

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

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**IN FINAL WEEK OF NY LEGISLATIVE  
SESSION, ADVOCATES AND NYS LAWMAKERS  
ANNOUNCE END-OF-SESSION SLEEP-OUT FOR  
PAROLE JUSTICE**

*PARTICIPANTS WILL CAMP-OUT BESIDE THE NYS  
CAPITOL AND ERECTED A PRISON GRAVEYARD  
REPRESENTING DEATHS BEHIND BARS IN PUSH  
FOR THE FAIR & TIMELY PAROLE AND ELDER  
PAROLE BILLS*

**(Albany, NY)** -- Today, in the final week of New York State's legislative session, advocates and lawmakers held a press conference announcing a sleep-out beside the NYS Capitol Building to demand passage of the Fair & Timely Parole and Elder Parole bills. Advocates erected a prison graveyard with the names of incarcerated people who have died behind bars, representing others who will die without parole justice.

**Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign**, said: "Behind me are graves. They are symbolic of a history and every one of them has a story. The one I'm holding is a friend of mine. He was 75 years old. Had been in prison 40 years and died behind bars. These people represent the thousands who

have died by a system that kills. DOCCS promotes genocide against incarcerated people. We are asking for these moderate bills to be passed this year.”

“It is time to stop keeping people in prison. The way the Parole Board works is abusive. As a legislator, it is my job to fix this. To allow people to die in prison is the death penalty. Let’s outlaw this too. We need to give back to the people we have abused and the only way we can do that is through the passage of Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole bills,” said **Assembly Member Emily Gallagher**.

“People behind bars become mentors but they don’t have the chance to be in their communities. It’s a racist system, it’s broken and we cannot continue to stand for it. We need to pass the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills this session to deliver parole justice now,” **Assembly Member Demond Meeks**.

“These tombstones are only a small number of the people who have been murdered behind bars. I’m not just speaking out for the ones who have been incarcerated for decades but for the people who time has forgotten about. You lock them up and throw away the key. It’s a paradigm of perpetual punishment. You’re killing our future, our generations. Everyone is worthy of redemption. We must pass the Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole bills now,” said **Donna Robinson, directly impacted advocate and community leader with the People’s Campaign for Parole Justice**.

“We need to free our elders today. What the prison industrial complex has been is a labor mill for Black and Brown bodies. We overly punish folks and we must end the racist Parole Board that never wants us free. They want us locked up because it makes them money. I’m calling on our leadership to allow these bills to pass so we can free our elders now,” said **Assembly Member Khaleel Anderson**.

“Incarcerated New Yorkers are still New Yorkers. We still represent them. They are still our neighbors. When we fight for these bills we are fighting for those who our society has left

behind. We are bringing their voices through these walls and into these chambers. In these 72 hours we will pass the Fair and Timely and Elder Parole bills. We will not make false choices between one necessary set of changes against another. We will pass them together,” **said Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani.**

“These are fiscally conservative, life saving approaches. And they are morally right. Think about the families, the lives of people who could improve our society if we let them go. In the next three days, we will change the conversation to one of justice and equity,” said **Assembly Member Harvey Epstein.**

“At 21 years old I came home from prison. Before I left, a lady named Linda made me a birthday cake. It’s almost 20 years later and she is still there. We are here today to say no more death behind bars. People deserve a fighting chance,” said **Serena Liguori, Executive Director with New Hour LI.**

“I served 22 years and if it wasn’t for the Parole Preparation Project I might still be inside in these greens. I wore these today to represent the people still inside. I’m so proud that over 300 organizations in New York State stand in unison for the passage of the Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole bills which would bring my incarcerated friends home,” said **Anthony Dixon, Parole Preparation Project.**

"I still think about the women and older adults I've met in prisons and jails. The carceral system has harmed so many of our communities. We have no more time to waste, there have been too many lives lost. Let’s get Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole passed now," said **Assembly Member Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas**

### **BACKGROUND:**

- There is a crisis of aging and dying for New Yorkers in prison and their families because of decades of extreme sentencing and blanket denials of parole release by a racially biased Parole Board. Without reforms to the Parole Board and parole release process in New York State, New Yorkers, especially those who are Black and brown, will continue to

- age without dignity, get sick, and die in prison regardless of their transformation and potential benefits to outside communities.
- 55% of the roughly 30,000 people currently incarcerated in New York State prisons are Black people, despite the fact that only 18% of the overall population in the state is Black. 77% are People of Color.
  - According to a [Times Union analysis](#) of the nearly 19,000 parole board decisions over the last two years, racial bias infects parole release determinations and disparities have only widened in recent years. The data, which spans October 2018 through October 2020, shows the Parole Board granted parole release to 41% of white people, compared to 34% of Black people and 33% of Latinx people.
  - Nearly 1-in-4 (24%) people in New York State prisons are serving life or virtual life sentences.
  - 4,704 people in prison are defined by NYS DOCCS as older adults, meaning they are 55 or older.
  - Without reforms to expand access to parole release and make the process more fair in New York State, New Yorkers, especially those who are Black and Latinx, will continue to age without dignity, get sick, and die in prison regardless of their transformation and potential benefits to the outside community.
  - The People's Campaign for Parole Justice is calling on lawmakers in Albany to pass two bills that, together, will ensure that people in prison have meaningful opportunities for individualized consideration for parole release based on who they are today, what they have done to change, and whether they pose a risk if released:
  - [Elder Parole \(S.15A/A.3475A\)](#) would allow the State Board of Parole to conduct a case-by-case evaluation for potential parole release to incarcerated people aged 55 and older who have already served 15 or more years, including some of the state's oldest and sickest incarcerated people.

- [Fair and Timely Parole \(S.1415A/A.4231A\)](#) would provide more meaningful parole reviews for incarcerated people who are already parole eligible, evaluating them based on who they are today and whether they pose a risk.
- The Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills are supported by more than 300 organizations across New York State, including some of the largest crime victims and survivor advocacy groups due to [the connections between parole justice and justice for victims and survivors of crime](#): The New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Crime Victims Treatment Center, The Working Families Party, 1199 SEIU, CWA District 1, VOCAL-NY, Citizen Action, New Hour for Women and Children—LI, LiveOn NY, JASA, the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, NY Communities for Change, Center for Community Alternatives, Osborne Association, NYCLU, [FWD.us](#), the #HALTsolitary Campaign, Legal Aid Society, Center for Justice at Columbia, and NYU Law's Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law.

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