

A MORE JUST NYC

Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform

City Council Hearing Testimony of Alethea Taylor

September 5, 2019

My name is Alethea Taylor and I am in support of the borough based jail plan. I am a former Executive Director of Greenhope Services for Women that provides trauma-informed care for justice-involved women and I have worked in Rose M. Singer, the women's jail. I am a member of the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, also considered the Lippman Commission. I am also a consultant with the New York Women's Foundation. And most importantly a family member of a formerly incarcerated individual.

My focus today are women. 80% of women in jail are mothers to young children. The overwhelming majority of women in jail have extensive histories of childhood and adult physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Many have substance use and mental health needs. Rose M. Singer Center cannot provide adequate trauma-informed care or healing to these women including women with children on Rikers. Its very physical environment prevents it. Furthermore, Rikers' isolation makes it incredibly difficult for women to maintain contact with their children and other family members. Worst - the horrific prevalence of sexual assault on Rikers – and the lack of accountability for it.

Clearly, we need to do everything to make sure few women as possible ever end up in jail. We have much better options, like the organizations associated with the Women's Community Justice Project with a phenomenal track record at helping women get the care they need – and with low recidivism. The City should invest heavily to grow programs like this.

We must properly support those who are incarcerated, keep them safe, and give them the tools they need to succeed when they get out. Women should be housed together in a single facility that meets their needs, ideally Lincoln Correctional Facility in Manhattan.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to turn hope into reality. The alternative of doing nothing is unacceptable. If this plan fails, we will condemn countless women to the continued inhumane conditions at Rosie's for generations or more. Please support this plan. Thank you.