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Nation's First Conversion of Former Prison Into Reentry Center Begins in the Bronx

- Osborne Association to Convert Former Bronx Prison, Offer Interim Housing, Workforce Development and Training, and Supportive Reentry Services, to Individuals Returning Home from NY Jails and Prisons -

January 29, 2015 (Bronx, N.Y.) — Today, the Osborne Association, community leaders, and government representatives celebrated the official New York State handover of the former Fulton Correctional Facility to the Osborne Association. This is the first conversion of a former prison into a community reentry center.

Acting DOCCS Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci said, “The transformation of Fulton into a Reentry Center helps fulfill Governor Cuomo’s vision to increase public safety. Through the efforts, expertise and commitment of the Governor and the Osborne Association, we are strengthening communities with a local resource that will directly benefit individuals who are coming home. Today’s announcement was made possible by a 25-year low in the state prison population, a declining crime rate, and a continued commitment to break the prison cycle with a refocused emphasis upon reentry initiatives.”

The future reentry center at 1511 Fulton Avenue will offer transitional residence, workforce development, and supportive reentry services to men and women returning home from prison and jail. The site will also be home to Osborne’s social enterprises—self-sustaining businesses created to offer meaningful careers to formerly incarcerated individuals.

“While the crime rate have decreased in The Bronx and the prison populations have declined in New York State and City, there are still a great number of people under correctional supervision,” says Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. “I believe that transforming this structure into a re-entry facility will provide Bronxites who are transitioning back into society from prison with the necessary tools and resources to succeed and become proactive members of our community”

“Turning a prison into a reentry center for formerly incarcerated men and women is truly turning swords into ploughshares,” says Elizabeth Gaynes, President and CEO of the Osborne Association. “We are sending a strong message that families affected by incarceration are assets to our community and our returning citizens are welcome home.”

The history of the former Fulton Correctional Facility reflects the demographic, social, and economic changes the Bronx has experienced during the last century. Starting out as a local church in 1907, it was turned into a YM-YWHA complete with synagogue and pool in the early 1920s. In the 1950s, the building was converted into a nursing home and in the 1960s it became a drug treatment center. Amidst rising incarceration rates in the mid-70s,

it was turned into a minimum-security prison – a role it would retain for the next 36 years.

But in 2011, citing the state's falling prison population, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a Prison Transformation Fund to help underwrite the conversion of several correctional facilities, including Fulton. Osborne applied to transform 1511 Fulton Avenue into a neighborhood resource as part of that process and is grateful to the Cuomo administration, the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the State Senate and Assembly, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Community Board 3, the Empire State Development Corporation and the Bronx City Council members for their support.

“The restructuring of the Fulton facility will provide countless of New Yorkers transitioning back into society with the necessary resources and skills to be productive members of their communities,” said State Senator Gustavo Rivera. “Instead of sending our residents away en mass, we are creating jobs and opportunities at home while simultaneously helping reduce our rates of recidivism in the Bronx. I am proud to have had the opportunity to work with the Osborne Association and my fellow elected officials in making this project a reality.”

Through funding from the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Osborne was able to partner with LISC to engage the community to determine the organizations and services needed at Fulton fulfill the needs of those returning home, their families and the larger community.

While the final occupancy plan has not been determined, Osborne hopes to attract nonprofit partners to co-occupy the building to ensure a seamless transition and a holistic one-stop reentry service model for returning citizens.

The Osborne Association is also working on other initiatives that will expand services to criminal justice-involved individuals and their families. These include a pilot reentry program for elderly incarcerated individuals and policy advocacy designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children during and after a parent's arrest.

About the Osborne Association

Osborne Association has an 80-year history of leadership in working with currently and formerly incarcerated men and women, and adolescents and families affected by the incarceration of a loved one. The Osborne Association is the oldest organization in New York State providing direct services to justice-involved men and women, at sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Poughkeepsie, and 24 city and state correctional facilities. To learn more, visit <http://www.osborneny.org>.

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