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RESOURCES

December 20, 2021

The Honorable Eric Adams
New York City Mayor-Elect
P.O. Box 23723
Brooklyn, NY 11202

Dear Mayor-Elect Adams:

Like many New Yorkers, I have read with horror the stories of chaos, death and deplorable conditions at the Rikers Island jail complex. I understand that currently, plans are underway to close Rikers Island by 2027 and then, open four new, smaller jails—one in each borough except Staten Island—to take its place. It has been reported though, that there are concerns regarding the proposed sites of these smaller jails and the cost to construct them.

Today, I write to you with a potential solution. I am the representative of St. Lawrence County, which is home to Ogdensburg Correctional Facility. Last month, Governor Kathy Hochul announced plans to shutter this facility by March 10th. Instead of constructing four new, smaller jails to house the incarcerated population at Rikers Island, I am proposing part of the population be relocated to Ogdensburg Correctional Facility (OCF). Precedence for this type of arrangement exists, as OCF is just across the street from Riverview Correctional Facility, which first opened in 1988 as one of two facilities in my district funded by New York City to house the incarcerated.

Housing part of the Rikers Island population at OCF would be a win-win for New York City and the North Country, with the arrangement offering the following benefits:

A reliable, hardworking and trained workforce: In recent months, I've read about the rampant absenteeism at Rikers Island. Up until recently, 268 hardworking individuals worked at OCF. These men and women show up for work, take their jobs seriously and help to create a safe, positive environment for the incarcerated. Many of those individuals would welcome the opportunity to again work at OCF.

Already in place infrastructure: Utilizing OCF to house the incarcerated from Rikers Island would relieve New York City from having to spend an estimated \$8 billion on four new jails. Recently, the state has poured more than \$10 million into this facility, making upgrades to its roof, HVAC system and other areas.

The ability to offer programs to prepare the incarcerated for the future: At OCF, a number of programs exist to help the incarcerated learn important skills they can put to use upon their release. In addition, other programs—like their on-site garden program and work release program—allow the incarcerated to give back to the community and find fulfillment in their lives. OCF has the infrastructure in place to be able to offer these opportunities to the incarcerated in the future.

Meeting the mental health needs of the incarcerated: Rikers Island has an unfortunate history of mistreating and even abusing the incarcerated with mental illness. In addition, in recent months, many incarcerated individuals have said they have missed appointments with mental health physicians, due to staffing shortages. OCF is located adjacent to St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and the opportunity could exist to collaborate with the facility to ensure the incarcerated are receiving the mental health care they need.

These are just a few of the benefits of utilizing OCF to house a portion of the incarcerated from Rikers Island. As you continue to develop your long-term vision for the Rikers Island jail complex, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you and discuss how we could work together on a plan that benefits each of our respective regions and in turn, New York State as a whole.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patty Ritchie". The signature is stylized with large, overlapping loops.

Patty Ritchie
State Senator