

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

April 27, 2021

Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
rhaskins@legal-aid.org
(929) 441-2384

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

New York State Defenders, Advocates Reaffirm Call on Albany to Enact Needed and Comprehensive Parole Reforms this Session

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and New York County Defender Services, New York State Defenders Association, Chief Defenders Association of New York, New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Legal Aid Society of Nassau County, Allegany/Cattaraugus Legal Services, Inc., Genesee County Public Defender, Erie County Bar Association’s Aid To Indigent Prisoners Society, Inc., Monroe County Public Defender, Office of the Appellate Defender, and Greene County Public Defender, in a [recently issued letter](#) to New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrew Stewart-Cousins and New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, [called](#) on Albany to pass desperately needed comprehensive parole reforms this session specifically Fair and Timely Parole (A4231/S1415), Elder Parole (A3475/S15A), and Less Is More (A5576/S1144).

The Defenders stated - “New York State’s parole laws have driven a humanitarian crisis. Thousands of incarcerated New Yorkers, who pose no risk to public safety, have been denied release and an opportunity to reunite with their families.

And thousands of New Yorkers who have been released from prison, and begun the work of reintegrating into their communities, have been needlessly returned to jail for technical violations of parole like missing an office report, testing positive for marijuana, or breaking curfew. Albany must right these injustices now, and we are calling on Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Heastie to immediately pass Fair and Timely Parole (A4231/S1415), Elder Parole (A3475/S15A), and Less Is More (A5576/S1144).”

Fair and Timely Parole (A4231/S1415)

Fair and Timely Parole would amend the standards used by the Board of Parole to make release determinations based on a person’s rehabilitation and current public safety risk. The bill would also curtail the Board’s discretion to make racially discriminatory parole decisions, a practice that the Board has perpetuated for decades.

Elder Parole (A3475/S15A)

Elder Parole would amend the Executive Law to ensure that all people aged 55 or older who have served at least 15 years of their sentence are granted a parole hearing, regardless of their original sentence. Elder Parole would not guarantee a person’s release, but it would require the Board to conduct a meaningful evaluation of a person’s

rehabilitation in prison, an evaluation that is not available to many older incarcerated New Yorkers, who under the current Executive Law, may be forced to wait decades for a hearing.

Less Is More (A5576/S1144)

Less is More would eliminate the use of incarceration for most technical violations of parole, while capping jail sentences for other non-criminal offenses at 30 days. It would provide bail as an option for those accused of violating parole, so they can maintain employment and family ties while resolving their parole matter. The bill would also create an earned path to discharge for those who successfully comply with the conditions of their release.

###