

STATE OF NEW YORK

1096

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 6, 2017

Introduced by Sens. RIVERA, AVELLA, MONTGOMERY, PARKER, PERKINS, STAVISKY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction

AN ACT to amend the correction law, in relation to establishing the pilot project for the placement of inmates close to home; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof

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

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "pilot project for the placement of inmates close to home".

3 § 2. Legislative intent. The legislature hereby finds and declares
4 that research shows inmates who maintain family ties during incarceration
5 have lower rates of recidivism than inmates who do not. Further,
6 most inmates are parents, and more than 80,000 children in the state of
7 New York have a parent incarcerated in the state prison system.

8 The legislature further finds that the department of corrections and
9 community supervision should consider proximity to minor children among
10 the key criteria of security and health and program needs when determining
11 prison assignments and transfers of parents, and should support
12 increased access of children to their incarcerated parents through the
13 use of technology and programs currently available within the department.
14

15 The legislature therefore declares that there is a need to develop
16 classification criteria that would place inmates in proximity to their
17 family members and home communities, and in particular for those inmates
18 who are parents of minor children in the appropriate correctional facility
19 located closest to those children provided such placement is otherwise
20 appropriate and suitable, and would facilitate increased contact
21 between such inmate and his or her child or children.

22 § 3. The correction law is amended by adding a new section 72-c to
23 read as follows:

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

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1 § 72-c. Pilot project for the placement of inmates close to home. 1.
2 The commissioner shall establish a pilot program at a designated correc-
3 tional facility for the purpose of housing inmates who are parents of
4 minor children in the correctional facility which is located in closest
5 proximity to the primary place of residence of any such inmate's minor
6 child or children under eighteen years of age, provided that such place-
7 ment is otherwise suitable and appropriate pursuant to the regulations
8 of the department and would facilitate increased contact between such
9 inmate and his or her child or children. For purposes of this pilot
10 program, there shall be a maximum of one hundred male and female
11 inmates, who on a voluntary basis request placement in the pilot program
12 and who are parents of minor children. In selecting such inmates the
13 department shall consult with the office of children and family services
14 and the local district of social services located in the county where
15 such inmate's child resides to determine if any reasons exist, such as
16 no visitation order, that may prevent the inmate from participating in
17 the pilot program. If the inmate's child and/or family is subject to the
18 review of the office of children and family services or a local social
19 services district, the department shall consult with the assigned agency
20 to determine whether the child and/or family is suitable for partic-
21 ipation in the pilot program, and, if so, collaborate with such agency
22 to obtain information relating to such child and/or family as shall be
23 necessary to determine the effectiveness of the pilot program.

24 2. The commissioner, in consultation with appropriate community organ-
25 izations, shall submit within one year of the effective date of this
26 section and annually thereafter a report to the governor, the temporary
27 president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly on the effec-
28 tiveness of this pilot project. Such reports shall include an analysis
29 of the impact on the inmate, including factors such as institutional
30 adjustment, behavior infractions, and program participation, among
31 related relevant factors, and on his or her children and family partic-
32 ipants. The reports shall also include analysis of factors such as
33 frequency of visits, reports from caregivers about children's connected-
34 ness to their incarcerated parents, children's emotional well-being and
35 behavior in the home, and other relevant factors as included in the
36 caregiver's reports. For child welfare cases, in addition to the above
37 factors, progress toward permanency goals, parent's participation in
38 case planning, and other relevant factors shall be noted. In cases where
39 an inmate parent's release is imminent, as determined by the commis-
40 sioner, the report shall examine the level of support received and provided
41 by the inmate's family through family involvement and the attachment
42 between a returning parent and his or her children upon reunification.
43 The reports shall also include such impact on institutional safety and
44 performance and any recommendations for additional legislative enact-
45 ments that may be needed or required, to improve, enhance and subse-
46 quently expand the program to other correctional facilities as deter-
47 mined to be appropriate by the commissioner. In compiling such reports,
48 the commissioner may establish and utilize a control group and, if he or
49 she fails to do so, the commissioner shall include an explanation as to
50 why a control group was not used.

51 3. No person shall have the right to demand or require participation
52 in the pilot project authorized by this section. The commissioner may
53 revoke at any time participation in such project for any serious disci-
54 plinary infraction committed by the inmate or for any failure to contin-
55 ue to participate successfully in any assigned work and treatment
56 program after placement in such pilot program.

1 4. An eligibility preference shall be granted for child welfare cases.
2 Admission shall be granted on a rolling basis and priority shall be
3 given to inmates who were primary caregivers, although all inmate
4 parents shall be considered. The families of inmates shall submit demon-
5 strated proof that they will visit the inmate if the person lives clos-
6 er, and the inmate shall request that such family members submit
7 letters. Other relevant factors shall be taken into consideration,
8 including but not limited to, whether an inmate's family member has an
9 undue hardship that would affect the person's ability to visit the
10 inmate. Such hardship shall include, but not be limited to, a physical
11 disability or serious illness that inhibits travel, or whether they
12 would not be able to reasonably visit the inmate because they would be
13 unable to visit by public transportation and cannot afford or use a
14 motor vehicle. Any action by the commissioner pursuant to this section
15 shall be deemed a judicial function and shall not be reviewable if done
16 in accordance with law.

17 5. Inmates shall not be eligible for this program for a variety of
18 factors, as listed in, but not limited to, those enumerated in this
19 section. Inmates who are incarcerated for violating parole or condi-
20 tional release shall be ineligible for this program. Inmates who were
21 convicted of a sex offense shall be ineligible for this program. Inmates
22 who have committed a crime against a child shall be ineligible for this
23 program. Inmates for whom a closer location would not lead to more visi-
24 tors shall not be eligible for this program. Inmates who have not had
25 contact with their children in over a year out of their own volition
26 shall not be eligible for this program, unless there is a compelling
27 reason for not having had contact with their children. The commissioner
28 is empowered to grant preference to more involved inmate parents, as
29 determined by the amount of contact that the children have with their
30 parents, should the commissioner determine to do so. Inmates who would
31 ordinarily be sent to a stricter security level prison shall not, unless
32 compelling reasons shall suggest otherwise, be sent to a lighter securi-
33 ty prison because of proximity on the basis of this program. Mental
34 health issues shall not be an issue of ineligibility with regard to this
35 program, unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

36 § 4. This act shall take effect six months after it shall have become
37 a law and shall expire 3 years after it shall take effect when upon such
38 date the provisions of this act shall be deemed repealed. Effective
39 immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regu-
40 lation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective
41 date is authorized to be made on or before such date.