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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO AND SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS MAKE AN
ANNOUNCENMENT ON THE MILLIONAIRES TAX**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I'm going to introduce him in just a couple of minutes but just since we should start at the beginning welcoming a proud son of Brooklyn home – Senator Bernie Sanders.

[Applause]

I want to thank everyone here gathered together to talk about the way we fix our subways, to talk about the way we provide fairness to those who need to get around. And we right some of the wrongs that plague our society at the same time. I want to thank everyone who's gathered here in support of the millionaire's tax to fix the MTA. And I want to particularly single out our Transportation Commissioner who has a done a fantastic job and serves on the MTA Board and speaks up for riders every time, Polly Trottenberg, thank you.

[Applause]

I want thank – he really deserves a special credit for taking this idea and putting it on the front burner in Albany. He is the Deputy Democratic Leader he is the prime sponsor of the legislation for the millionaire's tax, thank you Senator Mike Gianaris.

[Applause]

There are members of the Senate, members of the Assembly gathered with us who will tell you this is legislation that has the support of the people and that they will fight for in Albany and we intend to win in Albany. Let's thank the members of the Senate and Assembly.

[Applause]

And I want to thank members of the City Council. A majority of the City Council sent a letter last week in support of the plan showing that the City Council believes in the millionaire's tax. Thanks to the City Council of New York.

[Applause]

And to all the activists, all the labor union leaders who are here, thank you for your support for this important idea.

[Applause]

I want to be clear. Standing in the presence of Bernie Sanders means a lot to me, because he has redefined the American debate. He has said things that needed to be said that finally have broken through because of his integrity and the clarity of his vision and his life's work and the power of his message. He said something simple; the economy is rigged against working people. And it's time to take action to change that and we have to do that in every city, in every state and across our nation in the halls of Congress. We have to understand that a millionaire's tax to fix the MTA is another way of responding to the inequality that plagues our society. No one understands it better than Senator Bernie Sanders. Now, we happen to be here in a subway station that's just a few blocks from Wall Street. You go outside and walk a few blocks away you will see the offices of the millionaire's and billionaire's who dominate this nation. And they have benefited from a tax code written for them. It's matter of fact. I don't begrudge anyone hard work, I don't begrudge anyone's success. But I like to be honest. They got a lot of what they got, because of laws that benefited them specifically and tax laws written for them. Why don't we write our tax laws for the average New Yorker?

[Applause]

People ride the subway every day, working men and women. They depend on the subway for every part of their lives to get to work. To get their kids to school, to get to a job interview, to further their own education when the subway doesn't work, their lives don't work.

The MTA as everyone knows is run by the State of New York. The MTA has been plagued with challenges for a long time. But to be fair to the MTA, the MTA never had the resources it deserved. We need a long term funding stream. We need a verifiable consistent funding stream. And my friends, I know where the money is. I know it, we all know it. Those who have benefited so much in this society have the resources. It's time for them to pay a little more, and to them I assure you it's just a little more. So the rest of us can get around.

[Applause]

So consistent with Bernie Sanders vision, we've presented with our good colleagues in Albany a simple plan. It's called the Fair Fix. It's fair because it asks those who'd done very well to contribute. It's a fix, because it would provide at minimum half a billion dollars a year to fix the MTA's physical problems. That money would be there every single year. And it would give the MTA the certainty it needs to make the big changes. But this plan also includes over \$200 million for the Fair Fare. And this is the ultimate act of justice. Taking from those who have done very, very well and making sure that money reaches the lowest income New Yorkers who deserve a half price metro card so they can opportunity too.

[Applause]

Look, this is an idea that time has come. Anyone paying attention in the last few years in this country, in this state, in this city knows the people are demanding fairness. The people understand the game is rigged, they want solutions. By the way it's not an accident that there has never been a millionaire's tax for the MTA. Think about that. This subway system has been struggling for decades, but there was never the audacity among our political leaders to say, let's turn to those who benefit the most in our society. That didn't happen, that didn't happen for decades. But now, and you have to give foundational credit to Bernie Sanders. The discussion has changed. Things are now different.

[Applause]

And you'll hear a lot of criticism of this idea; you'll hear a lot of people say it can't be done. Well, let me tell you something. Bernie Sanders proven throughout his entire life in public service. When working people unite, when working people believe in change, they can overcome all the cynics, they can overcome the status quo, they can move mountains. And we can get this millionaire's tax for the people of New York City.

[Applause]

Before I turn to the Senator a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that it could not be a greater pleasure and it could not give me more inspiration to know that we can make the changes we need than to introduce the man who has this whole country thinking a different way. A man who has shown us the path forward. And we are going to get there together. Ladies and gentleman Senator Bernie Sanders.

[Applause]

Senator Bernie Sanders: Brothers and sisters, it is an honor to be here today with one of the great progressive leaders in the United States of America, a man who must be re-elected, Mayor Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

Today, today the Mayor and I are addressing two enormously important issues. Issues not just for New York City or New York state, but issues for every state in the country. It is important that I think everybody knows we have a crumbling infrastructure. This is the United States of America – our roads, our bridges, our water systems, our waste water plants, our rail system, and our subways all over this country should not be in massive disrepair. And when we rebuild our crumbling infrastructure – and in a Washington bill we are fighting for a trillion dollar investment over a 10 year period that will make this country more efficient; will make transportation safer; and by the way we'll create up to 15 million decent paying jobs.

[Applause]

And when we talk about mass transportation – when we talk about rail, or when we talk about subways – this coincides with our effort to combat climate change because when we invest in rail and subways –

[Applause]

When we invest in mass transportation we are keeping cars off of the roads. This is the wealthiest country in the history of the world, and it is not a radical idea to say that when you ride on the subway, you should ride in comfort. You should ride in a subway car where you can sit, when you know the train is coming. That is not a radical idea. It exists around the world. We can do it in New York. We can do it all over this country.

[Applause]

Now as the Mayor will tell you, rebuilding and improving subways and buses here in New York City is an expensive proposition, and it's expensive all over the country. So the issue comes out is – who pays to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure? So the Mayor just told you, we all know what's going on, we know for the last 40 years in New York City, Vermont, all over this country, the middle class has been shrinking. People are working two or three jobs while the people on top are doing phenomenally well. And what the Mayor is saying, and what we should be doing in Washington, is we say to the wealthiest people in this country, you know what, you need to start paying your fair share of taxes.

[Applause]

The American people are sick and tired of seeing the people on top doing phenomenally well, of seeing the gap between the very, very rich and everybody else growing wider, people demand justice and asking the top one percent in this city to pay a little more in taxes so we can create jobs; we can create comfort here; we can recreate reliability. When somebody has to get to work, they have a right to know that their mass transportation is going to work and get them there on time. And a little bit of a tax for the people on the top can do that and create thousands of jobs at the same time.

[Applause]

Now I should tell you, I should tell you, what the Mayor here is trying to do, needless to say, is exactly the opposite of what Trump and the Republican leadership in congress are trying to do. Instead of improving life for the middle class by asking the wealthy and large corporations to begin to paying their fair share of taxes, Trump and the Republican leadership in Washington want to give a \$1.9 trillion tax break to the top one percent, and then cut Medicaid by a trillion dollars and Medicare by over \$400 billion over a 10 year period. So I just want to applaud the Mayor for standing up for the working people of this country, for understanding how important rebuilding our infrastructure is, and for doing it in a fair and progressive way. Mr. Mayor, thank you.

[Applause]

Mayor de Blasio: In a moment we are going to take questions, first about the millionaires tax, and then we will take questions on other topics. We have been joined by two great progressive leaders who I want to acknowledge and thank, they have been at the forefront of the efforts to create more equality in this city and this state.

First of all, one of the most progressive and activist unions, the executive director Jill Furillo of the New York State Nurses Association, NYSNA, thank you.

[Applause]

And I would say an organization that has kept this message of equality alive in this state for years and years, and fought for higher minimum wage, fought for justice for working people with extraordinary impact, let's thank the New York State Director for the Working Families Party, Bill Lipton.

[Applause]

Mayor: Alright, we're going to take questions first on millionaires tax, then everything else.

David?

Question: For the senator, this has been – the issue of a tax for the subways has been a divisive one in New York State with the Mayor favoring it and the Governor being resistant to it. Are you taking sides with the Mayor on this?

Senator Sanders: I'm not taking sides, to be honest with you. I've got enough to keep me busy in Washington without getting involved in New York State politics.

[Laughter]

But it just seems to me that at a time of mass income and wealth inequality, when you've got a real problem here in terms of the subway while the very wealthiest people are getting richer, what the mayor is saying – let's reduce fares for working people, let's rebuild the subway system, improve the buses, and ask the people on top to pay a little more in taxes – I think that that is fair. I think it is the right thing to do.

Question: Do you think the governor is wrong to charge drivers to –

Senator Sanders: Now, I know you don't want to get me into a feud with the governor. I know that.

[Laughter]

So we'll leave it be.

Mayor: I want to also welcome – I mentioned before in addition to Senator Gianaris, we are joined by Assemblymember Felix Ortiz, we're joined by Councilmember Jumaane Williams, Assemblymember Bobby Carroll, Councilmember Ben Kallos, thank you.

[Applause]

And, I'm sorry, senator – you're standing right behind me.

Senator Martin Malavé Dilan.

[Applause]

Okay, Rich?

Question: So Mr. Mayor the argument against this at least made in the prior administration was it will chase the wealthy out of New York. Do you think –

Senator Sanders: Right to Vermont! Alright, go for it!

[Laughter]

Question: Do you believe that that's a possibility?

Mayor: I've never believed it, and I've never seen evidence of it. I think, look, the notion that we should be held hostage by the whims of the wealthy makes no sense to me. That's a race to the bottom to say if we ask the wealthy for their fair share in taxes, they'll leave, and therefore we should never have the audacity to ask for fairness. That's crazy.

Remember, by the way those of you who know your history – when were the wealthy taxes at the highest rate in modern American history?

During the Eisenhower administration.

And that money went to building infrastructure, and it made our economy stronger, and we had a thriving middle class. So these things are definitely connected. Once Ronald Reagan came along, the idea of retreating from taxing the wealthy grew – trickle down economic became somehow believable philosophy, even though it's failed every single time right to this day where in Washington they're literally talking about tax breaks for the wealthiest despite all the wealth they've gained lately; tax breaks for corporation; taking away the estate tax, which only affects the wealthy. I mean this is a charade. So no, we're not going to be taken in by that. I think at this moment in our history a lot of people want to be in New York City. A lot of people want to be here including people who are wealthy, but the bottom line, Rich, is we have to make our decisions based on fairness not based on the fear that some might leave.

Question: So you don't see Mayor Bloomberg moving out?

Mayor: I don't see Mayor Bloomberg moving out, no.

[Laughter]

Question: Senator Sanders there's another idea to put money into fixing the subway is congestion pricing – to charge drivers entering Manhattan – and so supporters of that say that would fund the subway system and reduce congestion on city streets, which is obviously a major issue as well. What's your position on that and your response to the argument that if you own a car in New York City and are driving into Manhattan, then you could afford to pay that?

Senator Sanders: Well, I don't know all of the details of that, but in general, again, I think that at a time of massive income and wealth inequality you don't want to be taxing working families and working people who might have an automobile and be travelling in the city, and we have that same problem by the way in rural America where people come up with these great ideas to tax someone in Vermont who has to go 100 miles to work and raise the gas tax and so forth. So I think the idea of asking the very, very wealthiest people in this city who are doing phenomenally well – phenomenally well, their incomes, their wealth is soaring – to pay a little bit more in taxes to address a major problem, I think is exactly the right thing to do.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: For both of you – Senator Sanders first perhaps – on the discounted fares for low income people, the earliest that that might pass in Albany will be in April. The city has an \$85 billion budget that gets adjusted all the time, do you think the city should perhaps do a pilot program to fund those in the immediate term?

Senator Sanders: I'll let the mayor answer that.

Mayor: Clever question. The – right now, let's focus on two facts. One – that opportunity to pass that tax is available right now. There were special sessions available in January as soon as the Assembly comes back, which is nine weeks or so away. This is something that can happen right away and change people's lives right away. And I know that a lot of the pundits like to say it couldn't pass with a republican senate, but a lot of things have passed with a republican senate, and I remind you this would only be a tax on New York City millionaires and billionaires – not on suburban millionaires and billionaires – which makes it more palatable to the Senate.

But on terms of the other immediate needs of the MTA, a constant reminder – and I'd really ask you guys to look into it because I think if I had taken \$456 million away from schools or police and diverted it elsewhere, you would rightfully be calling me on the carpet, holding my feet to the fire every single day. I just ask you to go to Albany and ask everyone in Albany when they're going to return the \$456 million owed to the MTA.

Questions on this? Yes?

Question: Senator Sanders, you've appeared with Governor Cuomo. You've worked on several projects with him or several initiatives. The Mayor and the Governor disagree on this issue, do you intend to serve – are you going to put in a good word? Are you going to lobby Albany at all?

[Laughter]

Senator Sanders: Look, we are working with political leaders all over this country who are fighting the good fight and are trying to do the right thing. And when governor Cuomo said that he wants to move towards making public colleges and universities in the state of New York tuition-free – man, I thought that was a great idea. And I support that idea and I support it all over this country. And we are seeing progress, by the way, all over this country – California and Tennessee and Oregon – we're seeing progress where mayors and governor are moving toward making public colleges and universities – delighted to work with Governor Cuomo on this. But what I hear here in New York City, we have an opportunity to become a model for this country. I have been fighting to rebuild America's infrastructure for a very, very long time. And that includes rail, and it includes mass transit. So I'm very proud to stand here with the Mayor of New York City, who in my view is doing exactly the right thing. And I will stand with any mayor, any governor, anywhere in the United States that is prepared to stand up for working people and if money is needed to demand that the wealthiest people start paying their fair share.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Amen.

[Applause]

Mayor: Hold on, just a – I'll send it right back to you after a comment.

I want everyone to recognize that that progress of making college affordable – a lot of people believed that was impossible until Bernie Sanders put that on the map. Because he said it had to happen, it could happen. The entire discussion in this country changed. So for all the folks who say “oh, a millionaires tax could never happen,” remember how change is made. Someone starts the ball rolling, someone changes the discussion and then the people take over. And the people are demanding college affordability and the people are demanding higher taxes on the millionaires and billionaires and the people are demanding that their subways actually work for them. We have that to thank Bernie Sanders for.

[Applause]

Question: [Inaudible] any plans to swing through Albany on your way up to Vermont or?

Mayor: Nice try.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Okay on this topic and then we will take a few on other topics. Anything else on this topic? Going once, going twice.

Other topics – we have time for a few, going once.

Question: Senator, I just, and to the Mayor, I wanted to get you reactions to the indictments this morning in Washington DC and any additional investigations that you think need to happen independent of the justice department.

Senator Sanders: As I think you all know, Special Counsel Bob Mueller was appointed with wide spread bipartisan support. This is a guy who I think the vast majority of members of Congress, despite all of the deep philosophical divisions believe is a man of integrity, undertaking an enormously important task.

I worry very much on a number of fronts about the attacks that we are seeing on American democracy, and that has to do with Citizens United and the ability of billionaires to buy elections. That has to do with voter suppression and the effort on the part of many republican states to keep poor people or working people or people of color from voting.

But I also worry very deeply about the fact that the evidence is now overwhelming that Russia interfered in the last election and in doing that is undermining American democracy. And what Special Counsel Mueller's task is – is to find out whether or not the Trump Administration was in collusion with people in Russia in order to support his candidacy for President. That's what Mueller was assigned to do and that is what he is doing. And I support his efforts. Obviously Manafort and anybody else will have their day in court and have the right to defend themselves in any and every way.

The last point that I would make on this is I hope very much that President Trump fully understands that he will not interfere or try to obstruct this investigation.

[Applause]

Mayor: Melissa?

Question: Senator Sanders, on another subject – you campaigned vigorously against the influence of big money in politics during your presidential run. As you may know in the papers [inaudible] in the last few days, Jona Rehnitz, a donor to Mayor de Blasio testified about their efforts to try to buy into [inaudible] the administration says they never got anything for it. Why are you willing to set this aside despite [inaudible] Mayor Bill de Blasio?

Mayor: I've spoken to this so many times over Melissa. It has been investigated, there were no further actions taken by any investigatory authorities. We have run a clean administration, an administration with integrity and what did we focus on? We focused on getting on pre-K for our kids. We focused on achieving affordable housing for millions or for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. We focused on trying to win back the State Senate for the democrats to have a progressive State Senate. That's what we were working on. It's been thoroughly looked at. There was no follow up action taken. Case closed. Last one, last one.

Question: Any updates on the negotiations about funding the subway actions plan?

Mayor: On the negotiations, I'm sorry, specifically?

Question: Action plan.

Mayor: Look, the goal we all share is to address the immediate issues on the subway while coming up with a long term funding mechanism. And Joe Lhota to his credit – and the Senator will appreciate the fact that Joe Lhota ran against me for Mayor last time as the republican candidate. He's now the chair of the MTA and I think in the spirit of corporation he's put forward some very good ideas. And he is right about the need to make some immediate actions even more foundationally that we need a long term funding mechanism. That's what today is all about. I believe this is the most reliable and most just funding mechanism.

But in terms of the immediate action plan – the resources are there in the state of New York right now. The MTA has access to its own funds – by the way the vast majority of what every day people do in paying for the MTA in so many ways is a lot of what supports the MTA right now. But the MTA has access to its own funds. The MTA should have access to the money still owed to it by the state. That will address any short term needs. The legislature is about to go back into session. Let's get the millionaires tax done and that will help secure the long term.

Thank you.

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