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U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

September 27, 2018

Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor of the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Subject: New York City Borough-Based Jail System Draft Scope of Work to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (CEQR No. 18DOC001Y)

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

We write as representatives of Lower Manhattan regarding the above referenced Draft Scope of Work, which includes the City's proposal to relocate the Manhattan Detention Complex from 125 White Street and replace it with a much larger new jail at 80 Centre Street, one of four new jails that are intended to enable the City to close Rikers Island Correctional Facility. **We urge the City to withdraw this Draft Scope of Work and engage in a more open public process to determine the best way to proceed before releasing revised scoping documents.**

Notwithstanding ongoing conversations about the best ways to achieve the goals set forth by the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform (the Lippman Commission), the proposal to build a 1.5 million square-foot jail at 80 Centre Street was first announced publicly on August 15, 2018 upon release of the Draft Scope of Work. Prior to that, the City had agreed to participate in a series of meetings, convened by Borough President Gale Brewer and attended by our offices, but had declined to disclose at these meetings that a plan was in the works for an new jail on a new site. The City had also promised to hold public forums in the Spring, but these did not occur.

With the release of the Scope of Work, the City has profoundly narrowed the range of options that the public is being asked to consider in order to achieve the goals of criminal justice and incarceration reform. The public comments the City is soliciting regarding the Scope of Work are limited to questions regarding the impacts the City should study and potentially mitigate as the project proceeds; the process does not provide a forum for considering the soundness of the underlying proposal or more desirable alternatives that may be available. Thus, the City's public engagement on this proposal has begun in earnest only after virtually all of the major decisions have been made about the location, number, and scale of the facilities.

Moreover, the particular needs of each community are discounted by grouping plans for facilities in four distinct neighborhoods into a single review process. In Manhattan, the City has decided to build the massive new jail at 80 Centre Street with no meaningful community input, without a public explanation of why the White Street site is insufficient, and without public discussion of potential alternative sites.

We applaud and share your commitment to improving our criminal justice system by significantly reducing the number of people confined to jails in our city each day, closing the complex on Rikers Island, and replacing it with facilities that are fairer and more humane for detainees, their families, and corrections officers. A plan to create jails that reflect the best design principles and include sufficient space to offer appropriate services to individuals in detention is long overdue. A well-planned community-based jail system would also bring detainees closer to their families and their attorneys, which would increase the likelihood of just dispositions of their cases and ease the return of detainees to their communities, potentially reducing recidivism.

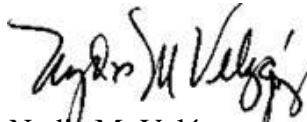
The need to achieve these goals is nothing short of a moral imperative. That said, creating a successful community-based jail system will require effective consultation with the communities in which the jails will be located, and many other stakeholders. We believe that withdrawing the Draft Scope of Work, re-starting the conversation, and producing a revised scope is the best way for the City to move toward the profoundly important objectives of reforming the justice system and reducing incarceration, while adhering to basic principles of openness, public participation, and community engagement that lead to better outcomes.

We look forward to your response.

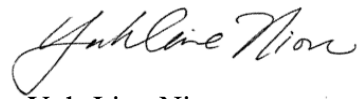
Sincerely,



Brian Kavanagh  
State Senator



Nydia M. Velázquez  
U.S. Congresswoman



Yuh-Line Niou  
State Assemblymember