



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Benjamin

## Statement on Governor Cuomo's Criminal Justice Priorities in State of the State and City's Plan for Rikers Jail Closure

BRIAN BENJAMIN January 6, 2018

| ISSUE: **RIKERS ISLAND, CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM, CORRECTIONS**

As a candidate for office, I promised that if elected I would go to Albany and be a voice and a fighter for the issues that deeply impact our district. One of my top campaign promises was to fight for comprehensive criminal justice reform.

Since becoming your Senator, I have used my voice and platform to do my part to transform our unjust criminal justice system. I have introduced legislation to close Rikers Island and for the state to divest its public pensions from private prisons. I have also worked with criminal justice advocates in district-centered actions calling on our Governor and Mayor to use their powers to bring needed change to New York's criminal justice system.

On Wednesday, January 3rd, which was the first day of the 2018 legislative session, Governor Andrew Cuomo delivered his State of the State address. In his address, Governor Cuomo announced that his priorities for 2018 include comprehensive criminal justice reform. He called for bail, discovery, and speedy trial reforms, and for the State Corrections Commission to develop corrective action plans or closure orders on jails like Rikers Island.

Also this week, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that the Department of Corrections plans to close the first of Rikers Island's nine jails. The George Motchan

Detention Center, which currently houses 600 men in custody, will close in Summer 2018.

I agree with Governor Cuomo that we must act with urgency in passing these reforms and closing facilities like Rikers where conditions are an affront to human rights; doing so enables us to moving away from a system that criminalizes poverty and mental health and towards one that actually seeks justice and rehabilitation. And I am encouraged to see that the de Blasio administration is making progress in closing Rikers and reducing its population.

I look forward to continued partnership with Governor Andrew Cuomo, my colleagues in the state legislature, Mayor Bill de Blasio, criminal justice advocates, and you as we continue to fight to fix our broken criminal justice system and to end mass incarceration, ensuring a fairer and freer New York for all.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S6747**

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- Introduced
- ◦ In Committee Assembly
- In Committee Senate

- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor

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Relates to the closure of the Rikers Island correctional facility within 3 years

June 15, 2017

In Senate Committee [Crime Victims, Crime and Correction](#)

Sponsored by [Brian Benjamin](#)

Do you support this bill?