

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Contacts: Jared Chausow, jchausow@gmail.com, 650-814-0565
TeAna Taylor, taylor-teana@gmail.com, 518-847-5497

**600 NEW YORKERS & LAWMAKERS FROM ACROSS STATE JOIN
MARCH FOR PAROLE JUSTICE AS LEGISLATIVE SESSION NEARS
CLOSE**

*BUSLOADS OF PEOPLE FROM WESTERN NEW YORK, LONG ISLAND,
CAPITOL REGION, WESTCHESTER AND NYC MARCH FROM GOV.
CUOMO'S NYC OFFICE TO LEGISLATIVE LEADERS' DOWNTOWN OFFICES
TO DEMAND PASSAGE OF THE ELDER PAROLE AND FAIR & TIMELY
PAROLE BILLS*

(New York, NY) -- Today, 600 New Yorkers from across New York State, joined by Assembly Members Kenny Burgos, Harvey Epstein, and Zohran Mamdani, marched from Governor Andrew Cuomo's NYC office to the Lower Manhattan offices of Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to demand passage of the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills. The crisis of aging and death behind bars has exploded under Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration, with Cuomo's failure to grant clemency to incarcerated people who are old and sick and rehabilitated – and the Legislature can end this crisis by passing the bills. The march took place as the end of the 2021 legislative session nears and both bills have been [widely identified](#) as [topline agenda items](#) in [these final days](#).

“We ain't going nowhere until these bills are passed and signed,” said **RAPP Leader Theresa Grady**, who's husband is severely ill and still incarcerated at age 62. He won't be eligible for parole until and unless he turns 92.

“They're going to tell us we have to wait to pass these bills. But we're talking about parole justice now! How many people have to die this year to pass these bills? We can't wait,” said **Assembly Member Harvey Epstein**.

“When we make a mistake we expect a chance to explain. But we don't give that to our elders. We don't give them a fair Parole Board. We are simply asking for a second chance. As long as your voices are loud on these streets, our voices will be loud in those chambers. You give us courage and let us know that there is no negotiation with this legislation,” said **Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani**.

“My husband was incarcerated and I too bear the burden of that. When he reformed himself and asked for medical parole, he was denied. He did all the programs required of him and they denied him again. Finally he made parole. The day he was supposed to come out, they dragged his body out. He was dead. They sent me what remained on him. These are the clothes he was wearing,” said **RAPP Leader Roslyn, holding her husband's prison clothes**.

“For every single woman I have left behind, for all of us who have been behind bars, we deserve freedom, we deserve a second chance. There are too many elderly people dying without their

families. We need to pass these bills this session,” said **Serena Liguori, Executive Director of New Hour for Women and Children LI.**

“My father has been incarcerated since I was 10. He has dedicated his life to being the best father he can be and to reducing harm in his community. He deserves a chance at release. I got a phone call from him this morning and I miss him so much. I just want him to have a chance to come home,” said **TeAna Taylor of the People’s Campaign for Parole Justice**, who’s father will be eligible for parole in a few years.

“My son was arrested at 17 years old. All I’ve wanted is that 17 year old kid back. He is up for parole next year. And I’m here to fight to get Fair and Timely Parole done so my son can be released based on who he is now,” said **April of Long Island.**

BACKGROUND:

- There is a growing 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 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—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.

###