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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON THE BRIAN LEHRER  
SHOW**

**Brian Lehrer:** It's the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC. Good morning everyone and we begin as we usually do on Friday mornings with our weekly Ask the Mayor segment, my questions and yours from Mayor Bill de Blasio. Our lines are open at 212-433-WNYC, 212-433-WNYC, 212-433-9692, or you can tweet a question, just use the #AskTheMayor. Mr. Mayor welcome back to WNYC.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you very much, Brian.

**Lehrer:** So can we start with an update from you on the separated children, the deadline for the Trump administration to reunite those 2,500 kids was midnight last night. I think that was Pacific Time so three in the morning our time. But you said as of yesterday that around 100 of those kids who were sent here to New York remain in the city. Do you have any new update this morning?

**Mayor:** No, that's the best we know and Brian what's still shocking to me is we can't get the federal government to give us answers and I know mayors around the city, excuse me around the country and governors as well, are all having the same reality that – and it's really unprecedented, I just want to make this one related note, even when there are differences politically, historically the federal government will at least work with states and localities and provide information. This is unprecedented. It's been an absolute blackout. We do not have any accounting for these kids nor a clear plan for when they will be reunited with their families. We think this moment about 200 kids now left the city but it's not clear whether they are actually back with their parents or when they will be. We think there is about 100 more still in the city with no plan, no timeline, and it's just painful to watch. And it's so – you know this is one that is really deeply felt by New Yorkers and by people all over the country. Everyone is putting themselves in the shoes of these families and it's something that transcends nationality, people are thinking about this on a very human level and they can't believe our government is separating families and then won't even account for them. So we are just going to have to keep fighting, including getting the legal support to these families that need, until every last child is back with their parents.

**Lehrer:** I think more guests and callers, we had another caller yesterday, crying, have cried on the air, on this show, over this since this family separation issue surfaced then maybe in all of the other years of this show combined. Melissa Mark-Viverito was here and broke into tears in a conversation recently and others. And you know I read the heartbreaking account in the Times today of how 80 children under the supervision of the Cayuga Center's agency in the city were supposed to be taken elsewhere to be reunited with their parents, more than a dozen vans had lined up at the facility to take them to the airport but then only 14 of the 80 turned out to be on a federally approved list. Those kids were taken to LaGuardia for a middle of the night flight but only seven were on the list at the airport, the others were then driven in the wee hours from LaGuardia all the way up to the Westchester County Airport in White Plains and not all the kids were approved there either. I mean my God, it's not only so cruel, it's so incompetent.

**Mayor:** I think the two go together, I think the cruelty underlines the incompetence. The fact is that President Trump has tried to create a dehumanization of immigrants, of all immigrants. He has a particular painful, you know, pleasure he takes out of attacking Latino immigrants and Latinos in general. And so, you know they attempted to dehumanize people who were coming here for asylum which really disgusts me even more because America has a very rich history in democratic and republican administrations of respecting the right to asylum and helping people fleeing oppression.

So you know, I think since the values of the Trump administration are we don't treat these children of families as human beings to begin with, it makes it even easier to be incompetent. But to the extent that they are trying to meet a deadline, they've done a horrible job. It is a huge number of children in human terms, it's not a huge number in logistical terms. It begs the question do they even know where all the kids are and where all the parents are. But what I think what you said in the beginning is 100 percent right. This has drawn out a kind of emotion that transcends party line, transcends philosophy. You've noted a lot of evangelical Christians who might be more conservative on some other issues, on this one are adamant that these kids need to be reunited with their parents. It's one of those moments that I think we will look back on and say this is where President Trump really started to lose ground with a lot of people who that might have been open to him because he's fundamentally affronting the most basic human relationship there is between parent and child.

**Lehrer:** Before we move on to calls and some other things, I just want to dwell with you a little bit more on the inability of you or the State of New York to get specific information about these children. The Governor says the childcare agencies don't want to violate the terms of their federal contracts in some cases which is why they don't provide the information. The Governor supports newly proposed legislation that would require them to provide more information in exchange for continuing to be licensed by the State. Do you support that?

**Mayor:** Look I think that makes sense as a general rule that if kids are being sent to here and we have obviously a sense of responsibility for anyone who's in our jurisdiction and that's why we have been providing additional health care support to these kids and legal support and we take seriously – if someone is here, they are a part of our community. So yes, we need to know I think that's a smart idea. But I think the original sin here has to be accounted for. Why wouldn't the federal government share information in a respectful fashion with its partner, you know local and state governments? This is the norm we have got to fight for here because again one of the things

that a lot of people are noting about the Trump experience is the breakdown of democratic norms. And we can't get too used to this. We can't somehow go to sleep on this. When the federal government feels it does not have to any longer talk to state and local governments, it's actually violating the core concepts of the constitution. And part of why America works is that states and localities still have power in the equation. We are not, you know a Napoleonic system. We are not a system that's entirely centered on our federal government, much to the chagrin of President Trump. We have got fight for that. So yes, the specific legislative idea is a good one but more importantly we should be demanding on every level that the federal government has to come clean on issues like this and actually has to work with the other parts of government that serve people every day.

**Lehrer:** And has anyone from the City tried or been able to visit the foster agencies within the last couple of days to even if they won't give you identities and relationships and things like that, to see conditions and see how these children are doing? WNYC's news team has been very dependent of getting words from the kids' lawyers because a lot of lawyers have stepped up to help these children. But have you been able to have anybody from the city at least look at the conditions?

**Mayor:** The social services organizations have been very forthcoming. You know our commissioners over this whole timeframe, have been, have visited some of these centers and checked on things. Generally speaking we think, under tough circumstances, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Charities, Cayuga Center have done a good job trying to support these kids. So on a conditions basis I certainly have not heard anything from my team that raises a particular alarm. I think it's the much more central issue. Even if these kids are getting good support while they are here, they still, you know where wrenched from their parents with no end in sight. All of the support in the world can't make up for that.

**Lehrer:** It's our weekly Ask the Mayor segment here on the Brian Lehrer Show with Mayor Bill de Blasio. Our lines are full, we will start going to callers now as they finish up. You can call 212-433-WNYC, 433-9692 and you can always tweet a question. Twitter stock went down this morning because like Facebook stock, yesterday I think with all of the fallout about social media, fewer people were signing up for Twitter in recent times we are told but if you are on Twitter, you can tweet a question for the Mayor, just use the #AskTheMayor. Jason in Brooklyn, you are WNYC with Mayor de Blasio, hi Jason.

**Question:** Hi Brian, thank you for taking my call. Mr. Mayor thank you for taking the time today, what I would like to ask you today is about Citi bike and the City's outright refusal to meaningfully expand the system. Citi bike has kind of proven itself to be a massive success where it is available, especially during constant subway outages which is a whole other thing we don't need to talk about. But the City's refusal to expand the footprint in more than extremely small increments is really frustrating to me. The dockless trial is great that they are doing out in the Rockaways, and I think in the Bronx but as I understand it dockless won't be able to operate in Citi Bike footprint and the other way around it's the same case. With the L-Train shutdown [inaudible], which again is a whole other thing. Why are we not expanding Citi Bike? It's been proven to be a success, it moves people around the city with very little infrastructure and we've been hearing rumors that you don't want to expand City Bike because it might take up parking spots, which is kind of ridiculous because Citi Bike docks are parking spots for 30-40-50 people. So what is the hold up here?

**Mayor:** Well, Jason thanks for the question, and thank you – I commend anyone who says we’ve been hearing rumors and ask if they’re true, because a lot of times they’re just not true. And we have greatly expanded Citi Bike, and yeah, of course there is people who complained about the loss of parking. And I understand why they do. But I think Citi Bike has been a tremendous success, and the expansion has been worthy, but I would, I would – I think you’re really downplaying the dockless bikes as a potential here. Clearly it’s not rocket science, we could if dockless bikes are working and it’s something that Citi Bike’s apparent entity motive is working with as well. This could be a way to expand much farther and you know, to do things in a much simpler matter. My jobs is to listen to every kind of New Yorker in different needs. Folks who have cars have needs; folks who want to get around in bikes have needs. I’m a believer that Citi Bike when it takes up those parking spaces has been a smart use of that space because it gets people out of cars and give people another option. And I’ve defended it including right on my own block in Brooklyn where I get concerns from my fellow residents. I think when we have the dockless possibility that comes – it’s able to be extended a lot quicker to a lot more places. We’re starting in the Rockaways and Staten Island, and Coney Island, the Bronx. This could really be a game changer and one that could be implemented very, very quickly. So no, there is no lack of desire to keep expanding the options. There is an interest in seeing dockless as potentially as strong or even stronger option than the traditional model.

**Lehrer:** Bruce in Manhattan, you’re on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Bruce.

**Question:** Hi, good morning, both of you. My question is regarding noise pollution. With the increase, the exponential increase in services like Uber and Lyft. As you know in Manhattan traffic is much, much slower than it was a few years ago and ambulances are driving at a crawl and stopped in traffic and yet blaring their sirens infinitely. I cannot find a single half an hour of the day where I am not being bombarded with this. What can be done? Can you institute a policy that says no if you’re not moving, don’t blare your siren. And police too, by the way with the – they’re much more heinous with the new siren that they have with the low frequency or something. This is really driving people insane.

**Mayor:** I really appreciate the call Bruce, and I believe in everything you just said. I feel it personally, and have had the exact same feelings. And so I directed my Deputy Mayor for Operations to look at how we can reduce noise pollution across the board. I think it’s one of the biggest concerns New Yorkers have. That to date, you know I don’t think the city in our time or previously has found strong solutions as we need. And I think there are some solutions. One of the things we need to look at is the way the sirens are set, and how they’re used. I think you hit both points right. You know, the actual physical tone of the siren. It needs to be effective obviously to save lives. But there’s different kinds of sirens around the world that are equally effective, and some affront people a lot less. We’re looking at the right now. And on top of that, better instructions to first responders about how to use them, when to use them. Safety has to come first obviously. So I want to be abundantly clear that anything we think about is through the prism of protecting people. But you know we live in the biggest city in this country and we’ve got to improve the quality of life. So I think soon we’ll be able to put forward some real, new initiatives to reduce noise. We’ve been doing a lot of that around construction sites too, and more enforcement on construction sites that are operating when they’re not supposed. And we’re looking at a whole range of other things that can reduce noise because it’s crucial to the quality of life to bring it down.

**Lehrer:** The caller blamed those slow moving ambulances on traffic created by Uber and Lyft. When you proposed the moratorium on new Uber cars a few years ago, as I certainly don't have to tell you, so the City Council could assess the impact on traffic and yellow cab owner's lives, the City Council prevented it. Now the Council seems to be coming around to maybe making us the first city in the country with such a cap. Maybe it's because of the rash of suicides of despondent yellow medallion owners who have seen their life savings gone up in smoke. Are you still into it?

**Mayor:** Oh yeah, look, I think what we tried to do a few years ago to put some realistic limits in place to fight congestion in the name of fairness for everyone in the industry, I think it was the right direction. I think a lot has changed since then. That makes it even clearer. We have more and more evidence – a huge number of these for-hire vehicles like Uber cars for example are driving around empty. Unfortunately Uber's business model is to flood the zone, to get lots and lots of drivers, make them basically compete against each other, and a lot of times not make much money.

But that's good for Uber's business models and it clogs up our streets and I think it's a huge problem and I think a lot of people also obviously have come to have real concerns about Uber on a policy level in a lot of things they have done that have really raised deep concerns – more and more concerns about the needs of the workers and these horrible tragedies with the suicides of the taxi drivers. I think everyone has felt that. So –

**Lehrer:** Are there any – can I ask, are there any specifics you hope are or aren't in a City Council bill because I guess they're just developing it?

**Mayor:** From – I have not seen the most recent version of the legislation. I do think what Speaker Johnson is saying is absolutely in the right direction and I think the Council is taking a strong view of a very, very serious issue and they're trying to do something about it and I commend them for that. So, there's specifics to look at for sure but what I can say – and I hear this from New Yorkers all the time is people want a lot more to be done about congestion and this is one of the things I think could start to address congestion.

There's tremendous concern for the drivers and the fact that a lot of these Uber drivers end up essentially working for subminimum wage is not acceptable and certainly a lot of concern for the yellow cab drivers and creating more fairness for them.

So, as far as I can see this proposed legislation is addressing some really serious issues in a smart way and I look forward to looking at it and I think the Council is trying to do something important here.

**Lehrer:** Nina – I mean Monica from Woodside. You're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Monica.

**Question:** Hi, Brian, hi, Mayor de Blasio. Yes, I am calling actually about the 52nd Street station in Woodside, the 7-Train line. It's an elevated train and there is a great deal of peeling paint from the station over Roosevelt Avenue. And the other day I was walking with my nine-year-old son and a large chunk of paint fell right in front of us and smashed. And this is an issue

that's been publicized before. There's lots of lead in the paint and there's tons and tons of peeling paint. And I am wondering if there is a long term plan to fix that? And if there's a short term solution to prevent the paint from falling onto the street, onto pedestrians?

**Mayor:** Well, Monica, thank you very much for that question. Now, let me see it at the outset please, at the outset – please give your contact information to WNYC so we can follow up with this, on this with you. Look, this really concerns me. I'll state the obvious; the MTA is run by the State of New York. We would have to push them to do what they should do here obviously, which is to protect against this paint falling and endangering people and we will do that and if there's any way we can get them to do the work or there's anything we can do to support that work we'll do it or if. This is something I take very seriously. You know, this is an example of like the old infrastructure that we still need to deal with in this city to protect people. The big picture thank God on lead paint poisoning has been reduced 90 percent in New York City since 2005. The City is actually moving very much in the right direction, but we've got to address it where ever we see it. And this is one that worries me the way that you describe as just right out there in the open. So we will get to work on that right away.

**Lehrer:** Monica, hang on. We'll take your contact information for the Mayor's Office. That allows me to segue to a NYCHA question because NYCHA admitted on Wednesday that it is out of compliance with not just lead paint and mold testing but on many other federal standards. Can you get specific for us on some of the worst of those and what you and the agency are doing about them?

**Mayor:** The bottom line is we're entirely changing the approach across the board and by the way not just for the housing authority but for the entire city. So we have, as I said, a 90 percent reduction in lead paint poisoning and lead poisoning in general. A lot of it is not paint. We need to be clear about that. There are other sources too.

But what's clear and we've all gotten an education on this in the last year is most of the exposure comes from private housing not in public housing. Public housing actually has a lower rate of exposure than private housing.

So, what we've said is anybody who has a child who is exposed, and that is known through a test that a doctor gives, we want to immediately do an inspection of their home, public or private, and address if there is any lead present. So, that's one part.

Another crucial part in public housing – we're going to do something that was never done before and it should have been done a long time ago. Lead paint was outlawed in 1960 in New York City, 1978, I believe it was, nationally. We're going to go and actually review every apartment. It's 130,000 apartments in NYCHA that may or may not have lead paint. That has never been determined once and for all.

We're going to use – literally it's a kind of x-ray technology that can look through the layers of paint over the years and determine if there's any lead in there. There should be a substantial amount of apartments that don't have lead and never will and we want to be able to identify them and then focus on the other kind. And we're not testing constantly, remediating constantly, and that will be the norm from now on.

**Lehrer:** And that's good about the lead paint but my question was the other federal standards that NYCHA now admits that its violating – can you give us some specifics and what you're doing about that?

**Mayor:** The bottom line here – and I want to commend the new chair, Stan Brezenoff, who has said very bluntly it's a day, we're looking at all elements of what's happening at NYCHA and if we cannot 100 percent confirm compliance we're going to say it out loud and then address each issue.

So – and there's a new compliance team in place and so, we're literally going to go through each element of federal standards. If we're sure there's compliance, we'll say it. If we're not, we're going to acknowledge that and then come up with a plan.

Now, in a bunch of the areas that are of concern, that plan is articulated in the settlement with the South District, with the Justice Department, and HUD. It's very explicit what we need to achieve and the resources to achieve it and there will be, of course, a specific action plan, a federal monitor, etcetera.

There's a couple of new areas, as you indicate. We're going to do the same thing on our own – put together a specific plan with specific timelines and lay out how we are going to address each one. We want to be in full compliance and I think honestly for years and maybe decades, there were probably a number of times when the City wasn't in compliance. We certainly know that the lead paint inspections stopped during the Bloomberg administration. That's a big part of the problem.

But we don't want to live in the past. We want to create a clear compliance regimen and be able to tell the people this city how and when we will get in compliance in each and every area.

**Lehrer:** As you continue to travel around the country representing progressive values and being outraged here about federal abuse of children – the separated families children – some people are saying you lose credibility because NYCHA, on your watch, has put the health of so many children in danger and you haven't made it enough of a priority until now to stop it more aggressively. Contradiction?

**Mayor:** No, because look, I take this issue very, very seriously but I'd like to be clear about how it wasn't taken seriously in the past and how we are making up for, I think, a lot of mistakes of the past. But we're doing it in a very intense and honest way. The settlement with the federal government – you know, there's plenty of people that said, you know, fight it, it's a lot of money, or one thing or another. We made a decision that the federal government wanted an ongoing funding stream to address these issues until everything was resolved.

It would have been very easy to say that's unprecedented, we won't do that. I was only too willing – I believed it was the right thing to do to agree to that settlement and to compel my successor to have to continue that work because when I look at the history and I got all the facts – and I didn't know them until they were all presented – you know, what happened in the past was unacceptable and we needed to fix it.

Separate from the lead question, on my watch, we've contributed \$3.9 billion more to NYCHA that was not any money that was in the budget. It was new money we put in to address the needs of NYCHA. No administration has ever come close to that before.

Once the problem of lead became clear, we acted on it, owned it, did everything possible to address it. That, to me, is what a progressive is supposed to do. We're never shocked when there's problems we receive from the past and we're never shocked when a government agency hasn't done what it was supposed to do.

But in the case of NYCHA, you also have to be very clear, it's not just NYCHA. It was decades of both the federal and state governments stepping away from NYCHA and failing to invest. This has been a time bomb ticking for a long time. The question is, are we doing something very, very aggressive in putting in vast resources? Yes and I'm at peace that that will really ultimately change lives.

**Lehrer:** Nina in Brooklyn, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Nina.

**Question:** Hello, thank you for taking my call. I live in Brooklyn in a rent-stabilized landmarked building that has had no elevator for 104 days to date for the second time after living from November of last year to January of this year for 78 days with no elevator [inaudible]. I've spoken to 3-1-1 many times. I've even sent a 3-1-1 call to you, Mayor de Blasio, but it doesn't seem like the landlord does anything. The Buildings Departments, I've called everyone. [Inaudible] got a lawyer but the landlord is still stuck and doesn't do anything. So, I don't know what more I can do.

**Mayor:** Well, we've got to get that fixed. Nina, I will direct my folks to follow up with you today. Please give your information to WNYC. That's not acceptable. There's no situation in which a building can go without an elevator for anything near that long. And our Housing Department, HPD, when a landlord is not providing basic services, they direct them to do it. By law, they have the right to direct them to do it. If they don't do it, we get a contract to do it and we charge the landlord.

So, I don't know the specifics but that basic outline that you provided, that's not acceptable and it's something we have to fix. So, I'll have folks talk to you today about how we get that done.

**Lehrer:** Nina, give your contact information to our producer and the Mayor's Office will put you in touch with them. I want to acknowledge, before we run out of time, that the deadline has passed for renewing the speed cameras law for speed zones around schools. That's on the State government. That's on the Republican controlled State Senate.

But I also understand the New York City police union is among those in those Republican Senators' ears getting them to allow the disabling of those cameras. Do you understand why NYPD officers would want that? The transportation advocacy group, Streetsblog, suggests it's because officers can't get out of tickets issued by those cameras for their personal driving like they can when they're stopped by another cop when they speed, a human stopping a human who can show police ID. Do you accept that reason for their opposition as being the reason that they want to be above the law?



**Mayor:** Okay, a couple different points there. First of all, this is a huge – the specific fact that we don't have these speed cameras and there are 100 schools, children were being protected but now are not because the State Senate hasn't acted, there needs to be furor about this.

All it takes is the State Senate to come back for a matter of hours and we can get these cameras back. School starts in six weeks. I'm going to say a sentence that you will probably rarely hear from me. Brian, I urge all New Yorkers to look at the cover of the New York Post today because the New York Post did something, I think, very smart and they went into the speed zones with a speed camera of their own or a radar gun of their own to find out if people were speeding now that they think that they can get away with it, and lo and behold, people are speeding again in school zones because they think there's no enforcement.

Another very important fact before I speak to your point, there are 20 speed cameras left that are mobile that we're allowed to use by law for the next month. We will be using those in a lot of places. So, any motorist who thinks they can get over should realize we still have the ability to get them.

But on the point that you raised – no one is above the law, first of all. And even your thought that you know if an officer pulls over a fellow officer who's speeding, they can get off on that but they couldn't with a camera – that's not how we do things. That's certainly not what Commissioner O'Neill believes in.

If anybody is speeding, we don't care who they are, they have to face the consequences. This is part of changing the culture and we're going to do that across the board. But the union, look, I have a lot of disagreements with the PBA but I never mistake the PBA for the views of rank-and-file officers who are a huge diverse group of people.

I disagree with the PBA leadership on this. They're suggesting that speed cameras are somehow not as good as other approaches. I argue the exact opposite. They're incredible effective. We have speeding down 60 percent in school zones because of the cameras, fatalities down 55 percent. Fatalities down 55 percent means lives being saved and allows our officers – we have the largest force on the beat now than we've had in 15 years – it allows them to work on so many other things that we need focused on.

But the cameras are incredible efficient and they're there and they catch people only if they're speeding in a school zone. No one should be doing that. If you're not speeding in a school zone, you're not going to have any problem with the cameras. So, couldn't disagree more with the union on that one.

**Lehrer:** But what's your understanding of their objection and would you argue against what that is?

**Mayor:** Oh, it's clear it's a classic – I've seen this with many a public sector union. They simply want to use it as a reason to say we need to hire more police. And I would argue that thanks to the City Council and our efforts, 2,000 more cops on patrol that we had a few years ago. The city is the safest it's ever been. Crime is going down again. We have a good number of police officers. We have the biggest police force in the country by far – 36,000 officers. That's working.

Speed cameras also are working. They do different things. Let's let the speed cameras very effectively and very economically – and that's something the taxpayers care about – very economically protect kids and let our officers do all the other things that they can do.

**Lehrer:** And last thing, what about the related issue of parking permit placard abuse? You told us here in May that you would have an update very soon about a new policy. Do you have it yet?

**Mayor:** Soon is correct. It has taken longer than I want and I'm not happy about that, to be very blunt. But it will be out soon. The bottom line is on the beginning of our effort, we saw real – we put out a whole plan to address placard abuse. In 2016, for example, there were 28,000 tickets related to placard abuse given. By the next year, we've gotten that up to 42,000.

So, 14,000 more tickets is a serious effort and I'm happy about that but I'm not happy about the overall effort. I don't think the City agencies have done a good enough job and I have again directed the Deputy Mayor for Operations to come up with a much more aggressive plan because there cannot be any sense that placard abuse is acceptable.

I want to keep encouraging people to report any placard abuse they see. It helps. We are monitoring everything online. It helps us to see these reports. But the next level of planning is going to be more aggressive and that will be out soon.

**Lehrer:** Mr. Mayor, thanks as always. Talk to you next week.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Brian.

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