



Wednesday, March 18, 2026

**Testimony of
Jessica S. Tisch, Commissioner
New York City Police Department**

**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Public Safety**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026
9:30 A.M.**

New York City Police Department's FY2027 Preliminary Budget

Good morning, Speaker Menin, Chair Feliz, and members of the City Council Committee on Public Safety. I am Jessica Tisch, Commissioner of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). I am joined at the table today by First Deputy Commissioner Tania Kinsella, Deputy Commissioner of Management and Budget Kristine Ryan, Deputy Commissioner of Legal Matters Michael Gerber, and Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Alex Crohn. I am also joined here today by the full executive staff of the New York City Police Department so that we may answer your questions as transparently and comprehensively as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on the NYPD's Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget – and to share with you the remarkable work of the men women of the New York City Police Department. Throughout my 18 years in government, I have always enjoyed a strong and collaborative working relationship with the City Council, and I expect that to continue.

At our last budget hearings, I laid out my vision for this department. I spoke about the immediate need to restore the public's trust through strong, ethical leadership. I announced sweeping changes to the NYPD's organizational structure. I presented plans for new operational units and department-wide initiatives, created to meet the demands of modern policing and respond to the needs of real New Yorkers. And I detailed a dynamic, data-driven strategy to fight crime and reduce violence in our neighborhoods and on our subways.

In 2025, that strategy – and the cops who execute it so brilliantly – made public-safety history. And we did not just break records, we shattered them. Last year, New York City had the fewest shooting incidents ever recorded, with 66 fewer shootings than the previous low set in 2018. With just 35 shootings citywide in December, we set a record for the fewest shootings in a single month, ever. The number of people shot in New York City also fell to a historic low last year, beating the record set in 2018 by more than 40 victims. Every city borough saw double-digit-percent reductions in gun violence in 2025.

And this success has carried over into 2026. For the first two months of this year, the NYPD has delivered the fewest shooting incidents, shooting victims, and murders over that time period in recorded history.

These historic reductions drove an overall decline of nearly 6% in major crime across the city for the first two months of this year, with decreases in every borough. Included in that overall crime decline was a 20% reduction in citywide burglaries. Retail theft fell 14% citywide last year, with more than half of all shoplifting complaints resulting in an arrest – the highest rate since 2019. And retail theft has continued its steep decline in 2026, falling by more than 20% year to date.

This progress extended into our transit system in 2025, which was the safest year on our subways since 2009, excluding the pandemic years.

And 2026 has been the safest start to any year on record in our housing developments, with shooting incidents, shooting victims, murders, and robberies falling to all-time lows.

Much of this is the result of a crime-fighting plan I detailed at this hearing last year: our Violence Reduction Zones.

The idea is simple: Don't just get tough on crime – get smart. Find out where and when our cops are needed most, and put them there. It is precision policing in the modern age, using powerful analytics to develop a focused and data-driven strategy. The resulting plan encompasses everything from highly visible foot posts to undercover gang takedowns – and we are seeing the biggest impacts in our city's most violent neighborhoods.

This is what happens when we are guided by the principles of precision policing, and last fall we brought that same exacting approach to our schools. As of March 1, compared to the 2024-2025 school year, major crime in our city's schools has fallen by more than 9%, and total crime complaints in our schools are down more than 15%. At the same time, enforcement in our schools is also down – with arrests declining nearly 10%, as of March 1st.

This is the result of two things: One, we posted officers in School Zones – deploying them along our students' commuting corridors, including subway stations and bus routes, with a special focus on dismissal times. Two, we overhauled the executive leadership of the School Safety Division, as well as its reporting structure, placing it directly under the First Deputy Commissioner. And part of that reorganization was taking Safety Agents out of administrative roles and putting them directly into schools where they are interacting and building relationships with students.

This is the same playbook we are using against street-level crime: a precise, proactive plan with strong central leadership and more officers on post. And it is working.

Our public-safety mission includes our relentless battle against hate in every form, and bias-motivated crime remains a top priority. We understand the fear, and we see the pattern. Since October 7, 2023 hate has ricocheted across the globe – especially targeting the Jewish community. Before 10/7, antisemitic hate crimes were down 20%. But by the end of 2023, they had surged 80%. And while Jewish New Yorkers make up 10% of our city's population – they account for more than half of all hate crime victims.

The NYPD is laser-focused on preventing these crimes – surging resources, investigating every

complaint, and calibrating our presence to meet the threat no matter where it lurks. And last year we reversed the upward trend we saw after Hamas' attack on Israel in late 2023. In 2025, hate crime incidents were down nearly 16% overall from the year prior, with anti-Jewish crimes down more than 7%. Other categories that saw significant declines were anti-Muslim hate crimes down 31% and anti-LGBT down more than 40%.

So far this year, though, the hate crime statistics are troubling. We are seeing a rise in anti-Semitic crime, and in hate crimes overall, citywide. We certainly will not hide from this – in fact it only strengthens our resolve to combat any and all forms of bias, prejudice, and hate. I applaud all those who have come forward to report these intolerable acts, and our Hate Crime Task Force – which is the premier unit of its kind in the nation – thoroughly investigates every complaint. This is not a time for fear – it is a time to face these threats head-on.

Reducing crime – which will always be our main mission – was just one of the pledges we made and delivered on in 2025. We also said we were going to restore credibility and lead with integrity. As you know, we inherited a department plagued by scandal and a public confidence deeply shaken. We wasted no time fixing it.

A department-wide review led to an overhaul of our executive leadership, matching the right skills and experience with the right roles. We restructured the Internal Affairs Bureau, both in leadership and personnel. We returned more than 1,000 cops from administrative roles back to patrol. We reduced waste and redundancy in our vehicle fleet. And we worked to rebuild trust not only between the police and the public, but also between the cops and NYPD leadership.

On January 1st of last year, we implemented our Overtime Management Plan, designed to prevent misuse, ensure compliance with NYPD regulations, and ensure more effective and efficient use of overtime. As a result, in 2025 the department reduced overtime spending by \$144 million compared to 2024, a decrease of 12.4%.

I spoke last year about our efforts to work collaboratively and fairly with the CCRB, and in particular my decision to change our policies so that CCRB substantiations are processed and adjudicated on the merits, rather than being dismissed on technical grounds. These changes have had a dramatic impact on the NYPD-CCRB concurrence rate:

According to the CCRB's own data, in 2023 the NYPD agreed with the CCRB's disciplinary recommendations in 56% of cases. In 2024, it fell to 30%. But in 2025, after the changes were implemented, the concurrence rate rose to 83%. And if you exclude the "short SOL" dismissals from the beginning of 2025 – a policy that I reversed on March 1st of last year – the concurrence rate in 2025 was approximately 90%. That is, in 90% of cases I adopted the discipline recommended by the CCRB.

As outlined in this chamber last year, we also amended the NYPD's vehicle pursuit policy to give our officers smarter, and safer protocols. Now, pursuits are limited to the most serious and dangerous crimes, and the impact was immediate – with vehicle pursuits dropping by nearly 65% last year compared to 2024. Just as important, the risks associated with pursuits declined sharply.

Fatalities fell by more than 80%, collisions dropped by 50%, and injuries were cut almost in half.

New leadership, new policies, and a renewed focus on what matters most – the work – stabilized this department. It restored the credibility of this organization, the integrity of this profession, and the dignity of policing. Once that standard was reset, we could turn to reshaping, restructuring, and modernizing the NYPD in ways that will best serve New Yorkers today and for years to come. And again, that work would be driven by the data and based on the needs of the people we serve.

Since 2020, domestic violence incidents in New York City have increased by 38%, and accounted for 40% of our overall felony assaults citywide. This is a serious issue, and it demanded a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach. So, in 2025, we created the new Domestic Violence Unit within the Detective Bureau, with approximately 450 Domestic Violence Investigators who are fully dedicated to prevention, investigation, and follow-up of DV cases.

2025 also saw the creation of the NYPD's Quality of Life Division, which is now operational in every precinct and housing command across the city. Since 2019, 311 calls have more than doubled. Demand for these services is at an all-time high, and with our citywide Q-Teams, the NYPD is finally equipped to handle that demand.

And let me be clear: Quality of Life Division officers are responding to the daily issues eroding people's sense of safety, and answering the pleas New Yorkers have been making for years. This is not a return to Broken Windows policing. It is not "zero tolerance" enforcement. It is not about preventing more serious crime. This is different policy, for one purpose alone: improving everyone's quality of life.

2025 was a year of firsts, renewed focus, and a new way forward. And that momentum continues in 2026, with plans for enhanced training, facility improvements, better safety equipment, upgraded use-of-force alternatives, and more. And underpinning it all was the one constant over this department's 181-year history: our cops. They are the most important resource we have – and in 2025, we set about restoring their ranks.

The pundits and the critics said it was impossible. They wrote policy papers and op eds about the unprecedented exodus of NYPD officers, and they preached about a profession in an unrecoverable decline. But we knew better.

In 2025, NYPD retirements were exactly what we projected they would be based on the number of people hired two decades ago. And resignations before pension eligibility were 40% below what they were three years ago. Put that together with the largest hiring year on record – more than 4,000 officers across four academy classes – and we not only outpaced attrition in 2025, we essentially brought the NYPD back to its authorized uniformed headcount for the first time in three years. And at the end of 2025, we had about 800 more officers than we did on average over the last three years.

And let me be very clear about this: At no point between 2021 and 2025 did the NYPD have a stable headcount above 35,000. The narrative that we cut 5,000 cops is absurd – because they never

existed. Would we love to have more officers serving the millions of New Yorkers who depend on us each day? Of course we would. But in a realistic world of limited resources, we can say our current headcount is more stable and more consistent than it has been since before the pandemic.

If we want to keep building a strong department, we have to look honestly at where our hiring process needs to change. From our recruitment strategy, to our psychological and physical evaluations, to our background investigation protocols, to our disqualification criteria – every part of the process must be reviewed through the lenses of fairness and transparency.

To do this, I am convening a Panel on Applicant Hiring, made up of internal and external experts from law enforcement, academia, and the community, to take a close look at the hiring process and recommend changes. The goal is straightforward: remove unnecessary barriers, bring greater transparency to decisions, and make sure qualified candidates are not being pushed away by the system itself.

On the panel will be: NYPD Chief of Patrol, Philip Rivera; NYPD Commanding Officer of the Community Affairs Bureau, Assistant Chief Victoria Perry; New York City Councilmember Yusef Salaam; Danielle Outlaw, former Commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department and former Chief of Police of the Portland Police Bureau; and Ian Adams and Scott Mourtgos, both Assistant Professors of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina.

New Yorkers deserve the best-of-the-best working in every city agency, especially in their police department. The Panel on Applicant Hiring will help us ensure this, and it is an important step in the NYPD's future success.

That success, though, depends not only on the resources we have, but also on how efficiently and effectively those resources are deployed. That is the motivation behind everything we do – and it is the reason for the first major restructuring to our Patrol Services Bureau in 31 years: the Bronx borough split.

For too long, the Bronx has experienced more crime per capita than any other borough, all while operating under a single patrol borough command structure that has not kept pace with the demands placed on it. And yet, when Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens each moved to two patrol borough commands to handle the volume of work there, the Bronx did not.

Last year, the Bronx accounted for more than one-third of all shooting incidents and shooting victims citywide – roughly three times Queens and Manhattan. The borough recorded more major crimes than Manhattan and Queens, and nearly the same as Brooklyn. Bronx residents also generated nearly 1 million calls for service last year – more than Queens and nearly equal to Manhattan. That is why, starting this spring, the Bronx will be split into Patrol Borough Bronx South and Patrol Borough Bronx North – mirroring the same two-patrol borough command structure as Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens.

This will bring nearly 200 additional cops and additional specialized units to the Bronx, including homicide squad detectives, evidence collection teams, narcotics teams, Neighborhood Safety

Teams, and auto crime units. Leadership will be closer to the communities they serve, and the command structure will finally match the Bronx as it exists today. And we will be in a perfect position to build on the work our cops are already doing in the Bronx – where major crime is down more than 10% so far this year.

The Bronx split is one example of the NYPD's structure better aligning with its function. But organizational fixes are not enough – they must be matched by enhanced investment in the people who do the actual work. To serve its critical purpose, policing must evolve along with the world it serves. Over time, the complexity of the job changes, the law changes, the threats change, and the expectations of the public change. And if we expect our officers to meet – and exceed – those ever-shifting standards, then we have an obligation to prepare them accordingly.

That is why, in 2026, we are launching the most significant overhaul of in-service training this department has undertaken in decades.

We ask a great deal of our officers, many of whom serve for 20 or more years. But after the academy, the only things officers are consistently required to be retrained on are firearms qualification and CPR. It is simply not enough – and our cops have been raising this concern for years. They want training that reflects the situations they are actually encountering on the street. They want to know what they are allowed to do under the law as those laws change with the times. And they want to know that when they are called into volatile moments, they are prepared to protect life and exercise sound judgment under intense pressure.

Now, for the first time, officers will start to participate in a regular, focused, week-long in-service training program built around real-world performance – and this will not be a procedural check-the-box. The program will ensure officers are exercising sound tactics and sound judgment, with curriculum to include de-escalation, constitutional policing and legal standards, and situational awareness. And again, it will be dynamic, immersive, and most importantly: recurring throughout their NYPD career.

Looking forward to this summer, the NYPD is preparing for two major, global-scale events taking place simultaneously: the 2026 FIFA World Cup and Sail4th 250. Both will bring millions of people to New York City over several weeks in June and July. It is a massive undertaking from a security standpoint, but New Yorkers should have every confidence that the men and women of this department are more than up for it.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, a reminder of a reality this department knows better than most: New York City is not only a global hub, it is a global target. That truth shapes how we staff, how we train, how we deploy, and how we build partnerships – because what begins overseas often finds its way here.

In 2025, NYPD investigations led to more than 100 arrests connected to foreign terrorist organizations, domestic extremists, lone actors, and other serious threats. Those arrests spanned eight foreign countries and nine U.S. states.

Today, as armed conflict in Iran spreads throughout the region and we continue to deal with the repercussions of October 7th, tensions remain high. The events of March 7th illustrated, again, that this threat is not theoretical. The deadly, insidious ideology of ISIS spread from the Islamic State to two quiet counties in Pennsylvania. And then it made its way to New York City.

This is amid a spate of terrorism and targeted violence since the onset of the war in Iran, including multiple incidents overseas as well as attacks and attempted attacks in the U.S. The ongoing conflict has inspired at least two “lone wolf” homegrown violent extremists to conduct recent attacks in the U.S. – a mass shooting at a bar in Austin, Texas and a vehicle ramming at a synagogue in Michigan. And ISIS-aligned attacks have occurred here in New York and against an ROTC class at Old Dominion University in Virginia. There have been a number of recent explosions and arson attacks claimed by an Iran-aligned militant collective in Europe which targeted U.S. diplomatic facilities and Jewish religious and cultural locations.

And add all of this to official statements and propaganda from the Iranian regime and its proxies urging retaliation, as well as violent rhetoric from supporters online – and it is clear that we will be in a heightened state of alert for the foreseeable future. In fact, in my 18 years in government, I have not seen a threat environment like this one in terms of the multitude of vectors that are all active at the same time. These threats are real. They are deadly serious. And we must be prepared.

To that end, New Yorkers should know that the NYPD has the most impressive and sophisticated intelligence and counterterrorism operation of any municipal police department in the world, and it rivals the capabilities of many nations. Our systems include advanced chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive detection equipment. We run the country’s premier intelligence-sharing and emergency response platform, the Domain Awareness System. We employ the nation’s top intelligence analysts, and we have NYPD detectives stationed in a dozen countries around the globe. And all of this is on top of the 1,500-plus uniformed officers doing intelligence casework and daily counterterrorism deployments and investigations across the city.

So, we remain vigilant. We treat every incident and every threat with urgency and care. And we will continue to aggressively and doggedly use all our available resources to protect the 8.5 million residents of this city.

Now, I want to address an issue that has played an outsized role in shaping the public-safety environment in cities around the nation – including our own – over the past several months: federal immigration enforcement operations.

On this point I will always be clear and unequivocal: The NYPD does not engage in civil immigration enforcement, period. We do not ask people about their immigration status, and we do not do civil immigration enforcement on behalf of the federal government. That is the law, and the NYPD will follow the law.

At the same time, that approach has never prevented us from working closely with federal partners on serious criminal matters. We have deeply important partnerships with federal agencies, and we work side by side with them on a variety of cases that are vital to public safety, including terrorism,

violence, guns, and gangs – regardless of the subject’s immigration status. That cooperation is important, and it continues.

But when federal immigration operations come into a city and generate fear, anger, or unrest, local police do not get to walk away from the consequences. They are the ones who stay, who respond to the next 911 call, who work to keep neighborhoods stable, and who have to rebuild trust that may have been damaged by actions they themselves did not take. That makes our job harder and our communities less safe.

The New York City Department of Investigation recently released a detailed report regarding the NYPD's policies and procedures in connection with immigration matters. It found that "the NYPD has been working diligently to ensure that its policies with respect to assisting federal law enforcement agencies comply with local laws, while still permitting the NYPD to partner with federal law enforcement on criminal investigations." It made seven recommendations for the NYPD to further improve its practices, and we have agreed to implement all of them.

Now, turning to the Mayor’s Preliminary Budget and its impact on the NYPD in the coming fiscal year:

In totality, the NYPD’s Fiscal Year 2027 Expense Budget is \$6.7 billion, the vast majority of which – 91% – is allocated for personnel costs. The remaining 9% is dedicated to non-personnel costs, which include costs for technology that provides officers with immediate access to critical safety equipment, tools, and applications.

As part of the Preliminary Budget, over \$400 million in new funding is included in the current fiscal year and approximately \$300 million in the baseline to address shortfalls in several areas of current operations, including overtime, information technology, the Domain Awareness System, emergency response vehicles, auto parts, and overtime. This funding also supports key initiatives, including the new Patrol Borough Bronx South and costs associated with safeguarding the FIFA World Cup.

The Preliminary Budget begins to address the historical underfunding of overtime by providing necessary funding in the current fiscal year, and addresses significant new needs posed by structural gaps in the later years of the financial plan.

The fiscal year 2026 all-funds overtime budget is now \$929 million; fiscal year 2027 is now \$776 million and the overtime budget is \$786 million for FY28 and beyond. The department will continue to monitor overtime spending to guarantee its efficiency, and to ensure that straight-time resources are utilized wherever possible.

In addition to the operating budget, the department’s Ten-Year Capital Budget is \$1.4 billion for fiscal years 2026 through 2035. This funding is critical for: facility construction projects (more than \$611 million, or 44%) including a renovated firearms training facility; communications and other information technology infrastructure (more than \$373 million, or 27%); large vehicle lifecycle replacement including ESU trucks, tow trucks, boats, and helicopters (\$371 million, or

27%), as well as cameras, boat engines, and police lab equipment (\$41 million, or 3%).

This year's federal Homeland Security Grant funding has been cut by 40% from federal fiscal year 2024 levels, with the NYPD anticipating a reduction of \$36 million, though the final award has not been issued yet. In addition, the department did not receive any funding tied to the Port Security Grant program, which historically has averaged more than \$6 million per year.

We cannot overstate the gravity of this. It is not bureaucratic inconvenience – it is a direct threat to the NYPD's ability to maintain and enhance critical counterterrorism and intelligence operations in New York City, the most visible terror target in the United States. People are alive today because of these grants – we must never lose sight of that.

And I want to be clear: Because of the nature of how these multi-year grants are distributed, this funding gap is not a problem now. But if it goes unaddressed, it will be a profound problem two years from now. So, the time to act is today – and I will not stop pressing this issue until the federal government restores the funding and the resources we need to keep New Yorkers safe.

2025 was a year of historic achievements by the NYPD – across our precincts, transit districts, and housing developments. We set high expectations – and then exceeded them. The work is not finished, of course. And every New Yorker should know that their police department stands ready to protect them at all costs.

I often say that policing is the noblest profession there is, and I believe that wholeheartedly. The job exposes these officers to things most people will never see, and puts them in situations most people could never handle. But they can, and they do – every tour, every radio run, every time this city needs them. That is the promise our department makes to the people we serve, and police officers are the keepers of that promise.

And this is not rhetoric – it is real life. Eleven days ago, when two ISIS-inspired terrorists attacked a protest in front of Gracie Mansion, their plan was to kill as many as possible. When they ignited and threw those two IEDs – loaded with highly explosive material, metal shrapnel, and glass – the crowd of people ran away.

Others, though, ran in. A select few, operating on their instinct to position themselves between the threat and the threatened. Who without hesitation put the safety of complete strangers above their own: the men and women of the NYPD. That is the quiet courage and uncommon valor that define these officers – and their heroic work is what we are here to discuss today.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning, and my staff and I look forward to answering your questions.

New York County District Attorney's Office
Testimony before City Council Public Safety Committee
FY 2027 Budget & Oversight Hearings
March 18, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Feliz and members of the Committee on Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding our Office's Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget. We thank the City Council for its past support and the other District Attorneys for their collaboration; we know that a safer and fairer city requires all of us working together.

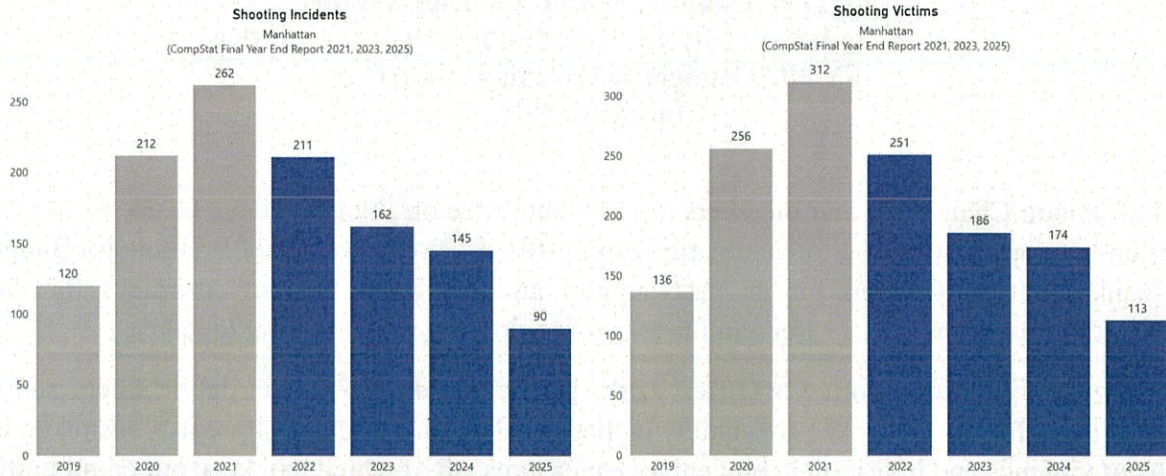
The Manhattan District Attorney's Office works hard every day to protect public safety and do justice without fear or favor. We are achieving these goals with a targeted strategy focusing on the drivers of violence and investing in preventative measures, all of which will keep our communities safe today and in the long term.

Our top concern is violent crime, consistent with our central mission to protect public safety. In 2025, index crimes were down 4% from 2024, and down 13% from 2022 which outpaces citywide decreases. Last year, the 53 homicides recorded in Manhattan were essentially back to pre-pandemic levels, and we are encouraged that the same promising trend is continuing in the first quarter of 2026. As of March 15, 2026, there have only been three homicides in the borough, compared to 9 in 2025. However, we know there is more work to do to get all index crimes back to pre-pandemic levels of public safety, which is our goal.

We are also acutely focused on addressing disorder and quality of life issues, which certainly impact both the perception and the reality of public safety. Over the past year we have seen modest gains here, by working with local businesses and community-based organizations on the ground while also making concerted efforts to divert individuals whose behavior is caused by underlying substance use or mental health issues towards programming and services.

GUN VIOLENCE

Following a significant increase in crime during the pandemic, New York City has witnessed a gradual improvement in public safety conditions over the past three years. In Manhattan we are proud of the downward trend of serious crime. Manhattan shooting incidents were down 38% in 2025 compared to 2024, 66% compared to 2021, and 25% compared to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. The number of Manhattan shooting victims also fell below pre-pandemic levels in 2025, down by 35% compared to 2024, 64% compared to 2021, and 17% compared to 2019 pre-pandemic levels, outpacing citywide decreases. We have witnessed this downward trajectory in crime while simultaneously expanding our use of problem-solving courts and screening significantly more people than ever for treatment and programming.



As one part of our enforcement strategy, we participate in an intensive, ongoing collaboration called the Gun Violence Strategic Partnership. Our office sits down five days a week with representatives from every local, state, and federal law enforcement agency in the tri-state area to share information in real time about the most significant drivers of gun violence and gun trafficking. We also cooperate by directing resources towards where we can make the most significant difference.

We have also implemented a unique approach to our gun violence investigations. There has historically been a disparity of resources that are devoted to solving shootings depending on the harm. If someone is shot and killed, law enforcement devotes a lot of time and resources to solve that shooting. If someone is struck by a bullet and survives, there is a significant investigation, but the level of resources is less than a murder. If shots are fired, but no one is struck, investigations occur, but not in the same sustained way as an injury or fatality. The criminal conduct and the danger to the community is significant, but the investigative response differs dramatically, simply due to resource constraints.

Due to a high number of shooting incidents in certain communities, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office worked together with NYPD and committed resources to investigate every shots-fired incident as if it were a homicide. Following intensive investigations, we secured ten indictments of individuals who we allege were driving the violence in specific NYCHA developments in East Harlem. There is a high likelihood that, absent these proactive investigations, these communities would have experienced additional fatalities and/or non-fatal shootings.

Further, we continue to address the continuing threat that 3D printed guns and gun parts pose on the streets of Manhattan through our Ghost Gun Initiative. Unfortunately, the technology behind 3D printing is only becoming more sophisticated, continuing the threat these weapons pose to our community. We are heartened to see efforts being made on the state level in Governor Hochul’s preliminary executive budget for FY 2027 to make manufacturing 3D-printed guns and gun parts illegal; to stop the sharing, selling, or distributing of files containing blueprints for 3D-printed firearm components; and to require 3D printer manufacturers to take steps to prevent their products from being used to easily produce these cheap yet lethal weapons.

HATE CRIMES

A few years ago, we requested and were granted \$1.7 million dollars from City Council to expand our Hate Crimes Unit from two to 15 specially trained prosecutors. We hired new investigators and analysts, and we expanded our community outreach work. The additional funding has also helped the Office's Survivor Services Bureau hire and retain victim services advocates with cultural competency to assist New York's diverse communities, including the Jewish, AAPI, Muslim, and LGBTQ communities. We also have a deputy director for the prevention of hate crimes and youth violence who ensures that we are engaging with communities impacted by hate crimes and educating the public about the work of our Office in combatting hate crimes. That funding was crucial to combat the unprecedented rise in hate crimes that we experienced in Manhattan.

For example, our Hate Crimes Unit gave a presentation to emergency room doctors and nurses at Lenox Hill Hospital, so that they are empowered to be credible messengers when they encounter victims and witnesses needing medical attention.

I will also note that in 2024, working alongside state legislative partners and Governor Hochul, we secured a change in the law adding additional offenses to the hate crimes statute. We believe that will help us get some deterrent effect, and reflect more accurately the experiences of victims and survivors in what we can charge.

We're encouraged that Manhattan reported hate crimes were down 30% in 2025 compared to 2024 and 16% compared to 2021, but they unfortunately are still up 41% compared to 2019. The work of our Hate Crimes Unit reflects our continued dedication to seeing those numbers continue to fall. In 2025, we brought 105 new hate crime prosecutions, up from 101 in 2024. We will continue to hold hate crime defendants accountable for their conduct, and are committed to providing culturally responsive resources to victims and the various communities experiencing these biased attacks.

Some examples include:

- In May 2025, Jesse Diaz Ramos was sentenced to 25 years in state prison after a jury found him guilty of Attempted Murder in the Second Degree as a Hate Crime and Assault in the First Degree as a Hate Crime, for brutally stabbing a transgender woman after asking her about her sexual orientation and calling her an anti-gay slur.
- In September 2025, Naatiq Giles was indicted for Assault in the Third Degree as a Hate Crime, for—we allege—entering a mosque, interrupting the imam who was actively leading prayers, and pushing him to the ground causing pain and swelling to his shoulder. He then yelled “you’re not supposed to pray here.”
- In December 2025, Clive Porter was indicted for two counts of Assault in the Second Degree as a Hate Crime, one count of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree as a Hate Crime, one count of Assault in the Second Degree, one count of Attempted Assault in the Second Degree as a Hate Crime, and two counts of Attempted Assault in the Second Degree as a Hate crime along with several misdemeanor charges after allegedly committing five

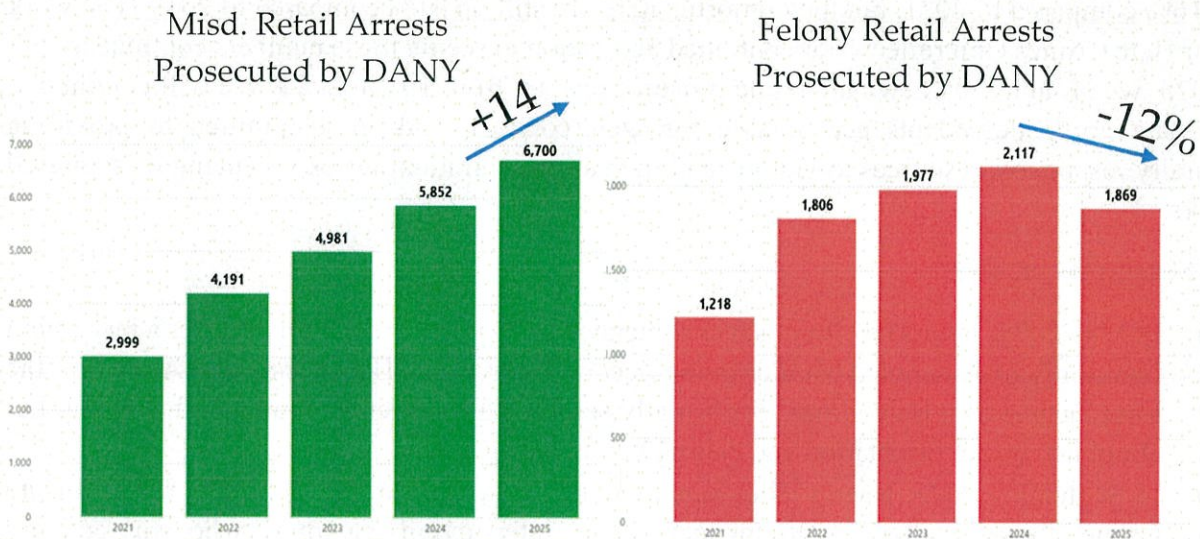
separate anti-Asian attacks in Lower Manhattan resulting in several victims being hospitalized for injuries they sustained.

- In February 2026, Skiboky Stora was convicted at trial for two counts of Assault in the Third Degree as a Hate Crime, one count of Stalking in the Third Degree as a Hate Crime, one count of Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree, and one count of Attempted Assault in the Second Degree for a series of unprovoked attacks driven by anti-woman, anti-white, and antisemitic bias. He is currently awaiting sentence.

RETAIL THEFT

When it comes to retail theft in Manhattan, which is one of the most heavily retail oriented places in the world, we've taken a multi-faceted approach, including traditional enforcement, partnership with the private sector, legislative efforts to bolster prosecutions of shoplifters, and increasingly, we're using our white-collar tools to prosecute those who buy and sell stolen goods.

The numbers are heading in the right direction, Manhattan retail theft complaints were down 11% in 2025 compared to 2024, but we have more work to do. Early in my tenure, we created a Manhattan Small Business Alliance bringing together business owners, BIDs, law enforcement and service providers to better understand the problem and target our efforts. We zeroed in on recidivists with a focused deterrence strategy. In 2025, misdemeanor retail prosecutions are up 14% in 2025 compared to 2024 (6,700 vs 5,852 respectively), though felony prosecutions are down 12% in 2025 compared to 2024 (2,117 vs 1,869 respectively), mirroring felony retail arrest trends.



We're getting people into meaningful treatment for drug and mental health issues through our Pathways to Public Safety Division when appropriate. And in some cases, we are seeking significant incarceration when that is appropriate.

We're also looking at where all these stolen goods are going and who is profiting from these crimes. From what we have seen, it is the large-scale fencing operation that buys and resells stolen goods from dozens of shoplifters that is really driving that underground economy. We have a case going to trial later this year against Aaron Khan and Bibi Rehana Khan, a brother and sister team

who we allege were in possession of more than \$1 million dollars in stolen goods that they planned to resell at a physical store as part of their ongoing fencing business. We had another large-scale fencing case underway, but when we brought charges against the brother and sister team, this other group packed up and left town. We see this as deterrence in action, and a win too in terms of drying up demand for stolen goods.

WORKER AND TENANT PROTECTION

In 2023, we launched our Worker Protection Unit to investigate and prosecute wage theft and other forms of worker exploitation across Manhattan. The Unit pursues criminal charges against individuals and corporations that jeopardize their workers' safety and steal their wages, and protects the city itself from corruption and theft of resources. The Unit also enforces workplace safety labor laws, incorporating the work of the Office's Construction Fraud Task Force, and pursues criminal charges when an employer creates dangerous or deadly work environments. Building on the Office's leadership in prosecuting wage theft in the construction and real estate development industries, the Worker Protection Unit expanded the Office's focus to include other industries with high rates of worker exploitation, such as home healthcare agencies, fast food and restaurants, hotels, and more. We are also coordinating with community groups such as Take Root Justice and Urban Justice Project to ensure workers across Manhattan are aware of their rights as employees and how to reach out to the Worker Protection Unit when appropriate.

The Unit continues to stand up for hard-working New Yorkers as we hold accountable companies that line their pockets at the expense of their employees. In multiple cases recently, we have been able to secure guilty pleas to wage theft charges including restitution payments that are distributed to affected workers. Indictments brought in 2025 alone resulted in nearly \$600,000 being returned to 22 workers from the unscrupulous employers who had stolen their hard-earned wages from them. We have also been able to return stolen wages directly to affected workers unable to be made whole via restitution through the Manhattan District Attorney's Office's Stolen Wage Fund. The Worker Protection Unit is housed within the Rackets Bureau whose attorneys, in 2025, have also been able to return approximately \$1,431,600 to the New York State Insurance Fund through 8 cases prosecuting companies that defrauded the Fund by failing to pay proper workers compensation insurance premiums. Rackets attorneys also returned approximately \$150,000 to city and state tax authorities through convictions in three tax fraud cases, and in another conviction we ensured that a first payment of \$45,000 was given to the New York City Department of Finance from the more than \$700,000 that was determined to be owed and ordered to be repaid by the defendant.

The Worker Protection Unit has also spent much of this year coordinating efforts with other government agencies including a presentation to over 150 employees of the New York State Department of Labor and a forthcoming Memorandum of Understanding with the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. Our government partners in the NYC School Construction Authority, NYC Department of Investigation, and MTA Inspector General have been critical collaborators for building strong cases against employers engaged in wage theft.

There is no question that stable housing is a cornerstone for public safety, and the housing affordability crisis in New York City is a public safety issue. As housing affordability continues

to be a paramount issue to New Yorkers, the Office has also created a Housing and Tenant Protection Unit to ensure that New Yorkers are able to live in their homes without fearing for their safety. This Unit prosecutes landlords who engage in large-scale systemic harassment to push people out of their affordable homes and developers who line their pockets by defrauding government subsidy programs and failing to fulfill their obligations to provide affordable housing.

The range of cases this Unit handles range from abuse of government programs including 421-a tax abatements, tenant harassment, deed fraud, or rental scams. Since its passage, Penal Law Section 241.05 Harassment of a Rent Regulated Tenant in the First Degree has only been charged twice. Both cases were brought by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, including an ongoing case against one landlord who is currently indicted with eight charges of Harassment of a Rent Regulated Tenant in the First Degree for allegedly creating dangerous living conditions including no heat or hot water, constant leaks, and broken locks in an effort to push tenants out of their homes across five buildings in Manhattan. We're encouraged by the number of community members who have come forward and made us aware of activity that threatens their or their neighbors' ability to stay in their homes. Since the Unit formed, we have received an increasing number of complaints from the community leading to investigations and at times, significant charges. As a result of the reports of these Manhattanites, we have charged nine cases with 32 defendants (17 individuals and 15 corporations), and there are several other ongoing investigations. The cases we have brought include charges for abuse of a government program, namely 421-A affordability; tenant harassment; deed fraud; and rental scams.

TRANSIT CRIME

New Yorkers rely on public transportation. Our transit system must be a safe environment for Manhattanites and visitors alike. Every day, we work closely with our law enforcement partners to hold accountable those who threaten the safety of anyone utilizing our transit system and we will continue to prosecute those who commit acts of violence against commuters, riders, or transit workers. We're very focused on transit crime because New Yorkers deserve to feel safe taking our subways and buses. Transit crime is down overall, but high-profile incidents are disturbing. Random assaults are especially scary and impact on how people feel about taking the subway. The numbers are heading in the right direction, Manhattan transit complaints were down 2% in 2025 compared to 2024, 12% compared to 2022 and 12% compared to 2019. However, transit complaints are up 15% compared to 2021, and we know we have more work to do. Citywide, but particularly in Manhattan, misdemeanor arrests occurring in a transit jurisdiction have accounted for an increasing proportion of all misdemeanor arrests, reaching 17% of all misdemeanor arrests in 2025. We will continue to hold people accountable for acts of transit violence.

In instances of serious violence, we seek and have successfully obtained convictions with serious sentences. At trial we obtained a conviction against Esteban Esonoasue for Assault in the First Degree, a B Felony, and other serious, related charges for an unprovoked Grand Central Terminal attack where he scratched one woman with a fork and stabbed two teenagers with a knife. For this conduct, he was sentenced to 26 1/3 – 29 years in state prison. This past summer, Christian Valdez pled guilty to Attempted Murder in the Second Degree and was sentenced to 18 years in state prison for throwing his girlfriend in front of an oncoming train at the Fulton Street Subway Station, causing serious, life-changing injuries.

However, much of the lower-level disorder and crime we see on the subway is due to the underlying substance abuse or mental health issues. To address this, our Pathways to Public Safety Division attorneys review cases to determine what course of action would best serve public safety, including non-carceral options to address the underlying issues that lead to the arrest.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We know that many of the quality of life issues that are of concern to our communities require an interdisciplinary approach to use all of the available tools in our collective toolbox. In 2022, we were proud to support the creation of the 125th Street Collaborative Hub, led by Barbara Askins of the 125th Street Business Improvement District. We then worked with community leaders and City Hall partners to replicate the model in Midtown (8th Avenue Corridor) and the West Village (Washingtons Square Park). The model includes one to four community leaders know as Co-Chairs, and city agencies, including the Department of Sanitation, Health and Mental Hygiene, Homeless Services, and the NYPD, as well as CBOs providing outreach to the unhoused individuals and those suffering from addiction or mental health issues. The groups meet twice a month, once virtually and once in person in the impacted area. The virtual meeting focuses on concrete issues like scaffolding, sanitation and other issues that impact quality of life and crime. The in-person meeting is focused on outreach to specific people who are unhoused or suffering from mental health and addiction issues.

Focused on addressing a range of public safety issues, including retail theft, substance use, the mental health crisis, and more, the Hub deploys teams to conduct regular walkthroughs to observe issues in real time and speak with local community members and businesses on the ground. They also identify specific individuals in the area who may need connections to services, such as housing or medical care, and make referrals to the appropriate city agency or service provider.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS

2025 marked a significant anniversary for our office – the 50th anniversary of Manhattan’s Survivor Services Bureau (SSB), which was formed in 1975 as the Witness Aid Services Unit. Over that time, both the rights and resources afforded to survivors have expanded significantly. Most recently, the Fair Access to Victim Compensation Act eliminated certain barriers and provided more time for victims to seek compensation. All these changes can be credited to the persistent advocacy of crime survivors and their supporters; the accomplishments of this movement cannot be overstated.

The transformation of survivor services in the Manhattan D.A.’s Office over the decades has been similarly extraordinary. What began as a unit of fewer than ten people, focused primarily on obtaining corroborating statements and securing orders of protection has grown into a bureau of almost 50 professional staff who provide notification services, case management, advocacy, counseling, and more.

Since the unit was revamped and expanded into the Survivor Services Bureau, we have been able to use the funding previously provided by City Council to increase staffing and innovate the bureau’s procedures. Two years ago, we adopted an automated management tool to connect SSB staff with survivors as early as possible. This system now covers all domestic violence cases. And

we increased our crisis responses by 280% over two years; in 2025, 7,863 domestic violence survivors involved in 7,707 DV cases were referred to SSB, and the advocates and counselors conducted 1,845 intakes with those survivors.

Our expanded Survivor Services Bureau is core to our public safety strategy. By providing trauma-informed support to survivors, we strengthen community trust in our office – trust that we rely on to bring cases and keep Manhattan safe. And by ameliorating the trauma of crime victims and witnesses before it metastasizes, we prevent untreated trauma from fueling further violence.

NEW ASKS

The Manhattan District Attorney's Office and I are sincerely grateful to the City Council for its continued support. Through this body we have been able to create new Units, expand critical survivor services, and best protect public safety through fairness and justice. With money that was allocated to our office last year, we have been able to increase our headcount and fill a significant number of open positions. In the upcoming year we are looking to further increase our legal staff across several divisions in our efforts to process cases more quickly and safely from arrest to disposition.

INCREASED LEGAL STAFF FOR THE SPECIAL VICTIMS DIVISION

Domestic violence is among the most common crimes in New York City and the nation, and yet, it is also widely misunderstood, and therefore, under-reported. When I took office, I created the Special Victims Division (SVD), within which our Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence (IPSV) Bureau is housed handling these types of cases. The total number of cases handled and resolved within SVD has sharply risen since the creation of the division in 2022, with approximately 300 cases resolved in 2022 and nearly 6,000 resolved in 2025.

In New York City, intimate partner violence comprises about 40% of all felony crimes. In Manhattan, about 13% of the cases we resolved last year were intimate partner violence cases. As of March 12, 2026, we had more than 1,600 IPV cases pending, including about 500 felony IPV cases. And it's important to note that those are just the cases that get reported. We know that there are many more victims who have not yet come forward. So, we want to do everything we can, in partnership with local elected officials, community-based organizations, and city agencies to encourage DV victims to seek help.

One strategy to prevent intimate partner felony assaults is to identify lower-level IPV offenses that signal a high risk of escalation to more serious violence, and then to respond to those high-risk situations with urgency and appropriate resources through what we call Early Engagement. An Early Engagement Team consists of prosecutors, analysts, and victim advocates who work closely with the NYPD to review domestic incident reports and identify high-risk misdemeanor cases early – to both enhance prosecutions and support survivors. Together with the NYPD, critical evidence is collected even if an arrest hasn't been made yet. That reduces the likelihood of case dismissals, so we can hold more abusers accountable.

Our IPSV Bureau has full time specialized prosecutors assigned to our most serious IPV cases. These ADAs are extensively trained in trauma and survivor informed practices. Also, our Survivor Services Bureau provides free, high-quality counseling, safety planning and other services, regardless of whether a survivor wants to participate in a criminal prosecution. Our focus is on survivors and what they need to be safe. Domestic violence is one of the most persistent and intractable public safety challenges facing communities across the nation. But here in New York City, we continue to innovate. We continue to invest more resources. And we continue to forge strong partnerships across law enforcement, government agencies, and community-based organizations to hold abusers accountable and provide survivors the safety and support they deserve.

I'd like to focus on the full-time specialized prosecutors assigned to the IPSV bureau. A key piece of our model for these cases is ensuring that our ADAs are not only trained to handle a criminal prosecution, but to be able to work with survivors in the most empathetic and effective way. This means being able to handle the demands of any criminal cases while also employing the appropriate sensitivity to working with survivors of deeply complex situations. Given these increased demands, there is additional time and resources that must be spent on each case by our IPSV attorneys. Every week since January 1 of this year, we have had an average of 30 felony cases coming into the bureau, meaning that once a week we are filling the ideal caseload of a single IPSV prosecutor.

Coupling the continually increasing caseload with the additional time and attention an attorney must spend on each of these cases, along with our core casework, will require us to add more attorneys and more legal managers to oversee this larger legal staff. We are asking for \$3,900,000 to hire twenty (20) more Assistant District Attorneys and five (5) supervisors.

INCREASED LEGAL STAFF FOR THE PATHWAYS TO PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION

The Pathways to Public Safety Division handles all our felony problem-solving court cases, as well as misdemeanor cases where services are deemed to be appropriate. Our specially trained Pathways Deputies screen every felony case with one key question in mind: what is going to make us safer? In many serious, violent cases, the answer is that incarceration is necessary to protect public safety. In those instances, we use our traditional tools to pursue accountability. Other times, it's clear that the best path to keep the community safe is to offer rigorous, court-monitored services to address underlying issues like substance use disorder, mental illness, joblessness, housing instability, and trauma. Not only are these common drivers of recidivism; they also make people more vulnerable to becoming victims of crime.

We are immensely proud of this work done by our Pathways to Public Safety Division in evaluating eligible individuals to divert away from the traditional trial courtrooms into problem-solving courts. The Manhattan DA's Office has been at the forefront of problem-solving courts in New York. There are currently four such felony courts in Manhattan, and we are continuing to advocate for further expansion. DANY funded the first six years of the Felony ATI Court (a first-of-its-kind court that has no charge or need-based criteria) and the first several years of the

specialized Mental Health Track within Manhattan's Article 216 Judicial Diversion Drug Court. The Office of Court Administration took over these multi-million dollar investments in April 2025. Additionally, Pathways worked with the Office of Court Administration to launch a Misdemeanor Alternative to Incarceration Compliance Court Part overseen by Pathways ADAs and case coordinators and we staff Midtown Community Justice Center several days a week. In total, Pathways staffs 44 court parts each month.

Pathways prosecutors proactively screen all Trial Division and Special Victims Division felony cases within 48 hours, and review thousands of misdemeanor cases each year. Cases considered for Pathways are reviewed individually and holistically in conjunction with independent clinical records. With the creation of Pathways, DANY has more than doubled felony problem-solving court referrals; close to one-quarter of indicted felony cases in Manhattan sit in one of the four felony problem-solving courts and many more are in other courts while they are reviewed. Our record of success is clear, based on encouraging data indicating distinctly low recidivism rates of participants that graduate from problem-solving courts, we are making Manhattan safer.

Since this Division was created in 2022, we have almost halved the time from arrest to treatment disposition for felony cases. However, our expansion efforts have been challenged by the fact that all four courts are currently at or over maximum capacity. The courts, stakeholders, and community-based providers are under-resourced and struggle to provide individualized attention and supervision in line with research-backed best practices. Wait times for clinical assessments and connection to services remain significant. To expand access and improve outcomes, Pathways has already started the process of advocating for another felony problem-solving court. We also need to add additional legal staff to this division to allow for quicker processing of these cases once a defendant with appropriate needs is identified, and also to further assist the city with its goals of reducing the jail population on Rikers Island by more swiftly moving those defendants to the appropriate programs. We are asking for \$2,900,000 to hire twenty (20) more Assistant District Attorneys.

And while it is not a funding request for my office, ATI programming is critical to the success of our Pathways Division and to public safety more broadly, and we urge the Council to fully fund these programs.

NEIGHBORHOOD NAVIGATORS

The Manhattan District Attorney's Office made a \$5.6 million, three-and-a-half-year investment (August 2023 through January 2027), to launch and operate a Neighborhood Navigator Initiative to address community concerns in four high needs areas in Manhattan: Inwood and Washington Heights, Central and East Harlem, Chelsea/Hell's Kitchen/Midtown West, and the Lower East Side and Chinatown. Operated by The Bridge, a non-profit in Harlem, the Initiative is a trauma-informed, recovery-oriented model that employs peer navigators with lived and shared experiences. The navigators work to build trust with people, offering them care rooted in empathy, and often start their connection by offering a warm cup of coffee, a meal, or a conversation. They engage in direct outreach to potential partners and host regularly scheduled stakeholder meetings to build interest, receive referrals, and respond to urgent community needs. The Initiative launched in February 2024, and as of October 31, 2025, the Neighborhood Navigators have engaged with

2,685 individuals, secured housing placements for 94 people, created ongoing client relationships with 46 individuals, and provided over 1,500 individuals with resources and referrals.

While limited to a handful of neighborhoods in Manhattan, data has shown promising results. Individuals, many with significant needs, have received both immediate resources and more formal long-term services and supports. Nearly one hundred individuals have been assisted in securing housing. Seeing the incoming administration championing this type of community-based approach to meeting the needs of currently unserved neighbors and the recently introduced legislation to create a Department of Community Safety sponsored by more than half of this Council is encouraging, and we look forward to seeing this model expanded throughout Manhattan and the entire city. To keep this program running in Manhattan will cost \$2,500,000 per year.

COURT BASED NAVIGATORS

We have also invested \$3 million in a similar initiative, Court-Based Navigators, for individuals leaving arraignments, developed in partnership with the Fortune Society. Court-based navigators ensure that people leave the courthouse with the immediate support they need to avoid future arrest and further system involvement. Navigators draw from lived experiences with justice involvement, homelessness, or behavioral health challenges, enabling them to build rapport quickly and authentically. Navigators offer immediate resources such as food, clothing, hygiene items, OMNI cards, and escorts to housing or treatment programs. They also conduct needs assessments and initiate short- and long-term referrals to Fortune programs and community partners. Engagement continues beyond the courthouse when navigators follow up with participants, schedule appointments, make warm handoffs to providers, and help people navigate their longer-term goals. From August 2024 through October 2025, our court-based navigators have engaged with 1,654 individuals, secured housing placements for 58 people, created ongoing client relationships with 76 individuals, and provided hundreds of resources and referrals. By facilitating immediate voluntary connections to resources post-arraignment, we help ensure that individuals are returning to the community with the immediate support they need and opportunity to connect with longer-term support to avoid further involvement in the criminal justice system.

While the current Court-Based Navigator program uses peers with lived experience related to justice involvement and behavioral health needs, specialized peers could engage and connect with individuals in other court parts, including misdemeanor and felony problem-solving courts and specialized parts designed to address intimate partner violence, gun possession, and emerging adults (18-25-year-olds). By staffing each setting with peers who bring both relevant lived experience and specialized training tied to the court's focus, this model can offer tailored, trauma-informed support, ensuring every court room is resourced to offer support and immediate connection. The continued success of this navigator program will cost \$2,000,000 per year.



**Testimony of Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez
New York City Council Public Safety Committee
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 18, 2026**





**Testimony of Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez
New York City Council Public Safety Committee
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 18, 2026**

In 2025, Brooklyn recorded its safest year on record. Homicides fell by 83 (48%) and shooting incidents dropped by 407 (62%) compared to 2020, representing the most significant public safety gains in the city. This progress is a testament to the hard work of our prosecutors and staff, our partners in law enforcement, and the dedicated community members who work with us every day. But structural underfunding of our office puts this progress at risk.

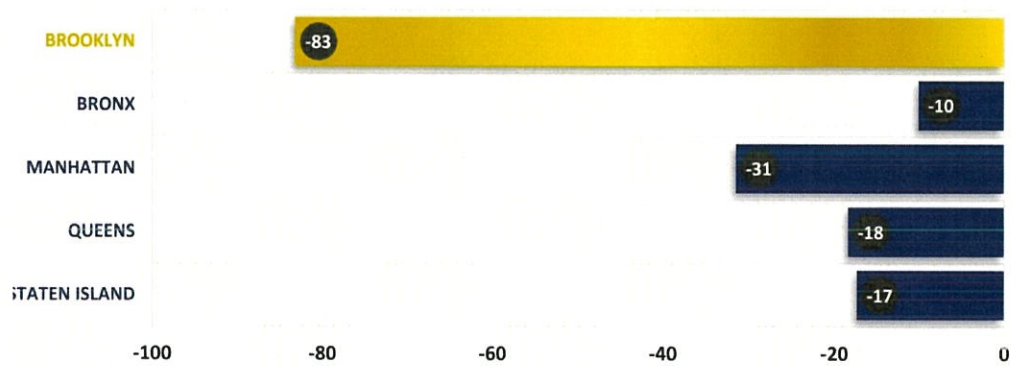
Brooklyn is New York City's most populous borough, home to 2.8 million residents, and the Kings County District Attorney's Office handles more arrests and felony prosecutions than any other in the city. However, our budget does not reflect that reality. Funding inequities, driven in large part by the uniquely high rental cost of our office space, have left Brooklyn's office chronically under-resourced relative to the scale of its work.

As arrest numbers in Brooklyn continue to grow, outpacing our peer offices, additional resources to bring our funding in line with our workload are vital.

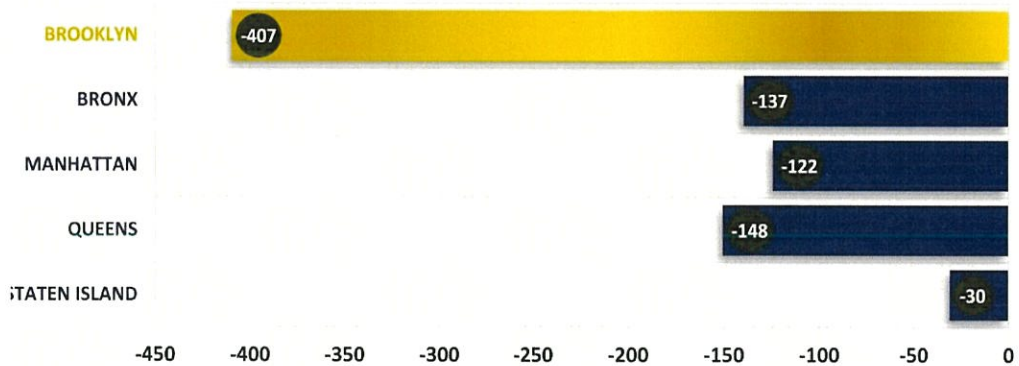
Brooklyn is Driving the City's Public Safety Progress

The reduction in violence in Brooklyn in recent years is dramatic, and attributable to a focused approach ensuring strong accountability for the drivers of crime, and comprehensive strategies to both prevent violence and combat recidivism. Year to date, homicides are down 64% from last year's historic low, and shootings have declined 12% from last year's record.

Reduction in Homicides by Borough 2020 vs. 2025



Reduction in Shootings by Borough 2020 vs. 2025



Unfortunately, however, the work of the Brooklyn District Attorney's office remains hampered by staggering funding inequities that stem from budget compression caused by the uniquely high cost of our office rent.

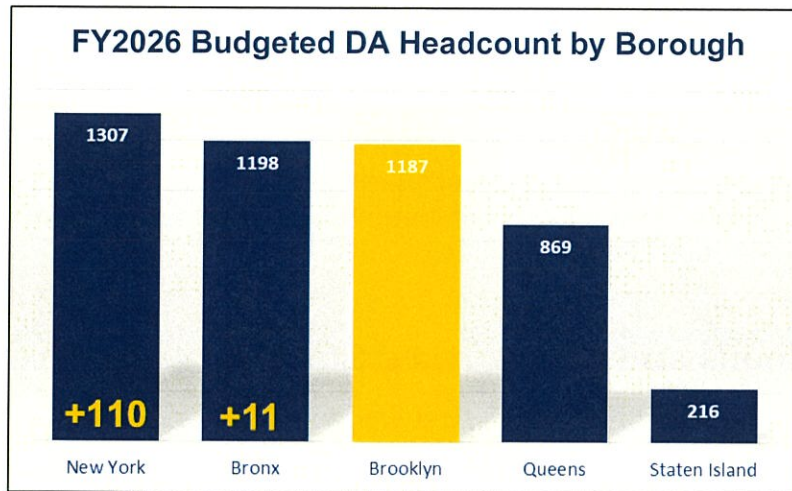
This structural underfunding hampers our ability to meet our current obligations and emerging challenges, jeopardizing public safety, compromising recruitment and morale, and undercutting Brooklyn's ability to deliver justice.

Brooklyn is the City's Busiest District Attorney's Office

The Brooklyn DA's office leads the city in case volume every year, and case numbers are rising faster in Brooklyn than any other borough:

- **Highest Arrest Volume:** 79,876 arrests in 2025 --- up 109% since 2020
- **Most Felony Prosecutions** in New York City

But despite the highest case volume, Brooklyn falls third in budgeted headcount, after Manhattan and Bronx.



The Funding Inequity Crisis

The unfairness of the current funding model is shocking. When adjusted for rent, in FY2026:

- The Brooklyn DA's Office receives **51% less per arrest than Manhattan** (\$1,703 vs. \$2,564)
- **On a per-resident basis, Manhattan receives 97% more per resident served** (\$10.25 vs. \$5.20)
- **Manhattan received \$34.2 million more than Brooklyn** (\$170.185M vs. \$136.005M), despite Brooklyn handling 10,495 more arrests and serving one million more residents
- **Brooklyn serves a population 89% larger than the Bronx but receives just 4.9% more funding** (\$136.005M vs. \$129.612M)
- The **Bronx DA's office receives 80% more funding per resident served than Brooklyn** (\$9 vs. \$5.20)

Under the Preliminary Budget Plan, these inequities would continue. Adjusted for rent, Manhattan's proposed funding would top Brooklyn's by \$30 million, with Brooklyn receiving just 3.6% more than the Bronx DA.

FY2026 rent-adjusted budgets illustrate the disparities:

	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Bronx	Queens	Staten Is.
Total Budget	\$161,516,000	\$175,424,000	\$132,863,000	\$106,641,000	\$26,837,000
Rent	\$25,511,000	\$5,239,000	\$3,251,000	\$7,033,000	\$369,000
Budget After Rent	\$136,005,000	\$170,195,000	\$129,612,000	\$106,641,000	\$26,837,000
Total Arrests	79,876	66,381	62,836	58,154	11,707
Per Arrest	\$1,702.70	\$2,563.91	\$2,062.70	\$1,712.00	\$2,292.39
% More than KCDA per Arrest:		51%	21%	1%	35%

Impact of Underfunding on Operations and Outcomes

With case volume as the primary indicator of workload in a District Attorney's office, the comparative underfunding of the Brooklyn DA's office, which reliably handles the highest case volume, illustrates the scale of the problem, and the consequences cascade.

High Caseloads and Overworked Staff

- Cases suffer from prosecutors stretched too thin.
- Prosecutors have less time for labor-intensive diversion and restorative justice programs.
- Less time for victim and witness engagement to build trust.
- Overworked prosecutors cannot keep up with rising caseloads.
- Prosecutors and staff are paid the lowest salaries of any DA's office in the city, compromising recruitment and retention.

Critical Operational Deficiencies

- **IT Staff Crisis:** KCDA's IT staff is less than half the size of Manhattan's, delaying critical projects, data analytics, and AI readiness.
- **Arrestment Delays:** Arrestment times routinely exceed the legal limit.
- **Unfunded Essential Programs:** We cannot afford 24/7 ECAB intake, dedicated diversion screeners, vertical prosecution for domestic violence, or sufficient DI staffing.
- **Self-Funded Programs:** Unlike its peer offices, Brooklyn must also self-fund vital programs for which other DA's offices receive dedicated funding, further straining already stretched resources.
- Vital initiatives to meet emerging needs are unfunded.

FY 2027 Funding Request

To meet the public safety imperatives in the City's most populous borough and sustain the record-setting progress we have made, we urge City leaders to approve the following new funding:

Program	Amount	Purpose
Project Restore	\$5.4M	Expand this successful violence-reduction pilot—which currently demonstrates a \$6.70-to-\$1 benefit-cost ratio—beyond Bed-Stuy to additional neighborhoods.
Diversion & Restorative Justice	\$5M	Support labor-intensive programs that reduce incarceration and recidivism, ensuring Brooklyn can match Manhattan's staffing levels, which is funded for a diversion ADA in every bureau.
IT Staff	\$5M	Address critical staffing shortage stalling mission-critical projects. Brooklyn handles more cases with an IT staff less than half the size of Manhattan's team. AI readiness and compliance obligations will continue to suffer until this vital need is met.
Data Storage & Technology	\$5M	Manage surging costs of storing petabytes of mandated digital evidence (such as body-worn camera footage), which now grows by more than a terabyte every day, and often must be retained for 25+ years by law.
Cybercrimes Bureau	\$2M	Broaden the Virtual Currency Unit into a comprehensive bureau dedicated to protecting seniors and immigrants from increasingly complex crypto fraud and scams.
Housing Justice Bureau	\$1.5M	Launch a dedicated bureau to combat deed fraud and protect vulnerable homeowners and tenants from harassment, lockouts, and the theft of generational wealth.
Hate Crimes Supplement	\$1.5M	With hate crimes up 137% since 2020, this supplement ensures dedicated funding for prosecution and community engagement, correcting a disparity where other DAs receive specific funding for this work while Brooklyn does not.
Animal Crimes Unit	\$1M	Establish a full-time prosecutor to handle animal cruelty cases in a borough of 2.8 million residents, addressing violence against animals that often precedes violence toward people.
Total:	\$26.4M	

In addition, we continue to request OMB authorization to hire attorneys and staff detailed in prior requests, and for DCAS support to meet our office space needs. These are essential to addressing immediate needs within the office.

We Ask for Your Support

Even if fully funded, Brooklyn's rent-adjusted FY27 budget would still be less than Manhattan's. Brooklyn would still have a lower budgeted headcount, while serving a larger population, prosecuting more cases, and driving New York's safety progress for less.

Granting the Brooklyn District Attorney's budget request would not eliminate inequities, but it would begin to correct the worst disparities, ensuring Brooklyn's prosecutors can more effectively do their jobs while continuing to lead in conviction integrity, restorative justice, community engagement, and post-conviction support.

While we know that budget resources are tight and the times are uncertain, Brooklyn has done more with less for too long. Failing to address these disparities risks undoing the progress we have made toward making Brooklyn safer and fairer. The time to act is now.

We thank you for your support and always welcome the chance to partner with you to help the people we serve.



**Testimony of Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz
New York City Council Committee on Public Safety
Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget and Oversight Hearing
March 18, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Feliz and members of the Committee on Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding my office's Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget.

2025 was another busy and productive year. A year in which my office processed a record number of arrests and arraignments. Specifically, we handled over 60,000 arrests, conducted over 45,000 arraignments, resolved over 44,000 cases and assisted nearly 5,000 victims through our Crime Victims Advocacy Program. We have taken a proactive approach to our investigations -- visiting 159 homicide crime scenes and 74 vehicular collision scenes last year, as we work to better assist law enforcement with investigative needs and connect with victims and witnesses as early as possible.

Central to our work is a commitment to transparency, community engagement, and strong partnerships with our partner law enforcement agencies. We do this all while responding to rising caseloads and increasingly complex criminal cases, but we are facing significant economic headwinds -- specifically, my office's current fiscal condition and the funding disparity that exists between my office and the other New York City District Attorney Offices.

According to New York State Unified Court System (UCS) statistics, Queens ranks 2nd out of the NYC DAs in terms of annual caseload volume, measured by case filings and dispositions. Despite this, Queens ranks 4th amongst the City DA's Offices in terms of annual PS budget funding.

When comparing 2025 UCS case filing statistics and FY 27 Preliminary Plan PS funding for the five DA's Offices, Queens receives the least amount of funding per case filing, the least amount of funding per case disposition, the least amount of funding per arrest and the least amount of funding per resident. These funding disparities are not only true for 2025 but have been consistent for many years.

At the same time, the average number of case filings handled per ADA has been steadily rising -- increasing from 83 in 2022 to 117 in 2025 and the number of case dispositions per ADA increasing from 66 in 2022 to 117 in 2025.

In addition, arrests in Queens have also been on an upward trend for the last five years -- increasing by 74% overall -- with misdemeanor arrests increasing by 84% and felony arrests increasing by 56%.

When looking at the collective PS budgets of the five NYC DA's Offices as of the FY 27 Preliminary Plan, Queens receives a 17.5% share. However, when looking at the total arraigned arrests for 2025, Queens handled 22.1% of the total arraigned arrests in the City during that period. The efficiency of this office should be supported, not penalized.

While I am supportive of my fellow District Attorneys receiving the budget funding they deserve, I would be remiss if I did not advocate for the same for my office. Queens' residents should not be less of a priority than any other borough. Funding parity among the DAs is necessary to ensure that a comparable level of services is offered in each County. It is essential that we are all treated equitably and that each County is given its proportional share of budget funding needed to do our jobs effectively. Unfortunately, my office's significant underfunding leaves Queens with fewer assistant district attorneys to handle the growing number of arrests and millions of dollars unavailable to keep the people of Queens County safe.

While we estimate the total funding disparity to be approximately \$35 million, we are only asking for a portion of this funding, given the City's current economic outlook. Specifically, my Office is requesting a total of \$12.5 million in expense funding to support various critical needs including funding for my Rehabilitation and Restorative Services Bureau, Community Partnerships Division, Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit, Human Trafficking Bureau, Intake and Assessment Bureau, Housing and Worker Protection Bureau, Crime Victims Advocacy Program, interpreter staff, as well as a variety of OTPS needs. We are also requesting capital funding for IT-related needs for a variety of upcoming license renewals.

Specifically, additional ADA and case manager staff are needed in my Rehabilitation and Restorative Services Bureau to provide assessments, referrals, and case management services to defendants eligible for alternative to incarceration programs. In addition, additional ADA and paralegal staff are needed for my office's Human Trafficking Bureau, Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit, and Housing and Worker Protection Bureau to address both the complex nature and volume of assigned cases. Additional staffing is also needed for my office's Community Partnerships

Division to increase our outreach and collaboration with Queens' residents and community-based organizations to prevent Queens residents from entering the criminal justice system in the first place. And, in order to better serve crime victims in Queens County, we need additional victim advocates in my office's Crime Victims Advocacy Program, as well as Spanish, Mandarin, Bengali and Korean interpreters, to communicate in the languages of our crime victims and witnesses.

Additional funding is also needed for my office's Intake and Assessment Bureau. This bureau is responsible for early assessment and enhancement of arrest cases, including interviewing crime victims, witnesses and police officers to determine appropriate charges and gather evidence for successful prosecutions. In addition to staffing the Bureau during regular business hours, we also schedule staff to work additional shifts on both weeknights and weekends in order to keep pace with the high volume of arrests and to keep case processing times down. Maintaining low arrest to arraignment and arrest to complaint sworn times is not only critical for this office, but also for the efficiency of the criminal justice system on a whole. Reducing case processing times reduces police overtime costs, gets officers back out on the street more quickly and reduces the amount of time those accused of a crime spend in detention before they see a judge.

We have seen success with this approach -- we are currently ranked second in the city in arrest to arraignment and third in arrest to complaint sworn times -- however, sustaining these case processing times is becoming increasingly difficult given the 74% increase in arrests in Queens over the last five years. Additional full-time staffing is needed, as well as funding for our weeknight and weekend extra shift program, to maintain the progress we have made.

We have included various OTPS needs in our funding request as well. The OTPS needs include expenses relating to our data center, as well as hardware/software maintenance and support. I am also requesting funding to support an initiative that my office launched in 2021 that supports youth-development and crime prevention programs for young people, ages 11-18, aimed at reducing crime and criminal justice involvement and increasing engagement with academic, career development and social services throughout Queens. Since the program's inception, it has been supported with non-city funds, however, the funding stream will no longer be available for this initiative after the end of this year.

Additional funding for our OTPS needs is critical because our current OTPS budget is insufficient to support our ongoing expenses. Of the \$14 million in OTPS funding allocated to my office, nearly \$9 million is set aside for rent expenses -- leaving only \$5 million to support the overall OTPS needs of my office.

Relatedly, I would like to note that my office continues to face a severe shortage of available office space. This ongoing problem hinders hiring and has prevented my office from moving forward on projects and initiatives simply because we do not have the space to put people. This need is especially critical in Queens where we require our staff to be present in the office every workday.

While my staff actively seeks out rental space in the vicinity of the Queens Criminal Courthouse to help alleviate overcrowding in the short-term, what we really need is a comprehensive, long-term solution that can house all of my staff in one consolidated space.

We also face a significant shortage of available storage space. A comprehensive, secure space is needed to house tens of thousands of files, as well as evidence that is collected as the result of our investigations. Evidence seized can be voluminous, at times, depending on the type of investigation. For example, a recent retail theft investigation that concluded in December resulted in the seizure of approximately 12,000 items, all of which needed to be catalogued and stored until the prosecution is complete. Having sufficient storage space is critical for long-term and large-scale investigations such as these. We are currently working with DCAS on both of these space requests and I ask for your support moving forward.

Despite my office's historical underfunding, we continue to innovate and work hard to ensure that justice is being served in Queens County. We have focused on a balanced approach to prosecution — one that emphasizes accountability, fairness and community trust. As part of my commitment to the fair administration of justice, all arrests are closely evaluated to ensure appropriate and consistent charging decisions are being made. We continue to place a strong emphasis on the drivers of crime, removing illegal and dangerous weapons from our streets, holding violent and repeat offenders accountable, dismantling gang networks, shutting down illegal cannabis operations, returning stolen homes to their rightful owners, combatting retail theft, and obtaining justice for crime victims.

We continue to place a strong emphasis on addressing evolving crime issues -- including removing illegal guns from our streets and curbing the pervasive gun violence that plagues our communities. Through hard work and collaboration with police and community leaders, 2025 closed with a significant decline in shootings both across the city and in Queens. While shooting incidents were down 24% overall in the city, Queens saw a 25% decrease. And, while the number of shooting victims citywide decreased by 22%, in Queens, that number decreased by 25%, demonstrating our unwavering

commitment to removing illegal firearms from our communities and keeping our residents safe.

My office's Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau continues to lead the fight against ghost guns. Since 2021, Queens County accounted for 38% of all ghost guns recovered citywide, more than any other borough.

Just as we are taking deadly firearms off of our streets, we are simultaneously dismantling street gangs. My office's Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau focuses on identifying and prosecuting drivers of violence engaged in organized crime, including members of street gangs and firearms dealers. Over the last year, this bureau concluded many successful prosecutions. One such case resulted in the indictment of 32 reputed gang members, marking it as the largest single gang takedown in the history of my office and included 17 firearms seized and taken off the street.

We are committed to working with our law enforcement and community partners to end the epidemic of gun and gang violence. Together, we will continue to use every resource available to ensure criminal networks, gang activity and other illegally organized operations are dismantled and that drugs and weapons are taken off our streets.

Our efforts in this area have not only focused on gun prosecutions. We have also placed a strong emphasis on gun violence alternatives and prevention. My office's Gun Diversion Program focuses on placing eligible defendants charged with gun possession into a program using a restorative approach. Participants interact with clinical professionals and culturally competent credible messengers during the 12-month-long program. Since its inception in 2022, my office has reviewed 735 cases for eligibility and, to date, 29 participants have successfully graduated from the program.

We have also participated in 12 successful community gun buyback programs since 2020, with over 700 guns surrendered by residents.

We continue to make great strides in other serious crime areas as well.

We remain keenly aware of the detrimental effect of hate crimes on our communities. While hate crimes decreased last year, we continue to remain cognizant of the prevalence of these crimes, particularly against Jewish members of our community, as anti-Jewish crimes continue to account for more than 55% of all hate crimes in New York City.

We have also implemented a comprehensive approach to combatting retail theft. My office has developed partnerships and relationships with large and small retailers

and civic associations throughout the borough to identify retail theft recidivists, those who engage in violent acts while committing theft, and investigating and prosecuting organized retail theft and resale rings responsible for the loss of revenue to businesses. This past December, my office concluded an investigation that resulted in a 780-count indictment charging 13 individuals with stealing more than \$2.2 million from Home Depot stores across nine different states. The defendants allegedly systematically and repeatedly stole merchandise from 128 Home Depot stores as part of 319 individual thefts. In addition, more than 2,600 trespass notices have been served as part of our Queens Merchants Business Improvement Program.

We also continue to prioritize shuttering illegal cannabis smoke shops that plague our communities and are dangerously close to schools, daycare centers and places of worship. These illegal smoke shops sell unregulated and untested cannabis flower and gummies packaged to look like brand-name candy and are targeting children. Since November 2022, the joint enforcement operations between my office, the NYPD and the City Sheriff have resulted in the seizure of tens of thousands of pounds of cannabis product and thousands of packages of “magic mushrooms,” all of which have an estimated total value of more than \$30 million. Since July 2024, 320 illegal cannabis shops have been padlocked and permanently closed in Queens.

My office also continues to focus on animal cruelty cases and last year handled several especially horrific cases of animal abuse. Unfortunately, many who are arrested for animal abuse become repeat offenders often in crimes against women and stronger penalties are needed to safeguard our community’s voiceless members and prevent future escalating violence.

Another persistent crime that continues to negatively impact Queens County is deed fraud. My office’s Housing and Worker Protection Bureau focuses on eliminating this issue from Queens and, since the creation of the bureau in 2020, 21 deeds have been returned to homeowners. In addition, in response to the growing problem of squatting, we have prioritized removing those who enter a home without permission. In 2025, the bureau’s efforts led to the removal of squatters from a total of six houses and the properties returned to the rightful owners.

Now, I would like to discuss our ongoing initiatives aimed at ensuring fairness and equity within the criminal justice system. Since the establishment of my Conviction Integrity Unit in 2020, 291 individual cases have been submitted to the CIU for review. Following thorough investigations by a team of experienced prosecutors and detectives, the CIU has vacated 17 convictions based on evidence of innocence or other fundamental errors that had been overlooked through the ordinary judicial process.

We are also proactive in protecting those affected by human trafficking. My office's Human Trafficking Bureau has implemented a victim-centered and trauma informed approach while connecting survivors of trafficking with meaningful services to empower them to escape their exploitation. The bureau also conducts extensive community outreach and education and distributes information aimed at preventing and identifying trafficking in our communities. In 2025, the Human Trafficking Bureau obtained 27 criminal convictions; 18 of which were felonies, most involving the kidnapping, sex trafficking and rape of women and children.

My office also remains focused on Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services to help break cycles of crime and allow eligible offenders to participate in treatment and community-based programs. Last year, we processed over 11,000 DATs all of which were screened for rehabilitative intervention and needed services. We work together with our non-profit agency partners and have referred 1,300 defendants to community service, with approximately 48% of participants successfully completing their service mandates.

We also refer eligible defendants to the Far Rockaway Community Justice program and the Queens Community Justice Center – restorative justice-based solutions that positively address the justice needs of both victims and offenders. In addition, we continue our participation in Project Reset -- a pre-arraignment diversion program for misdemeanor arrests. In 2025, we referred 556 new cases and had 333 successful completions. Since its inception in 2021, more than 1,000 people have successfully completed the program.

We also continue a community-based approach to prosecution and have successfully engaged the Queens community by fostering an environment where residents feel empowered to reach out to my office for assistance with law enforcement-related issues.

As part of this approach, we continue to place a strong focus on at-risk youth and alternatives to drugs and guns through our Community Partnerships Division. In 2025, my office's Community Partnerships Division participated in more than 600 public events and engaged more than 13,000 young people through various programs and outreach events. This outreach not only builds trust but also promotes mutual understanding and support within our neighborhoods. It is through early intervention that our children see that there are mentors, educators and law enforcement figures who care deeply about their future. By combining enforcement with engagement, we are helping to build pathways away from violence and toward stability.

In closing, I remain steadfast in my commitment to justice, fairness, and public safety, and I am grateful for your continued partnership. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I ask for your support to ensure that the inequity in my office's budget is corrected and that Queens can continue to maintain the progress we have made by receiving its fair share of budget funding.

**Office of the Queens County District Attorney
FY 27 Executive Plan New Needs Request**

PS Funding Requests

Total: \$7,120,000

1. Rehabilitation and Restorative Services Bureau

\$1,428,000

QDA is seeking funding support for its Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services Bureau. This bureau is dedicated to ensuring that individuals who have been arrested are offered opportunities for appropriate interventions and/or rehabilitative services. The bureau offers pre- and post-arraignment diversion opportunities to individuals arrested for low-level offenses and works closely with collaborative problem-solving courts offering treatment and a supportive court experience. These diversion opportunities provide one-time or short-term interventions for offenders that typically result in favorable dispositions upon successful completion.

The bureau also oversees several specialized felony treatment court initiatives including the Queens Treatment Court, Queens Veteran's Court, Queens DWI Court, Queens Mental Health Court, Queens Drug Diversion Court, as well as the Gun Diversion Program (QDP).

Through these alternatives to incarceration and diversion programs, offenders are given an opportunity to understand the impact of their crimes on victims and the community, while also being held accountable. Alternatives to incarceration and diversion programs allow offenders the opportunity to address substance use disorders, mental health disorders and any other clinical needs which helps to break the cycle of addiction that fuels criminal behavior.

QDA is therefore requesting funding for four (4) ADAs at an average annual salary of \$107,000; and ten (10) Alternative Sentencing Case Managers, at an average annual salary of \$65,000, who will be responsible for assessing the clinical needs of defendants, referring defendants to the appropriate treatment programs and providing case management supervision. In addition, QDA is also seeking funding for two (2) Case Manager Supervisors at an average annual salary of \$100,000, as well as one (1) Managing Supervisor at an average annual salary of \$150,000 who will work with community-based organizations and assist with placing defendants in programs and monitoring compliance, while also supervising the staff of case managers and paralegals and assisting the ADAs with clinical recommendations.

2. Crime Victims Advocacy Program

\$825,000

Providing victim services in a prosecutorial setting can be unique and challenging. While we have the opportunity to reach crime victims early on in the criminal justice process, the sheer

volume of cases makes it impossible to reach out to every crime victim or provide long-term victim services.

Compounding this issue is Queens' diverse population. Unfortunately, immigrant victims of crime are often reluctant to report crimes or seek the help of law enforcement due to language barriers, general unfamiliarity, and distrust of the criminal justice system.

The Queens County District Attorney's Crime Victims Advocacy Program (CVAP) provides a variety of support and services to crime victims including counseling, assistance navigating the court system, obtaining reimbursement for crime-related expenses, and referrals to a wide number of other support services. CVAP provides an environment that empowers crime victims to actively seek justice for themselves, their families, and their communities. CVAP is currently staffed with 11 advocates and 1 counselor to serve all victims of crime in Queens County. To make best use of limited resources, CVAP staff generally focus on felony cases where the victim has sustained physical injury. Although CVAP was able to provide services to nearly 5,000 crime victims in 2025, there were approximately 60,000 arrests in 2025, meaning that we are only serving approximately 8% of crime victims. Unfortunately, the voluminous felony caseload makes it nearly impossible to provide services and meet the needs of all felony crime victims. In addition, CVAP staff are only able to handle a limited number of misdemeanor cases.

To better meet the needs of our community, we are seeking to increase our CVAP staff by 13. Specifically, we are requesting ten (10) advocates and three (3) licensed counselors. With this additional staffing, we plan to place advocates within designated bureaus within the Office including our Criminal Court, Intake, Homicide, Human Trafficking, Juvenile Prosecutions, Domestic Violence, and four Felony Trial Bureaus. Advocates will be assigned to these bureaus and will be available to meet with victims and offer services in the same locations that the victims meet with ADAs regarding their cases. We believe that through the implementation of this model, we will be able to expand our social services network, reach a greater number of crime victims and assist them earlier in the criminal justice process -- ensuring that they are more likely to accept and receive the services that will benefit them. It will also reduce the number of times the victim/witnesses need to come to the office, as they will be able to meet with advocates and ADAs on the same day. In addition, discovery requirements will be streamlined as the advocates will be able to communicate more effectively with the ADAs in their assigned bureau. Specifically, the additional advocates will reduce caseloads, allow for more meaningful victim engagement, provide consistent support to victims from arrest through case disposition, and improve coordination between victims, ADAs and external providers. The additional licensed counselors will also be available to provide short-term counseling and crisis stabilization, consult with advocates and ADAs on trauma-related case issues, support victims who may not have access to community-based therapy, and assist with staff wellness and secondary trauma mitigation.

Hiring additional Crime Victim Advocates and Counselors will improve victim outcomes, strengthen prosecutorial effectiveness, and ensure compliance with state and federal victim assistance standards. The expansion will allow CVAP to deliver timely, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed services while supporting the District Attorney's mission of fairness, accountability, and public safety.

The total funding request is \$825,000 for ten (10) advocates at an average annual salary of \$60,000 and three (3) licensed counselors at an average annual salary of \$75,000.

3. Interpreter Staff

\$520,000

Queens County is one of the most diverse counties in the nation. According to 2023 U.S. Census data, Queens has approximately 2.3 million residents. Queens also has a significant proportion of immigrants and first-generation Americans, with approximately 48% of the County's residents being foreign-born. The County is highly diverse, with approximately 28% of the County's population identifying as Hispanic, 28% Asian, 21% Black and 23% White. Queens is also intensely multi-lingual and home to an estimated 140 languages/dialects. According to U.S. Census data, approximately 54% of residents speak a foreign language at home with the most common non-English languages spoken in Queens being Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Bengali, Russian, Tagalog and Haitian.

QDA currently utilizes Language Line (over-the-phone translation services) for a large portion of our interpretation services. In FY 25, over 14,000 calls were made to Language Line, totaling nearly 160,000 minutes. Over 50 languages were requested with over 10,000 calls for Spanish interpretation services, totaling over 118,000 minutes; over 1,400 calls for Mandarin interpretation, totaling over 18,000 minutes; over 500 calls for Bengali interpretation, totaling over 6,500 minutes; and 111 calls for Korean interpretation services, totaling over 1,100 minutes.

In addition to over the phone interpretation, we also regularly use in-person, per-diem, court-certified interpreters to provide interpretation services for non-English speaking or limited-English proficient witnesses and victims. In FY 25, we utilized the services of Korean, Mandarin, Bengali and Spanish court-certified interpreters 465 times – with over 60% of these requests being for Spanish interpreters. In addition to providing interpretation services, interpreters are also used for translating and transcribing documents and videos from various languages.

We have found that in-person interpreters are best able to build a rapport with victims and witnesses. They can read body language and facial expressions and connect with victims/witnesses in a way that is not possible over the phone.

For these reasons, we want to expand our own interpreter staff and reduce our need for the use of Language Line and per-diem interpreters. Oftentimes, an interpreter may be needed

in a short timeframe and ADAs and paralegals are left scrambling to find one who is available. Having a centralized unit will allow for better management of language services requests. In addition to providing direct interpretation services, this unit will also assist with translating documents, transcribing recordings and videos, providing court testimony as needed, scheduling per diem interpreters, when necessary, and making referrals for outside services that cannot be handled in-house.

Currently, QDA only has four Spanish Interpreters on staff to serve all victims and witnesses on over 60,000 arrest cases per year. We are therefore requesting \$520,000 in funding to support an Interpreter Supervisor, who will manage all interpreter staff, at an average annual salary of \$95,000, as well as one additional Spanish interpreter, two Mandarin interpreters, one Bengali interpreter and one Korean interpreter at an average annual salary of \$85,000. With this additional staffing, we anticipate being able to better meet the needs of victims and witnesses in this diverse county.

4. Intake Bureau Staffing/Case Processing Initiatives

\$2,600,000

QDA's Intake Bureau is responsible for early assessment and enhancement of arrest cases, including interviewing crime victims, witnesses and police officers to determine appropriate charges and gathering additional evidence for the successful prosecution of cases. Since this bureau is processing all new incoming arrest cases, they do not carry a regular caseload, and instead, their workload is directly impacted by the number of arrests in the county each year. Unfortunately, arrests have been on an upward trend – increasing by 74% over the last five years.

In addition, our Intake Bureau continues to place a strong focus on reducing arrest to complaint sworn and arrest to arraignment case processing times. For the past five years, Queens has ranked second in the City in arrest to arraignment time. In 2021, for example, we had an average arrest to arraignment time of 18.08 as compared to the citywide average of 20.56. In 2025, Queens County continued to rank second in arrest to arraignment time in the City at 21.58 hours, compared to the citywide average of 23.10. However, while we continue to rank second, our arrest to arraignment time has increased by 19% over this period. In addition, our arrest to complaint sworn time has also increased. In 2021, we had an average arrest to complaint sworn time of 10:27 as compared to the citywide average of 12:31. In 2025, our arrest to complaint sworn time was 12:26 compared to the Citywide average of 13:23, with Queens ranking third in the city. To reduce these times, we need more staff in our Intake Bureau.

Maintaining low arrest to arraignment and arrest to complaint sworn times, is not only critical for this office, but also for the efficiency of the criminal justice system, and for the city as a whole, due to the potential costs in police overtime. Through our specialized efforts to reduce case processing times, those accused of crime in Queens County spend as little time as possible

in detention before they see a judge -- and police are back on the street more quickly to do their jobs.

Maintaining these numbers requires a great deal of devoted resources. While advances in technology linkages and enhanced information sharing with the NYPD and other law enforcement agencies has helped reduce case processing times over the years, it is clear that efficient and expeditious case processing is driven primarily by adequate staffing levels.

We currently spend approximately \$1.4 million per year in staffing additional shifts in our Intake Bureau on weeknights and on weekends to ensure that arrest cases are processed as efficiently as possible. These extra shifts are in addition to the regular full-time shifts that our attorneys work in this Bureau.

Due to budget constraints, it is becoming increasingly difficult to address the rising number of arrests and maintain efficient case processing times. We are therefore requesting additional full-time staff for our Intake Bureau, including 10 ADAs, at an average annual salary of \$90,000, and 5 paralegals, at an average annual salary of \$60,000. In addition, we are also requesting funding to support our weeknight and weekend extra shift program at approximately \$1.4 million per year.

5. Human Trafficking Bureau

\$381,000

Human trafficking is a serious and growing crime concern in Queens County, requiring a specialized prosecutorial response in coordination with comprehensive support services for victims. Trafficking victims are extremely vulnerable. When they are brought to this country, they are often promised work and money, but when they arrive, they are instead forced to work in the sex industry or in the trafficker's household or business for no wages. They are often deprived of their passport and physically or psychologically abused. Most often trafficking victims do not speak English, are distrustful of the criminal justice system, and fear being deported if they go to law enforcement and are therefore left without resources and hope.

Compounding this problem is the intense diversity of Queens County, which is one of the most diverse counties in the nation. Queens has a significant proportion of immigrants and first-generation Americans, with approximately 48% of the County's residents foreign-born. Queens is also intensely multi-lingual and home to an estimated 140 languages/dialects. Queens is also home to two busy airports, John F. Kennedy International and LaGuardia Airports, making Queens County a prime location for trafficking activity to occur.

In 2025, the Human Trafficking Bureau obtained 27 convictions; 18 of which were felony convictions which included patronizing a person for prostitution, rape, sex trafficking and labor trafficking of women and girls. While we have seen great success thus far, current staffing of five

ADAs and three paralegals is not sufficient to address both the volume and complex nature of these cases, which are often very time and labor intensive.

In addition, the Human Trafficking Bureau implements a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach that connects survivors of trafficking to meaningful services to assist them in escaping their exploitation. The bureau also provides extensive community outreach, education and information aimed at preventing and identifying trafficking in our communities.

We are therefore requesting \$381,000 in funding for three (3) additional ADAs at average annual salary of \$107,000 and one paralegal at an average annual salary of \$60,000. This staff will be specially trained in the handling of human trafficking matters and will handle cases vertically from inception through disposition. In addition, staff will build strong partnerships with federal, state and local law enforcement in specialized investigative efforts and will conduct intelligence gathering and de-briefings for identification of emerging trends. Staff will also focus on collaborative efforts with not-for-profit agencies, to ensure that trafficking victims are provided with the comprehensive support services that they require.

We believe that with the requested funding, we will be able to better address this emerging crime area and better serve victims who are affected by these serious and complex crimes.

6. Community Partnerships Division

\$330,000

QDA is seeking funding to support its Community Partnerships Division that works closely with Queens communities and alongside QDA's other divisions to focus on identifying and addressing community crime concerns. They help bridge the gap between prosecution of crime and community-based intervention in order to ensure the safety of Queens residents. The division staff provide comprehensive, targeted community outreach as well as coordination and implementation of a variety of programs including gun buy-back initiatives, with the goal of addressing the pervasive problem of gun violence in Queens' communities. In addition, they work with faith leaders and community-based organizations to reduce crime and promote justice throughout Queens County. They also work with youth organizations on mentorship, education and work-based programs. In 2025, the Division engaged over 13,000 youth across Queens County with efforts focused on preparing young people for meaningful leadership and active civic participation.

The Division staff also coordinate the District Attorney's Community Advisory Councils, oversees the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and operate office-sponsored events, from criminal justice educational programs to cultural celebrations. They also regularly attend precinct council meetings, civic association meetings, and community board sessions, ensuring that our office stays closely aligned with neighborhood concerns. The team also partners with a wide range of

local stakeholders—including religious leaders, elected officials, civic representatives, and police officers — to share important information. Last year, Division staff participated in over 600 public events. The scope and reach of the work of our Community Partnerships Division can be viewed on our website via the interactive Community Partnerships map.

We want to build on this work and expand our outreach and are therefore requesting funding for six (6) community liaisons who will provide targeted outreach to specific neighborhoods in Queens County. These liaisons will mainly be based out in the community and will interact with residents, businesses and other community members to have a better understanding of the dynamics and priorities of the communities, as well as their crime concerns. This will allow QDA to expand our outreach to additional communities and gain a better understanding of Queens' unique neighborhoods and allow for better assessment of community crime trends and concerns.

QDA is therefore requesting funding for six (6) community liaisons at an average annual salary of \$55,000.

7. Housing and Worker Protection Bureau

\$655,000

The Housing and Worker Protection Bureau (HWPB) investigates and prosecutes crimes relating to fraudulent real estate schemes, deed and wage theft, unsafe workplace conditions and other forms of illegal exploitation. We regularly encounter cases where homeowners fall prey to unscrupulous scam artists who trick victims into signing over the deed to their homes. Cases handled by this bureau are often challenging to prosecute due to complex schemes that require exhaustive examination and analysis of voluminous documents and financial records. As a result of our dedicated efforts, 21 deeds have been returned to homeowners since 2020.

The bureau also regularly coordinates and works closely with other city agencies, such as the Department of Buildings and the Department of Investigation, to hold companies accountable to building codes, creating a safe work environment and paying prevailing wages. The bureau focuses on a variety of cases including those in which employers take advantage of their workers by exploiting their immigration status, language barrier, or inexperience, in order to pay less than a fair wage. In addition, as Queens continues to develop at a rapid pace, it is essential to ensure that workers are operating under safe conditions in order to prevent needless tragedies.

Cases referred to HWPB have been on the rise -- increasing by 55% from 2023 to 2025 -- from 303 referrals to 469 referrals. Specifically, there has been over a 100% increase in landlord/tenant case referrals -- from 53 in 2023 to 117 in 2025 and an 85% increase in housing/real estate fraud referrals -- from 98 to 181. These cases are extremely time and labor intensive, requiring detailed analysis of financial and real estate records and filings.

QDA is therefore requesting funding for five (5) ADAs at an average annual salary of \$107,000 and two (2) trial preparation assistants at an average annual salary of \$60,000.

8. Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit

\$381,000

QDA's Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit investigates and prosecutes animal cruelty crimes in Queens County and educates the public on how to detect and report animal abuse. The unit is based within our Domestic Violence Bureau since there are often direct links between acts of cruelty to animals and domestic violence, including family violence and other violent behavior. Pets are often used by intimate partner abusers as an effective tool of power and control over their partners and children in the household.

Domestic violence survivors with pets often report that their abusers had killed, harmed, or threatened their pets and many feel that they cannot leave abusive relationships for fear that their pets would suffer. In addition, animal abuse that occurs in the presence of children can also contribute to the cycle of abuse.

The types of cases handled by the Unit are wide-ranging, including dogfighting; cockfighting; animals that are abused, neglected, or abandoned; and large-scale animal hoarding. The Unit has obtained numerous convictions, with sentences that included requirements that defendants register as animal abusers. The Unit maintains a close partnership with the NYPD's Animal Cruelty Investigation Squad, comprised of highly experienced and specially trained detectives, as well as with NYPD animal cruelty liaisons in individual police precincts. The Unit also works closely with the ASPCA, which provides vital support through its forensic veterinarians and law enforcement staff. These veterinarians are critical in determining the extent and cause of conditions, injuries, or death of animal victims. As part of the initiative to prevent and address crimes against animals, the Unit also participates in public education and training for investigators and prosecutors and has worked to develop alternative sentencing programs geared specifically for animal abusers.

Despite the progress we have made, the Unit is currently understaffed with only one ADA and one paralegal, and additional staffing is needed in order to more efficiently investigate and prosecute these cases and to increase coordination, communication and specialized handling and expertise in these important cases, as well as to increase community awareness of these horrific crimes. We are therefore requesting funding to support three (3) ADAs at an average annual salary of \$107,000 and one paralegal at an average annual salary of \$60,000 to be assigned to the Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit.

Other Than Personal Services (OTPS) Funding Requests

Total: \$5,400,000

Like our PS funding, our office has also faced a significant shortfall in OTPS funding. While our PS funding increased by approximately 32% from FY22 to FY27, our OTPS budget has only increased by approximately 17%. In addition, nearly \$9 million of our \$14 million OTPS budget is designated for rent expenses. This leaves us with only \$5 million to support all of our OTPS operating expenses each year.

Overall, each year our OTPS budget is nearly completely spent and we are required to significantly supplement our OTPS budget by utilizing non-City funding. However, the revenue received from these funding sources is declining and cannot be fully relied upon for ongoing, large-scale expenses. Over the last several years, our office has been going through a major IT transformation, which has significantly increased our IT-related expenses. In addition, our OTPS budget has not kept pace with our office headcount, which has also increased over the last several years.

As our office headcount increases, so do our OTPS obligations. In addition, the cost of purchasing goods and services has increased substantially over the last several years. The increase in OTPS funding will help support rising IT costs, including maintenance, support, and data center services, as well as other costs such as contracted security guards, whose rates have increased 26% over the last five years.

Specifically, we request the following:

1. Data Center

\$405,000

QDA's data center was severely lacking adequate infrastructure and back-up capabilities, which left our agency vulnerable to potential data loss and the interruption of essential services. Unfortunately, our entire Data Center, which houses our network infrastructure, servers, and storage area networks, amongst other equipment, sits at ground level which exposes it to a higher risk from natural disasters such as flooding and hurricanes and higher vulnerability to security breaches and vehicular accidents. And while we regularly run backups and store data off-site, we had no off-site disaster recovery location. Issues such as power failures, with no on-site generator and limited onsite battery back-up capabilities, were causing our servers to shut down, significantly impacting our operations.

As a result, last year our office needed to move rapidly to find an adequate data center with the high level of specialized expertise and technical capability needed to secure our data. Several locations were reviewed and assessed to meet our requirements including having an optimal location, cloud options, enterprise grade security, FedRamp compliance and certifications for HIPAA, PCI DSS, and SOC 2.

After an extensive search and thorough review, a provider was selected that had the infrastructure and collaborative capabilities to support QDA's mission and operations, while ensuring continuity, security, and efficiency. The location provides comprehensive power infrastructure including high power density, and on-site generation ensuring 24/7 reliability and uninterrupted operations. The location's proximity to our office, yet outside of New York City, prevents a single localized event such as a hurricane or major power grid failure from taking down both the office and data center while still being close enough for our IT staff to reach. Further, the facility has onsite staff that can provide emergency operations, if necessary.

While our data center was a critical and necessary investment needed to ensure the continuity of our operations, the ongoing cost is significant at \$405,000 per year. Unfortunately, given our current budget outlook, it will be difficult for our office to sustain this yearly expense without ongoing funding support. We are therefore requesting \$405,000 annually to support our data center rental costs.

2. Data Center Connectivity Services **\$500,000**

Connectivity is required to connect our main office facility in Kew Gardens and the data center located outside of New York City. The use of multiple vendors for connectivity ensures high availability through redundancy and path diversity, eliminating single points of failure so traffic can immediately reroute if one carrier's infrastructure is damaged. This multi-vendor approach improves network reliability, enhances disaster recovery capabilities, allows for optimal load balancing, and prevents vendor lock-in.

3. HPE Nimble and Synergy Hardware Maintenance **\$400,000**

This maintenance includes hardware replacement and onsite support, software updates, and technical support for the primary production server and storage environments utilized by QDA.

4. Microsoft Support **\$250,000**

QDA is requesting \$250,000 to support the ongoing maintenance costs relating to approximately 1,100 Microsoft licenses officewide. The support includes services such as problem resolution, support management and training.

5. Office Supplies, Printing Supplies and Printing Contracts **\$700,000**

QDA is requesting \$700,000 to support the rising costs of general office supplies, printing supplies, and printing contracts. Our office handles a high volume of paperwork which has resulted in the increased need for printing supplies and printing contracts. The need for these services has significantly increased over the last six years due to discovery reform. However, our

office supplies budget has only increased from \$106,220 to \$154,439 from FY 01 to FY 26; our printing supplies budget increased from \$18,500 to \$144,218 from FY 01 to FY 26; and only \$35,000 is allocated for printing contracts in FY 26, despite our headcount increasing by 50% from 2001. This issue is compounded by the substantial increase in prices compared to twenty-five years ago. In recent years, we have spent close to \$1 million in these three categories. We are therefore seeking additional funding of \$700,000 to better reflect our current operational needs and the increased costs for goods and services.

6. Security Guard Services \$395,000

Security Guard Services - QDA Facilities \$312,000

QDA currently utilizes contracted security guard services at our office locations. Funding is being requested to cover the regularly scheduled wage increases that the guards receive, as per the prevailing wage law and the DCAS master agreement.

QDA is therefore seeking funding in FY 27 and the outyears as detailed below. The projected total additional expense for these services at QDA's facilities, is estimated at \$311,940 in FY 27, rising to \$381,660 in FY 29.

	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Hours	12000	12000	12000	12000
Avg. Hourly Rate	\$ 43.49	\$ 46.12	\$ 48.95	\$ 51.93
Cost Estimate	\$ 521,880	\$ 553,440	\$ 587,400	\$ 623,160
Current Budget	\$ 241,500	\$ 241,500	\$ 241,500	\$ 241,500
Funding Need	\$ 280,380	\$ 311,940	\$ 345,900	\$ 381,660

Security Guard Services - Queens Family Justice Center (QFJC) \$83,000

In addition, QDA is also requesting funding for a shortfall in funding for the security guards who are based at the Queens Family Justice Center (QFJC). By way of background, QDA's Domestic Violence Bureau is co-located at the QFJC, which provides comprehensive civil legal, counseling and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence. Since the establishment of the QFJC in July 2008, QDA has administered security guard services for the Center, including the procurement and payment for these services, through baselined intra-city funding provided by the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA). Over the last several years, the security guard hourly rates have been increasing, as per the prevailing wage law and the DCAS master agreement, and as a result, the actual cost of the services has exceeded the funding provided by HRA. As a result, QDA has to offset this funding deficit by utilizing QDA's own budgeted OTPS

funds. QDA is now seeking additional baselined funding beginning in FY 27, as outlined below, to cover the anticipated deficit in funds which will continue to grow as the contractual rate increases take effect.

	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Hours	6000	6000	6000	6000
Avg. Hourly Rate	\$ 43.49	\$ 46.12	\$ 48.95	\$ 51.93
Cost Estimate	\$ 260,940	\$ 276,720	\$ 293,700	\$ 311,580
Intra City MOU budget	\$ 193,476	\$ 193,476	\$ 193,476	\$ 193,476
Funding Need	\$ 67,464	\$ 83,244	\$ 100,224	\$ 118,104

7. Youth Community Outreach Programs

\$2,750,000

Young people growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to interact with the criminal justice system. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, high-crime and economically disadvantaged areas can negatively influence youth as they grow older and venture out of their family units. Areas with gang crime in particular can increase the likelihood of juvenile criminal behavior. Queens County, unfortunately has a high incidence of youth-related gang activity and related violent crimes, including assaults, shootings, robberies, and homicides. We see new gangs emerge, with increased recruitment of youth in the community, including in neighborhood schools.

In response to these issues, DA Katz launched the Community Youth Development and Crime Prevention Project (CYDCPP) in 2021. This initiative provided grant funding to community-based organizations in an effort to facilitate a collaborative and community-driven approach to fostering positive relationships between communities and law enforcement, reducing youth crime, improving self-confidence among young people, increasing exposure to positive adult role models, as well as improving academic performance and school attendance. As a result of the success of the initial program, CYDCPP was reissued in 2024 and is currently scheduled to conclude by the end of 2026. In 2024, grants were awarded to over 30 organizations with awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 over a two-year period.

The CYDCPP program supports youth-development and crime prevention programs for youth, ages 11-18, aimed at reducing crime and criminal justice involvement and increasing engagement with academic, career development and social services throughout Queens. Funded programs provide services including sports and recreational activities, job readiness workshops, academic assistance, mentorship and relationship-building, art and cultural activities, life skills workshops and civic engagement and leadership.

The CYDCPP program complements the youth programs overseen by QDA's Community Partnerships Division. These programs include the Hope and Leadership Academy program, which aims to promote anti-violence, anti-drug and crime prevention initiatives; the Legal Explorers program; the QDA Summer Leadership Internship program, mock trial competitions, and many other community-based youth initiatives. These programs reinforce positive options for youth, particularly those in at-risk communities, and help prevent the onset of disruptive behavior and support positive youth development.

The CYDCPP program was funded with non-City funding that unfortunately will no longer be available once the current program concludes at the end of this year. We are therefore requesting \$2,750,000 in funding to continue this program.

Total Expense Funding Request: \$12,520,000

PS: \$7,120,000

OTPS: \$5,400,000

FY 27 Executive Capital Plan Funding Request: **\$11,610,000**

1. Microsoft Licenses **\$3,600,000**

We are requesting \$3.6 million (\$1.2 million/year for three years) in capital funding for the renewal of approximately 1,100 Microsoft licenses for use by our staff officewide.

2. Salesforce Licenses **\$6,000,000**

We are requesting \$6 million (\$2 million/year for three years) in capital funding for the purchase of Salesforce licenses which is the platform for our new case management system, which is in the process of being implemented.

3. Box Licenses **\$1,110,000**

We are requesting \$1.1 million (\$370,000/year for three years) in capital funding for the renewal of Box licenses. Box is a secure file transfer platform that is currently being utilized to facilitate large file transfers, particularly related to discovery.

4. CaseGuard Licenses **\$3,900,000**

We are requesting \$3.9 million (\$1.3 million/year for three years) in capital funding for the renewal of our CaseGuard licenses. CaseGuard is utilized for redaction, translation and transcription and aids in our discovery compliance.

Please note that our total capital need is \$14.61 million, however, we expect to have approximately \$3 million remaining in our Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) capital funding that can be utilized to partially fund these needs. We are therefore requesting \$11.61 million in new capital funding.

Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

**The Council of the City of New York
Committees on Finance and Public Safety**

March 18, 2026



Pursuing Justice with Integrity

**Darcel D. Clark
District Attorney**

Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County

Darcel D. Clark, District Attorney

The Council of the City of New York – Committees on Finance and Public Safety

Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 18, 2026

A decade of justice—that’s how long I’ve served as the Bronx District Attorney—pursuing justice with integrity. In that time, we have reimagined our mission as a prosecutor’s office. We have evolved. Accountability is important and we work hard to ensure that the process of accountability is fair and just, and the outcomes reliable. But equally important is compassion, empathy, and respecting the dignity and humanity of all the people we serve. We provide many desperately needed and impactful services to crime victims and community members free of charge. We have also expanded what we are able to do to provide much needed resources to individuals who may be justice-involved.

We know that not every risk to public safety can or should be solved by incarceration or punishment. As prosecutors, we have enormous discretion to do what we believe is right and best serves the interests of justice and public safety. In the Bronx, we affirmatively exercise that discretion when we believe there is a better, more productive solution.

The real solutions are complex and layered. We need to use every tool in our toolbox to achieve public safety. We are willing, in an exercise of our prosecutorial discretion, to decline to prosecute cases, to dismiss or reduce charges, or to seek an alternative to prosecution when, after careful deliberation, we have determined that these options are the better course. Wherever possible, we want to harness the power of wraparound services, treatment, training, and job opportunities that are healing, preventative, and ameliorative, not punitive. We want to help people end the cycle of criminality and put them on a path to get the skills and support they need to improve their lives so that crime and violence are not an option.

Towards that end, we have implemented new solutions to help keep people safe. Gun cases offer a prime example. There are hundreds of gun arrests annually in the Bronx and these cases speak directly to basic public safety and the threat of violence on our streets. We studied the data and realized that most individuals who face gun charges have no prior felony convictions. Most are young, first-time felony offenders who live in the Bronx. Historically, sentencing options for these cases were limited to probation or incarceration. Additionally, there were collateral consequences, including a criminal record for a felony weapons charge, which would impact educational, job, and housing opportunities well into the future.

We wanted a new approach—a model that would guarantee accountability, enhance community safety and create a path away from violence and towards healing, growth, and success. This led to a partnership with the Osborne Association and the creation of BOGAP (Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention Program), the first of its kind for young adults in the nation. The purpose of the program is to identify the underlying factors that contributed to carrying an unlicensed loaded firearm, provide targeted treatment, support participants in building stable futures, avoid incarceration, and reduce the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction.

BOGAP launched as a pilot in summer 2021 with 25 participants. Its early success, coupled with strong interest from both prosecutors and defense attorneys, prompted the Bronx District Attorney's Office to expand capacity through a partnership with the Fortune Society and its Fortune Enhanced Gun Diversion program. For several years, prosecutors have routinely referred indicted defendants to Osborne and Fortune. In 2025, eligibility was broadened to include individuals up to age 40, and successful completion now results in full dismissal of charges rather than a conviction.

As of February 10, 2026, BOGAP has served 108 participants, and the Fortune Enhanced Gun Diversion Program has engaged 117 participants. The two programs have achieved a combined

success rate of approximately 80%, with many participants actively progressing through their respective programs.

Programs like these make a huge difference to people's lives, but they are expensive. What we are asking for today is additional support to enhance the services we provide to victims and members of our community and to grow our alternative programming. More specifically, we are asking for: \$2,174,000 in Fiscal Year 2027, and \$2,083,000 in the baseline to expand our therapeutic capacity within our Crime Victims Assistance Bureau, and \$600,000 for youth programming and services. We are also advocating for Bronx-wide needs such as \$2,000,000 in the baseline for the operation of the South Bronx Community Justice Center and \$6,479,000 for Bronx Assist diversion program.

Two years ago, I was here before the City Council and the Committee on Public Safety, to advocate not only for our Office, but for the people of the Bronx. Last year, the state and city invested some funds towards initiatives to build up the Bronx. Today, much of my testimony echoes what I said then, because our needs remain the same, and we have a long way to go to address decades of underinvestment. Again, I ask the city to meet this moment, with the support required to truly serve our community. It is only with a real commitment in resources, that the Bronx can transition from surviving to thriving.

FUNDING FOR YOUTH

We raised the age, now we must lift a generation by revitalizing the youth justice system. Our goal is to end the loss of our young people to gun violence, which inevitably leads to death or prison.

Youth crime is on the rise, particularly in the Bronx. Felony arrests of youth (ages 18 and under) increased from 715 in 2018 to 1,114 in 2025 – a 56% increase. Furthermore, youth gun possession arrests increased from 52 in 2018 to 131 in 2025 – a 152% increase. Under the Raise the Age law, cases continue on different tracks depending on whether the youth defendant is an

Adolescent Offender (“AO”, or 16- and 17-year-olds charged with a felony offense) or a Juvenile Offender (“JO”, or a 13-, 14-, and 15-year-olds charged with certain serious felony offenses specified by statute). The vast majority of youth cases – approximately 69% in 2025 – are transferred to Family Court. However, the cases that are retained tend to be the most serious matters and require significant attention, care, and resources. When a case is retained by the Office, the youth’s age, circumstances, and history are considered when determining whether diversion or alternative to incarceration will provide accountability.

To enhance our focus on youth, last year the Bronx District Attorney’s Office established a Youth Justice Bureau. The bureau is staffed with a Bureau Chief, two Deputy Bureau Chiefs, a Supervising Assistant District Attorney, and a staff of ADAs and other professionals, all of whom have been specifically trained on adolescent development, the concerns specific to justice-involved youth, and the programming or alternative dispositions that are available for youth. The bureau considers the root causes of crime and applies best practices to address the conditions and circumstances that contribute to youth violence. The bureau’s goal is to handle youth cases more efficiently to obtain individualized youth-focused resolutions quickly.

During the first year of its formation, the Youth Justice Bureau screened all JO and AO matters through a youth justice lens and strengthened relationships with the courts, law enforcement, community partners, and service providers. While youth arrests remained relatively stable between 2024 and 2025, Youth Part matters rose sharply. In fact, they are opening a second Youth Part to accommodate the increased caseload. This increase reflects more consistent screening, improved case tracking, and stronger coordination with ADAs across the Office. The Youth Justice Bureau is off to a good start towards its goal of advancing a holistic model of prosecution that balances accountability, victim engagement, youth development and community safety.

As a part of their work, the Youth Justice Bureau is piloting an initiative called the Justice Innovation for Bronx Youth (JIBY). The goal of the pilot is to serve high-risk youth, through meaningful and holistic programming. Partner providers include: EAC Network (a mental health partner who will conduct clinical screenings, conduct referrals, and provide case management services); Dr. Keith Cruise of Fordham University (who is developing an assessment tool and training staff on its use); Dr. Matthew Saleh of Cornell University (who is providing overall fidelity monitoring and continuous quality improvement, as well as assisting with resource mapping); Montefiore Medical Center (who will provide mental health and substance use services); Lead by Example Reverse the Trend (who will provide credible messenger services); and Reverend J. Lorren Russell and the NYS Chaplain Workers Taskforce (who will provide spiritual guidance and life skills).

The JIBY pilot is funded in part by a grant from the United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The grant is for \$650,000 over three years. To receive these funds, our Office must also supply matching funds \$267,823 over three years. However, the difference between the actual costs for the JIBY pilot alone and the funds allocated is upwards of \$1,249,146. These figures do not account for the costs associated with personnel that we hired to support the initiative. Moreover, because this is a pilot project, we sought funding only for AOs. Accordingly, the initiative does not reach JOs. Furthermore, the OJJDP grant can be used only for certain categories of offenses. This means that the resources of this initiative will not cover many of our youth. It is important to appreciate that very little youth-oriented programming is in the Bronx and existing programs tend to focus on isolated needs or conditions, which do not address situations where the individual has multiple needs and challenges. Therefore, we are asking the city to provide \$600,000 to cover the total costs of this pilot, which, when successful, will serve as a template for further expansion.

Concurrently, the Bronx District Attorney's Office and the Youth Justice Bureau held its first Youth Justice Stakeholders Convening. The purpose of the convening was to strengthen cross-agency and cross-sector partnerships; discuss emerging trends, gaps, and opportunities in youth justice; identify practical strategies to expand prevention, intervention, diversion, and reentry supports; and advance a unified vision for a more equitable, effective youth justice system in New York City. The convening brought together the following stakeholders: judges from the youth part, representatives from OCA, defense attorneys from Legal Aid, Bronx Defenders, 18-b court-appointed attorneys, representatives from the Bronx County Bar Association, community-based organizations who provide youth-centric services/programs, SSEU 371, NYPD, ACS, DOE, DOP, DOC, the Law Department, Sheriff, and MOCJ. During the convening's discussion, many challenges were brought to light and solutions under the current laws were explored.

There was consensus among the stakeholders to seek funding and further resources. For context, under the Raise the Age law, New York City has been excluded from receiving state funds, since it was passed as a part of the state budget in 2017. There is an opportunity to allow for the five counties that comprise New York City to apply for funding through a hardship application and the submission of a resource implementation plan. As discussed, in 2026, OMB is facilitating this process in collaboration with MOCJ, and the Bronx District Attorney's Office is in full support and steadfast partnership of these ongoing efforts. It was promising to see this funding prioritized in the most recent state budget responses by the legislature, including a new proposal to make New York City eligible to receive state funding to support expenses for Raise the Age. Bronx County needs its fair share of funding and resources to effectuate the goals of the Raise the Age legislation, and we are eager to see better outcomes for youth if the programs and services are put into place as envisioned in 2017.

FUNDING FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Within the Bronx District Attorney's Office, under the oversight of the Special Victims Division, there is a branch called the Crime Victims Assistance Bureau (CVAB). CVAB's mission is to empower and support crime victims in the Bronx by providing free, compassionate, comprehensive, and accessible services that promote healing, protect victims' rights, and advance a just and equitable criminal justice system. The bureau is committed to the highest quality professional assistance – regardless of a victim's participation in prosecution – CVAB helps individuals return to their pre-victimization status or better, being grounded in the belief that resilience and growth are possible after trauma, and supports victims to thrive beyond survivorship. To reiterate, CVAB's doors are open to the community for anyone who is a victim of crime, regardless of whether there is a pending criminal prosecution.

In 2025, the CVAB delivered targeted support to 5,817 new clients and 2,957 existing clients for a total of 8,774 clients served. Of those, 493 were children (under 18 years old). CVAB provided 54,958 direct victim assistance services and referrals across eleven programs: General Advocacy, Sex Assault, Homicide, Domestic Violence, Strangulation, Human Trafficking, Enough is Enough, Early Victim Engagement, Elder Abuse Child/Family Services, and Trauma Therapy. Our trauma therapists provided 2,205 sessions to 230 new clients and 74 preexisting clients for a total of 304 clients. Of those 60 were children – a population that we are seeing has untreated trauma and are not receiving necessary services in school. Each advocate provided an average of 1,717 direct victim services and referrals, and each trauma therapist provided an average of 551 therapy sessions to Bronx crime victims. This outstanding amount of work for each individual CVAB staff member generates an exponential positive impact for an underserved Bronx community.

CVAB faces a critical shortage of therapists. With only four therapists currently employed, CVAB is struggling to meet the needs of crime victims in the Bronx. The situation is further

compounded by the lack of Spanish-speaking therapists on staff. Community-based providers are already at capacity and unable to take on additional referrals. While CVAB struggles with a severe therapist shortage, as previously described, the Bronx has more crime per capita and less community-based resources when compared to the other boroughs.

To address the significant disparity in access to mental health services for crime victims in the Bronx, the BXDA proposes a comprehensive strategy to alleviate the therapist shortage, remove barriers to care, and improve victim outcomes. This proposal requests funding for 16 additional therapists and two additional supervisor positions, bringing the total to a staffing level that would finally align the Bronx with other boroughs' therapy programs. Furthermore, unlike other programs that impose arbitrary session limits, the BXDA's therapy program will prioritize client needs, providing support for as long as necessary to facilitate healing. Given the extensive waitlists for community-based mental health services, this client-centered approach is essential to ensuring that crime victims in the Bronx receive the comprehensive care they deserve. We are asking for \$2,174,000 in Fiscal Year 2027 and \$2,083,000 in the baseline to provide these additional services to crime victims.

FUNDING FOR THE SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER

The Bronx District Attorney's Office has been advocating for the South Bronx Community Justice Center for multiple years now. The city allocated funding to start the process of creating a new hub for community-based justice programming in the South Bronx last year, with awards of \$1,000,000 from the Mayor's Office and \$1,000,000 from the City Council.

While a site has been secured for operations (at 630 Jackson Avenue, central to support the neighborhoods of Mott Haven, Melrose, and Morrisania), and the service operator selected (CJI), we are no closer than we were last year to having a Community Justice Center in the Bronx—like the centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and soon-to-be in Staten Island. Again, we are appreciative

of the initial investment the City put towards the project, but there are significant additional needs, both in capital and expense. The City must make the South Bronx Community Justice Center a priority by baselining \$2,000,000 a year in MOCJ's budget for operational needs and by completing an assessment to fund DCAS's capital budget for improvements to the site's infrastructure.

BRONX RESTORE

As referenced at the outset, last year, the State invested \$6 million in the Bronx community—\$3 million of which went to the Bronx District Attorney's Office to pilot a program called Bronx Restore. The program uses a public health approach to address the root causes of violence and assist high-risk youth through supportive services that aid in their transition towards successful, productive, and law-abiding adulthood. Community-based partners provide a stipend for participants, who partake in trauma therapy and life skills training (e.g., job readiness, financial literacy, conflict resolution, restorative justice circles), internship opportunities, mentorship, and case management. The pilot program will serve 30 young adults, 15 from each of two Bronx neighborhoods—the St. Mary's Park area in the 40th Precinct and Fordham area in the 46th Precinct—with high rates of fatal and non-fatal shootings, shots fired, gun possession, robberies, and narcotics-related offense. The participants will engage in a one-year program for 10-20 hours per week and earn a stipend of \$25 per hour. Currently, we are reviewing responses to requests for proposals from project partners and an external evaluator, on track for an implementation timeline in 2026.

Bronx Restore, is largely based on Brooklyn's Project Restore model which has shown success since its inception in 2023, wherein they report a 28% reduction in shooting incidents and a 22% reduction in felony assaults in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area. With that, in the forthcoming years, we will seek to replicate the program in other high need areas of the Bronx.

FUNDING FOR BRONX ASSIST

We proposed a pilot program, called Bronx Assist, in last year's testimony. Bronx Assist is a pre-arraignment diversion program available to individuals who receive a desk appearance ticket (DAT) for victimless, non-violent misdemeanor offenses. Upon arrest, at the precinct, the individual is presented with an opportunity for aid or services, in lieu of prosecution. The program is designed to have credible individuals with similar lived experiences meet people where they are and connect with them when they are experiencing a moment of crisis and are most receptive to help and healing. NYPD's support has been a critical ingredient because we are able to take advantage of the small window of opportunity while people are still at the precinct. Our program partners, Osborne Association and Center for Justice Innovation (CJI), have on-site staff that offer services, such as: mental health referrals, housing supports, substance abuse treatment options, transportation, clothing or food. There has been almost 100% participation, resulting in a connection to services when otherwise nothing would occur or be ordered in court on these types of cases.

Even though last year the city did not fund it, our Office secured a federal grant, started the program in the 44th Precinct, and we're seeing successful results so far. However, the grant is in its second year and there is no other funding to sustain current efforts or to expand. We need \$6.5 million per year to continue and expand the pilot Bronx-wide.

A FINAL APPEAL: JUSTICE AND EQUITY FOR THE BRONX

In sum, we are proud of what we have accomplished by reimagining our mission as prosecutors. Our budget requests focus on funding vital services in Bronx County: youth programs, crime victim therapy, diversion service programs, holistic and incentive-based initiatives in high crime areas, and a South Bronx Community Justice Center. We are looking to strengthen the community and prevent harm before anyone becomes criminal justice involved. After ten years, my resolve has

not diminished. If anything, our accomplishments have strengthened my commitment to serve and pursue justice with integrity for the Bronx as District Attorney.

The Bronx deserves justice.

The Bronx deserves equity.

The Bronx deserves its fair share.

Bronx County District Attorney (902)

Finance Department

FY27 Executive Plan New Needs Request

EXPENSE (000s)

New Needs	FY26		FY27		FY28		FY29		FY30	
	\$	HC	\$	HC	\$	HC	\$	HC	\$	HC
CVAB Additional Staffing <i>(Therapists)</i>	\$ -	-	\$ 2,174	18	\$ 2,083	18	\$ 2,083	18	\$ 2,083	18
Justice Innovation for Bronx Youth <i>(CTL Match)</i>	\$ -	-	\$ 146	-	\$ 220	-	\$ 233	-	\$ -	-
GRAND TOTAL	\$ -	-	\$ 2,320	18	\$ 2,304	18	\$ 2,316	18	\$ 2,083	18

BRONX BORO/MOCJ EXPENSE (000s)

New Needs	FY26		FY27		FY28		FY29		FY30	
	\$	HC	\$	HC	\$	HC	\$	HC	\$	HC
South Bronx Community Justice Center	\$ -	-	\$ 2,000	-	\$ 2,000	-	\$ 2,000	-	\$ 2,000	-
Bronx Assist (DAT Diversion Program)	\$ -	-	\$ 6,479	-	\$ 6,479	-	\$ 6,479	-	\$ 6,479	-
GRAND TOTAL	\$ -	-	\$ 8,479	-	\$ 8,479	-	\$ 8,479	-	\$ 8,479	-

Crime Victims Assistance Bureau

Title	HC	Salary	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
Clinical Supervisor	2	\$ 125,000	\$ -	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
Therapist	16	\$ 97,593	\$ -	\$ 1,561,488	\$ 1,561,488	\$ 1,561,488	\$ 1,561,488
OTPS			\$ -	\$ 362,298	\$ 271,723	\$ 271,723	\$ 271,723
Total	18	\$ 222,593	\$ -	\$ 2,173,786	\$ 2,083,211	\$ 2,083,211	\$ 2,083,211

The Bronx faces a stark inequity. Despite comprising only 17% of New York City's population, the Bronx experiences a disproportionately high rate of violent crime. The borough accounts for a staggering 33% of murders, 28% of rapes, 31% of robberies, 30% of felony assaults, 37% of shootings, and 37% of shooting victims. This translates to a per capita index crime rate of 2,065 in the Bronx—significantly higher than Staten Island (727), Brooklyn (1,124), Queens (1,219), and Manhattan (1,853). **Ironically, the Bronx, with the greatest need for victim services, has the lowest per capita access to therapy resources of any borough.**

The Bronx needs more child and family therapy programs for crime victims who lack the financial resources and health insurance needed to access trauma-informed care to help them rebuild their lives in the aftermath of their victimization. Additional programs and services are also needed to address the immediate needs of individuals dealing with the dual diagnosis of substance use and mental health disorders.

The Bronx District Attorney's Crime Victims Assistance Bureau (CVAB) faces a critical shortage of therapists. With only one clinical supervisor and three therapists currently employed, CVAB is struggling to meet the needs of over 100 crime victims on its therapy waitlist. The situation is further compounded by the lack of Spanish-speaking therapists on staff and the lack of available community mental health resources to refer out to. **In 2025, CVAB provided targeted support to 5,817 new clients and 2,957 preexisting clients for a total of 8,774 clients served (a 16.18% increase from 2024). Out of 8,774 clients served, 493 clients were children. Additionally, in 2025, CVAB delivered a total of 54,598 direct services to crime victims.**

While CVAB struggles with a severe therapist shortage, other district attorney's offices in New York City are far better equipped with many more therapy personnel and resources.

To address the significant disparity in access to mental health services for crime victims in the Bronx, BXDA proposes a comprehensive strategy to alleviate the CVAB's therapist shortage, remove barriers to care, and improve victim outcomes. This proposal requests funding for ten additional therapists and two clinical supervisors. These additional staff members will help align the Bronx with other district attorney office's therapy programs.

Furthermore, unlike other district attorney office's programs that impose arbitrary session limits, the BXDA's therapy program will prioritize client needs, providing support for as long as necessary to facilitate healing. Given the extensive waitlists for community-based mental health services, this client-centered approach is essential to ensuring that crime victims in the Bronx receive the comprehensive care they deserve.

Finance Department

JIBY Budget - Finance Summary

Partner/Vendor	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		TOTAL		PROGRAM GRAND TOTAL
	Federal \$	CTL \$	Federal \$	CTL \$	Federal \$	CTL \$	Federal \$	CTL \$	
EAC/TASC	\$ 60,312	\$ 50,380	\$ 157,344	\$ 114,391	\$ 157,344	\$ 121,966	\$ 375,000	\$ 286,737	\$ 661,737
Montefiore Hospital	\$ 52,245	\$ 25,373	\$ 52,745	\$ 24,873	\$ 52,745	\$ 24,873	\$ 157,735	\$ 75,118	\$ 232,853
Dr. Cruise	\$ 11,700	\$ 11,700	\$ 11,700	\$ 11,700	\$ 11,700	\$ 11,700	\$ 35,100	\$ 35,100	\$ 70,200
Dr. Saleh	\$ 2,000	\$ 19,972	\$ 1,500	\$ 19,969	\$ 1,500	\$ 19,953	\$ 5,000	\$ 59,894	\$ 64,894
NYSCWTF Chaplains	\$ 12,432	\$ 6,418	\$ 21,794	\$ 15,049	\$ 22,132	\$ 14,019	\$ 56,358	\$ 35,485	\$ 91,843
LBERTT Credible Messengers	\$ 5,682	\$ 29,240	\$ 5,815	\$ 31,401	\$ 6,355	\$ 36,171	\$ 17,852	\$ 96,813	\$ 114,665
Community Advisory Council	\$ 955	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 2,955	\$ 10,000	\$ 12,955
TOTAL	\$145,326	\$146,083	\$251,898	\$220,382	\$252,776	\$232,681	\$650,000	\$599,146	\$ 1,249,146

Grant Allocation	Required BXDA Match	Grant Allocation	Required BXDA Match	Grant Allocation	Required BXDA Match	Grant Allocation	Required BXDA Match	GRANT + BXDA MATCH REQUIREMENT
\$ 145,326	\$ 36,331	\$ 251,898	\$ 62,975	\$ 252,776	\$ 168,517	\$ 650,000	\$ 267,823	\$ 917,823

FY	\$ Request
FY25	\$ -
FY26	\$ 146,083
FY27	\$ 220,382
FY28	\$ 232,681
Total	\$ 599,146

In addition to the creation of a Youth Justice Bureau and to ensure BXDA can provide meaningful and holistic programming to Bronx Youth, the Office will be initiating a pilot project called the Justice Innovation for Bronx Youth ("JIBY"). Our partners in this work include: EAC Network (a mental health partner who will conduct clinical screenings, conduct referrals, and provide case management services); Dr. Keith Cruise (Fordham University) (who is developing an assessment tool and training staff on its use); Dr. Matthew Saleh (Cornell University) (who is providing overall fidelity monitoring and continuous quality improvement, as well as assisting with resource mapping); Montefiore Medical Center (who will provide mental health and substance use services); Lead by Example Reverse the Trend (LBERTT or Lead) (who will provide credible messenger services); and Reverend J. Loren Russell (who will provide spiritual guidance and life skills).

This initiative is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The grant is in the total amount of \$650,000 over 3 years. In order to receive these funds, our office must also supply \$267,823 over three years in matching funds (totaling \$917,823). The funding only covers a fraction of the true costs for the services needed for the project. The difference between the actual costs for the pilot alone and the funds allocated (\$650,000) is upwards of \$1,200,000. This figure does not account for the costs associated with personnel that will need to be hired to support the initiative. Moreover, because this is a pilot project, we sought funding only for Adolescent Offenders (16- and 17-year-old youth.) Accordingly, the initiative does not reach Juvenile Offenders (13-15-year-old youths.) Finally, the OJJDP grant can be used only for certain categories of offenses. This means that the resources of this initiative will not cover many of our youth. Additionally, it is important to appreciate that very little youth-oriented programming is available in the Bronx. Moreover, existing programs tend to focus on isolated needs or conditions and do not address situations where the individual has multiple needs and challenges. For these reasons, we are asking the City to provide \$599k to cover the costs of the robust programming and additional providers that are needed for this project.

Ensuring that the pilot is done correctly is imperative as that will allow us to collect reliable data to determine whether this is a model to further expand in order to tackle the issue with AO and JO violence in the Bronx.

Last year, we asked for a Community Justice Center that would provide neighborhood-focused programs to address local public safety problems. During the last year, we looked for a partner who could help us actualize the kind of full-service Community Justice Center that we had envisioned for the Bronx. The Center for Justice Innovation (CJI) has agreed to partner with us to build the South Bronx Community Justice Center (Justice Center).

The Justice Center will have community-based and court-based programs that can meaningfully address public safety and justice. The Justice Center will work to create a safer, more equitable South Bronx through community-driven public safety initiatives, youth opportunity, and economic mobility efforts. The Justice Center will amplify the impact of its current neighborhood-centric approach and allow it to grow in response to the needs of the South Bronx community. The expansion of the Justice Center will be developed in partnership with our office as well as other city and state stakeholders. Accordingly, we wholeheartedly support that the City provide **\$2 million in baseline** funding to MOCJ to contract with CJI to operate the Justice Center.

In that regard, we will collaborate with CJI to share data informing programs, refer eligible young people, and track outcomes. The Justice Center will serve 200 young people per year through an array of programming out of 630 Jackson Avenue (formally the HRA multi-service center) and will support the neighborhoods of Mott Haven, Melrose, and Morrisania. This area is highly impacted by the criminal justice system and community violence, with disproportionately higher rates of incarceration, violent crime, and disinvestment. In 2023, the violent crime rate was 17 per 1,000 residents, more than triple the citywide rate. In 2024, 38% of the city's shooting incidents and 31% of total homicides occurred in the Bronx. The homicide rate in the Bronx remains high, with 121 deaths in 2023 and 86 in 2024 to date. There are 1,214 individuals per 100,000 adults incarcerated in this area alone, almost double the number for the Bronx as a whole. The NYPD reported that the 40th Precinct is one of the six precincts with the highest crime in NYC. Most recently, gun violence has increased in the Bronx, particularly among youth. In 2024, Bronx youth accounted for 42% of the city's youth shooting victims, which is a 14% increase from 2023. Bronx youth were also involved in 41% of shooting incidents where youth were arrested, which is a 7% increase from 2023. The South Bronx has a high rate of disconnected youth, with 30% of youth ages 16-24 out of school and not working, the highest high school drop-out rate in the city. The area has one of the highest numbers of juveniles held in secure detention in NYC.

\$2 million is needed for CJI to operate the South Bronx Community Justice Center. Additionally, DCAS services will be needed to assess the physical conditions of the facilities at 630 Jackson Avenue with an eye to determining whether capital improvements are required. We wholeheartedly support this endeavor and ask that the City expedite the transfer of the building from HRA to DCAS and provide the necessary resources to CJI because we believe that the investment in our community will help create opportunities and pathways away from crime and violence.

Bronx Assist Expansion Request

PS	HC	Salary	% Time	Total
Supervisor	1	\$ 108,000	9%	\$ 9,720
Peer Navigator (FTE)	4	\$ 75,000	100%	\$ 300,000
Data Analyst	1	\$ 80,000	5%	\$ 4,000
Budget Analyst	1	\$ 87,000	5%	\$ 4,350
<i>Fringe</i>				\$ 111,325
Personnel Subtotal				\$ 429,395
OTPS	HC	Salary	% Time	Total
Computers				\$ 2,000
Staff Training				\$ 1,000
Office Supplies				\$ 4,500
Program Supplies				\$ 10,000
Telephone Landline/Internet/Communications				\$ 3,250
Cell Phone				\$ 3,600
<i>Indirect Costs</i>				\$ 86,211
Per Precinct Subtotal				\$ 539,956
12 Precinct Expansion Total				\$ 6,479,471

Bronx Assist is an innovative pre-arraignment in-precinct diversion program that is currently piloted in the 44th and 40th Precincts in Bronx County. Developed in partnership with the NYPD and the Osborne Association, the program offers immediate light-touch services to individuals issued Detainer Appearance Tickets (DATs) on non-victim misdemeanors. Early results suggest strong engagement and meaningful system benefits, underscoring the need to expand Bronx Assist borough wide.

The need for development. Bronx Assist was created in response to three converging challenges: the post-pandemic rise in crime, the overwhelming demands of New York State's discovery reform, and the resulting strain on prosecutorial resources. Together, those pressures have led to the dismissal of roughly 65% of misdemeanor cases, often after multiple court appearances and without any intervention that benefits the individual or the community. The program provides that intervention and benefit.

Bronx Assist is modeled on two other pre-arraignment programs that already exist in Bronx County, building on their strengths and recognizing promising growth areas. The Heroin Overdose Prevention Program (HOPE), operated by Bronx Community Solutions under the Center for Justice Innovation, offers overdose prevention education and naloxone kits to individuals arrested who are at risk of overdose. Charges are confined to misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance and related charges, and the services are provided by a peer. While the intervention is meant to take place in the precinct, limited resources generally result in meetings that take place days after the arrest. The difficulties in obtaining accurate contact information and locating defendants (who may be unstably housed) often prevents successful interaction. If an arrestee successfully completes services, the case is dismissed before the arraignment date.

Project Reset, a second pre-arraignment program operated by the Center for Justice Innovation, provides services to people arrested on a wider range of charges than HOPE. Sessions are based on defendants' needs and interests and take place virtually or at a community-based location. Successful completion also results in dismissal. Eligible defendants who do not engage are afforded another opportunity to obtain services after arraignment and obtain a dismissal for participation. Referrals are made after arrest by BXDA. As with HOPE, limited contact information of those arrested often prevents Reset from connecting with eligible participants.

The core innovation. While building on the foundation of existing pre-arraignment diversion models such as HOPE and Reset, Bronx Assist introduces a critical advancement: real-time, in-precinct engagement at the time of arrest and a wide-range of charges. Trained peer navigators -- individuals with lived experience and specialized training -- are stationed directly inside precincts. Their presence enables immediate rapport-building, practical support, and service connection at crisis points in a person's life.

The process. Upon issuance of a DAT with eligible charges, the Desk Sergeant notifies a peer navigator who then meets the arrestee in a private area inside the precinct. The navigator offers a menu of tangible practical supports including naloxone and fentanyl test strips; hygiene supplies, clean clothing, and gift cards for food; transportation support; assistance in obtaining identification and shelter access; and referrals for case management, mental health, educational training, healthcare benefits, and other social services. If the arrestee accepts this light touch offering, the Bronx DA's Office declines prosecution, and the person arrested appears in court for arraignment. If the individual declines, the complaint will be drafted, and the defendant will be offered similar services at their arraignment.

The success. Bronx Assist launched in the 44th Precinct in May 2025 and expanded to the 40th Precinct in early spring 2025. From launch to the end of December 2025, 93 eligible individuals participated in and completed Bronx Assist and 93 DATs were declined for prosecution, resulting in a high program completion rate (93% as of early February). Nearly every individual who met with a peer navigator chose to engage and complete the program.

For comparison, HOPE reported approximately 66 completed cases over the entire 12 months of 2025 borough-wide. In 2025 there were 1,018 eligible people referred to RESET across the entire Bronx, and 374 people completed the program. The in-precinct peer model offered to individuals arrested on a wider range of charges appears to be the key driver of Bronx Assist's strong outcomes.

Bronx Assist has not been studied for recidivism purposes so the impact on crime is yet unknown. However, the reduction in cases has clear benefits for the DA's Office, defendants, and the court system. Fewer misdemeanor, non-violent DATs allows BXDA to redirect resources to cases involving violence and harm to human victims. In addition, participants receive meaningful support -- a conversation, tangible assistance, and service referrals -- where discovery reform would otherwise result in dismissal without any benefit. Finally, Bronx Assist completions and dismissals mean fewer cases for Bronx courts to process, arraign, and dispose, thereby alleviating strain on judges and court parts. Bronx Assist is delivering value across the system.

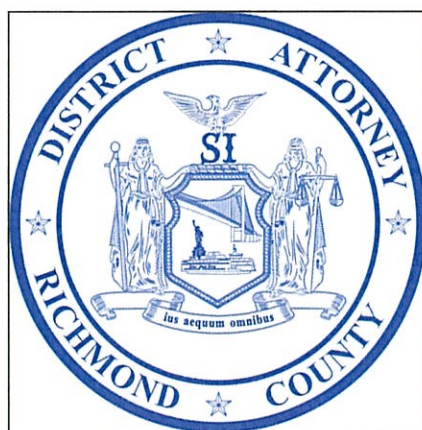
The ask. Bronx Assist is currently funded by a \$350,000 federal grant set to expire on September 30, 2026. Although the pilot was envisioned to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days per week in the 44th Precinct, limited funding allowed the Osborne Association to cover only one 8-hour shift 5 days per week. The Center for Justice Innovation, which operates HOPE and Reset, kindly offered to supplement the coverage for one shift on the remaining two days and expanded coverage to the 40th Precinct as well.

To fully realize the promise of Bronx Assist, city funding is essential. Through MOCJ, the City already funds HOPE and Reset. Combining their funds with an additional \$6.5 million would provide sustained support so that Bronx Assist can operate full-time in all 12 Bronx precincts. Approximately \$6.5 million would support hiring and training of peers, training NYPD, operation of the program for one year, and program evaluation. City investment would bring a promising model to scale, thereby promoting efficient use of resources, reducing unnecessary court involvement on low-level crimes, and connecting court-involved Bronx residents to services that promote stability and well-being.

OFFICE OF THE RICHMOND COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FISCAL YEAR 2027 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY HEARING



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

MARCH 18, 2026

MICHAEL E. McMAHON

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

I: OVERVIEW

Good afternoon. It is an honor and pleasure to appear before the City Council today. I hope you and your families are well and safe and I look forward to continuing our work together to improve our criminal justice system in line with our shared goal of better protecting and serving the people of the City of New York.

As Staten Island's chief law enforcement officer, I am incredibly proud of all the work we have done in my office, together with our partners in the NYPD, neighboring law enforcement agencies, and those who call our beloved Staten Island home, to make our borough a safer place. While there remains much work to be done, everyone here today should be encouraged by the record-low crime numbers reported on Staten Island last year. Violent crime – particularly homicides and shootings reached historic lows in our borough in 2025. For the third straight year, Staten Island recorded double digit decreases in stolen vehicles. Catalytic converter thefts were down over 90% in 2025, and as I stand before you today, incidents of retail theft are down almost 50% on Staten Island. Additionally, we also saw encouraging progress in our fight against the opioid and overdose epidemic with Staten Island recording a 49% decrease in opioid overdose deaths, the largest decrease in all of New York City.

And while Staten Island proudly remains the safest community of 500,000 residents in the country, now is not the time for a victory lap. We know that domestic violence, youth crime, and the omnipresence of scams remain massive public safety issues for Staten Islanders and their families and we are committed to doing everything in our power to turn the tide and help restore both public safety and peace of mind back to our beloved borough.

However, in order to do that, we need the Administration and this Council's help. During my testimony before you last year and the year before that, I warned the Council that Staten Island was facing a dire shortage of uniformed police officers patrolling our borough. Despite our persistent pleas, Staten Island has 20% fewer cops patrolling our shores now than we did five years ago and fewer cops deployed on Staten Island than there were in 1968, when our population was half the size it is today. Our borough and New York City as a whole needs the uniformed personnel and staffing necessary to prevent, deter, and properly investigate crime.

A persistent but underrated significant driver of crime on Staten Island, and one where we as a City must dedicate more resources to combating, is domestic violence, a terrible reality that impacts far too many families and we know goes widely underreported. On Staten Island, domestic violence helped to drive a significant increase—more than 25%--in incidents of rape last year, as well as the majority of felony assaults committed in our borough. As it stands now, domestic violence accounts for nearly a quarter of all index crimes committed on Staten Island. And while we thank this body for supporting the creation of RCDA's Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Unit, we once again ask that our City Council Members support the life-saving work of our Domestic Violence Bureau and Victims Services Unit with continued DOVE allocations.

While there are many pressing public safety challenges, none are more important right now as the alarming increase in youth crime and the harmful impact of New York State's "Raise the Age" laws. "Raise the Age" reforms began with the laudable goal of minimizing the exposure of 16- and 17-year-olds to the adult criminal justice system. Half a decade later, however, our communities have seen the flaws in the approach that was adopted. All too frequently, adolescent offenders face little to no consequences for serious crimes, including the majority of gun crimes and most violent assaults. Furthermore, courts and prosecutors are forced to disregard patterns of violence and recidivism, and victims lose access to justice when cases are rerouted to the Family Court system.

Unfortunately, the numbers support this growing concern. Overall youth arrests were up 44% on Staten Island last year with felony youth arrests increasing by nearly 54%. Even more concerning, as of this month, 12% of New York City's shooting victims are between the ages of 10-17 – 21% of shooting perpetrators fall within that same age group. Over a quarter of all gun arrests on Staten Island last year involved individuals under the age of 20. Numbers on paper can feel abstract but in the real world, numbers are not statistics – they are lives. Arrests are up, victims are up, how can anyone say the law is working?

It is for these reasons and more that my office remains dedicated to addressing the underlying conditions of crime while encouraging supportive programming that builds families up. Thanks to vital funding allocated by this body, RCDA has partnered with the Center for Justice Innovation (CJI) to actively engage and support

at-risk youth impacted by the criminal justice system. With \$635,000 coming from RCDA and an additional \$125,000 from City Council Discretionary Funding, CJI maintains a wide variety of youth programming, including restorative and peer-facilitated diversion programming, leadership development, violence prevention and community healing, placemaking, and so much more. Once a young person ends up in Family Court or before us in the Youth Part of Criminal Court, they have likely experienced so much trauma and missed countless opportunities for intervention. That is why programming like that being offered by CJI and their partner organizations is so critically important, because an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of prosecution, particularly in the case of our kids.

I am equally proud to share that my office utilizes close to 40 different diversion programs from a variety of different providers, ensuring that nearly 40% of all arrestees on Staten Island are offered some form of an alternative to incarceration. However, for far too long, the Richmond County District Attorney's Office has done this critical work with one arm tied behind its back. Staten Island remains without a Community Justice Center, and while we graciously received \$5 million in capital funding two years ago, capital funding is desperately needed to correct this inequity and bring this dream to fruition.

As my office continues to work tirelessly to combat these challenges, our success depends entirely on us working together to make our City as safe as possible. We have remained vigilant and consistent in our dedication to the rule of law, the protection of victims of crime as well as the rights of the accused, and the overall improvement of public safety on Staten Island, but I must reiterate in the strongest possible terms: we need your help.

With that said, I will focus the remainder of my testimony on detailing our greatest challenges as well as our priority budget needs for Fiscal Year 2027.

Fiscal Priorities & Requests for Public Safety on Staten Island

1. **Staten Island Community Justice Center and Support the Remediation and Renovation of the Staten Island Community Justice Center at 67 Targee Street (Capital Funding Request: \$50 Million).** The proposed Staten Island Community Justice Center at 67 Targee Street has experienced significant setbacks that now require urgent intervention. Although the

building is owned by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), it is currently vacant, not actively maintained, and continues to deteriorate. As a result, the scope and cost of the project have increased substantially. The original \$30 million capital estimate is now projected to require approximately \$50 million to complete. Within the past year, the building's roof has partially collapsed, resulting in extensive water intrusion and widespread black mold. These conditions require comprehensive environmental remediation before renovation can begin. While the City previously allocated \$5 million toward this project, substantial additional capital funding is necessary to fully remediate and renovate the building. Staten Island remains the only borough without a Community Justice Center underway. Establishing this facility is essential to expanding alternatives to incarceration, addressing quality-of-life offenses, and delivering community-based justice services tailored to Staten Island residents. We respectfully urge the City and State to prioritize this request and advance this long-delayed project.

2. **Support the Addition of Three Felony-Level Assistant District Attorneys to the Domestic Violence Bureau (PS Request: \$400,000).** The continued rise in intimate partner violence—including felony assaults and rape—has placed increasing strain on the Domestic Violence Bureau. Current caseloads and workloads demonstrate the clear need for additional felony-level Assistant District Attorneys. Domestic violence cases are among the most complex and resource-intensive prosecutions handled by the office. ADAs in the Bureau are specially trained in trauma-informed, victim-centered prosecution and must devote significant time to victim engagement, safety planning, and coordination with service providers. These cases require sustained attention and continuity of care to ensure both victim safety and successful prosecution. Funding for three additional felony-level ADAs will allow the Bureau to manage growing caseloads while maintaining the high level of attention and support that survivors deserve.
3. **Sustain the Expanded Workload of the Juvenile Justice Unit (PS Request: \$225,000).** Since the enactment of the Raise the Age law in 2018, which established a new court structure and framework for youth cases, District Attorney's Offices were not provided additional resources to meet the expanded responsibilities created by the legislation. At the same time, the City allocated tens of millions of dollars to the Law Department (Corporation Counsel) to expand staffing to handle cases transferred to their office under the new system. For several years, RCDA maintained a Memorandum of

Understanding with the Law Department that allowed for the cross-designation of Corporation Counsel attorneys in our office to support the handling of juvenile cases. Under this arrangement, Law Department attorneys assisted with drafting cases in the complaint room and appeared in the Youth Part for arraignments, particularly in matters ultimately prosecuted by their office. In recent years, the Law Department reduced its participation in this process, citing staffing shortages and attrition, and RCDA assumed responsibility for drafting juvenile cases in the complaint room. At the end of 2025, the Law Department formally notified RCDA that it would not renew the MOU, indicating it no longer had the staffing capacity to assist with juvenile case preparation or arraignment coverage. The termination of this agreement significantly increases the operational demands on RCDA. The office must now assume full responsibility for drafting juvenile cases and providing consistent coverage in the Youth Part. This challenge is further compounded by the fact that the Youth Part in Richmond County is located in a separate courthouse from other criminal court parts, requiring dedicated ADA staffing. RCDA is requesting funding for two additional Assistant District Attorneys to support the Juvenile Justice Unit and ensure the office can meet these expanded responsibilities. Additional resources are particularly necessary given recent increases in youth-related arrests in Richmond County. In 2025, juvenile offender arrests increased by 457 percent, overall youth arrests rose by 44 percent, felony youth arrests increased by 53.9 percent, and 26 percent of all gun arrests involved individuals under the age of 20.

- 4. Keep Pace with the Proliferation of Cybercrime by Designating a Cybercrimes ADA in Each Felony Bureau (PS Request: \$100,000).** RCDA has achieved significant success through the creation and expansion of its Cybercrimes Unit. However, the rapid growth and evolving nature of cyber-enabled crime requires a broader, office-wide response. Digital evidence and cyber-enabled conduct now arise in a wide range of prosecutions, including violent crime, domestic violence, financial crimes, narcotics investigations, and organized criminal activity. To strengthen the office's ability to respond effectively, RCDA seeks funding to designate a cybercrimes-trained ADA within each felony bureau. These designated ADAs would serve as subject-matter specialists and points of contact for emerging technologies, digital evidence, investigative techniques, and evolving legal issues. This structure would enhance the office's capacity to investigate and prosecute cyber-related conduct across all case types.

5. **Encourage Expertise in Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder, and Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI). Support Funding to Designate an ATI Expert in Each Felony Bureau PS Request: (\$100,000).** The increasing intersection of mental illness, substance use disorder, and criminal justice involvement requires greater expertise and coordination within prosecutorial offices. RCDA seeks funding to designate an ATI and mental health expert within each felony bureau to strengthen the office's ability to identify and utilize appropriate treatment-based alternatives where appropriate. These designated ADAs would serve as internal resources to improve knowledge of available programs, coordinate with service providers, and expand the effective use of ATI options. Strengthening expertise in this area will improve case outcomes, reduce recidivism, and ensure that individuals with behavioral health needs are connected to appropriate services while maintaining public safety.

6. **Support the Creation of a General Counsel Position and Support Staff at RCDA (PS Request: \$300,000).** Despite substantial growth over the past decade, RCDA does not currently have a General Counsel. Since 2016, the office has expanded from approximately 110 employees to more than 250 employees, significantly increasing the legal, administrative, and operational demands placed on executive leadership. The absence of a General Counsel limits the office's ability to proactively manage legal risk, ensure compliance with evolving city, state, and federal requirements, and coordinate efficiently with Corporation Counsel and other government agencies. RCDA is requesting \$300,000 to establish a senior executive-level General Counsel position along with necessary paraprofessional support. This position will strengthen compliance, improve interagency coordination, and support the effective management of a modern prosecutorial office.

Conclusion:

Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration of my testimony. It would be my pleasure to answer any questions you may have, and I look forward to working with this body and its members to achieve these goals and further our shared mission of a safer and more just New York City for all. Thank you.

Testimony

of

Bridget G. Brennan
Special Narcotics Prosecutor

Before

The New York City Council
Committees on Public Safety and Finance

Fiscal Year 2027

Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 18, 2026
Council Chambers
City Hall

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL NARCOTICS PROSECUTOR

As always, I am grateful for the leadership of the New York City Council and for your support of my office and the offices of the District Attorneys. I recently met with Public Safety Committee Chairperson Oswald Feliz to introduce myself and discuss challenges the city faces in coping with deadly illegal drugs and their impact on communities throughout the city. I look forward to collaborating with all of you to promote health and safety in our communities and most importantly, fairness in our criminal justice system. I am always happy to talk with you about specific concerns.

The Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) has been a leader in citywide efforts to confront the deadly opioid epidemic and is recognized nationwide for our expertise. After years of record-high fatal overdoses in New York City, they have dropped sharply over the past two years. In 2024, overdose deaths in New York City decreased by about one third, totaling 2,192, following consecutive years of more than 3,000 deaths annually. This mirrors a national trend, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By working together, law enforcement, public health, treatment providers, and educators have achieved a sustained, substantial decrease in drug-related fatalities.

Saving lives and protecting public safety have been top priorities since the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor was established in 1971. Over the past five decades, we have greatly expanded our tools and partnerships to rein in a succession of drug epidemics, most recently involving fentanyl, the most lethal drug crisis we have ever faced. SNP works collaboratively with the elected District Attorneys to investigate and prosecute felony narcotics cases and related crimes across all five boroughs of the city and to expand efforts to educate the public about our dangerous illegal drug market.

During the past year, we have talked to people who have suffered from substance use disorder and heard from their families and treatment providers. We met with members of communities overwhelmed with drug-related crime. We have been asked to develop strategies specific to neighborhoods with high numbers of open drug sales, public usage and overdoses. To understand each area's issues, we meet with community members and law enforcement partners. In these areas of strategically targeted enforcement, overdose deaths and crime have declined more quickly and at a higher rate than citywide. We will expand this work in the coming year. At the same time, we continue to focus on investigations and prosecutions of large-scale drug traffickers with a goal of reducing the volume of illegal drugs and crimes related to them.

While overdose deaths are no longer at record-high levels, we are not out of the woods. New York City's drug market is more unpredictable than ever before. We continually identify new synthetic substances mixed in with the fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine that we recover during investigations. Some of these mixtures originate from Mexico, while others are combined here in the city in drug packaging mills.

There is no "truth in advertising" when it comes to drug dealers, and, sadly, many drug users have perished when the drug they ingested was far more deadly than the one they thought they were purchasing. Extremely potent opioid drugs like carfentanil and other fentanyl analogs increase the risk of overdose, and a widening array of non-opioid sedatives, like the animal tranquilizers xylazine and medetomidine, may not be categorized as controlled substances, but they may be lethal or cause significant harm when mixed with other drugs.

Whether addressing local crime or high-level international narcotics operations, our office takes a holistic approach, bringing prosecutions while trying to restore a sense of security to communities. After strategic enforcement has cleared rampant drug dealing and open drug use, we use asset forfeiture funds or money designated by the City Council to support safe recreation spaces in neighborhoods where the enforcement has been concentrated. We also dedicate substantial resources to educating the public about the lethal drug market. Our educational outreach efforts touch thousands of young people, parents, teachers, and seniors. In 2025, SNP staff offered fentanyl awareness presentations to 96 classes in New York City schools, reaching over 6,500 middle school, high school, and college students. Staff also presented at more than a dozen group sessions for faculty, parents, and seniors, reaching hundreds of additional community members.

Despite diligent investigations, we have seen a decline in assets seized from high level narcotics traffickers, including significantly less cash seizures. SNP investigations have shown that international narcotics traffickers are increasingly utilizing cryptocurrencies to transfer and launder large amounts of proceeds generated from the narcotics trade. As a result, I am requesting \$615,250 in FY27 new needs funding to create a Crypto Laundering Prosecution Unit. Currently, my office is working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and crypto analytics firms hired by DEA to increase our capacity to identify and trace illicit crypto activity related to narcotics trafficking. SNP is also working with federal authorities to develop strategies to seize digital assets from crypto wallets. The complexity of such investigations requires training in the cryptocurrency transfer

system, and frequent updates as criminal enterprises devise new schemes.

The final funding request not addressed in the Mayor's proposed budget for Special Narcotics is one of critical importance. My office is making a new needs request to fund the expansion of our Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs with the goals of reducing recidivism and promoting public safety. Through these programs, eligible individuals charged with felony offenses are diverted into structured, treatment-based programs under close supervision of the courts. More than three decades ago, our office was among the first in the city to recognize the long-term benefits of alternative to incarceration programs, and through the years we have refined our programs to address specific challenges.

Since SNP's ATI Unit was established in 2021, we have self-funded the unit, even as it has greatly expanded. Currently, SNP's ATI Unit caseload is growing rapidly, with a 200% increase in potential participants screened. For FY 2027, we are requesting \$362,250 for increased staffing for SNP's ATI Unit. We are also renewing our funding request for \$218,841 to support ATI programming with our partner, the Center for Justice Innovation's (CJI) Manhattan Justice Opportunities, for a combined total of \$581,091. We have made this request in prior years, but the additional funds were not received. I am asking the Council to assist us.

Working closely with the two Manhattan Court programs, SNP's ATI Unit provides access to substance use and mental health treatment, case management, vocation and educational support, and other social services under court-supervised plea agreements.

While the growth of our ATI Unit is encouraging, rapid expansion has overburdened our current staff. Our self-funded structure, with a Unit Chief, an Assistant District Attorney, and a Case Coordinator, is no longer sufficient. The requested \$362,250 would cover a Deputy Unit Chief, a dedicated ADA, and a second Case Coordinator. These positions are critical to ensure thorough case screening, effective monitoring of participant compliance, and proper coordination with treatment providers, courts, and partner agencies.

As mentioned, we are also renewing our funding request for \$218,841 to support ATI programming with CJI's Manhattan Justice Opportunities. Support of CJI is essential for managing and coordinating the program with the Office of Court Administration (OCA). Currently we are experiencing a backlog of potential ATI participants awaiting screening by CJI.

When ATI works, it is a win-win. By providing supportive services to eligible defendants, we keep them out of prison, connected to their communities, and set them on a better course. We can help rebuild lives and reduce crime without increasing incarceration.

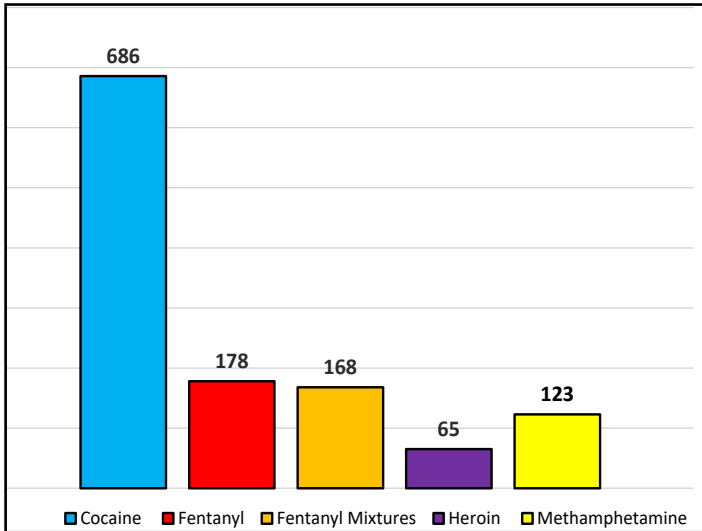
We are also requesting new needs funding for Discovery Compliance and expansion of our Discovery Litigation Unit (DLU). My office has not received the same level of financial assistance from the City and the State over the past few years as District Attorneys' offices statewide. The DAs received necessary funding, as they should. Yet, our office only received 25% of the amount requested. We are seeking \$2,257,220 from the City to address our Discovery funding shortage, and \$552,000 to expand our Discovery Litigation Unit. This is discussed more extensively in my testimony.

In conclusion, while we are encouraged by our successful 2025, we remain vigilant. Drug overdose continues to be the city's leading cause of accidental death. The illegal drug supply is more unpredictable than ever before, and new, potentially lethal substances pose unexpected dangers. In 2026, we are committed to informing the public of emerging threats, preventing death through education and outreach programs, and working with our partners to reduce the availability of illegal drugs and commission of associated crime in our great city.

Bridget G. Brennan
Special Narcotics Prosecutor
for the City of New York

Strategic Approach to Prosecutions

2025 SNP Drug Seizures in Pounds



SNP employs a strategic approach to curbing the flow of deadly narcotics into New York City and the region. Investigations focus on high-level trafficking organizations, often with international ties, and groups involved in violence or disruptive drug activity impacting neighborhoods.

In 2025, SNP cases with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and other partners netted over 1,000 pounds of narcotics, including fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine, as well as more than 100 pounds of methamphetamine.

To identify large loads of narcotics entering the city, SNP employs various investigative techniques, including physical and electronic surveillance. We work closely with the five District Attorneys to tailor our strategies to areas with citywide impact and concentrations of open narcotics sales.

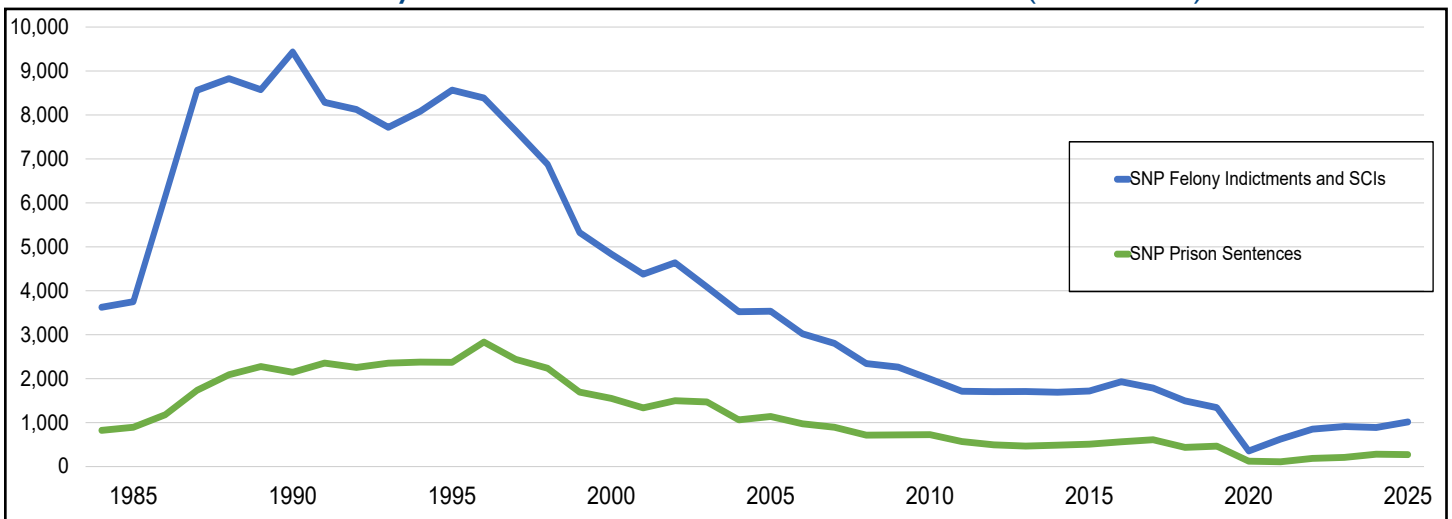
For example, we have collaborated with the NYPD and community leaders to address significant narcotics issues in the Times Square area, where open drug dealing and associated violence have long plagued residents, businesses, and visitors alike. In one ongoing investigation, our office and the NYPD's Midtown South Precinct tracked several drug dealers operating notoriously near a McDonald's location to stash apartments within a particular residential building in the area.

In another area of concern, following enforcement activity at Washington Square Park, members of the NYPD's Manhattan South Narcotics noticed drug sales shifting to Sara D. Roosevelt Park. So far, nine individuals have been arrested following multiple cocaine sales to undercover officers. Most of these defendants travelled from Upper Manhattan or outside of the borough to sell drugs at the park.

In crafting our approach, we analyze drug markets linked to clusters of overdose deaths and violence, receive input from communities and elected officials, and collect information from law enforcement and public health partners.

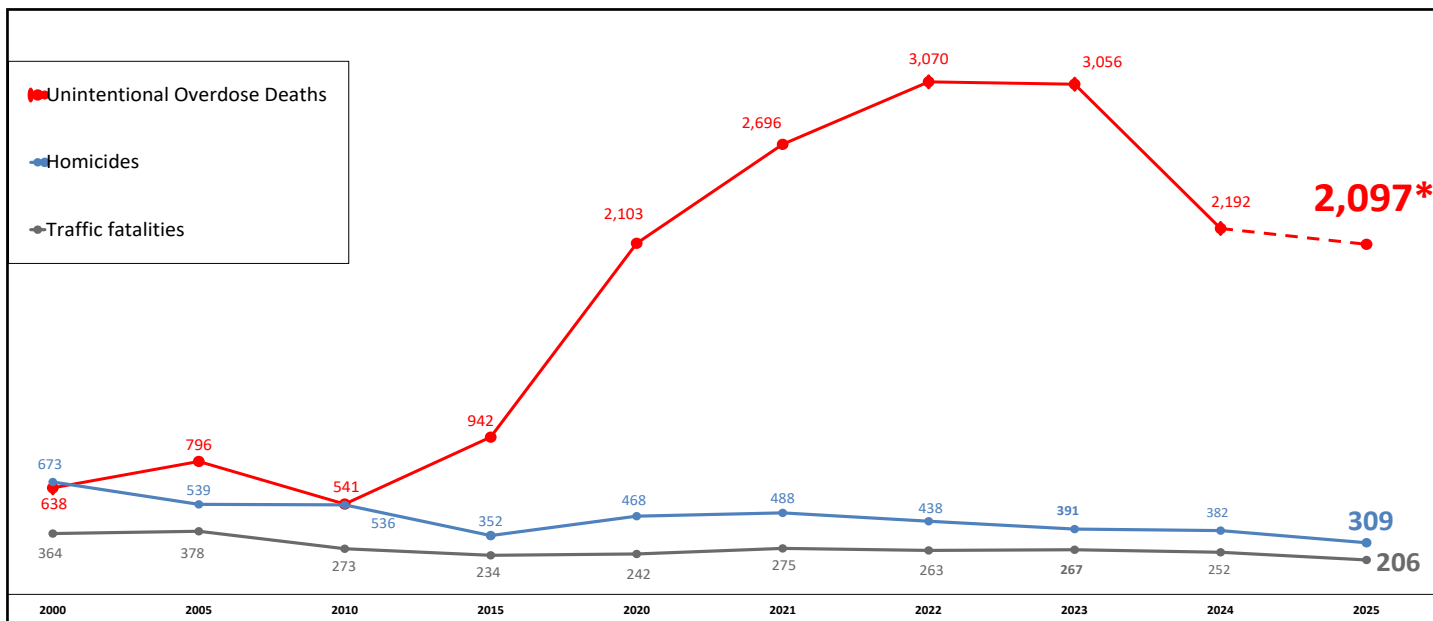
SNP's approach is consistent with the City's goal of reducing incarceration. By focusing on high-level traffickers, our prosecutions have greater impact with fewer arrests. The office is committed to connecting eligible individuals with Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs, with the goal of promoting public safety and reducing recidivism. Since 2021, SNP has expanded its ATI offerings, assessing individuals for treatment and social service referrals through the Manhattan Courts, where participants receive court supervision under a plea agreement.

SNP Felony Indictments/SCIs and Prison Sentences (1984-2025)



Expansion of Synthetic Drugs

NYC Fatal Overdoses Fall Towards Pre-Pandemic Levels



Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), predicted data for Oct. 2024-Oct. 2025; NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOMHM); New York City Police Department (NYPD); Vision Zero New York City

The tide appears to be turning on the opioid epidemic, with fewer fatal overdoses in New York City over the past two years as rates approach pre-pandemic levels. The decline from record-high numbers of overdose deaths is encouraging, but the opioid epidemic is hardly over, and we must remain vigilant. New York City is still losing more than 2,000 lives to overdose deaths each year. The city's drug market is increasingly unpredictable. Since 2024, fentanyl entering the U.S. is less pure, with more varieties of synthetic drugs mixed in. Often buyers are unaware of the contents of the drugs they purchase, and specific ingredients are only known to law enforcement after laboratory analysis.

Dangerous synthetic drugs are frequently pressed into pills,

including counterfeits of pharmaceutical drugs like oxycodone. In 2025, SNP recovered several pill pressing machines from apartments controlled by drug manufacturing organizations operating in the city and the surrounding area.

SNP seeks to understand the forces driving drug trends by consulting with our local, state, and federal partners, tracking information gleaned from investigations, and analyzing citywide NYPD data. Narcotics trafficking is a highly lucrative, international business. Mexico serves as the primary source for the U.S., producing synthetic drugs, like fentanyl and methamphetamine. Bulk shipments sent across the southwest border are sometimes concealed in truckloads of produce or other merchandise.



Automatic pill presses can produce thousands of counterfeit pills in a short amount of time. A variety of molds are used to create different shaped pills.



A hollowed-out car battery filled with six kilograms of cocaine was believed to be part of a larger pattern. Traffickers conceal narcotics for transportation across the country in trucks.

Surge in Chemically Produced Synthetics

Synthetic Drugs	Drug Descriptions
Fentanyl	Potent opioid linked to 80% of ODs in NYC, 50 times stronger than heroin; pharmaceutical anesthetic now mass-produced in illicit drug laboratories
Fentanyl Analogs	Variants of fentanyl with different chemical compositions and potencies (e.g. para-fluorofentanyl, acetyl fentanyl, carfentanil); highly potent carfentanil is 100 times stronger than fentanyl
Xylazine	Non-controlled substance; veterinary sedative; street name “tranq,” mixed with fentanyl and linked to 30% of ODs in NYC; non-opioid, unresponsive to naloxone
Medetomidine	Non-opioid veterinary sedative more powerful than xylazine; associated with heavier sedation than opioids and more severe withdrawal symptoms, such as extreme vomiting and high blood pressure
Nitazenes	Class of opioids never approved for medical use due to high risk of overdose; mixed with fentanyl
Methamphetamine	Stimulant with high addiction potential; Powder, pill and crystal form; increasingly mixed with fentanyl
Ketamine	Non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer; dissociative hallucinogenic effects; main component of “pink cocaine”
MDMA	Hallucinogenic stimulant; known as “ecstasy” (tablet) and “molly” (powder); ingredient of “pink cocaine”
BTMPS	Non-controlled substance: chemical used in the production of plastics; prevents oxidation; filler in fentanyl mixtures
Tramadol	Opioid pain reliever increasingly mixed with fentanyl
Benzodiazepines	Commonly prescribed to treat anxiety (e.g. Xanax and Valium); designer types found in illicit fentanyl mixtures; increased risk of overdose when combined with opioids
Procaine	Commonly known by the trade name Novocain; local anesthetic used for nerve blocks, spinal anesthesia, and dental procedures
Synthetic Cannabinoids	Lab-made substances chemically similar to cannabis plant

Only time will tell what impact rapid changes in the geopolitical landscape, and the recent killing of the powerful leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel in Mexico, will have on the drug market in New York City.

In addition to the reduction in purity, federal law enforcement agencies are generally seizing significantly less fentanyl and the same is true for SNP. Our fentanyl and fentanyl mixture seizures declined by 50% since 2022, likely a reflection of disruptions in trafficking from Mexico.

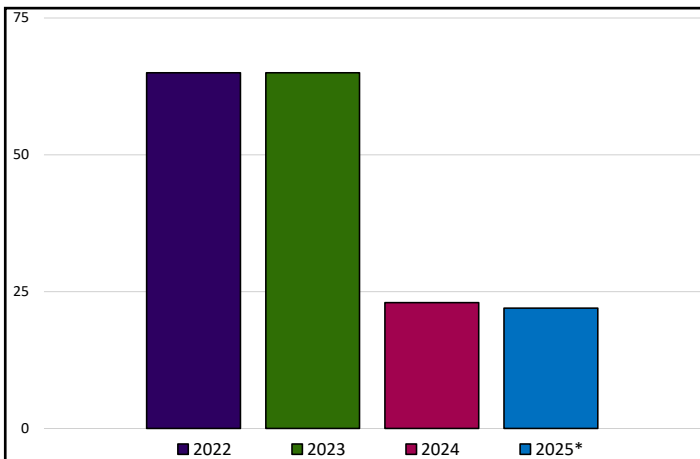
The proliferation of new types of synthetic drugs continues to transform supplies nationwide. Production is far easier

and cheaper than cultivating plants that yield heroin and cocaine. International criminal syndicates make huge profits while the health and safety of communities suffer.

As a result of careful tracking by SNP, and collaboration with our partners in law enforcement and public health, new chemical ingredients are continually being identified. Some are opioids, while others are non-opioids with dangerous side effects. A typical drug mixture might include fentanyl, a fentanyl analog, and heroin, mixed with one or a combination of xylazine, medetomidine, and nitazenes. Mixes can include additional substances like cocaine, methamphetamine, or MDMA.

Data Driven Enforcement

Fewer Fatal Overdoses in Midtown South



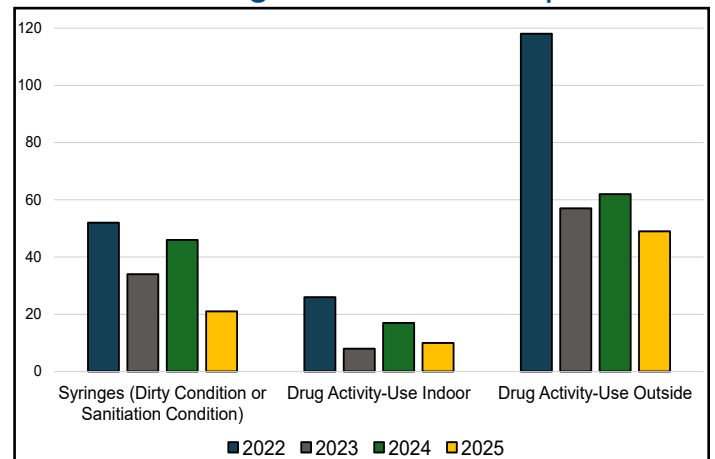
Source: NYC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and ODMAP courtesy of W/B HIDTA. *Data are approximate and unofficial.

To develop enforcement strategies, SNP analyzes data from various sources to identify patterns, such as geographic areas throughout the city where clusters of overdoses, gun seizures, and narcotics trafficking are concentrated. SNP partners with the NYPD, elected officials, and community groups to support public safety.

For example, SNP has devoted resources towards analysis and enforcement in the Midtown South Precinct (14th Precinct) over several years and we are seeing a positive shift in drug-related conditions, reflected in important metrics and community feedback.

Fatal overdoses have dropped significantly. Once the leading Manhattan precinct for overdose deaths, the precinct now ranks 10th in the borough. Non-fatal overdoses also decreased slightly in 2025, particularly in the northern part of Midtown South from 42nd Street to 45th Street between 7th and 9th Avenues.

Fewer Drug-Related 311 Complaints



Source: NYC 311 data for Midtown South Precinct.

Further evidence that Midtown South communities are seeing a difference can be found in a review of data for 311 calls. Fewer calls about certain narcotics-related complaints occurred in Midtown South in 2025. Calls related to discarded syringes and outdoor drug activity are at the lowest levels since 2020.

Drug-related arrests declined as well. NYPD data for 2025 shows fewer B felony narcotics arrests in 2025 as compared to 2023 and 2024 in the northern part of the precinct. This is consistent with positive community feedback, particularly near McCaffrey Playground on 43rd Street.

The decline in overdose deaths undoubtedly relates to less fentanyl in the area. An analysis of NYPD Drug Laboratory invoices for 2024 showed a decline in the percentage in which fentanyl was present. In 2025, levels remained similarly low indicating a positive trend.

Midtown South (14th PCT) Falls in Top Overdose Ranking for Manhattan

RANK	2022	2023	2024	2025*
1st	14	25	32	25
2nd	25	14	25	32
3rd	32	23	34	13
4th	23	32	23	23
5th	33	33	13	28
6th	34	24	30	9
7th	13	34	28	7
8th	9	28	24	33
9th	24	9	7	34
10th	18	13	14	14

Drugs and Guns



District Attorney Eric Gonzalez joined Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan and New York City Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch at a press conference announcing the seizure of 21 guns during a narcotics-related investigation in Brooklyn.

Many of our major investigations in 2025 resulted in the seizure of guns. In some cases, traffickers sold guns along with narcotics. In others, guns were a means of enforcing control over territory or used for protection. A wiretap investigation conducted in Weeksville, Brooklyn with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office and the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Brooklyn North resulted in the seizure of 21 guns and large amounts of crack, cocaine, fentanyl and other drugs. Seven individuals were arrested. The loosely connected drug and gun sales group operated round-the-clock, plaguing local businesses and residential streets. The man accused of heading the organization allegedly sold over \$35,000 worth of drugs and guns to an undercover officer. Guns sold included revolvers, semiautomatic pistols, AR rifles, and matching ammunition. More than half had high-capacity magazines.

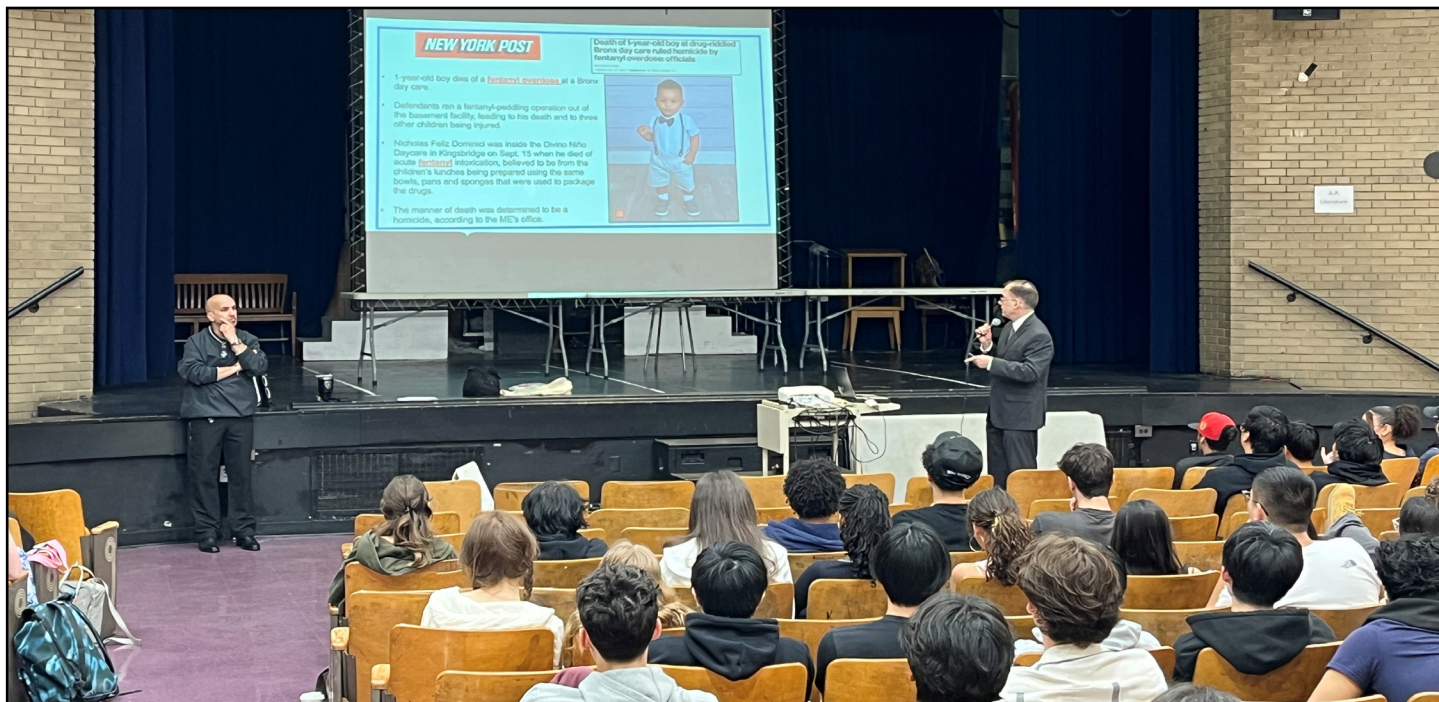
Guns and drugs are frequently found together in residential buildings, posing danger to neighbors and communities. In February, an investigation focused on narcotics activity in the Lincoln Houses, a New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residential complex in Harlem, resulted in six arrests, including a Bronx man who was the main subject. In a court-authorized search of his apartment, three young children were present when police recovered narcotics and two guns. The investigation began in response to commu-

nity complaints about drug dealers regularly gathering on East 132nd Street between 5th and Madison Avenues. Defendants allegedly sold crack cocaine, powdered cocaine, and cocaine mixed with heroin and fentanyl, to undercover officers with the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Manhattan North.



Two guns were recovered from a defendant who allegedly oversaw sales of crack cocaine, powdered cocaine, and cocaine mixed with heroin and fentanyl in the Lincoln Houses in Harlem.

Educational Outreach



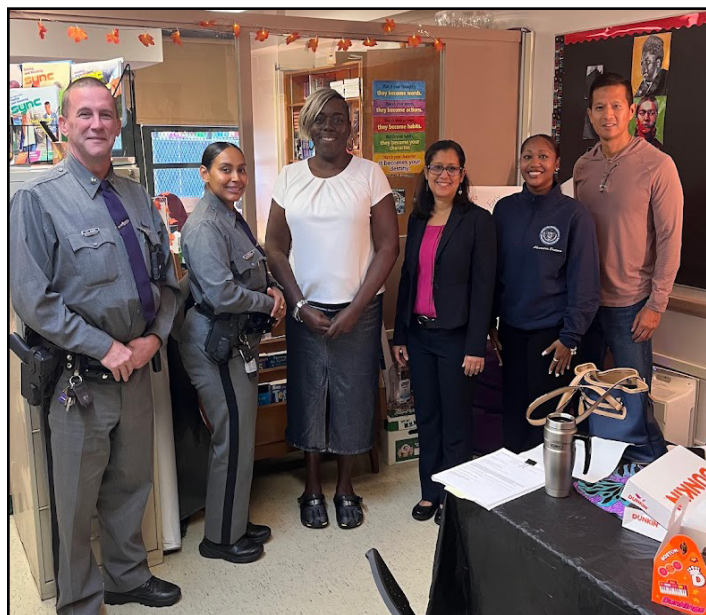
Senior Trial Counsel and Senior Attorney for Special Projects Chris Edel and SNP Investigator Daniel Quiles presenting to 400 students at N.Y.C. Museum School in Manhattan.

SNP is committed to saving lives by educating young people and families about the opioid crisis and particularly lethal fentanyl. The Educational Outreach Committee, composed of members of the executive, legal, managerial, and professional staff, offers workshops designed to raise awareness among teens, college students, parents, senior citizens, teachers, and school staff. SNP partners with the New York City Department of Education (DOE), the Richmond County and Queens County District Attorneys' Offices, DEA New York Division, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the NYPD, and non-for-profits.

SNP serves as a resource for schools by offering presentations to teens and college students in classrooms, training sessions for teachers and DOE staff, and educational forums for parents. Designated SNP attorneys lead workshops on the dangers of fentanyl: what it is, how it gets to New York City, and why teenagers are dying without even knowing they are taking it. SNP staff members explain the types of mixtures found in the city's highly unpredictable drug market, including pills containing fentanyl. Discussions include the role of social media in teen overdoses and how teens can stay safe. Stories from grieving families and recent headlines are featured in SNP's workshops to drive home the real risks associated with drug use today. A Spanish-speaking staff member is available to present workshops in Spanish.

Current School Year

In its third year, SNP's Educational Outreach Committee had a busy 2025. SNP staff presented to 96 classes and 11 parents' groups to spread awareness about the dangers of fentanyl and other potentially lethal substances to over



Chief of Investigations Bernice Ordoñez, Deputy Chief Investigator Lance Ho and Trial Preparation Assistant Alexandra Eastman presented for Red Ribbon Week at Springfield Gardens Educational Campus in Queens.



Assistant District Attorney Labiba Salim presented to 180 students at NYC Lab Middle School in Manhattan.

6,500 students and hundreds of parents. If you know of a school, parent association, senior center, or community group that would like to invite SNP’s Educational Outreach Committee to offer a presentation, please email our dedicated email address for such requests: info@snp.nyc.gov.

Workshops for Seniors

In 2025, SNP continued to present fentanyl workshops at senior centers and other community programs serving seniors. Some topics covered include the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit medication, bogus online pharmacies and risks associated with purchasing pills online, and the importance of Narcan, the overdose reversal drug. Seniors are also instructed on how to safeguard prescription medications within their homes to prevent theft and opportunities for young family members to take pills.



Bridget Brennan explains the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit pills to seniors at St. Paul Community Baptist Church in Brooklyn.

Public Service Campaigns

To raise public awareness about the lethal nature of New York City’s drug market, SNP’s Educational Outreach Committee developed educational materials, including a public service campaign that was displayed on LinkNYC kiosks around the city. The campaign appeared in multiple languages, such as English, Spanish, Mandarin, and French. Fentanyl awareness palm cards and posters are also available for distribution in schools and by non-for-profit organizations.

Over the summer, SNP’s college interns created a social media PSA to spread fentanyl awareness to teenagers and their college-aged peers. Short form video content and Instagram infographics were created for Instagram, YouTube and TikTok to teach about the dangers of fentanyl in an engaging way. Videos featuring three SNP Assistant District Attorneys were designed to instruct youth about the Good Samaritan Law.



SNP hands out fentanyl PSA palm cards to spread education to all New Yorkers. Just two milligrams of fentanyl, shown in this image on the tip of a pencil, can be deadly.

Community Initiatives



Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan attended the opening of the Police Athletic League (PAL) Summer Playstreets at the West 124th Street Harlem location.

Every year, SNP seeks to leave a positive impact on New York City communities where major drug enforcement actions have occurred. The office collaborates with the District Attorneys' offices and law enforcement agencies to support youth programs and strengthen communities disrupted by persistent crime. In 2025, SNP participated in 180 community outreach events. During the summer, SNP sponsored two Police Athletic League (PAL) initiatives in Manhattan: a Playstreet at West 124th Street, Lenox to 5th Avenues, in Harlem, and the McCaffrey Playground PAL Playsite, in Hell's Kitchen.

Playstreets utilize parks and other public areas throughout New York City to give children free and safe supervised places to enjoy fun recreational opportunities, as well as year-round programs. Police officers support PAL programs by engaging in youth interactions that help to promote positive relationships in the community.

SNP also joined the NYPD for their annual National Night Out Against Crime summer events in the 28th Precinct, the 32nd Precinct and the Midtown South Precinct. Community members came together for food and fun while also meeting leaders, government officials, and personnel from their local precinct with the common goal of partnership and safety.

During the holiday season, Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan and Community Outreach Director Calvin Solomon joined in the holiday spirit by attending a toy drive hosted at the Harlem PAL center. Children from all five boroughs received toys at the event and played holiday themed games with volunteers and officials.

Saving lives by reducing overdose deaths is the top priority of SNP. As part of an effort to educate the public about dangers associated with New York City's unpredictable drug market, and to better understand community concerns, over the past year Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan participated in community council meetings in the 6th Precinct, and hosted and moderated two community forums for community leaders in Manhattan South and Manhattan North.



Bridget Brennan moderated a forum of community leaders from the Midtown South Precinct to discuss narcotics activity and quality of life concerns in their neighborhoods.

New Needs

Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI)

SNP's ATI Unit promotes public safety and reduces recidivism by diverting eligible individuals into structured, treatment-based programs. Working closely with specialized Manhattan Court parts, the unit provides access to substance use and mental health treatment, case management, vocation and educational support, and other social services under court-supervised plea agreements. For FY 2027, we are requesting a total of \$581,091 for ATI new needs. SNP's ATI Unit is undergoing rapid growth, which requires additional staffing. We are also requesting funding for the Center for Justice Innovation's (CJI) Manhattan Justice Opportunities.

Since its founding in 2021, our ATI Unit's screening caseload has experienced a 200% increase. The post-plea monitoring caseload is also expected to expand. Staff perform screenings of potential participants to determine whether a programming disposition is appropriate. Referrals are made to CJI or another monitoring agency to begin a clinical assessment. A plea agreement mandates participation in services and/or completion of agreed-upon benchmarks for a set period. Unit staff monitor the case in court until the matter is closed.

While growth is encouraging, demands on current ATI Unit staff are considerable. We have self-funded this unit, beginning with a Unit Chief, then an Assistant District Attorney, and a Case Coordinator. This structure is no longer sufficient. Within the total \$581,091 requested for new needs, we are seeking \$362,250 for additional ATI Unit staff. Funding additional positions will strengthen the unit's ability to maintain fidelity to best practices and provide timely interventions that reduce recidivism. ATI programming for qualified individuals also benefits New York City and New York State financially. Participants might otherwise face sentences of incarceration – often multiple years – at great cost to taxpayers.

The remaining \$218,841 in new needs funding is to provide essential support for CJI's management and coordination of ATI programming with the Office of Court Administration (OCA). We are renewing this request after having submitted it in prior years without receiving funding. Currently we have a backlog of potential ATI participants awaiting screening by CJI.

Our office is proud to have been at the forefront of developing ATI programs for more than 35 years. SNP is also involved in Judicial Diversion and prosecutor-led diversion programs. Beginning in 2009, the New York State Legislature empowered judges to place defendants in court-sponsored diversion programs. These programs are adequately funded at present.

Crypto Laundering Prosecution Unit

In another FY27 new need, we are requesting \$615,250 to establish a Crypto Laundering Prosecution Unit dedicated to investigating and prosecuting international narcotics trafficking organizations that use cryptocurrencies to launder drug proceeds. In recent years, we have seen a decline in cash seizures from high level traffickers. These organizations are increasingly utilizing cryptocurrencies to transfer and launder large amounts of narcotics proceeds, enabling them to evade traditional financial surveillance.

The new unit will focus on tracing complex crypto-financial transactions, dismantling narcotics and laundering networks, prosecuting those accountable, and recovering profits of criminal activity. Currently, SNP is working with the DEA, and crypto analytics firms hired by DEA, to increase our capacity to work in this area and to develop strategies to seize digital assets from crypto wallets. The complexity of such investigations requires periodic training.

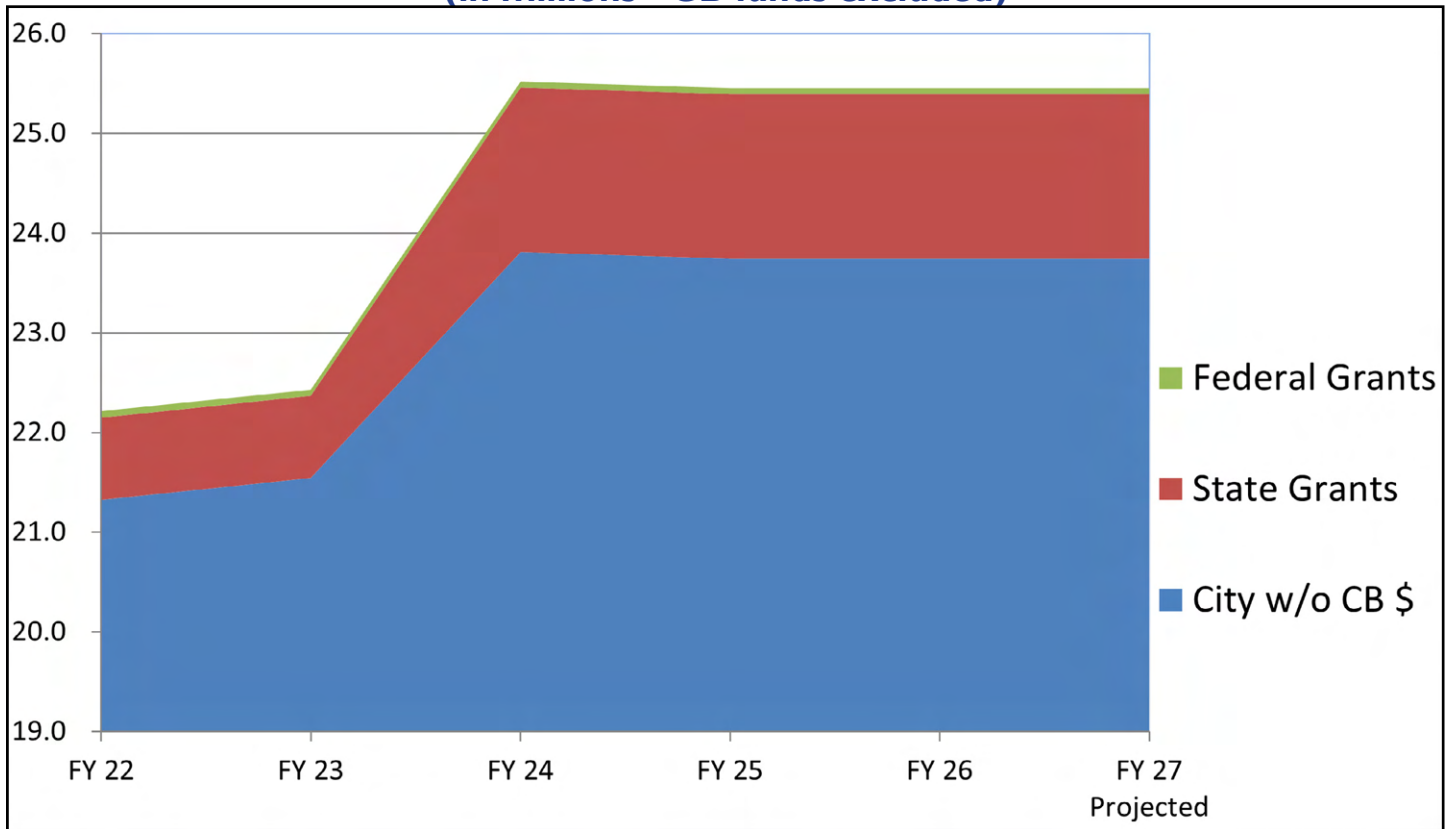
A new Crypto Laundering Prosecution Unit will require at least two experienced Assistant District Attorneys, as well as an investigator and an intelligence analyst with specialized knowledge. A dedicated paralegal will provide essential support. Due to the prevalence of Latin American and Chinese actors and jurisdictions involved in these schemes, a Spanish-speaking translator will be necessary, as will funding for periodic translation and interpretation in Mandarin, Cantonese and related Chinese languages and dialects.

Discovery Litigation and Compliance

Finally, we are seeking \$2,257,200 in baseline funding for Discovery Compliance to hire 14 mid-level Assistant District Attorneys and seven paralegals, and an additional \$552,000 to expand our Discovery Litigation Unit and increase staffing levels with two additional Assistant District Attorneys and four Discovery Specialists. These requests are detailed in the Funding section of this testimony.

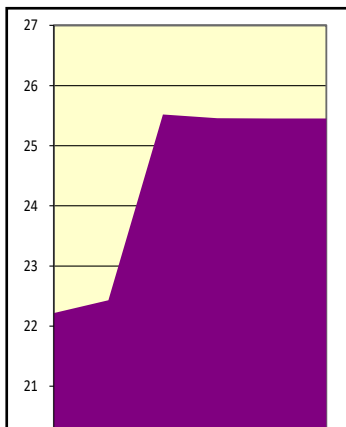
Funding

Special Narcotics Prosecutor FY 2022 Modified to FY 2027 Projected (in millions - CB funds excluded)



Overall Funding Outlook

SNP Funds (in millions)



FY 2022 Modified to FY 2027 Projected

According to the City's Preliminary Budget proposed for the next fiscal year, FY 2027, our new needs request for four programs have been denied, and our proposed City funding will stay at the same level for FY 2027 and out years.

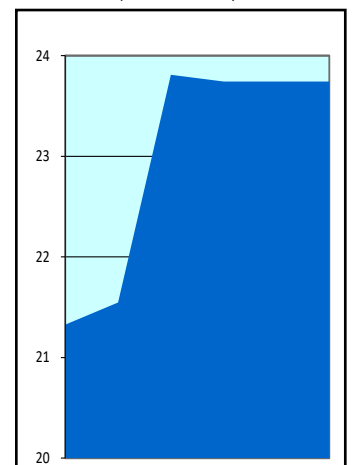
For the current fiscal year, FY 2026, we received the same amount of grant funds as we did in FY 2025. Since receiving the last round of collective

bargaining funding in FY 2025, our City funding has also remained unchanged. We hope our grant funds will be renewed for FY 2027.

City Funding Needs

Over the past year, we have continued to feel the impact of changes made to the New York State Discovery Law. Our staff works tirelessly to ensure we comply with all Discovery requirements. While the District Attorneys' offices have experienced less attrition and higher recruitment over the past two years, we still suffer from a legal staffing shortage, despite having had one of the largest classes of newly hired Assistant District Attorneys in 2025. We are looking to recruit and hire additional laterals in 2026.

City Funds (in millions)



FY 2022 Modified to FY 2027 Projected

Funding

As always, we are very grateful for the support we have received from the City Council over the years, especially the Discovery funding we received in FY 2024-25. These funds helped us recruit and retain staff and support our efforts in complying with Discovery and Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) requirements.

For the FY 2027 preliminary plan, we submitted new needs requests for four different programs/areas, which have unfortunately all been denied by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Our most urgent needs are SNP's Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Unit Expansion, our ATI program with the Center for Justice Innovation's (CJI) Manhattan Justice Opportunities, and a new unit for Crypto Laundering Prosecution.

SNP's ATI Unit promotes public safety and reduces recidivism by diverting eligible individuals charged with drug offenses into structured, treatment-based programs. We are requesting for \$362,250 to expand this unit with additional staff and help manage their increased screening caseload after the rapid growth in ATI responsibilities. We also need \$218,841 to expand our ATI program with CJI and the Office of Court Administration (OCA). We are seeking to help CJI hire two social workers (assigned to SNP) and to cover costs associated with managing and coordinating our ATI program with OCA. Lastly, we request \$615,250 to establish a new Crypto Laundering Prosecution Unit, dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of international narcotics organizations that use cryptocurrencies to launder drug trafficking proceeds.

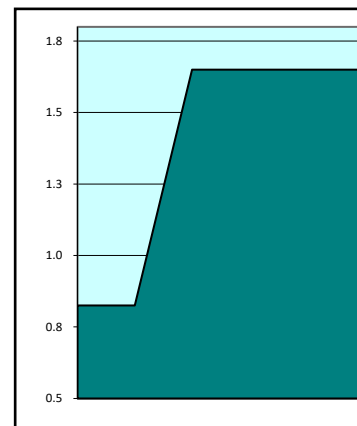
In addition to the above programs, we are also requesting funds to cover our Discovery Compliance Needs and Discovery Litigation Unit (DLU) expansion. Our office has not received the same level of financial assistance from the City and the State over the past few years as our partner District Attorneys' offices statewide. While the DAs received funds required to address their Discovery Compliance needs, our office only received 25% of the amount requested. We are seeking \$2,257,220 from the City to address our Discovery funding shortage and support our Discovery Compliance efforts. SNP's DLU does not have sufficient resources and personnel to meet the growing demands of compliance with evolving Discovery Laws. As the volume and complexity of prosecutions increase, particularly our long-term, multi-jurisdiction narcotics investigations, and multi-defendant indictments, DLU's staffing levels are inadequate to ensure Discovery obligations are met in a timely

manner. We are requesting \$552,000 to expand DLU and to cover anticipated costs for additional ADA's (2), Discovery Litigation Specialists (4), and associated overhead costs.

State Funding Disparities

In the current fiscal year, FY 2026, our SNP Aid to Prosecution program funding remained the same at \$825,000, while State Aids to Prosecution funding for other DAs' offices across the state has increased by 300% on average. We received an additional \$825,000 in Discovery funding from the State, and these funds were used to help us recruit and retain staff. Unfortunately, compared with other prosecutors' offices, proportionally we have received much less funding for both Aid to Prosecution and Discovery programs. In FY 2025, we received a one-time anti-fentanyl grant for \$2.5 million. These funds will support our state-wide anti-fentanyl initiative over the next few years. For FY 2027, we hope to receive at least the same level of state funding as in FY 2026.

State funds
(in millions)

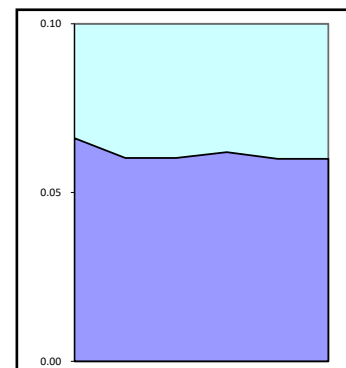


FY 2022 Modified to FY 2027
Projected

Federal Funding Updates

Our federal funding has gone down drastically over the years, from \$843,059 in FY 2013 to \$236,728 in FY 2017, then down to slightly over \$60,000 in FY 2026. In FY 2018-19, we did not receive any federal funding due to New York City's sanctuary city status. For FY 2027, we expect to receive about the same amount as in the current fiscal year.

Federal funds
(in millions)



FY 2022 Modified to FY 2027
Projected

Case Highlights

Fentanyl and Synthetics

Active Fentanyl/Heroin Packaging Operation Disrupted



A glass-topped table was set up for drug packaging with various equipment, including grinders, a strainer, empty glassine envelopes, and surgical masks.

Six men were indicted in connection with a fentanyl packaging mill that operated inside an apartment on Grand Concourse in the Bronx. More than five kilograms (over 11 pounds) of fentanyl were recovered, including approximately 50,000 filled glassine envelopes ready for distribution. Quantities of procaine mixed with medetomidine were also present, along with over \$18,300 cash. The narcotics carried an estimated street value of over \$1 million. During the eight-month investigation, members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force observed suspects going in and out of 1505 Grand Concourse carrying

materials associated with packaging drugs, including a box that appeared to contain a paper shredder, equipment sometimes used to mix narcotics. During a court-authorized search of the apartment, agents found the six defendants in one bedroom. Another bedroom contained a glass-topped table set up for drug packaging. A paper shredder coated in white powder was also present, along with the original box. Stamps used for branding glassines bore various names, including “Disney” and “McDonald’s.”

Packaging Mill Dismantled Near Morningside Park: Two Guns

A drug packaging mill was uncovered near Morningside Park in Harlem following an interstate investigation by DEA New Jersey Division, SNP’s Investigators Unit and the NYPD. The drug mill was located in a residential apartment across the street from a public school and around the corner from a Police Athletic League (PAL) Center. Approximately 2.5 kilograms (over five pounds) of cocaine and powdered heroin/fentanyl/xylazine mixtures, thousands of pills and two guns were recovered during a court-authorized search at 50 Morningside Avenue. The man charged with operating the drug mill was arrested in Totowa,



Narcotics and a gun with a silencer were recovered from a Morningside Avenue apartment. A package of cocaine bore the designer watch label “Rolex.”

N.J. after investigators tracked his vehicle from Harlem. Investigators found the Morningside Avenue apartment was largely empty of furnishings, and instead contained materials and equipment used in packaging and storing narcotics. Inside a hidden safe were large bags of cocaine, bags and glassine envelopes of heroin/fentanyl mixtures, and over 2,000 pills containing methamphetamine and tramadol. A 9mm machine pistol with a silencer attachment was also recovered. Another gun was found in the accused trafficker's vehicle at the time of arrest.

Dangerous Drug Mixtures Packaged in Inwood

Three men were convicted on narcotics possession charges following a long-term investigation into a fentanyl/heroin packaging mill in Inwood, Manhattan. A court-authorized search of an apartment at 4863 Broadway yielded approximately 8,000 glassine envelopes filled with fentanyl, heroin, tramadol, xylazine, and other substances, as well as bags of powdered cocaine and xylazine, and bottles of veterinary grade xylazine. Boxes of the opioid overdose reversal drug Narcan were also recovered, one of which was empty. Prior to the search, members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force conducted surveillance at 4863 Broadway and observed Narciso Negrum loading a bag into a vehicle. A second defendant, Jose Lopez Paulino, moved the bag into an Acura MDX and was later stopped. Agents seized a kilogram of powdered narcotics, which laboratory analysis showed contained cocaine, xylazine, BTMPS, and other substances. Lopez Paulino pled guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree and was sentenced to two years in prison. Negrum was arrested inside the mill with a third defendant, Jose Castillo. Negrum was sentenced to four years in prison for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Fourth Degree, while Castillo was sentenced to a two-and-a-half year prison term for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree.

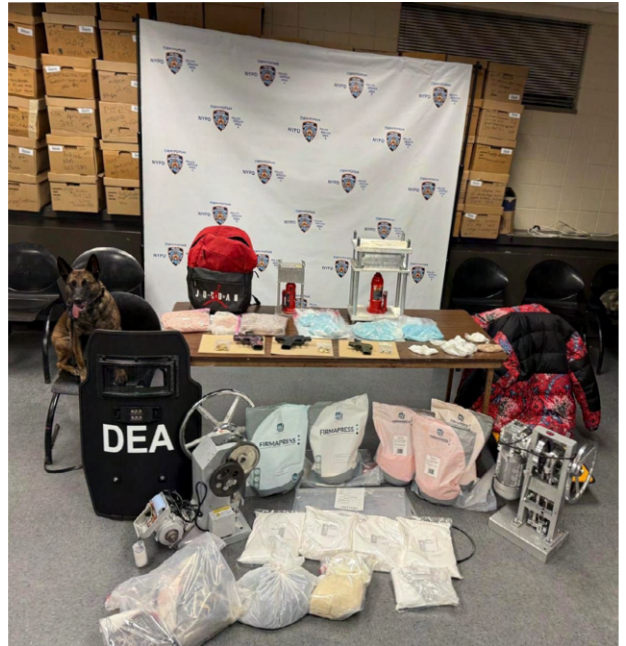


Dozens of stamps were used for branding glassines of dangerous drug mixtures with different names, including "Toy Story" and "Mayo."

Illicit Pill Production

Counterfeit Pill Manufacturing in Harlem: Three Guns

An investigation disrupted a high-level counterfeit pill manufacturing and distribution operation in the greater New York City metropolitan area. Two men face charges for using pill pressing machines to produce tens of thousands of pills containing fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other substances in an apartment in Harlem. The investigation revealed that one pill press was shipped from China to Yonkers in Westchester County and later transported to Harlem. Members of the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force seized the pill presses at 2745 Frederick Douglass Boulevard. Laboratory analysis revealed over 21,500 counterfeit oxycodone pills contained potentially deadly mixtures of fentanyl, heroin, xylazine, and medetomidine. Approximately 10,000 additional pills contained methamphetamine. Also recovered were 13 pounds of powdered methamphetamine, four pounds of xylazine, and three loaded guns.



A high-level pill pressing operation pumped out tens of thousands of counterfeit pills, made from dangerous drug mixtures, for sale in the greater New York City metropolitan area.

Pill Pressing Machines and Narcotics Mixtures Seized



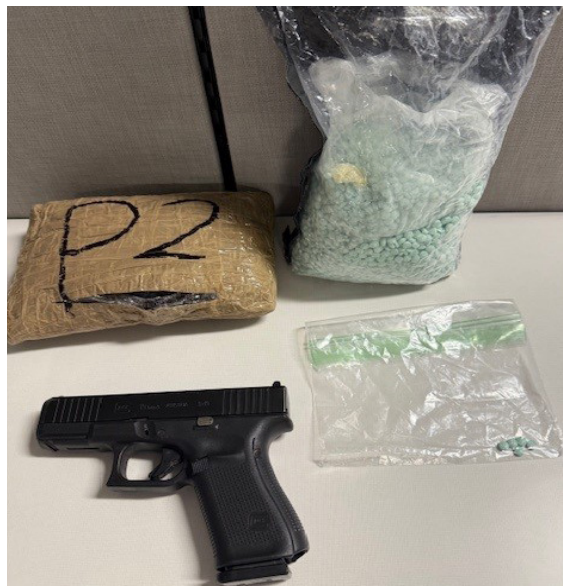
A wide variety of potentially lethal pills were produced by narcotics traffickers in Ozone Park.

A long-term, multi-borough investigation resulted in the seizure of three pill pressing machines and multiple kilograms of narcotics in Ozone Park, Queens. Fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and oxycodone were recovered from 150-28 Raleigh Street, Apt. 2. For months, members of the DEA New York Task Force Division observed three suspected traffickers come and go from the residence, located across the street from a public school. A court-authorized search led to the seizure of a manual pill press and a large automatic/mechanical pill press in the living room. A third pill press, also automatic, was in a bedroom. Automatic pill presses can produce thousands of pills in a short amount of time, while manual pills

presses create individual pills. A variety of molds used to create different shaped pills were present, including those used to produce counterfeit oxycodone pills. The three men were arrested and subsequently indicted.

Over 16,000 Fentanyl Pills and a Gun Seized in Midtown

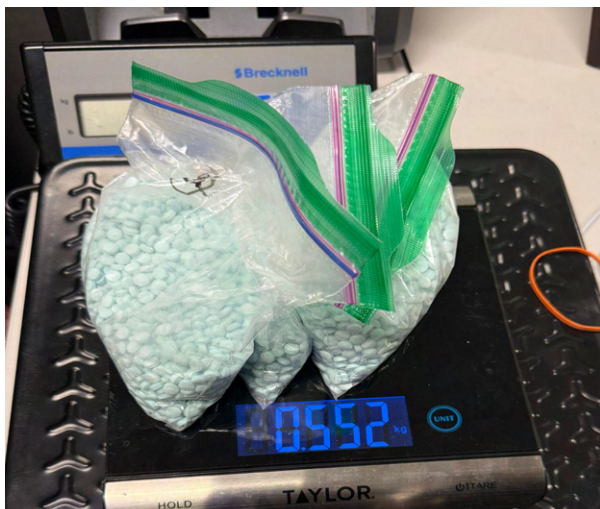
Two individuals were arrested in possession of over 16,600 fentanyl pills on West 57th Street in Manhattan on May 5, 2025, following a short-term investigation. The pair, a man and a woman, were parked in a Dodge Caravan when agents and officers with the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force approached and recovered the cache of counterfeit oxycodone pills from inside an open shopping bag. The man was also in possession of a 9mm Glock pistol with a large capacity magazine loaded with 15 rounds of ammunition. DEA laboratory analysis determined that the pills contained fentanyl. Both defendants were indicted on charges of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees. The man was also charged with Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second and Third Degrees and Criminal Possession of a Firearm.



Over 16,600 fentanyl pills and a gun seized in arrest on West 57th Street in Manhattan.

Fentanyl Pills Concealed in Holiday-Themed Gucci Gift Bag

Two alleged narcotics traffickers were arrested with over 4,800 pills concealed in a colorful Gucci gift bag during the bustling holiday season in Midtown Manhattan. Agents and officers with the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force approached the men as they sat in a parked vehicle on West 52nd Street on December 29, 2025. Inside the car were two gift bags, including a green Gucci bag containing thousands of counterfeit oxycodone pills. The second gift bag held approximately one pound of powder wrapped in plastic. Subsequent DEA laboratory testing determined the pills contained fentanyl, while the powder was lidocaine, a non-controlled substance often used as a cutting agent for narcotics. The two men, who reside in the Bronx, were indicted on charges of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees in connection with the fentanyl pills.



Over 4,800 fentanyl pills concealed in a green Gucci gift bag were seized during the holiday season.

Drugs and Guns

Investigation at Marcus Garvey Village: 26 Arrests; 18 Guns

A long-term wiretap investigation into prolific narcotics trafficking in the Marcus Garvey Village residential complex in Brownsville, Brooklyn led to the arrests of 26 individuals and dismantled three interconnected drug organizations. Two alleged heads of the supply organizations are charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker. Drug dealers terrorized residents and flooded the apartment complex with crack cocaine and heroin mixed with fentanyl, and often other substances, such as xylazine. At least four overdoses occurred during the investigation, which uprooted a street level group at Marcus Garvey Village and two narcotics supply organizations operating in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Westchester County. The investigation was conducted by the NYPD's Gun Violence Suppression Division, Gun Recidivists Investigations Program (GRIP), and Field Intelligence Officers with the NYPD's 73rd and 83rd Precincts. Officers seized 18 guns, approximately \$250,000 cash and over eight kilograms of cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, and other substances. Multiple apartments at Marcus Garvey Village were used to store narcotics, drug proceeds, and firearms. Narcotics seized during the investigation bore various brand names, such as "Strong Medicine," "Adidas," and "Addicted," among others. The Westchester Police Department and the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force assisted in the investigation.



Narcotics sales dominated public courtyards at Brooklyn's Marcus Garvey Village.

Narcotics Trafficker Sentenced for Kidnappings and Assaults

Jonathan Huertas, aka "El Don," was sentenced to serve a combined total of 11 years behind bars for orchestrating two kidnappings and vicious assaults in the Bronx in connection with a drug-related dispute, and for related federal supervised release violations. Huertas evaded arrest for a year and a half before facing prosecution in New York City. He fled New York after three of his co-conspirators were arrested in the Bronx in early 2022. All three of those conspirators were subsequently indicted and convicted of multiple felonies in Manhattan Supreme Court. After

those arrests, the authorities located Huertas outside of the United States and arrested him in Jalisco, Mexico after more than a year and a half evading law enforcement. An investigation revealed the kidnappings and assaults stemmed from the theft of multiple kilograms of narcotics. Portions of the incidents were captured in audio and video recordings. A court-authorized search resulted in the seizure of over four kilograms (nine pounds) of fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin, and a handgun. The investigation was conducted by DEA NY Division, the NYPD, U.S. Customs and Border Protection New York Field Operations and the NYSP. The U.S. Marshals Service and Mexican authorities assisted. Huertas was sentenced on charges of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, Kidnapping in the Second Degree, and Assault in the Second Degree.



A court-authorized search at an apartment where two kidnappings occurred yielded over nine pounds of fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin, and a handgun, as well as implements used to torture the victims.

Hell's Kitchen Man Sentenced After Undercover Probe



Seven guns were recovered in a search of 457 West 46th Street, Apt. 5A, along with cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, ketamine, MDMA, and methamphetamine.

An undercover NYPD investigation led to the seizure of seven guns and nearly four kilograms (over eight pounds) of cocaine, ketamine, methamphetamine, and various pills, from a residence at 457 West 46th Street, Apt. 5A. Patrick Sutherland pled guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree and was sentenced to nine years in prison due to his status as a violent predicate felon. During an investigation by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Manhattan South, Sutherland made eight sales of narcotics to an undercover officer in the vicinity of West 46th Street and 9th Avenue. One of the sales occurred across the street from a playground operated by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. The investigation focused on cocaine trafficking in Hell's Kitchen. During the court-authorized search of Sutherland's residence, in addition to recovering the four kilograms of drugs and seven guns, police seized \$33,000 cash, eight extended magazines, and over 350 rounds of ammunition.

Seven Arrested and 21 Guns Seized in Brooklyn

A yearlong investigation in Weeksville, Brooklyn ultimately led to the seizure of 21 guns and the arrest of seven defendants. The loosely connected drug and gun trafficking group operated round-the-clock, plaguing local businesses and residential streets. The alleged leader of this group is charged with selling 20 guns and more than a pound of narcotics, including large amounts of crack cocaine, cocaine, fentanyl and fentanyl mixtures to an undercover NYPD officer. An additional gun was recovered during a court-authorized search at the time of the arrests. The wiretap investigation revealed that the accused leader maintained kept a close watch over his territory in Weeksville, posing challenges for law enforcement seeking to conduct surveillance. Guns sold to the undercover included revolvers, semiautomatic pistols, AR rifles, and matching ammunition. More than half had high-capacity magazines, and some were already loaded when sold. The investigation was conducted by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Brooklyn North. Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez reviewed and signed multiple eavesdropping applications for court authorization.



A Brooklyn trafficker allegedly sold narcotics and 20 guns to an undercover officer during a yearlong investigation.

NYC and Westchester Drug Supply Chain Dismantled; Five Guns

A long-term investigation dismantled a narcotics supply chain operating in New York City and Westchester and resulted in eight arrests and seizures of five firearms, approximately eight kilograms narcotics (over 17 pounds), and \$35,000 cash. The wiretap investigation centered on two high-level drug suppliers who allegedly sold to a steady stream of distributors and used coded language to plan transactions: “100 push-ups” meant 100 grams of cocaine, while “pieces” referred to kilograms. Members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force observed multiple drug sales in the vicinity of one supplier’s residence at 1101 Forbell Street, Apt. 3F, in Brooklyn, and made several arrests following these transactions.



Seven kilograms of cocaine and fentanyl, four guns, and \$35,000 cash were recovered from the residence of an accused narcotics supplier in New Rochelle.

Once, the supplier drove his Mercedes to a nearby bank parking lot and allegedly handed off a McDonald's bag containing 100 grams of cocaine to customers in another vehicle. The largest seizure in the case occurred during a court-authorized search at the second supplier's apartment at 333 Huguenot Street, Apt. 1209, in New Rochelle. Agents and officers recovered four guns, a duffel bag containing four kilograms of cocaine and three kilograms of fentanyl, and \$35,000 cash. A search at 1101 Forbell Street yielded quantities of cocaine, fentanyl, and heroin in powder form, and over 3,500 packaged glassines of fentanyl, as well as a gun, a kilo press and other equipment.

Cocaine

Bushwick Bar Used to Stash Over 20 Lbs. of Cocaine and Cash

Over 22 pounds of cocaine (10 kilograms), \$90,000 cash, a gun, and high-end jewelry were seized in an investigation centered on a sports bar in Bushwick, Brooklyn. Agents with DEA New Jersey Division learned the bar, located at 1204 Halsey Street, was being used to store large amounts of drugs and cash after conducting surveillance for over a month. Four men were seen visiting the bar three or more times per week. The investigation revealed the men had access to a private, locked basement room, where a court-authorized search yielded 22 pounds cocaine, \$28,000 cash in bundles secured with rubber bands, and a money counting machine. The four men were arrested soon after leaving the establishment late one night. One of the defendants was stopped a block away from the bar and was allegedly carrying \$60,000 cash in bundles. Additional searches of two residences associated with the defendants in Queens and the Bronx yielded a firearm, more cash and high-end jewelry valued at approximately \$77,000 that was found hidden inside a secret compartment in a speaker.



A bar in Bushwick, Brooklyn provided good cover for a group of high-level cocaine traffickers, who stashed large amounts of drugs and cash in the basement.

Investigation on Drug-Plagued Block in Hell's Kitchen



Cocaine, fentanyl, an imitation pistol and over \$3,300 cash were recovered from the Hell's Kitchen apartment.

Two women were sentenced to prison following an investigation sparked by numerous community complaints about criminal activity in an apartment building in Hell's Kitchen. The NYPD investigation involved sales to undercover officers at 326 West 49th Street, and two court-authorized searches of the women's apartment in which large amounts of narcotics and cash were recovered. In the first search, police recovered more than 1,600 small bags of cocaine, as well as quantities of fentanyl, and over \$3,300 cash. An imitation firearm was also recovered. The women were released on their own recognizance while charges were

pending. Approximately six weeks after the first search, police again obtained court-authorization to search the apartment and found glassine bags of fentanyl, numerous twists and rocks of cocaine, and crystal methamphetamine.

Twenty Lbs. of Cocaine Hidden in Cigar Boxes

DEA agents discovered dozens of cigar boxes used to conceal cocaine during a court-authorized search of a Brooklyn man's residence at 33 Crosby Avenue in Cypress Hills. In total, nine kilograms (approximately 20 pounds) of cocaine were found inside 45 cigar boxes. Opened from the top, the boxes appeared to only contain actual cigars. But by prying off the wooden underside of each box, DEA agents discovered thin packages of cocaine beneath false bottoms. Prior to the search, agents conducted surveillance at 33 Crosby Avenue and observed the man who resided there retrieve a large box from a parked car and carry it to the rear of the building. Agents froze the location and obtained a court-authorized search warrant. In total, three large boxes with 45 wooden cigar boxes inside were recovered. The cocaine carried an estimated street value of \$300,000. Thin ketamine bricks were also found in the residence. One month before, a second man was arrested in possession of a thin brick of cocaine after he allegedly visited 33 Crosby Avenue.

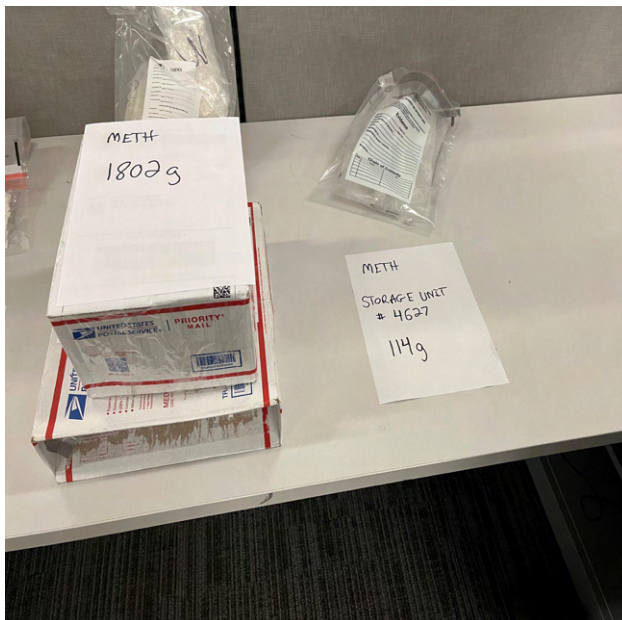


DEA agents discovered cigar boxes with false bottoms that concealed thin bricks of cocaine.

Methamphetamine



Five Charged in Multistate Synthetic Drug Operation

Over 20 pounds of methamphetamine, “pink cocaine,” and other substances, were recovered on Manhattan’s West Side during an investigation by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. Five individuals were arrested in connection with a drug ring that allegedly operated between Baltimore and New York City. Approximately seven pounds of methamphetamine, and over six pounds of MDMA and ketamine, were recovered from a room at a hotel, located at 342 West 40th Street in Hell’s Kitchen. Two alleged drug suppliers from out of town were arrested. Several hours earlier, agents had arrested another individual who allegedly served as a drug runner for suppliers staying at the hotel. Agents stopped him in a car on West 48th Street and recovered five pounds of methamphetamine, over 300 grams of MDMA, and approximately 250 grams of ketamine. Another car associated with the organization was stopped at 135th Street and Amsterdam Avenue and found to be carrying 645 grams of “pink cocaine,” also known as “tusi.” Laboratory analysis identified the contents as a mixture of ketamine and MDMA. An additional four pounds of methamphetamine were seized from a USPS package and a storage unit.



Methamphetamine, cocaine, and “pink cocaine” were seized from a Baltimore-to-New York City trafficking group.



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Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Written Testimony to New York City Council and the Committee on Public Safety

Thank you to the Council, the Committee on Public Safety, and the Committee on Criminal Justice for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget.

My name is Caprice Jenerson, and I am the President and Attorney-in-Charge of the Office of the Appellate Defender (OAD). OAD is one of the oldest institutional providers of mandated appellate and post-conviction representation for indigent individuals in New York City. I submit this testimony to underscore the urgent need to protect and grow funding for indigent appellate defense, including OAD. Our work is not only constitutionally required, but it is also essential to public safety, to the well-being of individuals and families impacted by the criminal legal system, and to maintain public trust in the fairness and integrity of that system.

The Office of the Appellate Defender fulfills a critical public purpose by ensuring the constitutional right to effective assistance of counsel for individuals who cannot afford representation after conviction. We serve people convicted of felony offenses in Manhattan and the Bronx, providing appellate and post-conviction advocacy that continues long after sentencing.

As a nonprofit law firm dedicated exclusively to appellate and post-conviction work, OAD safeguards due process, promotes lawful and accurate convictions, and strengthens confidence in the criminal legal system. Our attorneys identify and correct legal errors, challenge unconstitutional sentencing, and, in appropriate cases, secure relief from wrongful convictions. Appellate representation is not discretionary. It is a mandated component of the justice system, and New York City relies on organizations like OAD to fulfill that obligation.

High-quality appellate advocacy strengthens the integrity of the justice system as a whole. By identifying and correcting legal errors, appellate defenders ensure that convictions are lawful, sentences are constitutional, and judicial decisions are subject to meaningful review.

Efficient appellate representation also supports judicial economy. When appeals and post-conviction matters are handled effectively and without delay, courts can resolve cases more quickly, reducing backlog and avoiding prolonged litigation.

Timely appellate advocacy can lead to sentence corrections, lawful resentencing, or other forms of relief that prevent individuals from remaining incarcerated longer than the law permits. This not only protects individual rights but also promotes a more efficient and accountable system.

The impact of appellate and post-conviction advocacy extends far beyond the courtroom.

When individuals are not unnecessarily or unlawfully incarcerated, families experience less financial strain, children maintain stronger parental connections, and communities retain caregivers and wage earners. These outcomes contribute to greater stability in neighborhoods that are disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system.

In addition to legal advocacy, OAD provides client-centered services that support reentry and community reintegration. Our client services team, including trained social workers, works with individuals while they are incarcerated and as they prepare to return to their communities. This includes helping clients access housing, prepare for parole, and connect with critical support services. This work is directly tied to public safety. Individuals who are better prepared for reentry, and who have access to support and stability, are more likely to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Despite the critical role of this work, OAD's current contract does not fund most of the services provided by the client services team.

OAD is a relatively small but highly specialized organization. With a staff of 38 professionals, including attorneys, paralegals, client services staff, and administrators, we accept approximately 400 new case assignments each year. Because appellate and post-conviction matters often span multiple years, our caseload reflects both new and ongoing representation.

OAD is also a training office, expanding access to appellate practice by hiring and developing recent law graduates into skilled appellate advocates. This model strengthens the long-term capacity of New York's public defense system and ensures a pipeline of attorneys trained in this complex area of law.

Like many legal services organizations in New York City, OAD operates within a workforce environment where staff are unionized. This reflects a shared commitment to fair compensation, sustainable workloads, and workplace dignity. In order to recruit and retain talented attorneys, paralegals, and client service professionals, nonprofit public defense organizations must be able to coexist and collaborate effectively with their unions to build and maintain a healthy, stable workforce. Competitive compensation and equitable working conditions are essential not only for staff retention, but also for continuity of representation and the quality of advocacy provided to clients. Adequate funding must account for these realities to ensure that organizations like OAD can sustain the skilled workforce required to meet their mandated responsibilities.

Despite the critical and mandated nature of this work, compensation for public defense attorneys does not reflect parity with their counterparts in District Attorney offices. This disparity makes it more difficult to recruit and retain experienced attorneys, particularly in a high-cost city like New York. Addressing this imbalance is essential to maintaining a strong, stable, and effective appellate defense workforce.

To ensure that New York City continues to meet its constitutional obligations and support public safety, it is critical that funding for appellate defense be both protected and increased.

Investment in appellate representation:

- Ensures lawful and accurate outcomes in the criminal legal system
- Promotes efficiency and reduces unnecessary incarceration

- Supports successful reentry and community stability
- Strengthens public confidence in the justice system

At the same time, the current funding structure for nonprofit legal services providers does not adequately account for the rising cost of operating in New York City. Contracts that remain flat over multiple years, without regular cost-of-living adjustments, create structural deficits that place organizations in an unsustainable position. As the affordability crisis continues to impact housing, wages, and operational costs, it is critical that the City adopt a funding methodology that includes regular COLA increases and avoids prolonged contract stagnation. Without these adjustments, providers are forced to absorb increasing costs while continuing to meet mandated obligations, ultimately threatening organizational stability and service delivery.

OAD has demonstrated its ability to deliver high-quality, efficient, and impactful legal representation and advocacy. What is needed now is funding that reflects the true cost of this work.

OAD has served New York City for nearly four decades as a trusted provider of appellate and post-conviction representation. We remain committed to ensuring fairness, protecting constitutional rights, and supporting the individuals and communities impacted by the criminal legal system.

We respectfully urge the Council to protect and increase funding for appellate defense providers in the final budget. Doing so will ensure that this critical component of the justice system remains strong, effective, and aligned with the City's commitment to fairness, safety, and accountability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



ZOHRAN K. MAMDANI
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SHERENE CRAWFORD
INTERIM CHAIR

**Testimony of the Civilian Complaint Review Board before the New York City
Council Public Safety Committee**

March 18, 2026

Introduction:

Chairperson Feliz, members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you here today. My name is Jon Darche, and I am the Executive Director of the Civilian Complaint Review Board – also known as the CCRB – the largest police oversight body in the country. I am here today to discuss the work of our Agency; to highlight the important role our Agency fills for New Yorkers as a police oversight body, and to underscore just how vital it is that the Agency be fully funded in order to fulfill its New York City Charter mandate.

Civilians deserve justice in a timely fashion, and police officers deserve an appropriate resolution in a timely fashion. Our budget request enables that.

Background:

The CCRB receives, investigates, mediates, hears, makes findings, and recommends action on complaints against New York City police officers. These complaints allege the use of excessive or unnecessary force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, or the use of offensive language.

The Board itself is made up of 15 members, whose appointments are meant to reflect New York City in all its diversity. Five members are appointed by the Mayor. Five are appointed by this Council. Three are designated by the Police Commissioner and approved by the Mayor. One is appointed by the Public Advocate. The Chair is jointly appointed by the Mayor and the City Council.

The Agency's entirely civilian staff investigates complaints; gathers evidence; interviews witnesses and officers, and then shares the results of that investigation with the Board. The Board then reviews the investigation and meets to determine whether or not to substantiate allegations of misconduct.

In cases where the Board substantiates misconduct, it recommends discipline. Those findings and recommendations are then transmitted to the Police Commissioner, who retains the final authority on all disciplinary matters for NYPD officers.

In the most serious cases of alleged misconduct, the CCRB's Administrative Prosecution Unit – APU – will prosecute an administrative trial. The NYPD's Deputy Commissioner for

Trials and her team preside over these trials. The results of those trials are also transmitted to the Police Commissioner for her approval.

The scale of the work this Agency does cannot be overstated. We measure our work in complaints and allegations. A complaint is an incident where a civilian believes misconduct occurred. An allegation describes a possible violation of part of the NYPD Patrol Guide. Complaints may contain more than one allegation and involve more than one subject officer.

In 2025, the CCRB received five thousand, six hundred, and seventeen (5,617) complaints – the second-highest number of complaints in a decade. It received twenty-two thousand, one hundred, and seventy two (22,172) specific allegations.

The Agency fully investigated two thousand and seventy (2,070) complaints and fourteen thousand, nine hundred and fifty three (14,953) allegations. Our investigations substantiated nine hundred and eighty seven (987) complaints and three thousand, one hundred and seventy three (3,173) allegations, against 1,357 individual members of service.

This means that we substantiated 21.22% of the allegations we fully investigated. Put another way, the CCRB substantiated at least one allegation in 47.68% of the complaints we fully investigated.

New Yorkers have the right to report allegations of police misconduct to this Agency; and it is a right that New Yorkers have been exercising with increased frequency in recent years.

Whether a complaint is substantiated or not, the CCRB's job is to treat that complaint seriously and to find the truth. We owe this to the civilians and police officers.

The increase in complaints outpaced the CCRB's capacity to respond in a timely manner. In 2025, on average, it took 432 days to close a fully investigated case. This is the fastest average time to close a fully investigated complaint in five years. But it is still too long.

In order for our system of public safety to work for everyone – both civilians and police officers – it is vital that the CCRB be given the resources to ensure all complaints can be investigated in a timely fashion; and that the evidence can be followed wherever it leads.

FY27 Budget Request:

To that end, the Agency's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2027 would provide enough funding to support all of its functions as an independent police oversight Agency: 65 million, 94 thousand, 437 dollars (\$65,094,437) and an authorized agency headcount of 500 people.

This is an increase of roughly 36 million dollars, and 233 staff members over the enacted FY26 budget. It represents, in total, less than one percent of the New York Police Department's overall budget and headcount. If this request is granted in full, the Agency would have roughly 500 people to oversee the work of 35,000 members of service. We believe this is what a fully funded Agency would look like.

Efficiency and the Impacts of Underfunding:

Historically, the CCRB has been underfunded and under resourced. Changes to the City Charter gave additional authority and responsibilities to the Agency; including investigating allegations of untruthful statements, as well as racial profiling and bias-based policing. These changes also gave the Agency the power to initiate investigations without having received a complaint.

This tension led the Agency to make difficult decisions to prioritize where and how to use the resources at our disposal.

On January 1, 2024, the CCRB implemented a policy known as “Strategic Resource Allocation Determination” or S-RAD Closures. This was due to a shortage of investigators as compared to the increased number of complaints the CCRB received. Under this policy, certain types of allegations of misconduct were closed as “Unable to Investigate” when they were not part of a larger complaint. In 2025 alone, roughly 1,390 complaints were closed under S-RAD.

S-RAD is unfair to both officers and civilians alike. When misconduct is alleged, it helps no one to leave these allegations uninvestigated.

If the incident represents a violation of the NYPD Patrol Guide, the civilian should know that the officer was held accountable. If the incident is not a violation, the officer deserves to know they acted appropriately and the civilian deserves an explanation. This is how the CCRB, as an institution, builds trust.

Being unable to investigate allegations due to budgetary constraints harms all parties.

While the increased FY26 budget did enable us to reduce the scope of S-RAD, we were unable to eliminate it entirely. That is why we’re requesting a full budget today – to ensure we are able to investigate every complaint we receive that is within our jurisdiction.

Despite a lack of funding and increases to the Agency’s jurisdiction, as well as to the number of complaints, the quality of CCRB investigations improved.

In fact, we increased the number of fully investigated cases in which we provided a finding on the merits. What does this mean? In 2025, the Agency closed just 16.22% of allegations in fully investigated complaints as “unable to determine,” the lowest percentage on record. Body worn cameras factor importantly in this trend, as they provide key evidence that allows the Agency to resolve more complaints than ever before.

We’ve also made increased efficiency a key Agency goal for 2026; soliciting feedback from across our workforce to uncover new ways to be better in our work, each day. Efficiency alone is not enough to respond to the scale of the work our Agency faces each year. To do that, we need additional staffing, and our Budget Request captures those needs.

Budget Needs By Team:

The Investigations Unit makes up the bulk of our workforce. They carry out the day-to-day work of fact-finding and interviewing. This unit requires an additional 86 staff spread across several investigator roles, in order to fully address New Yorkers’ complaints. These are some of

the most critical positions in the Agency. Filling them is essential to meeting our duties under the City Charter. Additionally, the increased overall number of investigators would allow the workload to be spread across a much wider base of staff; shortening overall investigation timelines.

An efficient CCRB isn't only able to investigate more cases, it's also able to do so more quickly.

In addition, when this Council directed the CCRB to investigate racial profiling and bias-based policing allegations, it also funded the creation of a team to conduct these investigations. This requires specialized training and a different workflow than our general investigations. That team currently has 27 staff members, but it is in need of 37 additional positions to fully meet our responsibilities under the City Charter, including managers, supervisors, and investigators.

In 2012, the CCRB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NYPD to establish the Administrative Prosecution Unit, or APU. The APU prosecutes the most serious cases of alleged misconduct in administrative trials before an NYPD trial commissioner. As of now, this unit has 23 staff. It needs two additional roles to help handle the workload associated with an administrative trial. The additional support will further increase efficiency and reduce timelines associated with these cases.

The CCRB's Outreach unit is the face of the CCRB for many New Yorkers. They go into communities, schools, gyms, barbershops, and everywhere New Yorkers gather to explain how the CCRB works and how to file a complaint. Their vital work includes initiatives such as CCRB Courtside, where we interact with New Yorkers on basketball courts and other organized sporting events. Or CCRB Cares, where we partner with community organizations during charitable activities, such as community cleanups and food pantries. This unit requires eight new staff to spread the word across all five boroughs about the work of the CCRB.

Communicating with New Yorkers is a key responsibility for any Agency within the city government, but this is especially true for the CCRB. Many New Yorkers are unaware of the CCRB and their rights in an interaction with police officers. For this reason, the Agency needs to be supported in its efforts to perform targeted engagement with a diverse group of New Yorkers. These efforts share information about how to file a complaint should someone believe they are the victim of police misconduct. Providing this type of information to the public – where they are – can help increase overall trust in the system of public safety. This makes New York safer for everyone: police and civilians alike.

Beyond these core areas, the Agency has many needs in our other support offices – whether it's new attorneys to support our Office of the General Counsel; new specialists to help our Human Resources department; or new information technology experts to help support the rest of our staff as they do their work. It is these roles that provide less visible work – but no less important work – to help the Agency operate and fulfill its mission.

Board Member Appointees:

I also want to reiterate the importance of having a fully staffed Board. As mentioned, we currently have only 11 of the required 15 Board Member positions filled.

The lack of a full complement of Board Members impacts our work, slowing the overall time it takes to reach a conclusion in an investigation.

In 2025, fully investigated cases had to wait an average of 156 days before being reviewed by a Board panel. This delay is directly related to the lack of a full Board and burdens the civilians and police officers who are waiting to see the result of our investigations. Filling all Board Member positions would be a simple and effective way to increase the Agency's efficiency.

Conclusion:

The work of the CCRB is essential: to assure accountability of the members of the New York City Police Department. That is why Mayor David Dinkins supported the transition of the CCRB into the independent agency it is today. That is why our staff tirelessly performs the work they do, day in and day out.

The CCRB is the gold standard against which police review boards across the nation are measured. With the support of this Council, I believe we can do even better.

**Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Testimony to the New York City Council
Committees on Finance and Public Safety**

March 18, 2026

Chair Feliz, Chair Lee, and members of the council – it's my pleasure to be here today.

I'm Deanna Logan, Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. At the heart of MOCJ's work: making New York City a fairer and safer place for all. I'm joined here by MOCJ's Chief of Staff Nora Daniel, Chief Operating Officer Candice Julien, and Chief Financial Officer Robert Fiato

Every program we operate, every partnership we build, and every dollar we invest is guided by a clear goal: making communities safer – and stronger – using public dollars wisely.

Our office is focused on addressing not just the criminal legal system – but also the underlying issues driving system involvement.

When we invest in people — thoughtfully, strategically, and guided by data — we generate real return on that investment. Programs that connect people to services, put a roof over their heads, help them rebuild their lives, and stabilize families and neighborhoods...ultimately cost a fraction of what it takes to incarcerate someone on Rikers Island.

The outcomes are far better.

Through initiatives like Supervised Release, Alternatives to Incarceration, and the Community Justice Reentry Network, we're keeping *thousands* of people out of jail every year.

This is what it looks like when government works for New Yorkers.

[Public Health = Public Safety]

You may have heard me say recently that “Public Health *is* Public Safety.”

A core part of our strategy is recognizing that our public health and public safety systems have symbiotic relationships

Research is our foundation; we've studied people who are at heightened risk of criminal legal system involvement.

What did we learn? Many individuals who keep cycling through the legal system are navigating complex combinations of challenges:

- housing instability;
- trauma;
- untreated mental health needs; substance use disorder
- economic hardship.

Addressing only one piece of that puzzle doesn't work.

This is why we still have gaps in our safety nets.

But addressing those gaps does work; and we are now filling them in, with consistent coordinating and collaborating:

- Alongside DOC;
- DOP;
- The city's health agencies;
- Our five DA's;
- Our indigent defense providers...
- And a host of great community partners.

[Impact]

That coordination is paying dividends.

MOCJ is committed to strengthening the pipeline connecting people leaving custody to transitional housing, job training, mental health services, and community-based mentorship.

Our expansion of emergency transitional housing is an especially critical component — with more than 100 beds coming online in the upcoming months — to give more New Yorkers a stable place to lay their head during the vulnerable period of rebuilding their life.

We are also strengthening workforce development.

Of course, training is key. People need to be equipped in the skills to do the job. However, connecting the skilled person with the employer is as critical.

We're investing in programs that include placement services; employer partnerships; and sustained career pathways so participants can achieve the financial stability needed to

support their families. Thank you to second chance employers that understand the lived experience and trauma accompanies and who provide, not only opportunity, but grace and space as formerly incarcerated persons acclimate to the work environment.

When people have meaningful work and stable housing, they are less likely to return to the criminal legal system — benefiting entire communities.

If you'll indulge me for a very quick story...

I recently had the opportunity to sit in on a healing circle with a number of participants from our Project Restore pilot. That's our collaboration with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office and the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn.

[slow down here – really lean into these words] We often ask ourselves- what does public safety *look* like?

What does it *sound* like?

It looks and sounds like ten young men from Bed-Stuy, all with history of gun or gang involvement, working out their trauma to build better lives for themselves.

These men, when I first met them some 2+ years ago, were in rival street crews – sitting next to their former rivals, now friends collaborating on community safety and mental health initiatives.

They talked about the families they're now supporting; the degrees and careers they're now pursuing — *because they had the support to break cycles.*

Most importantly they discussed why this should be the reality for all and not just a lucky few.

That's what safety looks like for all of us.

[Vision]

At the same time, we are clear-eyed about the challenges ahead. Our jail population has climbed in recent years, so we still have work to do and investments to make to safely reduce it while maintaining accountability and public trust.

The path forward is clear. The solutions that work are the ones grounded in research, coordination across systems, and investments in people.

That means continuing to strengthen programs like Supervised Release, Alternatives to Incarceration, and the Community Justice Reentry Network – programs that help people stabilize their lives.

Simply put: investing in people is one of the smartest public safety strategies we have. It strengthens neighborhoods, reduces reliance on incarceration, and delivers a strong return on public dollars.

Thank you, council, for your commitment to building a stronger and fairer, safer New York; I look forward to continuing our partnership.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
TO THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING ON PUBLIC SAFETY
MARCH 18, 2026
4:30 PM

Chairman Feliz and distinguished members of the committee, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 - AFSCME. It is the honor of Local 372 to present this testimony on behalf of the Level-I and Level-II School Crossing Guards that we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I. Local 372 respectfully requests: the City to restore the School Crossing Guard vacancy positions that were cut from the previous budget, City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against School Crossing Guards, and permanent reforms to School Crossing Guard pay practices, conforming same to that of other DOE support staff titles.

Local 372 has long testified that the need to hire additional School Crossing Guards is vital in order to keep our children safe from the dangers of reckless drivers, and to ensure that our School Crossing Guard members are not stretched thin by the continuous decline of staff. Student-pedestrians often face major safety traffic hazards everyday caused by double-and-triple parked cars at bus stops sited in close proximities to school buildings, and School Crossing Guards are often the first line of defense in ensuring the safety of these students. These workers have risked their own health, safety and lives to perform these vital services to the community, and as the number of School Crossing Guards continue to decline, thousands of school children cross main intersections without any supervision, putting our children's safety in jeopardy. The need for increased protections for our student pedestrians and members of our communities make it

essential that the City of New York allocate funding for the additional hiring of School Crossing Guards. In 2023, former Mayor Eric Adams authorized the elimination of almost 500 open school crossing guard positions, completely eliminating the hiring of additional School Crossing Guards. There have been a number of casualties since. For example, in March 2024 an 8-year-old boy died in Queens after being struck just five blocks from school.¹ And just last month an 11 year old girl was killed while crossing the street in Brooklyn.² By eliminating these open positions and not hiring additional School Crossing Guards, sends a dangerous message: the safety of NYC school children is not the City's priority. **Local 372 respectfully requests** that the City restore the 500 open positions, and hire additional School Crossing Guards providing our school children with heightened protections as they travel to and from school.

Throughout the last couple of years, there has been a lot of coverage on the violence that transit workers were experiencing while on the job. In response, Governor Hochul and the Legislature, working with the City Council, enacted numerous legislation that implemented protections addressing the violence towards transit workers and riders, and the Governor highlights the corresponding reductions in New York City transit crimes and her Administration's ongoing efforts to expand safety initiatives throughout the transit system.³ What we have not heard addressed is the similar risk of violence that School Crossing Guards face on a daily basis. That is why **Local 372 respectfully requests** City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against School Crossing Guards.

¹ *Gothamist*: "Queens parents struggle to get crossing guards after 2 students killed in traffic," Sept. 27, 2024, <https://gothamist.com/news/queens-parents-struggle-to-get-crossing-guards-after-2-students-killed-in-traffic>

² <https://abc7ny.com/post/school-bus-struck-killed-teenage-girl-hit-run-bath-beach-brooklyn/18549142/>

³ Press Office: Safe Subways: One Year After Deploying Additional Law Enforcement and Safety Measures..., March 6, 2025, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/safer-subways-one-year-after-deploying-additional-law-enforcement-and-safety-measures-governor>

Notwithstanding, while increasing the number of School Crossing Guard positions solves the staffing and safety issue, it does not solve the equity problem that our members are currently facing. School Crossing Guards work a 25-hour capped part-time schedule that includes early morning, lunch time and after school hours, serving almost a million public-school children. Our members do not get paid for snow days and certain holidays (days where the schools shut down but the City remains open), leaving their paychecks dependent on the whims of the weather. A snow day might just be the determining factor as to whether a School Crossing Guard can put food on the table. For many New Yorkers who are living paycheck to paycheck, like School Crossing Guards, any one unanticipated day off from work can be the difference between making ends meet and financial ruin.

Despite working under the New York Police Department (“NYPD”), School Crossing Guards are functionally analogous to school support staff titles working under the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”). Likewise, School Crossing Guards and DOE school support staff should also share the same privileges and pay rights. Just as DOE school support staff are currently compensated for this lost time, so too should School Crossing Guards be equally compensated. On top of the equity concern, it also poses a retainage issue. Due to the acknowledged dangers that come with the position and not having the pay benefits that are on par with other DOE support staff titles, it makes it difficult to retain School Crossing Guards. Within the School Crossing Guard membership, 90% are women, 85% are Black and Latino, and many of our members are at higher risk because they are older, with 33% of the membership aged over 55 years old. **Local 372 requests** permanent reforms to conform School Crossing Guards' pay benefits to those of other DOE support staff titles.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued support on behalf of Local 372's School Crossing Guards.

TESTIMONY ON THE BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EMPLOYEES DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME

TO THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING ON MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES,
AND ADDICTION

MARCH 19, 2026

2:30 PM

Chairwoman Lynn Schulman, Chairwoman Tiffany Caban, and distinguished members of the committee, I am Trina Prior, Secretary Treasurer of Local 372 – NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 – AFSCME. It is the honor of Local 372 to present this testimony on behalf of the 24,000 members we represent, including the 256 Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (“SAPIS”) under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I. Local 372 respectfully requests the City of New York to fund the SAPIS program through a **dollar-for-dollar match** with the State Legislature.

Since 1971, SAPIS workers have provided a range of mental health and intervention services to the largest school district in the Nation, through teaching social-emotional strategies, and offering all behavioral support available so that our children are ready to learn. In group and individual settings, SAPIS use evidence-based programs approved by the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (“OASAS”) as positive alternatives for New York City public school students in need. SAPIS service grades K-12 throughout all of New York City’s 32 school districts, including special education.

SAPIS have always been proactive in providing students and their families with the tools to navigate the myriad of societal, personal, and peer pressures that can derail healthy academic, social, and individual development. SAPIS are also responsible for monitoring behavior and offering resources and services to support students where they struggle to improve, including

individual work plans each year that are specially tailored to the needs of the students in the schools. Not only do SAPIS help students dealing with substance abuse, they also help navigate students through LGBTQ+ issues, their relationships with themselves and others, and any other life events that may impact their education. All of these stressors are interconnected, so in order to tackle these issues at an early age, inserting a SAPIS prevents the destructive cycle from continuing. For many years, the SAPIS program was funded through a combination of federal and state funding that passed through OASAS and, in previous budgets, the State Legislature and the City were constant champions for our students through funding the SAPIS program.

Notwithstanding, while we appreciate the City's consistent lead in proffering \$2 million in funding towards the SAPIS program, it has not been enough to maintain our SAPIS and ensure their efficacy with our children. When the 2006 federal aid cuts occurred, the funding stream that we used to receive through OASAS was significantly reduced, resulting in the loss of over 200 SAPIS workers. And for the last eighteen years, the program has struggled to sustain with the reduced and stagnant budget totaling \$2 million, making it almost impossible to hire and maintain additional SAPIS. Taking the already reduced budget, the rising costs of living impacting our families due to inflation, losing SAPIS workers due to retirement, and the rising need for services tackling the mental health crisis, juxtaposed against the anticipated additional federal cuts towards education under the current Federal Administration, it is imperative that the City of New York continue to protect and invest in vital programs such as SAPIS, for the mental wellness of our children, and the healthy development of our future leaders. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the City of New York allocate funding towards the SAPIS program.

The students of New York City Public Schools reside in the City's most underserved regions, experiencing trauma daily, and continue to be influenced by the lingering effects of the

coronavirus pandemic. New York City School administrators and staff can affirm that the spike in student disciplinary incidents demonstrate the continued emotional difficulties students have experienced since undergoing the stresses of the pandemic. According to the released 2024 school survey results, more New York City students than at any point in the past five years say that kids in their schools regularly bully each other.¹ More than half of the roughly 355,000 middle and high school students who responded to the city school system’s annual survey earlier last year said their classmates are bullied, harassed, or work to intimidate each other – up from 44% in 2019. The rise in student reports of bullying comes as city schools continue to confront a swirl of old and new social challenges, such as family and financial losses experienced due to the pandemic, intense cyberbullying, exposure to pressures via social media, and more. This continues to prove that there is a higher need for more SAPIS in schools.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) encourages the use of evidence-based programs and practice. According to OJJDP, the use of evidence-based programs and practices generally have one or more rigorous outcome evaluations that demonstrate effectiveness by measuring the relationship between the program and its intended outcome(s).² Evidence also suggests that programs implemented at earlier stages in a child’s life may be more effective in preventative efforts and providing behavior adjustments, conversely to programs implemented in later adolescent years, especially for high-risk populations.³ With the youth’s mental health crisis worsening due to the use of social media, the need for resources tackling mental health is crucial, and the need for SAPIS is greater. Increasing funding towards SAPIS is one of the solutions in addressing this mental health crisis.

¹ Chalkbeat New York, “More bullying, teachers dissatisfaction with the chancellor: 5 takeaways from NYC’s 2024 school survey,” August 30, 2024, [NYC students report more bullying in schools, 2024 survey shows - Chalkbeat](#)

² [Evidence-based Programs | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#)

³ Park, 2008; Phillips, McDonald, and Kishbaugh, 2017; Webster–Stratton, Reid, and Hammond, 2004.

Two hundred thirty-six SAPIS are currently employed to provide programming and services to the City's 946,747 public school students. SAPIS are uniquely trained to provide a broad range of services and programming. SAPIS are positioned in the schools to be accessible to all students throughout the school day to provide a variety of services. An individual SAPIS can effectively reach approximately 500 students in need. Not only are there not enough SAPIS to place one in every public school, there are not even enough SAPIS to station one in every public-school *campus* (which can comprise more than five schools). Our SAPIS are instead moved to different campuses based on an evaluation as to who needs a SAPIS more. That should not be the system used to determine the needs of our children. Having to pick and choose which campus needs a SAPIS the most, leads to a reduction of additional support to our students, inevitably resulting in negative impacts, to students who need the support most. Due to these overwhelming circumstances, the previous allocation of \$2 million does not meet the demands of these extraordinary times.

In 2024, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) updated Chancellor's Regulation A-411 to require that every school establish a multidisciplinary Crisis Intervention Team comprised of a school administrator, counselors and/or social workers, teachers, a Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialist (SAPIS), the school nurse, and any available school-based mental health providers (such as Article 31 Clinic staff).⁴ The NYC DOE understands how important it is to have a crisis intervention team in every school, which is why it is important to have a SAPIS in every school.

⁴ New York City Department of Education. (2024). A-411 SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN BEHAVIORAL CRISIS. In Regulation of the Chancellor. Retrieved December 7, 2025, from <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/a-411-final-07-25-24.pdf>

This team must meet monthly, develop a Crisis Intervention Plan as part of the Consolidated School and Youth Development Plan, and engage in regular de-escalation training and professional development. However, despite the mandate, many schools lack sustainable funding and the necessary resources to hire enough staff for these teams, making it difficult to fully comply with the regulation's requirements in practice. That is why it is crucial for the New York City Council fund for a dollar-to-dollar match with the State Legislature towards the SAPIS program and be able to be in compliance with this mandate.

Local 372's goal is to once again partner with you and your colleagues in the City Council, along with the Mayor, in making a smart investment towards the quality of life for New York City students, their families, and communities at-large. It remains our shared responsibility to ensure that our children meet and exceed their potential. Without SAPIS, we are robbing struggling students of their opportunity to quality, competitive education, and ultimately, changing the trajectory of their futures. That is why Local 372 requests that the City of New York assist our efforts in pushing for **a dollar-for-dollar match** with the State Legislature in this year's budget. This would support the equivalent of an additional 80 full-time SAPIS positions, creating lifelines for up to 40,000 more students in need. We are committed to working together to make this possible.

If you have questions or need additional information, please reach out to Denise Mieses, the SAPIS Chairperson of Local 372 – NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 | AFSCME. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit the testimony for Local 372 NYC Board of Education Employees.

**Testimony of Olivia Duong
President, Local 3778, DC 37**

Preliminary Budget Hearing - Public Safety
New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The
Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, The Preliminary
Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2027-2030

March 18, 2026

Good Afternoon Chair Feliz and fellow Councilmembers. My name is Olivia Duong and I am President of Local 3778 of DC 37, representing 300 civilian NYPD professional titles such as Criminalists, City Research Scientists, Architects, and Engineers. I am here to highlight the urgent need for a new facility for our hardworking forensic scientists or Criminalists working at the NYPD Police Laboratory.

The Criminalists within the NYPD Detective Bureau are the scientists responsible for analyzing critical evidence—ranging from narcotics and latent fingerprints to gunshot residue and firearms—using accredited scientific methods. We provide essential investigative information to detectives and our scientific findings to the Assistant District Attorneys across all 5 boroughs as well as the Federal Government. Our members testify as expert witnesses, educating juries to ensure informed and fair verdicts. Throughout the pandemic, criminalists were deemed essential workers for our role in public safety and we answered the call.

The need for a modern, updated forensic laboratory building is long overdue. Currently, nearly 400 employees in forensic chemistry, firearms analysis, and crime scene units are squeezed into a five-story building in Queens that was built in 1930. This structure—originally a department store, then a college, and now a chemical laboratory and firing range— is fundamentally outdated. It exists in a state of constant, expensive repair. Years ago, our former Forensic Investigations Chief testified in this very room regarding the urgency of a new home. Since then, millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent simply to keep the roof from leaking, yet our operations have long since outgrown the space.

The current conditions are no longer sustainable. We are operating in laboratory spaces where 16 to 20 people are crowded into a single room, with constant foot traffic passing by fume hoods where hazardous chemicals are in use. Our workers deserve a state-of-the-art facility with proper ventilation for handling bulk powder evidence of unknown origin and safe, modern spaces to test live firearms.

I urge this Committee to prioritize a new laboratory in the NYPD capital budget. I ask this on behalf of the civil servants who are rarely seen but whose work makes a profound impact on public safety. Despite these challenges, my colleagues strive every day to maintain the highest standards of forensic science for the citizens of New York City. They deserve a workplace that also keeps them safe and matches the importance of their mission.

From: [Chin, Susan](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Safety-Tabitha Sheppard
Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 11:31:45 PM

[REDACTED]

Good day City Council,

My name is Tabitha Sheppard, and I am the Local President of Local 5911. I represent the supervisors, 911 operators, and dispatchers. Today, I would like to discuss the 2026 budget regarding the New York City Police Department Communications Section.

We are currently facing a severe staffing and retention crisis. While we continue to hire new employees who successfully complete a three-month training program, we are unable to retain them once they begin taking live 911 calls. The reason is clear and consistent: excessive and mandatory overtime.

Newly trained employees are routinely ordered to work 16-hour tours, five days a week. This means they are working an additional 40 hours of overtime weekly, on top of their regular shifts. This level of demand is not sustainable. It leads to exhaustion, burnout, and ultimately, resignation. Our employees are leaving because they cannot maintain any balance between their professional responsibilities and their personal lives, including caring for their families and loved ones.

This is not simply a staffing issue—it is a structural and operational issue. A major contributing factor is improper scheduling. As a 24-hour operation, the Communications Division cannot afford gaps between tours. One tour must seamlessly relieve the next. However, current scheduling practices create coverage gaps that automatically result in forced overtime.

I have repeatedly raised this concern with the Office of Labor Relations. If schedules were properly aligned, the reliance on excessive overtime would be significantly reduced. The solution is straightforward and achievable:

- * Establish a consistent structure of three tours
- * Limit the number of squads to four to five per tour
- * Ensure that tours are aligned with no gaps, allowing one tour to directly relieve the next

By implementing these changes, we can stabilize staffing, reduce burnout, and significantly improve retention.

Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that the City Council:

- * Allocate targeted funding within the NYPD budget specifically for the Communications Section
- * Support hiring efforts to reach sustainable staffing levels
- * Invest in retention initiatives that address working conditions
- * Direct a comprehensive review and restructuring of current scheduling practices

Our 911 operators and dispatchers are the first point of contact in emergencies. They are a critical part of public safety in New York City. However, the current conditions are driving them out of the profession at alarming rates.

I urge the Council to take this matter seriously and work with us to implement the necessary changes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

In Solidarity,
Tabitha Sheppard
President, Local5911

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES ON FINANCE BUDGET AND OVERSIGHT
HEARING ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027

PRESENTED BY:
JANE FOX

ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADVOCATES AND ATTORNEYS, UAW LOCAL 2325

MARCH 18, 2026

Thank you all for the opportunity to speak. My name is Jane Fox, and I am the Chair of the Legal Aid Society Attorneys Chapter at the Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys. We are United Auto Workers Local 2325. UAW 2325 represents over 3,700 active and retired legal services workers at [over thirty-five non-profit organizations](#) in the NYC metro area and beyond. UAW 2325 members are attorneys, paralegals, social workers, investigators and support staff.

Our members keep clients in their communities and outside of jails, keep families together, keep clients housed, and make sure New Yorkers have access to vital social services. In short, UAW 2325 members are the workers who guarantee community safety.

While our members are an essential labor force, decades of underfunding have led to untenable working conditions. This underfunding has persisted despite our members providing constitutionally mandated legal representation. We are facing an attrition crisis and a workload crisis not seen in years.

It is the City's obligation to meet that essential Constitutional mandate and yet, we cannot sustain these rising caseloads if our most experienced staff have left.

This Council needs to start paying attention to the attrition crisis in our industry. Because when we leave, the New Yorkers who depend on us for justice suffer.

Our message is simple and our fight for increased funding has one guiding light.

Working class New Yorkers deserve the same level of representation as rich New Yorkers.

Year after year, this city and this Council has found the money to keep police officers and District Attorneys in their jobs and guarantee them a pension. At the same time,

our union members have been pushed out, told they aren't worthy of an affordable wage or a dignified retirement because of the people we represent every day. Senior staff in the District Attorneys' offices and Corporation Counsel make far more than we do.

But you can support us and our clients, your own constituents, with your budget choices. You can support labor by ensuring there is enough money flowing so that when we get to the bargaining table with our employers, we can settle fair contracts.

This year, 2,100 of us will be bargaining, including all of the Criminal Trials providers, Legal Aid Attorneys, Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services and Neighborhood Defenders.

We are committed to bargaining in good faith with our employers and we are committed to fighting for the thousands of our union members who need better wages for the long-term.

In Fiscal Year 2027, we are asking the Council to fully fund legal services so our employers can meet our core bargaining demands on compensation and retirement.

Our costing estimates that the City will need to increase current funding by a minimum of \$80 million dollars across the legal services sector.

We are not siloed to just the criminal trials work, this funding ask will also cover our members providing family, civil, and immigration representation along other city contracts.

This is \$80 million in addition to what has already been guaranteed in the preliminary budget.

Our members are not immune from the affordability crisis. Austerity budgets in legal services hurt our union and they hurt New Yorkers. Settling fair contracts will provide stability to our members and ensure working class New Yorkers get the absolute best legal representation. They deserve nothing less.



Testimony of:

The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and New York County Defender Services

Presented before

The New York City Council Committee on Public Safety

Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 18, 2026

This testimony is submitted jointly by The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and New York County Defender Services. As New York City’s public defenders, we represented over 200,000 very low and no-income New Yorkers over the past year.

Our offices hold a unique role in the city. While our primary responsibility is to stand up in court for people facing arrest, our other functions are to hold the police accountable, ensure that the people we represent are safe while in custody on Riker’s Island, as well as assist people who have mental illness, substance use issues, are facing houselessness, may be at risk of losing their children to the foster system and many other issues.

Critically at this moment, as we navigate increased ICE enforcement, our offices are working to meet the growing need for immigration advice and assistance among the people we serve as they navigate a frightening and desperate moment in their lives. This is why, as part of our request for this year, we ask that the City Council work with the mayor to support this critical function, in addition to the other requests included in this testimony.

We have come to the City Council many times expressing the dire need for an infusion of funds so we can adequately pay our staff. Our offices have fallen far behind the prevailing rate in other cities with a similar cost of living to New York City (and even those with much lower living costs), as well as the federal pay scale for public defenders. The failure to keep pace has caused attrition in our offices to the mid and upper levels of our attorney staff. Indeed, the recent increase to assigned counsel rates makes moving into the private sector a choice that would double or triple an attorney’s income. Even with the benefits and other incentives we provide, we continue to experience the loss of senior, qualified attorneys.

For FY27, we urge the city to take immediate action and provide an additional:

- **\$100 million in salaries for staff;**
- **\$50 million for other expenses;**
- **An additional \$10 million for our crimmigration staff (also known as Padilla attorneys).**

Not only do public defenders in New York City earn significantly less than their counterparts in other jurisdictions with similar living costs, but they also make less than other attorneys working in similar jobs in the New York City legal system, such as Corporation Counsel, court attorneys employed by OCA, and attorneys who are paid under the 18b assigned counsel hourly pay scale.

Our offices hire people who choose to do the difficult and challenging work we do and are committed and passionate about representing people who are arrested and who face extremely harsh consequences. Nearly all the people they meet each day face the possibility of incarceration and a criminal conviction, which can impact them for their entire lives, limiting opportunities for education, employment, housing, and, for many, the right to remain in the United States. Our staff experience enormous pressure that is growing every day as they tackle the increase in low-level misdemeanor arrests and the outsized collateral consequences of these cases, as well as the enormous challenge of increased ICE enforcement and presence in our city.

Managing the added stress of making ends meet on a low salary while also paying off significant student debt wears down even the most dedicated and talented attorneys and causes them to leave our offices, thus creating a void of experienced attorneys to handle the cases of the people who need their assistance the most.

Our offices endeavor to provide the best representation possible for our clients who are poor and cannot afford to pay an attorney. To do so, we have built training and supervision models such that our attorneys surpass any other jurisdiction in the country. We have forensics units that oversee analysis of often sub-par scientific and pseudo-scientific evidence being presented in court; we have specialized staff to work with clients experiencing mental illness; and we provide social work assistance to people with housing instability, people who are entitled to benefits but have been unable to access them, direct support and assistance with drug and alcohol issues, intensive work with adolescents and emerging adults and more, as we are often the only service our clients have ever been able to access.

And while we are proud of the hard work and zealous pursuit of justice and mercy that we do daily, we are exhausted by the lack of value given to our staff year in and year out by the City of New York. The pay gap is stark. Analogous positions right here in New York City include:

- Assigned Counsel attorneys who are paid to do the same work on an individual, hourly basis, earn \$158/hour, while our attorneys average only \$60/hour.
- The New York City Federal Defender's starting salary is \$105K and nearly doubles over the course of 10 years. The wages we can provide our staff with current budgets is 25% less at the bottom of the pay scale and about 50% less than the top pay, but the representation, experience, and dedication are the same.

In California, with a similar cost-of-living, the same positions average 25% above our staff salaries. As state employees, our counterparts in California also receive full pensions and other benefits we cannot provide our staff under the current structure.

Each year, we face our staff with the same message: that we cannot afford to pay them a living wage because the City of New York is unwilling to provide the resources they deserve. Whether in collective bargaining or with our non-union staff, such as the supervisors who train and oversee recent law graduates, the message from our offices to them is not only unfair but deeply disruptive to the morale of our offices.

We hold no hidden pockets of money that we can draw from to meet the need. Small increases by the city over the past few years fail to keep up with increased healthcare and office space costs or even the everyday price increases in basics like supplies and utilities.

Unlike the city agencies and District Attorneys' offices we work beside every day, which receive automatic cost-of-living increases and often have their rent paid outside their organizational budgets, our offices must pay for every expense for our offices' operations, staff, and our clients' cases. For example, while District Attorneys get the benefit of the police lab and medical examiners at no cost to their budget, our offices pay experts directly as part of our budget. Unlike our counterparts, who tend to have public buildings at their disposal for their staff, we must pay rent to landlords under leases that automatically go up each year, even with no increase in funds from the city. Unlike our colleagues who receive pensions from the city, our offices pay out retirement benefits from our budgets, usually in the form of 403(b) with matching dollars for our staff.

We are likely facing another year of contract extensions this year. We have generally been unsuccessful in obtaining additional funding during a contract extension, making it unlikely that the mayor's office will provide the additional funds we need without significant pressure from the City Council. We ask that this year, the City Council follow through on the promises that have been made to our staff by many of your members, as well as the mayor, and find the funds our offices need.

IMMIGRATION

In the case of *Padilla v. Kentucky*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that when a non-citizen is charged with a crime, their criminal defense attorney must give the client appropriate and adequate advice about the impact of a guilty plea on their immigration status. In many cases, a person will face deportation after arrest. Immigration law is quite complex and there is a great deal of nuance in understanding the immigration status of an individual person based on their history, as well as the specific impact of the plea bargain they are offered. Given the high court's mandate, our offices have hired "Padilla" attorneys and other staff who provide direct immigration advice after consultation with the client and/or the criminal defense attorney to ensure we meet our ethical obligations.

Over the past year, increased ICE presence and enforcement in the city has created a sharp uptick in the need for our Padilla attorneys' assistance. And since our Padilla attorneys are often the only immigration experts our clients have access to, they receive frequent calls about check-ins with immigration authorities, ICE presence at the schools and homes of our clients and their families and generally fielding legitimate concerns about immigration issues for the people they represent.

The immigration legal landscape is notoriously complex and constantly evolving. Because it is largely rooted in federal administrative law and executive policy, it is subject to abrupt, dramatic shifts. These changes can occur rapidly, sometimes reshaping the legal consequences of criminal cases almost overnight. In recent years, immigration law, rules and procedures have become especially volatile. Even long-held professional norms and expectations, like the guarantee that immigration agents would not arrest people in immigration courthouses, have been abandoned. As a result, our staff have had to devote significant time and resources to tracking the near-daily policy changes, court rulings, enforcement practices, all while continuing to provide clear, reliable guidance to clients and trial teams. The constantly changing rules also make it necessary to revisit many advisals already provided to clients, to ensure we are accurate in real time under the constantly changing directives and Executive Orders.

There are other critical issues that are handled by our Padilla teams. For example, while New York City's Detainer Law protects non-citizens from law enforcement and ICE collusion, ensuring that this law is followed requires our staff to advocate and monitor DOC actions. Also, due to the limited access to representation in immigration removal proceedings, we work to ensure our clients can access available resources including the New York Immigrant Family Unity Program (NYIFUP), funded by the New York City Council, or other available resources if they are at liberty. When our clients are arrested and detained by ICE, our attorneys must locate them within the ICE detention system, attempt to contact and advocate for them to be returned to state court so that they can resolve their criminal cases.

The services our Padilla staff provide to our clients has never been more important. Our non-citizen clients are rightfully terrified. Even those with lawful status face the possibility that even minor criminal case could lead to detention, family separation, or permanent exile from the United States. We have numerous examples where a US citizen was approached by ICE, and even an unfortunate few that have been arrested, despite their US citizenship. Our Padilla staff are often the first responders in these circumstances.

To meet the needs of the growing and complex immigration issues facing the people served by our offices, including attending check-ins with ICE, attending criminal court proceedings, identifying and referring clients facing deportation to representation, as well as providing advice and counsel to our clients, their families and often broader communities, we are asking that \$10 million be added to our criminal defense budgets so they can be distributed along with our criminal defense contracts.

Conclusion

New York City's public defense organizations are essential to ensuring fairness and justice for all people accused of a crime, regardless of income. However, without funding increases, we will continue to lose experienced attorneys, struggle with rising costs, and fail to meet the growing demands of our work.

Failing to invest in public defense undermines the integrity of our justice system and jeopardizes the rights of the people we serve and the communities of New York City. We ask the Council to act now to support the defenders who fight daily to uphold justice for New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your support in the FY27 budget. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of our offices:

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**TESTIMONY OF DR. MEGAN FRENCH-MARCELIN, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK STATE POLICY
AT LEGAL ACTION CENTER
Committee on Public Safety Budget Hearing
March 18, 2026**

Thank you Chairman Feliz and the esteemed members of the committees for this opportunity to testify. My name is Megan French-Marcelin, I am the Senior Director of Policy at the Legal Action Center. Today, I testify on behalf of the New York City Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Coalition, a network of 12 service organizations with decades of experience in providing holistic, community-based supports to justice-involved New Yorkers. In FY25, our organizations served more than 68,000 New York City residents.

I sit before you as providers face \$4.6 million in cuts to ATI and reentry services in the preliminary budget - despite what we know about the role these programs play in shoring up and supporting public safety. Research clearly demonstrates that these programs are more successful than incarceration at improving public safety outcomes, decreasing the chance of future convictions, reducing homelessness and psychiatric hospitalizations, increasing connections to services, and inspiring civic engagement.

Not only are these programs a more effective public safety strategy than incarceration, their price point is much lower. A recent report from New York City's Comptroller estimates the cost of incarcerating one person on Rikers for one year is \$507,317. In contrast, ATIs create cost savings: studies estimate that for every \$1 spent on community-based ATIs, between \$3.46-\$5.54 in benefits are generated.¹ Put another way, approximately 50 New Yorkers could be taken through life-transforming programming for the cost of incarcerating one person on Rikers.

To usher in real, long-lasting public safety across the five boroughs, the Administration and City Council must invest in the scaling of these transformative programs, so that all New Yorkers can thrive in their communities.

These programs are some of the most meaningful mechanisms we have available to envision and scale a more comprehensive, holistic approach to public safety - one that ends our overreliance on mass incarceration and instead, invests in the human potential of our city's most marginalized residents.

¹Brinson, C., Gardener, T.M., Keegan, A., Klapholz, G. & Nikolic, S. (2022, January). *Transforming Criminal Legal System Outcomes in New York City: A Blueprint for NYC's Next Generation of Political Leaders*. Legal Action Center.

However, we cannot begin to ensure that our programs touch every eligible New Yorker or are responsive to new and changing conditions if we cannot pay staff adequately, expand services to meet those new needs, or pilot new approaches.

This year, we are asking the Administration for the restoration and expansion of funding for ATIs and Reentry services at MOCJ, a \$35.1 million increase. From the NYC Council the NYC ATI and Reentry Coalition is requesting an additional \$2.4 million in the **Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs** initiative across our 12 organizations. These funds have been critical for our programs and the communities we serve because of their flexibility and responsiveness. With Council funds, our organizations are able to fill critical gaps and enhance services (and even pilot new programs) outside the bounds of restrictive contracts and RFPS that often leave both staff and services underfunded.

If we truly want to turn the tide of mass incarceration, we must invest in the scaling of these critical services.

The Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative currently provides funding for:

- For Fortune Society, discretionary dollars have supported intake and assessment for approximately 230 people, connecting them to all appropriate services across all of Fortune's service domains with specific support for 30 people in our ATI program in Education and Employment Services.
- CASES uses discretionary dollars to add ATI services to our mental health programs. Current funding supports 36 different staff positions, including fully funding two court intake coordinators to screen and enroll clients in our ATI ACT program and serves 90 people annually. NYCC dollars also allows CASES to hold mental health appointments for people leaving incarceration.
- Defender-based mitigation services to reduce lengths of stay in detention and provide alternatives to detention and incarceration.
 - In FY24, Osborne's Court Advocacy Services enrolled 796 people. 98% of those served with court-imposed conditions met all conditions. 93% of dispositions were successful. Through this work, CAS prevented 1,411 years of incarceration, with an estimated taxpayer savings of \$162 million.

With additional dollars, the Coalition could operationalize many new initiatives while ensuring some of the ongoing programs that have been bolstered throughout the years with Council dollars. This includes:

- New funding would allow CASES to staff a new Manhattan misdemeanor part. CASES staff already carry caseloads of 100 or more participants, thus new funding would be essential to alleviate staff capacity and ensure high quality services.

- For exalt youth, new investments would allow for the organization to serve approximately 15 additional justice-involved young people including providing access to education, mental health services, stipends, etc. This will save at least \$13.4 million in incarceration costs for the City.
- As one of the only programs serving primarily women, the Women's Prison Association would be able to serve 100 additional participants each year.
- Urban Youth Alliance would be able to expand their successful ATI programming for young people to Staten Island.

These are examples of the meaningful and impactful work the Coalition does every day. We look forward to working with the NYC Council to scale these programs and create a new and more holistic system of public safety.

Thank you.

For further questions, please email Dr. Megan French-Marcelin at mfrenchmarcelin@lac.org or call at 617-869-1194



Asian American Federation

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance + Committee on Public Safety

March 18, 2026

Thank you, Chair Feliz and members of the Committee, for providing us the opportunity to testify. I'm Sofina Tanni, Senior Program Coordinator at the Asian American Federation (AAF), representing the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

Public safety remains a serious concern for our communities. Asian New Yorkers continue to face anti-Asian hate while also navigating heightened fear around immigration enforcement and surveillance. Across the city, immigrant families are increasingly hesitant to report crimes, seek services, or interact with public systems because they fear detention, deportation, or unintended law enforcement consequences.

For our communities, public safety means much more than policing. It means survivors of hate incidents can seek help without fear that contacting authorities could jeopardize their immigration status. It means workers can travel safely on public transit and report wage theft or workplace abuse without retaliation. It means families can access healthcare, education, and community services without worrying that doing so could expose them to surveillance or enforcement.

Community-based organizations that are Asian-led and Asian-serving are already doing the work to make this possible. Across New York City, Asian-serving nonprofits are providing victim support, safety escorts, language access services, community education, and crisis response. These trusted organizations help individuals report harm, connect to resources, and recover from violence, often serving as the first and safest point of contact for community members.

Asian American communities continue to face overlapping public safety challenges, including persistent anti-Asian hate, rising Islamophobia, and the ongoing impact of anti-immigrant policies. Over the past year, heightened immigration enforcement, increased surveillance, and growing uncertainty around federal policies have deepened fear across immigrant communities. Many Asian New Yorkers are increasingly hesitant to report crimes, seek services, or move freely through their neighborhoods due to concerns about safety and potential interactions with law enforcement. These conditions have compounded existing challenges—such as language barriers, economic instability, and isolation—making sustained investment in community-based anti-violence programming more critical than ever.

As a response to community safety concerns, in 2021, AAF launched the **Hope Against Hate Campaign (HAH)** to address the persistent threats of anti-Asian violence. Since its inception,



Asian American Federation

HAH has proven to be a crucial program for our community partners, providing essential safety programs in multiple languages, including safety training, youth programs, and victim support services. Currently, the HAH Campaign consists of 30 Asian-led organizations across New York State, serving 22 ethnic communities in 30 Asian languages. AAF became an anchor organization for the Partners Against the Hate Forward Initiative (PATH) following the launch of HAH. As part of the Campaign, we have worked with 6 sub-anchor organizations to build a community-centered safety infrastructure in Asian-majority neighborhoods across the City in direct response to the persistent threat of anti-Asian hate.

During the last four years, AAF has achieved the following through our Hope Against Hate Campaign to address anti-Asian violence:

- Built a network of over 30 community-based Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations to implement our landmark safety campaign, Hope Against Hate.
- Recruited and trained over 790 Community Companion Volunteers to provide language assistance, outreach, and safety escorts;
- Provided 1,549 protective accompaniment and presence services in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens to keep community members safe;
- Distributed over 29,000 safety resources to vulnerable community members, including AAF's safety booklet on conflict de-escalation and situational awareness, available in English and the most commonly spoken Asian languages in New York City: Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese;
- Outreached and provided safety resources to over 1,450 small businesses, faith centers, and community centers to increase awareness of safety resources and enlist their help to distribute safety resources to community members;
- Trained over 2,858 community members in physical self defense, conflict de-escalation, and situational awareness, and upstander intervention techniques to keep themselves and their communities safe; AND
- Hosted eight community conversations in Asian-majority neighborhoods to explore community perceptions of safety and collectively identify solutions for preventing anti-Asian violence.

In 2023, we surveyed 99 volunteers from our citywide Community Companions Program to assess the program's impact as part of our brief, [More than Just Strategies: The Lasting Impact of the Hope Against Hate Campaign](#). Nearly half (47%) reported fearing anti-Asian bias incidents at least some of the time, with 40% altering their daily routines due to safety concerns. Hate crimes ranked among their top community worries, and volunteers consistently cited our protective accompaniment and presence services as promoting immediate feelings of safety.



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Through our safety work, we found that community-centered solutions made people feel safer because they were equipped with the tools to keep themselves and their community safe. Specifically, nearly 90% of respondents said conflict de-escalation, situational awareness, and self-defense trainings helped them fulfill their roles as Community Companions, with many asking for even more frequent and in-depth sessions. Approximately one-third of volunteers reported personally experiencing an anti-Asian bias incident, and over half expressed doubts about police responsiveness — a gap our HAH Campaign helps to fill. Our partners routinely heard from residents who felt safer turning to our trained volunteers than navigating language barriers and mistrust in law enforcement. As the program has gained visibility, residents have increasingly sought out volunteers for resources and support, underscoring the program’s effectiveness and trust within the community.

HAH and the PATH Forward Initiative remain vital to both our partners and the communities they serve. However, as we move through FY26, we are already seeing the impact of the \$15,000 funding cut to PATH. At a time when immigrant communities are facing heightened fear due to increased immigration enforcement, surveillance, and uncertainty around federal policies, the need for trusted, community-based safety programs has only grown. While our partners continue to deliver critical services—including in-language safety trainings, victim support, and community outreach—the reduction in funding has strained their capacity.

Community-based organizations remain deeply committed to this work and continue to support community members every day, often serving as the safest point of contact for individuals who are hesitant to engage with formal systems. However, limited funding has made it more difficult to sustain staffing, retain Community Companions, and meet reporting and administrative requirements, all while responding to increased demand driven by fear, underreporting, and barriers to accessing services. PATH provides essential funding for culturally and linguistically competent safety programming that many Asian New Yorkers, particularly immigrant families, rely on as their first and often only point of access to support. Without restored and increased investment, organizations will continue to face challenges in maintaining and expanding these services when they are needed most.

AAF remains committed to supporting our network of 30 community-based organizations through coordination, outreach, and shared resources. However, restoring and increasing funding for PATH would significantly strengthen partners’ ability to meet community needs, sustain their workforce, and continue delivering trusted, community-based safety programming across New York City.

We call on the City Council to invest in our nonprofits and ensure they have sufficient resources to implement and expand essential services that support our diverse community's public safety and mental health needs.



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To strengthen public safety for Asian New Yorkers, we urge the Council to:

1. Restore and increase funding for the Partners Against the Hate Forward Initiative. Our PATH sub-anchor organizations continually deliver culturally and linguistically competent safety programming that communities trust and rely on, but received a 3% decrease in funding during FY 26.
2. Allocate \$28,434,000 to the safety initiatives in the newly released NYC Against Hate Violence Coalition report that focuses on preventing violence before it occurs by strengthening relationships between communities, improving early-warning systems, and investing in neighborhood-level infrastructure for social cohesion and conflict de-escalation.
3. Increase funding for anti-violence and immigrant safety initiatives, including the Hope Against Hate Campaign and the Rapid Immigration Support and Empowerment program, that provide rapid response support for vulnerable immigrant communities.
4. Invest directly in community-based organizations serving Asian and immigrant communities. These groups are already on the ground providing victim services, community education, and violence prevention.
5. Expand recovery services in Asian languages to help victims heal from trauma and improve access to culturally competent mental health services.

Public safety must include the communities most affected by violence and fear. Sustained investment in trusted community-based organizations ensures that safety efforts are accessible, effective, and equitable for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.

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The Center for Justice Innovation is a non-profit organization that seeks to transform the policies and practices of the justice system to make it fair, effective, and humane. The Center operates the following sites throughout New York City.

- Family
- Criminal
- Community Development
- Civil/Housing

Click on the name of any program to learn more.

STATEN ISLAND

1. Staten Island Justice Center

MANHATTAN

2. Harlem Community Justice Center
3. Headquarters
4. Manhattan Justice Opportunities
5. Midtown Community Court

MULTI-BOROUGH

6. Legal Hand (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens)

BRONX

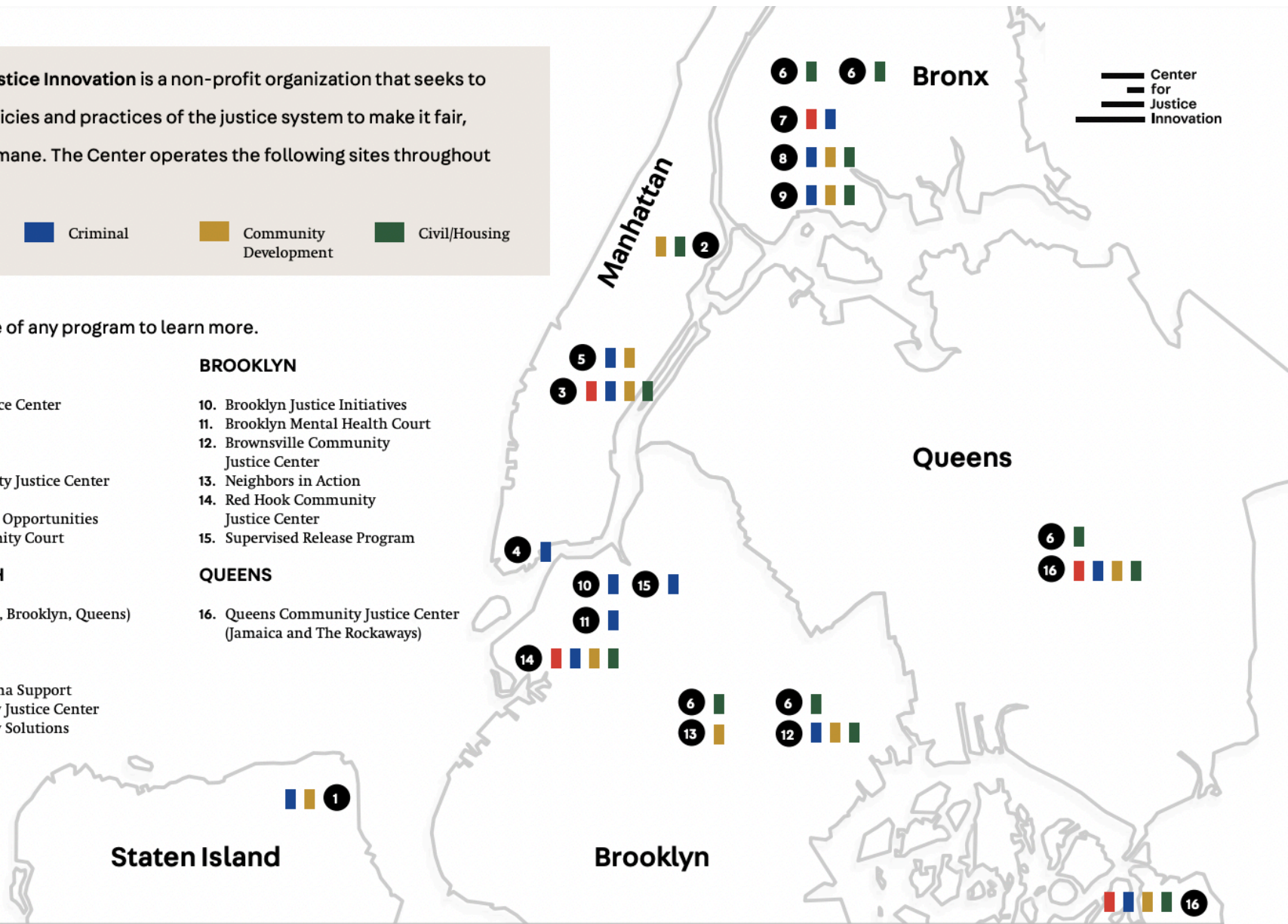
7. Bronx Child Trauma Support
8. Bronx Community Justice Center
9. Bronx Community Solutions

BROOKLYN

10. Brooklyn Justice Initiatives
11. Brooklyn Mental Health Court
12. Brownsville Community Justice Center
13. Neighbors in Action
14. Red Hook Community Justice Center
15. Supervised Release Program

QUEENS

16. Queens Community Justice Center (Jamaica and The Rockaways)



Center for Justice Innovation

Citywide

- Access to Justice
- Neighborhood Safety Initiatives
- RISE Project
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Parent Support Program
- Strong Starts Court Initiative
- Driver Accountability Program
- Project Reset
- Youth Action Institute
- ■ Gender and Family Justice
- ■ Restorative Justice Practices
- ■ Youth Impact

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**Center for Justice Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Public Safety
March 18, 2026**

Good morning Chair Feliz and esteemed members of the Committee on Public Safety. My name is Hailey Nolasco, and I serve as Senior Director of Government Relations for the Center for Justice Innovation (the Center). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Center is a community justice organization that centers safety and racial justice in partnership with communities, courts, and the people most impacted. Our approach recognizes that lasting public safety cannot be achieved through enforcement alone. Instead, it requires investments in prevention, early intervention, trauma-informed services, and opportunities that help people build stable and healthy lives. Across New York City, the Center operates programs that intervene at multiple points along the public safety continuum—from community-based violence prevention, to diversion and restorative justice programming, to alternatives to incarceration for individuals facing more serious charges.

We understand that the City faces unprecedented budget challenges. However, strategic investments in public safety can ultimately help the City manage costs by preventing costly cycles through emergency rooms, shelters, courts, and correctional facilities—systems that place significant and growing strain on the City’s budget. By connecting individuals to care, services, and stabilization earlier, we can limit ballooning downstream costs and provide tangible benefits to public safety. The programs highlighted in today’s testimony reflect this approach. Together, they demonstrate how strategic investments in community-based solutions can reduce violence, strengthen neighborhoods, and promote safer outcomes for all New Yorkers.

Community-Based Prevention

Bronx Community Justice Center

The Bronx Community Justice Center is a community-based hub for public safety, youth opportunity, and neighborhood investment serving residents of the South Bronx. The Justice Center works to create safer and more equitable communities through a comprehensive approach that combines violence prevention, youth development, economic mobility, and community healing.

Through programs grounded in community leadership and restorative practices, the Justice Center addresses the root causes of violence and justice system involvement while expanding opportunities for young people and families. The Justice Center’s work spans several key areas, including community violence prevention, youth leadership and employment opportunities, neighborhood revitalization, and workforce development.

A core focus of the Bronx Community Justice Center’s work is supporting young people most impacted by violence and systemic inequities. Through initiatives such as the Insight Initiative—a court-based program for youth facing serious charges—the Justice Center provides healing-centered programming that allows young people to take accountability, address trauma, and build pathways toward long-term stability and success. The Justice Center also offers paid youth internships in areas such as music production, digital media, and community planning, helping participants develop valuable skills while contributing to neighborhood safety and engagement.

The Justice Center also works to strengthen neighborhoods through placekeeping and community-led safety initiatives that transform public spaces, support local businesses, and engage residents in shaping solutions to violence and disinvestment. In addition, workforce development and entrepreneurship programs provide pathways to economic mobility for community members.

Funding from the City and State helps sustain this critical work and ensures that the Justice Center can continue to expand opportunities for South Bronx residents.

Save Our Streets (S.O.S.)

The Center for Justice Innovation’s Save Our Streets (S.O.S.) program operates out of both the Bronx Community Justice Center and Neighbors in Action in Brooklyn, and works to prevent gun violence using the public health-based Cure Violence model. This approach recognizes that violence spreads through communities much like a disease and can be prevented through early intervention, community engagement, and credible messengers.

S.O.S. staff—many of whom have deep ties to the neighborhoods they serve—work directly with individuals at the highest risk of being involved in gun violence, either as victims or perpetrators. Violence interrupters and outreach workers engage community members on the street, mediate conflicts before they escalate, and provide mentorship and guidance that helps individuals choose nonviolent paths. Staff also connect participants to supportive services such as employment opportunities, education, and counseling.

A key component of the program is its hospital response work. When a shooting occurs, S.O.S. staff partner with local hospitals to respond directly to gunshot wound victims and their families. By offering support and resources at a critical moment, the program helps prevent retaliation and interrupt cycles of violence.

S.O.S. also mobilizes the broader community to take an active role in violence prevention. Through public education campaigns, community events, and neighborhood outreach, staff work alongside residents, local businesses, and community organizations to promote peaceful conflict resolution and reinforce the message that gun violence is both unacceptable and preventable.

Faith leaders are also central partners in this work. S.O.S. collaborates with faith-based institutions to engage trusted community voices in violence prevention efforts, encouraging leaders to counsel individuals at risk of violence, support affected families, and speak out publicly against gun violence.

Across the Crisis Management System sites (CMS), we are requesting additional funding to support 24/7 coverage, and expand the localities they support. Currently, S.O.S. operates with a single eight-hour shift. However, we know that violence can happen at any time. We are requesting funding to support continuous staffing of the CMS sites.

Staten Island Justice Center

The Staten Island Justice Center, an operating program of the Center for Justice Innovation, has served Staten Island residents since 2009 through court-based services, youth prevention programming, and community partnerships aimed at improving public safety and reducing justice system involvement. Each year, the Justice Center serves over 2,000 individuals through supervised release, counseling, case management, employment support, leadership development, and wellness programming for both adults and youth.

In response to growing community needs, the Justice Center is working in partnership with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office to establish a Staten Island Community Justice Center modeled on successful sites in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. With City Council support, a 2023 public safety assessment identified local strengths, service gaps, and priority needs, informing the development and launch of new pilot initiatives.

The Justice Center seeks continued funding to sustain and expand these initiatives, including strengthening the Youth Impact restorative justice program through the addition of a Case Manager and expanding youth cohorts focused on music production, technology, and creative skill-building. These efforts aim to divert young people from the legal system, promote positive youth development, and advance community-based approaches to safety and prevention.

The Justice Center is also seeking support for their Youth Wellness Initiative (YWI), which provides wraparound support to court-involved and at-risk youth experiencing unmet mental health and social needs. YWI offers individualized services including wellness assessments, short-term counseling, restorative justice circles, peer mentorship, trauma-informed workshops, and family support. Referrals come from courts, schools, and community partners, allowing youth to access tailored interventions that promote healing, accountability, and community reintegration. With City Council support, YWI will serve 15 young people in Staten Island, funding key staff and resources necessary to deliver these critical services and reduce long-term justice system involvement.

Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement (RISE) Project

The Center for Justice Innovation's RISE Project transforms community responses to intimate partner violence (IPV) by addressing its critical intersection with gun violence. While often treated as separate issues, communities most impacted by gun violence also experience high rates of domestic violence, and access to a firearm makes an abused partner five times more likely to be killed.¹ RISE works in partnership with New York City's Cure Violence programs to deliver community-based IPV prevention services in neighborhoods most impacted by violence, with a focus on individuals at highest risk of harm.

RISE reduces violence by promoting healthy relationship norms, building community capacity, and intentionally engaging individuals who have caused harm through voluntary, non-mandated interventions grounded in accountability, healing, and transformative justice. The program provides group and one-on-one support, connects participants to services such as employment, housing, and behavioral health resources, and offers crisis intervention and technical assistance when IPV-related incidents occur.

¹ Center for Justice Innovation. *Rise Project*. New York, NY.
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/rise-project>

A core component of RISE is community engagement and norms change. The program trains community-based organizations, faith institutions, and local partners on IPV prevention, healthy relationships, trauma, and bystander response, while coordinating resources and strengthening neighborhood networks to respond to violence. Through public education campaigns, community workshops, healing events, and visible neighborhood outreach, RISE works to shift community norms and increase access to support.

RISE also invests in prevention through youth programming in neighborhoods most affected by gun and intimate partner violence. Young people participate in structured programs focused on healthy relationships, mental health, and peer education, culminating in community-based projects, arts initiatives, and public discussions that promote safety and accountability. Survivor leadership is central to the model, with a citywide Survivor Advisory Board guiding program development and elevating survivor voices.

In addition, RISE engages men and boys through the Men Rising Initiative, a cross-sector partnership advancing culturally responsive strategies to prevent gender-based violence and promote community leadership in violence prevention.

Each year, RISE reaches thousands of New Yorkers through public campaigns, trainings, and direct engagement. In FY25 alone, the program connected with about 10,000 individuals through workshops, crisis support, youth programming, community-based prevention initiatives, community events and outreach.² Funding supports these services, including community workshops, healing events, youth programming, and public education efforts that strengthen safety and prevent violence at the neighborhood level.

Queens Community Justice Center UPLIFT

While men and boys of color are too often viewed as perpetrators in our society, many are victimized by violence. Despite being at high risk of violent victimization from multiple kinds of violence (community, interpersonal, family), young men of color who have been involved in the justice system are rarely recognized as crime victims, rarely self-represent as crime victims, and are rarely treated as survivors of crime by their communities or by the agencies that provide coordinated services.³ Yet the overlap between victimization and justice system involvement should not come as a surprise. Among adult offenders, experience with childhood violence and trauma is high; in a study conducted with inmates in a medium security prison in New York State, more than two-thirds reported that they had experienced some form of childhood victimization. Nationally, approximately half of all young people involved in juvenile justice systems have a history of significant trauma.⁴

To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Queens Community Justice Center piloted UPLIFT in FY2022, a program that provides trauma and healing services to justice-involved young men of color. By offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops, case management and victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring, participants are

² Center for Justice Innovation. (2026). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

³ Sered, D. (2014, December). Young Men of Color and the Other Side of Harm. <https://www.vera.org/publications/young-men-of-color-and-the-other-side-of-harm-addressing-disparities-in-our-responses-to-violence>

⁴ Weeks, R., & Widom, C. S. (1998). Self-reports of early childhood victimization among incarcerated adult male felons. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 13(3), 346–361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088626098013003003>

supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. Given the program's initial success, the Justice Center was able to fully implement and sustain the program, thanks to the ongoing support of City Council.

Few programs help address the trauma histories of young men that often perpetuate their justice involvement and halt their development into healthy adulthood. UPLIFT serves young men between the ages of 16-25 that live in Queens neighborhoods that face substantial environmental challenges, including high levels of violence, poverty, and unemployment. In particular, UPLIFT provides trauma and healing services to community members who have been touched by gun violence, in a manner designed to meet participants "where they are," in terms of type, intensity, and location of services. The Center is requesting continued funding to support this invaluable program.

Brownsville Community Justice Center's Girls Collaborative

The Brownsville Girls Collaborative (BGC) is a cornerstone leadership development program at the Brownsville Community Justice Center, designed to support the holistic empowerment of young women ages 15–18 who are at high risk of violence or justice system involvement. The program creates a safe, supportive space where participants engage with peers, mentors, and facilitators to address the root causes of trauma, violence, and risk behaviors while building leadership skills and positive community connections. Grounded in a trauma-informed, youth-led, and peer-based approach, BGC helps participants heal from personal and community trauma while strengthening their ability to become positive leaders within the Brownsville community.

Using a rites-of-passage framework, BGC recognizes the intersection of interpersonal, community, and structural violence experienced by young women—particularly women of color—and works to divert participants from justice involvement while promoting personal growth and long-term opportunity. The program provides academic support, leadership development, and pathways to employment, internships, and careers in fields where women of color are historically underrepresented, including science, technology, design, and engineering. Participants also engage with gender-focused movements and professional networks across New York City, helping them navigate barriers within education and the workforce.

City Council funding would allow the Brownsville Community Justice Center to expand programming to serve more than 75 young women, including alumni, through aftercare services, new short-term projects, and expanded workshops and trainings led by female-identifying professionals and community organizers. Funding would also provide participant stipends to support engagement and economic mobility, while strengthening opportunities for leadership development, community engagement, and professional advancement. Through these efforts, BGC advances public safety by investing in young women's healing, leadership, and long-term success.

Diversion & Early Intervention

Bronx Project Reset

The Center for Justice Innovation's Bronx Project Reset is a restorative, voluntary, pre-arraignment diversion program that provides individuals arrested for eligible misdemeanors

the opportunity to resolve their case through community-based programming rather than appearing in court. Individuals who successfully complete Reset programming do not receive a criminal record, have the record of their arrest erased, and avoid the significant collateral consequences of court involvement. The Center is requesting renewed City Council funding to continue expanding diversion services for adults in the Bronx through the Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) site.

The program is guided by restorative justice—a justice paradigm which prioritizes the goals of connection and healing in place of punishment and isolation. Project Reset Bronx circles are designed to bring together participants who have experienced a low-level arrest and are often joined by trained volunteers from the Bronx community. During a circle, participants have an opportunity to discuss their arrest experience among peers, examine the underlying issues that may have contributed to the arrest, and develop a sense of connection and responsibility to their community with the support of trained community volunteers.

By diverting participants out of the criminal legal system for these low-level charges, Project Reset helps participants avoid future justice system involvement and the cascading impact of a criminal record. Since its launch, Project Reset Bronx has helped over 2,100 individuals avoid the collateral consequences of a criminal record, saving time and resources that would otherwise be spent in the traditional court process.⁵

The Center also operates same-day Reset, known as Rapid Reset the Bronx. A goal of this initiative is to serve individuals who would have already been eligible for Project Reset, but for a variety of reasons were not able to be contacted prior to their arraignment date. This may be due to inaccurate or missing contact information on their arrest paperwork. Participants might also have inconsistent access to phones or email, and may have no reliable method of receiving mail, making it difficult or impossible for Reset program staff to reach them and engage them in services. For years, these individuals missed out on the benefits of Project Reset. Now, with the availability of Rapid Reset, these individuals have the opportunity to engage in Project Reset programming at arraignment. Upon successful completion of the session, participants' cases are dismissed the same day and they are not required to return to court.

Driver Accountability Program

The Center for Justice Innovation's Driver Accountability Program (DAP) improves street safety by changing driver behavior through reflection, introspection and accountability rather than relying on punitive responses such as fines, prosecution, or short-term incarceration. Operating at seven sites across all five boroughs, the program serves individuals charged with vehicular offenses by helping them reflect on harmful driving behaviors, understand the impact of traffic violence, and commit to safer practices. In 2025, more than 1,200 participants completed the program citywide.⁶

DAP uses facilitated group sessions that encourage self-reflection, education on traffic safety, and accountability, including exposure to victims' perspectives. Evaluations show strong outcomes, including a 50 percent reduction in recidivism in Brooklyn and improved case outcomes compared to traditional legal responses.⁷ The Center also operates Circles for Safe

⁵ Center for Justice Innovation. (2026). Reset database. [Data file].

⁶ Center for Justice Innovation. (2026). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].

⁷ Strong, H., Reynolds, D., & Sharlein, J. (2024, November 3). Steering Towards Safety: An Impact Evaluation of the Driver Accountability Program.

https://www.innovatingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/DAP-eval_11072024.pdf

Streets, an intensive restorative justice initiative for crashes involving serious injury or death. This program brings together drivers and victims or surviving family members in facilitated dialogues focused on accountability, healing, and repair, filling a critical gap in the justice system's response to serious traffic harm.

City Council funding will sustain existing operations by support staffing, restorative justice facilitation, victim services, translation services, research, and program evaluation. Enhanced funding would also allow expansion in response to emerging needs, including:

- operations at the Midtown Community Justice Center,
- a new curriculum addressing documentation-related driving offenses,
- pre-arraignment diversion programming in Staten Island, and
- increased capacity and language access for Circles for Safe Streets..

Bronx Community Solutions Driving While Intoxicated Treatment Initiative

Since 2010, Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) has assisted individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the Driver Accountability Program. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services. While BCS never charges any cost to participants for services, private providers of DWI treatment regularly charge \$300 to \$400 to complete a screening and assessment. BCS has negotiated with several providers who have been willing to accept a reduced fee of \$150 in order to serve the volume of court mandated cases that come from Bronx Criminal Court, but that still remains a significant financial hurdle for participants and a barrier to entering the treatment process as soon as possible.

Bronx Community Solutions is seeking funding from City Council to cover the costs of DWI treatment and assessments for BCS participants, and to fund the staffing of a DWI treatment coordinator so that BCS may continue to be relied on by the courts to do the necessary work of rapidly connecting mandated participants to treatment, resulting in safer streets for all New Yorkers. Over the last three years, BCS has assisted an annual average of 176 participants in the completion of their mandated DWI treatment. Since 2020, among the participants referred and followed by BCS through their treatment process, over 94% successfully completed treatment.⁸ Currently, as an unfunded initiative, BCS utilizes the time of several members of the organization's intake and compliance departments to complete this work. The DWI Treatment Initiative will allow for the dedicated, full-time work of one treatment coordinator. If funded, this DWI treatment coordinator will be a bilingual Spanish and English speaker to best serve the community's demonstrated needs.

Strong Starts Court Initiative

The Strong Starts Court Initiative is a Family Court-based program that provides specialized, two-generational support to infants, toddlers, and their families involved in child protection proceedings. Serving children from birth to age three—the most critical period of early development—the initiative works with families whose cases are before the New York City

⁸ Center for Justice Innovation. (2026). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].

Family Court following allegations of abuse or neglect filed by the Administration for Children’s Services.

Strong Starts addresses a significant gap within the child welfare system by integrating expertise in infant development and infant mental health directly into court processes. Through comprehensive clinical assessments, ongoing consultation, and coordinated service planning, the program helps judges, attorneys, and caseworkers make developmentally informed decisions that promote safe parenting, strengthen caregiver-child relationships, and reduce harmful disruptions such as placement instability or prolonged separation.

First piloted in the Bronx in 2015 and now operating across all five boroughs and additional counties, Strong Starts connects families to high-quality, targeted services while fostering collaboration among courts, child welfare agencies, and providers. Evaluations of the program have demonstrated an increased rate of family preservation, greater efficiency in case resolution, enhanced family well-being, and a reduced likelihood of future abuse or neglect petitions.⁹ In addition, Strong Starts strengthens systemwide practice by training legal professionals in early childhood development, extending its impact beyond participating families. City Council funding will allow the Strong Starts Court Initiative to reach more families, strengthen early intervention, and improve outcomes for some of the City’s most vulnerable children during a critical period of development.

Alternatives to Incarceration

Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration

The Center for Justice Innovation’s Brooklyn Felony Alternative-to-Incarceration (FATI) programs provide community-based sentencing options for individuals facing felony charges, offering an alternative to incarceration while promoting public safety and rehabilitation. These programs—including Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) and non-specialized felony ATI services—address underlying issues such as mental illness, substance use, housing instability, and unemployment through individualized treatment, supervision, and case management.

Brooklyn Mental Health Court

Launched in 2002 as the first mental health court in New York, Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) seeks to craft meaningful responses specifically for defendants with serious mental illness (such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder), who are facing felony charges and would otherwise be jail- or prison-bound. In the years since, BMHC has served as a model for jurisdictions across the city, state, and country in its successful approach to addressing both treatment needs and the public safety concerns of the community. Program success has been well documented, producing results such as: a 73 percent compliance rate, along with a statistically significant reduction in re-arrests for active participants; and a 17 percent reduction in likelihood of reconviction versus a comparison group.¹⁰ Through 2025, over 1,500 participants have

⁹ Sharlein, J. (2021, August). Helping the Youngest Start Life Strong: A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Strong Starts Court Initiative.

https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2021/SSCI_eval_full_report_FINAL4.pdf

¹⁰ Rossman, S.B., J. Buck Willison, K. Mallik Kane, K. Kim, S. Debus-Sherrill & P.M. Downey (2012, July). Criminal Justice Interventions for Offenders with Mental Illness: Evaluation of Mental Health Courts in Bronx and

received treatment, satisfied program requirements, and graduated, all while avoiding the harms of incarceration.¹¹ Additionally, referrals have doubled over the past 10 years. This growing demand reflects the broader realities of mental health needs in Brooklyn’s communities and jails.

The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of BMHC provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and who represent a growing percentage of cases the program serves. Since 2017, nearly 200 youth in this age range have been served by Brooklyn Mental Health Court.¹² Thanks to City Council support, Brooklyn Mental Health Court hired a dedicated Youth Engagement Social Worker to lead youth programming and foster close relationships with participants. Renewed funding will enable Brooklyn Mental Health Court to continue and strengthen youth-focused programs, provide participants with meaningful activities, supply healthy meals and snacks to participants, continue essential training for staff, and maintain the position of Youth Engagement Social Worker.

Non-Specialized Felony ATI

In addition to the services provided by Brooklyn Mental Health Court, which are specialized for individuals with serious mental illness, the Center’s Brooklyn Felony ATI programming also offers community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring for felony cases that are ineligible for drug, mental health, and domestic violence courts. This initiative builds upon the long-standing success of BMHC, using a similar model but targeting participants who do not require the specific services of mental health court or other specialized courts. The program is based in various court parts within Brooklyn Supreme Court, working with different judges and supervising prosecutors who can ensure coordination in policies and practices. The goal of the program is to significantly increase the use of ATIs, supports, and supervision offered to individuals charged with felonies.

Due to growing demand and increasingly complex participant needs, the Center is seeking renewed and enhanced City Council funding. Additional funding would support program operations, data evaluation, and two new positions:

- A Housing Case Manager to address housing instability—a key barrier to treatment engagement and successful reentry.
- A Peer Mental Health Specialist to provide mentorship and hands-on support, improving engagement and compliance.

EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice

EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice is a gender-responsive program for female ATI participants. The goal of the ATI programs is to offer a single point of access to a wide array of community-based services as alternative sentencing options in criminal cases, thereby reducing incarceration and improving public safety by addressing the underlying issues that lead to justice system involvement. At the Center’s Staten Island Justice Center and the Queens Community Justice Center, there has been an increase in the number of female participants (including

Brooklyn, New York. New York, NY: Urban Institute.

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/25576/412603-Criminal-Justice-Interventions-for-Offenders-With-Mental-Illness-Evaluation-of-Mental-Health-Courts-in-Bronx-and-Brooklyn-New-York.PDF>

¹¹ Center for Justice Innovation. (2026). Brooklyn Mental Health Court Database. [Data file].

¹² Ibid.

female-identifying participants) referred to ATI programming, a trend that is reflected nationwide. Research shows that women who come into contact with the justice system often have unique needs and experiences that differ significantly from those of men, meanwhile there are few organizations in New York City that offer gender-specific ATI programs for women.¹³ Some of the unique needs of justice system-involved women include:

1. **Higher Rates of Abuse and Trauma:** Women involved in the justice system are more likely to have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse compared to their male counterparts¹⁴
2. **Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:** Women involved in the justice system tend to report higher rates of mental health issues and substance abuse¹⁵
3. **Economic Challenges:** Women involved in the justice system may face greater challenges securing stable, well-paying jobs upon release, impacting their ability to provide for themselves and their families¹⁶
4. **Parental Responsibilities:** A large portion of women involved in the justice system are mothers and often the primary caretakers for their children¹⁷

Internal data collected from female participants at the Staten Island Justice Center and the Queens Community Justice Center support these findings. With support from City Council funding, both Justice Centers will launch EmpowerHer: Pathways to Justice, which will provide both group and individual programming to address the needs of female participants. Funding will be used to hire a case manager for each site, who will deliver trauma-informed and gender-specific programming that address the intersections of trauma, race, gender, and sexuality for women involved in the justice system. Psychoeducational groups will aim to address the most pressing needs of women in the justice system, in tandem with individual case management services. The program's primary focus will be on addressing economic development, health, mental health, and parental support needs.

Conclusion

The programs described today illustrate the breadth of the Center's work to advance public safety across New York City—from preventing violence in communities, to diverting individuals from deeper justice system involvement, to providing effective alternatives to incarceration and supporting families in crisis. When we address the underlying causes of harm—such as trauma, mental health needs, housing instability, and lack of opportunity—we create safer communities for everyone and reduce reliance on costly, punitive systems. By investing in prevention, accountability, healing, and opportunity, New York City can continue to

¹³ U.S. Department of Justice. (2020, August 13). *Women and Girls in the Justice System: Overview*. Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/feature/women-and-girls-justice-system/overview>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Women's Justice: A Preliminary Assessment of Women in the Criminal Justice System*. Council on Criminal Justice. (2024, July). <https://counciloncj.org/womens-justice-a-preliminary-assessment-of-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system>

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Justice. (2020, August 13). *Women and Girls in the Justice System: Overview*. Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/feature/women-and-girls-justice-system/overview>

¹⁷ *Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform*. Vera Institute of Justice. (2016, August). <https://www.vera.org/publications/overlooked-women-and-jails-report>

build a public safety system that is effective, equitable, and sustainable. We are deeply grateful for the City Council's longstanding partnership and support of these programs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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Courtney Bryan, Chief Executive Officer

innovatingjustice.org

Center for Justice Innovation FY27 Proposals

- **#2156900 - Center for Justice Innovation General Funds - \$750,000**

Innovative Criminal Justice Programs (Renewal); Speaker's Initiative

Description: This is an application to support the continuation of the Center for Justice Innovation's innovative criminal justice responses, community-based public safety initiatives, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs in New York City. City Council's support allows us to serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers with mental health services, family development, youth empowerment, workforce development, and housing, legal, and employment resource services. Our goal continues to be improving safety, reducing incarceration, expanding access to community resources, and enhancing public trust in government to make New York City stronger, fairer, and safer for all. With expanded funding, the Center will be able to make deeper investments in housing justice: a key priority area that underpins our efforts at large to build community justice.

Community-Based Prevention

- **#2246699 - IPV Community Intervention - \$219,000**

Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative (Renewal)

Description: This is an application for continued support of the RISE Project. RISE is a part of New York City's Crisis Management System, working in partnership with Cure Violence sites to provide community-based intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention services to individuals at risk of being impacted by gun violence in communities most impacted. RISE works to reduce IPV by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior, change community norms to reduce tolerance for IPV, train credible messengers to identify risk factors for IPV, build skills to talk about IPV, and connect community members in need of services to

RISE. RISE incorporates components of the Cure Violence and restorative justice models in its work.

- **#2246286 - Queens Community Justice Center UPLIFT - \$100,000**

**Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations (Renewal);
Court-Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal);
Speaker's Initiative (Renewal);
Community Safety and Victims Services**

Description: To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Queens Community Justice Center piloted UPLIFT in FY22 with City Council support. Through the pilot, staff provided trauma and healing services to justice-involved young men of color, ages 16-25. Given the program's initial success, the Justice Center was able to fully implement and sustain the program, thanks to the ongoing support of the City Council. By offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops, case management and victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring, UPLIFT participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. This year, the Justice Center requests funding to continue UPLIFT's critical work through the following initiatives: Court-Involved Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations, Community Safety and Victim Services, and Speaker's Initiative.

- **#2243733 - Brownsville Girls Collaborative - \$150,000**

Young Women's Leadership Development (Renewal)

Description: The Brownsville Girls Collaborative (BGC), a cornerstone of programming at the Brownsville Community Justice Center, is a leadership development program focused on the holistic empowerment of young women in the community. The program creates a safe space for young women from Brownsville, who are at high risk of violence or justice involvement, to engage with Justice Center staff, facilitators, and one another. Throughout the year, the Justice Center will work with BGC participants to address the root causes of trauma, violence, and risk behaviors to reduce justice system contact and develop participants into positive actors within the Brownsville community.

- **#2247007 - Staten Island Justice Center/Community Justice Center - \$200,000**

Speaker's Initiative (Renewal)

Description: In response to growing community need, the Staten Island Justice Center has worked in close collaboration with the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office to plan and begin operationalizing programming for a Staten Island Community Justice Center. When fully implemented, this Community Justice Center will offer a robust array of programming, including replications of community-based interventions piloted and established at the Center for Justice Innovation’s existing Community Justice Centers in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. In FY23, with City Council support, the Staten Island Justice Center conducted a public safety assessment, which sought to pinpoint community strengths, needs, and gaps in service for Staten Island residents. Continued City Council support has enabled the Staten Island Justice Center to use the results of the survey to inform the Community Justice Center planning process, as well as develop, pilot, and implement several new initiatives responsive to identified community needs. The Staten Island Justice Center respectfully seeks continued funding for FY27 to support this ongoing work, and, particularly, to sustain implementation of the piloted initiatives, and bolster programming by hiring a Youth Impact Case Manager.

- **#2246334 - SIJC Youth Wellness Initiative - \$130,000**

Court Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal)

Description: This is a renewal proposal for the Staten Island Justice Center’s Youth Wellness Initiative (YWI), a program providing comprehensive wrap-around services to court-involved and justice-impacted youth in Staten Island, ages 12 to 18. The initiative aims to decrease the likelihood of long-term justice involvement while supporting those who may have unmet mental health needs. We specifically seek to engage youth who have either participated in community harm—such as assault, robbery, or gang violence—or who have experienced trauma through community or domestic violence. The primary objective of YWI is to foster restoration through transformative education, youth-led community engagement, peer support, individual counseling, and advocacy. The program also aims to help parents and guardians better support their children and help them navigate the justice system. Ultimately, participants are empowered to translate their therapeutic encounters into opportunities to reintegrate and restore themselves within their communities.

Diversion & Early Intervention

- **#2247221 - Bronx Project Reset - \$710,000**

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs (Renewal)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation seeks renewal funding to continue expanding diversion services for adults in the Bronx through its Bronx Community Solutions site. These diversion services build on Bronx Community Solutions’ success running the City Council-funded Project Reset restorative model for six years, the Center for Justice Innovation’s deep experience providing community- and court-based restorative justice programming since 2013, and the robust support and collaboration of Bronx court system stakeholders. With ongoing City Council support, Bronx Community Solutions will continue offering same-day at-arraignment Project Reset programming that gives eligible individuals the opportunity to participate in programming at their first court appearance and receive an immediate dismissal the same day. This programming, first piloted in 2024 with City Council funding, addresses the large gap in services caused by the inability to contact many Bronx Reset and Bronx HOPE (Bronx Heroin Overdose and Prevention Education) pre-arraignment diversion participants before their initial court date. Ultimately, these expanded diversion services reduce the collateral consequences of justice system involvement while instilling accountability; address underlying reasons for justice system involvement; and alleviate the massive backlog in the court system, an issue that disproportionately impacts the Bronx.

- **#2247172 - Driver Accountability Program - \$1,185,000**

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs (Renewal)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation’s Driver Accountability Program has been proven to improve street safety by changing driver behavior, while minimizing harms perpetuated by the criminal justice system’s historically punitive responses. It does so by offering a proportionate and meaningful alternative to fines, fees, traditional prosecution, or short-term incarceration for vehicular charges; and by utilizing principles of restorative justice to address the dangerous behaviors that are the primary cause of pedestrian fatalities. The program currently operates at seven sites in all five boroughs, with six of those sites receiving support from City Council. This application seeks funding to sustain those operations, as well as the operations of its more intensive version, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims for a process of accountability and healing in cases where traffic crashes have caused critical injury or death.

- **#2247165 - Driving While Impaired - \$100,000**

Member Item; Bronx Delegation (New/Renewal)

Description: Since 2010, Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) has assisted all individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the Driver Accountability Program. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services. While BCS never charges any cost to participants for services, private providers of DWI treatment regularly charge \$300 to \$400 to complete a screening and assessment. BCS has negotiated with several providers who have been willing to accept a reduced fee of \$150 in order to serve the volume of court mandated cases that come from Bronx Criminal Court, but that still remains a significant financial hurdle for participants and a barrier to entering the treatment process as soon as possible, thus making Bronx streets safer. To eliminate this financial burden on participants and also expedite the treatment process, this application seeks funding to cover the costs of DWI treatment and assessments for BCS participants, and to fund the staffing of a DWI treatment coordinator so that BCS may continue to be relied on by the courts to do the necessary work of rapidly connecting mandated participants to treatment, resulting in safer streets for all New Yorkers.

- **#2246404 - Strong Starts Court Initiative - \$100,000**

Children Under Five (New)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation seeks funding to build the capacity of the successful Strong Starts Court Initiative to meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families throughout New York City and help build a sustainable program not entirely dependent on private foundation support. The Strong Starts Court Initiative is a Family-Court-based project; it employs a two-generational approach to provide specialized supports for infants, toddlers and their families who have child protection cases, and it works to educate court-based professionals in an approach focused on early child development that will transform the traditional family court response to this extremely vulnerable population.

Alternatives to Incarceration

- **#2247280 - Felony Alternatives to Incarceration - \$1,385,000**

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs (Renewal)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation (Center) seeks continued and expanded funding to support its Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programming

for individuals arrested on violent and non-violent felony charges in Kings County. This programming offers holistic and individualized community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring of participants on felony cases, thereby reducing the use of jail and prison sentences and leading to reduced criminal dispositions. Expanded funding would target two areas of particular need: housing support and peer support. Specifically, the additional funds requested would support the hiring of two additional staff members: a Housing Case Manager, and a Peer Mental Health Specialist. These two staff members would significantly enhance the capacity of the Felony ATI Programs to better meet the increasingly complex needs of our growing population, ultimately improving outcomes for participants and society.

- **#2243510 - Brooklyn Mental Health Court - \$250,000**

Speaker's Initiative (Renewal)

Description: Launched in 2002 as the first mental health court in New York City, Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) is a specialized court that seeks to craft meaningful responses to the problems posed by defendants with mental illness in the criminal justice system. Addressing both the treatment needs of defendants with mental illness and the public safety concerns of the community, BMHC links defendants with serious and persistent mental illnesses (such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder) or neurodevelopmental disorders, who would ordinarily be jail- or prison-bound, with long-term treatment as an alternative to incarceration. BMHC performs psychosocial assessments and psychiatric evaluations, comes up with treatment plans, monitors clients' adherence to treatment plans, and refers clients to community-based services. For FY27, BMHC is seeking renewal funding from the Speaker's Initiative to enhance its support of some the City's most vulnerable residents.

- **#2243598 - BMHC Court Involved Youth Mental Health - \$150,000**

Court Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal)

Description: The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of Brooklyn Mental Health Court provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and who represent a growing percentage of cases the program serves. Since 2017, more than 240 youth in this age range have been served by Brooklyn Mental Health Court. City Council support ensures that Brooklyn Mental Health Court can retain a dedicated Youth Engagement Social Worker to lead youth programming and foster close relationships with participants. Renewed funding will enable Brooklyn Mental Health Court to continue and strengthen youth-focused programs, provide participants

with meaningful activities, supply healthy meals and snacks to participants, continue essential training for staff, and maintain the position of Youth Engagement Social Worker.

- **#2246478 - EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice, a gender-responsive program for female ATI participants - \$300,000**

Speaker's Initiative (Renewal);

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs

Description: This is an application to expand the Center for Justice Innovation's Misdemeanor Alternative-to-Incarceration (ATI) programming in Queens and Staten Island across two operating programs: Queens Community Justice Center and Staten Island Justice Center by adding EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice, a gender-responsive program for female ATI participants. The goal of the ATI programs is to offer a single point of access to a wide array of community-based services as alternative sentencing options in criminal cases, thereby reducing incarceration and improving public safety by addressing the underlying issues that lead to justice system involvement. Funding will support staffing and program delivery to meet the unique needs of female ATI participants at the Queens Community Justice Center and Staten Island Justice Center.



DARCEL D. CLARK

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BRONX COUNTY

March 9, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Menin and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Bronx District Attorney's Office, I am pleased to write this letter in support of key Center for Justice Innovation (formerly, Center for Court Innovation) FY27 City Council Applications. Funding will expand:

- pre-arraignment early diversion options;
- mental health supports;
- restorative justice programming;
- human trafficking survivor leadership initiatives at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence; and
- innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities within the Bronx.

These programs will enable the Bronx to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the legal system wherever possible and allow us to build public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

For the past several years, the City Council has supported the Bronx with **\$710,000** to invest in early system diversion, which includes **Project Reset**, the Center's citywide pre-arraignment diversion model and same day at arraignments programming that re-directs New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests from the court system. Project Reset Bronx includes borough-wide restorative justice circles to aid in diversion. This has offered relief from the collateral consequence's participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for low-level crimes. We support the Center in continuing to partner with the Council to implement the next generation of early system diversions for the Bronx to continue to lead the City in scaled restorative justice-based interventions. In 2025, Bronx Assist was launched, a promising pre-arraignment diversion program for certain Desk Appearance Ticket (DAT) arrests which is being piloted in the 44th Precinct with support from a two-year federal grant. CJI has demonstrated a willingness to partner on this project and has shown a willingness to see it succeed.

Thanks to meaningful changes in the treatment of trafficking victims in the justice system, the Center's **Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC)** referrals continue to decline. **Project Healing and Empowerment through Advocacy and Leadership (Project**

HEAL) is a survivor leadership and peer support initiative for human trafficking survivors. Additionally, we support the Center's RISE Project which is used in Family Court and provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence.

Since 2010, **Bronx Community Solutions (BCS)** has assisted all individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the **Driver Accountability Program**. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services.

Finally, we support continuation of the Center's **Innovative Core Funding** which addresses the immediate needs of all borough residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, and mental health services with diversion.

The Center has a long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in the Bronx. Their mission to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities aligns with my Office's vision. Together we can reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice. We can do this by reducing incarceration as well as by building substantial and meaningful community-based support. I encourage the City Council to consider funding each of the Center's programs which will ultimately enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of the Bronx.

Sincerely,



Darcel Clark



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
RICHMOND COUNTY

MICHAEL E. McMAHON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 3, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Re: Support for Center for Justice Innovation Fiscal Year 2027 Initiatives

Dear Speaker Menin and Members of the New York City Council:

I am pleased to offer my strong support for the Center for Justice Innovation's Fiscal Year 2027 funding request to expand alternatives to incarceration, provide enhanced mental health supports, develop early diversion programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence, strengthen restorative reentry options for individuals and their families, expand pre-court eviction prevention initiatives, and pilot innovative programs that address pressing community needs across New York City. These initiatives represent thoughtful, evidence-based approaches that reduce unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system while advancing public safety through sustainable, community-driven solutions.

The Center for Justice Innovation has a long and well-documented history of conducting original research and implementing direct service programs that promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities across New York City, including Staten Island. These values closely align with the vision of the Richmond County District Attorney's Office. My office has proudly partnered with the Center in the development of the Staten Island Community Justice Center, an initiative designed to reduce crime and incarceration, strengthen community trust in the justice system, and promote safer, more equitable neighborhoods through community-driven public safety strategies, youth opportunity, and economic mobility initiatives.

To maintain existing operations while expanding programming, Justice Center staff will dedicate time and expertise to developing new initiatives, including designing data collection and evaluation strategies to measure program effectiveness and ensure accountability. Through this partnership, we continue to reimagine a more holistic and equitable approach to justice—one that emphasizes prevention, diversion, and meaningful community-based support alongside traditional court responses. Investment in the initiatives outlined above will allow this work to continue and expand its impact in Staten Island and throughout the city.

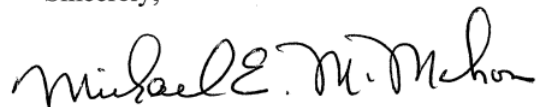
I also urge the Council to support **Youth Impact Staten Island**. Formerly known as Youth Court, Youth Impact is a dynamic youth leadership development program focused on peer mentorship, violence prevention, and restorative practices. The program works to keep young people engaged in school and out of the criminal legal system while fostering a youth-centered approach to community safety and healing. Through structured in-school partnerships and civic engagement opportunities, participants gain valuable skills in oral and written communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, and research. They also learn about the structure and impact of the justice system and receive training in community planning and organizing, empowering them to become leaders and advocates within their communities.

Continued investment is also critical to addressing the mental health needs of court-involved and at-risk youth. Individuals experiencing persistent and untreated mental illness must have access to culturally competent, trauma-informed mental health care. To address existing gaps in services for Staten Island youth, I urge the Council to continue and expand support for the Staten Island Justice Center's **Youth Wellness Initiative**. This program provides vital mental health services that promote healing and stability for young people involved in, or at risk of entering, the justice system. Importantly, the initiative also provides holistic support to families by offering resources and guidance to parents and caregivers of participating youth.

Finally, I support the continuation and expansion of the Center's **Driver Accountability Program**, which offers a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving offenses. This program seeks to meaningfully change risky driving behavior among individuals charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court while promoting greater accountability and safer streets for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration of this request as the Council makes important funding decisions on behalf of the City of New York. If you have any questions, please contact Agency Chief Contracting Officer and Grants Coordinator Dr. Lisa Sloan at (718) 556-7089 or by email at Lisa.Sloan@rcda.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,



Michael E. McMahon
District Attorney

Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti, Senior Policy Associate
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Submitted to the New York City Council FY'2027 Preliminary Budget Oversight Hearing
Public Safety Committee
March 18th, 2026

For 80 years, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) has been an independent voice for children advancing child and family well-being through research, advocacy, and civic engagement. With deep expertise in data, policy and child-serving systems, CCC champions proven solutions and mobilizes allies to secure reforms that improve child outcomes and promote equity. CCC drives systemic change to ensure every child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Feliz and all the members of the City Council Committee on Public Safety for holding today's important hearing on the FY27 Preliminary Budget, and how to improve the delivery of essential services and programs for NYC youth and young adults to build sustainable public safety practices.

Restore Alternatives to Incarceration and Supportive Programming for Youth and Young Adults

Extensive research demonstrates the positive impacts of Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and reentry programs, including lowering recidivism and crime.¹ Moreover, studies estimate between \$3.46-\$5.54 in returns for every dollar invested in ATI programs in addition to reduced costs for the criminal justice system and better community health outcomes.²

Despite the well-established benefits of these programs, since 2023, the City Administration has cut millions from probation programs proven to support re-entry by connecting young people to mentorship and services. Failing to provide robust reentry services or supportive probation programs will harm youth and is counterproductive to building safe communities.

CCC supports the recommendations of the [New York City Youth Justice Coalition](#), including the following investments and restorations in the FY27 Budget:

- Restore and invest \$4.1 million for the IMPACT program
- Restore and baseline \$5 million for the NextSTEPS program
- Invest \$40 million for the Community Justice Reentry Network
- Baseline \$2.4 million with a cost-of-living adjustment to each new year of funding for the Mentoring and Advocacy Program (MAAP)
- Invest \$30 million for NYC's Assertive Community Engagement and Success (ACES) program to ensure that all young people with risk factors have access to this kind of prevention model
- Maintain current funding for Family Court Alternative to Detention Programs to ensure young people and their families are successfully supported in the community.

¹ Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. ATI Report. Accessed: <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MOCJ-ATI-RNR-Report-2019.pdf>

² New York State Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Coalition (2024). Unlocking Potential: The Role of Community-Based Alternatives in Strengthening Public Safety. Accessed: https://www.lac.org/assets/files/Unlocking-Potential_The-Role-of-Community-Based-Alternatives-in-Strengthening-Public-Safety.pdf

- Expand Parent Support Services and create an open door policy for Family Support Services for youth as a prevention intervention
- Invest \$8.1 million for the Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program
- Invest \$8.5 million to reinstate, expand and fully fund YES services with original work scope as an effective impactful preventive tool
- Invest \$59.1 million for ATLAS funding
- Invest \$1.6 billion to raise the Cost-Per-Participant funding for youth in detention in COMPASS programming
- Invest \$3.2 million for NeON program funding
- Invest \$3.7 million for the WorksPlus Program
- Restore and baseline \$130,000 for the Adolescent Portable Therapy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Dismantling Racism Team
Congregation Beth Elohim

274 Garfield Place, Brooklyn, New York 11215

cbedismantlingracismteam@cbebk.org

Testimony of Congregation Beth Elohim's Dismantling Racism Team
New York City Council Committee on Public Safety
Budget Hearing, March 18, 2026

Congregation Beth Elohim's Dismantling Racism Team engages in advocacy to reform the criminal legal system, in alliance with directly impacted groups. Congregation Beth Elohim is the largest Reform synagogue in Brooklyn, with over 1,200 households.

In Genesis 1:27, we read that all human beings are created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. This foundational text guides us, as a Jewish community, to advocate for policies that will protect people who are incarcerated and increase public safety.

New York City's preliminary budget does not provide sufficient critical investment in programs desperately needed to improve public safety and keep people from cycling in and out of Rikers, such as re-entry services and alternatives to incarceration.

We need a budget that follows through on the legal and moral obligations to close Rikers as soon as possible, including associated efforts to expand community-based alternatives to incarceration.

- **We urge you to do all you can to secure a budget that increases investment in Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Reentry Services by \$2.4 million, for a total of \$15.027 million**, to enhance and support the scaling of ATIs citywide as requested by the ATI/Reentry Coalition. This investment will restore and increase critical funding for twelve service provider organizations with decades of experience in a broad range of alternatives to detention and incarceration programs as well as reentry services.
- **We strongly support the community-based alternatives these organizations provide to punitive systems**, which are essential to the City's efforts to incarcerate fewer Black and brown individuals from communities that have been disproportionately harmed by mass incarceration by providing them with pathways to healing and prosperity. Just as critically, we view these measures as morally and legally urgent means to reduce unnecessary and tragically high levels of incarceration, thereby directly furthering the City's efforts to close Rikers.

Thank you for hearing us.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
MARCH 18, 2026

To: The Honorable Oswald Feliz, Chair , Committee on Public Safety

From: Kalilah Moon, Executive Director, Drive Change
Board Member, NYC Employment and Training Coalition

Date: March 18, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Stevens and members of the Children and Youth Committee. Today I testify on behalf of Drive Change. Drive Change builds economic mobility for justice-involved young adults in NYC through our culinary arts training program. Alumni receive coaching and upskilling, while our employer network, social enterprise, and youth-led community food programs create sustainable jobs and leadership pathways. Our mission is to support justice-involved young people ages 18-25 by providing culinary and hospitality training, social support, and pathways to advance their economic mobility and overall wellbeing.

If we truly believe that young people are our future, then our budget must reflect that belief. Investing in young people means more than responding when something goes wrong—it means creating real opportunities for them to thrive in the communities they call home. It means ensuring that the basic needs many of our young people struggle to meet—housing stability, education support, mentorship, and access to services. And it means building clear pathways to economic mobility for youth in a city that has become unimaginably unaffordable.

Yet, too often in our city, young people only gain access to the services and supports they need only *after* they have already been arrested or are in crisis. Instead of building systems that proactively meet young people where they are, we wait until they have contact with the legal system before mobilizing resources. At that point, service organizations are asked to do the incredibly difficult work of wrapping a young person in supports while also confronting the deeper challenges that may have led to system involvement in the first place—poverty, trauma, unmet educational needs, housing instability, and lack of economic opportunity.

Across New York City, the organizations entrusted with serving young people are asked to meet increasingly complex needs while operating with exceptionally limited resources. City contracts for youth services remain significantly underfunded compared to adult service contracts—contracts that are themselves insufficient—creating persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff and maintaining the continuity of care that young people need to thrive. These constraints are particularly acute as we better understand the profound impacts of mental health challenges and trauma among youth; hiring and retaining clinical professionals capable of responding to these needs requires meaningful and sustained investment.

One of the most effective models for supporting system-impacted youth is to employ credible messengers—individuals with lived experience who can build essential trust and connection with young people—yet current funding structures rarely support them in long-term, sustainable career pathways. As a result, the very people we recognize as indispensable to this work are often unable to remain in it. Together, these structural barriers undermine providers’ ability to deliver consistent, high-quality services and highlight the urgent need for funding models that reflect the true scope and importance of supporting New York City’s young people.

Young people need access to real economic mobility. Paid work experience, connections to continuing education, and pathways into careers are not peripheral supports—they are core prevention strategies. When young people can see a future for themselves, when they can earn income, build skills, and connect to opportunity, they are far less likely to become involved in the justice system in the first place. These investments should be treated as central to youth justice policy, not as an add-on. If we want different outcomes for young people, we must treat youth services as the critical public safety investment they are.

Our Drive Change Fellowship is a paid, 12-week workforce development program serving justice-involved young people ages 18–25. Fellows participate in intensive culinary and hospitality training alongside leadership development, financial literacy, and healing-centered support. The Fellowship is structured around a three-phase journey—**Head, Heart, and Hands**—designed to align skill-building with emotional regulation, accountability, and real-world experience.

Fellows earn wages throughout the program, obtain industry-recognized credentials, and complete supervised work “trails” at partner restaurant sites. Wraparound support includes case management, mental health–informed practices, and individualized transition planning to support job placement and retention.

These are the kinds of evidence-based investments we should be scaling up.

This is why organizations serving justice-involved young people worked together to create the [Landscape of Youth Services for Young People with Juvenile/Criminal Legal Systems Involvement](#), a budget document that helps provide context and recommendations for how scaling should be approached. To scale requires us to invest in the strategies that have proven effective: prevention, credible messaging, and intensive community-based supports. We believe these investments must include:

- Investments in prevention programs that should include peer learning and supports, community in-reach through credible messengers, afterschool programs and drop-in centers, educational supports and more, including but not limited to the proposed increase in COMPASS to \$1.47 billion to meet the needs of the growing census in detention and \$5 million to reignite the NextSTEPS program;
- New investments in the education and programming needs of our young people in detention, inclusive of emerging adults who are now at Rikers.
- Expanded investments in reentry and aftercare for youth and emerging adults, including additional funding to the Community Justice Reentry Network (\$40 million);
- Expanded family court alternative to detention programs to allow young people and emerging adults to be diverted for more serious felonies, including but not limited to gun charges, in every borough (\$30 million);
- Development and promotion of new programs that connect youth to year-round employment opportunities with a meaningful wage, including including \$8,114,227 for the Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program, an increase of \$3.1 million; and,
- Doubled funding (to \$6.89 million) for Council’s Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative, bringing that initiative to new neighborhoods across the City and eliminating waitlists.

- Drive Change respectfully requests increased investment to expand our workforce development and reentry programming for justice-involved young adults. Additional funding would allow us to serve more participants annually, deepen our wraparound supports, and strengthen job placement and retention outcomes. With the right level of investment, we can expand access to paid training, scale our employer partnerships, and build stronger long-term pathways to economic mobility for young people across New York City.

If young people are truly our future, then we must invest in them now—by strengthening community-based services, ensuring youth providers are adequately resourced, expanding access to economic opportunity, and building a coordinated system that meets young people where they are.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to New York City’s young people.

Respectfully,
Kalilah Moon
Executive Director, Drive Change
kalilah@drivechangenyc.org



Testimony to the City Council Committee on Public Safety

Submitted March 18, 2026 by Edwin Santana

Thank you Chair Feliz and Council members, for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Edwin Santana. I am a Community Organizer with Freedom Agenda, and we're one of the organizations leading the [Campaign to Close Rikers](#). I'm also a survivor of Rikers, a native New Yorker, and a resident of the Bronx.

Our members are people who've been incarcerated, and had family incarcerated, but they're also people who have been impacted by crime. They know what works to create real public safety. It's things like housing, healthcare, work opportunities, mentorship, and safe community spaces.

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create community safety. Unfortunately, key investments to promote well-being and reduce incarceration are missing from the Preliminary Budget, including programs under the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. We are calling on the City Council to make sure the adopted budget aligns with the City's legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, by increasing funding for diversion and reentry programs. Specifically, we're recommending:

- a. **\$1.3M** to restore cuts to Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs, and **\$3.3M** to restore cuts to Reentry Services.
- b. **\$10M** in additional funds for ATI programs and **\$10M** in additional funds for Reentry Services, as recommended by the [ATI/Reentry Coalition](#), to bring these evidence-based models to scale.
- c. **\$6.89M** to expand programs serving court-involved youth with mental health needs.
- d. **\$20.3M** to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.
- e. MOCJ should also publish an analysis of the full need for transitional reentry housing, and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for [Justice Impacted Supportive Housing](#) (JISH), a permanent reentry housing program.

In recent years, the City Council fought hard for investments in evidence-based programs that strengthen communities, improve public health, and keep people out of Rikers. These programs are not only effective; they are also popular. [A recent survey](#) of crime survivors in New York City showed that 3 of 4 preferred alternatives to incarceration and mental health treatment instead of jail.

We thank you for your advocacy, and we need to do more. The truth is these recent investments still pale in comparison to the cost of Rikers, which is set to operate at a cost of **\$2.99B in FY27**. Meanwhile, hundreds of people still sit on waiting lists for transitional housing. Without that stability, too many people cycle back into Rikers. Alternatives to incarceration can serve 50 people on average for the same cost of detaining one person Rikers Island for a year.

The plan to close Rikers Island approved by this Council in 2019 marked a commitment to take a more effective approach to public safety. That shift requires spending our money differently, and this is the year to finally do it.

Included with this testimony is a [full budget analysis](#) that outlines the amendments needed to align the FY27 budget with closing Rikers Island.

Thank you,

Edwin Santana

Community Organizer, Freedom Agenda

Esantana@urbanjustice.org

[\[FY2027 Campaign to Close Rikers Budget Analysis\]](#)



FY2027 City Budget Analysis & Priorities

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create community safety. Unfortunately, key investments to promote well-being and reduce incarceration are missing from the Preliminary Budget. To align the FY2027 budget with the City's legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, it must include:

1. **An additional \$21.2M to meet mental health needs outside of Rikers, including:**
 - a. **\$11M more to eliminate the waitlist for [Intensive Mobile Treatment \(IMT\)](#) teams.**
Though \$11M was added in last year's budget, the waitlist to access this evidence-based program was last reported as [672 people](#). The proposed funding would allow for 8 more teams, each serving 27 people.
 - b. **\$2M more to create four more [Forensic Assertive Community Treatment \(FACT\)](#) teams.**
Though \$4.5M was added for ACT teams in last year's budget, the combined waitlist for all ACT teams was last reported at [682 people](#), and there is particular need for teams that serve people returning from jail and prison (FACT). The City should also work with the state to eliminate the waitlist for all ACT teams.¹
 - c. **\$1.7M to establish an outpatient competency restoration pilot program for 50-75 people who might otherwise be waiting at Rikers for [transfer to a state hospital](#).**
 - d. **\$3M in capital funds to support 60 new residential treatment beds for people with serious mental illness and with co-occurring addictions.**²
 - e. **\$3.5M to open more crisis respite centers**, in compliance with Local Law 118-2023. Though \$2.5M was added in last year's budget, New York City still does not have four more crisis respite centers than it did in 2023, when Local Law 118-2023 was passed.
2. **An additional \$48.5M for diversion and reentry services through the Office of Criminal Justice (OCJ), including:**
 - a. **\$1.3M to restore cuts to Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs, and \$3.3M to restore cuts to Reentry Services.**
 - b. **\$10M in additional funds for ATI programs and \$10M in additional funds for Reentry Services**, as recommended by the [ATI/Reentry Coalition](#), to bring these evidence-based models to scale.
 - c. **\$6.89M to expand programs serving court-involved youth with mental health needs.**
 - d. **\$20.3M³ to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.**
 - e. OCJ should also publish an analysis of the full need for transitional reentry housing, and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for [Justice Impacted Supportive Housing \(JISH\)](#), a permanent reentry housing model.⁴

¹ ACT teams are typically funded and licensed by the State. For FACT teams, the City adds approximately \$675,000 per team, to offer focused reentry services.

² State funding through OASAS would provide operational funds.

³ Approximately \$135,000 per unit, based on similar Safe Haven models.

⁴ While JISH funding would come through DOHMH, OCJ coordinated the first (and only) data match, when the program was launched.

3. **An additional \$3M to increase the Board of Correction’s oversight capacity.** The Board of Correction has testified that they need at least 27 more staff roles than they currently have⁵ to adequately carry out their oversight responsibilities, and would ideally have a budget set at a minimum percentage of the Department of Correction.⁶

Meanwhile, DOC remains over-resourced. With new management in place, the focus should be better deployment of resources, not hiring more staff. The FY2027 budget should:

4. **Eliminate vacancies for DOC uniformed staff, to begin to rightsize the agency**
 - a. The Department of Correction has 7,060 authorized positions for uniformed officers, but as of January 1, 2026 they employed [5,759](#) and [1,301 positions were vacant](#).⁷ Filling these vacancies would cost an additional **\$174M annually**.⁸ Given the administration’s stated commitment to reducing incarceration and cutting wasteful spending, these uniformed vacancies should be eliminated.
5. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where 109 officers are still assigned.⁹
6. **Conduct a staffing analysis before the release of the Executive Budget**, to determine how many staff DOC actually needs to operate the facilities it currently manages.

DOC Budget Breakdown

- The Preliminary Budget proposes spending at least **\$2.99 billion**¹⁰ for jail operations in FY2027. This represents a 5% increase from last year’s adopted budget.
- The Preliminary Budget shows an authorized headcount of [7,060 uniformed DOC officers](#). With approximately 6,800 people in custody, this amounts to a **staffing ratio that is 4 times higher than the national average**, and more than **2 times more officers** than will be required to operate the borough jails.¹¹
- DOC is on track to spend **over \$370 million on overtime** for uniform staff in FY26, 132% above their adopted budget.¹²
- New York City spent at least [\\$485,801](#) annually to incarcerate one person at Rikers in FY2025.
- Most of DOC’s costs are driven by staffing. The FY2027 budget projects that [87% of DOC expenses](#) will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the Department of Correction have a shortage of staff?

No. In her [contempt order](#) issued in November 2024, Judge Laura Swain wrote “*enormous resources—that the City devotes to a system that is at the same time overstaffed and underserved—are not being deployed effectively.*” In [A Shrinking System with Similar Spending](#), the Independent Budget Office reported that

⁵ Based on testimony from the Board of Correction on March 7, 2025 that approximately 60 staff are needed to fulfill their mandate. BOC’s proposed staffing in the F27 budget is 33 people, and total agency budget of \$3.67M, per [Departmental Estimates](#).

⁶ Board of Corrections representatives [previously advocated](#) increasing their budget to a minimum percentage of DOC’s.

⁷ Per Independent Budget Office

⁸ Based on \$133,756 per officer, as [calculated by the Vera Institute](#).

⁹ [February 2026 Departmental Estimates, Fiscal Year 2027 - All Volumes](#) p. 1379

¹⁰ Including expenses, associated fringe benefits, pensions, and debt service. [February 2026 Preliminary Budget Expense Revenue Contract](#)

¹¹ The Independent Rikers Commission estimates [3,240 officers](#) will be needed in the borough jail system.

¹² Per Independent Budget Office

between 2014 and 2023 “DOC staffing declined by 24%, while the jail population fell by 45%.” Mismanagement has resulted in excessive overtime for officers - that is bad for the workforce, for people in custody, and isn't fiscally responsible. The solution for this is better management, not more hiring. Reducing DOC's headcount is an important first step to [rightsizing](#) the department.

If they are not understaffed, why is there a shortage of officers to cover posts and provide services?

The Board of Correction's [death investigation reports](#) give an insight into the most serious failures at DOC. They do not show that staffing shortages led to these tragedies - rather, they describe instances in which officers did not complete their required tours, or left their assigned posts (not to cover another post, but to socialize with other officers).

Does DOC need to replace officers who are retiring?

Eliminating vacancies would not prevent DOC from replacing officers who quit, retire, or are terminated. It could push DOC to more effectively supervise and manage their very large staff. In 2025, 470 uniformed staff left the Department, but DOC was able to hire [only 445 officers](#), despite [lowering eligibility requirements](#), [increasing pay and benefits](#), and conducting extensive recruitment efforts, including a [\\$5M recruitment campaign](#) in FY26.

How does NYC's jail spending compare to other cities?

DOC's budgeted headcount of more than one uniformed officer for each incarcerated person is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#). NYC's is the only jail system among the nation's 50 largest cities that has nearly as many officers as people in custody.

What will we do about those jobs? Aren't a lot of correction officers people of color, and women?

DOC has provided a good-paying job for many New Yorkers of color, and women. But many of these workers share honestly that they would have preferred other career paths, and [would not recommend the job to others](#). Also, incarceration should never be maintained to preserve jobs. Our City should work to create more good-paying jobs in the sectors where we need them, like behavioral health and human services. Because of DOC's attrition rate, they are not likely to implement substantial layoffs, even as they transition to the borough jails. Rather, New Yorkers may increasingly choose other careers, including as we scale up the kind of work that the Department of Community Safety will carry out.



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**Testimony of
Ruth Lowenkron, Disability Justice Program Director
and
Christina Sparrock, Researcher
on behalf of
The Disability Justice Program
at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
before the
Council of the City of New York
Committee on Public Safety
March 18, 2026**

Our names are Ruth Lowenkron and Christina Sparrock, and we are, respectively, the director of the Disability Justice Program, and a Researcher with the Disability Justice Program, at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (“NYLPI”). We thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today regarding mental health and substance use in New York City.

NYLPI is deeply concerned about the City’s dangerous and illegal practices relating to the involuntary removal of individuals perceived to have mental illness diagnoses for psychiatric evaluation. We also oppose the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division (“B-HEARD”) pilot in its current guise as it is deeply flawed and diverts resources desperately needed for a true non-police response to mental health crisis into a program that continues the criminalization of disability. NYLPI urges the City Council to mandate significant changes to B-HEARD so that it dispatches teams of peers—individuals with lived mental health experience—and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who are not City employees, operates 24/7, routes calls through 988, and above all, prioritizes the self-determination of people with mental disabilities.

Fully revamping our mental health and social service delivery system could not be more critical as New York City faces a \$16 billion deficit, and New Yorkers must deal with unaffordable housing, rising health care premiums, Medicaid cuts, unlivable wages, increasing gun violence, the worsening effects of climate change, and fears of global war. These stressors will lead to more mental health crises if we are not doing everything in our power to guard against that.

THE CITY MUST WHOLLY TRANSFORM ITS RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISES BY ELIMINATING POLICE AND REPLACING THEM WITH A PEER-LED HEALTH RESPONSE

Our current mental health crisis response system is not working, and this is what Black and Brown communities, people with disabilities, families in crisis, civil rights attorneys and other advocates have been saying for years. It is too limited, too under-resourced, and too intertwined with policing to deliver real services. And lives are being lost.

Despite the City's claims, B-HEARD is not a true non-police model. Most mental health calls are still routed through 911 and to the NYPD. During the 2025 NYC Comptroller audit period, more than 13,000 calls eligible for a health-based response did not receive one.¹ That means thousands of New Yorkers in crisis instead encountered a police response.

At the same time, response times for mental health crisis calls have more than doubled in recent years, increasing from 12 minutes to more than 26 minutes, according to the New York City Independent Budget Office earlier this year.² The median response time has also increased over this period, from just over 10 minutes to almost 16 minutes. When someone is in crisis, minutes matter.

¹ N.Y.C. Comptroller, Audit of the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division's Effectiveness in Responding to Individuals with Mental Health Crises and Meeting Its Goals (2025),

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/audit-of-the-behavioral-health-emergency-assistance-response-divisions-effectiveness-in-responding-to-individuals-with-mental-health-crises-and-meeting-its-goals/#detailed-findings>

²N.Y.C. Indep. Budget Off., Tracking B-HEARD's Response to Mental Health Crises (Jan. 29, 2026),

<https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/content/publications/2026-january-from-dispatch-to-door-step>

The City must join other cities across the country – including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Albuquerque, Denver, New Haven, and many more – to **remove police** entirely from the equation, and **ensure that healthcare workers respond to healthcare crises**. According to [joint-research](#) by NYLPI and Human Rights Watch, there are at least 160+ emergency response programs nationwide that engage in crisis response activities without police as the initial responders or as automatic co-responders.

Closer to home, New York State is already taking action. The state legislators are working to pass a bill known as Daniel’s Law (S3670 / A4617), which would establish a statewide emergency and crisis response system where police are no longer the default first responders to health emergencies. Under Daniel’s Law, the state will only fund emergency response plans where peers and independent EMTs control the response to a health emergency, and the role of police would be strictly limited to situations involving imminent risk of serious physical harm. The bill currently has over 60 sponsors in the Assembly and the Senate.

Likewise, the City must establish a system whereby individuals who experience a mental health crisis receive appropriate services which will de-escalate the crisis and which will ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those who are trained in de-escalation practices should respond to a mental health crisis, and the most appropriate individuals to receive such training are health care providers and peers.³ Police officers, who are trained to uphold law and order, are not suited to deal with individuals experiencing mental health crises, and New York’s history of its police killing 24 individuals who were experiencing crises in the

³ See Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, “When There’s a Crisis, Call a Peer: How People With Lived Experience Make Mental Health Crisis Services More Effective,” (2024), <https://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bazelon-When-Theres-a-Crisis-Call-A-Peer-full-01-03-24.pdf>; Martha Williams Deane, *et al.*, “Emerging Partnerships between Mental Health and Law Enforcement,” *Psychiatric Services* (1999), http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed&#/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed.

last ten years alone⁴, is sad testament to that. Eliminating the police as mental health crisis responders has been shown to result in quicker recovery from crises, greater connections with long-term healthcare services and other community resources, and averting future crises.⁵

The scores of people experiencing mental health crises who have died at the hands of the police over the years is a microcosm of the police brutality around the world. Disability is disproportionately prevalent in the Black community and other communities of color,⁶ and individuals who are shot and killed by the police when experiencing mental health crises are disproportionately Black and other people of color. The City Council simply cannot stand by while the killings continue. Now is the time to remove the police as responders to mental health crises. Lives are literally at stake.

[Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC](#) has developed the needed antidote. Modeled on the [CAHOOTS](#) program in Oregon, which has successfully operated for over 35 years without *any* serious injuries to respondents or responders – let alone deaths -- the CCIT-NYC proposal⁷ -- upon which Daniel’s Law is based -- is positioned to make non-police responses available to those experiencing mental health crises in New York City. The proposal avoids the enormous pitfalls of the City’s B-HEARD pilot, which the City inaccurately refers to as a non-police model.

⁴ New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, *CCIT-NYC: See Their Faces. Say Their Names.*, <https://www.nylnpi.org/resource/ccit-nyc-see-their-faces-say-their-names/> (Mar. 7, 2026).

⁵ Henry J. Steadman, *et al.*, “A Specialized Crisis Response Site as a Core Element of Police-Based Diversion Programs,” *Psychiatric Services* (2001), http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.52.2.219?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Psychiatric_Services_TrendMD_0.

⁶ Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, “Accessible NYC” (2016), https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc_2016.pdf.

⁷ The full text of the CCIT-NYC proposal can be found at <https://www.ccitnyc.org/ourproposal>.

THE CITY MUST ENTIRELY REVAMP THE B-HEARD PILOT AS THE PILOT AUTHORIZES EXTENSIVE POLICE INVOLVEMENT AND IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE OR EVEN INCREASE THE RATE OF VIOLENT RESPONSES BY THE NYPD

The City, via its Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (formerly ThriveNYC), introduced a pilot program in 2021 that it contends is responsive to the need to cease the killings at the hands of the police of individuals experiencing mental health crises. Unfortunately, that is simply not the case, despite the City's glowing description of the program. Among B-HEARD's grim statistics are the following:

- As of March 2025, of 37,113 eligible calls during the New York City Comptroller's audit period, 13,042 (35%) of eligible calls did not receive a response for reasons unknown.⁸
- Moreover, **all mental health calls continue to go through 911**, which is under the NYPD's jurisdiction.
- The entire **program is run by the NYPD, the Fire Department and other City agencies**, with **NO role whatsoever for community organizations**. And there is not even any delineation of the lines of authority and communication among the various city agencies.
- **The crisis response teams are composed of EMTs who are City employees** (from the Fire Department) **who are deeply enmeshed in the current police-led response system**. Peers do not trust these EMTs. The other team members are *licensed clinical* social workers. The licensure and clinical orientation requirements are unnecessary and they also preclude a vast array of potential candidates who have excellent skills and a long history of working with people experiencing crises.
- B-HEARD has **NO requirement to hire peers**.

⁸ N.Y.C. Comptroller, Audit of the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division's Effectiveness in Responding to Individuals with Mental Health Crises and Meeting Its Goals (2025), <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/audit-of-the-behavioral-health-emergency-assistance-response-divisions-effectiveness-in-responding-to-individuals-with-mental-health-crises-and-meeting-its-goals/#detailed-findings>

- **The training of the teams does *NOT* require a trauma-informed framework, need *NOT* be experiential, and need *NOT* use skilled instructors who are peers or even care providers.**
- **The pilot operates only sixteen hours a day.**
- **There are no outcome/effectiveness metrics.**
- **There is no oversight mechanism.**

A comparison of the CCIT-NYC proposal, which is based on the CAHOOTS model with a stellar track record, and the B-HEARD program, which is not aligned with any best practices, is illustrated in the following chart:

Critical Attributes of a Mental Health Crisis Response System	CCIT-NYC's Proposal	NYC's B-HEARD Proposal
Removal of police responders	YES	NO (currently, around 79% of calls are still responded to by police, and even when all kinks are removed, 50% of calls will still be responded to by police)
Three-digit phone number such as 988, in lieu of 911.	YES	NO
Response team to consist of an independent EMT and a trained peer who has lived mental health experience and know best how to engage people in need of support	YES	NO (licensed clinical social worker and EMT employed by the New York City Bureau of Emergency Medical Services)
Crisis response program run by community-based entity/ies which will provide culturally competent care and will more likely have a history with the person in need and can intervene prior to a crisis	YES	NO (run by New York City Police Department and other City agencies)
Peer involvement in all aspects of planning/implementation/oversight	YES	NO
Oversight board consisting of 51% peers from low-income communities, especially Black, Latinx, and other communities of color	YES	NO
Creation/funding of non-coercive mental health services (“safety net”), including respite centers and 24/7 mental health care to minimize crises in the first place and to serve those for whom crisis de-escalation is insufficient	YES	NO

Response times comparable to those of other emergencies	YES	NO (Most recently reported response time of over 15 minutes -- compared with average response time of 8 to 11 minutes for non-mental health emergencies)
Response available 24/7	YES	NO (Response only available 16 hours/day)
Training of the teams to use a trauma-informed framework, be experiential, and use skilled instructors who are peers	YES	NO

Transparency and accountability are also essential in the crisis response model. NYC Former Comptroller Brad Lander’s audit identified serious gaps in the Office of Community Mental Health’s ability to track B-HEARD data, including response times, how often individuals are served, whether follow-ups occur, and other key indicators necessary to ensure New Yorkers are safe and properly cared for. Data collection and public reporting, as required by Int. [722-2026](#), will allow us to measure outcomes, find gaps, and enhance services. Without data and reporting, we cannot evaluate effectiveness.

NYLPI urges the City Council to ensure that the money previously allocated for a non-police mental health crisis response be utilized solely for a truly non-police response, and to mandate substantial modifications to the B-HEARD program by including the critical components of the CCIT-NYC proposal.

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NEW YORKERS DEMONSTRATE THE URGENT NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

I, Christina Sparrock, speak from lived experience of mental health challenges. The stigma I face is real, and it influences how systems respond to people like me during a crisis. Much of the

City's limited mental health funding goes toward limited crisis response, with very little funding allocated for prevention and early intervention. As a result, when someone calls 911 during a mental health crisis, the system defaults to police. Police officers, whose training primarily focuses on crime and the use of force, handle 911 calls related to mental health and substance use crises. When I am in a crisis, I am already afraid and do not need police to respond to make me even more afraid.

During one so-called "wellness check," police pounded unannounced on my apartment door. I believed a violent intruder was trying to enter my home to harm or kill me. In my fear, I began looking for ways to protect myself. That encounter could have ended in tragedy. I would have been another Eleanor Bumpurs, Deborah Danner, Win Rozario, Eudes Pierre. It is precisely this kind of escalation that demonstrates why police should not be the default response to mental health emergencies.

It is imperative that we remove police from mental health crisis response unless requested by the first responders who must be health care providers and peers with lived mental health experience. During a crisis, we deserve care, dignity, and de-escalation, not force.

THE CITY COUNCIL MUST ENSURE THAT NEW YORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF VOLUNTARY NON-HOSPITAL, COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES THAT PROMOTE RECOVERY AND WELLNESS, AS WELL AS A FULL PANOPLY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, INCLUDING HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, AND EDUCATION, BY ALLOCATING FUNDING FOR SUCH PROGRAMS

Since NYLPI was established 50 years ago, we have prioritized advocating on behalf of individuals with mental health conditions, and we have consistently fought to ensure that the rights of individuals with mental health conditions are protected by every aspect of New York's service delivery system. Core to our work is the principle of self-determination for all individuals with disabilities, along with the right to access a robust healthcare system that is available on a *voluntary, non-coercive* basis.

We have long been on record opposing mandatory outpatient and inpatient treatment for failing to offer appropriate healthcare and insufficiently safeguarding the rights of persons with mental disabilities. In line with our continued advocacy for comprehensive mental health treatment in New York, NYLPI has released our latest report: Implementation of Kendra’s Law Continues to be Severely Biased⁹. The report outlines that there is no proof that Involuntary Outpatient Commitment is more effective than voluntary treatment. We make key, urgent recommendations for New York to discontinue use of Kendra’s Law and in no event expand its scope or reach, and in the interim, take proactive measures to eliminate racial bias from Involuntary Outpatient Commitment.

Quite simply, there is no place for coercion. Forced “treatment” is not treatment at all, and it has long been rejected by health practitioners -- to say nothing of the disability community – in favor of numerous best practices strategies that offer assistance even to those who have previously resisted offers of care.¹⁰ There are multiple less invasive models of care that New York City must invest in to avoid the tragedy and enormous cost of forced treatment. At the heart of these models are trained peers, who are ideally suited to implement effective harm reduction and de-escalation techniques, especially during crises.

We know how to help those with the most severe mental illness, but we fail to do so, instead providing services that are insufficient or not held to the highest accountability. We face complete system failure, yet we have done little to correct the failure and even point our fingers at those most affected by the system failure. We must stop the finger-pointing and fix the system. We

⁹ NYLPI, Implementation of Kendra’s Law Continues to be Severely Biased (2025), <https://www.nylpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Implementation-of-Kendras-Law-Continues-to-be-Severely-Biased-Report-1.pdf>.

¹⁰ See, e.g., de Bruijn-Wezeman, Reina “Ending Coercion in Mental Health: The Need for a Human Rights-Based Approach,” Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 14895 (May 22, 2019), <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=27701&lang=en>.

must invest in innovative, voluntary health programs. And we must invest in supportive housing, rather than cart people off to a psychiatric ward or to jail.

Any proposal that facilitates the ability to force people into in-patient or out-patient “treatment” must be seen in the context of whom we’re entrusting to “remove” these individuals. As we now know all too well, the police, who are steeped in law and order, are not well-suited to deal with individuals with mental health concerns.

While there is extensive literature supporting voluntary treatment, there is no support that forced evaluation and treatment is more effective.

THE CITY MUST USE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE IN EVERY FACET OF ITS WORK ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

New York State has moved from using the pejorative term “Emotionally Disturbed Person” to “Person Experiencing an Emotional Crisis,” pursuant to recent passage of statewide legislation.¹¹ All aspects of crisis response and mental health service delivery, including our data systems, must reflect that change. Language matters. It reflects our values and our commitment to dignity.

CONCLUSION

NYLPI respectfully requests that the City Council:

- Mandate changes to the B-HEARD program to align it with the truly non-police, peer-led CCIT-NYC model and with the Daniel’s Law bills.
- Ensure that New Yorkers have access to a wide range of non-hospital, community-based mental health services that promote recovery and wellness, as well as a full panoply of community services, including housing, employment, and education, by allocating funding for such programs.

¹¹ S. 8210A, 2025–2026 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2025); Assemb. B. 4762B, 2025–2026 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2025).

Thank you for your consideration. We can be reached at (212) 244-4664 or RLowenkron@NYLPI.org and csparrock@nylpi.org, and we look forward to the opportunity to discuss how best to respond to the needs of individuals experiencing mental health crises in New York City.

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About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

For 50 years, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) has been a leading civil rights advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, poverty, disability, and immigration status. Through our community lawyering model, we bridge the gap between traditional civil legal services and civil rights, building strength and capacity for both individual solutions and long-term impact. Our work integrates the power of individual representation, impact litigation, and comprehensive organizing and policy campaigns. Guided by the priorities of our communities, we strive to achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care, ensure immigrant opportunity, strengthen local nonprofits, and secure environmental justice for low-income communities of color.

NYLPI's Disability Justice Program works to advance the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities. In the past five years alone, NYLPI disability advocates have represented thousands of individuals and won campaigns improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Our landmark victories include integration into the community for people with mental illness, access to medical care and government services, and increased accessibility of New York City's public hospitals. We prioritize the reform of New York City's response to individuals experiencing mental health crises, and have successfully litigated to obtain the body-worn camera footage from the NYPD officers who shot and killed individuals experiencing mental health crises. In late 2021, NYLPI and co-counsel filed a class action lawsuit which seeks to halt New York's practice of dispatching police to respond to mental health crises, and in the context of that lawsuit, seeks relief on behalf of individuals affected by the Mayor's Involuntary Removal Policy. We filed a companion lawsuit in 2024 on behalf of an individual shot within an inch of his life when experiencing a mental health crisis.

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Public Safety**

Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 18, 2026

Tarini Garimella, Policy Associate
Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations



My name is Tarini Garimella, and I am the Policy Associate for the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations at the Osborne Association. As many of you know, Osborne is one of the oldest and largest criminal justice service organizations in the state. Our services reach over 18,000 individuals each year, assisting them and their families in navigating arrest, courts, incarceration on Rikers and in state prisons, and reentry. Through advocacy, direct service, and policy reform, Osborne works to create opportunities for people to heal, grow, and thrive. We are grateful for the Council's ongoing support and look forward to continued collaboration.

My testimony will focus on the largely invisible issue of how children are affected by a parent's arrest; what is currently being done to minimize trauma to children before, during, and after a parent's arrest; how critical it is for NYPD to implement Administrative Code §14-181 (the result of a 2019 City Council law) and develop an ongoing, sustainable plan to train personnel; and the importance of NYPD and community-based organizations continuing to build their capacity to safeguard and support children of arrested parents in New York City.

We applaud the City Council for passing a law in 2019 (Administrative Code §14-181) that requires NYPD to adopt guidelines for safeguarding children present during an arrest¹, train officers, and provide families with information about services in the community to help children process the arrest of a parent. This law required a community-based partner to work with NYPD to implement the law and Osborne was chosen for this role. We have been collaborating with NYPD to safeguard children since the law's passage, and greatly expanded the scope of the work when we received City Council funding starting in 2021 to do so. This funding has allowed us to train over 9,000 members of service on child development, trauma responses in children, and tools for interacting with children across different ages, and to take unprecedented steps toward safeguarding children. But we have much more to accomplish.

We have submitted a request for continued funding, including expanding our work to the NYC

¹ This law focuses on non-child-related arrests (such as shoplifting, traffic stops, and more). Arrests that are related to child abuse are governed by other laws and protocols.

Department of Correction (DOC) to safeguard and improve interactions with children who visit Rikers. Osborne has also submitted eight (8) additional discretionary funding requests, which are attached to my testimony. And, as a longstanding member of the NY Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI)/Reentry Coalition, we also ask the Administration for the restoration and expansion of funding for ATIs and reentry services at MOCJ, a \$35.1 million increase. From the NYC Council, the coalition is requesting an additional \$2.4 million in the **Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs** initiative across our 12 organizations.

While I will detail what we have accomplished in NYC, the City Council funding we receive has had a statewide impact as well: in large part as a result of our work, the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) passed an accreditation standard in June 2023 requiring all accredited NYS police departments to have a written protocol and provide training to ensure children are safeguarded and trauma is minimized. Then in December 2024, Governor Hochul signed the Child-Sensitive Arrest bill [into law](#), which went into effect in June of 2025. **This law establishes New York as the first state to ensure Officers have the guidance and training to take steps to minimize trauma to children when a parent is arrested.**

Children are deeply affected by a parent's arrest, yet this event often goes overlooked and, until recently, it was rare to find a law enforcement agency that provides training to officers on child development and interacting with children. The training we currently facilitate for NYPD recruits and newly promoted Sergeants was developed over years of working with children, families, young people, and law enforcement. It incorporates research on child development, brain science, and trauma; body-worn camera footage of parents and/or caregivers being arrested in front of their children; and young people telling us what they need to be considered, validated, and seen. Some of the responses to the training from recruits and Sergeants (as revealed in the training evaluations we distribute) include:

- “Being a mother of young children, I could put myself in the situation and hope that someone would take the time to help my children and myself at our lowest moment.”
- “This is a good training and very important as these situations will happen unexpectedly.”
- “This is a very special tool to have going into our careers because the children will have a negative or positive impact about the NYPD and our job is to make sure it can be positive

all the time.”

In the upcoming fiscal year, we hope to continue to work with the NYPD Training Bureau to develop a sustainable plan for training all uniformed members of service (UMOS) on the new safeguarding protocols. Due to changes in leadership and staffing, substantive planning to sustainably integrate this into Academy training has not yet occurred.

I will now provide some background to underscore the importance of this work and why it is a multi-year effort.

The Impact and Scope of Parental Arrest on Children

From our programs at Osborne, we know that children and young people often carry the experience of witnessing the arrest of a parent for years or even a lifetime. They share that they felt invisible and vulnerable at the time, or felt seen but ignored. As a result, many tell us they are hesitant to reach out to the police when they need assistance, and fear law enforcement after what they have been through. Witnessing an arrest and being stripped from a parent is a traumatic experience. Research tells us that trauma negatively affects the brain and that having an incarcerated parent (almost always preceded by a parent’s arrest) is the fourth most common Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)², which increases the likelihood of children developing long-term negative health and mental health outcomes.³

We also know that protective factors can lessen the harmful effects of these experiences, and that police officers and community partners can be protective factors for children. Efforts to safeguard children at the time of arrest have the potential to build new and strengthen existing community-police partnerships while signaling to families that the police and their community will do everything possible to minimize trauma for a child whose parent is arrested. Thus, it is

² National Survey of Children’s Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau.
<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/data/national-surveys>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adverse Childhood Experiences,
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html

critical to ensure this local law is effectively implemented, and for NYPD and community partners to receive the necessary training to safeguard children.

There is no data available on how many children are present when a parent or caregiver is arrested in NYC. We provided the NYPD with data collection recommendations, including updating their “aided card” to collect this data, but were told that the best way to add a check box to the aided card would be through legislation requiring it. Having this data will enable us to better understand where and when this is happening, monitor trends (increases or decreases), and informing funding allocations to ensure community-based support is available for children post-arrest.

To date, the only source for this data (that we are aware of) is from the New York City Criminal Justice Agency (CJA). At our request in 2019, CJA agreed to include supplementary questions (not included in its bail assessment) in interviews of people in New York City awaiting arraignment.⁴ The first round of CJA data from 2019 estimated that **60,347** children in New York City experience the arrest of a parent or caregiver annually. During 2023 and 2024, CJA collected data on the numbers of parents, not numbers of children, and reported that 41,329 people told CJA’s pretrial associates that they provided full-time care to children under 18 years of age, and 64,863 people reported that they provided financial support to children. Given that many parents have more than one child, the numbers of children remain significant.

The CJA data from 2023-24 also reveals that Brooklyn has the highest number of people (30,910) reporting that they provide financial support to children, with 21,418 stating that they are primary caregivers of children. Documenting how many children are present at a parent’s or caregiver’s arrest was not included in the 2019 law, and we urge the Council to introduce a bill requiring NYPD to do so.

To expand on our success collaborating with NYPD and to better support the children who visit

⁴ This data reveals that 4,286 (4.3%) of the 98,675 respondents awaiting arraignment provided full-time care to children, and 31,203 (31.6%) respondents provided financial support to one or more children.

Rikers, our funding request this year has increased in order to support expanding our Safeguarding Children work to DOC to provide training to Officers interacting with children, and to examine ways the department can support children's positive visiting experiences.

Accomplishments

Given the estimated scope of the issue, the size of NYPD, and frequent departmental and organizational changes, our work to safeguard children is a multi-year, multi-faceted effort requiring immense coordination, time, and adaptability. I'd like to highlight some of our accomplishments, the work currently underway, and work needed in the coming years.

To date, thanks to City Council funding, we have trained over 9,000 members of service, including recruits, newly promoted Sergeants, Training Sergeants, and Youth Coordinating Officers. The responses on our training evaluations have been largely positive, as described earlier. We have also:

- Provided children's props for scenario-based training with recruits that are now included in these settings to signify children are present and must be considered during arrest incidents;
- Developed a handout on *Effectively Communicating with Children* and an Activity Log Insert as a practical tools for Officers to reference on the job;
- Identified 21 community-based children's mental health providers or "partners" who have agreed to accept referrals post-arrest;
- Worked with CJA to collect annual data about parental/caregiving status from people who are arrested in the five boroughs;
- Worked with the NYC Children's Cabinet to brief them on this issue and identify opportunities to continue to safeguard children; and
- Developed a training video featuring children and young adults speaking about their parents' arrest.

Work in progress or planned/needed:

- Collaborate with the NYPD Training Bureau to develop a sustainable training plan;
- Review existing NYPD curricula to identify areas where safeguarding children material can be infused;
- With shifts in how NYPD is structured and retirements, identify partners outside of the Training Bureau to advance this work and comply with the 2019 law;
- Collaborate with NYPD to produce refresher training videos for roll call and in service

training;

- Expand the number of community partners engaged in this work and provide them with technical assistance and training; advocate for funding to meet the needs of children and families affected by parental arrest;
- Engage the NYC DOC to develop a Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents protocol that reflects best practices when visitors with children are arrested;
- Engage the NYC DOC to further develop and implement child-friendly visiting processes required by Local Law 40, which adds §9-168 “Child Visitor Program” to the Administrative Code.

With 36,000 UMOS, a complex network of community providers in NYC, and many elements to implement, achieving a truly comprehensive, citywide approach to safeguarding children will take time. We are grateful to be partnering with NYPD and look forward to building on this work with DOC as well.

One final note about public safety: this year, Osborne enters its 93rd year of providing programs and advocating for justice and we have seen that public safety is an outcome of investing in people and communities. Today, this means prioritizing alternatives to arrest, jail, and prison whenever possible, and working to decarcerate and to close Rikers Island. The city and state must continue to implement pre-trial reforms and measures to expedite court processes. Reducing the number of people, including many parents to minor children, detained in our city jails and the length of time they spend there must be a priority for the Council and the city, for our shared humanity and for smarter investments that improve on the dismal return we currently receive for spending more than \$500,000 per person per year on Rikers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Contact: Tarini Garimella, Policy Associate

tgirimella@osborneny.org

**The Osborne Association
New York City Council
FY27 Discretionary Funding Requests**

Program	Description	FY27 Request	FY26 Funding
Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Services (Ref. 2155808)	Osborne’s portion of the ATI & Reentry Coalition request, which will support multiple programs: (1) court advocacy and mitigation services; (2) video visiting and family strengthening activities; (3) expansion of job training and placement; (4) elder reentry services; and (5) the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations.	\$2,152,074	\$1,952,074
Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention Program - BOGAP (Ref: 2242267))	To support BOGAP—an innovative diversion program developed with the Bronx DA. Funds will be used to provide hot meals to program participants, stipends for internships, and additional support services to participants to increase their chances of success in the program.	\$25,000	\$20,000
Elder Reentry Initiative Services and Advocacy (Ref: 2242507)	To support two related program areas: (1) The Elder Reentry Initiative’s participant screening, intake and assessment, reentry service plans, community case management, and technical assistance; and (2) Osborne’s advocacy and public education on behalf of incarcerated and returning older adults.	\$125,000	\$65,000

<p>Health and Wellness – Ending the Epidemic (Ref. 2241903)</p>	<p>To support formerly incarcerated people who are living with or at high risk of contracting HIV and come from low-income communities of color, with a focus on LGBTQIA+ people. Osborne will provide sexual health education, prevention/treatment, trauma support, and other supportive services.</p>	<p>\$110,000</p>	<p>\$83,461</p>
<p>Safeguarding Children Initiative (Ref: 2239478)</p>	<p>To support the implementation of Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests parents/ caregivers. Osborne will provide necessary training and collaborate with NYPD on numerous aspects of implementation, and engage and train a network of CBOs that can provide post-arrest support to children. Expanded funding also allows for safeguarding children's work with NYC DOC.</p>	<p>\$500,000</p>	<p>\$265,000</p>
<p>Improving Behavioral Health and Wellbeing for Youth (Ref: 2192640))</p>	<p>For assessing and addressing mental health and trauma in youth impacted by the criminal legal system through treatment options that alleviate stress, improve functioning, and reduce trauma symptoms. Targets: 70 assessments; 60 referrals.</p>	<p>\$308,000</p>	<p>\$158,000</p>
<p>Kinship Reentry Housing Initiative (Ref. 2243156))</p>	<p>To sustain and expand the Kinship Reentry Housing Program, which provides financial assistance, case management, and peer support to families housing a loved one returning from incarceration. By addressing economic and logistical barriers to stable reentry housing, the program reduces reliance on the shelter system, strengthens family reunification, and lowers the risk of recidivism.</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Testimony on B-HEARD

Good afternoon Speaker Menin, Committee chair Felice, the Public Safety Committee members, their respective staff, the legislative team, Commissioner Tisch, NYPD Officers, and also to other stakeholders in realm of public safety.

I am Dr. Tawanna Gilford, a NYS licensed psychologist and lifelong member of the Harlem Community. I am the chair of the Reimagining Policing Coalition, the cofounder of the Stop False Police Reporting initiative, and most of all, I am a health care practitioner for our most vulnerable New Yorkers, those experiencing mental health challenges and might possibly be in crisis.

In my previous role as a direct care provider and also as a concerned community member, I have assisted individuals and families with making calls to the B-HEARD initiative for a crisis response. On many of these occasions, I have witnessed breakdowns in communication, and also experienced failures in getting individuals the holistic and person-centered care that was needed to foster trust and a healthy transfer to a higher level of care. I left those experiences feeling regretful of having called for help because what ended up happening was that additional harm was caused in those situations. As opposed to remaining critical and apathetic, I have turned my pain into

purpose and I continue to advocate for a more humane response to those experiencing a mental health crisis.

With that said, I stand before you today to propose three ideas to improving the mental health response: First, I would like for city government to increase funding for the B-Heard program and make it a formal part of the NYPD response protocol, officially recognizing it as a collaboration with NYC Health and Hospitals. Secondly, the B-HEARD program should fall under the purview of a licensed psychologist working collaboratively with a psychiatrist, a licensed clinical social worker, and a member of the NYPD crisis management team. Lastly, I would like to address an ongoing debate as to whether NYPD officers should show up to mental health calls and domestic violence incidents. While there are valid points on both sides, I would point out that when individuals are in distress (and might already have a complicated relationship with the justice system), seeing a uniformed officer may exacerbate or heighten their reactivity. So, with that said, it is worth considering sending plain clothed officers to join mental health professionals in responding to crisis calls.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude for everyone's time and for being receptive to my testimony. May you carefully consider my recommendations for review and implementation.

Gilford Testimony on the Special Narcotics Prosecutors Office

I am Dr. Tawanna Gilford, a NYS licensed psychologist and lifelong member of the Harlem Community. I am the chair of the Reimagining Policing Coalition, the cofounder of the Stop False Police Reporting initiative, and also an individual impacted by a wrongful conviction under the jurisdiction of the Special Narcotic Prosecutor's Office (SNP).

I submit this testimony to request that the New York City Council and the public safety committee review and amend the conviction integrity review process of the SNP's office.

Currently, the SNP's office conducts their own conviction integrity reviews, diminishing any semblance of objectivity, fairness, and impartiality. During the public safety budget hearing on 3/18/26, Prosecutor Bridget Brennan testified that her office falls under the purview of all five-borough based district attorney's offices and that they have essentially "hired her." While this may be the case, in practice, describing the relationship from a top-down hierarchical framework, does not accurately reflect what actually occurs. In reality, the SNP conviction review unit is not beholden to any other entity except itself. There is no oversight regarding the legitimacy of their arrests or convictions. Put plainly, if a questionable conviction occurs, then no borough-based district attorney has the ability to reach into their office to pull a case into their

independent borough-based integrity review unit. I detest this practice and urge city leadership to establish mechanisms that would provide much greater oversight.

In order to enhance public safety, accountability, and transparency, I believe that each elected district attorney should have full power and authority to review a case that was brought into the SNP's review unit from their respective borough. This begs the question of "how can we expect for an entity to undo a decision that was made by them in the first place?" The review will be viewed under the same lens that justified and led to the conviction, increasing the likelihood of confirmation bias during the review process.

In closing, I urge you all to strongly consider making this very modest change in the operations of the conviction integrity review units throughout NYC. Thank you for your time and receptivity to my request.

Respectfully,

Dr. Tawanna Gilford



March 21, 2026

To: New York City Council Committee on Public Safety

From: Toni Smith, New York State Director, Drug Policy Alliance

Testimony for NYC Council Joint Hearing: Committee on Public Safety

The Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) respectfully submits this written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Public Safety.

DPA is a non-partisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with tens of thousands of members nationwide, including in New York state. DPA addresses the harms of drug use and drug criminalization through policy solutions, organizing, and public education. We advocate for a holistic approach to drugs that prioritizes health, social supports, and community wellbeing. We believe that seeking medical care, including care for substance use disorder, should be met with accessible, evidence-based options and not expose people to harm, such as surveillance, criminalization, or punishment.

Drug use, addiction, and substance use disorder are widely understood as health issues and often related to unmet mental health needs. While most people struggling with drug use and mental health issues don't become entangled in the criminal legal system, most people involved with the criminal legal system, especially those involved for low-level offenses, do experience these problems. This pattern shows a systemic shortcoming in the health and social response to drug use and mental health needs, particularly for Black and Latino New Yorkers, who disproportionately face structural and systemic barriers to care and involvement in the criminal legal system. In recent years, the consequences of these shortcomings have intensified as 2025 data show a 30 percent increase in drug arrests, and in areas such as the South Bronx, an increase as high as 45 percent. Low-level arrests account for more than half of all drug arrests and Black and Latino New Yorkers remain overrepresented.¹ Risk of overdose death is many times higher² for people recently

¹ <https://gothamist.com/news/low-level-drug-arrests-surge-in-the-south-bronx-according-to-new-data>

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0955395921004527>

released from incarceration and, unacceptably, overdose death rates among Black and Latino New Yorkers remain about twice as high as the rate of overdose death among white New Yorkers.³

Increased coordination of existing investments and targeted additional investments can significantly prevent barriers to care and breaks in our systems, which will reduce criminalization and improve the health and stability of vulnerable New Yorkers as well as strengthen community safety and wellness for all New Yorkers.

Leverage Existing Investments

New York City is fortunate to host a comprehensive range of services that reach vulnerable New Yorkers struggling with drug use and mental health needs, but the effectiveness of these services is frustrated by a lack of coordination, communication, and sometimes basic cooperation among providers and sponsoring agencies. Multiple city agencies and contracted providers engage with and provide health, social, housing, criminal legal, and other services to many of the same people, but are unaware of or unable to effectively coordinate these efforts with one another. As a consequence, individual connections to care are often lost or altogether missed, and safety suffers - both for vulnerable New Yorkers and for the wider community.

The City should strengthen communication between the Departments of Sanitation, Homeless Services, Parks, and Health and Mental Hygiene to identify trends in 311 calls related to homelessness, public drug use, and drug-related litter and proactively analyze where to deploy outreach teams and services.

Targeted additional investments

Low-threshold services

In 2025, the City committed 4 million dollars⁴ to site a drop-in space in the South Bronx to address community concerns of public drug use, public intoxication, and overdose. The planned site would provide low-threshold respite, meals, laundry, showers, and other hygiene services while also providing medical and mental health care, peer support and overdose prevention and response in the surrounding area.

³ <https://drugpolicy.org/resource/new-york-state-opioid-settlement-fund-maps/>

⁴ <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2025/08/mayor-adams-announces-new-proposal-to-further-support-new-yorker>

It's critical that this investment is fulfilled. In addition, the city should scale up harm reduction services and outreach teams in other geographic hotspots and unserved parts of the city. Geographic hotspots include locations such as homeless encampments and transit hubs, and also neighborhood areas with a concentration of people struggling with drug use and unmet mental health needs, and homelessness.

To address syringe and other drug litter, the City should increase funding to the Departments of Sanitation and Parks for deployment to clean-up areas where people have been congregating, including people who are using drugs.

Crisis Response

The City should work toward implementing non-police response to 911 behavioral health calls involving drug use. This includes implementing training and protocol to identify behavioral health calls involving substance use, dispatch appropriate non-police responders, provide competent and compassionate on-site response, and transfer care to appropriate centers and programs. Similarly, non-police response to 911 calls for overdose emergencies should become the standard response.

With increased coordination of existing investments and targeted additional investments, the City can vastly improve the lives of vulnerable New Yorkers as well as strengthen community safety and wellness for all New Yorkers.

We look forward to continued dialogue with the City Council on these priorities.

Drug Policy Alliance | 131 W. 33rd St, 15th floor, New York, NY 10001
For more information contact: Toni Smith | tsmith@drugpolicy.org | 212-613-8060



**TESTIMONY OF
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY**

**THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

City Hall,
New York, NY

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

SUBJECT: Preliminary Budget Hearing

PURPOSE: To highlight the need to invest more, not less, in
Alternative to Incarceration and Reentry Services.

Presented by

Lily Shapiro

Policy Counsel, David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy

The Fortune Society
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212-691-7554

<http://www.fortunesociety.com>

Good afternoon, Chair Feliz and members of the Committee on Public Safety. My name is Lily Shapiro, and I am the Policy Counsel for The Fortune Society's David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about The Fortune Society's work and how alternatives to incarceration (ATI) and reentry programs are essential in promoting public safety and desistance while empowering people to successfully rebuild their lives.

For over 58 years, The Fortune Society (Fortune) has been committed to supporting people returning from incarceration and providing meaningful alternatives to incarceration. Guided by the lived experiences of those we serve, our work is rooted in the belief that people can change when given the right support and opportunities. In Fiscal Year 2025, Fortune served more than 18,000 New Yorkers through our broad array of programs, including employment services, mental health and substance use treatment, and housing. Fortune served more than 1,000 people through our ATI programs in Fiscal Year 2025. We consistently see how comprehensive, community-based programming and interventions can change lives, break cycles of involvement in the justice system, and create safer communities for all of us. We have no wrong front door, meaning that whether someone is mandated to participate in our services or comes to us voluntarily, and regardless of which program is their initial form of engagement, they can avail themselves of everything we have to offer.

Fortune is proud to be a member of the NYC ATI/Reentry Coalition, a network of 12 service providers collectively serving more than 30,000 people each year, with decades of experience offering a diverse and person-centered array of programs. But we know that collectively, we can and should be serving even more, to reduce the number of people needlessly detained on Rikers Island and to enhance true community safety. Therefore, we are requesting that the Administration restore and expand funding for ATI and reentry services, an increase of \$24.6 million above what is proposed in the preliminary budget. We also request an increase of \$2.4 million in the Council's Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. We are grateful that the Council stood with us in preventing our funding from being cut in the Fiscal Year 26 budget and urge the Council to stand with us again, not just to prevent cuts but to ensure increases to support expansion of this collective work.

In Fiscal Year 2025, 83% of our participants successfully completed their ATI programming, and 92% of participants, many of whom are youth and young adults, successfully completed gun diversion programming. The successes behind these statistics are best illustrated by the stories of our remarkable participants:

- Mr. R entered The Fortune Society with an ATI mandate for a gun possession case. He maintained a perfect attendance record, while balancing the responsibilities of being a dedicated husband and father to three children, and finding and maintaining full-time employment as a chef. Mr. R credits the ATI program group sessions and case management with helping him address internal traumas he had not previously acknowledged, and radically changing his thinking from being reactive and short-sighted. He described himself as “living without a plan, ignoring consequences” to now holding himself accountable and being committed to his family. Had he been sentenced to prison instead of being granted this opportunity, his family would have suffered from the lack of income, and he would not have undergone this personal transformation.
- When Mr. S was mandated to our ATI program and released from detention, he immediately took advantage of the variety of resources available. Within the first three months of his release, Mr. S secured employment, and after four months, due to his consistent efforts, he found permanent housing through Fortune. Even after successfully completing his court mandate, Mr. S continues to voluntarily engage with Fortune programs that had helped lay the foundation for his stability, including attending ongoing sessions at our Better Living Center, Fortune’s outpatient state-licensed mental health clinic.
- Following his release from Rikers Island in September 2025 – after over 30 years of cycling through the juvenile and criminal justice systems, starting at age 12 - Mr. I made a deliberate decision to change course, enrolling in The Fortune Society’s Reentry for Individual Success and Elevation (RISE) program. Mr. I has taken significant steps towards stability after a lifetime of instability, including obtaining an NYC ID, participating in career development workshops, and training to become a Certified Recovery Peer Advocate. Throughout, he has remained sober and engaged in the Fortune community.

- After spending six months on Rikers Island, Mr. T began mandated inpatient treatment at Phoenix House. Remembering the support he had previously received from Fortune, he voluntarily enrolled in the RISE program to further strengthen his reentry and recovery with additional mentorship and guidance. While continuing his treatment, he completed Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor certification, participated in Fortune’s three-week Job Readiness Workshop, and enjoyed time with family as a grandfather. In an example of how the ATI/Reentry Coalition providers act as an ecosystem, he is also receiving outpatient substance use treatment through EAC. He now hopes to give back by working as a counselor. Mr. T said of his journey: “I’m 50 years old now and I can’t believe it took me this long to see life this way. I hope to share that perspective and the new knowledge I have with others who are going through what I went through in the past.”

As these stories demonstrate, ATI and reentry programs go beyond fulfilling court and supervision mandates; rather, they serve as entry points to a network of services that continue to support individuals as they navigate their lives following release. Fortune is proud to make a lifetime commitment to anyone who comes through our doors; people are welcome to remain engaged in our services even if they have completed a court or parole mandate, and many continue to visit our service centers weekly for creative arts workshops, therapy appointments, or to take additional employment services workshops to boost their employability.

To fulfill the new Administration’s commitment to reimagining community safety, we must confront our City’s overreliance on incarceration and begin to redirect resources to decarceration. While reentry and ATI programs are, of course, valuable in their own right, their impact is multiplied when we consider what they help our participants to avoid: the ongoing, dire situation on Rikers Island.¹ We are grateful that members of the new Administration

¹ Under the previous administration, in 2025 alone, 15 people died while in the custody of the city’s Department of Correction (DOC). People detained on Rikers Island are at a heightened risk of physical harm and lack consistent access to necessary medical and mental health care. In one month in 2025, there were more than 15,823 missed medical appointments – including mental health appointments – which represents a 300% increase since 2020. The most recent data tells us that more than 60% of people held on Rikers Island have a diagnosed mental health condition, and more than 50% have a diagnosed substance use disorder. (New York City Comptroller’s Office. *Department of Correction (DOC) Dashboard*. Office of the New York City Comptroller, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/services/for-the-public/department-of-correction-doc/dashboard/>; Rempel, Michael, Krystal Rodriguez, Kellyann Bock, Yonah Zeitz, Gabriel Sayegh, and Melanie Dominguez. *Rikers Island and Mental Health: Pathways Toward Community-Based Diversion and Jail*

acknowledge that the situation on Rikers Island requires urgent action, and we appreciate their commitment to the closure of Rikers Island in favor of the borough-based jails plan. However, the construction of those jails is behind schedule,² and in the interim, people on Rikers Island may continue to be routinely exposed to violence, poor infrastructure, staffing deficits, and systemic dehumanization; these deeply entrenched characteristics of Rikers Island cannot be changed overnight. Our programs, and those of our sister organizations, are crucial to safely reducing the Rikers population. Without increased and sustained investment, the promise of these life-changing and life-saving programs will be realized only for a small percentage of eligible people who would benefit from them.

It is especially critical that emerging adults aged 18-25, who make up nearly 25% of the population on Rikers Island,³ have access to ATIs because of their particular vulnerability to long-term harms of detention and incarceration. Fortune recently released a public health policy brief about how incarcerating young people disrupts their healthy development, by exposing them to conditions that undermine immediate and long-term mental and physical health and creating barriers to care. When young adults develop these adverse conditions, in addition to the trauma of incarceration, the impacts are long-lasting: their future chronic health problems will pose significant costs on our communities, including diminishing their workforce participation and increasingly their reliance on emergency services.⁴ Our City's overreliance on incarceration is having a negative public health impact with ripple effects into families, neighborhoods, and our City at large.

In addition to our funding from the Office of Criminal Justice and the Council, we are also grateful for the support of the Manhattan District Attorney's office in establishing a Court

Population Reduction. Data Collaborative for Justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Katal Center for Equity, Health, & Justice. November 2025. <https://datacollaborativeforjustice.org/work/diversion/rikers-island-and-mental-health-pathways-toward-community-based-diversion-and-jail-population-reduction/>

² Donaldson, Sahalie. *A Timeline on the Closure of Rikers Island*. City & State New York. January 28, 2026.

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2026/01/timeline-closure-rikers-island/376662/>.

³ Chester, Lael, Soraya Shri-Pathman, and Maya Sussman. *Emerging Adults Incarcerated at Rikers Island: An Overview*. Justice Lab at Columbia University. October 2022.

<https://justicelab.columbia.edu/sites/justicelab.columbia.edu/files/content/Emerging%20Adults%20at%20Rikers%20Overview.pdf>.

⁴ Chatman, Reggie and Hannah Ellen. "The Public Health Impacts of Youth Incarceration." The Fortune Society. December 2025. <https://fortunesociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/The-Public-Health-Impacts-of-Youth-Incarceration-v3.pdf>

Navigator program. Fortune peer navigators connect with individuals at arraignment who are released on their own recognizance or whose cases have been resolved to offer immediate resources, such as OMNY cards, clothing, and food, as well as longer-term supports such as housing, mental health and substance use treatment, and employment services. In Fiscal Year 2025, Fortune connected with over 3800 people, provided immediate resources to more than 1,000, completed full intake sessions with over 1100 people, and placed 33 individuals in housing – all on a voluntary basis. We hope that the demonstrated success of this program in connecting people to resources that may help them avoid further system involvement will encourage investment and replication in the other boroughs.

Thank you, Chair Feliz, and members of this Committee, for your time and your recognition of the value of these critical services and supports. We urge the Council to expand funding for ATIs and reentry services. Your support empowers and enables people with criminal legal system involvement to meaningfully contribute to their families and communities as they rebuild their lives, which makes us all, in turn, safer.

**Testimony Before the New York City Council
Public Safety Budget Hearing – Deed Theft Crisis**

Submitted by: Evangeline Byars

Organization: The People’s Coalition to Stop Deed Theft

Date: March 18, 2025

Email: stopdeedthftnow40@gmail.com

Phone: 347-757-1212

Good morning Chair and Members of the City Council,

My name is Evangeline Byars, and I am here on behalf of The People’s Coalition to Stop Deed Theft, a grassroots organization on the frontlines of one of the most devastating and under-addressed public safety crises in our city deed theft and mortgage fraud. We are asking that at least 4 million dollars be made available for this initiative.

On December 8, 2025, our coalition, alongside Council Member Chi Ossé, met with Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez to address the growing deed theft crisis and the lack of enforcement coming from the District Attorney’s Office. That meeting resulted in a critical agreement: our coalition would be included in the Deed Theft Task Force, and Council Member Ossé would work with the City Council to secure funding to combat this crisis through the establishment of a **Deed Theft and Fraud Division** to address these specialized crimes.

While this was a step in the right direction, the crisis has only deepened.

Deed theft is not a paperwork issue it is a violent economic crime. It strips families of generational wealth, displaces seniors, destabilizes entire communities, and disproportionately targets Black and Brown homeowners, immigrants, women, and people with disabilities. We are witnessing people being removed from homes they have lived in for decades homes that were stolen through fraud, coercion, and predatory schemes.

Our coalition is not theoretical; we are boots on the ground. We respond to active cases across **Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island**. We assist victims in real time, attend court proceedings, coordinate with law enforcement, and work to stop illegal evictions before they happen.

We are here today with clear and urgent demands:

1. Fund the Fight – Staffing is Critical

We are requesting funding to support:

- **Three (3) full-time attorneys** specializing in deed theft and mortgage fraud
- **Two (2) paralegals**
- **Social workers** to address the severe trauma experienced by victims

This is specialized work. These cases require expertise that can only come from direct engagement in the field.

2. Expand Across All Boroughs

While funding is being pursued for Brooklyn, deed theft is a **citywide crisis**. The Deed Theft and Fraud Division must serve as a model that is replicated and resources across all five boroughs. Every District Attorney's office must be equipped to handle these crimes effectively.

3. Oversight and Accountability

We are calling for the creation of a **City Council Oversight Committee on Deed Theft** to ensure:

- Funds are used appropriately
- Deliverables are met
- Impact is measurable

This initiative must not lack accountability.

4. Demand Accurate Data and Transparency

The data currently being reported by the District Attorneys and the New York State Attorney General is **outdated and incomplete**. We respectfully demand:

- Updated statistics on reported cases
- Transparency on investigations and prosecutions
- Public reporting on outcomes

Without accurate data, this crisis will continue to be minimized and misunderstood.

5. NYPD Accountability and Unlawful Evictions

Furthermore, we must address a deeply troubling and dangerous pattern: the role of the NYPD in deed theft cases.

The NYPD is currently being used to carry out evictions in situations that are clearly **civil disputes involving contested ownership and fraud**. Instead of protecting victims, law

enforcement is too often **criminalizing homeowners** and assisting in their removal from properties that are actively under dispute.

This is unacceptable.

We are calling on the City Council to hold the **Police Commissioner accountable** for this practice. The NYPD must not be weaponized to enforce questionable or fraudulent claims of ownership, nor should they be participating in what effectively amounts to the **illegal displacement of rightful homeowners**.

In many of the cases we respond to, the presence of the NYPD escalates the situation and results in families being forcibly removed without proper judicial resolution. This not only undermines due process, but it also contributes to the ongoing theft of homes across our city.

We are requesting:

- Clear protocols preventing NYPD involvement in disputed deed and ownership cases
- Mandatory verification of court orders and legitimacy before any enforcement action
- Immediate review of cases where NYPD assisted in evictions tied to alleged deed theft
- Oversight hearings to investigate the NYPD's role in these incidents

This issue must be treated as a **public safety priority**.

Let me be clear:

Deed theft is destroying families.

We have seen seniors become homeless.

We have seen families locked out of homes they legally own.

We have seen entire legacies erased overnight.

And while this is happening, enforcement has not matched the scale or urgency of the crisis.

We are not asking for charity we are demanding action.

We are the people doing this work every single day. The data, the cases, and the real stories come directly from our efforts on the ground. If this Council is serious about public safety, then protecting people from having their homes stolen must be a priority.

We stand ready to partner—but partnership must come with real investment, real accountability, and real results.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the people of this city.

I can be reached at 347-757-1212 or via email at stopdeedthftnow40@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Evangeline Byars

The Peoples Coalition To Stop Deed Theft

New York City Council Committee on Public Safety Budget Hearing

Written Testimony of Benjamin Heller
Program Manager, Greater Justice New York
Vera Institute of Justice

March 18, 2026

My name is Benjamin Heller, and I am the program manager of the Greater Justice New York initiative at the Vera Institute of Justice, which works to end mass incarceration, protect immigrants' rights, ensure dignity for people behind bars, and build safe, thriving communities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

The fiscal year (FY) 2027 preliminary budget allocates \$2.99 billion to the Department of Correction (DOC) and \$13.19 billion to the New York Police Department (NYPD)—representing a 5 percent increase for each agency compared with last June's adopted budget.¹ Although this is significantly less than increases to agencies like the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) or the Department of Social Services (DSS), it still amounts to an \$800 million budget increase. Further, this is likely an underestimate due each agency's pattern of far exceeding its overtime budget, as discussed below.

As of January 1, 2026, just six months into the fiscal year, NYPD had spent 85 percent of its \$601.9 million budget for the entire year.² NYPD, along with DOC, routinely underestimates its overtime budget only to adjust them upward midyear. The Fire Department (FDNY) and Department of Sanitation (DSNY) also underestimate their budgets, but to a much lesser extent. For DOC and NYPD, the gulf between budgeted overtime and actual overtime is so large—and so consistent across years—that it is possible the agencies are lowering their overtime budget predictions to evade accountability for spending.

NYPD hiring will not reduce overtime spending. Research from the New York City Comptroller shows that there is no relationship between NYPD hiring and reductions in agency overtime.³ By allowing for persistent underbudgeting, the city enables mismanagement and takes money from other services that benefit all New Yorkers.

One clear way the city can reduce police overtime and improve New Yorkers' wellbeing is to rethink its approach to mental health crisis response. Instead of dispatching NYPD to people experiencing crises, the city must send trained peer specialists and clinicians—not police—when it is safe to do so. Recent tragedies, like the shooting of Jabez Chakraborty, underscore the consequences of an inadequate mental health crisis response.⁴ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's national guidelines emphasize that it is “unsafe and unacceptable” to rely on police as the primary responders

to mental health crises.⁵ Beyond successfully connecting people to care, civilian crisis response can free up police resources to focus on violent crime, further strengthening community safety.⁶

The city's current mental health crisis response, B-HEARD, only operates from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. in just 31 out of 78 city precincts.⁷ The city's goal should be to expand this program to cover *all* city precincts round-the-clock, while making operational improvements that connect more people in mental health crisis to this crucial non-police response. **More immediately, we urge the city to increase B-HEARD's budget by 50 percent, allocating \$52.5 million in total funding (\$17.5 million more than this year's \$35 million budget) to make non-police mental health crisis response available 24 hours a day within its current operating boundaries and include peer specialists, who would bring valuable expertise to response teams.**⁸

Based on extensive conversations with city government, advocates, and experts, we also advise investing:

- **\$11 million** for eight more Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams and **\$2 million** for four more Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams, to scale up community-based mental health treatment and eliminate long waitlists for care;⁹
- **\$20.3 million** for 150 units of low-barrier housing, accompanied by a commitment to assess the need for transitional reentry housing and fund additional units accordingly;¹⁰
- **\$1.3 million** for alternatives to incarceration (ATI) and **\$3.3 million** for reentry services to offset slated budget cuts, **\$6.9 million** to expand programs serving court-involved young people with mental health needs, and **\$10 million** in additional ATI funding to scale services up to meet demonstrated need;
- **\$10 million** in additional funding for the Commission on Human Rights, which enables New Yorkers with conviction histories to find community-based stability through housing and employment; and
- **\$3 million** in additional funding for the Board of Correction (BOC) to enable the agency to hire staff for rigorous jail oversight.

By investing in these services, the Mamdani administration can connect people to care instead of arresting them and sending them to jail, shrinking the jail population while improving community safety for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please contact me at bheller@vera.org if the Vera Institute of Justice may provide further support.

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- ¹ The budget numbers presented in this brief were provided to Vera by the Independent Budget Office (IBO) in February 2026 and are on file with the author. Vera used data from IBO to have the most up-to-date numbers; for more information, contact Benjamin Heller at bheller@vera.org. Note that all fiscal year (FY) 2027 preliminary and FY2026 adopted departmental totals include fringe benefits, pension contributions, and debt service, which Vera drew from the New York City Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to supplement the IBO figures. See OMB, *The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2027: Expense Revenue Contract* (New York: OMB, 2026), 38E, 36E, 69E, 28E, 39E, 137E, 59E, 134E, and 68E, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/feb26/perc2-26.pdf>; and OMB, *The City of New York Adopted Budget Fiscal Year 2026: Expense Revenue Contract* (New York: OMB, 2025), 101E, 93E, 175E, 70E, 105E, 316E, 154E, 307E, and 173E, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt25/erc6-25.pdf>.
- ² IBO budget data.
- ³ Office of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, *Overtime Overview: A Deep Dive into NYPD Uniformed Overtime Costs* (New York: Office of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, 2023), 5-6, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/NYPD-Overtime-Overview.pdf>.
- ⁴ Charles Lane, “911 Call Shows Queens Family Asked for Ambulance Before NYPD Shot Son in Mental Health Crisis,” *Gothamist*, February 4, 2026, <https://gothamist.com/news/911-call-shows-queens-family-asked-for-ambulance-before-nypd-shot-son-in-mental-health-crisis>.
- ⁵ Julian Clark, Brian Dimmick, and Kelly Simon, “Changing the Mental Health Emergency Response System in Washington County, Oregon,” *ACLU*, February 5, 2024, <https://www.aclu.org/news/criminal-law-reform/changing-mental-health-emergency-response-in-oregon>.
- ⁶ Carl Smith, “Since 2020, Civilians Respond to 911 Calls in 10 Times as Many Cities,” *Governing*, September 19, 2025, <https://www.governing.com/management-and-administration/since-2020-civilians-respond-to-911-calls-in-10-times-as-many-cities>.
- ⁷ Maura Hayes-Chaffe, *Audit of the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division’s Effectiveness in Responding to Individuals with Mental Health Crises and Meeting Its Goals* (New York: Office of the New York City Comptroller, 2025), 8, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MG24-060A.pdf>.
- ⁸ Cassandra Stuart and Ed Dolan, *From Dispatch to Doorstep: Tracking B-HEARD’s Response to Mental Health Crises* (New York: New York City Independent Budget Office, 2026), 8, <https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/assets/ibo/downloads/pdf/public-safety/2026/2026-january-from-dispatch-to-door-step.pdf>.
- ⁹ As of March 2025, IMT teams had waitlists of 672 people. See Caroline Lewis, “NYC Council Press Officials to Cut Wait Times for Mobile Mental Health Teams,” *Gothamist*, March 24, 2025, <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-council-press-officials-to-cut-wait-times-for-mobile-mental-health-teams>.
- ¹⁰ In February 2026, the Mamdani administration announced that Just Home would create 58 additional supportive housing units for system-involved people. See New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, “NYC Health Department Releases Updated Request for Proposals to Expand Supportive Housing for Formerly Incarcerated and Homeless New Yorkers,” press release, February 12, 2026, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2026/request-for-proposals-to-expand-supportive-housing.page>.



Statement of Madeline Hopper

Policy Specialist, Women's Prison Association

New York City Council

Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on Public Safety

Written testimony

Good afternoon. My name is Madeline Hopper, and it is my privilege to represent the Women's Prison Association. Chair Feliz and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

For 181 years, the Women's Prison Association has supported system-impacted women across every borough and at every stage of their engagement with the justice system. From this experience, we know this: real public safety doesn't come from locking women up; it comes from stable housing, access to effective services, and deep community connections.

Women enter the criminal legal system carrying complex, unmet needs. Incarceration does not solve these challenges; it makes them worse.

And, when women leave prison or jail, the City lacks sufficient investment in women-specific, community-based programs and supportive housing, leaving many without the coordinated services they need to address co-occurring substance use, mental health challenges, and housing instability.

WPA envisions a different path. By meeting women and gender-expansive people where they are, we address root causes through individualized diversion and reentry programs that combine wraparound case management, safe and stable housing, and trauma-informed clinical care, supports that stabilize women, strengthen families, and enhance public safety.

The evidence confirms what our experience shows: gender-responsive, individualized supports in the community reduce recidivism and cost a fraction of what the City spends on the ineffective and inhumane approach represented by Rikers Island (Harding et al., 2017; Mueller-Smith and Schnepel, 2021; McCann, 2022).



With the City Council's support and investment, we can begin to fill these gaps and better address the interconnected needs of women impacted by the carceral systems - particularly those facing co-occurring substance use, mental health challenges, and housing instability.

Summary of WPA FY27 Funding Requests

ATI and Reentry Coalition (\$2.4M increase across 12 programs)

This year, we are asking the Administration for the restoration and expansion of funding for ATIs and Reentry services at MOCJ, a \$24.6 million increase from what is proposed in the preliminary budget. From the NYC Council, the ATI and Reentry Coalition is requesting an additional \$2.4 million increase in the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative across our 12 organizations.

Speaker Initiative: Mothers & Families Together (MFT) Diversion Pilot (\$500,000)

The MFT pilot will identify mothers on Rikers Island eligible for diversion and connect them to community-based services, including family-centered housing. MFT will support family reunification, provide legal advocacy, supervised visitation, and individualized diversion plans. By keeping mothers with their children and providing comprehensive supports, this program disrupts the intergenerational impacts of incarceration while strengthening families and promoting public safety.

Justice Involved Supportive Housing (\$500,000)

This funding will provide safe, stable housing for 30 formerly incarcerated women and their children, paired with holistic case management and mental health supports. Stable housing allows women to fully engage in services, reunite with their children, and build long-term independence. With 60% of WPA clients screened for transitional services lacking stable housing, this investment addresses a critical barrier to successful reentry and family stability.

Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations (\$200,000)

These funds will expand intensive case management and trauma-informed clinical care for women both in jail and reentering their communities. Services include individual and group therapy, substance use treatment, and family-inclusive supports, directly addressing the high



347 EAST 10TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10009 | 646-292-7710 | info@wpaonline.org

rates of trauma and mental health needs among justice-impacted women. Funding will increase access at Rikers Island and across the community, supporting long-term stability and wellbeing.

Works Cited

Harding, David J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, Anh P. Nguyen, and Shawn D. Bushway. "Short- and Long-Term Effects of Imprisonment on Future Felony Convictions and Prison Admissions." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 42 (2017).

McCann, Sam. "Diversion Programs Are a Smart, Sustainable Investment in Public Safety." Vera Institute of Justice, April 2022.

Mueller-Smith, Michael, and Kevin Schnepel. "Diversion in the Criminal Justice System." *The Review of Economic Studies*. 88, no. 2 (2021): 883–936.

Robertson, Allison G., Michele M. Easter, Hsiu-Ju Lin, et al. "Gender-Specific Participation and Outcomes among Jail Diversion Clients with Co-Occurring Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders." *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, August 2020.



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Our Locations

Manhattan Headquarters

63rd West 125th Street,

4th Floor

New York, NY 10027

(212) 760-0755

www.youthjustice.org

Bronx Office

424 East 147th Street,

Suite 200

Bronx, NY 10455

(718) 653-5301

Brooklyn Office

25 Chapel Street

Suite 702

Brooklyn, NY 11201

(347) 689-4771

March 18, 2026

Youth Justice Network City Council Testimony

My name is Messiah Ramkissoon and I serve as the Deputy Executive Director of Youth Justice Network, formerly known as Friends of Island Academy.

Our citywide youth advocacy model serves as the bridge between young people transitioning from incarceration to marginalized communities within the five boroughs, supporting healthier outcomes and sustainable pathways post release. Our work prioritizes proximity and tangibility as two critical components to eradicating recidivism.

In 2016 we created a system of aftercare called the Youth Reentry Network which was catalyzed by our youth advocacy model. This Network ensured that every young person entering the doors of New Admissions within Rikers was attached to a youth advocate from the first day of incarceration to the day of release. Inclusive of but not limited to outcomes around housing and employment, education and mental health; the youth plans created with young people and their advocates during detention were actualized immediately upon discharge. We've learned that young people are more responsive to a model built on trust rather than one build on mandate.

However due to unexpected COVID budget cuts, we were coerced into a 70 percent lay off of staff. I must also add that because of the pandemic, the jails also shut their doors to all service providers. We knew that this was the worse time for youth coming from inequitable conditions to be disconnected from the urgent support systems that ensured their wellness and success.

This resulted in our innovation and creation of Shifting Gears™, a mobile resource bus which drives into a different borough each day of the week delivering our resources directly to the doorstep of the neighborhoods that our youth come to. Our bus is equipped with an outreach team of credible messengers and also an army of advocates tied to each borough. We have seen impactful engagement within over 65% percent enrollments for services and supports from youth and young adults who meet us on the "block". We understand the investment of police presence in these community zones throughout New York City. We also understand that meaningful change can

only occur if the same or greater investment is filtered into the organizations providing culturally connected and meaningful intervention.

We envision a city where each of the respective boroughs you represent has its own dedicated Shifting Gears™ mobile resource bus and assigned team of advocates. We hope that you honor these words as an urgent call to action for greater intentionality and investment into the change that's needed for youth who are often forgotten and held accountable for conditions they did not create but rather inherited from birth.

Thank you for your time and attention today.



Messiah Ramkissoon
Deputy Executive Director, Youth Justice Network

SHIFTING GEARS



3-Month Outreach Schedule — March through May 2026

Legislative District Coverage | Three Levels of Representation

SCHEDULE KEY: Monday: Queens | Tuesday: Bronx | Wednesday: Manhattan | Thursday: Brooklyn or Staten Island (rotating)
 OUTREACH HOURS: Monday–Thursday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
 THREE LEVELS: AD = State Assembly Member | SD = State Senator | CD = NYC City Council Member

DATE	DAY	LOCATION	ASSEMBLY MEMBER (AD)	STATE SENATOR (SD)	CITY COUNCIL (CD)	NOTE
MARCH 2026						
Week 1 — March 2–5						
Mon 3/2	Queens	163rd & Jamaica Ave	Khaleel Anderson (AD-28)	Leroy Comrie (SD-14)	Nantasha Williams (CD-28)	South Jamaica
Tue 3/3	Bronx	149th & Third Ave	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	Primary hub
Wed 3/4	Manhattan	125th & ACP State Bldg	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Primary hub
Thu 3/5	Brooklyn	Mother Gaston & Belmont	Latrice Walker (AD-55)	Zellnor Myrie (SD-20)	Darlene Mealy (CD-41)	Brownsville
Week 2 — March 9–12						
Mon 3/9	Queens	Queensbridge Houses	Catalina Cruz (AD-39)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Julie Won (CD-26)	Long Island City
Tue 3/10	Bronx	Gun Hill Road	Amanda Septimo (AD-84)	Jamaal Bailey (SD-36)	Kevin Riley (CD-12)	Northeast Bronx
Wed 3/11	Manhattan	Frederick Douglass Houses	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	West Harlem
Thu 3/12	Staten Is.	Stapleton Houses	Charles Fall (AD-61)	Jessica Scarcella Spanton (SD-23)	Kamillah Hanks (CD-49)	North Shore
Week 3 — March 16–19						
Mon 3/16	Queens	Roosevelt Ave & Corona	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Corona
Tue 3/17	Bronx	Parkchester / Virginia Park	Karines Reyes (AD-87)	Nathalia Fernandez (SD-39)	Shirley Aldebol (CD-13)	Parkchester
Wed 3/18	Manhattan	63 W 125th St (YJN HQ)	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Home base

Thu 3/19	Brooklyn	Cypress Hills Houses	Erik Dilan (AD-54)	Julia Salazar (SD-18)	Sandy Nurse (CD-37)	CORRECTIONS CHAIRS
Week 4 — March 23–26						
Mon 3/23	Queens	East Elmhurst	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Jackson Heights area
Tue 3/24	Bronx	HRA 139th Street	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	South Bronx
Wed 3/25	Manhattan	116th & Lenox Ave	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Central Harlem
Thu 3/26	Staten Is.	West Brighton Houses	Charles Fall (AD-61)	Jessica Scarcella Spanton (SD-23)	Kamillah Hanks (CD-49)	North Shore
Week 5 — March 30–31						
Mon 3/30	Queens	163rd & Jamaica Ave	Khaleel Anderson (AD-28)	Leroy Comrie (SD-14)	Nantasha Williams (CD-28)	South Jamaica
Tue 3/31	Bronx	2952 Third Avenue	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	Mott Haven
APRIL 2026						
Week 1 — April 1–2						
Wed 4/1	Manhattan	125th & ACP State Bldg	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Primary hub
Thu 4/2	Brooklyn	Mother Gaston & Pitkin	Latrice Walker (AD-55)	Zellnor Myrie (SD-20)	Darlene Mealy (CD-41)	Brownsville
Week 2 — April 6–9						
Mon 4/6	Queens	Queensbridge Houses	Catalina Cruz (AD-39)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Julie Won (CD-26)	Long Island City
Tue 4/7	Bronx	Gun Hill Road	Amanda Septimo (AD-84)	Jamaal Bailey (SD-36)	Kevin Riley (CD-12)	Northeast Bronx
Wed 4/8	Manhattan	135th & Lenox Ave	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Central Harlem
Thu 4/9	Brooklyn	Flatbush & Church Ave	Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn (AD-42)	Kevin Parker (SD-21)	Farah Louis (CD-40)	East Flatbush
Week 3 — April 13–16						
Mon 4/13	Queens	Roosevelt Ave & Corona	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Corona
Tue 4/14	Bronx	Fordham Rd & Grand Concourse	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	Fordham
Wed 4/15	Manhattan	Polo Grounds Houses	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	155th/Amsterdam
Thu 4/16	Staten Is.	Arlington Houses	Charles Fall (AD-61)	Jessica Scarcella Spanton (SD-23)	Kamillah Hanks (CD-49)	Mariners Harbor
Week 4 — April 20–23						

Mon 4/20	Queens	East Elmhurst	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Jackson Heights area
Tue 4/21	Bronx	149th & Third Ave	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	Primary hub
Wed 4/22	Manhattan	Frederick Douglass Houses	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	West Harlem
Thu 4/23	Brooklyn	Cypress Hills Houses	Erik Dilan (AD-54)	Julia Salazar (SD-18)	Sandy Nurse (CD-37)	CORRECTIONS CHAIRS

Week 5 — April 27–30

Mon 4/27	Queens	163rd & Jamaica Ave	Khaleel Anderson (AD-28)	Leroy Comrie (SD-14)	Nantasha Williams (CD-28)	South Jamaica
Tue 4/28	Bronx	West Farms / E Tremont	Karines Reyes (AD-87)	Nathalia Fernandez (SD-39)	Shirley Aldebol (CD-13)	Castle Hill area
Wed 4/29	Manhattan	125th & ACP State Bldg	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Primary hub
Thu 4/30	Staten Is.	Stapleton Houses	Charles Fall (AD-61)	Jessica Scarcella Spanton (SD-23)	Kamillah Hanks (CD-49)	North Shore

MAY 2026

Week 1 — May 4–7

Mon 5/4	Queens	Queensbridge Houses	Catalina Cruz (AD-39)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Julie Won (CD-26)	Long Island City
Tue 5/5	Bronx	HRA 139th Street	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	South Bronx
Wed 5/6	Manhattan	63 W 125th St (YJN HQ)	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Home base
Thu 5/7	Brooklyn	Mother Gaston & Belmont	Latrice Walker (AD-55)	Zellnor Myrie (SD-20)	Darlene Mealy (CD-41)	Brownsville

Week 2 — May 11–14

Mon 5/11	Queens	Roosevelt Ave & Corona	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Corona
Tue 5/12	Bronx	Gun Hill Road	Amanda Septimo (AD-84)	Jamaal Bailey (SD-36)	Kevin Riley (CD-12)	Northeast Bronx
Wed 5/13	Manhattan	116th & Lenox Ave	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Central Harlem
Thu 5/14	Brooklyn	Flatbush & Church Ave	Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn (AD-42)	Kevin Parker (SD-21)	Farah Louis (CD-40)	East Flatbush

Week 3 — May 18–21

Mon 5/18	Queens	East Elmhurst	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Jackson Heights area
Tue 5/19	Bronx	Parkchester / Virginia Park	Karines Reyes (AD-87)	Nathalia Fernandez (SD-39)	Shirley Aldebol (CD-13)	Parkchester

Wed 5/20	Manhattan	Frederick Douglass Houses	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	West Harlem
Thu 5/21	Staten Is.	West Brighton Houses	Charles Fall (AD-61)	Jessica Scarcella Spanton (SD-23)	Kamillah Hanks (CD-49)	North Shore
Week 4 — May 25–28						
Mon 5/25 — MEMORIAL DAY — CLOSED						
Tue 5/26	Bronx	2952 Third Avenue	Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Justin Sanchez (CD-17)	Mott Haven
Wed 5/27	Manhattan	125th & ACP State Bldg	Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	Primary hub
Thu 5/28	Brooklyn	Cypress Hills Houses	Erik Dilan (AD-54)	Julia Salazar (SD-18)	Sandy Nurse (CD-37)	CORRECTIONS CHAIRS

3-Month Coverage Summary by Legislator

ASSEMBLY MEMBER	BORO	VISITS	STATE SENATOR	CITY COUNCIL	KEY LOCATIONS
Jordan Wright (AD-70)	Manhattan	12-13	Cordell Cleare (SD-30)	Yusef Salaam (CD-9)	125th St, Frederick Douglass, 116th, Polo Grounds
Chantel Jackson (AD-79)	Bronx	5-6	Jose Serrano (SD-29)	Rafael Salamanca (CD-17)	149th/Third, 2952 Third, HRA 139th, Fordham
Karines Reyes (AD-87)	Bronx	3	Nathalia Fernandez (SD-39)	Shirley Aldebol (CD-13)	Parkchester, West Farms, Castle Hill
Amanda Septimo (AD-84)	Bronx	3	Jamaal Bailey (SD-36)	Kevin Riley (CD-12)	Gun Hill Road, Northeast Bronx
Charles Fall (AD-61)	Staten Is.	4-5	Jessica Scarcella Spanton (SD-23)	Kamillah Hanks (CD-49)	Stapleton, West Brighton, Arlington
Latrice Walker (AD-55)	Brooklyn	5-6	Zellnor Myrie (SD-20)	Darlene Mealy (CD-41)	Mother Gaston, Pitkin, Belmont
Julia Salazar (SD-18) / Erik Dilan (AD-54)	Brooklyn	3	Julia Salazar (SD-18)	Sandy Nurse (CD-37)	Cypress Hills — CORRECTIONS CHAIRS
Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn (AD-42)	Brooklyn	2	Kevin Parker (SD-21)	Farah Louis (CD-40)	Flatbush / East Flatbush
Catalina Cruz (AD-39)	Queens	3	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Julie Won (CD-26)	Queensbridge Houses, Long Island City
Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (AD-34)	Queens	6	Jessica Ramos (SD-13)	Shanel Thomas-Henry (CD-21)	Corona, East Elmhurst
Khaleel Anderson (AD-28)	Queens	3	Leroy Comrie (SD-14)	Nantasha Williams (CD-28)	163rd & Jamaica Ave, South Jamaica

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sofina Tanni

Address: _____

I represent: Asian American Federation

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Minister Under Heraj

Address: 271 Chambers Plaza E Suite 21037 Brooklyn NY 11202

I represent: AD56

Address: Brooklyn

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Betty Davis

Address: 1070 2nd St

I represent: Coalition Needs Theft

Address: Brooklyn

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/16/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERICA FORD

Address: _____

I represent: LIFE Camp part of CMS

Address: 111-12 Supplican Blvd

**THE COUNCIL
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Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Isabel Greenberg

Address: _____

I represent: Center for Employment Opportunities

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Madeline Hopper

Address: _____

I represent: Women's Prison Association

Address: 347 E 10th Street

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bridget G. Brennan

Address: 80 Centre St., 6th floor

I represent: Office of the Special Narcotics

Address: Prosecutor

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nadia Chait

Address: _____

I represent: ATI/Reentry Coalition

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edwin Santans

Address: _____

I represent: Freedom Agenda

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: 3/10/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tina Luong

Address: 199 Water St

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Piyali Basal

Address: Neighborhood Defender Service

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Juwal Scott

Address: _____

I represent: The Bronx Defenders

Address: 360 E. 161st St. Bronx 10451

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: 3-18-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stan German

Address: _____

I represent: New York County Defender

Address: Services

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA SCHREIBERDORF

Address: 177 LIVINGSTON ST, BLY

I represent: BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

Address: SAN

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jane Fox

Address: 50 Broadway NYC

I represent: UAW 2325

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nata Durier, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Address: 1 Centre St

I represent: Mayor's office of Criminal Justice
Address: above

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deanna Logan
Address: 1 Centre Street, 1020, New York, NY 10007

I represent: Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jonathan Variche
Address: 100 Church Street, NY 10007

I represent: NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board
Address: NY 100 Church Street, 10th Fl, New York 10007

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yvonne Williams
Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn 11238

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
Hearing in favor in opposition

Date: 3/10/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robert Fiato
Address: 1 Centre St. NY NY
I represent: Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Address: 1 Centre St, NY NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Candice Julien
Address: _____
I represent: Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Address: 1 Center Street NY NY 10007

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wladia Chait

Address: 4 West 129th

I represent: CASES

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hailey Nolasco

Address: _____

I represent: Center for Justice Innovation

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3-18-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Candice Julien

Address: _____

I represent: MOLJ

Address: 1 Centre St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3-18-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robert Fiato

Address: _____

I represent: MOCJ

Address: 1 Centre St.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3-18-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nora Daniel

Address: 1 Centre St.

I represent: MOCJ

Address: 1 Centre St.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3-18-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deanna Logan

Address: _____

I represent: MOCJ

Address: 1 Centre St.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: C. G.

Address: Harlem

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lily Shapiro

Address: _____

I represent: ATT/Reentry Coalition

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aastha Metna

Address: _____

I represent: Common Justice

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Det. Chief Mary King

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Queens DA Melinda Katz

Address: Queens Blvd, Kew Gardens

I represent: Queens DA

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Richard Napolitano

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 3-18-2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RICHARD W. FLORES

Address: 224 E. 47th ST, NY, NY 10017

I represent: BRC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHIEF Andrew Arias

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tania Kinsella, DC

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 03/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Tisch Police Commissioner

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 03/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alex Crohn, DCST

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 03/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kristine Ryan, DCMB

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 03/18/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Herbert DeLM

Address: 1 Police Plaza

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Reverend Wendy Calderon-Payne

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Youth Alliance Inc

Address: 432 E 149th Street, Bronx, NY 10455

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Olivia Duong

Address: _____

I represent: District Council 37, Local 3778

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tabitha Sheppard

Address: _____

I represent: District Council 37, Local 5911

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Donald Nesbit

Address: _____

I represent: DC37, Local 372

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MEGAN FRENCH-MARCELIN

Address: 39 BROADWAY

I represent: THE NY ATi COALITION

Address: 39 BROADWAY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ruth Lowenkron

Address: 151 W. 30th St, 11th Fl. NY NY 10002

I represent: New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Address: [same]

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Evangelina Byars

Address: 1604th Carroll Street

I represent: the Peoples Coalition to Stop Boardwalk

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MESSIAH RAMKISSOON

Address: _____

I represent: YOUTH JUSTICE NETWORK

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms