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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE TO HELP DELIVER  
15,000 NEW SUPPORTIVE HOUSING UNITS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Monsignor, thank you. I have to say I've had the honor over the years of working with Monsignor LoPinto and Catholic charities of the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens – amazing work done by Catholic charities. And that is true in so many areas. They're such a crucial ally in the work of helping people in need. I have to tell you – I'm sure some of you have seen some of the reviews or maybe you even read his Holinesses new book. And we had such a great honor here in this city in September to have Pope Francis in our midst. But there is no question of what's happening here in this building, and the work of Catholic Charities represents everything that Pope Francis has been talking about – about reaching people in need including all people; bringing people in from the cold with compassion and understanding. That's what's happening here in this beautiful facility. I had the honor of meeting with some of the residents who are here. You're going to hear from two of them in a moment. But what I heard so clearly was what this means to them – the change in their life that happened when they got to this building.

By the way, to all the staff members who are within the sound of my voice, you're getting rave reviews.

[Laughter]

The residents I spoke with were so appreciative for the kindness, the compassion, the understanding. And they relayed, in each case, that their path to homelessness was a challenging and painful and difficult one, not what anyone of them expected to have happen in their life. Each of them has their own story of how they went from a more stable life to all the challenges of homelessness. But they found an antidote; they found an answer right here.

So Monsignor, a lot to be proud of. Let's give everyone at Catholic Charities a big round of applause.

[Applause]

The Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Residence epitomizes the idea that people can be reached. And it epitomizes something that I think is very much in the DNA of this city. This is a compassionate city; this is a generous city. Maybe as New Yorkers we can have rough exteriors, but inside there are hearts of gold. And this is a tenacity in this city unparalleled anywhere in the country, I'd argue. And we understand that people can go through tough times. And we appreciate people overcome those challenges, and we want to reach that helping hand to them. Here 98 residents – 98 residents' lives have turned around. 98 people who have been reached and our job is to reach so many more.

What's happened here has made all the difference in the world for these individuals; everything that they hoped they would find on their road back to a better life. And the Bishop Sullivan Residence is a tremendous model. There's a lot to learn from this place; there's a lot that's working here. And it's one of the facilities we are looking at as the model for where we want to go going forward – with 15,000 more apartments. Because we're

very proud of having committed to 15,000 apartments that are going to turn around 15,000 lives, but it's important to get it right, and here we have one of the great examples to build upon and to emulate. I want to thank the folks who are here with us from the administration; Steve Banks, our HRA Commissioner; Vicki Been, our HPD Commissioner; Loree Sutton, Commissioner for the Mayor's Office of Veteran's Affairs.

I'm going to talk to you about a new group that we're putting together that is going to make a big difference. And when I do, I'm going to talk about the role that Vicki and Steve will be playing. But everyone in this room is – and everyone behind me, has been at the forefront of the effort to create quality supportive housing, and to turn lives around. So, what is a supportive apartment in real terms? It means much more than a roof over someone's head. It is a much deeper concept than that because with a supportive apartment comes real support; counseling, social services; the helping hand in all its forms; people who are going to stick with you every step of the way. And why it works is because each person, and I heard six stories before, but each person needs something different. We've talked about this in terms of our HOME-STAT effort.

We're going out all over the city to find folks who very sadly are still living 24/7 on our streets. But we said, we're going to figure out how each person went from a better life to the streets, and then figure out their path from the streets to a better life. It is going to be person by person. There is a different approach for each person just like everything in human life. Each person is an individual. Well here that's recognized. Each person needs different things, but here in this building that's possible to get each person what they need. The 15,000 new apartments all over the five boroughs are going to make a really profound impact on the lives of people in need right now. And some people will need help because they're overcoming substance abuse. Some people will need help because of mental illness challenges. Whatever the specific challenge or whatever combination of challenges, supportive housing is built ready to serve each person. And in each case, it means a person who is no longer on the streets or a person who's no longer in shelter, but has found a home. We want to see each person reach their full potential, and I talked to some of the wonderful residents of this building, and some of them have dreams of what's going to happen next. And our job is to help them because that's the whole concept, helping people find the fullness of their potential.

So, we're starting right now. The 15,000 apartments, some of them will be available this year and the goal is to move as quickly as possible to achieve that goal. We want every additional apartment available to a New Yorker in need as quickly as possible. To achieve that goal – both to determine how to most quickly prosecute our plan – we want our plan to be constantly developing. We want to seize every opportunity to bring each additional apartment online as quickly as possible. We also want to make sure our supportive housing is the very best it can be. We want work from the very best models; we want to constantly refine it and improve it. To do that, I'm proud to tell you, today, that we have assembled a really fantastic supportive housing taskforce. The leading names in this field have agreed to join us to formally be a part of our effort to create the 15,000 new apartments. They're going to help us create the strategy; they're going to help us implement the plan; they're going to be part of how we make sure the quality is the highest it can be. They bring an extraordinary experience; experts, advocates, providers with a wealth of experience. They're going to help us figure out, in each case, what's the cutting edge approach to supportive housing.

Now, they're experts in different parts of the spectrums; some, members of our new taskforce are expert at, at risk – experts at, at risk young adults. Some are experts in mental health. Each of them brings a common faith and passion for this work, a common belief that we can reach people and help them turn their lives around. I want to tell you the members of the taskforce, and I'm going to introduce in just a moment one of the co-chairs Laura Mascuch who is the – also the Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York. She'll be speaking in a few minutes. She's agreed to be co-chair of our supportive housing taskforce along with, as I mentioned, Commissioner Vicki Been and Commissioner Steve Banks. So, those three co-chairs will lead the way.

Let me tell you who the members will be, and they really are an extraordinary group. I'm just going to name them off because I want you to hear all these names; Sam Marks, the Executive Director of LISC; Mary

Brosnahan, the President and CEO of Coalition for the Homeless; Christy Parque, the Executive Director of Homeless Services United; Kristin Miller, Director of CSH; JoAnne Page, President and CEO of the Fortune Society; Christine Quinn, President and CEO of WIN; George Nashak, Executive Vice President of Help USA; Donna Colonna, CEO of Services for the Underserved; Monsignor LoPinto, thank you – your involvement will mean a lot to us; Muzzy Rosenblatt, the Executive Director of the Bowery Residents Committee; Adam Weinstein, President and CEO of Phipps Houses; Jacqueline Kilmer, CEO of Harlem United Community AIDS Center; Joanne Oplustil, President and CEO of CAMBA; Brenda Rosen, President and CEO of Breaking Ground; Paul Freitag, Executive Director of Westside Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing; Dr. Rosa Gil, the founder and President of Comunilife; Tony Hannigan, the founder and Executive Director of Center for Urban Community Services; Reverend Terry Troia, Executive Director of Project Hospitality; Sister Paulette LoMonaco, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services; Jerilyn Perine, Executive Director of CHPC and former HPD Commissioner; Ted Houghton, President of Gateway Demonstrations Assistance Corporation; Tim O'Hanlon, Vice President of Hudson Housing Capital; Tori Lyon, Executive Director of the Jericho Project; Deborah VanAmerongen Strategic Policy Advisor Nixon Peabody; Sister Janet Kinney, Executive Director of Providence House; Eric Weingartner, Managing Director of the Robin Hood Foundation; Fred Shack, CEO of Urban Pathways; and Judi Kende, Vice President of Enterprise.

A really extraordinary group – we'll distribute that list, of course, to everyone, but a really, really extraordinary group that brings so much talent; so much knowledge; so much ability to help us get the job done; get the job done quickly and well.

Now, we can consider this our job to get this right, and since I'm in the presence of Monsignor LoPinto, I can say we consider it our moral imperative as well. Richest city in this country – we can do this, we must do this, we will do this. I mentioned all the tools we are applying, HOME-STAT, we'll be reaching each and every homeless person on the streets constantly; working to bring them in – making sure that any challenges are addressed – DHS, NYPD, and other agencies working together.

You heard the other day; we've doubled the number of city drop-in centers. And drop-in centers are yet another tool to help get folks off the streets; to give them a place that they feel comfortable; where they get some support, and again, we believe one of the best gateways to larger help – to longer-term help that a lot of homeless people need. The 500 new safe haven bed, again, with great cooperation from the Diocese and the Archdiocese and many houses of worship – again, smaller facilities – safe, secure facilities where many people feel more comfortable coming off the streets. And that is the beginning of getting them the larger help they need.

We're going to making a number of additional repairs and improvements at our shelters. We have our shelter repair taskforce underway. We've upgraded it, and we'll be putting in additional resources so that those changes are made more quickly. We're proud of the fact that we've helped 22,000 people get out of shelter, and to housing over the last two years, but there's much more to do. We're proud of the fact that we've reached 91,000 people to help keep them out of shelter to begin with, and in their homes, but there's more to do. Supportive housing is a crucial part of the equation because it is one of the actual permanent elements of the solution. It's one of the things that once someone gets to supportive housing they've actually reached a home for the long-term. We know this challenge developed over years and decades, but it's our job to fix it, and we know we can turn the tide. And we know this city will not be as great as it was meant to be until we turn that tide. A few quick words in Spanish then I'd like you to hear from a couple of our colleagues here, and from two of the residents of this facility.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

I just want to say for the record, taskforce is a good word. It's a good strong word, but –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

– that’s even stronger.

[Laughter]

Team of work – I like that, excellent.

[...]

**Mayor:** So you can see – and I see this every time I speak to people whose lives took a turn, I saw that the other night at Bellevue. Every story is powerful; it’s human, and it’s very real what people have gone through; how many people were doing all the right things, but still things can fall apart. It’s our job to catch people when they fall. And I know Catholic Charities does such an outstanding job. We’re honored to be in partnership with Catholic Charities, but that’s also the city’s commitment to catch people when they fall. This taskforce – so pleased that this is really the all-star team – when you look at the folks who are on it, again, the experts in the field – folks who have served in high positions in city and state government; folks who have been leaders of great non-profit organizations that have made a world of difference. If there is a good idea in supportive housing it resides in this group.

[Laughter]

If there’s a way to get it done faster and better, it resides in this group. So, we’re thrilled to have the partnership. A lot of the members of the taskforce are here, I want to thank you all. If I did not pronounce your name perfectly, I ask Monsignor to absolve me.

[Laughter]

But I appreciate everyone’s participation. It means a lot to the people of New York City that you’re stepping – stepping up to help us on this crucial mission. And as I said, they’ll be three co-chairs. I want to thank Vicki Been and Steve Banks, and finally and truly an expert because she’s Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York – I’d like to introduce our co-chair Laura Mascuch.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Okay, we are going to take questions on this topic, today – on this topic. We welcome your questions, yes?

**Question:** Is part of the reason that you are creating this taskforce because previously supportive housing has been created through this partnership of the city and the state; and there’s already kind of – if you were to be doing it through New York New York there’s like a model and a pattern of how that was done before, and you need to create a new way of doing it now?

**Mayor:** I appreciate the question. I think it’s a little different, and Steve and Vicki may want to add, but this is the way I see it; we’re approaching this on a bigger scale than ever before. Again, look at the three New York New York agreements; this is the biggest commitment the city of New York has ever made – 15,000 apartments. And the complexity of that endeavor; the speed with which we want to achieve it requires the very best talent; the very best ideas, and we’re going to move forward with that plan under any circumstance. We made that abundantly clear. So, we have a great brain trust to help us get it done. At the same time, obviously, I hold out hope that there will be the ability to work in an even bigger partnership with the state. But any way you slice it; this expertise is going to help us get this done as well as possible, and as quickly as possible.

Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible] on this issue over the past couple of weeks. You know, Governor Cuomo's giving his State of the State tomorrow, and is expected to announce much [inaudible] of state intervention. Do you think that any of that is necessary or do you think with everything you have going on that, you know, [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I think we need the state's support, and we welcome the state's resources and partnership. The 15,000 apartments is going to go a long way. We'd like to go farther. So, you know, we look forward to the announcement tomorrow, and hope, obviously, that will address the need for an ongoing state role as a partner in this work.

**Question:** Mayor, you're going up to Albany tomorrow for a State of the State. You'll – I presume will be going up later in the session to talk to the legislature about the budget. Can you give us any sense of what you'll be asking for in the budget regarding supportive housing? I know last year you asked for New York New York that obviously didn't happen. Curious if you'll ask about again or what you'll be looking for?

**Mayor:** Well certainly, first of all, the budget testimony – we're waiting for the final date, but it should only be in a few weeks, so that's where we'll lay out formally our agenda and our budgetary request. But absolutely, we would like to see the deepening of the New York New York agreement. And I said it last year – I meant it – I'll certainly say it again this year. I think that what we've done this year is to say we are finding every conceivable resource in the City of New York to show our faith in this approach; to show we're putting our money where our mouth is. And we have the best expertise to help us do it. And certainly, I think a lot of people in Albany will look at that and say that's good faith. And that's a good reason to see if we can go deeper together.

Yes?

**Question:** On the same topic, you're travelling to Albany tomorrow for the State of the State speech. I assume you'll be meeting with some lawmakers while you're up there. I know homelessness is definitely been the top priority at City Hall last few weeks. When you meet with lawmakers in Albany is that also going to be a top priority? Can you tell us about any conversations that you hope to have in the state capitol tomorrow regarding your homeless agenda?

**Mayor:** Well, I think, again, the formal agenda for, you know, the city's need from the state, and our vision for how we can move forward will be laid out in the budget testimony. Of course, there we'll talk about housing, not just homelessness, but housing – affordable housing in general. We'll talk about education – the education aid that the city needs. We'll talk about a number of issues, and I certainly think some of those conversations will start tomorrow when I meet with the various leaders. On homelessness, I'm going to let each and every one of them know how much we are committed to a solution, and how we are putting in more resources than any previous administration in a more coordinated fashion than ever before. And look, I can understand from the perspective of legislators or other leaders in Albany – they want to see that we have a plan; they want to see what we're doing, you know, within our capacity. I think we have a lot to show now. And we're very proud of that. So, that's what I'm going to go summarize to each of them.

**Question:** This is a quick follow-up, are going to be meeting with the Governor tomorrow?

**Mayor:** Yes. Yes.

Yes?

**Question:** On the supportive housing initiative, how detailed is the city's plan currently for the 15,000 units? Do you know exactly when you want these units to unroll? And is the taskforce job to work with that plan or just implement it or change it?

**Mayor:** I'll answer the first – the second part of your question that I'd like Vicki or Steve or both to speak to – timelines. I see the taskforce as everything from a conscious and a group of folks who help us think how to do things best, and sort of center of innovation. You know, to people who can help us figure out how to do this faster and better. So, it's like any other situation where you're bringing the leading expertise in the field. I think if you show this list to anyone who knows anything about supportive housing; about homelessness they would say this is essentially everyone.

[Laughter]

So, it's an extraordinary list. We want them to help us figure out how to do this as best and as quickly as it can be done. Who want to join in?

**HPD, Commissioner Vicki Been:** So, yes we, of course, have things in the pipeline. We have new buildings already in the pipeline that will close in June for example – or close by June. And we have, you know, land. We have partners we have financing commitments that, you know, we have scoped out over the years. But I think what – one of things that's really critical here is – and the reason why this brain trust is so important – is that we really are trying to shape new models. We're trying to harness funding that's never been available for supportive housing; taking it, you know, using funding better, so that we can build more affordable – more supportive housing over time. And – so, we're really, I think, pushing envelope, and that's one of the reasons why this brain trust is just so, so critical.

**Mayor:** Steve?

**HRA, Commissioner Steven Banks:** I just want to add, following the mayor's announcement we've already begun to put the plans in place to move forward. And we previously committed that we would at least get 250 additional units by the end of this calendar year, but the taskforce really represents yet a further step forward in the consultation input that we've been gathering from experts in the field. And certainly the city agencies and the experts in the field – we want to work together to expedite everything we can possibly expedite because, again, supportive housing is part of that pathway that we've been building from Comp-Stat to drop-in centers to safe havens to supportive housing.

**Mayor:** HOME-STAT.

**Commissioner Banks:** HOME-STAT.

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** You're not [inaudible] Bratton.

**Commissioner Banks:** Pardon me. Pardon me. Pardon me. Pardon me.

[Laughter]

**Commissioner Banks:** My prior life was coming back to me. The combination of moving from the HOME-STAT effort to identify people on the streets; give them a helping hand to the drop-in centers we discussed yesterday as a [inaudible] from the streets to safe havens, and now to supportive housing. We want to accelerate every piece of that pathway that we can to bring the urgency that the mayor is bringing to this issue on an everyday basis.

**Mayor:** Okay. On-topic? Any other questions? Going once; gong twice. Thank you, everyone. We'll see some of you in Albany.

Thanks a lot.

[Applause]

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