

Good afternoon. My name is Marissa Hughes, and through my family's experience with the New York City jail system, I have seen several issues that I believe can be improved for both people in custody and their families.

First, phone access continues to create unnecessary tension inside the jails. People can wait hours to use shared phones, certain individuals may control access to them, and phone PINs can become something people argue over or trade. These conflicts can become serious and can even lead to people being cut or assaulted over something as basic as trying to communicate with their families.

I recommend continuing to expand individual tablet access and allowing significantly more phone calls to be made directly through those tablets. If each person has their own device and does not have to compete for a shared phone, it could reduce arguments, intimidation, and violence while allowing people to maintain healthier relationships with their families.

The length of calls also needs to be reconsidered. A 15-minute call followed by only a short additional call is often not enough, especially when someone needs to contact a bank, attorney, government agency, medical office, housing program, or handle another important matter. These calls often involve long hold times before someone even answers. People in custody should have enough time to take care of necessary legal and personal responsibilities.

If cost is a concern, the City should look at other ways to balance those expenses, including reasonable adjustments elsewhere such as commissary revenue, because communication with family and access to important services should be treated as a priority.

I also want to address the clothing drop-off information available to families. There are several things listed online as approved, but when families arrive at the facility, they find out there are additional requirements that were never clearly stated.

For example, T-shirts may be listed as permitted, but families are then told at drop-off that they must be 100% cotton. Pajamas are listed as allowed, but the website does not clearly explain specific requirements involving buttons or openings in the private-area portion of the clothing. Families often do not find this out until after they have already spent money, traveled to the facility, waited to drop the items off, and then had them rejected.

The website should clearly list every requirement, including material, design, closures, colors, and any other restrictions. If an item will be rejected at the facility, that information needs to be available before families purchase it.

These are changes that could reduce conflict inside the jails, improve communication with families, and prevent families from wasting money and time because of incomplete

information. I respectfully ask the Board to review both phone access and the accuracy of the clothing-drop guidelines.