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## **NAACP New York State Conference Announces Support for the Passage of Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole Bills**

*Statewide Conference Joins Statewide Grassroots Movement  
Calling on New York Lawmakers to Pass Parole Reform  
Legislation This Session to Address Systemic Racism*

(New York) -- Today, the NAACP New York State Conference of Branches, led by President Hazel Dukes, released official memos of support for the Elder Parole ([here](#)) and Fair & Timely Parole ([here](#)) bills which, together, provide people in prison with meaningful pathways to parole release consideration based on who they are today and what they have done to change. With parole denial rates significantly higher for Black and Latinx people in New York, and a criminal punishment system that disproportionately denies the humanity and proof of rehabilitation and redemption of people of color, the NAACP's statewide chapter joins a grassroots movement demanding urgent change. **Welcoming this announcement, NAACP New York State Conference President Dr. Hazel Dukes and Vincent Southerland, Executive Director of NYU's Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law, released the following statements:**

**NAACP New York State Conference President Dr. Hazel Dukes** said: "Our country's legacy of racial discrimination carries on in New York State's parole system, where Black and brown people are so often denied the possibility of redemption afforded to white people. As one of the longest-serving racial justice organizations, we call on lawmakers to pass the Fair & Timely Parole and Elder Parole bills this session to chart a course toward equality in New York."

**Vincent Southerland, Executive Director of NYU's Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law**, said: "We are thrilled to be joined by the statewide chapter of the NAACP in this campaign for racial justice. New Yorkers agree that our parole system needs reform. On top of the racial inequity at every other stage of our state's criminal system, we continue to see stark disparities in parole denial rates, with Black and Latino people released at rates far below their white counterparts. Because of extreme sentences, many of our elders – our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents – will never even be eligible for release consideration, no matter how much they've transformed and what lessons and mentorship they stand to offer our families and communities. It's a structural problem that requires a structural solution. The Fair and Timely Parole and Elder Parole bills are urgent and reasonable measures to address the problem head-on by bringing fairness to the parole hearing process and enshrining into law the possibility of

redemption instead of permanent punishment. Now, lawmakers must act before the end of session, or more of our loved ones will unjustly perish behind bars.”

***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.
- 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](#), 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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