

2025 Legislative and Policy Priorities

Osborne Association's legislative and policy priorities advance restorative, healing-centered responses to law-breaking, strengthen communities, and promote opportunities for people to thrive. The bills¹ detailed here fall within the four key focus areas of our advocacy: decriminalization and decarceration; children and families; housing; and aging and parole justice. They also move us closer to achieving our fundamental goals:

- ▶ expanding community-based resources, services, and solutions rather than carceral, punitive responses that perpetuate harm;
- ▶ building equity and inclusion, and dismantling structural racism;
- ▶ improving conditions inside prisons and jails for those who live in, work in, and visit them, including maintaining and strengthening relationships among incarcerated people and their families and community.

NEW YORK STATE PRIORITIES

Protect In-Person Visits [Bill](#), (Senator Sepulveda/Assemblymember Weprin; A4603)

This bill protects in-person visits at state and local correctional facilities, ensuring that video conferencing cannot replace in-person visits—an alarming trend seen in other states and localities, sometimes required by the contracted for-profit tech companies. Legislation is needed to ensure in-person visiting is codified as a legal right, and that it is accessible via weekend and/or evening visiting hours so that children and families do not have to miss school or work to visit loved ones. The Senate passed this bill the last five years and we urge the Legislature to pass this bill immediately.

Compassion and Reproductive Equity (CARE) [Act](#), (Senator Salazar/Assemblymember Kelles; S4583/A4879)

This bill promotes the well-being of babies by requiring correctional facilities to provide basic standards of pre- and postnatal care for incarcerated individuals who are pregnant. It institutes universal, science-based conditions in correctional facilities for bonding, promoting positive outcomes for babies who remain with their incarcerated parents during the critical bonding period of the first year of life. This bill passed in the Senate last legislative session.

1. All bills will receive new numbers in the 2025 legislative session. 2025–2026 legislative session bill numbers are listed if available as of January 13, 2025.

NEW YORK STATE PRIORITIES *cont.*

Fair and Timely Parole [Bill, S159/A127](#) (Senator Salazar/Assemblymember Weprin)

The Fair and Timely Parole Bill requires the state to show that an individual poses a current and unreasonable risk of violating the law and a threat to public safety in order to deny parole release once they have reached their minimum sentence. The bill also requires the New York State Board of Parole to consider all evidence of rehabilitation when determining unreasonable risk to public safety, correcting the current injustice of prioritizing the nature of the original crime to determine (and often, deny) release.



Elder Parole [Bill, S454/A514](#) (Senator Hoylman-Sigal/Assemblymember Davila)

The Elder Parole Bill would allow individuals 55 years of age and older who have served 15 years or more an opportunity to appear before the Board of Parole, providing a chance at release for those who were not given parole eligible sentences decades ago or were given such excessive sentences that they will not be alive when their minimum sentence is served. Currently, one in four incarcerated individuals is age 50 or older, a great expense to taxpayers and the state, with little to no public safety benefit. Incarcerating older people does not make us safer—recidivism rates for those over 60 for new offenses are close to zero²—and deprives families and communities of their wisdom, contributions, and leadership.

Fully Staff the Parole Board and Ensure Commissioners have the Tools they Need

It has been many years since the NYS Board of Parole was fully staffed (there are currently 16 of 19 commissioners, 11 of whom have expired terms). Parole Commissioners conduct thousands of parole interviews per year, mostly by video, and deny parole to two-thirds of the eligible individuals who come before them, regardless of their risk assessment score, age, or rehabilitative record. We recommend digitizing the parole process, increasing resources for Commissioners, and fully staffing the Parole Board with diverse individuals who demonstrably believe in rehabilitation and transformation.

Reentry Assistance [Bill, A193](#) (Assemblymember Gibbs)

This bill addresses the inadequate, longstanding practice of providing people with \$40 “at the gate” upon release from prison. It establishes a reentry fund to provide stipends to individuals released from a New York State prison, setting them up for success by providing cash assistance. The first payment is provided by DOCCS at release, with subsequent payments distributed by community supervision agencies, up to a total of \$2,550 per person.

2. Vera Institute of Justice (December 2017), [Aging Out - Using Compassionate Release to Address the Growth of Aging and Infirm Prison Populations](#).

NEW YORK STATE PRIORITIES *cont.*

NYS Housing Access Voucher [Bill, S72](#) (Senator Kavanagh)

This bill dramatically expands rental assistance via vouchers at fair-market rent levels for those who are homeless or face an imminent threat of homelessness. Housing vouchers can be a critical part of reentry, providing access to stable housing, which is necessary for a successful transition back to the community.

NEW YORK CITY PRIORITIES

Reducing the Numbers of People in NYC Jails and Closing Rikers Island

By investing in alternatives to detention and incarceration, and responding to mental illness, substance use addictions, poverty, and homelessness with community-based solutions, NYC can drastically and safely reduce the number of people held pre-trial on Rikers Island. Legally, the City is bound to close Rikers by 2027 and we must pull all levers to meet this deadline. The harm caused by Rikers is tremendous, affecting not only those held there (85% of whom are pre-trial and 93% of whom are people of color), but the thousands of staff who work there, and the thousands of family members and friends who visit there.



Expanding Access to Reentry Housing, [Int 1100-2024](#) (Council Member Rivera)

This bill would expand supportive housing eligibility for justice-involved people by requiring the NYC Department of Social Services to expand eligibility parameters for any existing supportive housing program administered and wholly funded by the city.

Improving Children’s Visiting at Rikers, [Int 420](#) (Council Member Rivera)

Int 420 establishes a visiting program for children at Rikers to improve their visiting experience, including child-friendly items made available during visits and training for visiting staff specific to interacting with children. It also requires data reporting specific to child visitors.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

[FAMILIES Act](#) (Senator Wyden/Representative Jayapal)

The Finding Alternatives to Mass Incarceration: Lives Improved by Ending Separation (FAMILIES) Act would allow federal judges to divert parents and/or caregivers from incarceration into diversion programs that meet a family’s unique needs. It would also establish a diversion program that includes education, employment, mental health and substance abuse, and parenting services.

Amend HUD’s definition of “homeless” or “chronically homeless” in government-sponsored supportive housing programs to include the time spent incarcerated by people who would otherwise have been homeless.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

- ▶ Enact the [Justice Roadmap](#), a legislative agenda supported by more than 200 organizations and legislators, which addresses the harms caused by the entangled criminal legal and immigration systems. This includes: **Youth and Justice Opportunities Act; Treatment Not Jails; Freedom from Forced Labor; Voting Rights for Incarcerated People; Gender Identity Respect, Dignity and Safety Act; Connecting Families;** and, **Dignity for All**, among many other important bills.
- ▶ Enact the [Youth Justice Platform](#), including the [Right2RemainSilent](#) Bill.
- ▶ Pass the **Communities Not Cages Platform**, which includes **Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act, Second Look Act,** and the **Earned Time Act.**
- ▶ Pass **Reentry from the Inside Out**, [S207/A2461, 2023–2024.](#)
- ▶ Pass the **New York State Rights Behind Bars Bill**, [A8364/S7772, 2023–2024.](#)
- ▶ Pass the **Prevent Financing of Private Prisons Bill**, [S205/A6601, 2023–2024.](#)

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW LEGISLATION

Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents Law: Policies and Training Statewide

The [Child-Sensitive Arrest](#) law signed on December 21, 2024, requires the New York State Police and Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to develop, maintain, and disseminate written guidance and education for law enforcement personnel on how to safeguard children of arrested parents and directs local law enforcement to take “appropriate actions” to ensure a child's safety accordingly. We urge DCJS to offer ongoing, substantive training, developed with experts in child development and trauma, to strengthen officers’ skills in interacting with and minimizing trauma to children.



In accordance with the 2019 Safeguarding Children Law in NYC, we urge NYPD to implement a sustainable training plan to ensure all Officers receive substantive training.

Fair Chance for Housing Law: New Requirements

The Fair Chance for Housing Law that went into effect on January 1, 2025, prohibits NYC landlords with [qualifying exemptions](#) from conducting criminal background checks for those applying for housing and rejecting applicants based on conviction histories. If a background check is conducted, landlords can only consider felony convictions within five years, and misdemeanor convictions within three years.