

STATE OF NEW YORK

11413

IN ASSEMBLY

May 15, 2026

Introduced by COMMITTEE ON RULES -- (at request of M. of A. Zinerman) --
read once and referred to the Committee on Correction

AN ACT to amend the correction law, in relation to enacting the "family
reunification and economic empowerment act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-
bly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "family reunification and economic empowerment act".

3 § 2. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature finds and
4 declares that:

5 Family separation caused by incarceration has devastating social and
6 economic consequences for children and communities across New York
7 state. Existing prison labor systems rely on compulsory, underpaid, and
8 non-rehabilitative work, which prevents incarcerated individuals from
9 meaningfully contributing to the well-being of their families or prepar-
10 ing for successful reentry. Strengthening family bonds during carcera-
11 tion reduces recidivism, improves child outcomes, and lowers state
12 spending on foster care, child welfare, and public assistance. A rehabi-
13 litative employment and training model that pays fair wages to incarcer-
14 ated individuals, invests in family connections, and builds marketable
15 skills will create a path toward family stability, economic empowerment,
16 and community safety. The state further finds that its purchasing power
17 should be used to strengthen families and communities, not perpetuate
18 cycles of poverty and incarceration.

19 It is the intent of this act to:

20 1. Prevent unnecessary family separation by providing technology and
21 support for ongoing contact between incarcerated parents and their chil-
22 dren;

23 2. Create a pilot program in New York City that establishes paid
24 apprenticeships for incarcerated parents;

25 3. Ensure that compensation earned can be used to support dependents,
26 cover commissary needs, and build financial readiness for reentry;

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 4. By reforming procurement practices and opening opportunities to
2 incarcerated workers, New York can align its economic policies with the
3 values of rehabilitation, family stability, and community reinvestment.
4 § 3. The correction law is amended by adding a new section 173 to read
5 as follows:

6 § 173. Family reunification and economic empowerment pilot program. 1.
7 Establishment. There is hereby created a family reunification and
8 economic empowerment pilot program or "pilot program", administered by
9 the department, to provide incarcerated parents in the city of New York
10 with access to paid apprenticeship and employment opportunities while
11 incarcerated.

12 2. Wages. Participants in such pilot program shall be compensated at a
13 rate no less than fifty percent of the state minimum wage.

14 3. Use of earnings. Earnings from apprenticeship and employment oppor-
15 tunities pursuant to such pilot program shall be deposited into accounts
16 designated for the incarcerated individual and may be allocated toward:

17 (a) child support or dependent care payments;

18 (b) commissary purchases; and

19 (c) savings accounts for reentry upon release.

20 4. Training and certification. Participants shall receive access to
21 vocational training and workforce development programs aligned with
22 high-demand industries, with certification opportunities recognized by
23 state and private sector employers as referenced in paragraph two of
24 subdivision a of section thirty-five hundred two of the New York city
25 charter.

26 5. Virtual family contact for incarcerated parents. The department
27 shall establish and maintain a program to ensure that incarcerated
28 parents have regular opportunities for virtual contact with their minor
29 children, such children's guardians or caregivers, and other family
30 members, where appropriate. The department shall install, maintain, and
31 make accessible audiovisual meeting equipment in correctional facilities
32 for the purpose of facilitating such contact. The department may partner
33 with community-based organizations, libraries, child welfare organiza-
34 tions, and family support programs, including programs similar to Chil-
35 dren of Promise and the Brooklyn Public Library, to support meaningful
36 engagement between incarcerated parents and their children.

37 6. Evaluation. Such pilot program shall be independently evaluated
38 within two years of the effective date of this section, with findings
39 reported to the governor, the legislature, and the public on the impact
40 of such pilot program on family stability, reentry success, and state
41 expenditures.

42 § 4. Severability clause. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivi-
43 sion, section or part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of
44 competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect,
45 impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in
46 its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section
47 or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judg-
48 ment shall have been rendered. It is hereby declared to be the intent of
49 the legislature that this act would have been enacted even if such
50 invalid provisions had not been included herein.

51 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.