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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Joint Defender Statement on Mayor de Blasio's Comments Concerning New York's Court System

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders issued the following statement in response to recent [comments](#) made by Mayor Bill de Blasio concerning New York's court system:

“If Mayor de Blasio was actually engaged in the criminal legal system and not merely parroting his New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner's fear mongering, he would quickly recognize that New York's court system has been functioning throughout this pandemic, conducting arraignments, bail hearings, pleas and conferences. Trials and hearings have also begun in every borough.

What the Mayor continues to ignore is the crisis facing our detained clients at Rikers Island right now. He fails to understand that the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) is not producing people to court, to their hearings, to their medical appointments and to the mental health competency hearings. The Mayor should look in his own backyard before pointing the fingers elsewhere.

The necessary switch to virtual proceedings did not and has not prevented prosecutors from seeking bail, the courts from setting bail or from remanding individuals charged with certain crimes, or law enforcement from conducting investigations. In fact, that is the crisis that has caused the death of 12 people alone just this year.

The Mayor's call on the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA) to churn through cases is reckless and undercuts the real need for the entire criminal legal system to focus on those incarcerated and not this ridiculous performative dance of dragging people already out in the community to court every few weeks for nothing.

Lastly, as we have now stated ad nauseam, the Mayor's contention that the courts have contributed to any uptick in crime is entirely unsupported by any evidence and utterly devoid of logic. It is a claim that has been debunked multiple times in the press including by the *New York Post*.

We can only surmise that the Mayor continues to spread these falsehoods to undermine the historic and needed pretrial reforms enacted by Albany in 2019. The Mayor should stop making these reckless comments and instead educate himself on the fundamentals of our criminal legal system and focus on the problem that his agencies, namely the NYPD and DOC, have created.”

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