



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **New York City Department of Correction Honors Former Commissioner Ben Ward**

*Ceremony Held Today Renaming Rikers Island Visitors Center in his Honor*

East Elmhurst, NY—At a dedication ceremony held today on Rikers Island, the New York City Department of Correction (NYC DOC) re-named its central visitors center after former Commissioner Benjamin Ward, who led NYC DOC from 1979 to 1983. Ward, the second African-American to head the department, had a storied career in law enforcement and criminal justice that also included appointments as Executive Director of the city's Civilian Complain Review Board, Commissioner of New York State Correctional Services, and Commissioner of the New York City Police Department.

The Benjamin Ward Central Visit Building is the primary entrance for people seeking to visit those who are incarcerated on Rikers Island. In FY 2012, nearly 342,274 visitors passed through the Visitor Center.

"Ben Ward was dedicated to bringing people together, and that is why it is so appropriate to name this particular building in his honor," said NYC DOC Commissioner Dora B. Schiro. "His commitment to public service and public safety are an inspiration for us all—those of us who are part of the law enforcement community and those of us who are dependent upon it for our safety and wellbeing."

A number of dignitaries spoke at the event. These included Mr. Ward's daughter, Mary Ward-Markane; Hildy Simmons, former Chair of the New York City Board of Correction, former NYC DOC Commissioner Jacqueline McMickens; and Jeremy Travis, President of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

The New York City Department of Correction is the jail system for New York City and the second largest in the country. Last year it processed over 85,000 admissions and releases each, and detained an average daily inmate population of nearly 12,500 inmates. Most of the city's inmate population, about 10,400, are incarcerated on Rikers Island, which comprises 10 jail facilities. NYC DOC also operates four borough facilities, 16 court detention facilities, and, for seriously ill inmates and those requiring continuous psychiatric care, two hospital prison wards at Elmhurst General Hospital and Bellevue Hospital.

A complete biography of Benjamin Ward is available from the New York City Department of Correction press office.

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