

Dear Bobby Cohen,

I am a resident of NYC and I am contacting you about the proposed ban of physical mail on Rikers Island and within other borough jails. I find this ban extremely troubling. It has been shown time and time again just how important it is for people in prison to receive physical mail: it is a source of much-needed connection and community for people who are isolated behind bars. Physical mail has enormous sentimental value and incarcerated people should not be severed from this lifeline.

Furthermore, **there is no evidence that mail scanning makes prisons safer.** [There is literally no evidence](#) that it reduces overdoses or drug uses; in some cases, instances of contraband actually increased. Instead of making anyone on Rikers safer, this ban expands and intensifies violent surveillance, undermines access to community resources, and further isolates people from their loved ones. The state's own Department of Investigation reports drugs are brought onto Rikers Island overwhelmingly through correctional officers and contractors.

There are a multitude of other reasons why the switch to mail scanning is a poor and inadvisable policy. Switching to tablets excludes people with literacy issues, certain sensory access needs, and screen use limitations from accessing mail. Scanning mail creates further delays, produces partial, incomplete or illegible copies, and destroys physical correspondence which people rely on to survive and sustain connections with their loved ones. People often receive life-saving packages from their loved ones outside - getting rid not only of mail but also of packages does absolutely NOTHING to address the root causes of precarity and harm on Rikers, which is the institution of imprisonment itself. Finally, Securus, the proposed vendor, has a long track record of mass leaks of confidential information and contract violations. The contract dramatically expands the surveillance dragnet and charges prisoners and their loved ones for basic necessities, including the ability to communicate with those they care about.

The board's own Executive Director, Amanda Masters, has already resigned over this issue. If you have any real interest in people's safety, please ensure that the Department of Corrections abandons this punitive ban.

Yours sincerely,

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