

Amanda Masters, Executive Director
Julio Medina, Acting Chair
New York City Board of Correction
1 Centre St., Room 2213
New York, NY 1007
Sent via email

Re: DOC request for variances regarding mail and packages

Dear Ms. Masters, Acting Chair Medina, 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 a librarian, advocate, and New York state resident I recognize the importance of receiving mail from family, friends, and loved ones to maintain connections, to build relationships, and to prepare for reentry.

Removing physical mail and limiting packages to vendors will create more barriers to connection during incarceration. Here are some points that have led me to my strong opposition:

- People in DOC custody do not have reliable access to tablets, on which they would theoretically read their mail. People in DOC custody have not had any access to tablets for months since DOC ended a contract with a previous vendor, and their contract with new vendor may require incarcerated people to pay to access mail on their tablets
- Digitized mail is dehumanizing – holding something that your loved one held is important, especially as DOC has still not restarted weekend visits for people in their custody
- Limiting packages to specific vendors limits the items available to people in custody and increases costs for families
- The Department of Investigation has previously said “The mail and visits are not significant entry points for contraband.” Their investigations, and other criminal investigations, have shown that officers are regularly able to bring in drugs.
- Other jail and prison systems that moved to scanned mail and limited packages, like Missouri, have actually seen increases, or no reductions, in overdoses in their facilities
- This also introduces an additional level of surveillance, which dehumanizes the incarcerated individuals and could prevent them from accessing important information.

I urge the Board to deny the Department’s variance request.

Sincerely,
Kevin Adams

Kevin Adams (he/him/his)
Information Literacy Librarian

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