



Government of Bermuda

Ministry of Justice

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

Senator, Honourable Kim Wilkerson, JP

THE OPENING OF ASTOR HOUSE: A SYMBOL OF REINTEGRATION AND HOPE

Wednesday, 1st July 2026

Madam President,

Today, I rise to inform this Honourable Senate of the June 25, 2026 opening of Astor House—a powerful symbol of reintegration, renewal, and hope for individuals returning to our community after incarceration.

Madam President, Astor House is a newly renovated nine (9) bed residence that will provide transitional housing and support for individuals leaving prison as they reintegrate into the community.

Madam President,

It has been observed:

"When we provide individuals with three essential supports—a safe place to live, guidance to rebuild their lives, and opportunities to contribute positively to society—we strengthen not only the individual, but also families, neighbourhoods, and the wider Bermuda community."

This sentiment reflects the collaborative spirit that has brought Astor House to fruition and highlights the belief that rehabilitation and public safety are complementary goals.

Madam President

While the opening of Astor House on June 25, 2026, marks a significant milestone, it is only the beginning.

Madam President

Astor House stands as more than a building of nine beds and five rooms. It represents a commitment to safer communities, stronger families, and the belief that every person who is willing to accept responsibility and embrace positive change deserves the opportunity to succeed.

Madam President

Astor House represents a targeted and strategic investment in public safety and successful reintegration. The Government, through the Ministry of Youth, Social Development initially provided **\$317,275** to support the renovation of the site. This initiative is a Government cross ministry collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Social Development and Seniors committing and contributing \$150,000, the Ministry of Justice committing \$100,000 and the Ministry of National Security committing \$150,000 for a total of **\$400,000 in this fiscal year**. This funding is to ensure that a successful global standard of service delivery is enshrined in the Astor House programming. You see **Madam President**, Astor House is intended to provide not just accommodation, but structured support services and defined

supervision, that is necessary for individuals to rebuild and thrive as members of society.

Madam President,

This investment is grounded in evidence. International research demonstrates that individuals leaving correctional institutions without stable housing, supervision, employment opportunities, or support services are substantially more likely to reoffend. In some jurisdictions, up to two-thirds of formerly incarcerated individuals may be rearrested within three years when these supports are absent. Conversely, transitional housing programmes that combine accommodation, supervision, employment support, and rehabilitation services have been shown to improve reintegration outcomes and reduce recidivism.

Madam President,

Importantly, Astor House builds upon this premise by addressing one of the most significant barriers to successful reintegration—access to stable and supportive housing. Residents of Astor House will be on licence and supervised by a dedicated Court Services Parole Officer, while also receiving coordinated support from a HOME Case Manager and the House Parent.

That combination of housing, supervision, case management and daily support is what makes this programme distinct.

Madam President

Every successful reintegration not only improves the life chances of the individual concerned but also strengthens families, reduces demands on public services,

enhances community wellbeing, and contributes to safer neighbourhoods across Bermuda. Astor House is therefore both a social investment and a public safety investment.

Madam President

This programme has been brought forward through the leadership of the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors and the Attorney-General's Office, working with the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Justice, and HOME.

It is also a direct product of the partnership between my Ministry and the charity HOME, and I want that partnership to be clearly acknowledged today. I want to acknowledge the hard work of Minister, the Honourable Tinee Furbert, JP MP and her senior team, and Ms. Denise Carey, the CEO of HOME. The Government and its partners view Astor House as a foundation upon which a broader continuum of reintegration services can be built. The programme will be closely monitored to assess outcomes, identify opportunities for improvement, and ensure that services remain responsive to the needs of residents and the wider community.

Madam President

The governance framework established through the partnership of Government agencies and community organizations will support this ongoing evaluation and accountability process.

Madam President

Looking ahead, our focus will be on:

- Strengthening sustainable employment pathways and workforce participation opportunities for residents.
- Enhancing access to health, behavioural health, and social support services through coordinated case management.
- Monitoring and evaluating programme outcomes related to housing stability, successful reintegration, and reduced reoffending

We are not simply celebrating the opening of a facility, but the opening of new possibilities. We are investing in a programme that seeks to break cycles of instability, reduce the likelihood of reoffending, and improve outcomes for individuals, families, and communities across Bermuda.

Therefore, Madam President Let Astor House stand as a symbol of hope, responsibility, accountability, renewal...second chances. I therefore call upon all stakeholders—government agencies, community partners, faith-based organizations, employers, and residents—to join us in supporting this effort. Continued support and financial contributions from public and private sector partners will be instrumental in building upon the progress already achieved and ensure the long-term success of this initiative.

Madam President,

Successful reintegration is not the responsibility of any one agency or organization; it is a shared responsibility that requires partnership, compassion, accountability, and community engagement.

As a country, **Madam President** we all have a role to play in supporting successful reintegration. Government can provide leadership and resources. Community

organizations can provide guidance and support. Employers can open doors to meaningful employment. Families can encourage positive change. And our communities can help create pathways toward productive citizenship.

Madam President let it stand as a testament to what can be achieved when we invest in the people of Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam President.