

## **CITY PLAN TO LIMIT JAIL VISITING IS WRONG FOR NEW YORK**

### **CITY PLAN TO LIMIT ACCESS OF VISITORS TO CITY JAILS HURTS BLACK, LATINO & POOR FAMILIES**

The City is proposing severe limitations on the ability of children, family and friends to have meaningful contact visits with loved ones awaiting trial or serving a short sentence in our jails. This plan will overwhelmingly impact Black and Latino families and communities, and poor people, who can't make bail.

### **FACTS DO NOT SUPPORT THE NEED TO IMPOSE LIMITATIONS ON VISITORS**

The City claims that the limitations are needed to reduce contraband brought into the jails. Current procedures are already effective in stopping contraband entering the jails through visitors (if there is a basis for concern, limitations on visits can already be imposed including suspending visits and requiring visits to be non-contact "booth visits.") In fact, every official and unofficial report confirms that the primary source of contraband is staff, not visitors. There is no evidence that the proposed limitations would reduce violence. The vast majority of violent incidents at Rikers do not involve smuggled contraband. The plan to impose new restrictions on visits as a violence reduction measure inappropriately shifts the blame for violence at Rikers away from the corrections officers and their powerful union. The fact is that there is a lack of a connection between visit restrictions, violence reduction and reduction in contraband in the jails.

### **VISITS ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION – VISITING SHOULD BE IMPROVED AND MADE EASIER**

It is well known that visitors provide support, important community connections, and, as the Mayor acknowledges, facilitate "successful reentry." Visitors support the mental health of those incarcerated. When visits go up, violence goes down. The City has committed significant resources and funding toward decreasing unnecessary detention and increasing successful reentry following incarceration. Reducing and restricting visiting for individuals in the jails flies in the face of these laudable goals.

The City should be working to improve visiting in the jails by reducing the waiting time for visitors, improving equipment used to conduct searches without pat frisks, communicating visit policies and procedures clearly, assigning sufficient, trained, steady staff to visit areas, and providing appropriate space for visitors including children.

### **THE PROPOSED MEASURES ARE HARSH AND DISCRIMINATORY**

The proposed limitations on visiting are extreme, allowing DOC to conduct broad investigations on visitors including both criminal record checks and making decisions about who is a family member and what constitutes a close or intimate relationship. The proposed measures require that appeals of visit restrictions go to DOC rather than to the independent Board of Correction. The DOC has a long history of violating Board Standards and its own written policies, DOC should **not** be the arbiter of appeals to restrictions on visiting. The Board of Correction should retain this important role.

Harmful results of these proposed limitations on visiting include:

- Unfair discrimination against visitors based on prior criminal record or pending charges.
- Denying the rights of and unfairly punishing thousands of children who visit a parent or loved one on Rikers *each month* because their guardian has a criminal record or is deemed a threat based on DOC's assessment and will not be permitted to visit.
- Intimidating background checks for all potential visitors that go beyond a criminal record check to include running the names of innocent visitors, accused of no crime, through various databases at NYPD and other agencies, and retaining this information. This intimidating intrusion will discourage visitors, further isolating those who are incarcerated.
- Delays in permission to visit stemming from background searches and proposed lengthy appeals of imposed visit restrictions. We must not permit changes that could result in serious delays in contact with visitors. Lack of contact at a time of serious trauma and agitation can be seriously harmful and may result in tragic outcomes.

### **SAVE VISITING SIGN-ON ORGANIZATIONS**

1. Jails Action Coalition
2. Sylvia Rivera Law Project
3. National Religious Campaign Against Torture
4. JustLeadershipUSA
5. Healing Communities Network
6. The Osborne Association
7. The Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, UAW Local 2325
8. Urban Justice Center
9. The Correctional Association of New York
10. Hour Children
11. Brooklyn Defender Services
12. NYC Criminal Justice Clergy Task Force
13. The Center for Nu Leadership on Urban Solutions
14. Children's Rights
15. Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC)
16. Latino Pastoral Action Center

17. National Latino Evangelical Association
18. Antioch Baptist Church
19. Westchester Chapter NOW
20. Crossroads Church
21. Beulah Temple Church of Jesus Christ Apostolic
22. Trinity Baptist Church
23. St. Matthews Baptist Church
24. Community Protestant Church
25. Church of God 7th Day Adventist Church
26. Citizens Against Recidivism, Inc.
27. Incarcerated Nation Corporation
28. Queer Detainee Empowerment Project
29. Promised Land Church
30. Church of the Incarnation
31. Micah institute at New York Theological Seminary
32. Bronx Christian Fellowship
33. Accepted Ministry
34. New Testament Temple Church
35. College and Community Fellowship