

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 NYC resident and information professional, I recognize the importance of receiving mail from family, friends, and loved ones to maintain connections, to build relationships, to prepare for reentry, and to continue to learn.

People in DOC custody do not have reliable access to tablets, on which they would theoretically read their mail and have not had any access to tablets for months since DOC ended a contract with a previous vendor. People in DOC custody are already suffering the absence or very limited delivery of nearly every basic service, including “clean laundry, haircuts, time outdoors” as noted in the most recent Nunez federal monitor’s report.

The DOC's rationale in asking for this variance is to prevent contraband, including drugs; however, 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. Instead of taking a crucial lifeline of connection away from them, DOC should implement better security measures to hold their own staff accountable, and ensure provision of medical care and treatment programs to help people in their custody manage chemical addictions.

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

Sincerely,

Stefana Breitwieser