

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 29, 2020

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

BOARD OF CORRECTION CONTACT: Bennett Stein, Director of Policy & Communications, bstein@boc.nyc.gov, (929) 270-3282,

**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND BOARD OF CORRECTION CHAIR JENNIFER JONES
AUSTIN ANNOUNCE WORKING GROUP TO END PUNITIVE SEGREGATION**

*Department of Correction and Correctional Health Services implement new medical
restrictions to preclude certain individuals from punitive segregation*

NEW YORK—Today Mayor Bill de Blasio and Board of Correction Chair Jennifer Jones Austin announced the formation of a working group to eliminate punitive segregation in the New York City jail system. The working group's recommendations will be incorporated into the Board's broader rule package on restrictive housing and voted on in the fall. The Department of Correction and Correctional Health Services will also, effective immediately, implement new restrictions that will preclude individuals with certain medical conditions from restrictive housing.

"From closing Rikers Island to banning punitive segregation for people under the age of 22, we have reoriented our correction system to value human life and rehabilitation," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Now with Jennifer at the helm of the Board and Stanley leading the working group, we will chart the course forward with the Board to ban punitive segregation altogether, making good on our commitment to creating jails that are fundamentally smaller, safer, and fairer."

Effective immediately, the Department of Correction will also exclude individuals with several key medical conditions from being placed into any form of restrictive housing while in custody. Conditions include individuals who are diabetic, individuals on asthma medication, on antiepileptic medications for seizures, on blood thinners, or have any history of organ transplant. Individuals who have a diagnosis of heart disease, lung disease, or kidney disease will also be exempt. A full list is available [here](#).

The working group to end punitive segregation will be led by Board Vice-Chair Stanley Richards and include Department of Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann and Just Leadership USA President and CEO DeAnna Hoskins. We have reached out to Benny Boscio, President of the Corrections Officer Benevolent Association, to invite him to join the working group as a key partner in this work, which will prioritize safety for both officers and detained persons. Guided by the principles of safety, support and accountability, they will work over the coming three months to produce recommendations to be presented for inclusion in the proposed restrictive housing rule.

“Punitive segregation has been proven over and over to be an inhumane practice resulting in debilitating trauma that endures, often for the remainder of a person’s lifetime”, said **Board of Correction Chair Jennifer Jones Austin**. “City plans to overhaul our jail system, inclusive of reducing incarceration, closing Rikers Island, and locating detention centers in four boroughs must also incorporate the ending of solitary confinement and developing alternative means of accountability with a focus on safety for both staff and detained persons, mental health, effective and robust programming and education, and investment in training and the well-being of employees.”

"As an African American man, who spent time in jail and prison including solitary confinement, I know firsthand the harm extreme isolation can cause,” said **Stanley Richards, Board of Correction Vice Chair**. “The ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement of this time calls for the Board of Correction, City of New York and Department of Correction to act with urgency to stop the harm of solitary confinement. I am pleased to work with Commissioner Brann and DeAnna Hoskins to meet this moment of importance with action to end solitary confinement.”

“New York City is a national leader in correction reform and we are proud of the progress we’ve made towards safely and humanely housing people in custody. We have done more to limit the use of punitive segregation than almost any jail system in America, including eliminating it entirely for anyone under 22, as well as for seriously mentally ill individuals,” said **New York City Department of Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann**. “We have worked tirelessly under this administration to create a correctional system that is safer, more humane and fair while fundamentally reforming and significantly reducing the need for punitive segregation, and look forward to joining our working group partners as we continue to develop safe alternatives to its use.”

“I am honored to share my experiences with solitary confinement and isolation with the committee. The voices of directly impacted people have too long been silenced. And the screams of anguish and agony of people being held in isolation right this moment never make it past the walls of prisons and jails. Inside, the pleas of incarcerated people are ignored,” said **DeAnna Hoskins, President and CEO Just Leadership USA**. "It is time for New York and the country to hear our voices, listen to our stories, understand our pain — and then take action to end solitary confinement and isolation once and for all. There can be no justice until this inhumane practice is abolished.”

###