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May 8, 2018

Martha King, Executive Director
Chair and Members
New York City Board of Correction
1 Centre Street, Room 2213
New York, NY 10007

Re: DOC Variance Renewal Requests

Dear Ms. King, Acting Chair Cephas, and Members:

I thank the Board of Correction for its continuing vigilance and encourage you to exercise extreme caution in granting any of the variance renewal requests of the Department of Correction (DOC).

At the November 14, 2017 meeting, the Board approved a six-month variance request around Enhanced Supervision Housing for Young Adults (YA-ESH). The Board prudently attached conditions to its approval along with a reporting requirement. I encourage the Board to examine carefully the DOC's actions over the past six months and deny the request if it determines there is not substantial compliance.

I would also ask that the Board address more fundamental problems with YA-ESH and related variances. For example, I seriously question the DOC's assertions about the therapeutic nature of YA-ESH, especially when restraint desks are still used. YA-ESH, or any alternative setting, should not repeat the deleterious effects of punitive segregation.

Given New York City's move toward shuttering the facilities on Rikers Island, DOC officials must grapple with a complete overhaul of their practices, but the variance requests seem to lack awareness of this fact. Therefore, I hope that the Board will carefully consider the comments of advocates and experts, and exercise its authority to ensure that the DOC starts realizing the fundamental reform that is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Dromm".

Daniel Dromm
Chair, Committee on Finance