

WE CAN CLOSE RIKERS WITHOUT NEW JAILS: HERE'S HOW

Jails and policing have never made us safer. There is no empirical evidence demonstrating that more jails, prisons, and police make us safer. That's not ideology, that is fact.

The borough based jails plan does not improve conditions for incarcerated people. The plan did not commit to any improvements in immediate conditions for people currently incarcerated other than building entirely new facilities, did not divest money away from jails and incarceration, or shift that funding into communities.

11 billion must be spent on community resources. New York City has skyrocketing unemployment and houselessness, which have only been exacerbated by the existence of Rikers and other city jails. The funds allocated towards the jails—equivalent to the CUNY tuition costs of 1 million students for a year—must be directed towards meeting New Yorkers' needs instead of jails. This is money out of NYCHA's hands that must be returned to public housing.

If they build it, they will fill it. At the height of COVID-19, the city was able to lower the jail population to 3,950, only 650 more than the capacity of existing borough-based jails. Releases during COVID-19 proved that it is possible to decarcerate the number of people in NYC jails down to a number that would negate the new jails.

It is racist to claim directly impacted people have a uniform opinion. Spending 11 billion on new jails should be named for what it is -- a land grab, real-estate scheme -- without racist justifications that it is supported widely by criminalized people and families.

Police and COs are part of the same system. No one can be committed to public safety without being committed to safer outcomes for all New Yorkers.

The borough based jails aren't just a bad idea. They're unpopular. Even organizations who previously supported the plan pulled out.

Jail expansion is a choice, but not the only one. The city is choosing jail expansion, but closing Rikers is possible without new jails.

DECARCERATION STRATEGIES



ELECTORAL STRATEGIES

WHAT CAN THE NEXT MAYOR DO TO CLOSE RIKERS WITHOUT NEW JAILS?

Stop allocating money towards building new jails. The Mayor's power is virtually unlimited in this regard. The Mayor has the unilateral power to stop investing in jail building.

WHAT CAN THE CITY COUNCIL DO TO CLOSE RIKERS WITHOUT NEW JAILS?

The City Council does not have the power to transfer the use of those capital funds to other projects.*

The City Council could initiate a new ULURP process to prohibit jailing on Rikers before 2027 alongside budget initiatives to address New York City's actual needs (housing, harm reduction, etc.). As in, actually close Rikers now, invest in communities.

The City Council could fight, as a line item, the money allocated in the Mayor's proposed budget every year dedicated to building the new jails.

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