

**Erie County Corrections  
Specialist Advisory Board  
Old County Hall**

92 Franklin St., 4th Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202  
Switchboard: 716/858-7500



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**Cindi McEachon, Vice Chair**

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July 6, 2020

Legislator Howard Johnson, Chair  
Public Safety Committee  
Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

**Re: Request for Testimony/Written Comments Concerning ECSO's Proposal to "Close" the Erie County Holding Center**

Dear Chair Johnson:

It is our understanding that the Erie County Sheriff's Office has proposed "closing" or re-purposing the Erie County Holding Center, transferring the detainees and staff to the Erie County Correctional Facility, and re-purposing part of the Holding Center for some form of a "re-entry" program.

The purpose of the Erie County Corrections Specialist Advisory Board is to provide advice to, and oversight over the Erie County Sheriff Office's Jail Management Division which administers the Erie County Holding Center and the Erie County Correctional Facility. The Advisory Board may undertake functions and activities intended to provide advice to improve the conditions, systems and practices at the Erie County Holding Center and the Correctional Facility, including but not limited to, identifying and recommending programs that utilize restorative justice practices and other programs that help reduce recidivism in Erie County as well as by making formal recommendations to the Erie County Legislature, County Executive and the Sheriff's Office on the programs, funding, and services for the Correctional Facilities in Erie County.

As per your written request dated June 23, 2020 for testimony and/or written comments concerning the Sheriff's above-mentioned proposal the Erie County Corrections Advisory Board would like to submit the following written comments for the Public Safety Committee's consideration.

1. Access to transportation is an ongoing concern in our community and there is currently no active public transportation option (bus line) to the Erie County Correctional Facility.
  - a. How will transportation access be addressed in this proposal to ensure that families and providers are able and equipped with the opportunity to visit and access the Correctional Facility?
  - b. It is our request that if approved, this proposal incorporate language that would ensure, upon release, all prisoners are to be released from custody at the Erie County Holding Center and not the Correctional Facility.
2. The relationship between client and attorney is both crucial and essential.
  - a. Will the distance between Alden and the City of Buffalo where most attorneys have their offices increase attorney fees for prisoners and their families?

- b. How feasible is it for attorneys to visit Alden with the same regularity that they visit the Holding Center?
  - c. Will the location change make it more difficult for attorney access to clients or negatively impact defense counsel's ability to meet with their clients?
3. It is estimated that 260% of all prisoners incarcerated in local jails have a mental illness and nearly 20% suffer from a serious mental illness. Currently, the Forensic Mental Health Unit is housed at the Holding Center. How will this proposal impact access to necessary treatment?
4. As it stands, the Correctional Facility is under the geographic reach of the Alden School District, while the Holding Center is under the reach of the Buffalo School District.
  - a. What impact will this proposal have on prisoner access to appropriate district led education while incarcerated?
  - b. Will this proposal impact a person's ability to facilitate access to the appropriate education district upon release?
5. Does this proposal allow for access to reentry services at the Correctional Facility?
6. What impact will the relocation of prisoners, programs, and personnel have on the existing space? For example: access to recreational and educational space, as well as general housing confinement.
7. Does the Sheriff Office intend to incorporate more restorative practices and/or expand its existing program and service portfolio under this proposal and to what extent would the re-purposing of the Holding Center accomplish these goals?
8. How will the proposed increase in jail population in Alden affect the teacher census and/or the allocation of resources, as well as future drawing of the electoral districts?
9. Under the proposal, will the Superintendent move to the Correctional Facility and how will this impact the current union-management relations?

Thank you for your consideration and please contact us if you have any additional questions or would like to discuss the matter further.

Sincerely,

Members of the Erie County  
Corrections Specialist Advisory Board