



## **BOARD OF CORRECTION CITY OF NEW YORK**

### **BOROUGH-BASED JAIL REPORT JULY 1, 2025**

#### **Introduction**

The New York City Board of Correction ("BOC" or "the Board") is a non-mayoral independent City agency created under Section 626 (c) of Chapter 25 of the New York City Charter. This is the Board's second and final report of 2025, as well as the fifth report in the past five years, outlining the progress made by the Department of Correction ("DOC" or "the Department") and the City in closing Rikers Island over the next four years and transitioning to borough-based facilities. This report is compliant with Local Law 192 for the year 2019<sup>1</sup>.

Since the Board's January 2025 report, the City Council released a policy brief outlining immediate steps the City must take to move forward with the permanent closure of Rikers Island and ensure a successful transition to the borough-based jail ("BBJ") system. The 13-page brief<sup>2</sup> outlines administrative, budgetary, legislative, and Council actions or recommendations that would advance the goal of safely closing Rikers Island while carefully and fully transitioning to and operating borough-based jails.

#### **Jail Population and Overcrowding**

The jail population has increased steadily over the past year. Over the past 11 months, the Department's population has grown by 17.7%. Due to the ever-increasing jail population, in November 2024, the Department submitted a four-month variance request<sup>3</sup> to the Board seeking a variance from Minimum Standards regarding Overcrowding<sup>4</sup>. At the time, the

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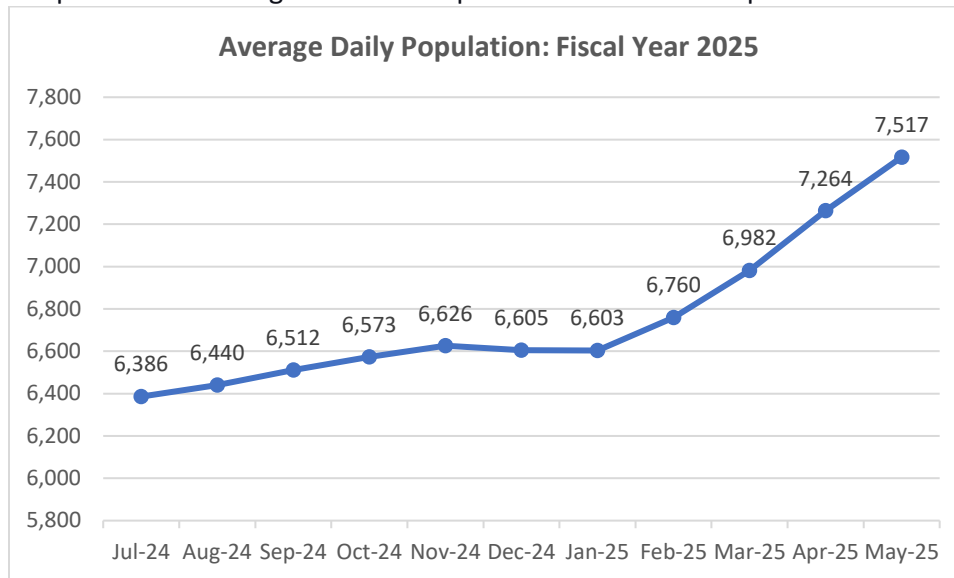
<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the City Council passed legislation—Local Law 192 for the year 2019—requiring the Board of Correction to publish semi-annual reports on the impact of closing jails on Rikers Island and constructing new facilities to replace them on: (1) people in custody, and (2) on the Department's and Correctional Health Service's compliance with the Minimum Standards.

<sup>2</sup> NYC Council's Response to the Blueprint to Close Rikers: Immediate Action Steps for City Government--  
[https://council.nyc.gov/press/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2025/04/rikers-commitments\\_041625-1.pdf](https://council.nyc.gov/press/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2025/04/rikers-commitments_041625-1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Limited Four (4) Month Variance Request to Board of Correction Minimum Standards Regarding Overcrowding--  
[https://www.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/FINAL-Variance-Request-Letter\\_1-04-Overcrowding.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/FINAL-Variance-Request-Letter_1-04-Overcrowding.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> 1-04 (c)(2), § 1-04 (c)(3), and § 1-04 (c)(5)(i)-(c) *Multiple occupancy*. (2) Multiple-occupancy areas shall provide a minimum of 60 square feet of floor space per person in the sleeping area. (3) A multiple-occupancy area shall provide a

Department stated that it conducted an internal review to assess all options for increasing bed space throughout housing facilities. The Department stated in the variance request that 10 additional single-style beds in dormitory areas would allow the agency to house more people in custody. Specifically, the Department requested to increase the bed capacity in the dorms at the Otis Bantum Correctional Center ("OBCC") from 50 to 60 beds. Also, the State Commission of Correction ("SCOC") approved two modular housing buildings at West Facility ("WF"), which was reflected in the variance request and part of the Department's four-phase plan<sup>5</sup>. The Board granted the Department's variance request.



*Source: DOC Data File*

The Department submitted a four-month variance renewal request in February 2025<sup>6</sup> regarding overcrowding. The Department noted that the population had been steadily rising and reached a new high since 2019. Additionally, the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS) was "temporarily unable to accept people in custody from local correctional facilities who were deemed state ready." In the same variance renewal request, DOC requested that dormitories in the Eric M. Taylor Center ("EMTC") use 60 beds per area (originally a city-sentenced facility) to move people in custody through the new admission intake process and house them within 24 hours. The variance was approved at the March 2025 meeting for two months with conditions. The conditions imposed on the Department included a requirement to provide monthly reports on all admissions and discharges from restrictive housing, criteria used by the Commissioner to identify sentenced persons in custody eligible for discharge, and the number of

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minimum of one operable toilet and shower for every 8 prisoners and one operable sink for every 10 prisoners. Toilets shall be accessible for use without staff assistance 24 hours per day. (5) A multiple occupancy area shall house no more than: (i) 50 Detainees

<sup>5</sup> Phase I- Increase bed capacity at OBCC from 50 to 60 beds in dormitories. Phase II- SCOC's operational approval of two modular housing buildings at West Facility. Phase III- The Department will swap a general population housing area at Robert N. Davoren Complex (RNDC) with a Clinical Alternative to Punitive Segregation ("CAPS") unit in the George R. Vierno Center (GRVC), gaining 25 additional mental observation beds. Phase IV- The Department will populate a North Infirmary Command (NIC) housing area dorm, upon approval for use from SCOC. This will result in an addition of the general population 28 beds.

<sup>6</sup> Limited Four (4) Month Variance Renewal Request to Board of Correction Minimum Standards Regarding Overcrowding- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/BOC-Variance-Renewal-Capacity.pdf>

sentenced people discharged by the Commissioner under the authority of the 6-A<sup>7</sup> program. In May 2025, the Department submitted another four-month variance renewal request<sup>8</sup> for EMTC, OBCC, and WF. The Board granted the request for two months, subject to additional conditions regarding reporting efforts aimed at reducing the jail population on Rikers Island.

With the four borough-based jails set for 4,160 beds capacity and approximately 360 secure hospital beds, and the population rising, more efforts must be made towards decarceration. As stated in the Independent Rikers Commission March 2025 Report,<sup>9</sup> “To close Rikers, New York City – with assistance from New York State – must prioritize meeting the mental health and addiction treatment needs of people cycling into and out of jail, and, while protecting public safety, surgically ensure no one is jailed who could be safely supported in the community. It is clear from our research and data analysis that there are multiple paths to safely reduce the jail population and ensure we can close Rikers. The following investments should be prioritized and started to be phased in immediately. We project these investments and reforms will safely lower the jail population by roughly 750 people.” Meanwhile, it is essential that the Department comply with the Board's minimum standards while managing its staffing shortages, despite challenges like overcrowding due to the State's correction officers' strike and staffing crisis in February 2025.

Since 2018, the Department has closed five jails permanently, most recently the Vernon C. Bain Correctional Center ("VCBC") in 2023. After 30 years of use, VCBC, also known as the "barge" or "boat," was decommissioned<sup>10</sup> in June 2025. The City announced plans to remove the barge from the Hunts Point section of the Bronx and create the Hunts Point Marine Terminal. Mayor Eric Adams originally announced the City's intention to decommission VCBC in 2022 and begin a community engagement process as part of its Hunts Point Forward plan.

### **Borough-Based Jails Projected Budget and Timeline**

The Board of Correction, the Department, and Correctional Health Services ("CHS") met in May 2025 during a scheduled quarterly meeting; one of the agenda topics was the capital cost per jail. The price tag for the borough-based jails project was originally \$8 billion when the plan was introduced in 2019. In 2024, the cost doubled to nearly \$16 billion.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The 6-A Early Release Program is modeled after Supervised Release, an initiative launched by MOCJ in 2009 as an alternative to pretrial detention, primarily instead of cash bail. Supervised Release has led to a significant reduction in the City's jail population and use of cash bail—with no corresponding increase in crime. <https://www.nycja.org/assets/Rikers-Early-Release-Briefing-Note-4.30.2020-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/site/boc/meetings/20250513.page>

<sup>9</sup> A PATH FORWARD: THE BLUEPRINT TO CLOSE RIKERS-

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b6de4731aef1de914f43628/t/6802a228b5619e3f5bafd0cf/1745003055967/Independent+Rikers+Commission+Blueprint+to+Close+Rikers+Island+March+2025.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Mayor Adams, NYCEDC, DOC Announce Plan to Remove Decommissioned Jail Barge From Hunts Points Unveil Ambitious Vision for Innovative Marine Terminal- <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/401-25/mayor-adams-nycedc-doc-plan-remove-decommissioned-jail-barge-hunts-point-unveil#0>

<sup>11</sup> <https://queenseagle.com/all/2024/4/25/borough-based-jail-costs-double-to-16-billion-mayor-claims>

Brooklyn BBJ is located at 275 Atlantic Avenue in Downtown Brooklyn. The projected budget for the Brooklyn BBJ is \$2.9 billion. The facility will have 1,040 individual cells for men. Its substantial completion<sup>12</sup> date is slated for 2029. The Bronx BBJ is in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. The facility will have 1,040 individual cells for men. The projected budget for the Bronx jail is \$2.9 billion. The substantial completion date is slated for 2031. The Bronx BBJ is the only facility without an adjacent courthouse. The Manhattan BBJ is located at 124/125 White Street in the Chinatown section of Manhattan. The Manhattan jail will have 1,040 individual cells for men. The projected budget for the facility is \$3.7 billion. The substantial completion date is slated for 2032. Finally, the Queens BBJ is located at 126-02 82nd Avenue in the Kew Gardens section. The jail will have 590 individual cells for men and 450 individual cells for women, with an additional bed capacity for the infirmary, CDU, maternity, and nursery units. The projected budget is \$3.9 billion, with a substantial completion date of 2031.

## **Conclusion**

As previously stated, the Board of Correction supports the City's plan to close Rikers Island and replace it with four borough-based jails that are smaller, safer, and more humane. To achieve this, the current focus must be on reducing the population. The City Council's response to the Independent Rikers Commission's report, which offered recommendations to achieve the goal of decarceration through the greater use of the 6-A program, was encouraging. While DOC used the program and released 115 people between 2022 and 2024, there is potential to release a higher number of eligible candidates within the following year. Collaborating with New York State legislators, city District Attorneys, borough presidents, and others is essential to develop plans that reduce recidivism and overcrowding.

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<sup>12</sup> Substantial completion in construction signifies the point at which a project, or a designated portion of it, is sufficiently finished for the owner to use it for its intended purpose, even if minor details or items on the list remain.