



NYS Assembly Hearing on Programs in the FY 2024-25 Enacted Budget

December 13, 2024

Testimony of Daniel F. Martuscello III, Commissioner

Good morning, Chairman Dilan and other distinguished members of the Assembly Standing Committee on Correction. My name is Daniel Martuscello III, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Thank you for inviting me to testify today and speak about the breadth and quality of programming offered in our facilities and in the community.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff, the Department offers a wide variety of programs. The Department currently operates 334 vocational shops that provide training in 27 trades. In partnership with the Department of Labor, DOCCS offers 12 Apprenticeship Training Programs, with more in development. There are currently 12 third-party certifications available, which provide participants with an industry-recognized credential.

Under Governor Hochul's Jails to Jobs initiative, the Department is pursuing several new trades that are in high demand in the community. We have launched new programs for CDL Driver and Automotive Technician and have programs under development for Heavy Equipment Operator and Computer Coding. The Department has increased engagements with industry partners and labor unions to support job matching. We invite these organizations into our facilities to conduct interviews, resulting in many individuals receiving job offers prior to their release. The Department is also creating a computer skills program to provide the digital literacy skills needed in today's modern workforce. These new initiatives join established programs such as Corcraft that provide participants with hands-on experience in manufacturing, abatement, resource recovery, and DMV call centers.

Following the restoration of TAP for incarcerated college students, the Department has prioritized the expansion of higher education. The Department currently hosts 30 providers that offer college programming in 37 facilities, and we are exploring the possibility of providing college credits for successful completion of vocational programs. To support primary education, DOCCS established a Reading Remediation program to improve reading skills, which are foundational to academic success.

The Department offers Transitional Services to assist with the rehabilitation and reentry process. DOCCS partnered with DMV to provide Non-Driver IDs and has prioritized the provision of vital documents to the population. These programs have been highly successful, with over 2,100 individuals receiving a Non-Driver ID, 91% receiving their birth certificate, and 81% receiving their Social Security card. The Department has also stood up Reentry Computer Labs at several facilities. These enable individuals to research job opportunities, apply for social services, and save resumes for applying to jobs. DOCCS previously converted Edgecombe into Transitional Housing for undomiciled males releasing to New York City. We recently expanded the program to admit females and establish a housing voucher program for those seeking permanent housing. This program provides wraparound services to support reentry and enrollment in social services.

The Department offers a variety of behavioral health treatments to support the rehabilitation of the population. Central among these is Medication Assisted Treatment (or MAT). DOCCS offers all forms of MAT for individuals diagnosed with an Opioid Use Disorder, and there are currently over 3,700 individuals on MAT. To provide continuity of care, the Department works hard to ensure that eligible individuals are enrolled in Medicaid prior to release. So far this year, almost 90% of discharges from DOCCS facilities had active Medicaid coverage.

As part of the Jails to Jobs initiative, the Department made key investments to enhance employment opportunities for releasees under community supervision. We hired Employment Parole Officers who are stationed regionally to focus on workforce development. In partnership with DCJS, the Department administered the Workforce Development Specialist Training Program for its community supervision staff, which provides the skills needed to help justice involved individuals seek, secure, and maintain employment.

DOCCS recently announced its participation in the Reentry 2030 campaign. This is a national initiative led by the Council of State Governments to improve reentry outcomes. The Department's goals seek to address barriers, such as obtaining personal documents, accessing healthcare, and finding secure housing and employment. This campaign follows record-low recidivism rates – 19 percent of 2020 releases were returned to custody within three years, or looked at in a more positive light, 81 percent were successful in the community. This represents the lowest return-to-custody rate since 1985, when DOCCS began tracking recidivism.

I would again like to recognize and thank my staff for all they do to support and advance the Department's mission. These progressive programs would not be possible without their time, dedication, and commitment to service. However, our current staffing shortages have impacted the Department's ability to run programs, which in turn can lead to idleness and violence. As we continue

to explore pathways for additional programs, recruitment and retention strategies must also be part of the conversation. To that end, the Department is actively pursuing several initiatives to recruit and retain the next generation of corrections and community supervision professionals. We look forward to engaging the legislature, our unions partners, and other stakeholders to further this goal.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.