

New York City Board of Correction
1 Centre St., Room 2213
New York, NY 1007

Dear members of the Board,

I write 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 college educator, library worker, and former NYC resident, I recognize the deep importance of receiving mail from family, friends, and loved ones to establish and sustain connections to the world outside of incarceration, and to build on knowledge and interests that can help prepare for reentry and a life of working and learning.

I feel very strongly that removing physical mail and limiting packages to vendors will be detrimental to the ability for incarcerated people to build knowledge and connections that could prove essential to reentry. Having written responses to questions from incarcerated people for the past eight months, I have noticed that they tend to focus on the one hand on building knowledge during incarceration, and on the other on figuring out how to actualize their work goals upon release. These seem to me to be essential goals for incarcerated people, and removing their ability to receive this kind of mail would severely limit their level of success and reintegration after their incarceration ends. In this vein, these new limitations would additionally drive up costs for community groups to send books and magazines meant to build knowledge.

I hope that these issues are taken under serious consideration: as a teacher, I know that when someone works to continue their learning outside of what's required of them, it signals a level of passion and commitment that is important to meet with resources whenever possible.

While the bulk of responses that I have written do engage with requests to build knowledge and prepare for work upon reentry, I also see the deep importance of receiving life-sustaining, tangible things from friends and family. I sincerely hope that you will consider this human necessity and reject the Board's variance request.

Sincerely,
Sophie Abramowitz