

Build it and they will come—and it will cost us
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Bill Martin
wgmartin1@gmail.com

Four years ago many of us attended a meeting in this room to argue against spending \$5 million to expand the jail. We lost that argument.

Two years later the new jail opened at a cost of \$ 6 million to house 600 persons. But that was just the down payment: thirteen new correctional officers were immediately hired to staff the new facility. Subsequent additions to the District Attorney's office allowed the county to prosecute more misdemeanors, particularly by those who have health problems. Build it and they will come: the jail was filled, for a while.

It's been costly:

The Sheriff's correction budget alone has ballooned in four years from \$23.8 million to over \$29 million proposed for 2019.

Correctional Officer positions have risen from 169 to 194.

And all this, despite ever lower crime rates.

As result of these efforts and funding, Broome County now has the *highest* incarceration rate in the state—yes, in the state. Reflecting corresponding cuts in health and social services, we rank 55th in health care among the states' 62 counties.

This year's proposed budget follows this path: *it's a mass incarceration, mass policing budget.*

Others will, I'm sure talk to the social and justice costs of this project. In my limited time, I want to focus on the major justification offered by County for many of these costs in the next year: meeting state mandates for the new Raise the Age legislation. We need, the County Executive tells us, 15 new positions to deal with just a few 16 year and 17 year old youth. This includes it seems:

- 4 new corrections officers (despite youth no longer being held in the jail)
- 1 (or 2?) new district attorneys (we need to prosecute more youth?)
- 3 new probation officers (for whom, what numbers?)
- 1 more family court judge (are there that many cases?)
- More e-shackles for youth (and adults? At what price?)

It isn't clear from the submitted budget what these costs are, but they will surely be high and continue for many years. We've seen no justification. Surely, we should ask: in an era of falling youth crime rates, do we really need this?

And: who will pay? The County Executive assures us Albany will. Really? Have plans for these positions and costs been submitted to the State? Have they been approved by the State, as they must be, before any financial reimbursement is approved? Can we see them? Or will we in Broome County end up paying?

Is even the state money there? The Governor put \$100 million in the state budget to pay costs by all the state's counties. New York City's costs are alone estimated at \$300 million--with the rest of the state seeking, like Broome, to expand their incarceration, policing, courts, and district attorney budgets on the back of incarcerating more youth. Will we and our youth get stuck with the bill?

Corrections Expenditures 2004-Proposed 2019
\$ Millions

