

*****PRESS RELEASE*****
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**DR. HAZEL DUKES OF THE NAACP JOINS NYU LAW CENTER ON
RACE, INEQUALITY & THE LAW RELEASE REPORT ON RACIAL
DISPARITIES IN PAROLE DECISIONS AT VIRTUAL PRESS
CONFERENCE**

*SPEAKERS RELEASED NEW DATA HIGHLIGHTING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN
NEW YORK'S PAROLE SYSTEM AND CALLED ON ALBANY LAWMAKERS TO
PASS THE ELDER PAROLE & FAIR & TIMELY PAROLE BILLS IN FINAL
DAYS OF LEGISLATIVE SESSION*

(New York) -- Today, **Dr. Hazel Dukes, President of the New York Chapter of the NAACP, NYU Law Center on Race, Inequality and the Law, and parole reform advocates** hosted a virtual press conference to release a report with new data on the deep racial disparities in New York State's parole release system, and called on NY lawmakers to pass the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills in the final days of the legislative session. See [here the report](#) by NYU Law's Center for Race, Inequality and the Law, and the Parole Preparation Project. Key findings of the report include:

- Black and Latino applicants are denied parole release at a higher rate than their white counterparts and are imprisoned beyond their minimum sentence for longer than white applicants.
- 33% of people of color were granted parole at their first parole release appearance, compared to 43% of white first-time applicants.
- From January 2018 and January 2020, 46% of white people seeking parole were granted release, compared to only 39% of people of color.

“The data from this report confirms what many know: The Parole Board treats white people better than Black people. That was true in 2016, 2018, 2019, and it's still true today. Between January 2018 and January 2020, 46% of white people compared to 39% people of color were granted parole release. New York State has a serious issue with racial injustice, especially when it comes to parole. We hear a lot of politicians say Black Lives Matter. Well, they should put those words into practice. There are two bills that address the issues in this report: the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills. Legislators need to pass them now,” said **Vincent Southerland, Executive Director of the NYU Center for Race, Inequality & the Law and a co-author of the report.**

Dr. Hazel Dukes, President of the NAACP New York State Conference of Chapters, said “We are strong supporters of these criminal justice reforms. We have told Speaker Carl Heastie and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. I believe we have a good chance to pass these bills. They need to get this done before they leave tomorrow.”

“We're here in a moment of reckoning. Today, we're hearing from the experts on a damning new report co-written by NYU's Center for Racial, Inequality & the Law and the Parole Preparation Project, *The Problem With Parole: New York State's Failing System of Release*, which

documents clear racial bias in parole release decisions in New York. Tomorrow, the New York State Legislature is slated to wrap up its 2021 session. The question remains, will lawmakers take action to address this crisis? Will they pass the Fair & Timely Parole and Elder Parole bills to ensure that people have meaningful pathways to consideration for release from prison based on who they are today and what they've done to change – and not on the color of their skin? Or will they play spectators as Black and brown people are disproportionately held behind bars years and decades past when they're ready to come home? Will they play spectators as Black and brown families are separated for years and decades longer than their white counterparts? This is personal for me. My family is one of those Black families. I was ten when my father went to prison. He is a completely and totally changed man," said **TeAna Taylor, Policy and Communications Associate for the People's Campaign for Parole Justice.**

Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, said: "I've seen the actual impact of the report just published today. When I was appearing before the Parole Board we knew that they would deny release to us as Black and Latinx people more than our white counterparts. Our legislators have a historic opportunity to pass groundbreaking legislation to address the injustice of the Parole Board. They must pass the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills this session."

BACKGROUND:

- Dr. Hazel Dukes and the NAACP New York State Conference of Branches [announced their support](#) for the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills, joining a broad coalition from members of Congress like [Rep. Jamaal Bowman](#), [Rep. Adriano Espaillat](#), [Rep. Jerry Nadler](#), and, big unions like 1199 SEIU, political parties like Working Families Party, and celebrities such as [Chelsea Clinton](#).
- 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.
- 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.

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