



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Luis R. Sepúlveda

## NYS Senator Luis Sepúlveda Statement on Rikers Island Correctional Center Crisis

**LUIS R. SEPÚLVEDA** September 23, 2021

| ISSUE: **RIKERS ISLAND, CORRECTIONAL CRISIS, PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

Bronx, NY — Luis R. Sepúlveda, State Senator for New York's 32<sup>nd</sup> Senatorial District released the following statement in regards to the growing public health concerns at Rikers Correctional Center.

A second person in three days has died in custody at Rikers Island jail, totaling 12 individuals in this year alone. That is twelve too many.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I called for the release of individuals and for proper protocols to be established to fight the public health crisis. In Rikers Island jail, it is important to note that 80% of its population has not been convicted of a crime. With an uptick in Delta variant numbers, it is important that we revisit the future of Rikers. It is practically impossible to social distance in this kind of congregate setting. Releasing individuals will keep the population and the staff safe.

My colleagues who have visited Rikers within the past two weeks have reported sightings of overflowing toilets, floors covered with feces, vermin and rotting food. This is inhumane and no one should have to live in these conditions regardless of the nature of their crime.

While I am elated that Governor Hochul signed the Less is More Act last Friday and released 191 individuals from Rikers - it is not enough. I implore Governor Hochul and Mayor de Blasio to address this issue at Rikers immediately. I am also calling on our District Attorneys to avoid sending more individuals to this facility.

What is happening at Rikers right now is horrific and it is time to close this facility down. My heart goes out to the family members of those that have lost a loved one due to these terrible conditions.