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**\*\*\*STATEMENT\*\*\***

**Advocates Applaud Heastie for Prioritizing Parole Reform in End-of-Session Push, Urge Legislature to Bring Hope & Healing to Families Torn Apart by Mass Incarceration**

*Grassroots Campaign Backed by 300+ Organizations Urges Passage of Fair & Timely Parole and Elder Parole Bills to Create Fair Opportunities for Release for Incarcerated People*

(New York) — Today, in [an interview with Susan Arbetter on Capitol Tonight](#), Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie identified parole reform as an agenda item for the remainder of session. In response, Jose Saldana, a leader with the People's Campaign for Parole Justice issued the following statement:

“We applaud Speaker Heastie for prioritizing parole reform before the legislative session comes to a close. New York State lawmakers must pass the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills this legislative session to create meaningful pathways for parole release that center redemption, healing, and public safety over permanent punishment and family separation. These two bills would address the aging crisis in New York's prison system, reduce racial bias in parole release decisions, reunite families, and free up to \$522 million annually for sorely needed resources that actually make us safe, like housing, healthcare, education and cure violence programs. Our families, communities, and over 300 organizations across the state are counting on Speaker Heastie and the rest of the Legislature to do what's right.”

**Background:** There is a crisis of aging and dying for people in prison and their families due to decades of extreme sentencing and blanket denials of parole release by a racially-biased Parole Board. Advocates are pushing reforms to create fair opportunities for release consideration.

- 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 percent of white people, compared to 34 percent of Black people and 33 percent 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 an 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.
- 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, LiveOn NY, JASA, the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, NY Communities for Change, Center for Community Alternatives, Osborne Association, NYCLU, [FWD.us](http://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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