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COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

June 24, 2025

Commissioner Daniel F. Martuscello III
New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision
The Harriman State Campus – Building 2
1220 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12226-2050

RE: Advocacy for Continued Operation of Collins Correctional Facility

Dear Commissioner Martuscello,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued operation of the Collins Correctional Facility in Collins, New York, and to urge that it not be considered for closure as part of any forthcoming realignment or consolidation of correctional facilities within New York State.

There are numerous compelling reasons why Collins must remain operational—financial, rehabilitative, and regional in nature—all of which underscore the facility's unique value to both the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the broader State of New York.

Since 2005, more than \$66 million in public funds have been invested into infrastructure and modernization efforts at the Collins facility. These improvements include an \$8.7 million investment in the water treatment facility, \$3.1 million allocated for the construction of a new water tower, and \$6.6 million directed toward the development of the Residential Rehabilitation Unit (RRU). These are not minor expenditures—they represent major commitments of taxpayer dollars, and it would be fiscally irresponsible to abandon these assets prematurely.

Moreover, Collins Correctional plays a uniquely important role in the state's ability to address the mental health needs of incarcerated individuals. The facility currently houses 125 individuals on the mental health caseload, representing 22% of the inmate population. Of the 55 incarcerated individuals residing in the RRU, 33 are on the mental health caseload—accounting for 60% of that unit's residents. Collins stands alone as the only male, medium-security correctional facility in the entire state to house an RRU. In fact, of New York's 42 correctional facilities, only 18 offer this level of care.

The Collins facility also provides mental health programs and staffing not available in other Western New York facilities such as Orleans, Wende, or Lakeview. As a result, medium-security

inmates from across the state are transferred to Collins specifically for these services. Any attempt to close this facility would not only limit the state's mental health treatment capacity but could also create dangerous disruptions in the continuum of care required for successful rehabilitation.

Additionally, the closure of Collins would have a devastating economic impact on the surrounding community. Following the closure of the adjacent Gowanda Correctional Facility in early 2021, the Town of Collins and Erie County have already endured the consequences of losing a major employer. Shuttering the Collins facility would compound those losses, jeopardizing more than 400 correctional jobs and further destabilizing Southern Erie County's economic foundation.

In light of these facts, I urge you to remove Collins Correctional Facility from any list of potential closures and instead recognize it as an essential component of New York's correctional and rehabilitative infrastructure. I would be happy to discuss this matter further and welcome any opportunity to work collaboratively to support our shared goals of safety, rehabilitation, and fiscal responsibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark C. Poloncarz", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark C. Poloncarz
Erie County Executive

MCP/db

CC: Governor Kathy Hochul
Members of the Western New York Assembly and Senate Delegation
Erie County Legislature



**Department of Corrections
and Community Supervision**

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

DANIEL F. MARTUSCELLO III
Commissioner

August 26, 2025

Honorable Mark C. Poloncarz
Erie County Executive
95 Franklin Street
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear County Executive Poloncarz:

This is in response to your letter dated June 30, 2025, regarding advocacy for the continued operation of Collins Correctional Facility.

As you likely know, the FY 2026 Enacted State Budget included legislation authorizing the Governor to close up to three state correctional facilities as determined to be necessary for the cost-effective and efficient operation of the correctional system. Per the legislation, at least 90 days' advance notice must be provided to the state legislature and shall include the list of facilities to be closed and the number of staff and incarcerated individuals in said facilities.

Please be advised that a decision regarding closures has not been made at this time. Once a decision is reached, notifications will be made in accordance with the law.

Thank you for your interest in the Department. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Martuscello III
Commissioner

cc: Darren Ayotte, Deputy Commissioner for Administrative Services
Anne Marie McGrath, Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Population Management
Jamie Donahue, Associate Commissioner for Mental Health Services
Cal Whiting, Assistant Commissioner for Government Affairs

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Office of the County Executive