



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

***ADVOCATES' STATEMENT ON FIRST DAY OF  
2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION & GOV. HOCHUL'S  
STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS***

**NEW YORK** -- Today, Governor Kathy Hochul delivered her first State of the State address and the Legislature began its 2022 session. The Governor's address includes one of the platform priorities of the People's Campaign for Parole Justice, namely fully staffing the Parole Board. **In response, Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) Campaign, released the following statement:**

“We are heartened by Governor Kathy Hochul’s commitment to fully staff the Parole Board and ensure that this work is Commissioners’ sole professional responsibility. We believe this is an initial step in the right direction. Crucially, new Commissioners

must, themselves, be committed to value human transformation and redemption if they are to carry out their responsibilities effectively and fairly. We call on Gov. Hochul to nominate to the Parole Board those who can fulfill this commitment.

Today, New York State incarcerates more than two times the number of people who were in prison before the era of mass incarceration and the devastation could not be more clear. More people have died in state prisons in the last decade than the total number of people executed during the 364 years of capital punishment in New York. The vast majority were Black and Latinx people. With the bodies of our cherished loved ones piling up behind bars, especially as COVID explodes again, lawmakers must take action to address this crisis and its impact on families and communities — and to end this new death penalty. The Legislature must move swiftly to advance the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills and deliver them to Governor Hochul’s desk. This is the pathway toward ending the epidemic of premature deaths and family separation created by the racist policies of mass incarceration.”

## **BACKGROUND:**

- New York’s prison system currently incarcerates more than two times more people than at the beginning of New York’s mass incarceration era, in 1970 (approximately 31,000 people vs. 12,059 people).
- The crisis of mass incarceration is at a boiling point, with [people dying in New York’s prisons once every three days](#) on average.
- A [recent report](#) by the Columbia University Center for Justice found more people have died in our state’s prisons in just the last 10 years than the total number of people executed during the more than 350 years in which New York applied the death penalty, with deaths of people over 55, in particular, skyrocketing.

- The average age of death behind bars was only 58 before COVID because of state policy failures.
- 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 older people who have already served 15 or more years, including some of the state's oldest and sickest incarcerated people.

- [Fair and Timely Parole \(S.7514/A.4231A\)](#) 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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