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MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CITY JAIL POPULATION IS BELOW 9,000 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 35 YEARS

de Blasio administration dramatically reduces the number of people in detention, while keeping crime at historic lows, as the jail population is on target to match monthly average daily population in 1982

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio today announced the New York City jail population has fallen below 9,000, and the City is on track for a monthly jail population below 9,000 for the first time in more than three decades. With just a few days left in the month, the average daily population for December is 8,980, and today's population is 8,783.

"Today, New York City has the lowest incarceration rate of all large U.S. cities and crime rates continue to fall, proving that a large city can have small jails and safe communities," said **Mayor de Blasio**. "We've been carrying out a multi-pronged effort over the course of my first term to shrink our jail population, and today we see the results: a jail population lower than it's been in 35 years."

"This historic announcement of this massive jail population reduction is a milestone in our path to closing Rikers Island. This milestone will help advance our progress in closing Rikers even sooner than we anticipated. From the lowest crime rate our City has seen in years to this momentous drop in the jail population to the Council's Criminal Justice Reform Act, our efforts to make our city more just and secure are delivering results. I thank Mayor de Blasio for his collaboration in establishing a fairer and safer criminal justice system," said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice said, "The historic reduction of the jail population is the result of many simultaneous efforts aimed at both reducing the number of low risk people who enter our jails and shortening the length of stay. Reducing the jail population is a piece of the seismic changes taking place in New York City to ensure a smaller, safer and fairer justice system. We are grateful to our partners inside and outside government and to every New Yorker whose ideas and work continue to push our work forward."

“This is a great step forward in our efforts to reduce population and close Rikers Island. We’re well on our way towards moving into smaller, borough-based facilities that will be safer, easier for visitors to access, and save the city millions in transportation and upkeep costs. In the meantime, we remain committed to the internal reforms that are protecting staff and inmates each day, and providing real opportunities for inmates to engage in programs that help build life and job skills. None of this would be possible without the efforts of our correction officers, who have been tasked with implementing these reforms and risen to that challenge magnificently,” said **Department of Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann**.

In March, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the City’s plan to close Rikers and replace it with a borough-based jail system that is smaller, safer and fairer. Achieving that goal will require the census be reduced to 5,000. The current jail population is down 58 percent from its peak of 21,674 in 1991 and has fallen more than 20 percent since Mayor de Blasio took office. Additionally, the jail population has fallen about 5 percent (roughly 400 beds) compared to this time last year. The reduction of the jail population is driven by a number of factors including reduced crime and greatly expanded alternatives to incarceration. Fewer people are entering jail because:

- Crime continues to fall. As of December 24, there have been 284 homicides, 774 shootings, and 11,827 burglaries citywide. Compared to the same time period in 2013 this represents a 14 percent decrease in homicides, a 28 percent decrease in shootings, and a 30 percent decrease in burglaries.
- Jail is increasingly reserved for serious crime. Arrests for low-level crimes continue to fall: misdemeanor arrests are down 29 percent in the last 4 years. And the number of jail admissions for misdemeanor detainees has dropped by 25 percent since 2014, indicating we are getting closer to the goal of reserving jail for those who pose a risk.
- For the first time in city history, we now have a citywide alternative to bail program – [supervised release](#) – that has diverted over 6,000 people from jail since launching in 2016. Funded in part by the District Attorney of Manhattan’s office, supervised release allows judges to assign eligible, lower-risk defendants to a supervisory program that enables them to remain at home with their families and continue working while awaiting trial. The program has helped to reduce the number of people in jail on bail of \$2000 and under by 36 percent in the last four years.
- The City has brought 120 additional supportive housing beds online, which are nearly filled. The evidence-driven program is based on models that reduced jail admissions by 36 percent.
- The City continues to introduce and expand diversion programs designed to help people access services and to prevent future reoffending, including \$30 million in new initiatives announced in June to accelerate safe reductions to the number of people in jail.

For those who do enter jail, every part of the criminal justice system is now working together to reduce how long people are detained by shortening case processing times. Since the start of [Justice Reboot](#), a partnership between the Mayor's Office and the State courts that brings every part of the criminal justice system together to resolve issues driving case delay, there has been a 49 percent reduction in the number of cases pending for 3 years or longer, from 307 cases to 156 cases citywide (a reduction of 151 cases). Additionally, there has been a 22 percent reduction in the number of cases pending for 2 years or longer, from 923 cases to 717 cases citywide (a reduction of 206 cases).

While the City works to reduce safely the number of people in jail and eventually close Rikers Island, broad work is underway now to ensure conditions on the Island are as safe and humane as possible. In late 2015, the de Blasio administration began a series of sweeping reforms that included programs for individuals in custody, increasing security camera coverage, training officers in de-escalation techniques, new safety equipment and protective gear, and creating a classification and housing strategy for individuals in custody. The reforms have not only resulted in a drop in our jail population, but also a 65 percent drop in assaults on staff with serious injury and a 53 percent drop in uses of force with serious injury since 2014.

The announcement today marks a major milestone in the City's work to close Rikers Island and replace it with a smaller, safer and fairer justice system. Progress is happening every day. The complete Roadmap, along with real-time updates and opportunities to get involved, is available at nyc.gov/CloseRikers.

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, "These numbers are very heartening and show the progress we have achieved in making Rikers Island safer. Through our presence on the Island with our Rikers Island Prosecution Bureau to our diversion programs and our support of bail reform, my Office has worked hard to reduce the jail population. By continuing to better train Correction Officers and prosecute those who commit acts of jailhouse violence, this decline will only continue and restore our community's faith in the criminal justice system."

Acting Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said, "Decreasing the reliance on incarceration has been one of my main goals and we are doing our part in Brooklyn to achieve it. The new bail policy we put in place this year, under which we consent to release in most misdemeanors, has reduced the number of people in pretrial detention. Our Young Adult Court offers alternatives to incarceration to defendants ages 16 to 24 and we are looking to expand such services. I am also exploring additional innovative ways to safely divert other eligible individuals, including those suffering from addiction, who in many cases will be offered treatment in lieu of prosecution. The decline in the jail population is a significant step in the right direction and I am committed to continuing the effort to reduce it even further so we can move towards a fairer and more humane justice system."

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., said: "This historic low marks a key milestone on the road to finally closing Rikers Island. Our Office is proud to help lay the groundwork for its closure by ending the criminal prosecution of tens of thousands of low-level, nonviolent offenses annually, and using ill-gotten gains seized in our financial crime investigations to fund the citywide Supervised Release program. Working together with the

Mayor's Office, the NYPD, and justice reform advocates, we will continue to reduce our criminal justice footprint without sacrificing public safety. We celebrate another New Year as the safest big city in America thanks to these partnerships and shared goals."

"Lowering our city's jail population to below 9,000 is proof of the De Blasio administration's commitment to criminal justice reform and public protection" said **Assembly Member David Weprin, Assembly Correction Committee Chairman**. By presiding over a historic decrease in crime, increasing alternatives for low risk offenders, and cutting down on case processing times; the Mayor has made for a safer, more fair, and just New York. I praise Mayor Bill De Blasio on this significant accomplishment and look forward to working with the administration on further steps to improve our criminal justice system."

Assembly Member Latrice Walker said, "Today marks a significant milestone in the journey to decrease mass incarceration and to eventually close Rikers Island. The City's jail population is in records low which is a positive reflection of our law enforcement and our judiciary system. Together we all are doing our part to make New York City one of the largest and safest city in the United States."

"The reduction in the City's number of detained and incarcerated validates recent efforts by the Administration and the Council to steer those at risk towards alternatives that both preserve public safety and help them avoid the irreversible consequences of being processed through the criminal justice system," said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller, Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor**. "Mayor de Blasio, Director Glazer, Commissioner Brann and the uniformed officers at Corrections all deserve to be commended for this collective achievement."

"This reduction in the jail population at Rikers represents a significant step forward to ensure that the plan to close the complex is on track. With crime at historic lows, and the Rikers population downsizing, it is clear that the closure of Rikers can be achieved without compromising public safety. It is the right thing to do," said **Council Member Ritchie Torres**.

"There is immense work yet to be done to revolutionize our criminal justice system, but it is critical to acknowledge and celebrate the gains we are making. This is a milestone worthy of recognition, and evidence that the broad reforms we have fought for are having a measurable impact on our incarcerated population. This achievement should serve as validation of our efforts and motivation to push forward," said **Council Member Jumaane Williams**.

JoAnne Page, President and CEO of the Fortune Society, said "The Fortune Society welcomes news that the population of Rikers Island has now fallen below 9,000. We are proud to be part of the effort to close Rikers through our policy advocacy and through our programs to prevent recidivism and unnecessary incarceration through services at Rikers and post-release, supportive housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and alternatives to incarceration and detention. We are proud that New York City leads the country in reducing both crime and incarceration, but there is much work still to do. More than half of Fortune's staff and much of its leadership has been incarcerated at Rikers. We celebrate this achievement because the life experience of our staff and clients reminds us daily of why reducing the number of people locked up at Rikers matters to the health and justice of our beautiful city."

"This success does not happen without the City and the Courts, including the District Attorneys and the defense counsels, all working together. But it also would not have occurred without advocates and activists - and those directly affected by over-incarceration - raising their voices. We know that the work we do, on Rikers and in the community, would not be possible without every voice, speaking and listening," said **Elizabeth Gaynes, President and CEO of The Osborne Association.**

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