

Alternatives to Incarceration

The negatives of incarceration outweigh the positives. Persons who are incarcerated while awaiting trial are more likely to be convicted, and receive harsher sentences, all things being equal. When people are locked up they lose jobs and homes. Families are broken up. Keeping people locked up while awaiting trial puts more pressure on public resources and hurts our local economy.

We should try to decrease the jail population if there are meaningful alternatives that other counties are exploring, including:

- Pre-trial assessments to ensure the release of those who cannot afford to pay bail.

- Community-based treatment options for individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues

- Re-entry services for former prisoners

- Dismantle barriers to employment, housing and social services for formerly incarcerated



*Tompkins County Residents
Fight Jail Expansion*

**For more information and to
get involved contact**

**BC Campaign for
Alternatives to Incarceration**
bingjustice@gmail.com

Andrew Pragacz
Phone: 651-747-6316

Brendan McQuade
Phone: 607-621-0815

**NO TO JAIL
EXPANSION!**



**Stop Jail Expansion
& Demand Answers!**

**Why is Incarceration
the Only Option?**

Jail Expansion?

Nationally and across the state, crime is in a twenty-year decline. After decades of growth, the prison population is finally declining. New York State has closed nine prisons in the last two years, saving the state more than \$100 million.

Yet at precisely this moment, Sheriff David Harder and Broome County Executive Debbie Preston are pushing a massive county jail expansion, levying a tax to the tune of \$5.77 million for more housing for 50 more inmates and an expanded medical unit at the Broome County Correctional Facility. County taxpayers will pay this exorbitant bill.

This expansion is ill timed and ill advised. The sheriff and county executive predict that this expansion will save \$400,000 per year. This means that 14 years will pass before we see “a return on investment.” If we come up with smarter and more socially just ways to deal with crime in our community we can save millions now. Which one is a better deal?

Who is in the Broome County Jail?

From 1996 to the present, the jail population grew from 375 people to about 500. The county’s population is decreasing and crime is in a twenty year decline. This is exactly the opposite of what anyone, experts and laypersons alike, would expect to see. So who is in the Broome County Jail?

- Of the 487 in jail, 368 or 74% are unsentenced, which means they are awaiting trial or convicted and awaiting sentencing.
- 23 minors being held, 18 of them are unsentenced.
- About 10% of convicted felons are for low level offenses like minor drug possession and DUI.
- On average, BC sends 9 persons to other facilities and takes in about 4 persons from other counties; this means county spends only \$150,000 to board people out despite their claims that it is \$400,000.

In short: there are too many persons in jail awaiting trial or serving expensive time for minor offenses.

Upstate Trends and Successes

The unsentenced population is increasing at a higher rate than the overall jail population. It is not a problem specific to Broome County. It’s an Upstate-wide trend: Tompkins, Cortland, Delaware, and others are forced to handle the increasing number of unsentenced persons held in county jails. Local officials also uniformly are proposing expansions to the problem.

Fortunately, concerned citizens are coming together to fight these expansion, forcing local officials to look for alternatives to incarceration. Recently in Tompkins County, while they did not successfully stop the jail expansion (it passed 3-2), the county commissioned a study to explore the reasons for the increasing jail population. Anti-expansion campaigns are also going forward in Cortland County.

We want a moratorium on adding fifty beds to the BC jail. Unlike the expansion of the medical unit, the bed expansion is not mandated by any state agency, it is a choice made by local officials. During that moratorium we demand a satisfactory answer to the increased jail population size and the unsentenced persons in particular.