



My name is Sarita Daftary, and I'm an organizer with JustLeadershipUSA. I've also been a Brooklyn resident for the past 16 years.

In the past three years, the leadership of directly impacted people has moved closing Rikers from an abstract idea to a goal within reach. As this has happened, there's a pattern we've seen in the discussions about closing Rikers - in these hearings and beyond.

We have heard people who have the privilege of not having experienced Rikers suggest that we should scrap this plan, vote it down, and start over - with no answer to the question of when, in that scenario, Rikers would close. Directly impacted elders that are a part of this campaign have been a part of efforts to close Rikers going back decades. We've learned so much from prior efforts and it's why we are relentless about moving forward with closure and justice reinvestment that will support directly impacted people and their communities, so we can one day get to zero people in jail.

We have also heard - and you have heard tonight - people most harmed by Rikers who have educated themselves on this process because it matters so deeply to them, and they know the power of organizing that got us here and they know that we are not stuck with yes or no, but that we can keep pushing for bold improvements to this plan right up until the City Council votes on it, and even after, during the procurement period. You have heard from people who have not only shared their experience of Rikers, but have done the hard work of analyzing and fighting for all of the ways we can get thousands of people free in the next 5 years AND close Rikers within that time. The people I organize with are people who have

- examined how we get to the reality of closing Rikers on the shortest possible timeline,
- grappled with the hard questions of how we reduce the reach and harms of incarceration while we work to eliminate it entirely
- laid out a concrete and achievable plan
- and committed to leaving no one behind on Rikers or the Boat.

They are also the people who organized to pass the pre-trial reforms in Albany that will reduce NYC's jail population by approximately 2,900 people by January 1, 2020, and are now calling on the Mayor to do his part to further reduce the jail population to less than 3,000, including ending City year sentences through expanding alternatives to incarceration, and diverting all people with serious mental health needs to treatment settings instead.

These people are my teachers, and you've heard them pleading with you to recognize their leadership, their wisdom and their humanity to vote this plan forward WITH the important improvements the #CLOSErikers campaign has articulated. We are fighting for a further reduced jail population - which, in addition to freeing more people, will get you the smaller building that you want and reduce the cost of it. And we're fighting for true culture change, which you can fight for with us.

It was never going to be easy or convenient to close Rikers, and solving human rights crises rarely are. On this extremely difficult and complex issue, I choose to follow the leadership of people most harmed by Rikers. You still have a chance to be on the just side of history and follow their leadership too.