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THE COUNCIL  
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Before I say anything else, I want to make clear that I believe Rikers Island must close. And I believe investing in better facilities is the right thing to do for those who are incarcerated.

My colleagues and the speaker have done a great job in negotiating for investments.

This issue is very personal to me and my constituents on many fronts. I visited Rikers on many weekends, was subjected to the long bus ride, the long wait times, and the many pat downs before seeing a loved one.

On one night I stood outside for 24 hours, while waiting for bail to be posted. Hearing the stressful noises of planes landing in La Guardia and breathing in the toxic chemicals that pollute the island. I thought to myself that Rikers Island is an Island of Hell.

But, I am voting no because I feel that the conversation City Hall started has not gone far enough. Like many people in Rikers today, I was born in East New York in the height of the crack epidemic. My neighbors were handed over to cops instead of social workers, and had nowhere to go but street corners. Instead of social programs, they ended up in Rikers.

When the City should have been pumping money into nurturing and strengthening my community, they instead neglected and abandoned it.

I am voting no, because I can't vote yes on a plan that spends \$8.7 billion on new jails, but doesn't match this investment in communities like mine. Where are the billions to break the school to prison pipeline? Where are the billions to clean our air? Where are the billions to keep our streets safe?

What we are saying by not matching this plan dollar for dollar is that we can afford to incarcerate New Yorkers in newly built facilities but we cannot afford to make long term investments that will prevent the youth of today from being incarcerated tomorrow.

There are too many half-formed solutions. we need to fully invest in building stronger well rounded communities. We can do better. I vote no.