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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR BLASIO APPEARS ON PIX-11 TO DISCUSS HOME-STAT INITIATIVE**

**Sukanya Krishnan:** Mayor Bill de Blasio – taking an aggressive approach to tackle the city’s homeless problem – a new outreach program aimed at getting people off the street and into permanent housing. The mayor’s move comes on the heels of the resignation of the city’s homeless service commissioner, Gilbert Taylor, but a lot of people, and a lot of critics, are saying, you know what? It could be a little too late. So, we thought we’d invite him in-studio and get the answer from the man himself. The mayor is here in-studio – welcome. Mayor Bill de Blasio, nice to have you here.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you.

**Krishnan:** Before we get to that issue of homelessness and the new program, can we talk about the escaped prisoner last night in TriBeCa? This is the seventh time this year that this has happened. The commissioner was very, very harsh in his criticisms – your reaction to it?

**Mayor:** I agree with Commissioner Bratton – we don’t tolerate this. And look, it’s not just about the harsh criticism you’ll be hearing from the commissioner. He’s made very clear there will be real disciplinary results that – our officers are part of the finest police force in the country –

**Krishnan:** Right.

**Mayor:** – Vast majority of whom are excellent professionals, but some of whom who have been a little sloppy, and that’s not going to be tolerated.

**Krishnan:** Alright, it happened the first time, the second time, the third time – it’s the seventh time.

**Mayor:** Yeah.

**Krishnan:** So, it feels like there needs to be a little bit more – maybe readdress –

**Mayor:** There – look, there –

**Krishnan:** Okay.

**Mayor:** There are real consequences happening for some of the individuals in the previous situations. Look, I have tremendous respect for the men and women of the NYPD, but you have to uphold that professional standard all the time. And Commissioner Bratton’s very clear – if an officer does not reach that level, there will be consequences.

**Krishnan:** Alright, mayor, let's talk about the new HOME-STAT program. You're seeking to canvas all the streets between Canal Street and 145th Street.

**Mayor:** That's right.

**Krishnan:** So, talk about this – and really addressing this homeless epidemic – and you said in your press conference yesterday that's it's an issue that every city is dealing with, but it seems like in New York it's a little bit more than –

**Mayor:** Well, actually, every city around the country is dealing with it. Some of the cities on the west coast, like Los Angeles, San Francisco – the amount of folks on the street is actually much greater than what we have here in New York City. We have much more people in shelter here than in the street, thank God, but, it's a big, big problem, and it's a historic problem, Suki – it's one that literally goes back decades to the Koch administration. We need to keep doing more. So, the HOME-STAT effort that we announced yesterday – literally every day city officials will be going over every block of Manhattan, as you said, from Canal up to 145th every day. We'll be counting how many folks are on the street. We'll be addressing each situation we see. And an average New Yorker – any New Yorker can pick up the phone and call 3-1-1 and report a condition, and either a homeless services worker will be there within an hour to address the problem, or, God forbid, it's something that might be a law-breaking situation – a police officer will be there to address the situation. And we will then be tracking constantly – where are the problems? What do they look like? Look, we've already gotten rid of the some of the worst problems. There were 30 “encampments,” meaning places that homeless folks had congregated for years in many cases – mattresses – they were drug dens. We've taken those all out. They are gone. They were tolerated for years – we did not tolerate them any longer. But this is going to be an every-day thing. We have 3,000 to 4,000 homeless folks on the street – many more in shelter who you never see, but 3,000 to 4,000 homeless folks on the street. We have to systematically get them off the street. And one more point – we now have the capacity to know who literally every single individual is on the street and to have a specific plan to get them off.

**Krishnan:** So, this is going to be like a tracking system almost – that you're going to actually put people into the system? And also what I –

**Mayor:** We're literally going to –

**Krishnan:** Yeah?

**Mayor:** Let me – I said yesterday, you can go into any police precinct and say, who's that guy at the corner? And they're going to say, oh, that's Charlie – we know Charlie – and they'll tell you a little bit about him. We want to make that systematic. We want to know who each person is on the street. Why? What is their challenge? Is it mental health? Is it substance abuse? Why are they on the street? And then what can we get them that will get them off the street? What can we do that will change their lives?

**Krishnan:** But a lot of people are saying that with the police getting involved that that's going to make the situation a little bit more difficult in terms of are they going to arrest the people? How are the police going to be able to do it? And what are the challenges that the police are going to face once again?

**Mayor:** Commissioner Bratton understands this issue very well, and the idea is not to just have police show up without training, but, in fact, train a special unit of the NYPD –

**Krishnan:** Okay.

**Mayor:** – To do homeless outreach – to train them in mental health challenges, because that's what we're dealing with in many cases with the street homeless. And look, the idea is to – when there's law breaking,

there's law breaking – I don't care who does it, we're going to address law breaking, we're going to enforce – but also to look at when there's law breaking, there's a mental health problem, there's a substance abuse problem. What's the pathway? For example, one thing we found is some of the folks who are on the street and have been for years will – they won't go into a big shelter – they will go to a house of worship. We started these new efforts called Safe Havens. They're small facilities in houses of worship, and we're finding that some of the street homeless will come in, they will get off the street, and then we say, look, why don't we get you some substance abuse help? Why don't we help you to the next step so we can get you off the streets permanently?

**Krishnan:** A lot of people are saying, okay, you're cleaning the streets from Canal to 145th Street, but what about the outer boroughs? They also are dealing with a homeless epidemic as well.

**Mayor:** Yes. There are – and I come from Brooklyn and I'm aware of Downtown Brooklyn, for example, and some areas in each of the boroughs. Overwhelmingly, we know it is a problem between Canal Street and 145th in Manhattan. That's where –

**Krishnan:** So, that's the first step?

**Mayor:** – That's the biggest concentration. But, as we said yesterday, we're also going to have teams ready to go to any other location in the outer boroughs where there's any kind of activity that warrants special attention. We will have both homeless services workers ready to go and police officers ready to go to address those problems. So, anywhere in the five boroughs a New Yorker can call 3-1-1 and say, here's a problem, and be assured that within, give or take, an hour, there will be an official of the city government there to address it.

**Krishnan:** So, it's not just being Manhattan-centric? You are going to address the outer boroughs – any other issues –

**Mayor:** We're going to address –

**Krishnan:** Okay.

**Mayor:** Again, as a Brooklynite –

**Krishnan:** Alright.

**Mayor:** – I can assure you we're going to address everywhere, but we also should be clear – the vast majority of the reports we get, the vast majority of the homeless we see on the street are in Manhattan.

**Krishnan:** And for those critics who are criticizing you and comparing you to former Mayor Giuliani, saying that, you know, you're just attacking the problem on the street and not attacking the real problem, which is the families that are in the shelters – what do you say to that?

**Mayor:** We've been focused on the families in the shelters. We've in fact – because of a new initiative started by my administration, we've gotten 22,000 – listen to this number – 22,000 people out of shelter and into permanent housing in less than two years. So, we're very focused on reducing that shelter population. We're very focused on keeping people from going to shelter to begin with. We've been able to reach thousands and thousands of families on the brink of going into shelter and actually stabilize them in the apartments that they're in now. So, we're looking at the whole picture. But I – look, let me be clear – and I think a lot of your viewers probably feel what I've heard all over the city – when folks see a homeless individual, particularly if it's someone acting erratically or who has a mental health problem, it's unsettling, sometimes it causes fear. We have to go at that problem. We've been working on the shelter problem for two years. We're finally finding some of the new approaches that are working to get people out of shelter and keep them out of shelter. But the street problem is very real also, and it's caused a lot of concern among New Yorkers. We have to address it

because people care about it legitimately, but we also have to address it because we have 3,000 or 4,000 people who never should have been on the street to begin with.

**Krishnan:** I wonder if you saw the reports that Jay Dow and Mario Diaz did? We did a lot of reports extensively – in-depth stories about homelessness right here in New York City. And what they were able to find were families in hotels – and families in hotels, and the amount of money the actual city actually spends in these – for these families in providing hotels. And – here are some of the graphics of the money that was spent – Super B. in Brooklyn – \$258,000; Quality Inn, Queens – \$231,000-plus; PAR Central in Queens – \$286,000. In fact, \$3.5 million was spent on hotels from September 22nd to January 1st. A lot of people are saying that, you know, these people, you know, they don't have a kitchen, you know, they're struggling to get their kids to school – sometimes traveling 45 minutes – that this isn't really a solution and this is money that's being wasted. So, what do you say to those families that are in hotels? I mean, we're one week away from Christmas – how do you create a situation for them that is going to be a situation that they can get out of?

**Mayor:** That's why – look, we have the biggest affordable housing effort in the history of this city – 200,000 apartments we'll be building and preserving over the next 10 years.

**Krishnan:** Okay.

**Mayor:** We have the biggest supportive housing effort the city's ever launched – 15,000 apartments over the next 15 years. The solution is always to keep building more and more housing. But let's be clear, here's what changed – and I want into this in detail yesterday – over the last 20 years in this city, the cost of living, the cost of housing skyrocketed, but what happened to wages and benefits for every-day people? It didn't move. That's what happened here. More and more the folks in shelter are families and working people. They're not what we used to think of. When we thought of homeless, we thought of single guys, probably – unfortunately with a mental health problem or a substance abuse problem –

**Krishnan:** Yeah, I know.

**Mayor:** That's not what it is anymore.

**Krishnan:** There's 40,000 families and children that are dealing with this.

**Mayor:** There are 40,000 – right – between parents and children, 40,000 people of our approximately 58,000 in shelter are family members, which means it's now about economics. It's not about those other issues as much as it's about economics. What do you do? Raise wages and benefits, you fight income inequality in a variety of ways, you created affordable housing – that's the long-term solution. I'm as frustrated as you are –

**Krishnan:** I know – no, no, a lot of people are saying, you know, the mayor isn't doing enough – this is falling poll numbers – they're criticizing you as being reactive as to being proactive. A lot of people are saying, you know, you ran on a campaign – a tale of two cities – now, we really do have a tale of two cities.

**Mayor:** Well, c'mon –

**Krishnan:** There's all of this that's kind of going on, so I just kind of have to address it –

**Mayor:** Suki, I would say –

**Krishnan:** – when I have you here.

**Mayor:** No, I'm glad – I'm glad you're addressing it, but I want to say, as we pointed out yesterday – this is a problem that has been brewing for years and years. That doesn't make it any better, but let's be clear – the tale

of two cities existed before I got here. We're trying to combat it with everything we've got, which is why – again, the biggest affordable housing program ever in the history of this city. Many, many efforts that we put in place to raise people's wages and benefits, and get them to a better standard of living – it will take time. Everything big takes time, but we are trying to change the dynamic so there's more and more affordable housing available to people because that's what will really change the reality for a lot of these families. A lot of these families would never have ended up in shelter to being with. They don't have – they're not dysfunctional families, they don't have a mental health problem, they don't have a substance abuse problem, a lot of them are working while living in a shelter. I said yesterday, you don't even see them because they get up in the morning, they put on their clothes, they do to work, they get their kids to school –

**Krishnan:** They're struggling. They're part of the working poor.

**Mayor:** Correct.

**Krishnan:** They're part of the working poor that's looking for real, tangible solutions, and they're looking to you, mayor, and this plan to work, and hopefully it will work. I know we're running out of time, and I have to ask this one question about pre-k.

**Mayor:** Yes.

**Krishnan:** Tell us about this – we've got to end on a positive note.

**Mayor:** A very positive note. So, Suki, we talked about this when I was here campaigning for mayor. I said my goal is full-day pre-k for free for every child in New York City. We have achieved it. I'm going to break some news right on the show.

**Krishnan:** Do it – break some news.

**Mayor:** Breaking some news – the final number – that for this school year, we now have the official number – 68,500 kids in pre-k right now. Two years ago, when I took office, it was 20,000.

**Krishnan:** Wow.

**Mayor:** So, look how far we've gone up. And here are four of them – the Capellan family – quadruplets from Washington Heights. This is the day they got their pre-k acceptance. For this family, pre-k – here's a number you'll appreciate – this probably meant more than \$50,000 in savings for this family that they had full-day, free pre-k.

**Krishnan:** Well, we thank you for being here. We thank you for breaking that news. And we thank you for really, you know, putting a spotlight on it. And I'm going to give you a little bit of flak, while I have you here –

**Mayor:** You have to.

**Krishnan:** You haven't been here.

**Mayor:** I mean, Suki –

**Krishnan:** You haven't been here.

**Mayor:** – it wouldn't be you if you didn't give me a little flak.

**Krishnan:** Well, listen, listen – you haven't been here – and we call you, I write, I send flowers, I sent chocolates –

**Mayor:** You don't call, you don't write –

[Laughter]

Suki –

**Krishnan:** So, can you not be a stranger? Because a lot – you know –

**Mayor:** I want to pledge to you here, live on air, that I'll be back. I'll be back, as Arnold once said.

[Laughter]

And very happy holidays to everyone here at WPIX, and all of your viewers as well.

**Krishnan:** Well, we thank you. Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you for being here.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

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