

New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision
Acting Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci on Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's
2014-15 Executive Budget

Before the Senate and Assembly Fiscal Committees

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The Harriman State Campus, Bldg. 2
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FY 2014/15 Budget Testimony

Good Morning. Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, and other distinguished Chairs and members of the Legislature present here today, my name is Anthony J. Annucci, and I am the Acting Commissioner for the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. It is my honor to be here today to briefly sketch some highlights of the Department's proposed budget and then answer any questions you may have.

As was the case for the three prior fiscal years, the Department's proposed Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 14/15 again advances Governor Cuomo's vision to change the culture of state government and transform all state agencies so that, with pride and integrity, they will focus upon the performance of core responsibilities in an effective and cost-efficient manner, on behalf of the People of this State. The measure of success can be summed up succinctly as -- what results have been achieved, and what results will be achieved.

The budget for this agency is driven in large part by the overall criminal justice picture for the state. Today New York is the safest large state in the country. Because crime rates have plummeted, there has been a steady reduction in the demand for prison capacity. As the inmate population has continued to decline, prisons that are no longer needed can close. By pursuing policies that are tough, smart, and fair, we can maintain and even improve public safety while delivering savings to New York taxpayers.

When I first started with this agency in 1984, and for many years thereafter, the landscape was vastly different. There was extraordinary pressure to expand. We could

not build new prisons fast enough, and we had little lead time to develop those alternative programs that were approved by the Legislature, such as earned eligibility, Shock Incarceration, CASAT, expanded Temporary Release, Willard, Merit Time, and Early Parole for Deportation. The upward trend in prison growth continued until December of 1999 when the inmate population reached an all-time high of 71,600. This was followed by a steady downward trend that continues to this day. Presently, there are approximately 54,200 inmates confined in our institutions.

No metric is more compelling than the changing demographics on the number of incarcerated drug offenders. At the end of 1996, there were more than 24,000 drug offenders in state prison. At the end of 2013, there were less than 6,700. Consequently, last July, I set in motion the one-year notification procedures in the Correction Law to close four facilities effective July 26 of this year. The total savings for taxpayers annually will be approximately \$30 million.

An immediate Department priority is the welfare of the staff at these four facilities. We have previously closed a number of other facilities and have successfully transitioned 97 percent of the staff impacted to other facilities, other state agencies or retirement. Our Central Office Personnel and Staffing Units continue to refine the ongoing process to carefully advise affected staff of their rights and options for employment at other facilities, as well as elsewhere in the state through our collaborative efforts with Civil Service. On the day the closures were announced, there were 673 employees at the four facilities. As of February 3, there were 368 staff remaining.

With regard to the surrounding communities which have hosted these four prisons over the years, the Governor's Executive Budget allocates \$24 Million in economic development money for the affected communities.

As for the inmate population, they have been naturally attriting out of the four facilities. Furthermore, these closures will not in any way diminish the Department's ability to continue to house the inmate population in facilities based on their appropriate security classification.

The Department is focused on our ongoing priority of the delivery of evidence-based programs that will reduce recidivism by reliance upon the risk, needs and responsivity model. For this purpose the Department uses the COMPASS risk and needs instrument at both reception, initial facility placement, and just prior to release to assign programs of treatment and levels of supervision.

To facilitate the successful re-entry of offenders into the community, there are three important areas of focus: education, employment and healthcare. All of our academic education programs will continue to play a key role in the upcoming year, but we are particularly pleased with the continued growth of our privately funded college programming that is offered at 19 different facilities. Approximately 1,200 inmates are presently enrolled in college courses that are taught by educators from approximately fifteen different institutions of higher learning from across New York State.

Two other initiatives worthy of brief mention are our work for success and pay for success programs. The former serves recently released low risk parolees with low employment needs. Parolees will be referred by their parole officer to Department of

Labor Career Centers for services to supplement the work search effort they would undertake on their own. The services provided include resume assistance, job leads, and training referrals to match parolees with appropriate job openings.

Pay for success serves recently released higher risk parolees who are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The project is supported by a \$12 million federal grant from the US Department of Labor. Job training and transitional employment interventions are provided by CEO, the Center for Employment Opportunities. Over a four year period, the project will serve over 2,000 parolees in New York City and Rochester. Recidivism outcomes will be carefully monitored.

Another important re-entry related initiative is our inmate Medicaid enrollment program. Upon release, the former inmate will have Medicaid coverage for healthcare needs in the community, resulting in a continuity of care which should lower recidivism and thus, result in taxpayer savings. This initiative also ties into the Affordable Care Act.

In terms of other important initiatives planned for the upcoming year, to implement new policies and procedures pertaining to our special housing units, and to also comply with the PREA standard requiring the separation by sight and sound of 16 and 17 year olds, we will invest \$3.8 Million for the implementation of our plan to designate general confinement housing units at Coxsackie, Woodbourne, and Greene for their separate placement. If disciplinary segregation over thirty days is required, we will ensure that they are offered five hours per day of out-of-cell time, Monday through Friday.

At Sullivan Correctional Facility, a new initiative called the Correctional Alternative Rehabilitation Program, will be established as an alternative to SHU, to address the

special needs of certain inmates with intellectual or adaptive deficits who receive SHU sanctions in excess of thirty days. Following an orientation phase, participating inmates will be offered four hours per day of out-of-cell programming. This 64-bed unit will be located where Phase II of the Behavioral Health Unit had previously operated.

Similarly, we will continue to advance our PREA-related work to combat sexual abuse and harassment of offenders in our care and to comply with the national PREA standards. We recently began the process of hiring PREA Compliance Managers for designated clusters of facilities.

In conclusion, there are many challenges and expectations, as well as opportunities for the Department in the upcoming fiscal year. The Governor's proposed budget nicely positions the Department to advance the interests of public protection for all New Yorkers in a sound and fiscally prudent manner, while simultaneously developing new initiatives to lower recidivism and achieve better outcomes. Thank you for your time and I now would be happy to answer any questions you may have.