



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 4, 2020

Contact: Jessica Floyd | JFloyd@Skdknick.com |

**NYUJ: UPDATED DATA SHOWS NEW YORK
STATE STILL DANGEROUSLY LAGS ON
COVID-19 TESTS IN PRISONS; ADVOCATES
URGE NYS TO ADOPT NEW COVID SAFETY
PLAN**

*Latest Data Shows Data Shows New York's prison testing rate (15.28%)
is far below other states*

*NYUJ to New York State: Test Every Individual In The Prison System;
Reduce the Existing Prison Population; Limit Incoming Detainees*

NEW YORK – New Yorkers United for Justice (NYUJ) today called on New York State to implement new COVID-19 principles to safeguard the state's criminal justice system during the pandemic. In the [state comparison data collected by NYUJ](#), New York is testing the incarcerated population at limited rates (15.28%) and continues to trail states like Ohio, Michigan, California, Texas, New Jersey, Wisconsin, and Missouri. The alarming data details an underwhelming approach to prison safety during this global pandemic.

COVID-19 cannot be contained within state prisons; the spread of the virus behind bars threatens all communities. The lack of routine and consistent testing in New York state prisons remains a large blind spot that not only puts those who are incarcerated and work in corrections in danger – it threatens the success of New York's reopening.

*“It is simply unacceptable that we are 5 months into this crisis and New York State has only tested 15% of its incarcerated population and the high overall positive rate of 10.30% suggest cases of COVID have gone undetected in our state prisons,” said **Khalil Cumberbatch, Senior Advisor at New Yorkers United for Justice.** “We need a full scale plan now. Last month, we provided the state with COVID-19 principles to develop a framework to safeguard all New Yorkers from the virus, yet there is still no plan in place to administer a test of all incarcerated New Yorkers nor prevent COVID-19 in the state’s criminal justice system which includes judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, court officers and corrections staff. For every individual who interacts with a system which has limited testing, the broader New York State population’s vulnerability increases.”*

New York developed precautions for safely returning to restaurants, shops, and businesses throughout the state – we must be sure that the same precautions are taken in our entire criminal justice system to mitigate the [spread of this deadly virus](#). Crowded courtrooms can contribute to virus transmission and can present enormous risks for all court personnel, lawyers, witnesses, accused persons, and the general public. The reopening of courts should be guided by independent medical advice. The [recommended principles](#) that NYUJ is urging the state to adopt to minimize the risk of renewed outbreaks by relying on post COVID practices in policing, sentencing, incarceration, and supervision.

**COVID Cases Among Incarcerated Individuals and Correctional Staff
Updated on August 3, 2020**

Prison System (Accessed Aug. 3, 2020)	Incarcerated Positive	Staff Positive	Incarcerated Individual to Staff COVID ratio	# of Tests for incarcerated population
Alabama	207	303	0.68	997
California	8,274	1,544	5.36	69,547
Delaware	521	161	3.24	N/A
Federal BOP	10,686	1,212	8.82	N/A
Florida	8,471	1,750	4.84	58,809
Georgia	940	505	1.86	N/A
Illinois	369	281	1.31	N/A
Indiana	733	344	2.13	2,483
Iowa	375	63	5.95	6,084
Kansas	925	134	6.90	N/A
Louisiana	875	310	2.82	2,513

Michigan	3,896	414	9.41	55,853
Missouri	539	122	4.42	22,297
Nevada	19	76	0.25	N/A
New Jersey	2,777	781	3.56	Reporting all incarcerated individuals tested.
New York	604	1311	0.46	5,866
Ohio	5,262	964	5.46	20,011
Oregon	415	116	3.60	2,298
Pennsylvania	304	218	1.40	8,374
South Carolina	930	293	3.17	N/A
Texas	15,285	3,288	4.65	163,362
Vermont	130	20	6.5	1,515
Wisconsin	304	123	2.47	25,596

Connecticut and Massachusetts removed from analysis due to inconsistent availability of data.

###

About New Yorkers United for Justice (NYUJ):

New Yorkers United for Justice is a statewide coalition comprised of local and national non-profit organizations committed to supporting a movement that will bring much-needed criminal justice reform to New York State and ensure that policies promote safety and fairness. NYUJ aims for legislative urgency to fix a broken criminal justice system that punishes the poor and communities of color, tears families apart, and makes New Yorkers less safe. NYUJ believes that a system that ensures equal access to justice for anyone accused in New York State, regardless of age, race, ethnicity or social economic status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin or religion, must be the standard.