



Correctional Association of New York

Testimony of Phil Miller before the New York City Council's Criminal Justice Committee

Re: CANY's Support of HALT and Community Supervision Reform Bills

May 1, 2019

Good morning, Chair and Councilmembers:

My name is Phil Miller, and I represent the Correctional Association of New York. We are an independent, non-profit organization that was established in 1844 and is legislatively authorized to conduct oversight on all 54 of New York State's prisons.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today, and I thank you all for listening.

The Correctional Association of New York supports New York City Council Resolution 143, which urges the NYS legislature to pass the HALT bill (Humane Alternatives to Long-term Solitary Confinement). We also support New York City Council Resolution 829, which urges the legislature to pass a bill that reforms the various types of community supervision.

I'll speak briefly about both resolutions, starting with HALT (S1623/A2500).

On April 1st of this year, DOCCS reported that there were 2,377 people in solitary or segregated confinement cells. That number fluctuates slightly each day, and although it is lower than in years past, it still indicates that far too many people continue to experience the inhumane practice of isolated confinement.

Part of the Correctional Association's mission is to help preserve the dignity of incarcerated people, and the HALT bill would embody that mission by prohibiting vulnerable populations (e.g., people with serious mental health disorders, pregnant women, etc.) from placement in any solitary confinement at all, limiting most cases of segregated confinement to no more than 15 days, and requiring at least 4 to 6 hours of out-of-cell activity, among other things. If it is



passed by the legislature, the Correctional Association is fully committed to utilizing its oversight mandate to ensure that DOCCS correctly implements the provisions of HALT to their fullest extent.

We also applaud the City Council for passing Resolution 829, which urges the legislature to pass a community supervision reform bill (S1343A/A5493). In his Sponsor Memo for that bill, Senator Brian A. Benjamin states that in 2016 over 6,300 people were reincarcerated in NY State for technical parole violations, such as missing a curfew or not reporting a change in address quickly enough. Additionally, the NYC Mayor's Office found that from 2013 to 2018 reincarceration for technical parole violations had increased by 8%. Technical parole violations are really minor things, but reincarceration is frequently used as a penalty, even though it completely *disrupts* rehabilitation, *disrupts* reintegration, *disrupts* family relations, *disrupts* employment opportunities and *disrupts* housing, etc.

This community supervision reform bill is a small but much needed step in the right direction. It would allow a 30-day reduction in supervision periods for every 30 days completed; it would also prohibit reincarceration for technical violations; and it would even place caps on how long reincarceration can be for parole violations. Although the Correctional Association's primary focus is prison oversight, we support any positive efforts to reduce the amount of incarcerated people so that more people remain free to establish connections with their families and otherwise continue moving forward with their lives in a productive manner.

In closing, we support both the HALT and community supervision reform bills, and we really applaud the City Council for urging the legislature to pass them.

Thank you,

Correctional Association of New York