

**Testimony By: Isaiah Waters, DIN: 08A5307**

**Before: The New York State Senate Committee on Crime Victims,  
Crime & Correction Hearing on how the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole Bill will  
improve Parole release laws and public safety in New York.**

Good morning. My name is Isiah Waters. I am 35-years old. I have been incarcerated for a little over 15 years on a 20 years to life sentence. During my incarceration I have completed vocational masonry skills, textile and chemical preparation, and have acquired an industrial cook's certificate where I have been certified to cook meals for 2,000 incarcerated individuals at one time. After accomplishing these milestones, I began doing volunteer work for the Alternative to Violence Project (AVP), which I am currently a co-chair of. In my capacity as an AVP facilitator I have been conducting workshops every month for the last 5-years. This program has helped thousands of men identify nonviolent ways to handle challenging situations in which they might have previously acted violently. I am also a Bard College student who is projected to receive my Associate's Degree by the summer of 2023.

The reason I am writing this letter is to show my support for the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills. Although these bills do not grant many my age relief, it still affects me because elderly incarcerated individuals have been the sole reason why so many young men like me have learned how to become the men we are today. If it was not for these "Ol Timers," as we call them, I would have been lost in the dark aspect of prison culture and, firmly believe, I would not be the person I am today: someone who is now ready to transition back into society.

Back in 2008, when I first entered DOCCS, most of these Ol Timers had already served more time than encompassed my whole life. Yet, they took the time to give young men like me the guidance and advice that many of us never received from our own fathers. I did not have a father growing up and these men -- through advice and encouragement -- have supplemented and filled the void I experienced while growing up.

This bill is needed not just because the political climate has changed in favor of restorative justice, or that the cost of warehousing these elder men and women are a strain on the State, but, in all actuality, if these bills are not passed, many of these elders and father figures are going to die in prison without ever getting a chance to impact and uplift the communities they once helped to destroy.

Not to negate the crimes they were convicted of, while serving lengthy sentences and even with no hope of being released themselves, they have taught young men life lessons, made sense of what was hard to see clear before, and ultimately have aided in bringing boys into manhood. These types of individuals deserve a second chance at life, a chance in which they can continue

giving the life affirming, pro-social lessons they imparted on me in prison to young men in the community so they will never have to experience this education and mentoring in prison. Thank you for your time and consideration in regards to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Isiah Waters  
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