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To the Editor:

The economic and human costs of incarceration highlighted in "The Growing Inmate Population" (editorial, Aug. 1) are magnified for women, the fastest-growing segment of the criminal justice system.

The majority of incarcerated women are mothers. The increase in female incarceration has significant consequences for children, families and neighborhoods.

In New York State, approximately 50 percent of women in prison are incarcerated for drug-related offenses; 69 percent for nonviolent offenses. By devoting more resources to community corrections with treatment, job-training and family preservation services -- which are far more cost-effective than arrest and imprisonment -- we can begin to reverse this trend and its devastating effects on children, families and communities.

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New York, Aug. 2, 2003

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