

Statement of Alex Crohn

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New York City Council

Int. 1147: A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to establishing an office of crime victim services

Int. 1150: A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to creating a municipal division of transitional services

Committee on Public Safety

Committee on Oversight and Investigations

May 3, 2016

Good morning, Chair Gibson, Chair Gentile, and members of the Committees on Public Safety and Oversight and Investigations. My name is Alex Crohn and I am General Counsel for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice ("MOCJ"). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Jennifer Scaife, Executive Director of Prevention, Diversion, and Reintegration, and Ilana Turko, Associate Counsel, from my office are here with me to answer questions.

The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice advises the Mayor on public safety strategy and, together with partners inside and outside of government, develops and implements policies aimed at reducing crime, reducing unnecessary arrests and incarceration, promoting fairness, and building strong and safe neighborhoods.

The issues we are here to discuss today – supportive services for survivors of crime and targeted re-entry strategies to help ensure that people returning from correctional facilities do not commit new crimes – should be seen in New York City's larger crime context. Over the last twenty years, New York City has experienced the sharpest drop in crime of any city in the nation. Every type of major crime has plummeted, with the number of murders dropping by 83% and grand larceny dropping by 93%. The trend toward greater public safety has continued, with 2015 showing the lowest yearly crime numbers ever in the modern Compstat era. Since January of 2014, index crime citywide has fallen 1.7% and overall crime has fallen 5.8%. Burglary and grand larceny auto were at their lowest levels in more than 50 years in 2015. And although in the rest of the country, jail and prison populations increased 11% between 1996 and 2013, New York City's jail population fell by over half. These trends provide proof that we can have both more safety and a lighter criminal justice touch.

To continue improving safety while avoiding unnecessary arrests and incarceration, our office is working to effectively match the right interventions to the right people at the right time. Central to this

strategy is a comprehensive understanding of the risks and needs of various populations, an array of effective interventions, and the infrastructure to ensure that people are paired with the right service at the right time. The City supports the Speaker's attention to reentry services in Intro.1150 and focus on services for survivors of crime in Intro. 1147 as both bills seek to enhance connection to appropriate and effective services for eligible populations.

Each year, roughly 45,000 people return to New York City from jail and prison. Last week our office announced a strategy to continue safely reducing the Rikers Island population by connecting eligible individuals to effective interventions before and after jail. This strategy aims to drive New York City's crime rate even lower by reliably assessing who poses a risk of recidivism, appropriately addressing the issues that have led many into contact with the criminal justice system, and connecting people with stabilizing services that help ensure they do not commit new crimes.

Our new strategy will ensure that re-entry and diversion resources are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible to reduce jail use safely while promoting public safety. To meet this goal, we have convened a multidisciplinary council of 54 organizations and agencies – including City government agency representatives, the courts, district attorneys, defenders, providers, members of the faith community, formerly incarcerated individuals, and advocates. The Council will review data on populations and available options and develop solutions to address unmet needs and improve program effectiveness.

Over the next six months, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice will work to:

- Comprehensively understand populations in need through conducting a deep analytic dive to understand the risk, service needs, and characteristics of the target population in order to identify opportunities for intervention;
- Map available interventions across diversion and re-entry points by creating an electronic catalogue of New York City's justice and service providers. Identifying existing gaps will help determine what additional resources or partnerships are necessary; and
- Conduct direct outreach with currently incarcerated individuals to better understand re-entry needs.

These efforts will build on and strengthen our current effective programming. We look forward to working with the Council on Intro.1150's call for a coordinated re-entry system, which will importantly advance this work.

We also applaud the Speaker's work to ensure that survivors of crime and those close to them are paired with the services they need. As just one example of the City's commitment in this area, we have funded the Urban Justice Center to better support victims of human trafficking. The Urban Justice

Center conducts intakes, assessing clients' needs including safety planning and risk assessment, and provides 24-per-day emergency services. As you know, we also partner with the Council to bolster the capacity of service providers in human trafficking intervention courts. We look forward to working together to expand available services and supports for victims.

To this end, we look forward to working with the Council to develop an office dedicated to crime survivors' services, which will work closely with the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence and the New York City Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services to ensure survivors have access to services. The administration does have concerns that the current Crime Victims Services bill conflicts with the longstanding work of the Office to Combat Domestic Violence with survivors of intimate partner violence. Therefore we look forward to discussing with the Council possible adjustments to the bill to ensure there is no duplication of efforts.

We appreciate your partnership in developing these reforms and look forward to our continuing work together in creating a city in which every New Yorker is safe and treated with respect. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be happy to answer any questions.