

Beth Diesch – LCSW, MS Ed

March 13, 2023

New York City Board of Correction  
1 Centre St., Room 2213  
New York, NY 1007  
*Sent via email to boc@boc.nyc.gov*

Re: DOC request for Variance Request to Board of Correction Minimum Standards Section 1-12(a) Regarding Packages and Section 1-11(e)(1)(i) Regarding Correspondence

Dear Chair Sampson 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 social, I am writing to highlight my concern about the psychosocial impact of banning physical mail and personal packages for people who are incarcerated and to challenge the dangerous false claims the DOC is using as rational for this cruel policy.

In their variance request letters, the Department claims that fentanyl is coming into the facilities via mail and packages, stating:

- “At present, drugs, including fentanyl, are entering our facilities, in part, through correspondence sent in from the outside, often with deadly consequences. Paper is literally soaked in fentanyl and mailed in to those in our custody”
- “Items soaked in the drug are placed in packages and mailed in. Pictures of the contents of two such packages – a fentanyl-soaked T-shirt and a book laced with fentanyl – are attached to this submission.”

<https://health.ucdavis.edu/news/headlines/can-fentanyl-be-absorbed-through-your-skin/2022/10#:~:text=Can%20fentanyl%20be%20absorbed%20through%20the%20skin%20or%20by%20touching,a%20doorknob%20or%20dollar%20bill>.

<https://healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-021-00163-5>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-fentanyl-overdose/fact-check-overdose-of-fentanyl-just-by-being-in-its-presence-is-not-possible-experts-tell-reuters-idUSL1N2PI0PZ>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/13/magazine/police-fentanyl-exposure-videos.html>

Mail and packages from family are a critical source of connection that give people in custody hope and fuel the tenacity needed to survive incarceration. The Department’s reasoning for this variance is patently false. The Board of Correction should deny both variance requests.

Sincerely,

*Beth Diesch – LCSW, MS Ed*