

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY
25TH SENATE DISTRICT

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 915
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE: (518) 455-3451
FAX: (518) 426-6854

DISTRICT OFFICE
30 THIRD AVENUE, SUITE 207
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11217
PHONE: (718) 643-6140
FAX: (718) 237-4137

E-MAIL: MONTGOME@NYSenate.GOV

WEBSITE: MONTGOMERY.NYSenate.GOV



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April 4, 2019

Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Howard Judd Fielder, A.I.A.
Administrative Architect
Director of Design Unit
NYC Department of Correction
75-20 Astoria Blvd., Suite 160
East Elmhurst, NY 11370

Re: New York City Borough-Based Jail System Final Scope of Work to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, CEQR No. 18DOC001Y

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Director Fielder,

I am writing to submit my scoping comments to the New York City Department of Corrections regarding the current proposal to expand the Brooklyn House of Detention as part of New York City's plan to close Rikers Island Correctional Facility.

While I support the closure of Rikers Island, I am unequivocally against the current New York City Borough-Based Jail System proposal. The proposal nearly doubles the size of the current jail from 20 to approximately 36 stories. This considerable expansion is to accommodate an increase in housing for people in detention from an 810-bed to a 1,440-bed facility. **This is completely unacceptable and contradicts the spirit of the City's Borough-Based Jail System plan for smaller, safer, and fairer jails.**

The City's Borough-Based Jail System plan calls for a reduction of New York City's jail population from its current average daily population approximately 7,800 to 5,000. My colleagues and I in the State Legislature have recently enacted three critical criminal justice reforms that will significantly reduce New York City's jail population: Discovery, Speedy Trial, and Bail Reform. Based on the actions of the state legislature and current City initiatives to reduce the jail population, there is no reason we should build larger jails in our communities. Additionally, District Attorney Eric Gonzalez recently announced his Justice 2020 initiative, and has already refused to prosecute low-level offenses such as marijuana possession, and turnstile jumping also known as "theft of services".

Therefore, my colleague Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon and I have concluded that the City should submit an alternative proposal that reflects an average daily jail population of approximately 3,500. This will more accurately reflect what the criminal justice landscape will look like in the next few years.

Furthermore, the City's plan lacks details regarding how to bring tangible resources to our most underserved communities. The implementation of employment, education, mental health and other services should be included in the City's plan to close Rikers Island. Expanding the successful model of the community courts created by The Center for Court Innovation and implementing neighborhood policing in conjunction with the NYPD will help create more alternatives to incarceration.

I look forward to working with the City, other criminal justice entities, and my colleagues in the State Legislature to close Rikers Island and reform the criminal justice system.

Sincerely,


Senator Velmanette Montgomery
25th Senate District

Cc: Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
District Attorney Eric Gonzalez
Comptroller Scott Stringer
Speaker Corey Johnson
Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon
Senator Brian Kavanagh
Community Board 2
Community Board 6
Fort Greene Association
Commissioner Cynthia Brann, NYC DOC