



# Corrections and Community Supervision

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ANTHONY J. ANNUCCI**  
Acting Commissioner

April 27, 2018

Honorable Pam Helming  
NYS Senator, 54<sup>th</sup> District

Honorable Fred Akshar  
NYS Senator, 52<sup>nd</sup> District

Honorable Robert G. Ort  
NYS Senator, 62<sup>nd</sup> District

Honorable Patty Ritchie  
NYS Senator, 48<sup>th</sup> District

Honorable Martin J. Golden  
NYS Senator, 22<sup>nd</sup> District

Honorable John J. Bonacic  
NYS Senator, 42<sup>nd</sup> District

Honorable Catharine Young  
NYS Senator, 57<sup>th</sup> District

Honorable Thomas F. O'Mara  
NYS Senator, 58<sup>th</sup> District

Honorable Terrence Murphy  
NYS Senator, 43<sup>rd</sup> District

Honorable James L. Seward  
NYS Senator, 51<sup>st</sup> District

Honorable Kathleen A. Marchione  
NYS Senator, 43<sup>rd</sup> District

Dear Senators:

This is in response to your letter dated February 13, 2018, concerning the recent technology initiative that will provide tablets to the incarcerated population.

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) has successfully negotiated a contract, wherein, at no cost to the state, the vendor will provide a new financial trust account system to include debit cards upon release and tablets for all incarcerated individuals. The tablets, which do not have internet access capabilities and are preloaded with pre-approved educational and other material, would provide incarcerated individuals with the option to purchase other approved music, videos, e-books and media, and allow inmates the opportunity to use a secure e-mail system to communicate with family and friends as approved by the Department. The tablets would also make available, additional services including grievance filing, Prison Rape Elimination Act reporting, and the potential for placing commissary orders.

The devices will be implemented later this year and will be issued with headphones and a charging cord, which if replacement is necessary, the incarcerated individual would be responsible for. The devices will function through a kiosk that will access a secure network without any capability of accessing the internet and the vendor is responsible for all installation and maintenance to ensure the device is functional. As for your reference to the \$8,800,000 associated with the contract, the Office of the State Comptroller requires an estimated value to be entered with the contract; this does not represent any costs or expenditures associated with the state, but the estimated value if incarcerated individuals and their families elect to utilize the additional services offered.

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The introduction of tablets offers incarcerated individuals with educational materials and a means to connect with family and loved ones, while at the same time vastly reducing the hours of idle time an inmate has, making facilities safer and less violent. There are many jurisdictions around the country, as well as at the county level right here in New York State, that have safely implemented similar programs which have led to better outcomes and a safer environment for staff and incarcerated individuals alike. Additionally, the Department's own pilot of the tablets in three Special Housing Units in correctional facilities across the state has been well received by both staff and inmates, the two groups this program aims to benefit most.

Safety and security continue to be a top priority. As I previously outlined during my budget testimony, in working with the various unions we have implemented, and this year will expand upon, a variety of technological enhancements, training improvements, and policy changes. The Department will continue installing a number of fixed camera systems. After initially piloting the use of body cameras at Clinton and Bedford Hills, we will also expand their use to other facilities and our Office of Special Investigations. We have also successfully piloted the use of pepper spray and this year, we will operationalize it statewide. Thus far, among the results of the pilot at the four test facilities, there is an 11 percent reduction in the number of reported staff injuries associated with staff assaults. Statewide training on pepper spray will begin on April 1, 2018, and we have already begun the training for all new correction officer trainee recruits during their 8-week academy training.

We firmly believe, as evidenced by other jurisdictions' use of tablet technology, that the introduction of this technology into our system will benefit both staff by making the facilities safer, and incarcerated individuals by assisting them in becoming better prepared for release and a successful transition back to their communities. As a case in point, the Missouri Department of Corrections is presently in the process of implementing a tablet distribution initiative for its entire prison population that bears a strong resemblance to New York's plan. About 33,000 tablets will be made available to their inmate population at no cost to Missouri taxpayers. Enclosed herewith is a March 17, 2018 article which provides a full explanation of their tablet program and the anticipated benefits. This same multi-faceted approach in New York will better position our Department to achieve its overall mission.

Thank you for your interest in the Department. Let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Anthony J. Annucci  
Acting Commissioner