

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

My name is Christopher Harrell. I am a 33-year-old incarcerated individual currently serving my sentence at Eastern NY Correctional Facility. I wanted to share my experience with an incarcerated individual, Leroy Taylor, whom I believe is the ideal candidate for why the Fair and Timely Parole and Elder Parole bills should be passed.

I met Taylor here in this facility approximately two years ago. In that short amount of time, he has had a major impact on my life. Since meeting him he has only spoken positivity into all aspects of my life, becoming an older role model for me to look for guidance from. Through his rhetoric and disposition, he has taught me the value of peaceful dialogue and education. In fact, through his constant encouragement, I was convinced to apply to college. I am proud to report that I am now attending college and maintaining a high GPA, part in due to the work ethic I adopted from this man. Even though this man is extremely busy being a full-time student, facilitator of several programs, father to his children, and much more, he always finds time to help individuals who request his help, including me, navigate a wide array of aspects.

As a man 15 years his junior, I often wish I had the man he is today as a role model for me when I was growing up. If I had a man like this to look up to then, I believe my chances of success would have been far greater. As I do not have a time machine, it is too late to create that scenario, I must live with the consequences of my mistakes, although, it is not too late for a whole generation of youth coming into adulthood. Even though I consider this man a flower in this concrete garden we reside in, it would be selfish of me, and contrary to what Mr. Taylor has shown me, to not write this letter. I cannot keep this man here for myself. His positive influence should not be limited to this small environment. Indeed, this influential man should be released to help an entire generation of children searching for a man worthy of them to regard as a role model and life coach, a title I solely reserve for this one man. Indeed, Mr. Taylor is the epitome of what accountability followed by soul searching, followed by hard work, and determination looks like.

The Fair and Timely Parole bill would give Mr. Taylor a real chance to be released by mandating the Parole Board to look at who he is today and all the ways he would benefit his community outside of prison, a chance he likely would not get without the bill passed. The Elder Parole bill would give the many men and women in prisons across

the state who are impactful mentors, like Mr. Taylor, a chance to be considered for parole release, as well. Communities need positive figures home so they can spread that hopeful and productive lifestyle to so many others.

Truly Submitted,

Christopher Harrell