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Changes sought at city's jails

by [joshua rhett miller](#) / metro new york
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LOWER MANHATTAN. Proposed changes at city jails will give correction officials the tools to maintain a safe and secure environment while respecting the rights of inmates, Correction Commissioner Martin Horn said yesterday.

Testifying before the Board of Correction, Horn said the minimum standards for operation need to be reviewed for the first time in nearly three decades to better reflect the "contemporary challenges" at the jails.

One key change would be to eliminate diversity in the prison garb, Horn told the nine-member board. The move would quicken searches by prison staff and give inmates one fewer source of dispute, Horn said.

Another change would raise the number of inmates in a limited number of dormitories from 50 to 60, and from 60 square feet per person to 50 square feet, a move that Horn said has been in practice for two years under a board-issued variance.

Horn also called for increased monitoring of prisoners' phone calls and mail to give DOC officials a better chance to, say, determine the "bullies" in a given housing unit or to learn who is smuggling contraband and how. Jail officials could do so when they have "reasonable belief that limitation is necessary to protect public safety or maintain facility order and security," according to the proposed revisions.

Prior to Horn's testimony, Maddy deLone, executive director of the Innocence Project, blasted the proposals and others such as 23-hour cell lock-in for prisoners removed from general population for protection (or for administrative reasons) and less assistance for Spanish-speaking prisoners.



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