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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ADAMS DELIVERS REMARKS, SIGNS "SMALL BUSINESS FORWARD" EXECUTIVE ORDER TO REFORM SMALL BUSINESS VIOLATIONS

Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Economic and Workforce Development: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. I want to of course, first show my gratitude to Mayor Eric Adams, for being here today and for making sure that we take in this Administration very early and very bold steps to support the small businesses in our city. I also want to thank our elected leaders for being here. We'll hear from them in just a second. And of course, huge, huge gratitude to Joanne Quang, and Mr. And Mrs. Chen, the owners of the Pearl River Mart, let's give them a round of applause, please. We all know, of course, that New York is a big city of small businesses, 98 percent of the cities more than 230,000 businesses have less than 100 employees. And even in the best of times, it's pretty hard to run a small business. But we all know that during the pandemic, too many of our small businesses were devastated. More than 3,000 businesses closed during the height of the pandemic. And it's reported that close to a third of them may not come back.

So the mission that we are on, the mission that Mayor Adams has set us on is a very urgent one, which is why we are extremely excited to be able to on day four of this Administration announce steps that we are taking to ensure that agencies across government take those types of bold and early actions to do the type of top to bottom review of the most frequently enforced violations, all of which to ensure that we uplift the small businesses in our city.

And let me be clear, this is not just about changing rules and regulations. This is changing fundamentally, the City's relationship with small businesses, changing the culture of agencies so that we work harder for small businesses. This is about making sure that we give small businesses the room and the freedom to propel our economic recovery. This is about making sure that we make good on what I know to be the Mayor's commitment to ensure that New York City is the best place in America to start and to run a business. And then of course, as everyone knows, this is ultimately about getting stuff done every day of this Administration. And so, with that, I'd like to invite a number of partners to speak before we talk about the specifics of the executive order, which we're calling Our Small Business Forward Executive Order. First, I'd like to invite our new Manhattan Borough President, Mark Levine, who has been a long-standing champion of small businesses, not just in this borough, but across the city. Mr. Borough President.

[Applause]

[...]

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: Thank you, Borough President and now I'd like to invite the Council Member for this District Chris Marte. I know this is an issue that is near and dear to his heart. I understand that at some point in his youth he stalked cans in the bodega owned by his parents. So welcome and please, a few words from our Council Member.

[...]

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: Thank you, Councilmember. And before we hear from our Mayor, I of course, want to thank and welcome the owners of Pearl River Mart. This store was opened 50 years ago. And it was the first Chinese American department store in the city, and maybe even in the country, let's find out in the world, okay, even more legendary, even more legendary. And Joanne took over the reins in 2016. And as everyone knows, it's part of everyone's story of either visiting or living in New York to come by Pearl River Mart. We know that was tough during the pandemic. But the owners of Pearl River Mart like so many of their business owners in the city showed the type of grit and resilience that has been needed in order to persevere through very, very tough times. Joanne, I know like me, is the child of immigrants. I learned earlier that her parents are of Chinese descent, but from the Philippines, where my family is from. So, we shared a couple of stories and recipes just a few minutes ago. But what is amazing, is this is a common story for entrepreneurs in the city. And what we are here to say as part of this new Administration, is that you are not alone anymore. And we are going to take those early bold steps to make sure that we don't just communicate from with you or listen, but we actually make good on the promise. And we follow this through until there is real progress and meaningful change on your part. So, Joanne, thank you and welcome.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor Eric Adams: Love that. I love that. Yesterday, I talked about swagger. But now I'm talking about New York grit. You know, people miss that. And I appreciate you as owners, and activists, and your commitment. You've helped me indirectly without even realizing it. On during some real dark moments in my life, I walked on Broadway and walked into your store, and I bought a large Buddha that sits in my backyard. And I sit down all the time and meditate in front of that Buddha. So, thank you. There's a lot of Eric Adams stories out there, approaches something here in this store. It's more than trinkets and souvenirs. And to my amazing Deputy Mayor, you know, just continue to bring that energy, you're going to see the productivity, and the excitement of the team that we are building. And we're going to continue to be optimistic. Because you know, people don't realize negative energy breaks your spirit. All the negative energy we see out here every day, you know, that is what's killing the spirit of New Yorkers. And so yes, you may be happy, unhappy that I'm happy all the time. Because I have a lot to be happy for. I know this city, the city is resilient. And we just need to get out of the way and allow

that resiliency to happen. We have used our agencies to turn the American Dream into a nightmare. Every day all day in the way of small businesses not allowing them to flourish and grow. Resenting the fact when an agency walks through the door, not to say we're here to help, but we're here to hurt. And that has to stop. And when you think about the what the Councilman and the Borough President have—they have advocated for so long. We know that this city is made up of working people, everyday people with narratives and stories of coming here, as immigrants in opening a small shop or selling something on the streets maybe to graduate to open your own small business. Invest in all your money to open a restaurant as a dishwasher, only to have the Department of Buildings take two years to give you a CFO or National Grid to take another three years to turn on your gas, or Con Edison taking even longer to turn on your electricity, or having agencies walk in and fine first, instead of fixing and giving you the support that you deserve.

So, Pearl River Mart, we're going to put you on a new river, a river of hope and prosperity, we're going to be your partners and not your enemy. This is a landmark Asian American business. That's been a cornerstone of the community. I remember your large store on Broadway. And the course just sort of pushed you out after you made it a stability, a stable place to be. And this mart faces the same turmoil we heard all over the campaign trail. Every community I've visited that dealt with small businesses. They told me about the problems. And I stated as I took my notes on the campaign trail, I stated it was an Arnold Schwarzenegger moment, I said, I'll be back. I'll be back and I'm back. I'm back to use the power of the Mayor's Office to assist and not to hurt.

And you're right this community was devastated during COVID. Businesses closed, the hateful rhetoric that came from Washington, D.C. to connect COVID to the Chinese community, the anti-Asian violence, the number of attacks that we saw right here on Canal Street, but you were resilient, and you stood in there. And we were able to mobilize the families and friends to deal with the bigotry, the violence in the hate and the failure to patronize these important businesses. And I truly believe that this city, this administration is going to do everything possible not to talk about it but to be about it, to help small businesses in the city. all over the city off five boroughs, it doesn't matter if you're in Brighton Beach with the large Russian speaking community. If you're in Sunset Park with the large Spanish speaking community, if you are in Bed-Stuy with the large African American small business community and restaurants, or if you just merely here in a Chinatown area place that I served as a police officer, in my beginning years in 1985. We're going to be here to ensure these business grow. They have the hustle we're going to give them the flow and allow them to continue to bring commerce to our city.

So today, I sign Executive Order to reform small business violation, slash red tape, reduce needless fines and penalties. It will bring relief to our heartbroken entrepreneurs. The Executive Order builds upon Local Law 80. It calls on the Department of Buildings, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Sanitation, the Fire Department, Department of Consumer and Brokers Protection, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. All of these entities separately carry, they carry out important functions. But they have not been business friendly enough for this Administration will require all of these agencies to promptly review business regulations with the goal of encouraging compliance, reducing fined schedules, and allowing for cure periods or warnings for first time violations. You just opened a new business, you make a mistake, you should not be hit with a fine that's going to prevent you from keeping your doors open. We're going to put in a warning system that will allow those businesses that have a period of time for those non-emergency health violations a period of time to fix the problem. That's the goal. The goal is not to harm you, but to help you. Within three months each

of these agencies will need to identify the 25 violations that result in the greatest number of summonses and fines issued to businesses. We're not going to use this system to fine you to put money in our coffers. We're going to use this system to help you to put money in the tax base that you make when you hire people, when you have people come in and spend their money as tourists. That is how we feed our tax base and that is how we feed our coffers. These agencies will then submit recommendation for which violations should be reformed through elimination, fined amendments, allowance of a warning or allowance of cure period for first time violations which is so important. The agency will submit recommendations about whether the violations are necessary. We have so many violations on the books that are no longer necessary. And we want to promote and ensure that they promote important public purpose.

So, the Executive Order also establishes an interagency working group in the Mayor's Office to evaluate the submission of each agency to expedite decisions and put a plan into action. And of course, the working group will be chaired by my amazing Deputy Mayor, Mayor Maria Torres Springer, and the Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services, Kevin Kim, one of the first South Asians to represent and lead that Small Business Services. Small businesses are the heart and soul of our city, and we want to make sure that that heart continues to beat. Without us hurting and harming the small business of our city. The goal is to help keep each and every American Dream alive in New York City by offering a helping hand to ensure compliance with necessary support. We feel not fines, but extra support is going to get us through this in a real way. We failed in a real way. Fix it, don't fine it. Support, don't destroy it. The pandemic sidetracked our reform so many times before, but we're now full speed ahead. And we're excited about the moment and what are the opportunities that's going to come with it. This is our time. This is our time to revitalize our city and bring the right energy and spirit that this city has to offer.

During the 60s, a young man came here with his wife and opened a small shop. They brought the American dream and the American spirit with them. They believed, they believed in who we are and what we represent globally and nationally. Today, we are going to ensure that dream continues for the next families that are to come and for businesses to continue to thrive in our amazing city. So, I am signing this Executive Order with the same pride that I had when you signed your first lease. This is a new opportunity for us to move forward in the right directions.

Let it be said and let it be done. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

You need to commiserate the moment on me trying on. There's something about me and wearing South Asian clothing just really highlights me. And all and all of you before you leave, we want you to do something that's the new way New York way, spend, buy something. How does that look Gloria? Yes, we care. Let me set up the alarm.

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