



THE LEGISLATURE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

Mr. Vincent Schiraldi, Commissioner
New York City Department of Correction
75-20 Astoria Blvd.
East Elmhurst, NY 11370

August 20, 2021

Dear Commissioner Schiraldi,

We are gravely concerned to learn of the recent death of 25 year old Brandon Rodriguez after being detained for only a week in your custody. As the respective State Assemblymember and Senator for Rikers Island, we would like to seek answers as to why another preventable death has occurred at this facility.

There appears to be a consistent pattern¹ of unsafe conditions for both incarcerated individuals and staff at this institution. Multiple reports² have been released illustrating unsafe conditions at Rikers from lack of food, blankets, pillows and beds for detainees, to the lack of staff and supplies required to operate the facility at full capacity. Shortages in staff are impeding oversight to provide treatment that is desperately needed, and healthcare workers are voicing concern that these gaps in operations will directly result in physical harm to themselves and those who are in custody.

We are deeply saddened to know that Brandon will join Tomas Carlo, Javier Velasco, Thomas Earl Braunson III, and Richard Blake's preventable deaths from this past year, as well as Kalief Browder in 2015. It is a tragedy that this continues to occur on a regular basis. As a facility that is largely populated by Black and Brown individuals, we need to ensure that we are actively trying to rectify our broken corrections system instead of remaining complacent and allowing these injustices to prevail.

¹ [https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/new-york-elections-government/ny-rikers-isla\[...\]rses-doctors-20210815-7afhpb2tdzddljecuoutygmzc4-story.html](https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/new-york-elections-government/ny-rikers-isla[...]rses-doctors-20210815-7afhpb2tdzddljecuoutygmzc4-story.html)

² <https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/8/1/22605140/rikers-island-horrible-conditions-jail-deaths>

It is the duty of Rikers Island to adequately care for the safety and well-being for incarcerated individuals. We request information in regards to not only what led to the death of Brandon Rodriguez, but also as to why this persistent lack of staffing, resources, and treatment continues in the aftermath of repeated tragedies and calls of concern by those working to help individuals within the jail complex. We would like to know Rikers' plan moving forward to stop this pattern of inadequacy, including your intention to further implement training for staff, and potentially reallocate resources to properly care for the people in your custody. We must work to ensure that another preventable death does not occur.

Sincerely,



Kenny Burgos
New York State Assemblymember
District 85



Alessandra Biaggi
New York State Senator
District 34

CC: Dana Wax, Chief of Staff