



## Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Eleazar Bueno, Chairperson  
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

May 4, 2020

Hon. Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, N Y 11201

Hon. Cyrus Vance Jr.  
Manhattan District Attorney  
2 Broadway  
New York, N Y 10004

**Re: Resolution calling for the release of the most vulnerable Incarcerated people in DOC Facilities, additional PPE and Hygiene Products and Expansion of Re-Entry Services.**

Dear Mayor De Blasio and DA Vance:

At the General Meeting, Tuesday, April 28, 2020, with a vote of 32 in favor, 2 opposed, 2 abstentions, 1 not voting, Community Board 12 Manhattan, passed the following resolution, calling for the Mayor to follow the recommendation of the NYC Board of Corrections and release those remaining individuals over the age of 50 being detained who are non-violent offenders, those who incarcerated for technical violations, and those who are incarcerated for low-level offenses with less than a year remaining in the City sentence.

**Whereas:** NYC jails continue to face a public health crisis as COVID-19 spreads through Department of Correction (DOC) facilities impacting the lives of incarcerated people, Correction Officers, DOC Administration staff, Correctional Health Services (CHS) staff, families and the public at large;

**Whereas:** The rate of COVID-19 infection in NYC jails is about nine times higher than the city's rate, according to Legal Aid Society's data analysis, and the NYPD has not placed a moratorium on bringing new individuals to Rikers Island;

**Whereas:** On March 21, 2020, the NYC Board of Correction called for the immediate release of people over 50 years old who are non-violent offenders, those serving time for technical violations, lower-level offences and those with underlying health conditions due to the accelerated mortality rates for COVID-19;

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**Whereas:** According to NYC Board of Correction (BOC) census data, nearly 15 percent of the New York City jail population is over the age of 50 and a vast majority of those being detained are there due to pretrial requirements or parole violations with an average jail detention time of 73 days. Older adults in custody have an average of three and four medical diagnoses requiring medication and regular check-ups. BOC data also shows that 189 of the 906 older adults in custody were being detained on technical violations. Additional data (as of March 21, 2020) showed 666 people in custody, under the 50 year old benchmark, for technical violations, including curfew, missing a meeting with parole officer or failing drug screenings with an additional 551 people in DOC facilities were being detained for low-level offenses. As a result of changes to bail reform laws and its unintended consequences, there is the potential of an increase in prison population overtime due to changes in cash bail options and expanded options for pretrial release;

**Whereas:** Social distancing remains a challenge for many New Yorkers to comply with and is impossible for those who are incarcerated in facilities across New York City and specifically Rikers Island Correctional Facility, a location known for its structural deficiencies and inhumane conditions.

**Whereas:** Those incarcerated people under the age of 50 and those not eligible for release, face conditions of having limited access to hand washing soap and non-alcohol based hand sanitizers during this global pandemic, rendering them incapable of protecting themselves and other incarcerated persons;

**Whereas:** Staying indoors and frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to protect individuals from COVID-19. Incarcerated people are unable to access free soap or alcohol free hand sanitizer;

**Whereas:** Correction Officers and other administrative staff working in facilities return to their families and communities each day many via public transportation, and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) is the best way to minimize COVID exposure to incarcerated persons and fellow staff. To date, 19 DOC staff and one incarcerated person have died due to COVID;

**Whereas:** Several New York City Council members, including local Member Mark Levine, have requested an audit of hand washing access in the Department of Correction facilities, but the number of cases continues to increase and it is unclear when such an audit would be complete. The Department of Correction has not commented on the conditions in the jails, must act by spending the necessary dollars to ensure access to hand washing supplies for all incarcerated persons, and release an official statement about the steps they will take to continue to ensure their facilities are safe;

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**Whereas:** The city has successfully released many of the vulnerable individuals outlined in the Board of Correction press release and has taken steps to prevent COVID transmission through placement in hotels across the city; it remains unclear, however, what medical, mental health, substance use, housing, and re-entry support services individuals will receive upon their release and Washington Heights and Inwood (CB12) has an incarceration rate higher than the citywide rate; therefore be it;

**Resolved:** Community Board 12, Manhattan calls for the Mayor to follow the recommendation of the NYC Board of Corrections and release those remaining individuals over the age of 50 being detained who are non-violent offenders, those who incarcerated for technical violations, and those who are incarcerated for low-level offenses with less than a year remaining in the City sentence; and be it;

**Resolved:** Community Board 12, Manhattan calls for immediate action to be taken by the Mayor, City Council, and the Department of Correction to ensure that all persons who are incarcerated have access to free soap and hand washing stations and that officers and health staff have adequate PPE. Without this access, the risk of spreading COVID-19 inside of DOC facilities and preventing the spread to communities in NYC will remain impossible; and be it further;

**Resolved:** Community Board 12, Manhattan calls for the expansion of medical, mental health, housing, substance use, and emergency re-entry support to all incarcerated people being released from DOC correctional facilities.

Sincerely,



Eleazar Bueno  
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor  
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate  
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller  
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman  
Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator  
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman

Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator  
Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator  
Hon. Alfred Taylor, Assembly Member  
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member  
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member  
Hon. Ydanis Rodríguez, Council Member