

THE ASSEMBLY
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****PRESS RELEASE****

***Corrections Chair David Weprin, Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa,
Diverse Group of Supporters Rally for 7-Day Visitation at NY Medium Security Prisons and
Restoration of Free Transportation for Visiting***

NEW YORK, NEW YORK –Assemblyman David Weprin, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Correction, and Assemblymember De La Rosa; joined the Osborne Society, Correction Lieutenants Council 82/AFSCME, the Legal Aid Society, the Correctional Association of New York, Brooklyn Defender Services, family members, religious leaders and other advocates stood on the steps of city hall to rally in support of A7241 (Weprin) to restore 7-Day visiting at New York State medium-security prisons and A7016 (De La Rosa) to restore the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision transportation program for inmate visiting. Both bills are sponsored by Senator Velmanette Montgomery in the Senate.

Research has shown that allowing for increased visitation in correctional facilities decreases recidivism, reduces violence in prisons, and benefits local communities. By allowing for contact between inmates and family, children and community members; inmates can maintain necessary bonds needed for reentry after serving a prison sentence.

New York previously offered a 7-day visiting schedule at all correctional facilities and currently offers 7-Day visiting at minimum and maximum security prisons. The state also operated a transportation program from 1976 - 2011 that allowed for free bus service on weekends from New York City, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany to every correctional facility in the state.

“The amount gained by limiting visitation in our prisons does not match what is lost” said Assemblyman David Weprin “Increased visiting has been proven to reduce recidivism, as visits help family members maintain ties and help incarcerated individuals transition to a life outside prison after release” **said Assemblyman David Weprin, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Correction.** “On top of that, there is evidence to suggest that more visiting means less violence in prisons, which means a better work environment for both civilian and security employees in New York’s prisons. And even if we look at it from a cost standpoint, reduced recidivism would greatly lower costs for the state in the long term.”

“As a member of the Assembly Corrections Committee, I am proud to be the lead sponsor of A.7016 which reinstates the free transportation systems for visits to state prisons. This system was operational in our state from 1973 to 2011, when it was eliminated for a cost savings of \$1.5 Million in a Department of Corrections budget of \$3 Billion. Studies have shown that family visitation contributes to reductions in recidivism and improved inmate behavior which results in safer prisons and cost savings in the long run” **said Assemblywoman Carmen De La Rosa.**” There are close to 100,000 children in our New York State who have an incarcerated parent. When you look at communities who have families that have been historically and disproportionately affected by criminal justice policies in our state, it is incumbent upon us to find solutions that foster a family’s ability to maintain relationships. Today, I am proud to join Chair Weprin to advocate for the passage of these two pieces of legislation, as I believe they embody the values of restorative justice and further our goals of criminal justice reform.”

“The Osborne Association strongly supports these two bills that would increase family member's access to their incarcerated loved ones. Transportation is a significant barrier and we know from our work in more than 20 state prisons that children and families relied on the free buses while they were available. Bringing back these buses and restoring seven-day-a-week visiting will strengthen visiting, which promotes rehabilitation, safety, reentry, and child well-being” **said Tanya Krupat, Director, Osborne Center for Justice Policy and Practice.**

“New York’s prison visitation policies at medium security facilities are fundamentally flawed and inflict punitive harm on the incarcerated,” **said Tina Luongo, Attorney-In-Charge of the Criminal Practice at The Legal Aid Society.** “The current weekend-only visitation structure is too often chaotic and rushed due to large crowds leaving relatives little quality time to spend visiting a family member. We need reform now and restoring weekday visits along with the family bus program as viable ways for low-income people to visit relatives is the right path forward. This is smart policy: visitation reduces recidivism and creates safer prisons and safer communities. The Legal Aid Society applauds Assembly Members Weprin and De La Rosa for introducing these bills and we encourage the Legislature to pass them before adjourning for the year.”

“The importance of family visits to our incarcerated clients cannot be overstated. Substantial research has shown that consistent visits are one of the primary drivers of rehabilitation and protect against recidivism. Indeed, the state has a financial and public safety interest in promoting and facilitating them. Most importantly, they serve as a lifeline for the tens of thousands of families separated by mass incarceration in New York State. Brooklyn Defender Services strongly supports legislation by Assembly Member Weprin and Assembly Member de la Rosa to restore both 7-day visiting in medium-security facilities and DOCCS’ transportation program serving communities impacted by incarceration. We respectfully urge Governor Cuomo to include them in the budget next year” **said Lisa Schreibersdorf, Executive Director of Brooklyn Defender Services.**

“Keeping families apart is just as destructive to a society as "divide and conquer" tactics; it weakens us as a state and nation” **said family member Anna Pastorella.**

<<Photo attached: DeLaRosaWeprinVisitationSevenDayandTransportRally.jpg>>

<<Caption: Assemblymembers David Weprin and Carmen De La Rosa join supporters to call for 7-Day visiting at NYS medium security prisons and a restoration of free transportation programs for visiting. Photo courtesy of Mireya Acierto>>