

## PROMISING PRACTICES

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MR. GOORD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Thank you, Commissioners. I greatly appreciate the

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opportunity to appear before the commission. This

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hearing represents another example of our shared

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commitment to providing the safest, most secure

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prison as possible. These commission hearings has

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helped shine the light on what those of us who work

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in correctional systems have always known, sexual

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assault have devastating effects on victims even

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long after an assault occurs. We have always

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maintained that even one rape or sexual assault at

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our facilities is too many.

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As commissioner of the fourth largest state

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system in the country and as chairman of the of the

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American Correctional Association Standards

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Committee, I'm happy to discuss classification and

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standards development as it relates to the Prison

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Rape Elimination Act.

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The foundation of any standard is the

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commitment to meeting certain goals. Our

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commitment in New York state has been to provide

1 the safest and most secure prison as possible. And  
2 that goal is at the core of all department  
3 policies. Inmates are dependent upon correctional  
4 staff for the fulfillment of basic human needs. It  
5 is a formidable challenge to force the safest  
6 correctional environment possible, and correctional  
7 administrators fully understand and accept the  
8 mandate that they must be relentless in their goal.

9 Long before the enactment of PREA, we  
10 recognized that when it comes to the matter of  
11 sexual abuse of inmates, the only acceptable policy  
12 is zero tolerance. The department's position has  
13 always been that given the authority employees  
14 exercise over inmates, laws must be enacted that  
15 criminalize any and all sexual relationships  
16 between inmates. The enactment of PREA provided  
17 the department with another tool in our efforts to  
18 combat sexual violence of prisons.

19 In addition to addressing staff on inmate  
20 abuse, we have been equally as adamant about  
21 improving our efforts to prevent potential inmate  
22 on inmate sexual attacks. We have viewed PREA as a

1 vehicle to inform inmates of a number of practical  
2 steps that they can employ to protect themselves or  
3 report an incident.

4 Individuals entering our system are provided  
5 with written materials that summarize the  
6 department's policies on sexual abuse and discuss  
7 issues related to safety reporting and  
8 confidentiality. We continue to make capital  
9 investments in installation and operations of fixed  
10 video and recording systems. Since 1995 the  
11 department has spent more than \$35 million for the  
12 implementation of these systems.

13 In addition, correctional systems also carry  
14 the responsibility to identify inmates who may be  
15 potential targets and those who may be potential  
16 predators. This is a process that can be carried  
17 out both at reception and in general confinement so  
18 that inmates are housed appropriately and the  
19 potential of incidents are reduced.

20 Classification of inmates is very important.  
21 In New York, staff are required to screen each  
22 inmate to determine compatibility and look into

1           whether an inmate is a victim, is victim prone, has  
2           a history of sexual abuse, or has displayed violent  
3           tendencies. Without that question, placing  
4           resources and emphasis on classification allows us  
5           to address a potential problem even before it  
6           starts.

7           I hope that these policies and the documents  
8           provided to the commission may be of assistance  
9           during your consideration of appropriate national  
10          standards to be developed; however, I must add two  
11          cautionary notes. The first is that we, in New  
12          York, gain practical experience in the application  
13          of these directives. We will be fully prepared to  
14          make further adjustments and refinements as the  
15          need arises.

16          Secondly, what works very well in New York may  
17          not work as well in other jurisdictions. I think  
18          it's safe to say that all of us share the same goal  
19          of zero tolerance, but there are also significant  
20          differences in the makeup and management of  
21          different systems across the country; therefore, it  
22          is important for the commission to enact standards

1           that will accomplish the intended results, but also  
2           have universal application throughout the country.

3           As chairman of the Standards Committee for  
4           ACA, I know well the careful balancing that must be  
5           done while developing and implementing new  
6           standards. These measures must not only be  
7           practical in the application, but they must also  
8           truly improve the quality of life with staff and  
9           the offender.

10          I am very proud of the fact that New York was  
11          one of the first correctional systems in the  
12          country to have each and every one of our  
13          institutions accredited by ACA. This means that  
14          all of our facilities meets or exceeds hundreds of  
15          nationally accepted standards for operation,  
16          management, administration of our facilities.  
17          Accreditation is not merely a certificate or a  
18          plaque on the wall. It illustrates an unwavering  
19          commitment of staff members to a code of conduct,  
20          professional standards that leads to safer and more  
21          secure facilities, which operate in a humane and  
22          constitutional manner.

1           To receive accreditation from ACA, a facility  
2           must demonstrate 100 percent compliance with 63  
3           mandatory standards and at least 90 percent  
4           compliance with 469 nonmandatory standards. The  
5           accreditation orders are conducted every three  
6           years. But, it's important to understand that  
7           simply promulgating policies is not sufficient to  
8           achieve accreditation.

9           Since 2000 the ACA has instituted a  
10          performance based approach to its standards and  
11          accreditation. This allows auditors to determine  
12          to the extent to which a desired condition has been  
13          achieved. As a result, we are able to monitor not  
14          only a facility's activities, but also the outcome  
15          of these activities, and could give them and  
16          examine them compared to their other outcomes.

17          It is our recommendation that the commission  
18          take a look at the ACA standards while developing  
19          its own criteria. New York's correctional  
20          facilities, staff and inmates and the public, have  
21          benefited greatly from the practical application of  
22          the ACA standards across the state and hope that

1           they might serve as a blueprint as a national  
2           guideline that we can discuss and implement.

3                     Again, thank you for the opportunity. I look  
4           forward to working with you in the future and  
5           answer any of your questions.