



**TESTIMONY BY SHNEAQUA PURVIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BOTH SIDES OF THE VIOLENCE, INC.
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**

December 7, 2022

My name is Shneaqua Purvis. I'm a lifetime resident of Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York. I am the Executive Director of Both Sides of the Violence, Inc., which services justice impacted youth, provides grief services for victims, and gives out resources for our community both victim and perpetrator. We work in NYCHA developments, schools, and jails. We work on proactive ways to stop violence by changing the mindset of how people handle violence.

In 2002 my sister Maisha "Pumpkin" Hubbard was killed by a stray bullet in Tompkins Houses. Her assailant was sent to prison for manslaughter, came home and decided to change his life. The hurt and pain of losing a sibling (your first best friend) is unimaginable especially when I was the one that found her. You never want another family or community to experience that. So currently, in my healing, I mentor him in his progress and ideas for a boxing program, because justice to me means that he goes on to help prevent other acts of violence from happening.

I also have a father-in-law who in 2014 lived with me and he was incarcerated most of his life. Before entering prison, he felt depressed and clouded by his untreated traumas. He is now 63 years old and will go to the parole board in 2029. Addressing these traumas *before* people commit crimes and enter the system is a key part of my mission – and it should be a priority for all of us.

I wish to advocate for people like the person who committed this crime against my sister, who's life was changed while incarcerated, made amends with the community he hurt and is able to help others like him through my organization. I advocate for my father-in-law so he can come home and get real help outside of prison walls and live the rest of his life in peace around family. Lastly, I want to advocate for people like my current fiance who at 16 years-old was sentenced to 7 years to life and ended up serving 16 1/2 years in prison because the Parole Board denied him 9 times before a judge was finally able to intervene and order that they had to release him. By his first Parole Board hearing, his COMPAS score showed he could be safely released, and he had done real work to change, but the Board denied him over and over simply because of the one thing he could not change – his conviction.

Today I am here to testify in support of the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole bills to promote healing, transformation, and safety. The Elder Parole bill will ensure that older people serving long sentences have an opportunity to at least be heard by the Parole Board and considered, on a case-by-case basis, for release. The Fair & Timely Parole bill will help to empower the Parole Board to evaluate all people who come before it more holistically – focusing their decision on people’s rehabilitation, readiness to return to the community, and current risk to safety.

In closing, this would be a case by case situation and I believe if a person made a mistake especially depending on the traumas in their lives, they should be able to come home and help others to learn from their mistakes. The only way this vicious cycle can be broken is through us. Together we can reduce the traumas and reduce the violence that is caused by hurt people. We can't keep their life experiences in a cage forever.