

NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF CORRECTION NAMES AMANDA MASTERS AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 21, 2022

New York, NY – [The New York City Board of Correction](#) has named Amanda Masters as its Executive Director. Masters will lead the Board’s independent oversight of the New York City jail system as the City moves forward with its plan to close the jail complex on Rikers Island and build four smaller, safer, and more humane jails in the boroughs.

An accomplished executive, Masters brings nearly 20 years of experience in the oversight of jails, police, and systems that serve people with disabilities. Her deep passion for the Board of Correction’s mission began over ten years ago when she served as the Board’s Deputy Executive Director and then as the Interim Executive Director. In January 2022, Masters again answered the call of duty by returning to the Board to lead the organization as the Interim Executive Director. Today’s announcement illustrates the Board’s confidence in Masters to effectively lead the Board of Correction during this critical and transformative period in New York City corrections.

The Board of Correction consists of nine members, three of whom are appointed directly by the Mayor, three by the Mayor jointly with the presiding justices of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for the first and second judicial departments, and three by the City Council. The Executive Director of the Board of Correction is appointed by the Board’s members. Board members expressed the following sentiments regarding Masters’ selection:

Interim Chair Julio Medina: “BOC is proud to announce the selection of Amanda Masters as the new Executive Director of the Board of Correction. Amanda brings to this role vast and diverse professional experience engaging a practical and realistic approach to problem-solving. Amanda’s in-depth knowledge of Rikers coupled with her ability to collaborate with all the stakeholders will undoubtedly strengthen our city while simultaneously making Rikers safe for correctional officers, staff and detainees alike. I look forward to working with Amanda as we create a safer and transformative jail system for all.”

Dr. Robert L. Cohen: “Amanda Masters is the right choice: she understands the importance of the Board of Correction’s Minimum Standards. In this difficult time, when the Mayor’s Emergency Executive Order attempts to keep the Board from its critical oversight role, we, and the people living and working inside the jails are extremely fortunate to have her inspirational leadership. I have known Amanda for many years. She has the experience and stamina necessary for this difficult and crucial job.

Marco A. Carrión: “The Board of Correction needs a leader who is committed to the collaboration necessary to create a modern, fair, just and humane corrections system. Amanda Masters has shown herself to be both extremely knowledgeable and passionate, traits which are much needed in this time of transformation. It’s my pleasure to welcome Amanda as the new Executive Director of the Board of Correction.”

Freya Rigterink: “Amanda Masters is the right leader for the Board at this critical time. Over the years, working in her different capacities, she has shown incredible dedication to improving jail conditions and the care of people in custody. She is a talented and effective leader. We are grateful for her ongoing service and look forward to working with her in this role.”

Felipe Franco: “In Amanda Masters we found the right Executive Director to lead the Board of Correction in its oversight role of a correctional system in crisis, that is failing those who it meant to care and rehabilitate. Amanda Masters is a dedicated public servant who has over two decades of experience working with justice agencies, and who has consistently worked in protecting the rights of those with disabilities and those in the justice system. I am grateful for Amanda’s commitment to those in our jails, their loved ones and willingness to accept this challenging job.”

Incoming BOC Executive Director Amanda Masters has pledged her commitment to providing the agency stability and strong, empathetic leadership. She stated, “I am deeply honored to be appointed to the Board of Correction during these challenging times and will work with our team to ensure that the Board fulfills its mandate to evaluate the performance of the NYC Department of Correction, and enforce the Board's regulations concerning the 'care, custody, correction, treatment, supervision, and discipline of all persons held or confined under the jurisdiction of the Department of Correction.”

About Amanda Masters:

Amanda Masters earned her bachelor’s degree and J.D. from the Ohio State University. Over the years, her passion and compassion for vulnerable populations led her down the path of becoming an accomplished civil rights attorney and loyal public advocate. Masters began her career advocating for immigrants, healthcare resources, and people in custody. Further, she promoted law enforcement oversight by collaborating with Columbia Law School on a police officer oversight program and practicing civil rights litigation centered on police, correction officer, and prison official misconduct.

In 2009, Masters served as Counsel for Giskan Solotaroff, Anderson & Stewart LLP, overseeing civil rights litigation primarily focused on race, disability, and income discrimination cases. She also served as the Director of Access to Healthcare and Disability Rights Programs for the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. In this role, Masters represented the Willowbrook class members and provided oversight to ensure that thousands of people with developmental disabilities received high-quality and appropriate medical and habilitative services. Further, she monitored conditions in residential facilities for people with developmental disabilities throughout New York State.

Masters went on to work for the New York City Board of Correction between 2012 and 2015. During this time, Masters collaborated with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to increase the Board’s operating budget from less than \$1 million to \$1.8 million. This milestone helped the Board re-align capacity to meet the agency’s City Charter-mandated responsibilities. Masters also led efforts to publish the first set of public reports. For example, qualitative and quantitative reports analyzing solitary confinement on Rikers Island – the first reports of its kind published by the Board – led to ground-breaking regulation on punitive segregation. Masters and her team achieved nationally recognized rules limiting solitary confinement to a maximum of 30 days and categorically prohibiting the placement of people in solitary confinement who are 21 years old or younger. Also prohibited from solitary confinement are people with serious mental illnesses, disabilities, or health contraindications and those who committed low-level infractions.

In 2015, Masters transitioned to serve as Deputy Counsel to New York City Public Advocate Letitia James. Masters successfully petitioned the Board of Correction to implement the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in addition to local regulations. Additionally, Masters engaged in

rule-making, advocated on behalf of sexual abuse victims at Rikers Island, and drafted legislation to limit people in custody from being assessed exorbitant money transfer fees. Her reputation as a social justice advocate continued to solidify.

For the past five years, Masters has served as Senior Counsel for the Legal Counsel Division of the New York City Law Department. In this position, Masters advised the Office of the Mayor, Department of Correction, Board of Correction, and other city agencies on sensitive legal matters. She also reviewed and approved the Board of Correction's rule-making, negotiated City Council legislation on corrections-related matters, and developed an extensive portfolio of human rights, social services, and housing advocacy. And recently, Amanda began serving as the Board's Interim Executive Director.

It is Masters' passion for reform that kept her engaged with the Board throughout these years. She rose to the occasion to assist the agency in furthering its mission where she could because of her deep commitment to serving vulnerable populations. Moreover, Masters' unwavering dedication and thoughtful approach has led to the cultivation of strong connections with Board staff, agency stakeholders, and community members, alike.

CONTACT: Denise Upshaw, Director of Policy, (212) 266-4364, dupshaw@boc.nyc.gov