

MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT

Sam McCann, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (smccann@ndsny.org)
Arianna Fishman, New York Civil Liberties Union (afishman@nyclu.org)
Redmond Haskins, The Legal Aid Society (rhaskins@legal-aid.org)
Ryan Karerat, The Bronx Defenders (rkarerat@bronxdefenders.org)
Daniel Ball, Brooklyn Defender Services (Dball@bds.org)
Katie Schaffer, Center for Community Alternatives, (kschaffer@communityalternatives.org)

Following BOC Report on Deaths in Custody, City and State Officials Join Advocates in Demand to Address Dangerous, Overcrowded Jails and Prisons

The calls include reducing the jail population, offering vaccinations to incarcerated people and passage of the Less is More Act

NEW YORK— Public defenders, advocates and city and state officials will hold a digital press conference on **Tuesday, March 9 at 11:00 AM to respond to a bombshell Board of Correction (BOC) [report](#) that details the conditions that led to COVID-related deaths in Department of Correction facilities last year.**

When: Tuesday, March 9, 11:00AM

Register on Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KCXxBmOESfKA03Rgn9tKSg

Who: Speakers include:

- Senator Julia Salazar
- Senator Brian Benjamin
- Assembly person Phara Souffrant Forrest
- Assemblyperson Zohran K. Mamdani
- Council Member Keith Powers
- Alice Fontier, Managing Director, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem
- Justine Olderman, Executive Director, Bronx Defenders
- Philip Desgranges, Legal Aid Society
- Marvin Mayfield, Statewide Organizer, Center for Community Alternatives

What: Digital press conference calling for immediate steps to be taken in response to the BOC report, including:

- Offering all incarcerated people a COVID vaccine
- Reducing the jail and prison population
- Passing the Less is More Act

Speakers will explain how the DOC continues to fail to protect incarcerated New Yorkers from the danger posed by COVID, and draw a line from the conditions outlined in the report to what is currently happening on Rikers Island and other DOC facilities.

Background:

- **The BOC report outlines dangerous conditions in DOC Facilities**
 - The investigation details a complete disregard of social distance measures; severe overcrowding; an inability to keep facilities clean; a failure to distribute masks; and a denial of necessary treatment to people with underlying respiratory conditions.
- **Jail and prison conditions remain dangerous**
 - Recent affidavits from people held on Rikers Island echo the same dangers detailed in the report. Alberto Frias said on February 4, 2021 that Rikers Island “is very unsanitary and risky. It is impossible to stay six feet apart. You eat together, you use the same showers. DOC does not supply masks within the housing area, so people are walking around without masks.”
- **The city must reduce the jail population immediately**
 - DOC population has surged back to pre-pandemic levels, creating overcrowded, unsafe jails
- **The state must offer vaccines to incarcerated people**
 - Defender groups and advocates [sued](#) the state on February 4, seeking vaccinations, but are still awaiting a decision
 - Access to the vaccine, while not a panacea, is an important step towards dramatically reducing the risk this failure poses.
- **The legislature must pass the Less is More Act**
 - The Act would nearly eliminate the unnecessary and racialized incarceration of hundreds of people for technical parole violation.
 - New York incarcerated more people for these minor infractions than any other state in the country and this legislation must be passed urgently Michael Tyson, one of the men whose death is detailed in the BOC report, was jailed on Rikers because he failed to report to a parole officer.

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