

Leah Faria
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Board of Correction Testimony
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My name is Leah Faria and I am a Senior Community Organizer at Women's Community Justice Association. We advocate for the women and gender-expansive people at the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers Island, and I was one of them. I was detained at Rosie's for three years from 1997-2000.

That is why I am asking the Board of Correction not to grant the variance that would require packages to be purchased and mailed from specific vendors. This would be an extra burden on families who are already struggling to provide for and stay connected with their loved ones inside.

I visit Rosie's on behalf of WCJA roughly twice a month and I see so many women and gender-expansive people who can be served in the community and do not need jail. So many are suffering from being away from their families and they feel hopeless. I see the women cycling in and out of Rosie's. As one young woman recently said, "All I know is drugs and jail."

Community investments are the real solution that will break the cycle of incarceration and make everyone safer. Preventative services like mental health and drug treatment must be properly funded and accessible to those who need them. More than 70 percent of women at Rosie's are mothers, and they need stable housing and childcare.

District attorneys and judges should also do more for the many domestic violence survivors who end up at Rosie's. WCJA's report with the Rikers Commission found that up to 94% of women who were diverted from Rosie's were survivors of intimate partner violence. I was one of them. I ended up at Rosie's because of intergenerational trauma. Had there been more accessible programs and education in my community, things might have been different. Courts should consider a person's history of domestic violence at every stage of their case, including when they first get arrested.

Our mothers, daughters and sisters should be home with their families for the holidays. The Board of Correction should call for decarceration, particularly for women and gender-expansive people at Rosie's who belong in their communities with services and support.