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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, CHANCELLOR FARIÑA AND BOROUGH
PRESIDENT ADAMS ANNOUNCE 15 BROOKLYN SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE IN
MEATLESS MONDAYS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Hey, hey Andy, Andy you got to turn around a minute, everybody it is Andy's birthday. Let's give him a big round of applause.

[Applause]

There you go. You did a great job Andy. Thank you.

Well, how impressive is that? An eight-year-old who is standing up and saying what he thinks is right for his school and for the health and well-being of everybody. That's really fantastic and very moving. And we are here at Brooklyn PS 1 that has the distinction of being Brooklyn's first all vegetarian school. Isn't that amazing?

[Applause]

And I am very proud of all the students and I'm proud of everyone here for their decision. They made a decision based on their own experience and their own values that they wanted to live healthier and they want to do something that they thought would be good for the Earth as well. And they decided to step up and do something different. I think it's incredible. So I really give a lot of credit to everyone here at the school and this is part of a bigger movement that is happening in this borough and in this city. And we wanted to be here as part of Brooklyn week of City Hall in Your Borough week, particularly due to the leadership of Borough President Eric Adams.

[Applause]

Now if you have spent any time around Eric in the last few years, you would see he is a very sincere human being, he's done a lot to help people over many decades. He's also a dog with a

bone if you'll forgive that analogy when it comes to speaking up for the idea of a plant-based diet. So, we've had this conversation a lot of times. He loves to tell people about what he's experienced. The decision he made, the impact it made on his life but also, he spreads the message that there are some things we can do differently in our whole society that would be good for everybody.

And boy you know before, if you met Eric before – good looking guy before, and after I'd like to note, he was a little beefier, a little bigger, but now it's incredible. This man is in the perfection of health here. So Eric you have proven through your own example that your philosophy has a lot to recommend it. Let's thank the Borough President for all he has done.

[Applause]

I want to thank the principal of this great school, Arlene Ramos, thank you so much. Where's the principal? There she is.

[Applause]

And Arlene, thank you. You talked to me about the process you went through here in the school where students raised the concern and that led to real conversations amongst the students and then with parents that got to the decision to become an all vegetarian school. So I really admire that you gave people a chance to talk about their views and figure what worked for them. So Arlene, well done.

I want to thank Anita Skop, the superintendent for this district as well. And from my team, I want to thank our Director of Food Policy for the Mayor's Office, Barbara Turk, thank you so much for all you do. And at the DOE, the CEO of the Office of School Support Services, Eric Goldstein, thank you so much.

[Applause]

Representing folks who do such good work for our kids, I want to thank Shaun Francois, the president of Local 372 AFSCME.

[Applause]

I want to thank an organization that has worked hard for these kinds of changes, the Coalition for Healthy School Food. Thank you.

[Applause]

They are vocal. And all the parents at PS 1, for this beautiful school community that you have created.

[Applause]

Now I want to be clear up front, I myself am not yet a vegetarian, but I am surrounded by vegetarians. My children, Chiara and Dante are strict vegetarians, they made that decision both, I think it was in middle school for both of them. And they have stuck with it since and throughout college, and beyond in Chiara's case. And they are very vocal about both what a good experience it's been for them and also what it means for our larger society and for our Earth. So I have some very good influences in my life.

And I think what we're talking about today, I want to make really clear, if you are vegan or vegetarian, it's obvious why this discussion today is important to you. But even if you are not, even if you had a bacon, egg, and cheese this morning, you still should want to see more and more of our diets go to a plant-based approach. It's good for everyone. And this is about recognizing, again our own health and the health of the planet. It is about making different choices and starting to move in a different direction. Everyone will do it their way, everyone will exercise their own choice, but one thing we can say overall is, it's a good direction for our society and certainly for our city to move in.

Now look, it comes back to some of things we've seen, only in the last few decades in particular, become crisis. You know, the idea of the climate crisis a few decades ago was not widely understood, it wasn't widely believed. And now, for so many of us, I'd say the vast majority of New Yorkers and Americans, we understand there is a climate crisis, and the decisions we make have an impact on that crisis.

The obesity crisis, a few decades ago, we would have never talked about it but with advent with more and more fast food and unhealthy food in peoples' lives, we ended up having an obesity crisis. Both of these crises can be meaningfully addressed by adopting more of a plant-based diet. Again, everyone will figure out the degree, but if everyone takes steps in that direction, it'll help to combat obesity and it will help to address climate change.

And with our young people, we have a chance early on to show them what healthy eating looks like and all the options and choices they have. And obviously in this school, kids took matters into their own hands, but we want to make sure that option is available, we want to show them all the good choices. And also we want to recognize that by purchasing less meat, we have an impact on the carbon footprint. It's something people more and more are realizing, that the production of meat has a very big impact on our climate and here is a chance to do something about it.

So we are now announcing today that in 15 public schools in Brooklyn, in our beloved Brooklyn, in 15 public schools we will be instituting "Meatless Mondays".

[Applause]

And these schools, like PS 1, will be offering all vegetarian lunch and breakfast menus on Mondays. So it will be whole day through and that will start this spring. Now, this is a big deal, and it's going to show people all over the city that this is an idea that can work. But I'd like to add some personal commitment to this, I really want to commend these young people and

commend this school, so I'm here to announce that at Gracie Mansion we are now going to be instituting "Meatless Mondays" as well.

[Applause]

And that will be for our family meals, as well as for the events we have at Gracie Mansion and when we have guests over to dinner. We are starting a new habit and it's something I'm really looking forward to.

Now I want to tell you, when you see young people, I mean third graders, this is a beautiful thing, when third graders are so conscious, and they say we want to make a change in our own lives. That really gives you a hope for the future. It really gives you hope to see that kind of concern, that kind of involvement, and I want to say to all the parents here, thank you for listening to them. Thank you to the teachers, thank you to parents, to the principal, because you're giving these young people a real sense that they can have an impact on their future. And by the way, we should thinking about these young people and the generation beyond and for them to know they can make an impact on their own lives, that's going to really encourage them to be involved in their society in a positive way. So let's thank all the adults who were a part of this for doing such a good thing.

[Applause]

Before I turn to two colleagues, I would like to just say a few words in Spanish.

[The Mayor speaks in Spanish]

With that, I want to bring forward our Chancellor. She is, as I've seen over the years, a big believer in school communities thinking together what works for them and making choices that will help to improve their school. So I know this warms her heart today as well. Our Chancellor, Carmen Fariña.

Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña: Well I have to say this couldn't have happened on a better day. Last week, we had at the DOE, Alice Waters come to speak to our staff. This is the person who started the farm to table movement, and she was passionate, she was inspiring, and she gave us a lot of new ideas. Right, Barbara? And I have a list, and now I think I also asked the Borough President to join us in this, because there is a saying, and the child shall lead the way. And what I heard at my table today was, the children who I was sitting with brought their own lunch to school, but it was a meatless lunch. They also all convinced their parents to cook on Mondays dinner that is meatless. And one of the children told me, and I taught him what to do.

So the reality is then when we think about how we do this, these are – this is the generation that is very much aware of what they need to do. And the fact that a lot of the food products that now come to the school, come from farms nearby, because you know Brooklyn is growing an awful lot of their own farms. This is to me really inspirational. And to have 15 schools in Brooklyn, which is one of my favorite boroughs, I think is really, really important. But I think also, this is only the beginning of the work we are doing. When you look at programs such as Edible

Schoolyards, and I think we are going to think more about that, and we have a lot of culinary programs in New York City in the high schools, how do we make sure that what they are learning in their culinary programs is really more based on nutrition rather than very fancy food as much as we may like it.

So this is a movement, it's a movement that's long overdue. I think Brooklyn is always a place where we can new and radical things, and I am very proud of this school for taking initiative. And the fact that it came from children, and also because the Borough President is the poster child for this movement, I think is really, really good. So it's my pleasure.

So in Spanish, a little bit?

Mayor: Oh sure.

[The Chancellor speaks in Spanish]

One the kids also said to me that they don't eat meat on Mondays because it is less grease in their stomach, words from the kids. So to me, it's not just about having a day, it's about understanding why you have that day, and how it benefits you over time.

Mayor: Thank you so much.

[Applause]

Mayor: So before I bring up the Borough President, I want you to know I've been doing some public opinion research in the cafeteria here, and at the table with the kids I was at, I asked what their favorite vegetables were, this is going to be the most shocking revelation of the week. I have still not fully recovered from this experience. So first of all, of the three that were noted most often, the third most popular, I think – I think is lovely vegetable I enjoy, not sure if it's the leader in nutrition, but is still a great vegetable, lettuce was number three. Okay, lettuce has a place, I wouldn't make it the center of things, but it has a place. Number two, made a lot of sense to me, because it's kind of been a favorite among kids for generations, was carrots. Always a winner, cooked or raw, always a winner. But number one will blow your mind, if you are not sitting down, you might want to sit down at this point, literally, number one with enthusiasm was broccoli.

[Applause]

Okay, anyone, anyone who thinks the world can't change come here to PS 1 and see these kids, like oh broccoli, like with glowing faces, I said what's your favorite vegetable? Broccoli! I'm like wow, the world has changed.

So, finally want to bring up the Borough President. And I really want to just make this point about the impact of a leader showing the way through his own personal example. It's not easy and again, Eric can attest to whatever food choices he made in past years, but what I've heard with such passion was a realization for his life of recognizing that some of what we all came up

with and we we're all taught wasn't working for him and it doesn't work for a lot of other people. And he broke through that and said I'm going to do something very, very different, and I'm going to show other people that it might be right for them. And he did not go half way, I mean, it's just outstanding the way he looks but also as Eric has said the kind of energy he has now which is really extraordinary. So Eric, I really want to commend you, we got 2.6 million people look to you as their Borough President. You've shown that things can change, making a real impression on the people of this borough and this city. And I want to thank you for your leadership – our Borough President Eric Adams.

[...]

Mayor: Well everyone I want to conclude with this point, and we really need to reflect on it, when we get a little down sometimes, sometimes we turn on the news and we feel a little depressed about what we see in the world, let's remember the good news. We have to spread the good news. We have to spread the fact that there are good people everywhere making their lives better, other people's lives better, but we especially have to spread the news that the children started this here at PS 1. So we'll conclude by giving a big round of applause to all of these kids.

Thank you, everyone.

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