

# THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

## ***NYC TGNCNBI Task Force Demands Governor Hochul & Mayor de Blasio Stop Transfers of Women, TGNCNBI New Yorkers to Upstate Prisons***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The New York City Task Force on Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, and Intersex (TGNCNBI) individuals, in a recently issued [letter](#), called on Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Bill de Blasio to immediately end their plan to transfer women and TGNCNBI New Yorkers from Rikers Island to correctional facilities upstate.

The Task Force, commissioned by the City Council to advise the Department of Correction (DOC) on TGNCNBI-related matters at local jails, urged the Governor and Mayor to consult with advocates and directly impacted communities to discuss community-informed solutions to address the multiple and historic concerns on Rikers Island.

The Task Force further echoed what advocates have been saying since the beginning of the crisis in City jails: decarceration is the only real solution. They demand that the Governor work with the Mayor and community advocates and organizations to immediately release all vulnerable populations from DOC custody.

The letter reads in part:

*We recognize this crisis and know it intimately. However, transferring women and TGNCNBI people off of Rikers Island and into the custody of a wholly different entity, DOCCS, is simply not an acceptable solution.*

*This decision is ill-advised and lacks the expertise of advocates and those most directly impacted by carceral systems. Women and TGNCNBI people should not be used as pawns. Their safety, however minimal in any jail setting, should not be jeopardized due to staffing and crowding issues they did not create, and are not responsible for exacerbating.*

“Women and TGNCNBI people housed at Rikers Island should not be used as pawns. Their safety should not be jeopardized due to staffing and crowding issues that they did not create,” said **Mik Kinkead, TGNCNBI Task Force Member and Staff Attorney with the Rikers Island Civil Re-Entry Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “We are outraged that this decision was made without consulting the City’s own taskforce focused on issues facing incarcerated TGNCNBI New Yorkers, and demand that Governor Hochul and Mayor de Blasio abandon this plan and work with defenders and others to decarcerate Rikers Island now.”

“The hasty plan to transfer women and transgender people from Rikers Island to state prisons flies in the face of the years long fight to improve the conditions for transgender people incarcerated in NYC jails,” said **Deborah Lolai, Supervisor of the LGBTQ Defense Project at The Bronx Defenders**. “The protections for transgender people we have all fought so hard for simply do not exist in state prisons. Compounding the harm, it is our understanding that if our clients refuse a transfer outside the city they will be forcibly moved to men's jails on Rikers Island, where they will be put at even greater risk. This is just another example of complete disregard for trans lives.”

“The issues on Rikers Island have been ignored for too long. The options of transfer or being forcibly moved to a men’s jail on the island shows how little those in power understand the impacts of gender expression and identity in their daily lives of TGNCNBI people who are incarcerated,” said **Bryan Ellicott, Program Coordinator at Princess Janae Place Inc**. “Those of us signed on to this letter have been tirelessly working to address and develop policies on the treatment and placement of gender non-conforming and non-binary people that DOCCS does not recognize and still doesn’t by example of this population being transferred.”

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*The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. [www.legalaidnyc.org](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*