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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S MORNING JOE

Mika Brzezinski: Newly-elected Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez kicked off her time on Capitol Hill by taking part in a demonstration at the office of her Democratic colleague, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. Ocasio-Cortez, who was on the Hill for her first day of her new member orientation, stopped by and greeted the demonstrators who were calling for Democrats to take more action on climate change. The Congresswoman-elect said she wanted to show Leader Pelosi that, "We're here to back her up in pushing for 100 percent renewable energy." Leader Pelosi issued a statement on the protest and what she said in part, "We are inspired by the energy and activism of many young activists and advocates leading the way on the climate crisis. I have recommended to my House Democratic colleagues that we reinstate the select committee to address the climate crisis."

Ocasio-Cortez also spent the day slamming Amazon's plans to open a second headquarters in Queens, even as Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo cheered the move. Joining us now, the Mayor of New York City, Democrat Bill de Blasio. Good to have you back on the show this morning.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Great to be here, Mika.

Brzezinski: So, Mr. Mayor, explain the tax breaks that Amazon is getting and do they offset the benefits do you think? Because Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and others are worried it's too much of a give.

Mayor: 25,000 new jobs coming to New York City – let's just start with that – could go as high as 40,000. We're going to see in New York City alone over \$13 billion in tax revenue coming to our city so that we can do things to help all New Yorkers. This has been, I think, an extraordinary moment for New York City. There's a lot of big things that are happening in New York City right now and I think it's all interrelated. We're the safest big city in the country, we have almost 4.5 million jobs, we have a strong social fabric, a sense of fairness that we're creating in this city, and an incredible workforce and a diverse workforce – that's what attracted Amazon. Amazon wanted a whole host of different types of subsidies and concessions – we wouldn't give it to them. What we got in the end was a 9-to-1 ratio of the amount of revenue we're going to get back for any kind of incentives that they got. And for this city, that's a five-borough city, where we want to see the borough of Queens thrive, we want to see people in every neighborhood have opportunity. We want to see people in public housing have chances for jobs,

students who go to our public universities to have chances for jobs. This is a boon to have Amazon come in with 25,000, maybe 40,000 jobs and the way it's going to help our whole technology community grow. I think it's an extraordinary opportunity for New York City.

Brzezinski: You've called this the single biggest economic development deal in the history of New York City, but what is New York giving Amazon? What are the tax incentives, the tax breaks? And the other gives to make this deal happen?

Mayor: So, there's a series of automatic incentives that are available to any company that comes into the State. There's a series of incentives that are available to companies that build in the outer boroughs – those are all automatic, any company who qualified there are getting those type of things. They wanted additional concessions, again, we weren't willing to do that. Other states offered, as you know, vast incentive packages. They still ended up coming to New York City because we said, look, this is what you get if you come to New York City – in fact, we're going to ask you to do things. We're going to tell you we need you to build public space for everyone in that community, we need you to give us space for a school, we need to do training programs for folks who live in public housing. The largest public housing development in America is right near this Amazon campus. We want those folks to get jobs too. Amazon understood that if you're going to come to New York City, you have to live with our values. And in the end, what we're going to see is not only a vast number of jobs – it's by far the biggest number of new jobs this city's ever seen. But you're also going to see an opportunity to create a pathway for a lot of folks who have wanted to get into the technology community. A lot of every-day New Yorkers coming up through our public schools are now going to have a chance, because this is not only going to help build one company, it's going to help build the entire technology community in New York City.

So, I understand – listen, Mika, the folks who have a concern or a critique – I get very upset when I see something that I think is a giveaway to a corporation, like the Republican tax legislation last year. But what this is, is we drove a hard bargain, we're getting a whole lot more tax revenue back than anything that the City or State are putting in, and we're getting a number of jobs that's almost unimaginable for a single transaction. And we've made clear to Amazon, those jobs need to go to every-day New Yorkers, those jobs need to go to CUNY students or City University students, those jobs need to go to public housing residents. As a progressive, I think that's what we're here to do – create economic opportunity for a lot of folks who have not had enough.

Willie Geist: Well, part of the concern, Mr. Mayor, is about those jobs, because Amazon said the average salary would be \$150,000 for these new jobs, which sounds incredible, it sounds great, but a lot of people worry that excludes people like the people you talk about who live in New York City public housing in the area. How does someone – a working class person in Queens – aspire to that \$150,000 job and why aren't they being locked out of the process as they're worried about?

Mayor: Well, I'll tell you something, I've talked to a lot of people in the technology community in this city, and they say when you really look at the jobs that are available, sure, some are at the \$150,000 level, but a lot are \$50,000, \$60,000 and above. Those jobs can go to young folks who have just gotten an associate's degree from one of our City university colleges. Those jobs can go to folks who have a four-year degree. We have an opportunity here to make sure that the

doors are open of the technology community. Now, this is pretty clear, on the west coast there's been a huge critique that the tech community, which is so strong, has been profoundly narrow. It has not been diverse, it has not been open to all, there's not enough opportunities for women and people of color. This is a city where we have an extraordinarily diverse workforce and we encourage everyone to have opportunity. I think Amazon coming here is going to also spark the growth of our technology community. I think it's going to send the message, you can have that diverse workforce, you can give opportunity to folks who have been left out and thrive while doing it.

Geist: The head of New York City's Employment and Training Coalition says the \$15 million-promise by Amazon to go into some of the New York City public housing, have job fairs and things like that is a drop in the bucket and they believe something that's just symbolic to help close the deal. What do you tell, again, those working class and, really, poverty-line folks who live in Queens about this project and why they will be a part of it and they won't be locked out?

Mayor: So, 25,000, up to 40,000 jobs to begin with – that's going to create a lot of other jobs in the surrounding area. We always know this, you bring that kind of economic presence into a community, a whole lot of other businesses build up to support it. A technology community – 350,000 jobs in the whole city – that's going to grow a whole lot more. This is going to be a consolidating moment. For the borough of Queens, unquestionably this sends a signal that Queens is now an ever more important economic center. That's going to benefit New Yorkers of all backgrounds, all income [inaudible] no question in my mind. But here's the other piece, when I tell you we're going to get \$13.5 billion in tax revenue in the coming years, we're going to use that to create opportunity. We're going to use that to create affordable housing. We're going to use that to create job training programs that reach hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, ultimately. So, I think the important thing to recognize here is, a smart government says we're here to bargain for the people, we need to get a lot back for the people. There's no question in my mind that that's what we're going to achieve here. New York City is already moving in the right direction. We have said, we're going to be the fairest big city in America. We're going to make sure there's opportunity for all. This is going to help us do it. If we didn't have them we would be missing an opportunity to really reach a lot of people.

Geist: I know Nick has a couple of questions for you. One more from me about the subway – the 7 train, as you know, anybody who lives in Queens and tries to get into Midtown Manhattan every day, it's brutal, it's crowded. That's a larger problem with the MTA – and upstate and everything else – about funding the subways. But what do you say if you're adding all these people, all these new residents to the area on an already strained subway system. How is it going to handle that? And why won't it be a further mess over there?

Mayor: So, there are some improvements being made to the 7 train. You're right, right now it is a mess. There's some improvements being made that's going to increase the number of trains. We need a full funding plan for our subway system. We get a chance to do that in Albany this spring once and for all. I have added in my administration ferry service, which is tremendously important. This Amazon campus is right on the waterfront, the ferry is right nearby. That's going to give people an entirely different opportunity and ferry service is growing rapidly in New York City, something we should have done a long time ago – it's working. But there's other things we need to do – Long Island Railroad goes nearby, there's a place we can add a stop on the Long

Island Railroad taking people into Penn Station. We can add shuttle buses in the community, taking people to the ferry stop. There are things we can do to improve transportation.

Geist: Has Amazon offered to pay for any of that, in terms of subway repairs and upgrades?

Mayor: Look, this was a very specific deal. We understood there was going to be a lot of investment by us, the public sector, in that community no matter what, Amazon or not Amazon. That part of Queens has been growing intensely. What we wanted from Amazon was a clear commitment on jobs. What we wanted was a clear commitment on a variety of things they would do for the community, the job training, the open space, a school site, a variety of things. What we're clear about is, we're going to get so much tax revenue back. We can apply that and a lot of the specific property taxes Amazon will be paying will go to the rest of the community to address –

Geist: But nothing specifically earmarked from them for subway improvements or transportation?

Mayor: As I said, the money that they pay in taxes, half of that earmarked specifically to strengthen the community. That's one of the things we can draw in.

Nicholas Confessore: So Mr. Mayor, as you know in my salad days I covered City Hall –

Mayor: You did.

Confessore: I covered Albany. I have seen these promises come; I've seen these deals get struck. I saw it with the AMD factory up in the Capital region where tax-payers poured a billion dollars into that thing and did not get it back. What happens is promises are made, ribbons are cut, politicians get credit, 5-10 years later when the jobs don't come through the rules are changed quietly. The people who made the deal are out of power and there's no accountability. In this case, City Hall – City Council is being cut out of the process. What can you do? And who will be responsible for making sure that Amazon holds up this bargain in 5-10 years when you're out of office?

Mayor: So, we struck a binding agreement. If they don't stick to the agreement it's all off. And that's part of the power of this. I agree with your critique that in the past there are a lot of really loose economic development plans. When our administration came in, we said we're no longer going to do any direct corporate incentives. The things I've talked about here are state and city programs. They're pre-existing that anyone can tap into. But Amazon wanted direct support. We said we're not doing that. Legally binding – if at any point they do not fulfil their requirements all the incentives, all the [inaudible] off the table, can be pulled back by the public sector. Claw back provisions – if they don't do what they're supposed to do. We can actually recapture money from them. So this is – I think your critique is great, and I think that mayors, governors have to play hard. And make very, very clear if you don't keep your commitments. You're not going to be able to do things. In New York City, we have a very similar reality with affordable housing. We have passed a law that said if a developer wants to develop, and we have to give them a permit, they have to build affordable housing. If they don't, they are literally not allowed to build on that site. So it's time to get tough, but I also think when you have a deal this good, and a number of jobs we've never seen a jobs deal for 25,000 to 40,000 jobs. If you go to look at any

kind of precedent you're talking about a few thousand jobs. This is an entirely different scale. And you think the way it's going to transform people's lives – the folks who came up in New York City and you know New York City well. The folks who live in Queensbridge houses get an opportunity through Amazon; CUNY student gets an opportunity through Amazon. It's going to change their life forever. We want to make that happen but if Amazon blinks, with all due respect to them and tries not to keep their end of the deal. We have real tools to enforce on them.

Brzezinski: Mayor de Blasio, before you go. Give us your take on what democrats learned in these midterm elections. Did they learn to go way progressive and continue leaning way left or was it a more convoluted lesson given the slow trickle of winds ultimately?

Mayor: I think its three things Mika, it's don't talk about Donald Trump. He does plenty of talking on his own. He's his own worse salesman. Obviously we saw in the election result. Over six million more votes for democrats for Congress nationwide. Hillary Clinton won with three million more, that's more than double. Don't talk about Donald Trump, talk about healthcare, talk about basic economic reality – college debt, talk about the fact that people need new and better jobs in areas like renewable energy. That's what Americans want to hear about and democrats have really a huge opportunity [inaudible] progressive economic vision. Make clear, we're never going to be the party of the elites. We don't want corporate money for the DNC. We want to repeal that tax-break that corporations and the wealthy got, and give that money back to the middle class and working class Americans and be blunt about institutional racism, be blunt about pay and equity for women. All of those ideas go together. There's been some that said you have to choose one or the other. Actually we saw a lot of democrats talk about all of the above but not talk about Donald Trump and those folks did either won or came damn close. And I think we have a clear template for what we need to in the next to two years.

Brzezinski: Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you very much for being on the show this morning.

Mayor: Thank you.

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