



October 8, 2016

Stanley Brezenoff, Chair  
NYC Board of Correction  
1 Centre Street, Room 2213  
New York, NY 10007

RE: New York City Board of Correction Grievance Study

Dear Mr. Brezenoff:

The New York City Department of Correction (“Department”) shares the New York City Board of Correction’s (“Board”) interest in ensuring that all inmates in our custody have an effective avenue for communicating and resolving issues of concern. The Department reviewed the Board’s Study of the Inmate Grievance Resolution Program and is in agreement with the recommendations contained therein. To that end, it important to note that, beginning in 2014, the Department executed its own rigor and analysis to determine the effectiveness of the Inmate Grievance Resolution Program.

In 2015, a targeted working team was established and tasked with the responsibility of exploring nationally recognized best practices, assessing the current grievance protocols and designing a violence reduction tool to increase inmate accessibility for expeditious resolution of inmate grievances and notable issues. In August 2016, the Department advanced a five (5) week pilot to test the developing new grievance resolution model, identify and resolve operational deficiencies, and evaluate the benefits of new system technologies. The pilot incorporated recommendations received from the Board, the Department of Justice, the Moss Group, and other advocacy groups. Throughout the pilot, the Department evaluated our performance and worked to address issues.

As we have already shared with the Board, the pilot was a tremendous success and provided extensive insight resulting in a new proposed model. This innovative model, which is in compliance with both the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), includes the following core features and enhancements:

- A streamlined universal tracking system that monitors the lifecycle of an issue;
- No distinctions are made between grievable and non-grievable issues -the focus is on resolving all inmate issues while prioritizing and escalating issues of concern such as medical access, protective custody requests, etc.;
- A mechanism to manage issues related to ADA and PREA concerns;
- Reporting, investigation and resolution protocols to maximize efficiency;
- Transparency and enhanced access to the complaint process;

This new approach will significantly reduce violence by providing tools for staff to facilitate inmate requests and eliminate frustration.

The Department is committed to the establishment of an effective grievance system that serves the needs of the inmates in our custody in a timely manner. It is our joint mission to ensure all inmates in DOC custody have access to expeditious resolution of their concerns. As we advance this new grievance structure, I welcome the opportunity to continue our dialogue and collaboration with the Board.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Ponte". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joseph Ponte

cc: Martha King, Executive Director