



Division of Criminal Justice Services

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

Testimony of Commissioner Rossana Rosado

Senate Standing Committee on Alcoholism & Substance Use Disorders

Public Hearing on the Treatment Court Expansion Act

Friday, October 10, 2025

Good Morning Chair Fernandez, Chair Ramos, and distinguished members of the Senate Committees on Labor and Alcoholism and Substance Use Disorders. Thank you for inviting the Division of Criminal Justice Services, also known as DCJS, to provide testimony on the Treatment Court Expansion Act and the critical role that treatment courts and alternatives to incarceration (ATI) play in building safer and stronger communities across New York State.

As Commissioner of DCJS, my top priority is helping our local partners keep New Yorkers safe while ensuring a justice system that works for all. I am pleased to share how our agency's historic investments and evidence-based programs support the objective of treatment courts as both a public safety imperative and a holistic approach to criminal justice.

Under Governor Kathy Hochul's leadership, New York State has made unprecedented investments in programs that divert individuals from the criminal justice system toward the resources and services they need. As a prime example, DCJS is currently accepting applications for new and enhanced ATI and re-entry services, making up to \$15.5 million available. This represents one of the largest allocations for ATI and re-entry programming in recent years, building upon the Governor's record investments in criminal justice services writ large, including aid to defense, aid to prosecution, pretrial services, discovery implementation, and gun violence reduction and prevention programs.

These investments, paired with nation-leading technical assistance, reflect our commitment to data-driven, evidence-informed approaches. Through our partnership with the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, we assessed that certain ATI programs in New York State generate returns of approximately \$4 for every dollar invested. This analysis, which examined more than 50 different programs across the state, demonstrated that cognitive behavioral therapy and employment programs were expected to produce the highest returns while reducing recidivism by up to 8 percent.

Currently, DCJS funds approximately 145 ATI programs operating in all counties in New York State, including New York City. These programs are administered by government agencies, not-for-profit, and community-based organizations. These programs span the full continuum of care from pretrial services and treatment accountability programs to mental health diversion services, cognitive behavioral interventions, residential treatment, and defender-based advocacy. We also support 20 County Re-Entry Task

Forces in the counties with the most people returning home from prison. Together, these programs provide critical resources to address the complex needs and risks of people who are involved in the justice system, helping to ensure their stability and success in reconnecting with their community, family, work, and school.

The impact of this strategic investment has been transformative. As we have seen, these initiatives yield tremendous savings for the system by reducing costly incarceration while also decreasing recidivism and increasing employment, as well as advancing better health and behavioral health outcomes. Despite this success, the *New York ATI and Reentry Coalition's* 2024 report, which was funded by DCJS to help inform future investments, identified areas for improvement across the state: most surveyed providers report they could expand services with additional funding and more than half lacked enough resources to meet the current demand for their services. Strategic investments – like the new \$15.5 million secured by the Governor and administered by DCJS – in community-based alternatives represents both a moral imperative and fiscal opportunity to transform lives while enhancing public safety.

New York's extensive treatment and problem-solving court system – with hundreds of drug-related courts, mental health courts, and veterans courts – has served tens of thousands of individuals, consistently achieving high retention rates and reducing recidivism for court participants. These documented outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of treatment courts in addressing underlying causes of criminal behavior while saving lives and reducing costs.

DCJS supports the principles of the Treatment Court Expansion Act. The Act aligns with evidence-informed practices that we have championed through our funding and technical assistance. The expansion to serve more people in more areas throughout the state directly addresses a need that practitioners and service providers have shared with DCJS throughout New York. The DCJS grantees who deliver ATIs, pretrial, and similar services are well-positioned to assist in the continued success of treatment courts, strengthening their programmatic effectiveness while ensuring fair treatment for all participants.

Our current funding opportunity directly allows more people to be served to ensure not only their stabilization, but also public safety for all our neighborhoods. This new funding specifically prioritizes programs addressing criminogenic factors, mental health services, substance use treatment, housing stability, and employment assistance, which are precisely the comprehensive wraparound services that make treatment courts successful.

The evidence for treatment courts is compelling. National research demonstrates that drug court participants are up to 50 percent less likely to reoffend compared to their counterparts handled through traditional prosecution. Well-administered programs can reduce long-term crime rates. Employment outcomes show equally dramatic improvements, with adult diversion program participants experiencing double-digit percentage improvements in employment rates that can persist for years.

These outcomes translate directly into safer communities. Through the nationally-recognized DCJS programs – like Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative, Crime Analysis Center (CAC) network, SNUG Street Outreach and Social Work program, and Project RISE (Respond, Invest, Sustain, and Empower) community engagement efforts – we have helped our local partners drive shootings down to record lows throughout New York State. Treatment courts complement these efforts by addressing underlying causes of criminal behavior, preventing future victimization, and breaking cycles of incarceration that destabilize families and communities.

As we look ahead, DCJS stands ready to continue to support treatment courts with our resources and expertise. Our agency's nearly \$1 billion budget provides substantial opportunity to support local criminal justice programs. Our existing partnerships with the Office of Court Administration (OCA), probation departments, community-based organizations, and treatment providers create the collaborative infrastructure needed for success.

We have the evidence, the infrastructure, and the commitment to make treatment courts successful. These specialized, problem-solving courts provide opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery before individuals become entangled in cycles of incarceration. It represents smart justice that protects public safety while treating individuals with dignity and providing pathways to productivity.

In closing, I want to thank Chairs Fernandez and Ramos, as well as the Senators on these Committees for their leadership on these critical issues. Treatment courts represent evidence-based policy that can work to save lives, reduce crime, lower costs, and provide humane, effective alternatives that address root causes of criminal justice involvement. Under the Governor's steadfast leadership, DCJS looks forward to continuing our partnership with OCA and the State Legislature to build safer and stronger communities for all New Yorkers. Thank you for your time and consideration.