

Dear Chair Sampson and Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the variance request submitted by the Department of Correction regarding the Board Minimum Standards [§ 1-12\(a\)](#) and [§ 1-11\(e\)\(1\)\(i\)](#) regarding packages and mail. As an emergency medicine clinical pharmacist specialist, I am writing to highlight my concern about the psychosocial impact of banning physical mail and personal packages for people who are incarcerated and to challenge the dangerous false claims the DOC is using as rationale for this cruel policy.

In their variance request letters, the Department claims that fentanyl is coming into the facilities via mail and packages, stating:

- “At present, drugs, including fentanyl, are entering our facilities, in part, through correspondence sent in from the outside, often with deadly consequences. Paper is literally soaked in fentanyl and mailed in to those in our custody”
- “Items soaked in the drug are placed in packages and mailed in. Pictures of the contents of two such packages – a fentanyl-soaked T-shirt and a book laced with fentanyl – are attached to this submission.”

Many vetted researchers have debunked these types of claims. As a pharmacist, I have personally mixed and handled fentanyl countless times -- absorption of fentanyl is not possible without a transdermal system such as a medicated patch. It is this exact type of fear mongering against fentanyl that continues to alienate disadvantaged individuals seeking appropriate care for pain. Both of these variance requests have no scientific or medical standing and therefore must be handled appropriately.

Mail and packages from family are a critical source of connection that give people in custody hope and fuel the tenacity needed to survive incarceration. The Department’s reasoning for this variance is patently false. The Board of Correction should deny both variance requests.

Sincerely,

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