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

***Advocates Urge Swift Passage of Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act (S.1049 Salazar/A.5478 Gallagher) Amid Federal Rollbacks and Local Abuses***

*The GIRDS Act ensures dignity and safety for incarcerated transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people by requiring housing, language, and care aligned with their gender identity*

(ALBANY, NY) - In light of escalating federal rollbacks on transgender protections and alarming reports of mistreatment of transgender individuals in New York correctional facilities, advocates held a lobby day and press conference calling for the immediate passage of the Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act (GIRDS).

A recent investigative report by *THE CITY* highlights the dire conditions faced by transgender detainees at Rikers Island, including forced placement in facilities misaligned with their gender identity, denial of gender-affirming healthcare, and exposure to harassment and violence.

These revelations come amid federal actions that have dismantled key protections for transgender, gender non-conforming, nonbinary and intersex (TGNCNBI) individuals in custody and the cessation of funding for the Prison Rape Elimination Act Resource Center.

The GIRDS Act aims to address these systemic issues by:

- mandating that incarcerated individuals be housed in facilities that align with their self-identified gender, unless they opt out;
- ensuring access to commissary items, clothing, and other materials consistent with their gender identity;
- requiring correctional staff to respect individuals' gender identities in all interactions, including the use of correct names and pronouns; and
- limiting the use of involuntary protective custody to no more than 14 days, to prevent the misuse of solitary confinement.

Advocates point to recent legal victories, such as the settlement in Watertown, NY, where a transgender woman received policy changes in local law enforcement agencies following a lawsuit over mistreatment. These cases underscore the urgent need for statewide legislation to protect TGNCNBI individuals from discrimination and abuse in correctional settings.

“Transgender people are already disproportionately criminalized and incarcerated. Forcing them into facilities that do not match their gender identity is not just cruel, but it quite literally puts them in harm’s way,” said **New York State Senator Julia Salazar**. “For example, transgender incarcerated women face extraordinarily high rates of sexual assault in male prisons. And, transgender incarcerated people overall are less safe and dehumanized by correction officers. Given the full-blown assault taking place across our country against the trans community, it’s critical that we stand up for transgender rights in all spaces, including in our prisons. We must pass the GIRDS Act.”

**New York State Assembly Member Emily Gallagher** said, “People who are incarcerated and are trans, nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, and/or intersex face a disproportionate amount of violence — in society and particularly in carceral settings. Studies have found that they are nearly 10x more likely to be sexually assaulted than the general prison population while incarcerated. It is cruel and dangerous to force someone to serve a sentence in a facility that doesn't correspond with their gender identity. In this moment, when violence and dehumanization of trans people are on the rise, we must stand strong in New York and affirm that trans and nonbinary people exist and deserve to live with dignity, safety, and respect.”

“At a time when transgender, gender non-conforming, nonbinary, and intersex individuals are facing increased mistreatment and abuse in correctional facilities, New York State has a critical opportunity to step up and ensure the dignity and safety of its incarcerated population,” said **Ethan Lin, Staff Attorney with the LGBTQ+ Law & Policy Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “The Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act (S.1049 Salazar/A.5478 Gallagher) is essential to address the systemic issues that have led to harm and violence, particularly at places like Rikers Island. This bill would ensure that individuals are housed in facilities aligned with their gender identity, receive necessary gender-affirming care, and are treated with respect in all interactions. We urge lawmakers to pass this vital legislation before the session ends in June.”

“As the federal government attacks trans identity, reports are mounting of abuse of trans individuals inside correctional facilities. In this moment, New York must lead with moral clarity and pass the Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act. This is not just about respecting the identity of incarcerated individuals—it’s a matter of life and death. Every day without its passage puts trans, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, and intersex people at greater risk of harm behind bars. We call on lawmakers to act with urgency and pass S.1049/A.5478 to affirm that our dignity does not stop at the prison gate,” said **Brittan Hardgers, Director of Advocacy & Community Engagement at New Pride Agenda**.

“The deliberate indifference toward the safety and mental health concerns of TGNCNBI people housed in non gender-aligned housing is staggering,” said **Rachel Golden, Founder and President of Golden Psychology**. “These are life or death experiences that could be easily and safely remedied by a clear pathway to gender-aligned housing. S.1049/A.5478 will not only save lives, it will also save the State money in medical fees, mental health costs, and legal fees. It is a clear win for everyone involved. I urge lawmakers to protect our most vulnerable New Yorkers, and pass S.1049/A.5478 before the session ends in June.”

“In the face of the Trump administration's bigoted threats to TGNCNBI people and alarming reports of abuse of trans people in New York jails, our lawmakers must pass the GIRDS Act (S.1049/A.5478),” said **Ronan Tuggle, organizer at the New York Civil Liberties Union**. “TGNCNBI people, especially those of color, are often placed in prisons or jails that do not match their gender identity and subject to harassment, degradation, and violence. The GIRDS Act would ensure that incarcerated New Yorkers are housed in facilities aligned with their gender identity, receive necessary gender-affirming care, and are treated with dignity. We urge our lawmakers to pass this critical legislation before the session ends in June.”

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