



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

SENATOR ALESSANDRA BIAGGI CALLS ON NEW YORK STATE AND NEW YORK CITY TO IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENT DECARCERAL POLICIES TO REDUCE JAIL POPULATION ON RIKERS ISLAND

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI September 8, 2021

BRONX, NY - Yesterday, a tenth incarcerated individual was reported to have died on Rikers Island this year. Senator Alessandra Biaggi, who represents Rikers Island, is calling on Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to work in tandem with the New York City and State Departments of Corrections to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis on Rikers Island and immediately implement decarceral policies in order to reduce the number of individuals being held on Rikers Island.

Senator Alessandra Biaggi is requesting the following measures be taken:

1. Governor Kathy Hochul immediately sign the Less is More Act (S1144A/ A5576) and direct Acting NYS DOC Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci to use his discretion to release individuals being incarcerated for technical parole violations.
2. Mayor Bill de Blasio and the Commissioner of the NYC Department of Correction permit people sentenced to less than one year to be released and serve the remainder of their sentence at home.

3. District Attorneys and judges use their discretion to change the pre-trial status of incarcerated individuals*, decline prosecuting cases, and avoid setting cash bail**.

Senator Alessandra Biaggi issued the following statement:

“Yesterday we learned of the death of Esias Johnson, the tenth incarcerated person to die on Rikers Island in 2021 alone. I extend my deepest condolences to the family of Esias, as well as the countless families who have endured the pain of losing loved ones on Rikers. However, our condolences and sympathies alone are not enough.

Sending individuals to Rikers Island has become a death sentence. Those incarcerated, many of whom are awaiting trial or being held on technical parole violations, are forced to live in filth and deprived of regular access to food, beds, and medication. The lack of resources and staffing, paired with ongoing mismanagement at Rikers Island, has created a violent environment that continues to threaten the safety of individuals who are incarcerated, staff, and healthcare workers. The inhumane conditions have resulted in a dramatic spike in self-harm among the incarcerated, with many becoming so hopeless that choosing to end their life is deemed a better option than remaining another day on Rikers.

We have failed to ensure the safety of all incarcerated people, and inaction is no longer an option. New York State and the City must work in collaboration to immediately reduce the number of incarcerated individuals on Rikers Island and ensure no individual is forced to live in the current conditions.”

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* The release of people held pretrial charged with violent felony, nonviolent felony, or misdemeanor crimes requires a judge’s order to change pretrial status, often on a motion by a district attorney or a defense attorney. <http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp->

content/uploads/2020/04/MOCJ-COVID-19-Jail-Reduction.pdf

**Judges have the discretion to release people, with or without pretrial conditions designed to ensure their return to court. Examples include electronic monitoring or drug treatment program participation. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/new-yorks-latest-bail-law-changes-explained>