



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie to NYC Mayor-Elect: Let Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Solve the Rikers Island Dilemma

PATTY RITCHIE December 20, 2021



State Senator Patty Ritchie is encouraging New York City Mayor-Elect Eric Adams to consider making Ogdensburg Correctional Facility part of plans to close Rikers Island and relocate the incarcerated. The complex, which has been plagued by violence, chaos and death, is slated to close by 2027.

In a letter sent Monday to Mayor-Elect Adams, Senator Ritchie made the case for relocating incarcerated individuals to Ogdensburg Correctional Facility. Currently, plans are in place to

close Rikers Island by 2027 and then, open four new, smaller jails—one in each borough except Staten Island—to take its place. It has been reported though, that there are concerns regarding the proposed sites of these smaller jails and the cost to construct them, which is estimated to be \$8 billion.

“Like many New Yorkers, I have read with horror the stories of chaos, death and deplorable conditions at Rikers Island,” said Senator Patty Ritchie. “As Mayor-Elect Adams continues to develop his long-term vision for the jail complex and its expected closure, I am encouraging him to make Ogdensburg Correctional Facility part of his plan.”

“Ogdensburg Correctional Facility has a number of positive attributes—everything from its impressive safety record and reliable workforce to its close proximity to St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and more than \$10 million in recent infrastructure improvements. Utilizing this facility to address the Rikers Island issue both now and in the future would be a win-win situation for New York City and the North Country.”

Precedence for this type of arrangement exists, as Ogdensburg Correctional Facility is just across the street from Riverview Correctional Facility, which first opened in 1988 as one of two facilities in Senator Ritchie’s district funded by New York City to house the incarcerated.

In her letter, Senator Ritchie highlighted several benefits to utilizing Ogdensburg Correctional Facility to house part of the incarcerated population at Rikers Island, including:

A reliable, hardworking and trained workforce: In recent months, Rikers Island has faced rampant absenteeism amongst its staff. Up until recently, nearly 300 individuals worked at Ogdensburg Correctional Facility—and would welcome the opportunity to again work at the prison.

Already in place infrastructure: Utilizing Ogdensburg Correctional Facility to house the incarcerated from Rikers Island would relieve New York City from having to spend an estimated \$8 billion on four new jails. Recently, the state has poured more than \$10 million into this facility, making upgrades to its roof, HVAC system and other areas.

The ability to offer programs to prepare the incarcerated for the future: At Ogdensburg Correctional Facility, a number of programs exist to help the incarcerated learn important skills they can put to use upon their release. In addition, other programs—like their on-site garden program and work release program—allow the incarcerated to give back to the community and find fulfillment in their lives. Ogdensburg Correctional Facility has the infrastructure in place to be able to offer these opportunities to the incarcerated in the future.

Meeting the mental health needs of the incarcerated: Rikers Island has an unfortunate history of mistreating and even abusing the incarcerated with mental illness. In addition, in recent months, many incarcerated individuals have said they have missed appointments with mental health physicians, due to staffing shortages. Ogdensburg Correctional Facility is located adjacent to St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and the opportunity could exist to collaborate with the facility to ensure the incarcerated are receiving the mental health care they need.

A copy of Senator Ritchie's letter can be viewed by clicking the link at the top of the page.