To:
Mayor de Blasio
First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan
Chief of Staff Emma Wolfe
Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Raul Perea-Henze
Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives J. Phillip Thompson
NYC Mayor’s Senior Advisor for Public Health Jay Varma

cc:
Oxiris Barbot, MD, Commissioner
Demetre Daskalakis, MD, MPH, Deputy Commissioner Disease Control
Mitch Katz, MD, CEO Health + Hospitals

May 7, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio et al.,

We are writing to request the immediate public release of all epidemiological data related to the COVID-19 pandemic among individuals previously or currently incarcerated or detained within New York City Dept. of Corrections (DoC) facilities, including total number tested, confirmed cases, hospitalizations, confirmed deaths, and probable deaths. Furthermore, we request elaboration of medical screening protocols currently in use in NYC DoC facilities. This includes, but is not limited to the following questions and concerns:

- Is SARS-CoV-2 RNA or antibody testing limited to symptomatic individuals or does it include those who have had contact with those with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection?
- What percentage of the total population held in DoC facilities, including Rikers Island, has been tested?
- What is current daily testing capacity?
- What unmet needs with regard to SARS-CoV-2 testing have been identified, and how are they being addressed?
- What are the City’s plans to conduct and publish sero-surveys of the incarcerated population, and proactively identify, trace, isolate and release individuals with COVID-19 to prevent further transmission, illness and death?

We acknowledge the daily pandemic data reports by NYC DOHMH, in particular efforts to collect and report data by race and ethnicity, and zip code, as essential to highlighting health inequities, and improving our collective response to the pandemic. Given the City’s sophisticated lab based electronic records systems, disaggregating data collected at Rikers
Island and other DoC facilities is well within the current capabilities of the DOHMH, and will not unduly burden public health staff. Therefore, people under DoC care can and must be included in DOHMH reports of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, and DoC counts disaggregated, with location noted (ex. Rikers Island). Demographic data, including race and ethnicity, must be reported for all DoC cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

As the number of reported cases of COVID-19 among people detained and working on Rikers Island continues to grow, in addition to advocating for the immediate release of elder and vulnerable inmates, families concerned for loved ones inside the walls, and all New Yorkers, deserve accountability and transparency regarding the situation of individuals detained in our name.

We are available to discuss these concerns in further detail, and look forward to your response within one week of receipt of this letter.

On behalf of the COVID-19 NY Working Group,

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