

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Public Hearing
Public Protection
February 12, 2026**

Good Afternoon Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow and Members of the Senate and Assembly,

My name is Alyssa Bradley, and I am a Policy and Business Development Director with The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about CEO and our work across New York, and the need for increased resources for New Yorkers returning home from prison.

Background on CEO

CEO has nearly 40 years of experience in workforce development programming. Our mission is to provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services to individuals recently returning home from incarceration. As the largest provider of reentry employment services in New York, we serve individuals on parole and probation supervision in Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and New York City with an intentional focus on individuals facing the most significant barriers, while also returning \$3.30 for every \$1 of public investment into CEO's program.

After our participants complete our orientation class, CEO hires and provides them with immediate employment - for which they are paid daily - through our transitional work crews, and offers advanced training opportunities in key industry sectors. CEO operates more than 25 work crews across New York state that provide public sector agencies with a variety of general labor services. Access to immediate work through a transitional job helps our participants gain stability and motivation to attain long-term, quality full-time jobs outside of CEO.

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CEO urges the legislature to consider our recommendations to ensure the investment brings additional capacity to serve formerly incarcerated people, implement new strategies to target this population to increase public safety, and ensure the process is equitable.

CEO maintains a commitment to meeting participants' complex needs through wraparound and supportive services. We are advocating to see targeted investments in evidence-based reentry services for community organizations that provide the on the ground resources that are crucial for New Yorkers returning home.

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Additionally, an essential part of CEO's broader strategy is ensuring individuals have access to immediate financial resources upon release. For many of the individuals we serve, the transition from incarceration is marked by food insecurity, unstable housing, and justice-related debts—obstacles that hinder reentry success. The Reentry Assistance Bill (S6222/A6990) led by Senator Cooney and Assemblymember Gibbs, is a critical piece of legislation that would address this gap by increasing the financial assistance provided to returning citizens at their most vulnerable time, and aligns with Governor Hochul's commitment to facilitating employment for individuals on parole, and reducing recidivism across the state.

Currently, state law only requires people being released to receive two-hundred dollars (\$200) taken from their commissary account, a bus ticket, and seasonally appropriate clothing, which must be cheaper than sixty-five dollars (\$65) if provided by the facility. With those \$200 dollars, people are expected to find approved housing, food, find transportation to meet with their Parole Officer within 24 hours (if applicable), secure employment, and comply with any special conditions. Research has shown that people receiving cash assistance are 50 percent more likely to find a full- time job than those who don't. Evidence also suggests that financial assistance upon release from incarceration does improve recidivism outcomes and can reduce rates of re-arrest by up to 30%, a significant potential savings for New York taxpayers. Furthermore, a recent study on the impact of financial support for individuals returning home from incarceration has found:

- Parole violations dropped over 41% within the first six months post-release;
- New arrests for violent parole violations decreased by 64% in the same period while violations for the young adult group dropped from about 12% to roughly 8% at the 12-month follow up; and
- Positive impacts lasted at least 12 months, reduced reincarceration observed at 18 to 30 months.

Currently, New York State spends more than \$3B annually on incarceration (an average of \$115,000 a year, incarcerating one person), yet the most recent budget passed in the state legislature allotted approximately \$50 million to alternative to incarceration and reentry programs - that is less than 1.5% spent on helping people to return. Remedyng our overreliance on incarceration is an easy way to ensure we can afford effective reentry with dignity. Research shows that incarcerating people for technical parole violations costs New

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York taxpayers over \$680 million — \$319 million of which is paid by the state, \$91 million by NY counties, and \$273 million by New York City — without meaningfully contributing to public safety. In 2019, 40 percent of the people admitted to New York prisons were imprisoned for minor violations of parole rules, nearly three times the national average of prison intake for technical parole violations.

Lastly, we are advocating for the funding that CEO currently receives in the aid to localities budget be appropriated in this upcoming budget passage. This funding was not included in the Governor's recent Executive budget, and it is crucial that CEO works alongside a member to ensure this much needed support is maintained.

These are sound investments and policy changes the state can and should adopt through the budget. With additional financial backing, organizations like CEO can expand their impact and enhance partnerships with local businesses and government agencies to create a more holistic, sustainable reentry process.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

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