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

NYC Defenders Statement on Plan to Transfer Women and Transgender People on Rikers Island to Upstate Prisons

(NEW YORK, NY) – Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, and Queens Defenders released the following statement on Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Kathy Hochul’s plan to transfer nearly all of the women and transgender people currently in detention on Rikers Island to two upstate prisons operated by the state’s Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS):

“The announcement, recently made by Governor Hochul and Mayor de Blasio, that nearly all of the women and transgender people currently detained on Rikers Island will be involuntarily transferred to state prisons is troubling in several respects. Primarily, the process used to arrive at this decision was illegitimate. A partial list of highly relevant parties who were not consulted or given any notice would include directly-impacted incarcerated people, their families, their attorneys, as well as their social workers and other critical service providers. A decision of this magnitude requires extremely careful and fully-informed deliberation. None was present. What was created instead was a unilateral plan that threatens to re-traumatize our clients by forcibly placing them in facilities designed for the long-term housing of convicted persons, thereby alienating them from their familial and legal support systems. The human rights disaster at Rikers is attributable to years of mismanagement, bail reform rollbacks and an illegal work stoppage by its corrections officers— a fact the City acknowledged in a lawsuit that it then promptly and inexplicably abandoned. A genuine solution to this disaster would seek to address the primary causes, not add to the dehumanization of our clients.”

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