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**STATEMENT OF QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
**MELINDA KATZ**

This statement is part of regular updates that will be issued by the Queens District Attorney's Office as needed.

Our new normal is social distancing and other preventive measures to halt the spread of the coronavirus. We must also take into account the safety of our staff here at the Queens District Attorney's Office, as well as those who visit us and the defendants who come before us.

In the coming weeks, the Queens DA's Office will continue to provide the essential services necessary to keep Queens County's residents safe while we do everything possible to avoid COVID-19. Therefore, we are operating within the office with a skeletal crew while most of our employees work remotely from home.

As we have done from the start of the year, we will continue to evaluate the prosecution of low level offenses on a case by case basis and decline to prosecute where appropriate.

And in light of the new circumstances that we find ourselves in, we will make every effort to consider the impact of each prosecution on both the health and safety of the defendant and the community at large. Applications to the Courts to send arrestees to Rikers will not be made without consideration of the risk that poses to defendants.

We are mindful of the population that is currently being housed at Rikers. We are currently reviewing the bail status of defendants who are being held pending trial. We are looking at individuals who have little time left on their sentences to see if the interests of justice would be served by their release. We are also looking at those who have been identified by the DOCHS as exceedingly high risk individuals due to their medical conditions.

We are committed to working with our criminal justice partners to see that both the needs of the defendants and the community are best served during this health crisis.

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