



## **CBC's 2023 Annual Gala Award**

The Medal for High Civic Service Presentation to Governor Kathy Hochul

*Transcript*

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### **Marissa Shorenstein:**

Now let's turn to our evening centerpiece CBC's Medal for High Civic Service. Let's all please quiet down for this part. Each year we give the medal to a current or former public servant who exemplifies CBC's values and who has demonstrated great dedication to serving the public. I could not be more excited or proud to announce this year's awardee our very own Governor Hochul.

I had the pleasure of working with Governor Hochul for more than a decade. We traversed the state together to promote many issues important to New Yorkers. And I observed firsthand that she approaches her work with a steady hand combined with a deep sense of empathy and compassion. Her pragmatic approach makes her just the kind of moderating force New York needs now to help lift us out of the crises of the past few years, to deliver a brighter future for all New Yorkers. And yet, yes, it is true that she is a role model to the millions of young girls and women who call New York home. So many of us stand on her shoulders, including me as I stand here today, the first female chair of the CBC since its inception in 1932. And before we present Governor Hochul with her well-deserved award, we are fortunate and honored to have a special guest joining us this evening, Mayor Eric Adams.

Both Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul are lifelong public servants sharing a deep commitment to lifting their communities and working tirelessly to do so. They both also know that working collaboratively is the key to accomplishing big goals. We are grateful for their partnership on behalf of all New Yorkers for their approach to leadership and for the priorities they have individually and collectively set forth to bring positive change to our city and our state. Mayor Adams is a longtime friend of CBC. He spoke at this very gala last year because he knows that our organization brings value to city government and that the open and honest dialogue we have with his administration allows for a healthy exchange of ideas to move the city forward.



Mayor Adams, welcome back and it's nice to see you for the second time today. Please come forward to say a few words and introduce our great governor.

**Mayor Eric Adams:**

You, you could have kept that box. I could have been taller. Before I speak on behalf of my good friend the governor of the state of New York. I just want to thank CBC. During my campaign we used to have what was called Mayor classes where we spoke to about 250 to 300 New Yorkers. People who had one criteria, they love this city. And CBC was part of those conversations and many of the ideas that you see right now that I am implementing in stabilizing the financial crisis that we are experiencing. I learned from the CBC. They were very clear, very direct. It was hard to do the PEGs. Not only once, but twice. I knew we had to get our fiscal house in order before we ask New Yorkers to deal with the pain that came from not only the fiscal cliff that we are going to experience in 2025 but the uncertainties, no one thought in January 1st, we will have 47,000 migrants that were in our city. In some of the other uncertain times, uh, that we experienced. My mother used to do something when I was a child. Beginning of the week, she'll sit down with the six of us and she'll say, this is how, how much money's coming in. These are the bills. And so when you decide that you want something that can't pay for the bills, you tell me which bill you want, take, remove, want to turn off the lights. You want to turn off the heat, you want not to eat. You be part of the team. And so that's what I say to everyone in city government, when you start say, spin, spin, spin, you tell me what to take off the list. If we are going to get out of this situation, we have to do what this great governor is doing. And no matter how you look at the math, one good governor, one good mayor equals a good New York. Plain and simple. Plain and simple. And we are clear on policies. I cannot tell you, we do not have to make believe that we agree on the things that are important for this city. What she did with our team on the New New York Committee, what she's doing in Kips Bay, what she did was subway safety. The prerequisite to the prosperity of this city is making sure people feel safe in our subway system. You saw the results of what this governor did in our subway safety plan.

And the contributions she's making into the real crises we are having with those with severe mental health illnesses, to the point that they can't take care of themselves and they are dangerous to themselves and for her to state we're going to put the resources into our mental health crisis states a lot because it impacts on how we feel and how inhumane we could be by not taking care of those who are in need. We're in a good place and we have a steady hand at the wheel during these tough times. But I know this city and I know this state. This state is resilient. This is America's city and how we navigate out of these fiscal challenging time is going



to determine how the entire country is going to navigate out of them. People look towards New York. So I'm proud to be here today as we give the governor of the state of New York this award. Thank you CBC. Governor.

**Governor Kathy Hochul:**

Well, thank you. Good evening everyone. First of all, a lot of history was made on this stage tonight. Not just the first female governor, not just the first female head of the CBC, but you also witnessed something that is quite historic for New York. That's the governor and the mayor working together. Same team. Same team, Mayor.

And I thank you for being such an extraordinary partner because it is working together that we can look to the promise of the future, the present of the future with great optimism. So thank you Mayor Adams for honoring me with the presentation that you afforded me this evening. And I want to thank all of you. Marissa Shorenstein, we've known each other a long time. I thank you for the guidance you've given to me when I was in an unexpected situation. August 21st, 2021. All of a sudden you're the governor. And I called upon the Shorenstein family. I've known them a long time to help me assemble what I called the dream team. I said I want to have the best and the brightest people that we could attract to government be at my side because I also was a student of history and I know that people like F.D.R was governor during the crash.

And so many of the policies that he was able to take to the White House, literally the same year that this Commission was founded, were formed first with smart people like Francis Perkins in his own office and our capitol. So I knew that I could only get through the crisis, that if we fail our state because of the pandemic, if I had the smartest people, many of those advisors in this room. And I thank Marissa for being the person who brought them to the table. I also thank Andrew, Andrew Rein for being the President. I've drawn on his advice. I know he knows men are many members of my administration and he knows he's got direct access because I benefit from the ideas that all of you come up with as leaders, but also the research team. Because you can't go this alone. You truly can't go this alone.

And I think about what Stephen Berger was talking about. Sounds like he's auditioning for a job with my administration. All he's up here talking about I saved hospitals, I saved the Port Authority, I saved the MTA, I saved the city, I saved the planet. Come on, I've got room for you. I've got a job opening for you. So Steven, come on board. What an extraordinary, and thank you. Your award is so well deserved as well. But I think back through history, you mentioned



Stephen, some people I was mentioned Hugh Carey, the man who saved New York. That book is in my bookstand in the Capitol. And I think about that often because my first time in sort-of public service was as a high school intern working on Hugh Carey's campaign for governor. And two years later, you mentioned Stanley Steingut I had a very cool business card as an 18 year old that said special assistant to the speaker of the New York State Assembly, which is a nice way of saying I was an unpaid intern, but I had really cool business cards. But it was that really cool status that I had that I could attract another intern into my life. And that is my husband who's with me here today. Your first gentleman, your first first gentleman. My husband Bill Hochul. I could recognize him as well. Another lifelong public servant.

I also want to thank our Attorney General Tish James, who just lights a fire. She's out there just battling evil wherever you find it. Whether it's an former occupant of a White House, she's not afraid of anybody. She is one of my dear friends to our Attorney General Tish James.

And Brad Lander. I saw him at, I got a little mixed up with my speech binders because earlier Brad and I were at the CPC and I had my CBC binder. The CPC is the Chinese Planning Council wishing them happy year of the tiger. It's, I don't know what I'm talking about, but Brad Lander is a great friend as well and what a wonderful public servant. But also as I think about the leaders of the past and the present, this room is full of my advisors and one of them is our former Lieutenant Governor Dick Ravitch. I'd like to give him recognition tonight as well. Thank you Dick. Thank you.

So, and to Walter Harris, who everybody's congratulating on his years of service here. I'm going to congratulate him on being a first time grandfather. Walter to you and to Gale and your beautiful family, Kate, we adore Kate. Can't believe she actually left public service to have a baby. I mean, who does that? But she's welcome back anytime. What a great contributor to all the work that was done to get us through the pandemic. You know, helping lead ideas that got us through some of the darkest days. So to Kate Harris, congratulations as well. But this organization is quite extraordinary. I think you know that. You know you're sitting with really the movers and shakers of our time. But what I want to focus on is not just today, and I'll get to that in a minute, but also what Stephen spoke about is how we're looking back 50 years on how we got through some of the darkest days when people were basically thinking of New York City, last one here, turn out the lights. You know, it was a very, very difficult time. A lot of people gave up on this city. A lot of people didn't believe in it. A lot of people left this city, found their fortunes elsewhere. So they thought, but boy did they miss a great comeback. They missed something quite extraordinary in our state's and our nation's history. And I want people 50 years from now



to look at our time and say, how did the city that was hit the hardest by a pandemic where people just abandoned our streets for the longest time and in its place crime rose, not just in New York, I just want to be clear on that. It rose everywhere across the country. But something happened to the human condition during that pandemic that drove a lot of people either to criminal behavior or to the depths of mental illness. A lot of people had been on the edges maybe before, but this pushed them over. More homelessness. Some of the changes are facing saying, how do we stabilize places like Midtown when people just aren't coming into work anymore? There's zooming into life, zooming into their careers. I think it's going to right set itself. I really do. Three years later, we thought we'd be a little further along. I'll be honest, I'm still frustrated that our ridership of the MTA is only about 60, 67%. But you know what surprises me? Even a year ago when I was studying on our MTA trends, why is ridership down a half or two thirds of what it used to be during the pandemic, during the work hours, like morning commutes into your jobs, but somehow it's back to normal during Sunday brunch times and late at night on Saturdays and Friday nights. I'm just curious because if you're afraid to get on the subway at 8:00 AM on a Monday morning, why are you out there at midnight on a Saturday? So I just want to put out, these are the kind of studies that I do. Maybe you don't do that. Maybe the analysts at the CBC don't do that level of scrutiny that I give things, but I'm just looking at common sense. I'm from Buffalo. I just look at what, what, what the heck. Uh, but I do look at the MTA because it is so critically important to us and how are we going to stabilize the MTA, keep it going for that time when we are back to normal and we will get to that time. In fact, we'll do better than normal just like we did 50 years ago. You'd always do better. But I want to thank, uh, many of the people in this room for helping us come up with a plan to literally stabilize the MTA in still such time as we have the revenues back from the riders that we used to rely upon. So we put forth a plan in our budget, please support it to our legislators. And it's kind of a shared pain approach, which I think is what got you through 50 years ago. Everybody's got to bear some of the pain. But this is important to me. It's important to me because I know how important the MTA is. So I'm not going to cut service at a time when I'm trying to get riders back. I don't think that works very well. I don't think that's a good philosophy. But we'll find savings. We'll find savings. Got a little more shared experience with the payroll mobility tax. And I don't complain about it. It's only going from 0.34% to 0.5%. We can all handle that because we're going to keep investing in the MTA. I've got to make sure that we keep improving the safety on the MTA. And the Mayor was correct. We talked about public safety on the subways back in October. We stood together when our crime rate was really out of control. And I said, I'm stepping up as a State, Mayor, because I want work with you to make sure that people feel safe and be safe on our subways. So we literally put money to help pay for the overtime for NYPD on the subways.



We paid for cameras to go in the subways. And we also talked about not just cops and our care for individuals, but also the cameras, but also taking care of the people who are mentally ill who should not be living on the subways. They need to be getting care somewhere else. So my budget this year puts in \$1 billion into dealing with the mental health crisis because that's how we can stabilize our society by giving people the continuum of care. And no other governor has leaned into this because no one really talked about mental illness before. But I've seen it firsthand. I know it can do. I know what depression can do to people. And even in my own family, we lost a nephew to an overdose. People give up hope. So there is a better way and we're going to take care of these individuals. But we also want to make sure that people are not afraid to walk our streets and to go into our shops and go into our subways. They deserve the security of knowing that no one on the street who needs care is going to harm them or their children. That's a basic compact we have with our residents. Government will take care of you, we'll protect you. And I'm committed to continuing to do that. So we're focusing on the MTA, we're focusing on mental health.

We're also focused on housing. If you've not heard about it, it's bold, it's ambitious, but it's imperative. It's imperative that we right the years of neglect when other parts of this region are literally eating our lunch. They're surpassing us in how many more housing units they have built. And I'm not just talking about affordable. I put \$25 billion toward affordable housing one year ago in my budget. But now I want to make sure we have affordable market rate, luxury housing, townhomes, condos, multi-family units, big housing, it doesn't matter. I just want more housing built because we have a challenge right now. We have a situation where people want to live here. They want to come from other parts of the country. They want to raise their kids in the same neighborhood where they were born and raised and went to grade schools and they can't afford it. You build more housing, increase the inventory, should have a stabilizing and hopefully depressant effect on the prices. That's how we're going to bring back this state. 800,000 housing units. I'm going to build them with your help. We'll get it done. And we have no alternative. Other regions of this, the Northeast, Boston, Philly, Washington, New Jersey going to lose to New Jersey. I love new <laugh>, I love New Jersey. I love New Jersey. I love the governor of New Jersey. But come on <laugh>, they're building more than we are, okay? We don't let that happen. I'm very competitive, okay? I watched a lot of football and I'm kind of going through football season withdrawal. So I've got to be competitive in another sport. And that is to make sure we win this, we win this because this is how we're going to make sure that when employers want to come here, whether it's 50,000 jobs coming because of Micron, that I have a place for their employees to live.



So you know the elements of my plan, they're all in here. My staff and they're really smart. They're all convinced that I should stand here and read to you my entire budget and all the policies. And I said, why would I want to do that? And they said, because these are policy wonks. They eat this stuff up, they'll enjoy with their desserts. But I'm go out on a limb and assume you do not want that to happen tonight. So look up my budget online. I'm sure it's under [kathyhochul.com](http://kathyhochul.com) or someplace. You'll find it. You're smart. But it's important. It's important that you know the elements of our New York compact so you can help me persuade others that yes, 421a is not just a couple of numbers that don't mean anything by not extending 421a yet last year the legislature took a big gamble that people without the incentive will decide that it's in their financial interest to continue building affordable housing. I knew that was not going to be the results. We have no more basically no business in the pipeline. We have a challenge there. We have to overcome that. And I want to make sure that this budget restores the incentives that I believe are going to incentivize the building of more housing. Now, that's not the whole plan, that's only one part of it.

But I've also put forth metrics. I expect every community to participate in the rebirth of this state. And that means creating more housing in every single community in the state of New York. Now I spent 14 years as a council member. I know all the resistance, I know all the ways to stop a project. I did zoning, I did planning, I did traffic safety, I did environmental reviews. I know all the ways you can stop a project, but I also know how to get a project through. And I'm going to be dedicated to making sure we build a coalition with your help and the help of others to make sure that we can get this through the legislature and win the hearts and minds of New Yorkers who will realize that despite them saying that Long Island's going to become the sixth borough. Not sure why that's a negative. But Long Island can do this because people want to live on Long Island. And if you build back the housing, the kids and grandkids can live there. The employers will know that they can bring people who want to work there and live there because Long Island and Westchester are wonderful communities as well. And they deserve to have this housing built. So we've got some hurdles ahead of us. I'm okay with that. I don't mind a good fight, but I need your help and I'm asking for your help.

And lastly, the Mayor mentioned the crisis, the humanitarian crisis of the migrants coming through here. Just last Saturday night at the White House at a dinner with the President and other governors, I said, we need some more help. I'm going to continue asking for more help from the federal government. But until then I could not leave this city hanging. So we stepped up, I said, I'll put a billion dollars between paying for housing, legal services, helping facilitate the National Guard to be there, paying for healthcare, whatever we have to do because I don't think





this should be a New York City only burden. So we're going to do that as well. We're going to make sure that we help share until such time, when the fever breaks and you know when things are going to start turning around? As soon as we get Washington to agree with us that these individuals should be able to get expedited work permits. Because believe me, I've got jobs for every one of them. They want to work. I've got jobs that are going unfilled and that's how we don't need shelters anymore. We don't need supportive services because they'll be able to support themselves and their families. And that's what we have to fight for. And I'm continuing to work on that every single day.

So we're looking in good shape with our budget. We're far better off than we were when I took office 18 months ago when our, we had in our state the 10th largest economy in the world had a 4%, 4% reserves. Now in Buffalo, where I'm from, we don't talk about rainy days, we talk about blizzard days. So I've seen some really wicked storms in my lifetime and I knew that if our finances turn from what they were, and last year everything looked great. Unprecedented money out of Washington, stock market was on fire higher than ever tax receipts. It was great. And there's a lot of pressure as my first, my first budget by a lot of people in Albany to spend every dime we had. Now that's very tempting. Everything sounds great and many of them were important to do. But I also knew at 4% reserves, we are heading into a danger zone because while it may have been good a year ago, I did not know what the future would bring. I could not have foresee the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the spike in oil prices, inflation going off the roof, the interest rates going up. None of that was foreseeable when I did my first budget. But I knew we had to set money aside. And what I did then, and this year, and we'll do in this budget, within a very short time, within a matter of months, New York state will have gone from 4% reserves to 15% in reserves. And that is how we make sure that we are stable, that we can head into the future with the confidence that regardless of what happens, we can handle it. We don't have to raise taxes, we don't have to cut services, and we can be fiscally sound. That is my commitment to all of you as we go forth. But thank you for this honor. It means the world to me. Thank you for listening and thank you for being such great advisors through this organization, to make sure that we are doing the right thing by New Yorkers. God bless everybody. Thank you very much.

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