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MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CITYWIDE ROLLOUT OF \$17.8 MILLION BAIL ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

New citywide program will supervise 3,000 defendants in the community, allowing them to remain in the community instead of jail while waiting for trial

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced the citywide expansion of supervised release, a program designed to cut unnecessary detention and reduce reliance on monetary bail. Judges citywide can now assign eligible, lower-risk defendants to a supervisory program that allows them to remain at home with their families and continue working while waiting for trial.

“No one should be in jail simply because they are unable to pay bail,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Starting today, we are taking steps to ensure that people who can be safely supervised in the community are able to stay there, regardless of the size of their bank account.”

“Supervised release is another step towards establishing a more rational approach to bail by moving us closer to a system that assesses the risk a person poses,” said **Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice**. “It is a common sense approach that balances public safety and liberty by expanding the options available to judges beyond simply detention or release with no conditions.”

The program was developed in close partnership with the Office of Court Administration, the five District Attorneys’ offices, the defense bar, and national experts to ensure that it is both evidence-driven and tailored to New York City’s unique criminal justice system. The new \$17.8 million initiative will be able to supervise 3,000 defendants safely each year, allowing these individuals to remain in the community rather than in jail while waiting for trial. Key features of this program include:

- **Risk-Driven Eligibility Screening.**
 - Providers are using a new validated risk assessment tool, created by the Criminal Justice Agency, to determine eligible candidates and set an appropriate level of supervision.
 - The target population is individuals who have been assessed to not pose a public safety risk and who otherwise would wait for trial in jail.

- Misdemeanants and non-violent felons are eligible to be assessed as posing a high risk of being arrested for a new felony while waiting for trial on the original charge will not be eligible for supervised release.
- **Individualized Supervision Levels.**
 - All defendants in supervised release programs receive phone calls or text message court reminders and supervised release providers conduct a monthly, individualized assessment to determine whether levels of supervision should be adjusted.
 - Supervision is tailored to different defendants' risk level and needs and is based on evidence-driven models.
- **Citywide Coverage from Qualified Providers.**
 - Providers were selected through a competitive bidding process that assessed ability to effectively supervise, ensure defendants return to court, and facilitate connection to available, voluntary services. The providers are:
 - The Criminal Justice Agency in Queens (560 individuals)
 - The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services in Manhattan (850 individuals)
 - The Center for Court Innovation in Brooklyn (882 individuals), the Bronx (630 individuals), and Staten Island (126 individuals)

Connection – Where Wanted – to Stabilizing Services.

- Once defendants are determined to be eligible for supervised release, providers conduct intake and needs assessments to determine whether defendants could benefit from referrals to stabilizing services such as vocational programs, housing opportunities and mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- Services are also available to ensure that all clients are signed up for all benefits they need, such as housing, Medicaid and food stamps. Referrals are voluntary.

Supervised release is a central feature of the City's larger effort to reform the bail system by avoiding unnecessary jail time and enhancing the criminal justice system's ability to protect public safety. Without supervised release, judges' choices are limited to setting bail – which could lead to unnecessary detention if an individual is unable to pay – or releasing a defendant to the community without a system in place to ensure the defendant returns to court without reoffending. This bail reform work is a key piece of a larger effort to reduce the City jail population safely.

Additional features of the City’s bail reform work – coordinated through [the Bail Lab](#) – include:

- Testing alternatives to money bail such as reminder systems;
- Working with judges to encourage use of alternatives to money bail;
- Eliminating procedural and physical obstacles to paying bail in order to make the bail process faster and easier;
- Supporting City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito’s creation of a citywide bail fund, and working with the Council to create eligibility criteria for this valuable program;
- Pursuing a change to state law so that New York is no longer one of only two states that prohibit judges from considering public safety risk when making bail determinations; and
- Crowdsourcing innovations by soliciting input from New Yorkers on how to solve problems with bail in New York City.

Citywide supervised release is funded through \$4 million from the City and \$13.8 million from asset forfeiture money pledged by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr.’s office. This model expands upon the successful pilots currently operating in Queens since 2009, Manhattan since 2013, and Brooklyn since 2013. In the Queens program, operated by the Criminal Justice Agency, 87 percent of clients successfully returned to court and completed the requirements of participating in supervised release.

“Evidence-based and science-driven risk assessment tools help us ensure that the right people are in jail and reduce unnecessary incarceration,” said **Cyrus R. Vance Jr., Manhattan District Attorney**. “I am proud to contribute my office’s asset forfeiture proceeds toward this important citywide program, which allows us to tailor supervised release to the needs and challenges of each defendant. I also want to renew my call for the State legislature to enable prosecutors, judges and defense attorneys to evaluate dangerousness and risk of re-offending when determining bail, which will help us make more informed decisions about those returning to our communities. We are committed to allowing those who do not pose a risk to their fellow New Yorkers to be released and safely supervised at home while awaiting trial.”

“Supervised release provides judges with a valuable option to release lower-risk individuals back to the community while their criminal cases are pending. This forward-thinking program will help ensure defendants’ return to court and keep the public safe while reducing the financial and human costs associated with unnecessary pretrial detention,” said **Chief Administrative Judge of the New York State Court System Lawrence K. Marks**.

"If we pursue bold reforms, we can transform policing and criminal justice to better fit our communities' needs and eliminate practices that perpetuate inequality," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "I hope the expansion of supervised release and other evidence-driven innovations in criminal justice will produce better outcomes for everyone involved."

“Our bail system is broken and in desperate need of reform to make it fair for everyone, regardless of economic status,” said **State Senator Michael Gianaris**, who is a leading advocate

for reforming the monetary bail system. "The expansion of a citywide supervised release program is a good step in the right direction."

"Implementing alternative bail programs, such as supervised release, will prevent poor New Yorkers from being held unnecessarily in jail while they await trial," said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "By allowing lower risk defendants to remain home and continue working, we are taking the right steps towards making our City's justice system more effective for all New Yorkers."

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio on his announcement of this landmark supervised release bail alternative program for individuals evaluated as not posing a threat in the community who would otherwise be behind bars simply because they couldn't make bail. It is a cornerstone of meaningful rehabilitation that we accelerate supportive reconnection to the community for those who were formerly incarcerated who have done their time. This puts them on the right path in their lives – and in the community, and it enhances the overall public safety," said **Assembly Member Luis Sepúlveda, Chair of the Subcommittee on Transitional Services**.

Assembly Member Lentol said, "Unfortunately, detention is often overused in our criminal justice system. Instead of employing pre-trial detention judiciously when it's believed that a person will return to court, it is often used to keep people in jail simply because they are poor and cannot afford bail. I am pleased to see the Mayor working to implement smart reforms of the bail system that will help to avoid unnecessary detention."

"Too often, life and future opportunities are lost because someone is sitting in a jail rather than their home waiting for their fair trial of justice. The longstanding damage it creates is evident in countless instances including our former constituent, Kalief Browder, who waited for three years until eventually taking his life. This change is a smart, effective and humane policy that will give people the truest chance for an opportunity for Justice. I commend Mayor de Blasio for taking this courageous step of providing equality for all, which will continue #BuildingABetterBronx," said **Assembly Member Michael Blake**.

"Supervised release recognizes that poor defendants accused of low-level crimes do not need to be held in jail awaiting trial just because they can't afford bail," said **Council Member Rory I. Lancman**. "It's the right direction for our justice system to be moving, and it's good to see this available now to defendants in every borough."

"This program is a real step forward in the ability of the Criminal Court to utilize available resources to minimize unnecessary pre-trial incarceration," said **Honorable George Grasso, Supervising Judge for Arraignments in New York City**. "This Supervised Release Program has great potential to enhance justice for individuals while making a positive impact on both public safety as well as the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System."

"The creation of this bail alternative program for New Yorkers is clearly a step in the right and just direction," said **Stan Germán, Executive Director of New York County Defender Services**.

“I support bail reform – including supervised release – for low level, non-violent offenders, because I don’t believe you should sit in jail for months just because you are too poor to afford bail,” said **Darcel D. Clark, Bronx District Attorney**. “This program provides accountability, monitoring and stabilizing resources for eligible defendants and will help make the criminal justice system more equitable.”

“The Center for Court Innovation is honored to partner with the Mayor's Office to expand supervised release in New York City,” said **Greg Berman, Director of the Center for Court Innovation**. “This is a potentially game-changing effort that could have far-reaching impacts, including reducing the use of jail and improving public trust in the justice system. Indeed, our work on supervised release already in Brooklyn has demonstrated that it is possible to help hundreds of New Yorkers meet their obligations to court without spending time on Rikers Island.”

“We applaud the Mayor's efforts and hope that judges start using the tools that have been given to them, such as alternative forms of bail and supervised release, to reduce the number of people awaiting trial in our city's jails,” said **Justine Olderman, Managing Director of the Bronx Defenders**.

“Even short periods of incarceration have an enormous impact on our clients’ lives, families and housing. Those who cannot afford cash bail should not have to endure such harsh consequences. Brooklyn Defender Services welcomes the Supervised Release Program to correct this imbalance,” said **Lisa Schreibersdorf, Executive Director of Brooklyn Defender Services**

Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society of New York said, “When a person is in jail on bail, their life is turned upside down. Even a single day in jail means the possible loss of housing and/or employment and the impositions of other devastating consequences. The expansion of supervised release recognizes this reality.”

Matthew W. Knecht, Managing Attorney of Criminal Defense Practice at the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem said, "New York City's Department of Correction houses a significant daily population, composed nearly entirely of people from poor, minority communities awaiting their day in Court. These people are incarcerated for no reason other than their inability to pay cash bail. Neighborhood Defender Service supports the City's Supervised Release program, which seeks to reduce the City's daily jail population by offering community supervision to people who would otherwise be incarcerated."

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