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## **MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF ONLINE BAIL IN NEW YORK CITY**

*New York City's jail population has dropped more than 20% and number of people held on low bail is down by 60% since 2013*

**NEW YORK**— Mayor de Blasio today announced the launch of an online bail payment system, which will make it easier for New Yorkers to pay bail – including when a friend or relative cannot get to court or a DOC facility to pay in person.

“Until we see the necessary bail reform that will make the system more just and speed up the closure of Rikers Island, New York City will do everything in its power to make the system as efficient and fair as possible. People should not be in jail based on the size of their bank account and no one should stay in jail because a family member was unable to get a day off from work to go to court or a correctional facility,” said **Mayor de Blasio**.

Trying to pay bail in person and during business hours can be a time-consuming process due to travel times, security clearances, long lines and wait times. The City’s new online bail system will provide a number of conveniences for the public, including:

- Sureties, or people who are posting bail to secure the release of another person, will no longer need to pay bail in person at a courthouse or DOC facility or wait at a facility.
- There is no geographic limitation. A family member living out of state can now contribute to the bail amount or pay the full bail amount.
- Credit card bail payment is no longer limited to a single card-holder. Multiple people can now pay portions of the total bail amount, as long as the full amount is paid within a few hours of the first transaction.
- The person paying bail will be able to use multiple credit cards unlike the current in-person process where one person must pay the entire amount in a single transaction. This will ease the financial burden on a surety by allowing payments to be spread across multiple credit cards without worrying about maxing out one credit card.

While most of the online system will be funded through fees, the City agreed to subsidize the service to reduce the financial burden to New Yorkers. The 2.49 percent fee to sureties will be among the lowest in the nation for a service of its kind and scope.

In the initial rollout, online payment will be available for bail that a judge orders is eligible for credit card payment, pursuant to an existing Office of Court Administration cap of \$2,500 on the credit card bail amount. The City and OCA are working to lift the cap before the end of the year in order to expand the service to higher bail amounts.

The City will also install kiosks in all the boroughs, which will allow people who don't have access to the internet at home, to simply go to a kiosk to post bail. Kiosks will be available in courthouses before the end of the year.

To use the new system customers go to the NYC Department of Correction's Inmate Lookup Service at [nyc.gov/doc/lookup](http://nyc.gov/doc/lookup) and find the person whose bail is to be paid. Customers will need the person's first and last name, or NYSID, or Book and Case Number.

New York City has launched a number of initiatives intended to reduce the negative impacts of the cash bail system. These include the Citywide Bail Fund, which assists eligible people who have had bail set at below \$2,000. The City is also investing \$860,000 per year in legal services for people held on money bail, like bail reviews, bail applications, writs of habeas corpus and appeals. The program also includes social services such as connecting people in custody with family and other community ties, personal history reviews and matching clients with supportive programming.

Last year, the City expanded the "bail expeditors" program, which helps families pay bail before their relative enters jail by contacting family members to let them know bail has been set and ensuring that defendants are held at the courthouse so that their families have an opportunity to post bail. The expanded program will keep roughly 2,000 low-risk people from being booked into jail every year.

The de Blasio administration's Supervised Release program, intended to reduce unnecessary jail time and give judges an alternative to money bail, has diverted over 7,000 people from jail since its launch last year.

These efforts have helped reduce the jail population by more than 20 percent since the Mayor took office and have reduced reliance on money bail as seen by the decrease in the number of people held on bail amounts of under \$2,000 by around 60 percent since 2013.

"This is an important initiative for justice that we're pleased to add to the portfolio of other efforts that the city has supported, all of which contribute to the historic lows in the jail population that we are seeing today," said **Elizabeth Glazer, director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.**

"We are proud to announce this new initiative which will provide family and friends of people in custody an easier way to pay bail so loved ones don't spend unnecessary time in jail," said **Department of Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann.** "As the use of the online payment option increases, we look forward to further reducing our population and transitioning to more modern community-based jails."

**Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks** said, “The Unified Court System is pleased to collaborate with New York City in making additional options available for bail. This program is designed to continue our work in reducing barriers to posting bail.”

“Cashless bail will make life easier for those who cannot afford to go through the arduous bail payment process that keeps people at Rikers Island. This is a positive step forward in reforming and modernizing the criminal justice system. I thank the Mayor for making long-needed cashless bail a reality,” said **Council Member Keith Powers, chair of the Criminal Justice Committee.**

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