

**Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti, Senior Policy Associate**  
**Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**  
**Submitted to the New York City Council FY27 Preliminary Budget Oversight Hearing**  
**Criminal Justice**  
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For 80 years, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) has been an independent voice for children advancing child and family well-being through research, advocacy, and civic engagement. With deep expertise in data, policy and child-serving systems, CCC champions proven solutions and mobilizes allies to secure reforms that improve child outcomes and promote equity. CCC drives systemic change to ensure every child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Brooks-Powers and all the members of the City Council Committee on Criminal Justice for providing the opportunity to discuss how to improve the delivery of essential services and programs for NYC youth and young adults in the FY27 Preliminary Budget.

**Restore Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Supportive Programming for Youth and Young Adults**

Extensive research demonstrates the positive impacts of Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and reentry programs, including lowering recidivism and crime.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, for every dollar invested in ATI programs, studies estimate between \$3.46-\$5.54 in returns, in addition to reduced costs for the criminal justice system and better community health outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the well-established benefits of these programs, since 2023 the City Administration has cut millions from probation programs that have proven to be successful in supporting re-entry and connecting young people to mentorship and services. Failing to provide robust reentry services or supportive probation programs will harm our youth and is counterintuitive to building safe communities.

CCC supports the recommendations of the [New York City Youth Justice Coalition](#), including the following investments and restorations in the FY27 Budget:

- Restore and invest \$4.1 million for the IMPACT program
- Restore \$5 million for the NextSTEPs program
- Invest \$40 million for the Community Justice Reentry Network
- Invest \$1.6 billion to provide COMPASS programming for youth in detention
- Maintain \$2.4 million with a cost-of-living adjustment to each new year of funding for the Mentoring and Advocacy Program (MAAP)

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<sup>1</sup> Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. ATI Report. Accessed: <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MOCJ-ATI-RNR-Report-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> New York State Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Coalition (2024). Unlocking Potential: The Role of Community-Based Alternatives in Strengthening Public Safety. Accessed: [https://www.lac.org/assets/files/Unlocking-Potential\\_The-Role-of-Community-Based-Alternatives-in-Strengthening-Public-Safety.pdf](https://www.lac.org/assets/files/Unlocking-Potential_The-Role-of-Community-Based-Alternatives-in-Strengthening-Public-Safety.pdf)

- Invest \$30 million for NYC's Assertive Community Engagement and Success (ACES) program to ensure that all young people with risk factors have access to this kind of prevention model
- Maintain current funding for Family Court Alternative to Detention Programs to ensure young people and their families are successfully supported in the community.
- Expand Parent Support Services and create an open door policy for Family Support Services for youth as a prevention intervention
- Invest \$8.1 million for the Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program
- Invest \$8.5 million to reinstate, expand and fully fund YES services with original work scope as an effective impactful preventive tool
- Invest \$59.1 million for ATLAS funding
- Invest \$1.6 billion to raise the Cost-Per-Participant funding for youth in detention in COMPASS programming
- Invest \$3.2 million for NeON program funding
- Invest \$3.7 million for the WorksPlus Program
- Restore and baseline \$130,000 for the Adolescent Portable Therapy

### **Close Rikers and Invest in Supportive Services**

As of July 2022, 22.5% of those in Department of Corrections custody were young adults between the ages of 18-25 –approximately 1,300 people.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, 90% of this population was being held pre-trial, meaning they have not been proven to have committed a crime and are presumed innocent. This age group, 18-25, is referred to as *emerging adults*. Brain science shows that brains are still developing until at least 25 years old, and that these young adults require an array of developmentally appropriate justice system responses. Emerging adults are more vulnerable to the harsh environment on Rikers Island and will be more impacted in their ability to re-enter society based on what they witness or experience while incarcerated.<sup>4</sup>

The harms of incarceration at Rikers are undeniable. Under the Adams Administration, 48 people died while incarcerated there.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in the first 6 months of 2021, 18-21 year olds were involved in 22% of the reported uses of force by staff but only made up 8% of those detained at that time.<sup>6</sup> The dangerous impact of Rikers Island – and the disproportionate harm to young people – cannot be ameliorated by reforms alone.

NYC spends nearly half a million dollars each year to incarcerate just one person on Rikers, and that includes over \$370 million on overtime alone. New York must reinvest those resources in services that foster real community safety and wellbeing and prevent involvement in the criminal justice system. The

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<sup>3</sup> Columbia University Justice Lab. (2022). Emerging Adults Incarcerated at Rikers Island. Accessed: <https://justicelab.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Emerging%20Adults%20at%20Rikers%20Overview.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Columbia University Justice Lab. (2022). Emerging Adults Incarcerated at Rikers Island. Accessed: <https://justicelab.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Emerging%20Adults%20at%20Rikers%20Overview.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Vera. (2026). Tracking Deaths in NYC Jails Since 2022. Accessed: <https://www.vera.org/news/nyc-jail-deaths>

<sup>6</sup> The Nunez Monitoring Team. (2021). Twelfth Report of the Nunez Independent Monitor

budget for Rikers Island should be redistributed and invested into services that support and assist the reentry of people experiencing incarceration and detention. **We join the [Campaign to Close Rikers](#) in urging the city to align plans to close Rikers as closely to the original 2027 goal as possible. Additionally, we urge the city to invest in age-appropriate mental health services, diversion and reentry services, and housing for people leaving custody.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.