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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES NEW PILOT PROGRAM TO INCREASE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED

Schenectady, Syracuse, and White Plains Public Housing Authorities will Carefully Screen and Monitor Formerly Incarcerated Individuals to Live in Public Housing with their Families

Pilot Program Funded by New York Department of State and Supported by State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision

Measure Will Fight Homelessness, Enhance Public Safety, and Reduce the Risk of Recidivism upon Reentry into the Community

Latest Criminal Justice Reform Established through Governor's Council on Community Re-Entry and Re-Integration

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced pilot projects at three public housing authorities to help formerly incarcerated New Yorkers safely reunite with their families under a new pilot program. These authorities in the cities of Schenectady, Syracuse, and White Plains have heeded a call from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to allow carefully screened and monitored people with convictions to live in public housing with their families.

"Stable housing drastically reduces the risk of recidivism and, under this initiative, qualified individuals who meet careful screening and monitoring guidelines will be able to be reunited with their families," **Governor Cuomo said.** "This pilot program will help break down barriers, aid in their reintegration into society and increase public safety."

In an effort to aid the authorities' efforts, the New York State Department of State is providing funding for case management that will track these individuals, and the Department of Correction and Community Supervision will monitor participants through their parole officers and undertake home visits as part of the normal course of supervision as well as any other time that the housing authority requests they do so.

Public housing authorities supported by the United States Department of Housing and

Urban Development, including all of the urban housing authorities in New York State, have the lawful discretion to screen housing applicants with past criminal behavior on an individualized basis – excluding sex offenders and methamphetamine producers. However, many authorities refuse to give applicants this fair assessment. This results in people who present little risk to society being separated from family members, and forced into unstable housing or homelessness at the expense to themselves and our communities.

A [2016 study](#) by the Vera Institute showed that reuniting carefully screened individuals with family members living in public housing is safe for the community. Not one of the 85 individuals who participated in an ongoing housing pilot program in the New York City Housing Authority has been convicted of a new crime since enrollment.

The Governor's Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration introduced these results to other housing authorities, and these three authorities decided to pilot the approach. Schenectady County Community Action, Inc., PEACE, Inc. of Syracuse, and the Westchester Community Opportunity Program will provide the case management services to enrollees and their family members. These public housing authorities will have the ability to review a number of important factors to ensure any participant does not pose a public safety concern to residents. These include an individual's criminal background, their path to rehabilitation, and family structure. At the end of the pilot program, successful participants may be added to the household on a permanent basis.

Richard Homenick, Executive Director for the Schenectady Public Housing Authority, said, "In Schenectady, we are excited and optimistic about this opportunity to reunite and strengthen families, empower individuals, and increase public safety. We look forward to providing a fresh start for returning citizens through a supportive network."

William J. Simmons, Executive Director for the Syracuse Housing Authority, said, "The Syracuse Housing Authority is happy to participate in the Family Reunification Pilot program'. The case management support is a critical element in the successful return of the participants to their communities."

Mack Carter, Executive Director for the White Plains Housing Authority, said, "The Mayor, Board of Commissioners, Residents, Management and Staff look forward to the reunification of family members re-entering their homes and their communities, and for some families this time could not have come soon enough. The White Plains Housing Authority have been asked for many years to be more tempered and considerate of family members who have been incarcerated and barred out of Public Housing we believe we are answering that call."

Secretary of State Rossana Rosado, Chair of the Governor's Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration, said, "Governor Cuomo has been a champion of the formerly incarcerated by offering them opportunities that will help them succeed in becoming productive members of our State. Housing is a vital first step that

can reunite these individuals with their families and this pilot will foster an environment where they can prosper."

Anthony J. Annucci, Acting Commissioner of the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, said, "I applaud Governor Cuomo for once again having the foresight to recognize that a key facet in reducing crime is helping people leaving incarceration reenter society and successfully become law abiding citizens. Several years ago the Governor created the Reentry Council to address issues such as housing, employment and access to health care for those on parole. This latest program will most certainly further his vision."

New York State Homes and Community Renewal Commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas said, "Research shows that stable housing and family connections help to reduce repeated recidivism and homelessness, yet individuals who have been incarcerated often face direct and tacit discrimination when applying for housing. This pilot program, coupled with our agency's efforts, will expand access to housing for the formerly incarcerated, allowing families to reunite and stabilize. Governor Cuomo's continuing initiative to break reentry barriers provides the key to opening these doors, bringing families back together and setting the example of how to create a fairer and more forgiving society."

Governor Cuomo's Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration

This pilot expansion is preceded by several other recent reentry-focused housing reforms through Governor Cuomo's Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration, all of which are now underway and making a substantial impact.

In 2015, the Governor [announced](#) that he was accepting and directing the State to implement several initial housing-related recommendations from the Council. As of today, these recommendations have led to thousands of additional housing options available for eligible people with criminal convictions.

These housing-related recommendations have already begun to have a positive impact, and in 2016 alone:

- Less than one percent of the 16,755 applicants for New York State-distributed Section 8 rental assistance were denied because of previous convictions.
- Six organizations recently received conditional awards in the Empire State Supported Housing Initiative to create 86 units statewide of supported housing that is targeted specifically at the formerly incarcerated.
- 100 supportive housing units for the formerly incarcerated who are mentally ill are currently being built in New York City.
- Close to 200 individuals with domestic violence histories have been allowed to live with partners with whom they have no history of violence, changing prior exclusionary practices that left them homeless in many instances.

Nicholas Turner, President of the Vera Institute of Justice, said, “We commend Governor Cuomo for supporting public housing authorities across New York State to expand access for people reentering society from prison. As our New York City Housing Authority Family Reentry Pilot shows, housing and supportive services are fundamental to success after incarceration. By reuniting more families in public housing, we can improve public safety and strengthen family ties.”

Kristin Miller, CSH Director in New York, said, “What we have seen from our hands-on experience is that everyone wins when those reintegrating into communities are reunited with family in a home that promotes stability and strong connections to supportive networks. Thanks to the Governor’s support, we are confident White Plains, Syracuse and Schenectady will realize the same positive outcomes we witnessed with the New York City pilot: successful reintegration for those leaving incarceration; stronger family bonds; reduced costs and a safer environment for everyone, including neighbors residing in and around the public housing.”

David Condliffe, Executive Director of the Center for Community Alternatives, said, “Governor Cuomo and Secretary of State Rosado once again lead the way in demonstrating that supportive reentry services make our communities safer. The support of family and stable housing provide the platforms on which we all depend to succeed.”

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