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Board of Correction Testimony
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My name is Michelle Feldman and I am the Policy and Campaigns Director for Women's Community Justice Association.

WCJA urges the Board of Correction not to grant the variance that would limit package and mail delivery. These are lifelines for families and communities. Care packages are not just items, they represent hope and connection. As the holidays approach, these changes would put an extra strain on families.

WCJA's top priority is lowering the number of women and gender-expansive people at the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers Island. In April 2020 there were roughly 149 at Rosie's, and today there are around 340. This is moving in the wrong direction. As the holidays approach, we call on the courts and policymakers to do more to safely return those at Rosie's back to their families and communities.

WCJA's *Path to Under 100* report that was released this year found that:

- 82% of women at Rikers are treated for mental illness, compared to 49% of men, and up to 93% are domestic violence survivors.
- 70% of women compared to 54% of men are caregivers.
- Harlem, East New York/Brownsville (in Brooklyn) and parts of the Bronx are the highest zip codes for admissions to Rosie's over the past five years.

The report has four recommendations to safely lower the number of women and gender-expansive people at Rosie's to under 100, including:

1. Increasing investments in gender-responsive community-based programs that prevent and divert women from the system. For example, SHERO has diverted over 300 women from Rikers since 2017 with only 2 rearrests, and the cost is 1/5 that of keeping someone at Rikers.
2. Conducting holistic needs assessments for mental illness, domestic violence and other factors that are considered at every stage of a case, and ensuring treatment not jails for people with mental illness.
3. Establishing Population Review Teams to evaluate every case at Rosie's for off-ramps into non-jail alternatives.
4. Providing accessible, up-to-date information who is at Rosie's and what their needs are, as well as establishing a citywide women's resource liaison navigator.

The Board of Correction has the power to call for more decarceration and we urge you to do so. Please let more mothers, daughters and sisters spend the holidays with their families where they belong.