



## SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY

May 15, 2026

The Honorable  
Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin St.  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**Re: Jail Management Facility Improvements**

Honorable Members:

Earlier this week, you approved the 2026 Consolidated Bond Resolution (CBR). By passing the CBR, you have authorized \$5.5 million in borrowing for improvements to our two Jail Management Division facilities: the Erie County Holding Center and the Erie County Correctional Facility. This includes:

- \$4.5 million for Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) improvements, the majority of which will be used to replace air handlers
- \$500,000 to improve exterior fencing
- \$500,000 for a study to identify and prioritize needed facility upgrades moving forward

This represents just a first step of what is to come, as both facilities – particularly the nearly 90-year-old Holding Center – continue to deteriorate at a rate with which it is impossible for the Department of Public Works to keep up.

Right now, 136 cells at the Holding Center are out of service due to varying mechanical, electric and plumbing issues. This makes it extremely difficult for my classification staff to figure out where to safely house our incarcerated individuals in a way that is consistent with best correctional practices and state regulations.

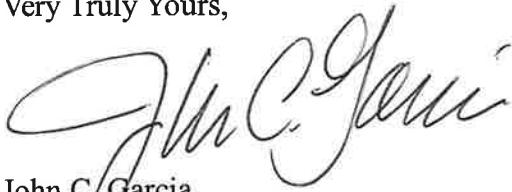
Additionally, we have identified urgent issues with the fire suppression system above the Alden Correctional Facility's kitchen and the aging cell-backs on linear units of the downtown Holding Center. With respect to the fire suppression system, the hoods are outdated and need immediate replacement. As for the cell-backs, decades' worth of water and urine pooling where the wall meets the floor have caused flaking and chipping of the steel. This presents a safety hazard, allowing incarcerated individuals to break the steel off and use it as a weapon. In fact, just this morning, a rusted-out gap nearly two feet long was discovered in the shower area of one unit. A photograph of this is attached. We have no choice but to relocate three incarcerated individuals, as fragments could easily be broken away and fashioned as a weapon. It remains to be seen

whether any of the cell-backs can be repaired by simply welding the old steel. If not, the cost of completely replacing them will be exorbitant.

The Department of Public Works – under the direction of Commissioner Bill Geary and Deputy Commissioner Tracy Cichocki – continues to act as a tremendous partner to my Jail Management Division staff. Trust me when I say they are collectively doing everything they can to put Band-Aids on these facilities so that they can function, while prioritizing the safety of those inside. But quite frankly, the deck is stacked against us. Father Time is undefeated and is currently winning the race.

The assessment of our facility and operational needs, which concluded last year, estimated that approximately \$408.3 million in investments will be needed to keep our two facilities running for another 30 years. The \$5.5 million you authorized the Comptroller to borrow this week only represents the start. There will be several expensive requests made of this Honorable Body in the years and decades to come. I ask that you keep the well-being of my staff and incarcerated population in mind when considering them.

Very Truly Yours,



John C. Garcia  
Sheriff of Erie County

cc: Mark Poloncarz, Erie County Executive  
William Geary, Commissioner of Public Works  
Tracy Cichocki, Deputy Commissioner of Buildings and Grounds  
Mark Cornell, Director of Budget and Management  
Joseph Noeth, Superintendent of Jail Management

