

Hello,

I'm writing to ask you to vote against the DOC's requested mail system changes. DOC wants to have all mail sent to an off-site facility where it will be scanned and then read on tablets by people in custody. They also want to require that packages be sent directly from a limited list of vendors. The argument is that these changes would reduce the prevalence of drugs in the jails; however, the Department of Investigation has already stated that "the mail and visits are not significant entry points for contraband." This investigation and others have shown that officers are regularly able to bring in drugs and that this is a much more significant entry point for contraband. Additionally, other jail and prison systems that moved to scanned mail and limited packages, like in Missouri, have seen either increases or no reduction in overdoses in their facilities.

People in DOC custody do not have reliable access to tablets, which is how they would read their mail if these changes were approved. Currently, no one in DOC custody has access to tablets and haven't for months since DOC cancelled their contract with a previous vendor. Their contract with a new vendor may require incarcerated people to pay to access mail on their tablets. This is unacceptable. In addition, digitizing someone's mail is dehumanizing. It's important to be able to hold something that your loved one held, especially since DOC has not restarted weekend visits for people in their custody. In addition, limiting packages to only those sent from a limited list of vendors would limit the items available to people in custody. It would also increase costs to their families.

It is clear that these changes would not reduce the prevalence of drugs or overdoses and are, instead, yet another attempt to chip away at the rights of people in DOC's custody. People in DOC custody already suffer from 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. Instead of taking away a crucial lifeline of connection, DOC should be implementing better security measures to hold their own staff accountable and ensure the provision of medical care and treatment programs to help people in their custody manage chemical addictions.

Please do not approve DOC's requests to change the mail system.

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