

Testimony by Barry Manuel, DIN: 87A3635
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 &
Public Safety in NY State.

My testimony comes from inside a cell at Sing Sing prison ironically located in New York State's richest county (Westchester) overlooking the Hudson River & a view of the Mario Cuomo Bridge. Many will agree that NY State has one of the most complex sentencing laws that exist, determinate and indeterminate, concurrent and consecutive, predicate and persistent, just to name a few. In the 1980's through the mid 1990's the disparate impact these draconic sentences inflicted on people of color still resonates throughout marginalized communities. When bills like the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills are introduced & become law, it's social justice. The funding alone that warehouses elders and others who are ready for release can and must be used to develop the creativity and safety in communities. Young people deserve every available resource, including those of us who are currently incarcerated and can help steer young people on a different path than the one we went down. As elders we suffer from advanced health issues costing the New York State double, triple the cost to keep us in. That money should be reinvested in the community, promoting real community safety that supports people and families.

I am 60 years old and have been imprisoned since 1986. The Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills would offer an individualized chance at release for so many people who have changed their lives. I am one of those people. I'm classified as an incarcerated veteran, having served in the United States Marines from 1979-81 at Camp Lejeune. I have a legal assistant /paralegal diploma. My re-entry plan is to reunite with my loving, supportive family and to obtain employment in an entry level position as a paralegal. I am currently in a program here at Sing Sing as a program aide with the Office of Mental Health. I assist and facilitate group therapy and am a peer counselor. I am more than ready to come home.

I urge everyone listening to support these bills and I thank all who contributed to them. Thank you for your support. Thank you to all the sponsors, co-sponsors. Thank you to everyone who believes in and is fighting for a second chance.

Sincerely,
Barry Manuel
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