don't need to be.

Yes, Rich?

Question: Mr. Mayor, are you surprised or confounded at Mr. Trump's continuing success [inaudible] Republican nomination?

Mayor: I cannot tell you I would have predicted it, certainly. So, on that level, I guess I have to say I'm surprised. Where I'm not as much surprised is, as you've watched it develop, you know, there's a strange logic to it. People are very frustrated in this country for very good reason. And, you know, obviously everyone knows I've been talking about inequality for years now. That reality – you've seen it more and more in the public polling, you certainly see it in the election results – people feel cheated. They feel cheated. They feel lied to. They feel the government hasn't been on their side. And when someone speaks bluntly about that, even with all the wrong ideas, all the wrong policies, it's still going to be appealing to a lot of people. I think Mr. Trump will later on find that his innumerable statements against women, Latinos, Muslims, and many other categories of human being will catch up with him. I think over time people will take a much more critical view. But, at this moment, I understand why he's been able to fuel such support. I think there's a very good chance he could be the Republican nominee. I think no one should underestimate him at this point. We have to assume he could be the Republican nominee. We have to assume he has a legitimate shot at the presidency, and take that deadly seriously.

Question: Can he win?

Mayor: Of course he could win. I don't think he will. I think the Democratic nominee will be Hillary Clinton. I think Hillary Clinton will beat him for a number of reasons. I think she's talking much more about what to do about income inequality. I think she has the clearest platform and vision for change. I think people are going to respect her experience and ability, and her sanity, and her ability to be inclusive. This is a country that's becoming ever more diverse, and Hillary speaks with a powerful voice of inclusion, and Trump speaks with a

negative and exclusionary voice. So, I think that's why, in the end, she will prevail. But could he win? Yes, we should take it very seriously – the fact that he could. And I would say to anyone, we should prepare to defeat him.

Thank you, everyone.

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