



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Luis R. Sepúlveda

Senator Luis Sepúlveda and Senator Gustavo Rivera Announce a Joint Public Hearing To Discuss the Impact of COVID-19 on Prisons and Jails

SENATOR LUIS SEPÚLVEDA September 15, 2020

| ISSUE: **CRIME AND CORRECTIONS**

| COMMITTEE: **CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME AND CORRECTION**

With the purpose to examine the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on incarcerated populations

(New York, NY): State Senators Luis Sepúlveda and Gustavo Rivera announce a joint public hearing to discuss and receive testimonial evidence on COVID-19's impact on prisons and jails on Tuesday, September 22 at 10:00am via Zoom. More than 50,000 people are incarcerated in New York State, while most New Yorkers are unaware of the realities of the conditions these individuals are facing. Due to the pandemic, the inability to isolate and maintain safe social distancing measures from overcrowding has put the lives of many people incarcerated at significant risk, especially amongst the aging prison population. It has led to higher COVID-19 infection rates and deaths in prison systems nationwide.

This hearing will examine how New York State and local correctional facilities have responded to the pandemic. It will determine what next steps New York State should take to improve its emergency readiness and adequately prepare for future public health crises that will prevent an outbreak in the state prison population.

“As Chair of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, we must assess the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic in our prisons and jails statewide. We have an overcrowded incarcerated population, antiquated infrastructure, an increasingly aging population with underlying chronic health conditions, and an inadequate health care

system. We need to fully understand the needs of incarcerated individuals and correctional staff to adequately address the impact COVID-19 had on our correctional system. My heart goes out to the families that have lost loved ones inside due to this pandemic. I look forward to hearing testimony from stakeholders that can help us make informed decisions to significantly reduce the spread of the virus and protect the health and safety of incarcerated people and staff. I am grateful to be joined by my colleagues in government and fellow committee members to take proactive measures in the New York State legislature," said **Senator Luis Sepúlveda**.

"The response to the COVID19 pandemic in our State's correctional facilities has been deplorable and has put the health and safety of New Yorkers at risk. Incarcerated individuals and correctional staff have tested positive for COVID-19 at higher rates than New York City's general public," said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "Along with Senator Sepulveda and our colleagues in the Legislature, I look forward to this public hearing to take a closer look at how COVID-19 continues to impact New Yorkers in correctional facilities all over the state."

"New York has put forth commendable efforts to battle a once-in-a-century pandemic that we are still trying to figure out. When it comes to the incarcerated, however, those efforts have been minimal to nonexistent. The incarcerated were asked to produce hand sanitizer by the thousands of gallons yet didn't have access to the very product they were producing. Many families that I represent have reached out worried about the safety of their loved ones inside yet the state has refused to provide them, or my office, with answers. So I am grateful that Chair Sepulveda has called for this important hearing at this time. For the safety of the incarcerated and employees of our correctional facilities, it is critical that the legislature get answers on how the state has handled the pandemic in our prisons and I look forward to getting some answers on the 22nd, said **State Senator Zellnor Myrie**."

"Our inability to respond rapidly and effectively to the needs of incarcerated individuals during this crisis is unacceptable. While we continue working to significantly decrease our prison population and reshape the criminal justice system, we have to think very seriously

about how to prepare for these kinds of emergencies in the future. I thank my colleagues, Senator Sepulveda and Senator Rivera for hosting this important hearing,” said **State Senator Velmanette Montgomery**.

“COVID-19 affected many families, institutions, and individuals. We saw first hand how unprepared we were to handle the magnitude of the pandemic. This caused our correctional facilities to struggle significantly in their attempt at preventing the spread of the virus within their buildings. I would like to thank my colleagues Senator Sepúlveda and Senator Rivera for holding a necessary hearing on the impact of COVID-19 in our often overlooked incarcerated population, said **State Senator Jamaal Bailey**.”

"This pandemic has impacted every segment of our society, including our correctional facilities, which were already among the most challenging environments to live and work. I look forward to learning more about the effects of the virus on inmates, corrections officers and staff, and the policies that have been put in place to deal with the pandemic,” said **State Senator Patrick Gallivan**.

###