



New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

102 Hackett Blvd., Albany, NY 12209
(518) 427-1551 www.nyscopba.org nyscopba@nyscopba.org



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May 5, 2017

Mr. Anthony Annucci
Acting Commissioner
NYS DOCCS
1220 Washington Ave; Building 9
Albany, NY 12226

Dear Acting Commissioner Annucci:

We are responding to your memorandum to correctional facility security staff dated May 3, 2017.

Your memorandum states "...some bargaining units have failed to provide accurate information and feedback to their members on all of the efforts undertaken on their behalf." You indicate that some units have focused on "half-truths" and perpetuated a "negative outlook." You further note that some Security Services Unit employees have engaged in job actions that are prohibited under the Taylor Law.

Regarding the Taylor Law, we have consistently advised our members that job actions in any form are prohibited. We condemn any such actions and will continue to do so. Respectfully, however, we don't think it's necessary for the Department to advise our membership on their Taylor Law obligations – that is our job and one that we are perfectly capable of performing.

As to your suggestion that we aren't adequately communicating the Department's recent safety initiatives to our membership and are instead promoting a negative outlook, we are simply reflecting our members' interests and concerns. While we acknowledge many of these initiatives, our members are telling us that they aren't sufficient to stem the increasing security threats from the inmate population. Our members feel, and we feel, that more could and should be done to protect security and civilian staff. Although we are often told that fiscal concerns are a limiting factor, to us that is an inadequate response when safety and security are at risk.

To mention one concrete example, you list "Deployment of Pepper Spray" as one of the Department's safety initiatives. Make no mistake, we fully support this initiative. But at the same time, it is a pilot program that has been introduced at only six of our facilities, and even at those locations not all security staff have been supplied with it. For the vast majority of our members at the remaining facilities, this initiative has yet to be realized.

We believe we have every right to insist that this program be extended to all security staff at all facilities, and as soon as possible, regardless of cost.

Another issue is training. You state that over the past several years DOCCS has “invested in training and technology to make our facilities safer.” Despite the technological changes and vast new array of mandates and topics with which our members must now be familiar, the training curriculum is still limited to 40 hours per year. This forces DOCCS to cram needed instruction into woefully small segments that often do not provide enough time. To be fully trained on all of the new policies, directives and other mandates they will be held to, our members desperately need additional training. We realize there is a cost associated with additional training, but in our minds limiting necessary training because of budgetary constraints compromises safety and security and is counterproductive in the long run. We will continue to speak out about this and other issues.

We appreciate your acknowledgment of the hard work done by the men and women who staff DOCCS’ institutions and the pride in their accomplishments that you express. Going forward, we will work with the Department through the labor/management process as the various initiatives you describe and others are more fully implemented. As we do so, we would simply note that it is our job to continue to articulate matters of interest and concern to our 20,000 members, particularly those impacting safety. We do so, not to be negative or to ignore the positive changes the Department has made, but out of a sense of responsibility grounded in the belief that everything possible must be done to ensure that every member can return home safely at the end of his or her shift.

Sincerely,

NYSCOPBA Executive Board

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