

**Preliminary Budget Hearings for FY 07  
Fire and Criminal Justice Services Committee**

March 15, 2006

**Testimony of New York City  
Alternative to Incarceration Programs**

Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services  
Center for Community Alternatives  
Center for Employment Opportunities  
Family Justice / La Bodega de la Familia  
Legal Action Center  
Osborne Association  
Women's Prison Association

Presented by Joel Copperman  
Chief Executive Officer  
CASES

My name is Joel Copperman. I am the CEO of the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services. CASES is part of a coalition of seven organizations that provide ATI services in all five boroughs. Those organizations are CASES, the Center for Community Alternatives, the Center for Employment Opportunities, Family Justice, Legal Action Center, the Osborne Association and the Women's Prison Association. I am here on behalf of that coalition and I thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee.

The Council has been supporting ATI programs since FY 98. The Council funding for ATIs has never been incorporated into the Mayor's budget and the Council restores it every year. Last year, the City Council provided almost \$5 million for our seven organizations. We thank you for supporting our programs and your support of this very important field. This year, we ask the City Council to continue to support our work and to restore our funding to pre-9/11 levels. After 9/11, Council funding to our seven programs was cut by 25% - \$1.6 million. With that cut, each of the organizations was forced to reduce the level of services that they were able to provide. In addition, over the four years since that cut, our programs, like all programs in New York City, have had to absorb increased expenses. We ask that you restore that funding this year.

On June 3, 1997 a report – *Curbing Crime, Cutting Costs* – was issued by the Council's Committee on Public Safety. Among their findings, the Report indicated that ATI programs:

- Are an extremely cost-effective means of administering sanctions;
- Produce cost-savings to the City and the State, both by diverting individuals from jail and prison and by helping to expedite the judicial process; and
- Contribute to increased public safety by placing defendants under an enhanced level of supervision.

Our programs continue to provide supervision and services to thousands of individuals coming through the justice systems while saving money for the City and State. Our programs serve court involved students, women, individuals with drug and substance abuse problems, and the mentally ill. We help kids get into school and stay there; we reconnect women with their families; we help our clients prepare for work, find jobs and

help them keep those jobs; we help the mentally ill off the streets, into services and permanent housing. We work in all of the courts across the five boroughs. We partner with employers, with schools, with other non-profits, with most City agencies including the Departments of Probation, Correction, Health and Mental Hygiene, Education, Youth and Community Development, Small Business Services, the Human Resources Administration and the Housing Authority. We work with thousands of individuals and families every year.

I'd like to give you one example of the work of the coalition by focusing on one of CASES programs. Six years ago, with the support of the Council and several foundation grants, CASES began the first ATI program in the City for felony offenders with serious and persistent mental illness. Our two-year program keeps defendants with mental illness from spending their lives cycling through jails, emergency rooms, the streets and City shelters because they do not have access to mental health care, treatment and housing. Our staff, which includes a psychiatrist, a registered nurse, clinical social workers and peer specialists provides recovery oriented treatment designed to meet our clients individual needs. The State Office of Mental Health licenses us and Medicaid provides much of our funding.

We are still in touch with the first two clients that came into the program and I am happy to report that they are living crime free productive lives in permanent housing. In fact, of the almost 200 clients (all of whom committed a felony before entering the program) who entered the program since its inception, only 8% have been rearrested on a felony while under our supervision. Through this program we have been able to keep hundreds of individuals off the streets, and out of our jails and prisons.

Once again thank you for your past support and we ask you to support our programs again this year.