



AGING AND ELDERLY PEOPLE IN NEW YORK STATE PRISONS

- More than **10,000 people** in NYS prisons—**20% of the prison population**—are aged **50 or older**. The vast majority are **Black and Latinx people**.
- It costs New York between **\$120,000 and \$240,000 annually** to incarcerate one older **person** (compared to an average of \$60,000 for all people in NYS prisons).
- While the prison population in NYS fell by 27% between 2000 and 2016, **the percentage of incarcerated older people more than doubled from 4,706 to 10,337 people**.
- Older people, especially those who have been convicted of the most serious crimes, have the **lowest recidivism rates** of any age cohort, **posing little, if any risk to public safety**.
- NYS has the second highest number of people serving a parole-eligible life sentence in the country—roughly 9,500 people.

PAROLE RELEASE IN NEW YORK STATE

- The New York State Board of Parole is the administrative body responsible for making parole release determinations for all parole-eligible people. While the statute permits 19 Commissioners, there are currently only 13 active Commissioners.
- The Board interviews **more than 11,000 people** every year—**roughly 60 hearings per day**—via **videoconferences** that last an average of 15 minutes.
- The Board **denies release to nearly 75% of all parole-eligible people**. Many have served additional decades in prison due to the punitive, retributive and racist culture of the Board.
- For those serving long sentences, the Board repeatedly **denies parole based on one, unchangeable factor—the nature of a person’s crime**—and not a person’s age, many accomplishments in prison, personal transformation or network of support.
- **Parole is highly political**. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Candidates contribute to the campaigns of elected officials to secure their appointments, and once appointed, bend to the political pressure of special interest groups.

ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

1. **Presumptive Release (S8346/A7546)**: Create a presumption of release that requires the Board to parole all individuals at their first hearing unless there is a current unreasonable public safety risk.
2. **Elder Parole (S.8581/A6354A)**: Aging people who are not yet eligible for parole, but have served decades in prison should be given a “second look” and granted parole consideration, regardless of their original sentence. Our elder parole initiative would give parole consideration to all people aged 55 or older who have served 15 years or more in prison.
3. **A Fair & Fully Staffed Parole Board**: The Parole Board should be fully staffed by 19 Commissioners who are social workers, psychologists, nurses, and other professionals that embrace notions of mercy, redemption and rehabilitation.

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