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For Immediate Release

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**NJDOC ANNOUNCES PILOT PROGRAM
FOR USE OF CANDLES DURING MENORAH LIGHTING**

In keeping with its mandate that each state-sentenced inmate has the right to freedom of religious affiliation and voluntary religious worship while incarcerated, New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) Commissioner Gary M. Lanigan announced a new policy that will establish a pilot program for the use of candles in menorah lighting ceremonies during religious celebrations.

The new policy, which complies with fire regulations, will not disrupt the safe and secure operations of any NJDOC facilities.

The policy permits inmates the use of a department-approved menorah and candles for holiday celebrations. The policy resulted from collaborative discussions between the Governor's Office, NJDOC and leaders from New Jersey's Jewish community.

The new policy stipulates that during the eight nights of Chanukah, each prison shall designate a room in which a menorah will be lit by a member of the NJDOC staff or an authorized volunteer religious group leader. Participating inmates will be permitted to observe the lighting and the burning of the candles to completion under the supervision of staff. Electric or battery-operated menorahs also have been authorized for use.

The NJDOC allows inmates to take part in practices of their religious faith that are deemed essential by the faith's judicatory, limited only by documentation demonstrating a possible threat to the safety and security of the persons involved in such activity or that the activity itself poses a potential disruption to the safe and orderly operation of an NJDOC facility.

“Our goal is to respect and accommodate religious traditions as best we can in our institutions,” said NJDOC Commissioner Lanigan. “I am pleased that collaborative discussions between the Governor’s Office, the Corrections Department and leaders from New Jersey’s Jewish community have resulted in this pilot program.”

“I commend Governor Christie and Commissioner Lanigan for their sensitivity toward people who are typically overlooked in our society,” said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum of the Rabbinical College of America-Lubavitch, a participant in the discussions that led to the development of the new pilot policy. “The observance of traditions is very important in the rehabilitation of inmates and can lead to a reduction in recidivism. Many people worked together on the details to make this possible, and because of them, we will bring the spirit of the holidays to people who need it most.”

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The mission of the New Jersey Department of Corrections is to ensure that all persons committed to the state correctional institutions are confined with the level of custody necessary to protect the public and are provided with the care, discipline, training and treatment needed to prepare them for reintegration into the community.

NJDOC...Protecting the Public. Changing Lives.