



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 221

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation allowing family and friends of incarcerated individuals to deliver packages in person during prison visits

By Council Members Hudson and Louis

Whereas, Under a recent New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) policy, Directive 4911A, known as the Secure Vendor Package Program, family members and friends of individuals incarcerated in New York State prisons are no longer allowed to ship food directly to incarcerated people, or bring packages on in-person visits, except for two non-food packages per year, and

Whereas, The Secure Vendor Package Program's intended crackdown on contraband stipulates packages have to be mailed, and must be ordered from online vendors willing to ship to prisons, and

Whereas, Directive 4911A, which began in May 2022 as a pilot program in 8 prisons with plans to expand to all 44 prisons in New York State, and

Whereas, The Secure Vendor Package Program follows a failed attempt in 2018 to implement a similar policy that was reversed after 10 days amid intense public outcry, and

Whereas, Directive 4911A adds financial and logistical burdens to an already difficult shipping process, and

Whereas, Mandating items must be ordered from online vendors creates hardships on families as vendors like Access Securepak and Union Supply charge steep markups for a limited selection of food products, and

Whereas, Many grocery stores and affordable retail vendors don't ship fresh food to prisons, which impacts vulnerable prisoners, such as diabetics, who view food packages as a lifeline, and

Whereas, According to watchdog organization Correctional Association of New York (CANY), the purported relationship between packages and contraband used to justify the new restrictive policy is questionable, and

Whereas, Tyrell Muhammad senior advocate at CANY reportedly indicates that during the pandemic there were no visits and very few packages, but DOCCS had an explosion in drug use, and

Whereas, Advocates argue that much of the contraband making its way into prisons comes from corrections officers and prison staff, an issue the package restrictions fails to address, and

Whereas, According to present and former incarcerated individuals, packages from home provide both access to fresh food and an emotional connection to loved ones, and

Whereas, By further tying a prisoner's access to fresh food to their financial resources, the new package policy threatens to entrench existing health disparities behind bars, especially among Black and low-income people who are highly overrepresented in New York's prison system and must be overturned; now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation allowing family and friends of incarcerated individuals to deliver packages in person during prison visits.

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