

Reentry from the Inside Out: New York's Reintegration Pilot Program Act (S5061/A3934a) Sen. Cordell Cleare/AM Andrew Hevesi

The Reintegration Pilot Program establishes a structured approach to reentry through interagency collaboration between the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Office of Mental Health, and the Office of Addiction Services. The two-year pilot program will offer at least 100 people across three DOCCS facilities (one for women and two for men) comprehensive assessment and screening to develop robust reintegration plans up to one year before their earliest expected release date. In the six months prior to release, participants will be connected to peers and non-profit supports to assist in implementing their reintegration plan, including but not limited to mental health care, substance use treatment, stable housing, job training, and employment opportunities. Critically, these non-profits will be resourced to continue offering services for up to one year following release. To promote transparency and accountability, and to enable the study of the efficacy of this pilot program, this bill requires DOCCS and contracted non-profits to report data on the numbers of people connected to housing, employment, and mental health treatment as needed.

Why This Legislation Matters

The Problem: Lack of Coordination and Scarcity of Resources

Every year, thousands of people come home from prison in New York State, yet there is currently no comprehensive, statewide approach to reentry and community reintegration. Far too many people leave prison with no connection to resources in their home communities. More than 40% of people are released from DOCCS custody undomiciled or to shelter; many more struggle to meet the basic needs of food, clothing, and transportation.¹ Consequently, people are at their most vulnerable in the period of time immediately following their release; in fact, during the first two weeks post-release in New York, people face a twelvefold higher risk of dying than the rest of the population, in part due to the increased likelihood of overdosing.² In addition, many shelters are ill-equipped to provide or make connections to necessary services. This lack of connection to services makes it more likely formerly incarcerated people will spend disproportionately longer periods of time in shelter.³

Program providers throughout the state have the will but lack the resources to offer the breadth and depth of services that are necessary to ensure stability upon reentry. Providers are also disadvantaged because they often have no connection to people until they come home, are in crisis, and have already disconnected from the services they desperately need.⁴

¹ Lennon, John J. "How Do People Released From Prison Find Housing? (Published 2023)." The New York Times, 31 March 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/20/realestate/prison-parole-housing-shelters.html>.

² Overdose Deaths and Jail Incarceration - National trends and racial..." Vera Institute, <https://www.vera.org/publications/overdose-deaths-and-jail-incarceration/national-trends-and-racial-disparities>. Accessed 6 October 2024.

³ "The New York Prison-to-Shelter Pipeline." Spectrum News NY1. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2018/02/27/ny1-investigation-more-inmates-released-upstate-prisons-going-into-nyc-shelter-system>.

⁴ French-Marcelin, Megan, et al. "Unlocking Potential: The Role of Community-Based Alternatives in Strengthening Public Safety," Legal Action Center, 2024: <https://www.lac.org/resource/unlocking-potential-the-role-of-community-based-alternatives-in-strengthening-public-safety>.

The Solution: Connections and Coordination from the Inside Out

Numerous studies show that connection to needed mental health and/or substance use treatment, the ability to obtain and maintain employment, and safe and stable housing—and in particular supportive housing for those who need it—are proven to stabilize people and reduce their likelihood of returning to incarceration.⁵

By mandating coordination across relevant agencies and with non-profit providers prior to and upon release, as well as resourcing community-based providers in areas across the state with high rates of incarceration, the Reintegration Pilot Program Act would knock down silos between stakeholders, promote efficient service delivery, and, most of all, ensure that people have access to the supports they need immediately upon release.

The total estimated fiscal-year cost of the pilot program is approximately \$6.2 million. This is far lower than the average cost of holding an individual in local jail or state prison—which can range from \$82,000 to \$560,000 per year per person in New York City—as well as the associated costs around potential emergency room visits, homelessness, and other social determinants of health.

Support this legislation to promote individual and community well-being and stability, enhance public safety, and build a stronger and more equitable New York for all.

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⁵“PREVENTION OVER PUNISHMENT.” Treatment Advocacy Center, <https://www.tac.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Prevention-Over-Punishment-Full-Report.pdf>.