



Message from Chair Sampson

“Humanity Continues Here” Agenda

Part I: Cultivating Agency Resilience

February 14, 2023

Dear New Yorkers,

It is with great honor and commitment that I serve as Chair of the New York City Board of Correction. I am eager to collaborate with our esteemed Board members, staff, and partners as we use our collective insight and expertise to improve conditions of confinement and outcomes for persons in custody. I also will gather thoughts from incarcerated individuals, service members, families, and the public to keep the needs of all stakeholders in mind. Jail conditions are not only a reflection of our society’s values, but it also has a ripple effect that extends into the community in two significant ways– through interactions with loved ones and reintegration into our communities.

First, most persons in custody have loved ones in the community supporting them through their detainment. I recently read a 2019 statistic by Cornell University stating that virtually half of Americans have a family member who has been jailed or imprisoned. This unfortunate reality not only speaks to the far-reaching impact of the jail system on our country and communities, but it also reminds us that there are families “doing time” with their incarcerated loved ones. Most incarcerated individuals have families that correspond with them, visit with them, pray with them, and hope they are receiving humane treatment under our minimum standards. The unfortunate truth is that many detainees do not receive the minimum standard of care to which they are entitled, and they continue to have their health and safety jeopardized. In fact, loved ones often attend our public meetings or write letters to express how deeply concerned they are about the health and safety of persons in custody, and to demand change.

The second way jail treatment impacts our community is when persons in custody eventually return home as our neighbors. It is in our best interest for institutions to be humane and rehabilitative, ensuring incarcerated individuals are returned in optimal mental and physical health, and are equipped with the skills and knowledge to serve as productive members of our communities. This begs the question: If the effect of jail conditions can have an impact on the community, then what prevents our humanity from permeating the jails?

Upon being appointed Chair on January 6, 2023, I dedicated the first 30 days to conducting a full assessment of the agency, touring jails, and speaking with stakeholders. I also drew upon the previous two months of insight gained as a Board member. After completing a thorough



review, I concluded that if the Board is to contribute to sustainable change, then we must first develop our agency's resilience to ensure that the Board has the necessary resources and capabilities to respond effectively to the changing needs of the population we serve. To that end, I propose strengthening our agency's critical areas, such as Board members and staff, technology, auditing and reporting, and partnerships.

The "Humanity Continues Here" agenda is a multi-year strategy toward achieving our City Charter mandate to carry out independent oversight and enact regulations that promote safer, fairer, smaller, and more humane New York City jails. The first phase of the "Humanity Continues Here" agenda is Phase I: Cultivating Agency Resilience, which aims to:

- Expand monitor coverage and reporting
- Audit minimum standards
- Collaborate with agency partners on systemic issues
- Advance transparency in oversight
- Invest in the learning, development, and wellness of staff and members
- Amplify and incorporate the voices of incarcerated individuals and service members

Ultimately, this phase will ensure that the Board of Correction is data and results-driven and prepared to pursue bold initiatives in additional phases:

- Phase II: Advancing Compliance with Minimum Standards – exercising authority under the City Charter to enforce compliance with minimum standards.
- Phase III: Measuring Progress – measuring year-to-date progress in all areas of reform.

I look forward to partnering with fellow Board members, Board staff, stakeholders, and the citizens of this great city to humanize persons in custody, destigmatize incarceration, and normalize humane jail conditions.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dwayne C. Sampson".

Dwayne C. Sampson
Chair, New York City Board of Correction