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

## ***More than 70 Incarcerated Women and Transgender New Yorkers at Rikers Island Release Petition Protesting Transfers to Upstate Prisons***

(NEW YORK, NY) – More than 70 incarcerated women and transgender New Yorkers at Rikers Island released a [petition](#) condemning a plan brokered by Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Bill de Blasio forcing them to transfer from New York City jails to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility or Taconic Correctional Facility, which are run by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS).

**These New Yorkers** write, “How does making female detainees more isolated and less able to meet with counsel, court advocates, and visitors address the emergency?”

The petition further states that “this [plan] is simply a political maneuver designed to accomplish the closing of Rikers in name only. In reality, inhabitants at Rikers are being further violated once again starting with the women. How dare the governor sacrifice women for a photo op/headline?”

“This false ‘state of emergency’ in no way justifies creating obstacles to justice for detained women. We are unequivocally opposed to this edict and we will not be silent,” the petition continues.

“If you’re going to declare an emergency, we insist that the gov’t shoulder the burden, not the women who are already subjected to lengthy detention,” the petition concludes.

New York City’s public defender organizations, The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, and Queens Defenders, who collectively represent over 80% of the impacted incarcerated people, also decried the plan. In addition to creating difficulties for family and loved ones to visit the incarcerated person, the move will impact their access to counsel and ability to prepare their case. Unlike other residents of the state-run facilities who have already completed their cases and are sentenced, the people scheduled to be transferred all have pending cases, where they need to confer with counsel on a regular basis.

**The NYC Defenders** stated: “The people scheduled for transfer cannot afford the price of their freedom. They have not been convicted of a crime and are presumed innocent. The answer to the crisis at Rikers is not to transfer women and transgender people against their will away from their programs, service providers, attorneys, social workers and investigators who are working with them on their cases, or their families and friends who care about and support them. Instead, the answer is to come up with creative ways to safely release them and ensure their return to court. No person who is being held pre-trial should be transferred without their consent.

As is stated best by those who signed the petition, they did not cause the problems, but they are being made to bear the burden of this ill-conceived plan.

We urge the Mayor and Governor to read and acknowledge the words of the impacted people as stated in the petition and reconsider this plan.”

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