



# The JUSTICE for WOMEN COVID-19 TASKFORCE

Respect\*Dignity\*Safety

4 West 43rd Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10036  
646.546.8591

April 18, 2020

Dear Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio,

We are pleased that the Governor has announced that incarcerated people in DOCS facilities over the age of 55, having 90 days or less on their sentence, and not guilty of a violent or sexual related crime will be released on a rolling basis. Believing there are a little over 200 people eligible, out of that number, just how many are women? We are also pleased that the Mayor is reducing the population at Rikers and as we support your combined efforts, please recognize there is much more to do!

As women, mothers, academics, religious and non-profit leaders, health care providers and formerly incarcerated advocates; we recognize the imminent danger facing incarcerated women and mothers during the current COVID-19 pandemic. We, as a collective, have formed the Justice for Women COVID-19 Task Force as a statewide response to urge the protection of women behind bars during this unprecedented pandemic. Our mission is to uphold and protect the inherent dignity, value and human rights of incarcerated women in New York State.

While we call for responsive intervention for all incarcerated people, we urge an immediate and gender-specific response be taken to prevent illness and potential death(s) of pregnant women, older people, the medically vulnerable and all women, girls, intersex, gender non-conforming and trans persons in New York State prisons, county and NYC jails. As of December of 2019, there were approximately 1,961 women in New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) custody. These numbers do not reflect the many women detained in county jails. Three quarters of the women behind bars are mothers, many with babies in prison nurseries, as well as 170 women housed in Rose M. Singer in custody at the New York City Department of Correction (DOC). Women and mothers are often the primary caretakers of their families so we urge you to release mothers so they can return home to their children.

We are equally concerned for the welfare of correctional officers, and other prison and jail staff. We call on DOCCS and the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) to take every precaution and preventive measure to protect everyone and immediately halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In addition, we urge DOCCS and DOC to provide education and ongoing updates to the prison and jail population and their families. To do so, we call on Governor Cuomo, DOCCS and DOC to:

- Immediately release anyone at high risk for infection, including those who are older, pregnant, those with underlying health conditions, and mothers with babies in the prison nurseries. We recognize the high risk of infection posed by keeping babies and mothers in prison and urge their joint release as a family prioritized.
- Release not only those convicted of non-violent offenses, but older people since research by leading criminologists has shown that older people in prison convicted of violent crimes are the least likely to reoffend and end up back in prison.
- Immediately release those held on technical parole violations, all incarcerated people who have been granted clemency, and those within a year of their release date. While DOCCS and DOC have stated that they will release some individuals who

## Statement of Purpose:

To bring women home and improve the conditions for women at any facility in NYS; and at the RMSC in NYC

### Conveners

\*Serena Liguori-ED

\*Sharon White-Harrigan-ED

### Leaders

Ana Zukowsky

\*Anisah Sabur-Mumin

Anita Kennedy

Bridget Shanahan

\*Brunilda Rivera

\*Carole Eady-Porcher

Chaplain Kim Elano

\*Chermaine Black

\*Cheryl Wilkins

Connie Tempel

Danielle Minelli-Pagnotta

\*Denise McCreary

\*Donna Hylton

\*Greer Ellis

\*Grace Price

\*Hope Sanders

\*Ivelisse Gilestra

\*Jessica Vargas

Joan Montbach

Jordyn Rosenthal

\*Kandra Clark

\*Kathy Morse

\*Laura Tina Tinen

\*Lissette Bamenga

Lorie Gorshin

\*Lorrayne Patterson

\*Marion Rodriguez

Misael Syldor

\*Ms. "V"

Rabbi Hilly Haber

Rabbi Suzanne Singer

Rita Zimmer

\*Rusti Miller-Hill

Ruth McDaniels

Sarita Daftary

Stephanie Bazell

Tanya Kuput

\*Veronica Sullivan-Blyther

Vanee Sykes

\*Yolanda Johnson-Peterkin

\*Women with lived experience

qualify for release, this has not been done expediently and has resulted in several deaths.

- Release all women to the least restrictive environment possible. Any person who can be moved to community supervision should be. These environments must adhere to Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. All those returning to the community must have a discharge and treatment plan, including medical and housing resources provided by DOCCS and DOC.
- Award clemency for women who have applied for consideration.
- Create clear and transparent procedures to protect the women inside medically. All procedures should be clearly outlined and shared in postings in each dorm and unit. The process for handling an incarcerated woman exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or been exposed to it must be shared widely. Incarcerated women must receive testing, humane medical treatment, and adequate nutrition.
- Provide public dissemination of the 7 precautions being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the number of current infections, and the demographic breakdown of the population. DOCCS and DOC must be clear that there will be no punishment or SHU time given to any incarcerated person quarantined due to potential contraction of COVID19.
- Provide free telecommunications while family visits are suspended. Make telephone calls, emails, and any other communications free and accessible ensuring women maintain family ties, which are especially important while visitation is not an option.
- Appoint a family liaison in each facility for families to call and receive information about the status of their incarcerated loved one.

Women in prison been long ignored - often referred to as the “invisible population.” We, many of us formerly incarcerated women, hear state and city executives assure the public that no life is expendable. Yet the plight of incarcerated women, our sisters, goes unseen and unheard. Public health experts have repeatedly stated that people in jails and prison must be released, as has successfully been done in other nations and states without any threat to public safety.

To aid in this effort, we as a task force stand ready to provide housing, reentry and transitional service assistance to all released women, in the capacity, we are able to do so. We still urge immediate action to ensure all justice-impacted women, mothers and babies not be left behind during this pandemic to die or suffer needlessly. Again, as we support your efforts, please recognize there is much more to do!

Please contact the **Justice for Women COVID-19 Task Force** conveners, **Serena Liguori**, New Hour for Women & Children –LI Executive Director at: [sliguori@newhourli.org](mailto:sliguori@newhourli.org) and **Sharon White-Harrigan** Women’s Community Justice Association Executive Director at: [sharon@wcja.org](mailto:sharon@wcja.org) and **Rita Zimmer** HousingPlus Executive Director at: [rita@housingplusnyc.org](mailto:rita@housingplusnyc.org).

Respectfully,

**The Justice for Women COVID-19 Task Force**

CC:  
Acting Commissioner Annucci  
Commissioner. Cynthia Brann  
Jeremy Shockett, Deputy Secretary of Public Safety, Office of Governor Andrew  
Cuomo  
Cal M. Whiting, Policy Advisory for Public Safety  
John Morely, MD, Deputy Commissioner NYS DOCCS, Chief Medical Officer  
Corrections and Community Supervision Superintendent  
Ross MacDonald, Chief Medical Officer for Correctional Health Services  
Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice  
Superintendent Bartlett  
Superintendent Lamanna  
Superintendent Mitchell 'Voyd  
Superintendent Squiref

## **Organizational Signators in Support:**

A Little Piece Of Light	College and Community Fellowship	Justice League
Abortion Care Network	College Gateway	JustLeadershipUSA
Advocacy and Research on Reproductive Wellness of Incarcerated People, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine	Create Forward	Legal Empowerment and Advocacy Hub
	CUNY Freedom Prep	LI Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival
	D4Entertainment	
Alden March Bioethics Institute, Albany Medical College	Darfur People's Assn of NY	Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse
	Decarcerate Tompkins County	
Alliance for Families for Justice	Disability and Civil Rights Clinic, Brooklyn Law School	Media Projects Inc.
Artist Entertainment		Movement for Family Power
Baldwin Wallace University	Drama Club NYC	National Action Network
Birth Beyond Bars	Drug Policy Alliance	New Beginnings Reentry Services, Inc.
Breaking the Chains of Your Mind	Educate Don't Incarcerate	
Bronx Community Board 9	Exodus Transitional Community	New Hour for Women & Children – LI
Brooklyn Defender Services	Forward Justice	
	FWD.us	New York Communities for Change
Brooklyn Law School Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic	Gifted Community Services Inc	NYU Law School Prison Reform and Education Project
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth	Hands of Hope Outreach Ministries, INC.	Office of Council Member Helen Rosenthal
Center for Community Alternatives	Harry Joe Brown, Jr. Foundation	
	HALT Solitary, CAIC	Parole Preparation Project
Center for Constitutional Rights	Healing Communities Network	Participatory Defense Durham
Center for Disability Rights	Health in Justice Action Lab,	Peer Network Of New York
Center for Justice, Columbia University	Northeastern University School of Law	Prison Education Project, Washington University in St. Louis
Children's Haven: A Place of Healing & Hope, Inc.	Hour Children	Prison Studies Project
	HousingPlus	
Circle of Brothers	Hunter Bellevue School of Nursing	Providence House
Citizen Action of New York	Immigrant Defense Project	Pure Legatee inc.
Close Rosie's	Ithaca Prisoner Justice Network	Rebuilding Independence My Style
Code Cooperative	Jobs For Life	Reentry Rocks
Collective Speakers		Release Aging People in Prison/RAPP

1. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/04/07/violence-report/>

Resilience OC	The Bronx Defenders	United Methodist Women National Office
Rich Family Ministries and PDMNOLA	The Bronx Learning Lounge	University of Denver
Rising Ground, Inc.	The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls	University of Kansas
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights	The New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents	V-Day/One Billion Rising
Rockland Coalition to End the New Jim Crow	The New York Women's Foundation	Visionary V
Rockland Prison Justice Project	The Public Science Project	VOCAL-NY
Sankofa	The Real Cost of Prisons Project	We Are Better Together Warren Daniel Hairston Project
SCORES, LLC	The Rockland Coalition to End the New Jim Crow	White Coats for Black Lives
Second Chance Reentry	The Tadini House	Women & Justice Project
Silent Cry Inc	The Talking Drum Incorporated	Women Transcending
Sills Family Foundation	Unchained Scholars	Women's Community Justice Association
Sisters of St. Joseph	Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork	Women's Community Justice Project (WCJP)
Social Justice Action of St. Boniface		Women's Prison Association
Temple Beth El		

**Individuals Signators In Support:**

Al Brooks	Rosenthal	Briana Gangi
Alex Qin	Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman	Bridget Shanahan
Alexander Brooks	Austin Oswald	Britney Moreira
Alexandra Bonagura	Aviva Kleinman	Bryn Magnus
Alexis Moh	Barat Ellman	Caitlin Cahill
Allison Hollihan	Barbara Treen, parole commissioner (ret.)	Carole Eady-Porcher
Aloe Blacc	Barrie Tinen	Carolyn Sufrin
Amanda Acevedo	Beatrice Lozada	Cassady Fendlay
Andrea James	Beth Meredith	Catherine Jones
Andrea Suarez	Betty Chin	Catherine Nelson Brown
Andy Dukeshire	Beverly John	Charlotte Austin
Anita Kennedy	Bianca Valle	Chermaine Black
Ann Brameier	Bonnie Greaves	Cheryl Wilkins
Anne Patterson		Chiara Benetollo
Assemblymember Linda B.		Christina Holdredge

1. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/04/07/violence-report/>

Christine Jaselskis	Fabiola Quijano	Kaia Stern
Cindi Katz	Fran Gilmore	Kandra Clark
Diamond Lewis	Frances Buchinsky	Kate Mogulescu
Donald Curtis	Georgan Arsons	Kathleen Lynch Gaffney
Connie Tempel	Gina Belafonte	Kathy Boudin
Craig Schwalbe	Gina Sissoko	Kathy Morse
Cynthia Salzman Mondell	Greer Ellis	Katie Schaffer
Dan McKeon	Greg Hetmeyer	Kayla Gerdes
Dan Pearson	Heidi Coleman	Keila Pulinario
Danielle Donaphin	Heidi De Leon	Kelly Grace Price
Danielle Minelli Pagnotta	Helen Rosenthal	Kelly J Williams
Dara Baldwin	Hope S. Sanders	Kendra Bradner
Darlene DiFrischia	Howard Rosenthal	Kimberly Bliss
Darlene Jackson	Ibrahim Zaman	Kimberly Q Johnson
Dave George	Jane Weckesser	Kirsten Pickering
Deborah Arthur	Jasmin Borges	klarisse torriente
Deena Daughtry	Jaya Vasandani	Laura "Tina" Tinen
Deirdre Sinnott	Jayette Lansbury	Laura J. Limuli
Denise Barnes	Jenna Rieder	Laura McTighe
Denise McCresry	Jennifer Ayala	Laura Whitehorn
Devohn Phillips	Jennifer Mancuso	Lauren Reed
Diana McHugh	Jeremiah Goulka	Le Anne Alexander
Dominique Pierce	Jessica Esposito	Liliana Trafficante
Donna Goldsmith	Jessica Vargas	Linda Agripino
Dr. Apryl Alexander	Jhody Polk	Lisa Cowan
Dr. Breea Willingham	Joan Montbach	Lisha Cundari
Dr. Colleen Eren	Joan Sakalas	Liza Peterson
Dr. María Elena Torre	Jodie Blum	Lois Ahrens
Dulce Saavedra	Johanna Crane	Lori Rodriguez
Eileen Maher	Jonathan Spear	Lorie Goshin, PhD, RN
Elaine Daly	Jordyn Rosenthal	Lorrayne Patterson
Elizabeth Ross	Jose Saldana	Lucas Sanchez
Elsie Jolade	Josephine Cardamone	M. Baum Tucci
Emily Jones	Josie Whittlesey	M. Smith
Erin Cloud	Jovada Senhouse	Magella Declé
Erin George	Judith Kubran	Maggie Ferreira
Erin McCloskey	Judy Clark	Marc Pessin
Eugenia Williams	Juli Kempner	Marilyn Reyes

Mark McPhee	Longoni	Serena Liguori
Marlena Buggs	Patricia Zimmerman	Sharmaine Smith
Marlene Steele	Penelope Lillianna LillieMay-Garcia	Sharon Richardson
Mary Ellen Kramer	Penny Fujiko Willgerodt	Shawanna Vaughn
Mary-Louise Hildebrandt	Peter Sills	Shelby Henderson
Megha Ramaswamy	Phyllis Chillingworth	Sister Janet Kinney, CSJ
Melissa Taylor	Piper Anderson	Sister Karen Burke, CSJ
Michael Skolnik	Priscilla Carmona	Sister Tesa Fitzgerald, CSJ
Michele and Rob Reiner	Rabbi Suzanne Singer	Soffiyah Elijah
Michelle Daniel (Jones)	Rachael Mills	Stacey Borde
Michelle Fine	Rev. Donna Hylton	Stacy Amador
Michelle Lewin	Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Sealy	Stacy Bell McQuaide
Miea Walker, MSW	Rev. Sharon White-Harrigan	Stacy Lyn Burnett
Mildred Lara	Riki Drout	Stephanie Bazell
Mindi Rosenthal	Rita Taddonio	Stephanie Gilman
Minerva Pascual	Rita Zimmer	Susan Celia Swan
Dr. Victoria A. Phillips -	Robert Worlds	Susan Karbiner
Ms. V	Robin McGinty	Susan Rosenberg
Misaël Syldor	Robin Templeton	Sydney Baker
Mishka Terplan	Romy Reiner	Tanine Dugger
Nahal Zamani	Russelle Miller-Hill	Tanya Friedman
Nancy Hruska	Ruth McDaniels	Tanya Gallo
Naquasia Pollard	Ruth Otoo	Tanya Pierce
Natasha Narayanan	Ruth Rollins	Tia Fletcher
Nathaniel Dawkins	Sandra Langston	Tia Hassell
Nicole C. Jones Young	Sandy Figueroa	Traci Bowman
Nora Maetzener	Sara Bennett	Veronica Sullivan-Blyther
Olivia Hull	Sara Tempel	Victor Pate
Olivia McCheyne	Sarah Lorr	Vivian Nixon
Pamely Neely	Sarah Simone	Wesley Caines
Pat Dellatto, NP	Sarah Zeller-Berkman	Willa Beckman
Patanjali de la Rocha	Sarita Daftary	Yara Bonifacio
Patricia Boone-Edgerton		Zillah Eisenstein



# WE FIGHT FOR HER



#covid19justiceforwomentaskforce