

TESTIMONY BY ALEX HANSEN
BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME & CORRECTION HEARING ON HOW
THE ELDER PAROLE AND FAIR & TIMELY PAROLE BILLS WILL IMPROVE
PAROLE RELEASE LAWS AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN NEW YORK STATE

Thank you to the New York State Senate Committee on Crime Victims, Crime, and Correction, and in particular Chair Julia Salazar, for the opportunity to present testimony today on the Elder Parole (S.15A-Hoylman) and Fair & Timely Parole (S.7514-Salazar) bills. Together, these two parole justice measures will reunite families, improve community safety, and save the state massive sums of money that could be reallocated toward urgent community needs. I submit this testimony in support of both bills and respectfully urge the Legislature to finally call a vote on them.

I am an organizer with Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) NYC. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability. We work to connect people in NYC to local racial justice organizing efforts. SURJ NYC provides a space to build relationships, skills, and political analysis to act for change.

As an individual, my life has only been improved by my interactions with formerly incarcerated people. I have learned so much from organizing with SURJ NYC and Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP). Prior to this work, I never would have known that a parole hearing in New York state is not just a way to ensure that people re-joining the community do not pose a risk to the community, but is often simply an extension of the trial that person went through years ago, and a way to simply assign further punishment based on the initial offense. I did not know just how many of our elders were languishing in prison because of inhumane sentencing laws that are definitively racist, on top of the racism of the entire system. I advocate for the Fair and Timely and Elder Parole bills to correct these issues. Please take the right step toward racial justice by passing both of these bills in 2023. Please bring our elders home, and use the money that would have been spent on cages on our communities.

Thank you for considering my comments.