

\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*

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# Dromm, RAPP Campaign Hail Passage of CARE Act



*Nurridin Khabir speaking at RAPP's press conference at City Hall in support of The CARE—Compassion & Assistance for Reentering Elders—Act, before a public hearing on the bill in September 2017.*

*The Compassion and Assistance for Reentering Elders or CARE Act establishes a task force on issues facing older adults reentering society post-incarceration.*

**New York, NY** - Today, NYC Council Member Daniel Dromm and the Release Aging People in Prison/RAPP Campaign hailed the Council's passage of Intro 1616, the Compassion and Assistance for Reentering Elders or CARE Act.

The CARE Act establishes an interagency task force to examine the needs of older adults returning from incarceration.

The task force will consist of 12 members as follows:

- Eight members will be appointed by the mayor and will be chosen from individuals representing relevant city agencies, provider organizations, advocacy groups and impacted communities. **At least three members must be formerly incarcerated individuals.**
- Four members will be appointed by the NYC Council Speaker and will be chosen from individuals representing provider organizations, advocacy groups, impacted communities, and academics with expertise in post-incarceration reentry for older adults.
- The legislation will also permit the city to invite the state to designate a representative to be a member of the task force.

The task force will study and report on the root causes of incarceration for older adults and will issue proposals on increasing social services for those reentering society. The task force will also issue a proposal on how the city and state can reduce the rates of incarceration and recidivism for older adults in New York.

“The CARE Act means justice for older adults reentering society post-incarceration,” said **NYC Council Member Daniel Dromm (D-Jackson Heights, Elmhurst)**. “An increasing number of older adults are facing a destitute future. These individuals, many of whom have spent significant periods away from the rest of society, must deal with a myriad of issues associated with aging simultaneously and the challenges of reentry. Throughout the city, families and communities must also deal with the increasing number of older adults who are coming from prisons and jails. We have a moral obligation to provide re-entering elders with the services they need to rejoin society. The panel of experts and leaders, including formerly incarcerated people will see that the city does just that. I thank the RAPP Campaign for their tireless advocacy, both of this bill and the community they serve so well.”

“For far too long our elders have been permanently punished,” said **Mujahid Farid, Lead Organizer of the Release Aging People in Prison/RAPP Campaign**. “From long minimum sentences, to frequent parole denials and inadequate supports upon release, the punishment of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated older people is often endless. The passage of the CARE Act is a critical step towards releasing and better supporting currently and formerly incarcerated older people and ending this permanent punishment. We thank Council Member Dromm for his leadership on this initiative and for valuing the leadership and expertise of formerly incarcerated people who with this bill will continue to shape the direction of this task force and initiative moving forward.”

“By passing the CARE Act, NYC Council Members take a critical step forward in recognizing the needs of older men and women coming home from prison,” said **Tanya Krupat, Director of the Osborne Association's Center for Justice Across Generations**. “Osborne's Elder Reentry Initiative—a program that prepares individuals

to come home and supports them in the community after release—reminds us that while older adults have unique needs, they also bring wisdom, experience, and very often, a passion for giving back that can benefit our communities and younger generations. We applaud Council Member Daniel Dromm and the NYC Council for working to ensure that NYC effectively responds to older adults returning from incarceration. And we thank RAPP for their leadership in this. Reentry is challenging for anyone, but older people face unique challenges and barriers exacerbated by aging, long-term incarceration and separation from their communities. Elders are returning home to a city that has transformed in their absence, and the CARE Act positions NYC to develop practical and effective solutions that other cities across the country—also facing this challenge—can look to as models. We look forward to working with NYC agencies, other community providers, and formerly incarcerated leaders to develop solutions that strengthen us as a city.”

**BACKGROUND:** With an unprecedented number of currently incarcerated older people in New York State prisons (more than 10,000 people aged 50 and older) and state and federal prisons across the country, strong community pressure from the Release Aging People in Prison/RAPP Campaign and others is resulting in changes to the New York State Parole Board and an increase in the number of elders released from prison in New York. However, both the city and state currently do little to support older people once they are released. Older people returning home face particular barriers in seeking employment, community resources, health care, reconnecting with family, and especially housing. In 2016, 58 percent of older people (1,699 people) were homeless upon release from a New York State prison and nearly 1,200 went directly to a homeless shelter. Such unstable housing placements offer little to no age-appropriate, safe, and secure support and care for recently released older people with unique difficulties and needs. Therefore, for many elders leaving prison, the human right to sufficient, sustainable and appropriate housing and community resources remains unmet.

The legislation will become law once signed by Mayor Bill de Blasio and will take effect immediately.

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