



September 22, 2025

The Honorable Eric Adams  
Mayor of New York City  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Adrienne E. Adams  
Speaker of the New York City Council  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Jessica Tisch  
Commissioner  
New York City Police Department  
One Police Plaza  
New York, NY 10038  
[PC.Office@nypd.org](mailto:PC.Office@nypd.org)

Dear Mayor Adams, Speaker Adams and Commissioner Tisch,

We write to share our deep concern about the recent surge of NYPD in-custody deaths. As the city's public defenders, we are horrified that people arrested are at risk of dying in our city precincts and the central booking spaces in our courthouses. We voice our collective demand that New York City take concrete steps to address the crisis of deaths taking place in police custody, including when individuals are arrested and awaiting arraignment. To that end we offer the below as immediate measures to stop the deaths of New Yorkers in NYPD custody.

**1. Recognize the crisis of in-custody deaths and end broken windows policing**

We call for the end of “quality of life/ broken windows” policing, which NYPD has accelerated through its launch of “[Q-Teams](#)” across the city. NYPD is increasingly policing poverty and untreated behavioral health needs, which undermines both safety and public health. Waitlists and backlogs to access social services that address the needs of people with mental health and substance use, as well as the houselessness and food insecurity that are the underlying causes of many arrests should be eliminated. The city budget should continue to invest and build upon the “[Crisis to Care](#)” platform championed by the Progressive Caucus. We call on City Council to immediately use their oversight power to question the NYPD, and we call on Commissioner Tisch to provide answers as to her ramping up of so-called “quality of life” policing efforts and to justify these low-level arrests, which in the past six months have resulted in the unnecessary death of New Yorkers.

**2. Demand NYPD cease the illegal in-custody arrests of low-level offenses**

We call on the City Council to question NYPD on their overuse of in-custody arrest rather than issuing appearance tickets for low-level offenses as required by law. In total, [at least nine New Yorkers have died in NYPD custody](#) in 2025, three of them inside local courthouses waiting to be arraigned on low-level charges. NYPD continues to routinely violate Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) § 150.20, which

requires them (with limited exceptions) to issue appearance tickets in lieu of arresting individuals charged with violations, infractions, misdemeanors, and certain class E felonies. Arrests for low-level charges are on the rise. These arrests are illegal and unwarranted and they contribute to people with medical conditions and mental health issues entering jails in which NYPD is not equipped to provide needed medical attention.

**3. Request City Council inspections of NYPD central booking**

We call on city council members to use their oversight powers to visit NYPD central booking locations to experience first hand the squalid and unsafe conditions that New Yorkers are detained in 24 hours a day and the lack of coordination between medical staff in central booking and requests for medical attention.

**4. Create independent EMS staffing in courthouses**

The City should staff independent EMS workers, whose authority does not stem from NYPD, in every arraignment court room, every court house, every hour it is open - 9am-1am. This would also mean emergency personnel on call for the rest of the courthouse, which would reach incarcerated people on regular court appearances from Rikers Island, another City-controlled institution that is not providing adequate medical care which has resulted in unnecessary deaths.

This placement of EMS workers would be in addition to the [Enhanced Pre-Arrest Screening Unit](#) (EPASU) staff present in central bookings 24/7. The nurses in EPASU do pre-arrest screenings but they are dependent on the NYPD bringing the clients to them and their presence in central bookings has not been sufficient to prevent the deaths in NYPD custody in central booking this year. While emergency personnel must be readily available to respond to crises in central bookings and arraignments, City Council should also expand the scope of medical personnel in EPASU units to include a duty of care to evaluate all people in custody and respond appropriately to emergent medical conditions, including self-requested, attorney requested or officer observed.

**5. Engage in oversight on suicide prevention and mental health standards**

Serious inquiry should be made into NYPD failure to implement measures to prevent death by suicide in its precincts. Inquiries must be made into whether NYPD is trained on and in due course implementing [mental health minimum standards](#). This inquiry should include investigation into whether established standards found in the patrol guide (PG210-04) for people NYPD has in custody who require immediate medical or psychiatric treatment are being ignored or are simply inadequate to prevent escalation of the crisis leading to death.

**6. Empower automatic CCRB investigations of in-custody deaths**

City Council should require CCRB to automatically initiate independent investigations whenever there is an NYPD in-custody death. Council must demand that CCRB is granted direct access to NYPD records and databases *alongside NYPD Force Investigation Division (FID)* to effectively investigate these serious incidents expeditiously. The City Council should demand that CCRB is adequately staffed and resourced to fulfill their mandate. FID investigations lack transparency, and, in our experience, are neither thorough nor timely. For example, in the case of [Allan Feliz](#), the (FID) kept their investigation open for over two years, which stalled the CCRB investigation past the 18-month deadline for most discipline charges. FID should not be the primary investigative entity for the public nor the loved ones of people who have died in custody.

**7. Demand DOI-OIG systemic investigation**

We call on the City Council to issue a formal “must-investigate” to the DOI-OIG to ensure that they conduct an investigation and review of fatal deficiencies in NYPD policies, practices, and procedures as well as FID investigations of NYPD in-custody deaths and publish a report with their findings and

recommendations to prevent future deaths. DOI-OIG must conduct an inquiry into NYPD failure to implement measures to prevent death by suicide in its precincts. Inquiries must be made into whether NYPD is trained on and implementing mental health minimum standards, such as whether established standards found in the patrol guide (PG210-04) for people they have in custody who require immediate medical or psychiatric treatment are being followed. We urge City Council to ensure that DOI-OIG is adequately staffed and resourced to meet their obligations as an independent oversight agency over NYPD patterns and practices.

#### **8. Amend the NYPD Disciplinary Matrix**

We urge the NYPD to amend its Disciplinary Matrix to eliminate the category for “negligent failure to provide medical assistance.” Any failure to provide medical assistance is serious misconduct and calls for severe presumptive penalties including termination. Creating a separate category for “negligent failure to provide medical assistance” serves only to weaken accountability. “Negligence” is inherently a mitigating factor that can be considered within the Disciplinary Matrix. Since a person in custody is under the complete control of NYPD and has no recourse if they are ill, there should be serious consequences for any officer who fails to take appropriate measures to obtain treatment when a person’s life is in jeopardy.

When NYPD *action* results in civilian death (i.e. discharged firearm), a member of the service “may be suspended without pay for a period not exceeding thirty days.” (See New York Civil Service Law § 75(3) and New York City Administrative Code § 14-123). In cases of criminal allegations or other serious allegations of misconduct, a member of the service may also be suspended with pay during the pendency of the investigation and disciplinary Process. NYPD *inaction* that results in death should also lead to an immediate suspension and disciplinary proceedings.

#### **9. Demand Changes from Prosecutors**

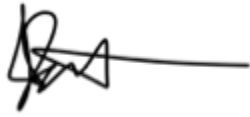
We call on other criminal legal system actors to take immediate steps to address their role in the crisis of in-custody deaths. Prosecutors’ disparate handling of violation and misdemeanor complaints, combined with overly harsh emphasis on pre-arraignment detention rather than issuing appearance tickets as mandated by law (CPL 150.20), should be examined by the City Council, as many of these policies are contributing to the deadly nature of pre-arraignment incarceration. The practice of denying appearance tickets on petit larceny cases because of a potential order of protection for allegations of theft alone should be examined and reformed. Prosecutors, in conjunction with the courts, should organize amnesty days so people can clear old bench warrants without fear, and prosecutors should dismiss outstanding SAP warrants.

#### **10. Support emergency stop-gap medical request process**

As an emergency stop-gap measure to address the city’s failure to care for New Yorkers in their custody, NYC defenders will create a form that memorializes our request to the NYPD for immediate medical attention. The defense attorney will sign and note the following: date and time of request to NYPD, name and badge number of the officer to whom request was made, as well as the officer overseeing the holding area. Copies will be given to the NYPD Sergeant on duty who should include the receipt of form in digital duty logs. NYPD should, as required by the Patrol Guide, keep records of these determinations and actions. This stop-gap emergency measure does not replace the city’s obligation to care for those it has taken into custody.

We look forward to a prompt, detailed response from you about how the City will end this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juval O. Scott', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Juval O. Scott  
Executive Director  
The Bronx Defenders

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tina Luongo', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tina Luongo  
Attorney-In-Charge  
The Legal Aid Society

*/s/ Piyali Basak*

Managing Director  
Neighborhood Defender Service  
Harlem

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stan Germán', with a bold, stylized script.

Stan Germán  
Executive Director  
NY County Defender Services

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Schreibersdorf', with a cursive script.

Lisa Schreibersdorf  
Executive Director  
Brooklyn Defender Services