

RESPONSES FROM MAYA WILEY

MAYORAL FORUM: CLOSING RIKERS ISLAND

Do you support closing Rikers Island by or before August 31, 2027, and reducing total citywide jail capacity to 3,300 or less by that time? Would you like to provide more context on your above response?

Yes. Closing Rikers Island is a moral imperative. Rikers Island has long been a disgrace to New York City and closing it needs to happen as soon as possible. I support the Close Rikers plan and the recently passed Renewable Rikers bill.

To decarcerate NYC, I will ensure that the NYPD polices crime, not poverty. We need to ensure that if the NYPD receives a call about a poverty problem, the right city agencies are involved and the NYPD is not. This will significantly cut down on incarceration, as will expanded alternatives to incarceration and re-entry programs.

As Mayor, rather than investing in prisons, I will invest in what keeps our communities safe like youth programs, job and workforce creation, and other community-sourced safety initiatives. The Gun Violence Prevention Plan that I released in November is an example of this approach. This plan is entirely focused on investing in the programs that actually keep our communities safe, including the creation of an \$18 million Participatory Justice program that will give communities the resources they need to decide what and how they want to invest in their neighborhoods.

Do you support moving forward with the Renewable Rikers plan? If so, how will you ensure the transfer of land from DOC to DCAS as quickly as possible?

Yes, I support moving forward with the Renewable Rikers plan, and will enforce Intro 1592, which establishes a process for the transfer of land, buildings and facilities of Rikers Island to DCAS by 2027. As Mayor, I will ensure that we not only meet that goal, but exceed it, and will push for the transfer of land from DOC to DCAS as a matter of urgency.

My economic recovery platform, New Deal New York, commits \$3 billion toward a climate-resilient NYC. A significant portion of this funding will go toward the implementation of Renewable Rikers.

How will you address dangerous and dehumanizing conditions on Rikers Island & in the existing borough jails?

The conditions on Rikers Island are unacceptable and will be addressed immediately. In order to close Rikers, the City must continue to bring the jail population down while maintaining a low crime rate. I am a proponent of the comprehensive bail reform passed in the New York State Legislature in 2019. By ending cash bail for low-level offenses, we can eliminate the two-tiered system that detains poor people accused of crimes for long periods before their trial, while allowing wealthy folks to await trial from home. As we work to reduce jail populations, we must simultaneously work to improve conditions of confinement, by building on recent legislative victories like the Halt Solitary Confinement Act. Additionally, as we work to lower incarceration rates, we will need places to house those who are still incarcerated. We will invest in humane, holistic environments that help rehabilitate individuals and ensure they are ready to re-engage upon release. The current borough jails are not in the condition necessary to provide humane housing options. I fully support ATI programs and the expansion of rehabilitative services in communities. Lastly, abolishing the dehumanizing and dangerous conditions at Rikers requires improving the conditions for those who remain in jail. I plan to explore the recommendations of the Freedom Agenda at the Urban Justice Center, whose plan is broken down into three parts: decarcerating, improving conditions for those who remain, and reducing the reach and scope of law enforcement.

During the peak of the pandemic, Rikers Island held about 3,800 individuals thanks to a citywide effort to rapidly decarcerate jails and protect our communities from COVID19. As of January 2021, the population had risen above 5,400 people in custody. How will you as Mayor of New York City reduce the average daily jail population during your first year in office? Overall, what are your top three priorities for reducing the jail population?

I am a proponent of the comprehensive bail reform passed in the New York State Legislature in 2020. By ending cash bail for low-level offenses, we can eliminate the two-tiered system that detains poor people accused of crimes for long periods before their trial, while allowing wealthy folks to await trial from home. Furthermore, New York City must continue to develop alternative measures to incarceration that allow individuals to await trial in the community while also accessing services that meet individuals' level of need. A Maya Wiley Administration will expand on city initiatives, such as Atlas and Supervised Release. Rikers is currently the biggest psychiatric facility in New York City, with 40% of inmates struggling with mental illness. Thus, alternatives to incarceration must also include expanding access to mental health

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services and supportive housing for at-risk populations. As we work to reduce jail populations, we must simultaneously work to improve conditions of confinement, by building on recent legislative victories like the Halt Solitary Confinement Act. In addition, we will integrate the work of Court Watch NYC into the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, creating a program that documents court proceedings, and use this information to issue reports on judicial bias in sentencing, among other equity issues. My administration will explore ways to end judicial discretion because when judges fail to use discretion appropriately and reverse bail, it systematically increases jail capacity. I support moving toward a system where judges are more likely to choose the most restorative means and restorative justice programs. Additionally, we must move toward Judges declining to prosecute a longer list of cases in order to reduce numbers. Lastly, the Mayor's Office MUST be documenting and reporting on judges, and think creatively about how we can tie the Office of Court Administration Budget to case outcomes and discretion.

Last year, the number of women, trans and gender non-conforming individuals on Rikers Island was less than 180 for several months. How will your administration continue to significantly reduce the number of women in detention, and close the Rose M Singer Center before 2027?

In order to significantly reduce the number of women in detention, and move toward closing the Rose M Singer Center before 2027, we must take a critical look at restorative justice programs, and how they can be more accessible and effective to address the unique needs and experiences of women in detention centers. In general, community centers are greatly lacking specific programming for women; BedStuy has no restorative justice programs. As Mayor, I will explore ways my Universal Community Care plan can more directly serve women, especially women who are victims of domestic violence. My UCC plan centers building community care centers in all five boroughs and in historically marginalized communities. I will seriously consider making these care centers places for restorative justice practices and programming. We will invest in professionals who have specific training in women centered restorative practices and connect them to both Rikers and the Community Care Centers. A good place to start recruiting these professionals is at the Freedom Agenda at the Urban Justice Center.

Do you believe NYC can and should eliminate all incarceration of people with serious mental health needs? If so, how would you achieve this?

Rikers is currently the biggest psychiatric facility in New York City, with 40% of inmates struggling with mental illness. I believe NYC can be a place where all incarcerated people with serious mental health needs can be released and moved to the appropriate mental health facilities and support programs.

Achieving the elimination of incarceration of people with serious mental health needs requires expanding access to mental health resources and affordable, supportive housing for at-risk populations. Above all, policing is not the intervention we need to address this crisis. Rather than punish people suffering from acute mental health episodes, we must ensure that every dollar we spend on mental health has the maximum positive impact.

As Mayor, I will first remove mental health crisis management from the NYPD and create a mental health emergency response agency capable of responding to all reported emergencies within 15 minutes. I will also support the following: Support and Connection Centers as an alternative to avoidable emergency room visits or criminal justice interventions, Respite care centers, mental health urgent care centers, and drop-in centers for those with mental health concerns to avoid incarceration and involuntary hospitalization, Drop-In Centers--multi-service facilities for homeless New Yorkers that provide a variety of services including food, social work, and referrals to needed programs, Mental Health Urgent Care Centers, and Safe havens which would provide immediate temporary housing for homeless individuals and offer supportive services, including mental health and substance abuse programming. I will integrate homelessness outreach and mental health services to build on this model, and utilize caseworkers to help find stable permanent housing.

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How will you recruit, assess, and select judicial appointees, particularly those who sit in criminal courts?

"As Counsel to the Mayor, I oversaw the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Judiciary and oversaw the Mayor's appointments to the bench. In that role, I worked to diversify the bench and ensure that the Judges that were appointed came from the communities that are most likely to interact with the City's court system.

I have spent my career as a civil and human rights lawyer, and my commitment to human rights will inform all of my judicial appointees. I will pay close attention to the background and experience of all judicial appointees, and ensure that they are champions of justice and equity, across Family, Civil, and Criminal court.

As Mayor, I will build on recent legislative victories like the Halt Solitary Confinement Act. I will integrate the work of Court Watch NYC into the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, creating a program that documents court proceedings, and use this information to issue reports on judicial bias in sentencing, among other equity issues. In order to truly reform the judicial process, we must create a system of accountability that doesn't leave people behind. My administration will work to end judicial discretion, so judges can no longer reverse bail and seek to implement more restorative programs. We will also create systems that incentivize judges to decline to prosecute a longer list of cases to reduce incarceration numbers. The Mayor's Office MUST be documenting and reporting on judges, and my team will creatively consider how we can tie the Office of Court Administration Budget to case outcomes and discretion. We can do this two ways; stop volunteers from doing court watches, and using information to issue guidance and report, go public, and talk to the city legislature to legislate on judges discretion."

Many candidates have said that they would defund the NYPD. Decarceration advocates have also pointed to bloated operations budgets of other law enforcement agencies, including District Attorneys, and the Department of Correction, which employs 8 times more officers per incarcerated person than the national average, and twice the number of officers per incarcerated person recommended by the Lippman Commission's research. Will you reduce DOC's annual operating budget? If yes, by how much, and over what period of time?

"Our budget must ensure that all New Yorkers are safe -- safe from violence and from over-policing and incarceration. Just as I will audit the NYPD budget, I will take a hard look at what we are spending on District Attorney's offices. We must stop criminalizing poverty and prioritize spending in a way that ensures public safety and quality of life in a structural way by preventing the scenarios that lead to crime to begin with. And let's not forget that our public defender and civil legal services providers are chronically underfunded- a related issue that deserves our attention.

I also plan to reduce DOC's annual operating budget. I will immediately freeze the incoming NYPD and DOCCs cadet classes for two years. I will reduce the NYPD headcount by 2,500 officers, and redirect \$300 million in diverted resources to fund a Universal Community Care income, which would give 100,000 low-income caregivers a \$5,000 annual stipend to compensate them for their labor. My administration will conduct a full audit of the NYPD's budget to determine where to make cuts and where to reallocate those funds to adequately address the root causes of crime. These cuts would include out of budget expenses, such as settlements, which in 2019 cost the taxpayers \$220 million. "

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Since 2015, the Department of Correction has been under a Federal monitor for its excessive use of force and failure to hold staff accountable for abusing their power. The Monitor's most recent report stated that "The City and Department have established a record of non-compliance," and the Department is now under a remedial order. How will you bring the Department into compliance?

It is imperative that the DOC comply in full with the Federal monitor, and all remedial orders recommended, to address the culture of violence and fear that has been prevalent within our jails. As Mayor, I will speed up compliance with the monitor's recommendations, through creating a strict timeline and benchmarks for progress toward full compliance, to be publicly and regularly reported, as well as immediate disciplinary action against those officers accused of brutality or excessive force.

Local Law 193, passed in October 2019, established a commission to make recommendations on reinvestment in communities most impacted by mass incarceration. At least half of the commissioners will be formerly incarcerated leaders. How will you support the work of this commission and implement their recommendations?

"In my many roles fighting the structural racism that undergirds how we handle public safety in this country, I know that the community investments that organizers are rightly demanding will produce public safety and dignity in communities of color, and criminalized communities. I have fought for criminal justice reforms in the US and in South Africa and spoken out against over-policing and misconduct. I will bring these principles, work experience and expertise into City Hall as Mayor.

I completely support the goals and intent of Local Law 193, and understand that reinvesting in impacted communities is a critical step toward preventing and healing from violence. My gun violence prevention plan recognizes the urgent need for investments in communities impacted by gun violence, to treat the underlying conditions that produce this particular pandemic. It notes that the demands of activists and organizers who are calling for community reinvestment are reinforced by the research, which has shown that gun violence is driven by a lack of social mobility, also called "the social determinants of health." A key component of my plan is the establishment of an \$18 million Participatory Justice fund targeting those communities that are hardest hit by violence. This fund will allow residents of impacted communities to participate in the development of solutions that work specifically for them. We must commit to democratic, community-based participation in developing and implementing solutions to violence and over criminalization – including an examination of what initiatives and innovations are working, as well as what additional investments, strategies, and partnerships will contribute to a meaningful change to the conditions that drive violence in our communities.

With this in mind, as Mayor, I will work to ensure that every city agency supports the work of the commission established through Local Law 193, through staffing capacity, resource allocation, and commitment to working in partnership with formerly incarcerated leaders."

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Have you ever been detained on Rikers? Have you ever visited loved ones on Rikers? If elected, would you visit Rikers and each of the borough jails, unannounced, and meet with survivors of Rikers before making any decision to deviate from existing plans to close them?

I have never been detained on Rikers but I have visited Rikers. If elected, I will visit Rikers and each of the borough jails to meet with New Yorkers who are currently incarcerated and formerly incarcerated. When I was in City Hall, I made my entire staff go to Rikers so they could witness the injustice first hand. I have also had extensive personal and professional experience with the New York City court system. Personally, I have had to represent my Godson in court on many occasions when he has received summonses for loitering in the park or other misdemeanors based on the fact that he is young and Black in New York City. I witnessed first hand the trauma that his interactions with the Justice system caused and the impact it had on his self-esteem and education. This experience has strengthened my resolve to radically reform policing in this City. Professionally, as Counsel to the Mayor, I oversaw the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Judiciary and oversaw the Mayor's appointments to the bench. In that role, I worked to diversify the bench and ensure that the Judges that were appointed came from the communities that are most likely to interact with the City's court system.

The majority of people incarcerated in City jails retain the right to vote. How will you ensure the Board of Elections and all agency staff uphold these rights and improve access to voting for people in custody?

"As Mayor, I will develop a structure that ensures inmates in pre-trial detention have access to voter registration, mail-in voting, early voting, and same-day voting. There are currently 4,101 people in Rikers, who are being detained pretrial. Another 1,144 people in Rikers are being held for violation of parole or probation. These Rikers detainees may all be eligible to vote because they are not currently serving a sentence for a felony conviction. This means that of the total number of people in jail in New York City, 92% may be eligible to vote. However, our current system relies on the Department of Corrections (DOC), rather than the Board of Elections, to distribute voter information packets to eligible inmates and facilitate access to voting in New York City jails.

A system that relies on a law enforcement agency to inform inmates of their voting rights and facilitate access to voting is irresponsible and unjust. As Mayor, I will invest resources and develop a structure within the Board of Elections (BOE) that shifts the responsibility of educating inmates and facilitating access to voting in jails from the DOC to the BOE. I will require annual reporting from the BOE on the number of inmates eligible to vote, the number of inmates registered to vote, the number of absentee ballots requested by and distributed to inmates, and the number of total voters. She will require representatives from the BOE to give quarterly presentations on voting rights and voter deadlines to inmates. Finally, I will increase the BOE's capacity to conduct in-person early voting and same-day voting on Rikers Island."