

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Makes a Workforce Development-Related Announcement

March 29, 2022

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Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you so much, Miss President. And drawing back on my childhood days, I will share with you the hawk is out here. So I'm going to be brief. And I'm really excited about this program because promises made, promises kept. For far too long we have ignored the young, bright, smart, energetic minds of those who are in foster care. And it's unimaginable that aging out at 21 and not having a support base. I don't know where I would have been if I would've had to age out without any support at 21. I called my mother all the way up until I was 60-years-old. So you just continue to need the support of your family. And this program understands that. And the real partnership between LaGuardia Community College with just a fantastic leader here at the school speaking at the graduations understood what it means to be in a community college and the role it plays.

Mayor Adams: I am a [inaudible] CUNY graduate from New York City College of Technology and John J. College. And the diversity on these grounds, when you do an analysis of the diversity of the students that attend here, you understand how important community is. And I say this over and over again, I'm going to continue to advocate for our youth. You saw our summer youth program. Over 100,000 young people who received summer jobs. We're going to have a paid internship program. How we're leaning into what we're doing in our school system, the announcements that we did around early childhood development and doula's, that is the focus area. An upstream approach, especially and particularly for those who experience some level of diversity in their lives. They need the support that they deserve. And for those young people who have been in foster care or had contact with the juvenile justice system, instead of leaving them there, we need to be there for them to give them the support.

Mayor Adams: That's why today, I'm proud to announce the new V-CRED program and the partnership between ACS and Kingsborough Community College. Both of you

should be proud of this, the commissioner and the president of the college. And to Antoinette and Lola, thank you. I'm actually going to see if you want to come on board with my office. You have some great energy, both of you. Just really very positive. Just greeting you. People tell you by your greeting, you know that?

Mayor Adams: I don't know. Next mayor better watch out because you have that real handshake that goes with it. But this new vocational training and apprenticeship program is going to help our young people prepare for good jobs and bright future. These programs are crucial, because you can start out with a good job, a good career, and then it's a pathway to what you want to do.

Mayor Adams: Starting out in community college allowed me to continue to go into law enforcement and then become a state senator and a borough president. What we have failed to do, we have failed to bring a ladder in the room so people can have an opportunity to climb up that ladder. This program is bringing a ladder into the room and we are going to make sure that just not allowing these young people that age out to wing it. We are going to be there and be the wind under their wings so they can reach their full potential and place them on the career path so they can move in the right direction. And we're going to give them the support that they need to explore different careers. As we just mentioned, you have two careers that you are exploring and opportunities to find how they can be productive citizens and contribute to our city.

Mayor Adams: In just one year, a young person can go from learning a skill to getting a job. In one year. Jobs like EMT, nursing assistant, electrician's helper and IT support. All of the new growth you're seeing in the IT industry in the city, these young people can move into those employment opportunities. And we need the new tech industry to come to our campuses and see the young people we have here. Don't recruit outside our city when you have great home grown product right here in the city of New York. And they're going to continue to receive the support that they need. V-CRED lays the groundwork for a career, a union job, or even building your own business. And that is why we are proud of this initiative. Because the job is not just a paycheck, it's the foundation for a good life. And in fact, it's a foundation for a great life.

Mayor Adams: We will continue to be supportive and work with our city to improve our economy and improve the lives of young people in the city. And we're creating upstream solutions. I say this all the time. We should not wait until our young people fall in the river and pull them out. Let's go upstream and prevent them from falling in the first

place. And we spend too much time fixing broken promises instead of preventing those broken promises from taking place in the first place. So I'm really proud of this initiative. It's going to continue to grow. We're going to use this as a pilot and figure out how do we continue the expansion of this, to continue to give opportunities to our young people who have either early introduction to the criminal justice system or those who are in foster care aging out. We want to give them the support that they deserve. So I thank you for this partnership. And I want to bring on Dannhauser to go further in the program and give you the breakdown of it. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Commissioner Jess Dannhauser, Administration for Children's Services: Thank you. Thank you, man. First, I want to say thank you to Mayor Adams. I've witnessed for many years now your commitment to our young people. Our young people in foster care and juvenile justice have no greater ally than you. So thank you so very much. Good morning, everybody. I'm Jess Dannhauser, the commissioner of ACS, the Administration for Children's Services. I'm so happy to be here with Mayor Adams at this beautiful Kingsborough Community College campus. I learned on the way here that our general council at ACS is an alum. He said he didn't get enough time on the beach so he might be coming back. Today, we're announcing V-CRED. That's our newest vocational training program. I want to give a very special thank you to CUNY and Kingsborough who are not only our hosts today, but a key partner in the success. Second, I want to thank the Kellogg Foundation and New Yorkers for Children, which is ACS's philanthropic partner.

Commissioner Dannhauser: And New Yorkers For Children, which is ACS's philanthropic partner for the funds and support to make this program possible. Their funds gave us the support that the ACS staff could run with and make this program with partners all across the city work. I want to thank that team. I want to thank Deputy Commissioner Julie Farber, Associate Commissioner [inaudible] and a very special thank you to Assistant Commissioner Ray Singleton with the phone right there. He has been the man who's been making magic out of all this.

Commissioner Dannhauser: And Ray, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your commitment to our young people, all of yours, is very, very special. And a big thank you to Antoinette and Lola, who I know when she gave me an update on her brothers and

how well they're doing today, which warms my heart. So, learning about your success and the impact of the program obviously is so important to us.

Commissioner Dannhauser: We want to continue to grow opportunity for young people in foster care and juvenile justice. So V-CRED is a vocational training and apprenticeship program for youth age 16 into 24. And you've heard the mayor talk about upstream. Upstream also includes sticking with our young people. When we're in a relationship with young people, we want to do right by them and make sure we don't drop them at the most important parts of their life.

Commissioner Dannhauser: The mayor has been a huge proponent. It would not have happened without him, a Fair Futures. And before we had Fair Futures was their coaching program, we struggled to get kids into vocational programs. We signed up 45 almost overnight and we have 45 next year. But we can continue to grow this program on the foundation of that coaching model.

Commissioner Dannhauser: As part of the program, youth partakes in professional certifications through courses offered by Kingsborough. This [inaudible] isn't always here, it's here because this is where young people are learning. Next, I want to turn it to someone very important to this program, the chancellor. And I just wanted to outline before I do that real quickly, the mayor said there's five occasional tracks, information technology, electrician's helper, allied health, farm tech, and building trades. And one of those key partners here at Kingsborough. Kingsborough the EMT program. And I was learning about an instructor who called these young women in Ray's office to say to them, "Don't give up". And earlier, I think it was you who shared that you got lucky to pass the test in your first time. What did I say to you? That's not luck. That's hard work. That is hard work.

Commissioner Dannhauser: CUNY is absolutely vital to the social mobility of our young people. Chancellor Matos Rodriguez has been an ally for our young people for a long time. Most of our kids in college are going to CUNY and thriving in CUNY because of all the programs they have to welcome them. And this is just another addition and speaks to your commitment to our young people. Chancellor?

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

Commissioner Dannhauser: Thank you so much, Chancellor. So now, while we're all here, I'm very, very thrilled to welcome up two of our young people. And I want to tell you in advance, not only have they finished the program, they've already passed their exams. So Antoinette, Lola, will you come join me please? This is Antoinette McKnight and Lola Ramisor. They're going to share a little about their experiences. Go ahead.

[...]

[Applause]

Commissioner Dannhauser: I just heard the chancellor tell Antoinette she's not alone, and that's darn right. That is darn right. Antoinette told me earlier she was nervous, and I said, "Nerves are important, because it means it matters." This program matters, so thank you all for being with us today.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Commissioner Dannhauser: Thank you to all of our partners. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I think we're available for a few questions.

[Crosstalk]

Question: New York city has about half a million fewer private sector jobs that it did pre-pandemic. We have the largest employment deficit in mainland United States. Do you think that's due to not investing in fields like the ones that V-CRED is focused on, or what is it?

Mayor Adams: A combination, and you hear me use the term all the time, there are many rivers that feed these crises. Number one, we need people back to work. The financial ecosystem is crucial. I need the accountant in the office so that they can go to the local restaurant, so we can make sure that everyone is employed. This is not a city where you can remotely have employment, and that's feeding our ... really, unemployment numbers.

Mayor Adams: Yesterday, I was out in Broadway. We had the lights coming back on in Broadway that feeds our tourism. The amount of tourists we receive in the city is crucial. So there are many rivers, we must ensure all those rivers are flowing. Having our young people receive the proper training and skills is going to allow them to be employed. Too many of our jobs are being one, we recruited people from outside the city. Number two, we have too many New Yorkers who are not in the city, and they're carrying out jobs remotely. It's draining our economy. So we're doing a full push to get people back to work, get jobs back here in the city, train our young people so they can be employed, so we can turn around these numbers.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Wondering some specifics about the program itself. How many students are going to be able to be trained every year? What's the budget for the program?

Mayor Adams: Okay. We're starting with 45 now. We're going to make sure the policy, we iron out all the kinks so we can get it right, but we are going to lean into this. I'm a big believer that we failed foster care children far too long. We know 6,700 age out every year, only 20 something percent graduate from high school, 3 percent graduate from college. We know the numbers, but we did nothing about it. So this is one of many approaches we are going to make to really zero in on foster care, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to be a victim of a crime or dealing with criminal behavior, more likely to deal with mental health issues.

Mayor Adams: We just ignored this population. It fed the problems we have in the city, and so we're starting out with 45. There's a commitment with the Kellogg Foundation, we're going to do another 45 next year, but we're looking to do more than that. We want to... these two young ladies are going to be our recruiters. They're going to help us go into foster care locations and get young people engaged. The exact dollar amount, do you know the dollar amount?

Commissioner Dannhauser: The Kellogg Foundation grant is about \$200,000 each year over the next two year years, but all of the ACS staff, all of the work that President Schrader and Kingsborough, that's all public resources going into this program as well.

Mayor Adams: We're going to invest more in the next budget cycle. This is going to be a hallmark of our reaching out for young people.

[Crosstalk]

Question: I would like to talk to you today about your effort to close down the homeless encampments. It's a two part question. The first part is this. Homeless advocates say that you need to offer more Safe Haven beds and other facilities, because most of the people on the street don't want to go to [inaudible] shelters. I know you're opening a Safe Haven place in the Bronx today. I want to know what other programs you're developing so that people who live in these encampments will have a place to go that's not the street? The second part of the question is why do you think it's important to do this? Do you think it's going to bring tourism back? Do you think it's going to convince people who moved to Florida to come back, and it's going to make New York city more appealing as a city?

Mayor Adams: No, great question. I am just so amazed, Marsha, that we believe it's dignified to allow people to live on the streets. That just shocks me. It shocks me that we believe it's all right that someone should live in a tree in the parks. I looked at some of the encampments. You should see the number of hypodermic needles on the ground... human waste. People are not allowed to take showers. They're not allowed to take care of themselves. That is just so undignified.

Mayor Adams: When I hear people say to me, "Why are you taking down the encampments? Are you doing it because you want the city to look better?" No, I want us to do better. People should not live on the streets where they can't take care of themselves. I made a commitment that I'm going to give people the treatment they deserve with the Safe Haven beds, and I'm going to live up to that. There are those who are going to criticize me, and that's fine. They have the right to do so, but they also have a right to get in the streets and help the people like I'm doing. We're walking past people that are living on cardboard boxes in these makeshift, inhumane houses. This is just not right. I know it's not right. I promised it, and I'm going to live up to it.

Question: I know you're opening this new Safe Haven place in the Bronx. Are there other plans on the drawing board so that you can help these people, because most people just don't want to live in city shelters. They say it's not a good situation for them.

Mayor Adams: I understand that. In this city, we cannot stop people from living on the streets, but we cannot tolerate these makeshift, unsafe houses on the side of highways and trees, in front of schools and parks. This is just not acceptable, and it's something

that I'm not going to allow to happen. We've normalized, I say this over and over again, we've normalized dysfunctionality in our city, and I am not going to ignore what I'm seeing like other people are willing to do so. I see the dysfunctional actions of our city, and I'm not going to pretend as though it doesn't exist. There's nothing dignified about people living on the streets.

Mayor Adams: So we're going to give them the housing, the safest place for them to be in the shelter. I was on Randall's Island on Saturday. I went up to the Bronx last week. I've been visiting shelters to see what's happening indoors. The shelter that I visited in the Bronx last week, I knocked on the door, spoke to some residents. The housing is good. People are talking about our Right to Shelter program here and the conditions people are living in. I'm doing these spot checks. I'm not stating that I'm coming, because I don't want people putting their best foot forward, and I'm seeing clean housing for people where they're able to get meals, they're able to take showers. Yes, we're going to continue to do better, but it is better than sleeping on the street with no bathroom, no shower, no conditions that are suitable. So those advocates who believe I'm doing the wrong thing, come and see me. Let's do this together, but I'm not going to allow people to sleep on the streets in cardboard. It's not going to happen.

[Crosstalk]

Question: The shelters seem to have a reputation among this population of being dangerous, of being too restrictive. You see it in the numbers, especially the folks coming out of the subway, a very low percentage accept placement in a shelter. What other options can you offer them right now?

Mayor Adams: First of all, this is a city where we have right to shelter. As I stated, I'm visiting the shelters. You got to inspect what you expect or it's all suspect. I say that over and over again. So I'm walking into shelters and I'm looking at what are we giving our clients? How are we treating them? How safe is it? I have the HRA, the police department, they're going to give me a real analysis of how many crimes are taking place in the shelter. What is happening in the shelter? The perception, it must match reality. The safest place for people who are homeless right now, the safest place is a shelter right now. We saw what happened two weeks ago. Thank God, we were able to catch the person, someone walking around shooting people who are homeless. I don't want the residents of this city, our brothers and sisters who are homeless, to be in

shelters. Right now, we're going to open new safe haven beds. Right now, we have the right to shelters.

Mayor Adams: And I think there's a difference between those who are dealing with mental health illnesses and those who just need shelter, why they temporarily move into permanent housing. We're getting ready to tackle firsthand. It was astonishing to me that we had over 2,000 beds that were open that we couldn't fill. I'm zeroing in on that. And I'm going to make an announcement of how we're going to rectify that.

Mayor Adams: Listen, y'all know my motto: get stuff done. And the only reason I'm saying stuff is because I'm on TV. There's another way I want to say it. But we got to do better. We have to do better. I inherited a dysfunctional city. What more could I say? My city is dysfunctional and taxpayers deserve better.

Question: From a logistical standpoint, how many encampments are you aware of? How many have been looked at to this point?

Mayor Adams: I believe the number was 180. We're going to give a full profile of exactly the encampments. I believe tomorrow, we're going to be giving the full profile. And you have to see some of these encampments and you have to see the difference of just removing an encampment, what it did for that entire block. I'm just really proud that we were able to do it. I made a commitment and I lived up to the commitment and our city is going to finally say, "Yes we can."

Question: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Just to follow up on the past two questions, as you were saying, even if the shelters are safe from your point of view, the perception among a lot of homeless people is that they are not, and they will under no circumstances, go back to a congregate shelter because of fear that they might get beaten up or robbed or something else horrible. How do you change that perception to make sure that people actually go into shelters?

Mayor Adams: And it's about producing a better product. We are going to do something I'm really excited about as we go out to talk to those who are homeless. And we are going to go out, hit the streets. People are going to joke about it or laugh about it, they're going to do caricatures about it. But we are going to go with brochures and show, "Here's what a safe haven bed looks like. This is where you're going to. This is not your dad's..." I used to say your dad's osmo bill. "This is not going to be your dad's

Safe Haven beds." We're going to show people, "Here's where we are asking you to go."

Mayor Adams: We know they're afraid of congregate shelters. We know that those who are dealing with mental health illnesses that they've been assaulted, they've been preyed upon. We are aware of that. And so now we have to go out in the streets and tell them, "We're not putting you back in a place where you were treated unfairly. We have a new model of where we're going to take you." And we're going to show them pictures. "This is where you're going to. Here's this clean, safe place." And we're going to have wraparound services, medical professionals, the psychological help that they need. And so this is a new product that we're going to roll out. We're going to get it right.

Mayor Adams: When I go to look at a place I'm going to stay abroad, I want to see pictures. Where are you sending to me? We're going to do that. We're going to show them that this is a better environment than you having to live on the train. People living on the train or on the streets is an indictment on our entire city of what we're doing. But also let's be clear on something. The homeless problem is all of our problems. If you are walking past someone sleeping on the street and you are a New Yorker, you're going home to your home, don't point to me and say, "Eric, what are you doing?" No, I got a better question. What are you doing? This is all of our city. We need to all deal with people who are homeless and put them in a better condition.

Question: All right. Good. About the comments after the game Sunday...

Mayor Adams: Which game?

Question: Well, the one where Kyrie Irving played. Since you lifted the mandate, what you said about his refusal to get vaccinated is about personal freedom. Can we ask, what the response is to the city council speaker, Adrienne Adams? She said last week, she has serious concerns that Adams dropped the mandate and is a step away from following sensible public health driven policies that prioritize equity. And she said, "The exemption sends the wrong message that higher paid workers and celebrities are being valued as more important than our devoted civil servants, which I reject." Do you agree with her assessment? And what do you make of this criticism?

Mayor Adams: I want you to get your phone on so I can... Listen, I said this over and over again. We have 8.8 million people and 30 million opinions, but we only have one

mayor. She's a speaker of the city council. We're going to agree and disagree sometimes. That's all right. I don't agree with myself all the time. It's all good. I made a decision based on analysis, spent two days explaining the decision. And I have so much more I have to do in the city and I'm focused on that. So she has the right to her opinion and I have the right to carry out what's best for the city of New York.

Question: Are people given back their belongings if their encampment is taken down?

Mayor Adams: Without a doubt, I have issued complete orders. We have a voucher system. We are not going to take away the private belongings of people. We are going to do this in a very humane way. We're not going to treat people in an undignified way. So without a doubt, their private property is going to be vouchered and they're going to have an opportunity to recover it.

Question: And on subway crime, there was a slashing last night and then the sex assault on Thursday. Can you comment?

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry. There was...

Question: The sex assault on Thursday in the Q train stop and then last night there was a slashing. Can you just comment on the subway crime?

Mayor Adams: Yeah. Yes, we have millions of New Yorkers that are using this subway every day and they're using it in a safe way to get to and from. But the actual crimes and the perception of crime is going to destroy our recovery. And I must ensure that it's done correctly. Now, what we learned during the eighties that everyone wants to ignore, people who commit crimes, they don't pay the fare. They hop the turnstile to commit a crime. And so we knew that you had to zero in on those that came into the system to commit a crime. We moved away from that. We stopped prosecuting those who were fare evaders because we stated it was criminalizing poverty.

Mayor Adams: No, there's a way to get on the subway system if you don't have enough money to pay your fare. We've created an environment in our subway system where rules don't matter. I don't subscribe to that. We have been issuing tab summons, we have been creating those who are violating the rules, they've been ejected. We have been doing thousands of station inspections. And so I must bring back the sense of you

can't do whatever you want in our subway system that has fed to criminal behavior in our subway system. A person should not be sexually assaulted on our system. They should not be robbed. They should not be slashed. They should not be pushed to the subway tracks. But we ignored it over these years. The system has turned into a place, come in the subway system and do whatever you want. And so people are pushing back on me. Oh, there goes that mean po-po, police officer Eric again. So what? Call me what you want. We're going to be safe. I'm like broccoli. You're going to hate me now, but you're going to love me later.

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