

JOHN C. GARCIA  
SHERIFF  
WILLIAM J. COOLEY  
UNDERSHERIFF



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
10 DELAWARE AVENUE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14202-3913  
(716) 858-7618  
FAX: (716) 858-7882  
WEBSITE: <http://www.erie.gov/sheriff>

## SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY

June 20, 2025

COLLEC JUN 23 '25 AM 8:42

Erie County Holding Center  
40 Delaware Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14202

Erie County Correctional Facility  
11581 Walden Ave.  
Alden, NY 14004

**Re: Challenges Imposed by State-ready Issue**

To our Valued Jail Management Division Staff:

As I write this letter to you, we are incarcerating more individuals than at any other point since November 2019. Our jail population currently sits at approximately 875, including 146 state-ready individuals who should be in the custody of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

As you know, however, DOCCS continues to accept transfers at a snail's pace. Most weeks, the number of incarcerated individuals sentenced to serve time in DOCCS custody outweighs the number of incarcerated individuals we are transferring into DOCCS custody. This mess, which has been caused by the mismanagement of the state prison system and refusal of some elected officials to acknowledge the challenges you and your state colleagues face each and every day, has fallen at our feet.

When DOCCS initially suspended intake in February – a result of the prison strike that was caused by difficult working conditions in state prisons – there were 712 individuals in our custody. With a 22% increase in our jail census in four short months, our classification system is strained. The escalating census also means we need to staff our facilities appropriately. I understand that means many of you will be working long, difficult days in the months ahead. I know how burdensome it will be for you and your families.

That being said, I want you to know what I am doing to advocate for you. I joined my fellow sheriffs from across New York in calling for Governor Hochul and state legislative leaders to address the state-ready problem before the end of their session. They ignored our call and concluded their work this week without taking any action. We anticipate this means that our roster of state-ready incarcerated individuals will continue to grow, as I see no signs that DOCCS

plans to return to normal operation any time soon. We have no choice but to meet this challenge head-on. We can do so only by coming together and supporting each other to meet the moment.

Although our state lawmakers who push policies that make your jobs harder may not see or appreciate the work you do each day, I do. The citizens of Erie County do too. The overwhelming majority of our neighbors care about you and are thankful for the work that you do. Do not be discouraged by the vocal minority that may not understand.

I have full confidence in Superintendent Phillips to lead us through these summer months. He recently told members of the Erie County Legislature that if he could accomplish just one thing as the leader of our Jail Management Division, improved working conditions for our staff would be that one thing. His best quality as Superintendent: he cares. He cares about you. I know that he will do everything in his power to minimize the inconvenience caused by the incompetence of our state leaders. I have complete faith in the rest of the Jail Management Division command staff as well. I ask that you put trust in them to make the correct decisions as we navigate through these waters.

I intend to be completely open with you. If you have any questions, please report them through your chain of command. We will ensure that you get all of the answers you need. I believe in each and every one of you. And I thank you for your service to this Office and the people of Erie County.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Garcia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent part.

John C. Garcia  
Sheriff of Erie County

cc: Mark Poloncarz, Erie County Executive  
Hon. Erie County Legislature