

A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget:

Mayor Adams Continues to Invest in Incarceration over Communities

To promote safety and stability for all New Yorkers, city leaders must stop overfunding incarceration and instead fund services that help New Yorkers flourish. Yet once again, the Adams administration’s preliminary budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 shows continued overspending on incarceration instead of community-based safety solutions.

Even as other agencies face deep mandated cuts, budgets for law enforcement and incarceration remain virtually untouched:

- The Department of Correction’s (DOC) budget remains over \$2.6 billion, just 3.3 percent lower than FY 2024 spending, according to the January 2024 forecast.¹
- The New York Police Department’s (NYPD) budget remains near \$12 billion, decreasing by 3.9 percent.²

In contrast, agencies that keep communities safe, stable, and healthy are facing significant budget cuts.

The FY 2025 budget includes cuts to:

- the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene,
- the Department of Youth and Community Development, and
- the Department of Social Services.

Although overall funding for the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) is set to go up by 4.6 percent, this increase will likely not help many New Yorkers living on the streets or in the subway—who often require additional engagement before they take advantage of services—as funding for outreach services is set to decrease by 8.2 percent.³

Changes to New York City departmental budgets, FY 2024 to FY 2025

Agency	FY 2024 budget	FY 2025 preliminary budget	Percentage change
Department of Homeless Services	\$3.88B	\$4.06B	4.6%
Department of Correction	\$2.71B	\$2.63B	-3.3%
New York Police Department	\$12.05B	\$11.58B	-3.9%
Department of Social Services	\$13.55B	\$11.53B	-14.9%
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene	\$3.08B	\$2.45B	-20.4%
Department of Youth and Community Development	\$1.36B	\$1.01B	-25.4%

FY 2024 budget figures use numbers from the January modified budget; departmental totals for FY 2024 and FY 2025 include fringe benefits, pension contributions, and debt service where relevant

Source: FY 2024 numbers from the New York City Independent Budget Office and current as of January 16, 2024; FY 2025 numbers from the New York City Office of Management and Budget Preliminary Expense Review Contract Budget

The preliminary budget also cuts funding for community-based interventions backed by extensive research, including:

- \$6.7 million for alternatives to incarceration,
- \$13 million for supervised release,
- \$8 million for reentry services, and
- \$6.1 million for summer youth employment.⁴

In addition, while the mayor celebrates reductions in gun violence, the Office of Neighborhood Safety’s budget faces a \$66 million (33.8 percent) decrease. This will shrink the Crisis Management System and the Office to Prevent Gun Violence, and it will eliminate the Precision Employment Initiative, a jobs training program that targets neighborhoods with high rates of gun violence.⁵

DOC's overspending comes from persistent overstaffing.

Examining DOC's budget reveals that 88 percent goes to salaries, overtime, fringe benefits, and pension payments to staff, 80 percent of whom are uniformed officers.⁶ As a result, any attempt to rightsize New York's correctional spending will require DOC to rein in its bloated personnel rolls.

The Office of Management and Budget's staffing forecasts indicate that DOC intends to budget for 7,060 officers through the end of FY 2028.⁷ These staffing levels would translate to more than one uniformed officer for every person in detention at the current jail population.⁸ Such a staffing ratio is vastly out of step with the national average of nearly one officer to four incarcerated people, and it is particularly concerning given the city's legal mandate to close Rikers Island and transition to a smaller borough-based jail system.⁹

Rather than accept a decreasing workforce given the decreasing jail population, DOC is working to hire more officers quickly; to do so, it has slashed educational requirements and cut training time in half.¹⁰ The department currently employs approximately 6,150 uniformed officers and forecasts 1,451 uniformed vacancies in FY 2025.¹¹

Proactively removing these vacancies to bring budgeted staffing levels in line with actual personnel rolls would reduce the DOC budget by approximately \$162 million in the next fiscal year alone.¹² That amount is nearly double the 2025 savings DOC projects by reducing excess personnel spending gradually (which is effectively cancelled out by increases in other areas of its budget).¹³ Those savings would fund more than 3,800 supportive housing beds or increase the size of the city's summer youth employment program by nearly two-thirds, both of which have been shown to effectively deliver community safety and stability without inflicting the physical and psychological harms of spending time on Rikers.¹⁴

New York City must invest more in its communities and less in incarceration.

To build public safety in New York City without relying on law enforcement or incarceration, the city should:

- **Proactively eliminate DOC uniformed vacancies** to save a total of \$162 million in FY 2025 alone, redirecting those funds to community-based initiatives that keep communities safe and thriving.
- **Restore funding to programs that maintain safety more effectively than jails**, including:
 - \$27.8 million to alternatives to incarceration, supervised release, and reentry support;
 - \$6.1 million to summer youth employment;
 - \$66 million to the Office of Neighborhood Safety; and
 - \$26.7 million to street outreach programs.
- **Allocate at least an additional \$6 million to fund five new clubhouses and an additional \$6 million to fund four new crisis respite centers** by 2025 (as mandated by 2023 legislation), which will provide opportunities for connection, support, and access to wraparound services for New Yorkers struggling with serious mental illness.¹⁵
- **Protect and expand supportive housing programs** by increasing funding for Justice Involved Supportive Housing by \$6.4 million, which will add 380 beds and ensure adequate funding for the existing 120.

With these actions, New York City can provide safety and justice for all its residents instead of continuing to overfund systems that for years have failed to deliver either.

Endnotes

- ¹ Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 January modified budget numbers from the Independent Budget Office (IBO), shared via email with Vera on January 16, 2024, on file with authors. Vera used data from IBO for the FY 2024 budget to have the most up-to-date numbers; for more information, contact Benjamin Heller at bheller@vera.org. FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from New York City Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), *The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025: Expense Revenue Contract* (New York: OMB, 2024), 39E, <https://perma.cc/R4J2-UYN4>. The total FY 2024 and FY 2025 numbers presented in this brief include fringe benefits, pension contributions, and debt service.
- ² IBO, January 16, 2024; OMB, *Budget Fiscal Year 2025, 2024*, 29E-30E.
- ³ FY 2024 January modified budget numbers from IBO, January 16, 2024. FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from OMB, *Budget Fiscal Year 2025, 2024*, 135E-136E (Health and Mental Hygiene), 68E (Youth and Community Development), 36E-37E (Social Services), 38E (Homeless Services).
- ⁴ OMB, *Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)* (New York: OMB, 2024), 30-31, <https://perma.cc/FF4X-ALKB>. Summer youth employment budget data from IBO. For evidence of the effectiveness of supervised release, see Melanie Skemer, Cindy Redcross, and Howard Bloom, *Pursuing Pretrial Justice Through an Alternative to Bail: Findings from an Evaluation of New York City's Supervised Release Program* (New York: MDRC, 2020), <https://perma.cc/9WAR-TQ3Y>; for evidence of the effectiveness of reentry services see Emilee Green, "An Overview of Evidence-Based Practices and Programs in Prison Reentry," Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, December 19, 2022, <https://perma.cc/68C6-G9A3>; and for evidence of the effectiveness of summer youth employment see Judd B. Kessler, Sarah Tahamont, and Alexander Gelber, et al., *The Effects of Youth Employment on Crime: Evidence from New York City Lotteries* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28373/w28373.pdf.
- ⁵ Office of the New York City Mayor, "Mayor Adams, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Release 'A Blueprint for Community Safety'," press release July 31, 2023, <https://perma.cc/6FB3-SWJF>. FY 2024 January modified budget numbers from IBO, January 16, 2024. FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from OMB, *Budget Fiscal Year 2025, 2024*, 68E. For the mayor's celebration of decreasing gun violence, see Office of the Mayor, "Transcript: Mayor Adams Announces Citywide Crime Statistics for 2023," video transcript, January 3, 2024, <https://perma.cc/7WKF-B7LA>.
- ⁶ FY 2024 January modified budget numbers from IBO, January 16, 2024. FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from OMB, *The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025: Expense Revenue Contract*, 39E. To calculate percentage spent on staff, researchers added personal services, fringe benefits, and pension contributions, and then compared that sum to the total DOC budget. Uniform (6,177) and civilian (1,583) staffing figures from IBO and current as of January 22, 2024.
- ⁷ OMB, *The Financial Plan of the City of New York: Fiscal Years 2024-2028; Full-Time and Full-Time Equivalent Staffing Levels* (New York: OMB, 2024), 35, <https://perma.cc/PYK6-T5NK>.
- ⁸ New York City Comptroller, "New DOC Staffing Data: NYC Comptroller Updates Monthly Dashboard on Department of Correction Operations," December 20, 2023, <https://perma.cc/HH6X-LYK2>.
- ⁹ Zhen Zeng, *Jail Inmates in 2021 – Statistical Tables* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022), 16, <https://perma.cc/GT4F-LJYU>; and City of New York, "Closing Rikers: NYC Borough-Based Facilities," A Roadmap to Closing Rikers, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us/nyc-borough-based-jails>.
- ¹⁰ Graham Rayman, "NYC No Longer Requires College Credit for New Officers at Rikers Island and Other Jails, Correction Commissioner Decides," *NY Daily News*, April 21, 2023, <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/04/21/nyc-no-longer-requires-college-credit-for-new-officers-at-rikers-island-and-other-jails-correction-commissioner-decides>; and Graham Rayman, "NYC Correction Dept. Slashes Academy Training Time for Officers in Half," *NY Daily News*, April 17, 2023, <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/04/17/nyc-correction-dept-slashes-academy-training-time-for-officers-in-half>.
- ¹¹ Data on current headcount from IBO. For FY 2025 vacancies, see IBO, *Taking New York City Down a PEG: IBO Estimate of the Impact of The Mayor's Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) on New Yorkers* (New York: IBO, 2023) 6, <https://perma.cc/VKQ7-9FKN>.
- ¹² To calculate this number, researchers calculated a full employment cost multiplier (2.3) by comparing personal services spending to the sum of personal services, fringe benefits, and pension contributions. Researchers then multiplied the starting salary for a correction officer (\$47,857) as listed on the DOC website by 2.3 for the full employment cost to DOC per new correction officer. Multiplying that number (\$111,660) by the total number of vacancies (1,451) equals just over \$162 million, which is \$73.8 million higher than the \$88.2 million savings indicated in OMB, *Program to Eliminate the Gap*, 2024, 25.
- ¹³ OMB, *Program to Eliminate the Gap*, 25; and OMB, *Budget Fiscal Year 2025, 2024*, 39E.
- ¹⁴ These numbers are based on the FY 2025 summer youth employment budget of \$251.3 million as shared by IBO and the cost of supportive housing as reported in Coalition for Supportive Housing, *Advancing Supportive Housing Solutions to Reduce Homelessness for People Impacted by the Criminal Legal System* (New York: Coalition for Supportive Housing, 2022), <https://perma.cc/SP24-MUN2>; for research on the effectiveness of supportive housing see Coalition for Supportive Housing and Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, *Fuse 10-Year Follow-Up Report: Initial Findings* (New York: Coalition for Supportive Housing and Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2023), <https://perma.cc/U94V-D6WP>; for research on the effectiveness of summer youth employment, see Judd B. Kessler et al., *The Effects of Youth Employment on Crime*, 2021.
- ¹⁵ New York City Council Int. 1021-2023, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6179132&GUID=CE077354-6AB1-404E-A55C-6189B6299603&Options=&Search=>; and New York City Council Int. 1022-2023, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6179131&GUID=1A0BCFE1-49E1-4083-8371-BD61D5AE1166&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>.