

**Testimony to the New York State
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection**

Public Hearing

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Tanya Krupat and I am the Vice President for Policy and Advocacy at Osborne Association. As you may know, Osborne is one of the largest and oldest criminal justice service organizations in the state. Our services reach over **18,000 people each year**, spanning 39 of New York's 42 state correctional facilities, all jails on Rikers Island, directly affected neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Newburgh, and Buffalo, and criminal courts in all boroughs of New York City and in Westchester, Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schoharie, and Schenectady counties. Osborne's work spans lifetimes and generations, from the children of incarcerated parents, to the parents themselves, to older adults returning to our communities after decades of incarceration. We base ourselves in communities most affected by historical and present-day structural racism, from our headquarters in Brooklyn to offices in the South Bronx, Newburgh, and Buffalo, to satellite locations in Westchester and Troy. Osborne also now provides a variety of reentry housing, including the Fulton Community Reentry Center, which we opened in April 2024.

All of our work at Osborne is grounded in our core values, which include recognizing our shared humanity, advancing racial justice and equity, promoting healing through compassion, connection, and accountability, and strengthening communities. My testimony addresses the following topics:

- 1) the current prison landscape, and the status of our programs and visiting;
- 2) public protection budget items in the Governor's proposed Executive budget;
- 3) recommendations for additional and alternate investments;
- 4) legislation to promote community safety.

Current Landscape

Last year's public protection budget hearing was emotional and difficult, as this body and those testifying grappled with the unacceptable, horrifying, brutal murder of Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi by corrections officers. Only four days after this budget hearing, DOCCS Officers began an unauthorized work stoppage that became referred to as a prison strike. While this unauthorized strike was declared "over" on March 10, it continues to have harsh effects on those incarcerated and their families and loved ones in the community. This work stoppage also led to \$700 million in spending on the National Guard, and millions more spent to recruit 18-year-olds and others to become COs. It led to the suspension of the HALT law, holiday and weekday visits, programming, transfers from jail to prison and closer to home and children transfers, and so much else. Many of these critical lifelines for people inside remain suspended or limited today.

Next week, February 20 to be exact, marks one year without 7-day-a-week visiting that was the norm in the 13 maximum security prisons and one year without holiday visits. It's important to really think about what this means. We hear about it from children and families in our programs. This was the first year for some children that they couldn't spend Thanksgiving sitting on their dad's lap or spend Christmas playing in the Children's Center with their mom. Many families rely on the weekday visits, especially older parents, people with mobility issues or other vulnerabilities. Spreading the visits out over 7 days also allowed them to be less crowded and

the wait times to be shorter. Over this past year, weekend visits have been very crowded, with visitors told to start lining up at 4 a.m. in the hopes of getting in by 8 or 9 a.m., or at all.

And then there is the introduction of body scanners.

In 2023, the Executive budget included (as an Article VII) the use of body scanners on visitors and staff, as well as those incarcerated. There was to be a Commission that would promulgate rules and reporting to the legislature would be required. No further action on any of these provisions was ever made public, but the Department seems to have proceeded with purchasing body scanners.

Fast forward to March 2025, when striking officers included the mandate that visitors go through body scanners among their demands. DOCCS conceded to this demand and within days, the body scanning directive and process was put into place. There was no Commission to establish safe guidelines and protocols, and no reporting requirement to allow for monitoring and oversight of this widespread, mandatory use of body scanners. This has had heartbreaking and traumatic effects, with many families sharing that they fear that the end of in-person visiting is now the goal. The toll on women and girls is particularly disturbing, and [NYCLU is representing](#) visitors specifically denied entry due to menstrual products being mistaken for contraband. Hundreds of visitors have reported being accused of concealing contraband, despite none being found, and visitors are not only denied visits for that day, but are being given 3-month, 6-month and even *indefinite suspensions*.¹ According to DOCCS' own data, over 2,500 visitors have been turned away due to body scans. This is a huge number of visitors not able to see their loved ones, with an isolating and negative effect on those incarcerated.

We call on the legislature to request data from DOCCS on visitor denials and suspensions, per facility, and to review all suspensions for 3 months and more. We call for an end to giving indefinite suspensions to visitors. Additional training and accountability is needed to ensure the Department follows its own directives, and upholds its own stated commitment to visiting.

Status of our Programs

Keeping families and their incarcerated loved ones connected and strengthening relationships during incarceration have always been core to our work and values at Osborne. We opened our first Family Center at Sing Sing back in 1986. Osborne has seen firsthand the devastating effects of no weekday or holiday visits, and the use of body scanners on visitors, as we coordinate 19 Hospitality Centers and 5 Family Centers. We also offer programming in 39 of the 42 prisons. For all of the programs we operate inside prisons, we are dependent upon DOCCS for the approval and entry of our staff, and literally having keys to the doors we need to walk through. The crisis within DOCCS, particularly over this past year, directly affects our ability to provide programs. Each of our programs has been affected differently over this past year, with changes week to week, and even day to day. It has been very challenging to facilitate consistent

¹ See New York Focus [article](#) (12/6/2025) and New York Times [article](#) (2/6/2026).

programming and very hard on those inside who want to participate in programming and need this for parole and release.

Currently, seven of the eight prisons where Osborne offers the Family Works Parenting Program—Fishkill, Green Haven, Wallkill, Eastern, Otisville, Sing Sing, and Shawangunk—have resumed in-person programming. Only Woodbourne Correctional Facility remains affected by staffing issues stemming from the unauthorized work stoppage. However, some restrictions on parenting class offerings persist in these facilities. Specifically, some of the facilities are currently unable to offer "Connected Couples" workshops or graduations due to the consolidation of program space aimed at maximizing security staff coverage.

All Osborne Family Centers are currently operational across five facilities: Sing Sing, Fishkill, Shawangunk, Wallkill, and Woodbourne. These centers have recently observed a steady increase in the number of visiting children. This growth appears to be a result of the Proximity Law's implementation, which is granting incarcerated fathers greater access to their young children. Additionally, the Family Centers collaborated with the facilities during the past holiday season to provide festivities, including distributing toys to visiting children.

In spite of challenges, and thanks to partners within DOCCS who value programming and recognize its positive effects, in the last fiscal year (FY25):

- Our **19** Hospitality Centers at prisons spanning nearly 300 miles across the state hosted **86,777** visitors.
 - This number is the sum of visits by a total of **8,943** unique adults and **2,423** unique children
- Our **5** Family Centers within men's prisons hosted **at least 594 unique adult and child** visitors, including 356 new child visitors.
- We conducted **468** video visits between children, other family members, and incarcerated people in DOCCS custody at 10 prisons, connecting from our 3 community sites in NYC, Newburgh, and Buffalo.

The success of our programs is also evidenced by results from anonymous evaluation surveys from graduates of Osborne's parenting program, FamilyWorks:

- 99% of participants would recommend the course to others
- 98% received information that was useful to their family
- 85% showed improvement in parenting knowledge and skills (*based on validated instrument for evaluation of parenting programs*)

Video Visiting

Osborne offers families four community sites where they can participate in video visits with their incarcerated loved one. These are located in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Newburgh, and Buffalo. Before the prison strike, we connected families to 11 prisons: Adirondack, Albion, Bedford, Bare Hill, Collins, Clinton, Groveland, Gouverneur, Greene, Taconic, and Wyoming. Currently, out of

the original 11 facilities, nine are operating video visiting programs with Osborne. We would like to add Green Haven and Attica.

After the strike most participating facilities resumed their video visiting programs in March 2025. However, one year later, Clinton Correctional Facility has still not resumed its video visiting program. In January 2026, Clinton alerted us that they plan to resume video visits in March 2026, although they do not yet have a set date yet.

Throughout this period, we have remained in contact with families to keep them informed. Given the location of Clinton, video visiting is a really important option for many families. Families continue to express strong interest in the program and are eagerly awaiting Clinton's resumption of video visiting services.

We are also losing Bare Hill in March 2026 due its being slated for closure. In mid-December, Bare Hill notified us through email that they would need to cease video visiting services to prepare for closing. At this time, we are staying in contact with Bare Hill families and asking them to notify us if their incarcerated loved ones are transferred to another participating facility so they may continue video visiting with Osborne.

In addition, since the strike, most facilities have changed their video visiting time slots to earlier hours, eliminated evening sessions, and reduced the number of available days, stating staff shortages as the justification. This has made it more difficult for families to participate in video visiting, especially for children during school hours and for adults with work schedules.

Loved Ones Link

This past year, funded by DOCCS, we launched a free bus service bringing visitors to see their incarcerated loved ones. We are currently serving 19 prisons and more information can be found on our [website](#). We are thrilled that DOCCS has brought back the free transportation service that was offered for decades and discontinued suddenly in 2011.

ReentryWorks

In addition to parenting, visiting, and video visiting programs, Osborne also currently leads ReentryWorks, a New York City-funded initiative implemented in partnership with DOCCS, that brings Osborne staff into 24 DOCCS facilities across the state on an in-person or virtual basis. Since launching in late 2022, ReentryWorks has served 1,027 people. Based on funder guidelines a successful exit from ReentryWorks is a participant working with a transition planner to develop a transition plan (which often includes making appointments with community providers for the releasing individual) and getting the plan to the individual in advance of their release. If we exclude administrative exits (which include people declining services after they have been referred by DOCCS, people being transferred to other facilities Osborne does not have staff in, or being ineligible due to their OMH level) Osborne staff achieved a **99.67% successful exit rate**.

And while we did have a drop in referrals in February and March as a result of the unauthorized work stoppage, we were able to accomplish the following:

- In 2025 RW served 253 people (230 have been closed with 222 successful exits and 8 administrative exits).
- Of the total 1,027 people served, 945 cases have been closed, and of these:
 - 894 have been closed successfully
 - 48 have been closed administratively

We bring our significant expertise in serving “long termers” and older people to this work as well, which increases our effectiveness. Osborne began implementing the first reentry case management model in the state focused on older people back in 2015. Applying the dual lenses of aging and long-term incarceration is critical, since more than one in 5 people (22%) within DOCCS is now over age 50.²

We are eager to expand ReentryWorks to support people returning to counties outside of NYC. For an additional \$100,000, we could hire an additional Transitional Planner to work with 50 people returning to counties outside of NYC. The cost-savings of reentry planning that starts inside and continues into the community is tremendous.

Comments on FY27 Public Protection Budget Items

The Governor’s proposed FY27 budget includes \$535 million more for the National Guard, bringing the total spent on the National Guard to over \$1 billion. This is more than twice the entire budget for the State Office of the Aging (which is \$436 million) ... and 4 times the \$250 million new capital funding in the FY27 Executive Budget that accelerates affordable housing construction.

We ask the legislature to require a report on the activities and outcomes of the FY26 National Guard deployment, and a plan for FY27 from DOCCS for how the National Guard will be deployed to address the “staffing crisis.” Despite this astronomical investment and deployment of the National Guard, visits, programming, and transfers have not returned to pre-strike levels. The legislature and taxpayers deserve to know how DOCCS is making staff assignment decisions, what the minimum staffing needs are for various activities, and why, with this incredible influx of resources and funding, critical activities are still not happening. Additionally, we continue to advocate for a staffing roles and responsibilities assessment to ensure staffing needs are aligned with training and professional titles/ background, rather than assume all roles should be filled by Corrections Officers and spending millions to recruit them. This staffing assessment and adjustment could help ensure smooth operations which also allow for outside providers to be able to provide needed programming and services.

The budget also includes a continuation of the funding levels from last year’s budget for items that many of us assumed were one-time costs or costs that would carry over at reduced levels for maintenance purposes only. Last year and again this year, the Executive Budget includes:

² This figure is based on the DOCCS Under Custody report from February 2026, which reveals there are 7,545 people in custody who are age 50 and above, which is 22.36% of the total in-custody population.

- \$400 million of installation and implementation of security cameras. The legislature should require a report on what last year's \$400 million was spent on and why another \$400 million is needed;
- \$18 million for body-worn cameras. Why is a full additional \$18 million needed if these were purchased and distributed last year?
- \$7.2 million to expand and restructure OSI. How was last year's \$7.2 million spent and why is another \$7.2 million needed, and for what?

This year, there is also \$3 million to support Officer recruitment efforts.

We all often hear that budgets are value documents; we invest in what matters most to us. As a member of the ATI & Reentry Coalition, Osborne joins our Coalition partners in calling for a \$20 million investment in ATI & Reentry Services. For every one person served in prison, ATI and Reentry services can serve 7 people with outcomes that stabilize lives and lead to people thriving, enhancing their families and our communities.

For the same \$3 million spent to recruit those 18 and up to become Officers:

- 150 people could be supported by a comprehensive reentry program;
- 3 years of free bus service for visitors across the state to visit their loved ones could be paid for reentry cash assistance payments of \$2,500 per person could support 1,200 people returning to their families and communities.

We are spending so much money on building and holding up the current incarceration infrastructure with deadly results, and levels of PTSD among officers are higher than those in the military. **We urge DCJS to initiate the Future of Prisons workgroup that they announced last year, and to make this an inclusive and bold process that could truly transform and advance justice for all New Yorkers.**

We were glad to see the Governor's budget includes \$35.8 million investment in "the development and implementation of an electronic health records system," digitizing health records within DOCCS. We have long called for a similar **investment in digitizing parole records** and files. Currently, Parole commissioners travel the state not to meet with people whose liberty they hold in their hands, but to read through piles of paper. They then do all the parole interviews via video. This is an outdated and unfair practice, perhaps connected to the high parole denial rate.

Lastly, we were dismayed and concerned that hidden in the Human Services section of the Executive budget is legislation that would authorize the use of body scanners for youth detention facilities for young people, visitors, or staff. This bill should be debated and not included in the budget, in light of the disastrous effects body scanners have had on visitors to NYS prisons.

Recommendations for Effective Investments in Public Safety

We urge the Senate, Assembly, and the Governor to increase investments in communities, and in proven, cost-effective, data-informed solutions; it is time to protect all New Yorkers from harm, including inside prisons and jails. Community-based providers are critical partners in advancing public safety. Expanded funding is needed to divert people away from jail and prison, address root causes of law-breaking and harm, and set people on a path to success. As part of the [NY ATI/ Reentry Coalition](#), we are asking for an **investment of \$20 million to expand ATI and reentry services** statewide, including in “service deserts,” as detailed in the Coalition’s recent report [Unlocking Potential](#).

In addition to greater investments in ATI & Reentry Services, **decarceration of older adults in our prisons should be a priority**. Older adults make up one in five people in NYS prisons. They have the lowest recidivism rates yet among the highest incarceration costs due to health issues that come with aging, and accelerated aging given the conditions inside and the lack of accommodations for aging conditions. The prison setting is not conducive to safety for an older person and this is not only costly in human terms but also to the Department. It is an urgent matter—literally of life and death—that older people past their minimum sentences be released. Currently, the parole board denies about two-thirds of older people, a rate of release that flies in the face of low risk assessment scores and so much evidence.

Additionally, we have long advocated for DOCCS to hire a geriatrician **to comprehensively assess both systemic and individual needs of older adults within DOCCS**. This would include an audit of “a day in the life” of someone who is older: taking a shower, getting to and from “chow,” reporting for “count” several times a day, and more. We commend DOCCS for creating the Ulster Senior Living Program (serving 52 older people who do not have serious health conditions or challenges) and to build on this and other tailored models to address the needs of older people.

Finally, we are specifically seeking state funding to expand our Court Mitigation Services in Westchester, and our services to families affected by incarceration in Buffalo. This past calendar year, our Court Advocacy Services saw 98% of clients meeting all of their court conditions, and resulted in a total of **1,673 years of reduced incarceration**, as well as an estimated **\$192,475,500 of cost savings** due to reduced incarceration.³ Our state funding requests detail the need, the effectiveness of our approach, and the deliverables and impact of additional funding, and are included as Appendices in my written testimony.

Additionally, we urge greater investment in reentry housing.

Reentry Housing Models

Osborne now has an array of reentry housing in NYC, with more to come, and soon, in Newburgh, ranging from transitional supportive housing to permanent supportive housing. Highlighted here are two of our innovative models: the first transforming a former prison into a

³ According to the Vera Institute of Justice (2022), the cost of one year in a NY State prison is \$115,000. <https://www.vera.org/the-cost-of-incarceration-in-new-york-state>

reentry center and the second providing subsidies to families to welcome loved ones back home from incarceration.

Fulton Community Reentry Center: supportive transitional housing

As you may know, Osborne successfully advocated to take ownership of the former Fulton prison in the Bronx with the plan of transforming it into a community and reentry center. We opened our doors last April 2024. Similar to the Fortune Society's Castle Gardens, Fulton is a 140-bed transitional housing facility for formerly incarcerated older men who would otherwise be without housing, and will benefit from support to reacclimate to a changing, fast-paced, digital world. Fulton offers an array of programming, as well as housing specialists to assist people in the daunting task of finding permanent housing.

Kinship Reentry: investing in families

The Kinship Reentry Housing Program addresses two intertwined challenges for people returning from incarceration: safe and stable housing, and reunification with loved ones in the community. Since 2016, 40% of people released from state prisons to NYC are discharged directly to shelters, amounting to an average of 3,500 people each year at a cost of \$138 per day, which comes to an annual cost of \$176 million. Many have families who are excited to welcome them home but may lack the financial resources to do so, or who may need support to navigate the reentry process.

To interrupt the cycle of homelessness and incarceration and divert people from the shelter system, Osborne has created an innovative model that supports families who welcome their formerly incarcerated loved ones into their homes after their release from prison. Based on the kinship foster care model that allows relatives who are fostering children to receive the same support that unrelated foster parents receive, Kinship Reentry addresses the underlying challenges that may discourage families from offering people coming home from prison a safe place to land.

Services for families include:

- \$500 monthly cash assistance for up to 12 months to help offset the financial costs of housing a formerly incarcerated family member;
- Case management and counseling to support families in the reunification process, delivered by credible messenger staff who draw from their own experiences welcoming a loved one home;
- Home visits and advocacy for families, including advocacy with landlords to address unsafe living conditions;
- Financial literacy education and financial planning for the end of the 12-month cash assistance program; and
- Service coordination with the formerly incarcerated person's reentry services provider.

Since launching Kinship in 2021, more than 250 families have fully enrolled and we have an 85% successful completion rate and close to zero recidivism. A research team from Chapin Hall

at the University of Chicago is evaluating Kinship Reentry for cost effectiveness and its impact on family outcomes.

While we know we need more affordable housing throughout the state, we cannot only build our way out of the housing crisis. We must create and support the ability of families to take in their loved ones when they come home. Kinship Reentry is a solution worth investing in, replicating, and taking to scale throughout the state.

Urgently Needed Reforms and Legislation⁴

With the violence, death, and isolation inside prisons, and the ongoing citing of staffing shortages, ensuring people who can safely come home do just that is a matter of urgency.⁵

Towards this end, we call on the legislature to:

- Fully staff the Board of Parole with commissioners who believe in rehabilitation and transformation. There are currently 2 vacancies on the Board.
- Monitor racial disparities in parole release rates and investigate why release rates are so low⁶. The Board currently denies almost two-thirds of people who come before them, despite the fact that almost all have served their minimum sentence. Repeated parole denials can mean that someone serves almost twice their minimum sentence, which was not the intention of the statute nor the sentencing judge. [A recent study](#) specifically looked at New York State Board of Parole decisions using an algorithm that “looked at 91 variables to predict crime risk” that included “age, minimum and maximum sentence, prison type, race, time in prison, previous arrests and other criteria,” and concluded:

“We conservatively estimate the board could have more than doubled the release rate without increasing the total or violent felony arrest rate. And they could have achieved these gains while simultaneously eliminating racial disparities in release rates.”⁷

- Invest in digitizing the parole process so this is not a paper-based system and restore in-person parole interviews.
- Examine the catch-22 for those with a mental health diagnosis that OMH does not create discharge plans until an individual has a release date, but Parole will not grant release without a comprehensive discharge plan for those with mental health diagnoses.
- Examine the process of allowing commissioners to continue to serve on the Board of Parole long after their terms have expired. Currently, 10 out of 17 commissioners have expired terms, including several with terms that expired many years ago.⁸
- Pay close attention to community supervision, and ensure people are being reviewed at the required 3- or 5-year mark after release, and being discharged from parole supervision according to Executive Law 259(j).

⁴ Osborne’s 2026 legislative priorities can be found [HERE](#)

⁵ See Senator Salazar’s report entitled [Built on Brutality](#) (January 2026).

⁶ See NYU’s report [The Problem with Parole \(2023\)](#)

⁷ See “Artificial Intelligence Could Aid in Evaluating Parole Decisions,” (2023) [HERE](#).

⁸ See [Parole Board Commissioners Terms](#).

- Additional challenges we hear from participants about community supervision include:
 - Frequent changes in parole officers, with some parole officers returning people to initial rigorous reporting (drug tests, unannounced visits, curfews);
 - Parole officers who are difficult to reach with voicemail boxes that are full;
 - Lack of clarity around the 3YD or 5YD process, and not being given a reason for being kept on parole supervision despite this being required;
 - Special conditions or aging, or other vulnerabilities not being considered resulting in violations or “absconding” when this was not the case (for example, a person on parole who has diagnosed dementia being repeatedly violated for not reporting to his parole officer when he does not know he is on parole and this is not going to change).

We urge the Senate and Assembly to pass the following bills:

Fair and Timely Parole Bill ([S159/A127](#)) 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 Board of Parole to consider all evidence of rehabilitation and, when determining unreasonable risk to public safety, to not solely and primarily rely on the seriousness of the crime, correcting the current injustice of prioritizing the nature of the original crime to determine release.

Elder Parole Bill ([S454/A514](#)) would allow individuals 55 years of age and older who have served 15 years or more a chance to go before the Board of Parole, even though they have not yet reached their minimum sentence or would not otherwise be parole eligible. At great expense to taxpayers and the state, approximately one in five incarcerated individuals is now aged 50 and older, representing a four-fold increase in the past 10 years. Incarcerating older people does not make us safer (as noted earlier, recidivism rates for those over 60 for new offenses are close to zero) and deprives their community of wisdom, contributions, and leadership.

Protect In-Person Visits Bill ([A4603](#)) protects in-person visits at state and local correctional facilities, ensuring that in-person visiting is offered during accessible hours and that video conferencing cannot replace in-person visits, an alarming trend across the country that is encouraged by for-profit companies. The Senate passed this bill the past six years and we urge the legislature to pass it immediately.

Compassion and Reproductive Equity (CARE) Act ([S4583/A4879](#)) 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.

Transitional Reentry Health ([S614/A1008](#)) would require the state to develop a process to enroll all incarcerated individuals into Medicaid, and require all correctional facilities to provide

individuals with information about enrollment. It also allows a 60-day presumptive enrollment window in the community post-release.

Reentry Assistance Bill (S.6222/ [A193](#)) 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.

We also urge passage of the bills in the **Communities Not Cages, Youth Justice and Opportunities Act**, and **Justice Roadmap** platform of essential bills.⁹

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Attached Funding Requests:

Osborne Buffalo (formerly known as Buffalo FamilyWorks): \$250,000 to support expanded youth programming for young people whose parents are incarcerated, and the addition of a clinical staff person.

CAS: \$200,000 to expand our Court Mitigation Services in Westchester County.

⁹ Osborne’s full 2026 Legislative Priorities are detailed [HERE](#)



Osborne Buffalo
(formerly known as Buffalo FamilyWorks)
Strengthening families, empowering youth

FY27 Budget Request: \$250,000

Since 2019, FamilyWorks Buffalo has received a Senate budget allocation of \$180,000. Initially championed by then-Senator Tim Kennedy and now by Senator April Baskin, Osborne has received this funding each year since. With demand for the program increasing significantly, and with the success of existing program components, we seek expanded program funding in the amount of \$250,000. We have expanded to now refer to our array of programming as Osborne Buffalo.

The Program

In 2019, Osborne launched its **FamilyWorks Buffalo (FWB)** program to address the needs of Western New York's (WNY) children and families affected by a parent's incarceration. FWB's goal is **to combat the negative impacts that an arrest, incarceration, and other system involvement have on WNY's children, families and communities**. We work with families at each stage of the criminal legal system (from arrest to incarceration to reentry) to provide children with support to grow into healthy, happy adults, free of system oversight and limitations. We also provide **direct services to young people** to provide a welcoming and brave space where they can be their full selves, explore their passions, heal, connect with peers to create a strong supportive community, and learn to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Recent Accomplishments

In Fiscal Year 2025, we provided direct support to over 45 families. Specifically:

- 26 families participated in 143 free video visits connecting them with parents at 8 NYS prisons;
- 25 young people aged 12 to 19 attended afterschool programs that combined positive youth development and family support with leadership development;
- 12 family counseling sessions/restorative justice circles were held, with a total of 259 attendees; and
- 21 families received vital transportation support.

Osborne Buffalo: A Multi-Pronged Approach

Youth engagement and leadership development: We offer two youth afterschool programs that build leadership, confidence, and civic engagement. Since 2021, **44 youth** have enrolled across these programs, participating in **188 group sessions**.

Video visits: We provide free, trauma-informed video visiting services that connect children with their parents in 11 NYS prisons. Since launching the program in January 2020, we have conducted **790 video visits for 89 different families**.

Material support: We provide material support to children and families to help reduce financial strain and ensure consistent engagement in our programs. Since 2023, FWB has provided **1,685 transportation rides for youth** to attend group sessions.

Restorative circles: We partner with VOICE Buffalo to provide monthly restorative healing circles. Since holding our first session in 2021, we have hosted **46 circles**.

Kinship Reentry Housing Program: To interrupt the cycle of homelessness and incarceration and divert people from the shelter system, Osborne has created an innovative model that supports families who welcome their formerly incarcerated loved ones into their homes after their release from prison. This program is beginning in Buffalo in the coming months, and families will receive **\$500 monthly cash assistance for up to 12 months** to help offset the financial costs of housing a formerly incarcerated family member, as well as case management services and financial literacy education and financial planning.

Loved Ones Link: A new Osborne program, starting this month in Buffalo, offers **free transportation for families** throughout NYS to visit their incarcerated loved ones in prison.

Community partnerships: We value and lean on our community partners in Erie County, including: Community Health Center of Buffalo, Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo, Voice Buffalo, Peaceprints-Project Blue at Erie County jail, It Takes a Village, Northland Workforce Training Center, Near East and Westside Task Force of Kaleida Health, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Erie County, and the Reentry Opportunity Center, run by the Erie County Sheriff's Office.

Training and technical assistance: We provide training and technical assistance to child-serving and law enforcement agencies across WNY to help them recognize and address the needs of children with incarcerated parents. Since launching our first Safeguarding Children Initiative training in October 2021, we have conducted **58 training sessions across five different sheriffs' departments and police organizations**, including Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Erie County, Tonawanda, as well as all new graduate sessions through the Central Police Services Law Enforcement Training Academy.

Plans for expansion

Over the last six years, Osborne Buffalo has continued to build local support for our work. At the same time, the financial sponsorship we have received annually from our State Senator since 2019 has been essential to our capacity to offer services provided by no other organization in WNY. The requested funds would allow us to **grow from one to two Family Services Specialists** working with participating youth and families while also **covering the costs of food, material support, and—in an area with a very limited bus system—transportation.**

About Osborne Association

Founded in 1933 to honor the legacy of prison reformer Thomas Mott Osborne, the Osborne Association serves individuals, families, and communities affected by the criminal legal system. There is no other nonprofit that spans so much of New York State and New York City's criminal justice and correctional systems than Osborne. Our services reach over **18,000 people each year**, spanning 39 of New York's 42 state correctional facilities, all jails on Rikers Island, directly affected neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Newburgh, and Buffalo, and criminal courts in all boroughs of New York City and in Westchester, Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schoharie, and Schenectady counties. Osborne's work spans lifetimes and generations, from the children of incarcerated parents, to the parents themselves, to older adults returning to our communities after decades of incarceration. We base ourselves in communities most affected by historical and present-day structural racism, from our headquarters in Brooklyn to offices in the South Bronx, Newburgh, and Buffalo, to satellite locations in Westchester and Troy.

For more information, please contact:

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Court Advocacy Services in Westchester County
Reducing incarceration through court-based advocacy

FY27 Budget Request: \$200,000

On behalf of the Osborne Association and the participants we serve, we ask you to support an allotment of **\$200,000** in Fiscal Year 2027 funding for Osborne’s Court Advocacy Services (CAS) in Westchester County.

The Program

CAS operates across all five NYC boroughs and in Westchester, Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Schoharie Counties, working to prevent or reduce jail and prison sentences by aligning court responses with individuals’ needs. Osborne’s Mitigation Specialists partner with defense attorneys to advocate in court for individualized, community-based sentencing alternatives for people charged with misdemeanor and felony offenses, allowing them to remain at home, maintain employment and family stability, and address the underlying factors contributing to their justice involvement. When alternatives to incarceration are not possible, CAS advocates for reduced jail or prison terms and connects individuals to critical supports such as substance use disorder treatment, education, job training, and housing—promoting public safety while helping people build secure and stable lives.

Proven Track Record & Recent Accomplishments

CAS is one of Osborne’s longest operating and most successful programs, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach over decades. In FY25 alone we:

- Conducted **804 intakes**—73.3% of which were felonies, 25.3% percent misdemeanors, and 1.5% violations.
- Submitted **490 court reports/work products**, and had **2,387 case management contacts** with CAS clients.
- **Achieved a 89% successful program exit rate**, and **98% of clients met all court conditions**.

This resulted in a total of **1,673 years of reduced incarceration**, as well as an estimated **\$192,475,500 of cost savings** due to reduced incarceration.¹⁰

¹⁰ Cost savings estimate calculated using per-year incarceration cost data from Vera Institute of Justice (2022), The cost of incarceration in New York State.

<https://www.vera.org/the-cost-of-incarceration-in-new-york-state>

Since opening our **Westchester office in February 2023**, CAS has grown to become an indispensable resource for the justice-impacted community across Westchester County. In just three years, we have:

- Conducted **195 intakes** and had **1,099 case management contacts**.
- Achieved **non- or lesser-incarcerative sentences in 93.07% of cases**.

The Need in Westchester County and Plans for Expansion

Our work in Westchester County is especially critical given persistent racial disparities in the criminal legal system and a limited local mitigation infrastructure. In 2023, **nearly 80% of the County's 11,939 arrests involved Black and Hispanic residents, despite these communities representing only 45% of the population**. Currently, there is only one other organization in Westchester providing similar mitigation services; it operates with a waitlist and does not offer services in Spanish. CAS fills a critical gap by providing culturally responsive mitigation **services in both English and Spanish**, with bilingual staff, and by partnering closely with 18B assigned counsel attorneys—who often lack access to in-house social workers and mitigation support. The requested funds would allow CAS to expand from one to two Mitigation Specialists in Westchester, increasing our capacity to meet growing demand, reduce waitlists, accept additional referrals, conduct thorough assessments, produce timely court reports, and appear more consistently in court on behalf of individuals who would otherwise have no access to mitigation advocacy.

About Osborne Association

Founded in 1933 to honor the legacy of prison reformer Thomas Mott Osborne, the Osborne Association serves individuals, families, and communities affected by the criminal legal system. There is no other nonprofit that spans so much of New York State and New York City's criminal justice and correctional systems than Osborne. Our services reach over **18,000 people each year**, spanning 39 of New York's 42 state correctional facilities, all jails on Rikers Island, directly affected neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Newburgh, and Buffalo, and criminal courts in all boroughs of New York City and in Westchester, Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schoharie, and Schenectady counties. Osborne's work spans lifetimes and generations, from the children of incarcerated parents, to the parents themselves, to older adults returning to our communities after decades of incarceration. We base ourselves in communities most affected by historical and present-day structural racism, from our headquarters in Brooklyn to offices in the South Bronx, Newburgh, and Buffalo, to satellite locations in Westchester and Troy.

For more information, please contact:

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