

QUART AND HOYLMAN INTRODUCE WRONGFUL CONVICTION COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

Benefits for exonerees include lifetime health, mental health and dental insurance, reimbursement of attorney fees, and tuition at SUNY or CUNY

Bill would make New York one of the only states in the country to seal criminal records and provide education benefits

NEW YORK – Assemblymember Dan Quart (D-New York City) and State Senator Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan) announced today they will be introducing legislation that would provide a comprehensive package of benefits to persons who have been exonerated of a crime for which they were wrongfully convicted.

Under the provisions of the bill, any person who was convicted of a crime, incarcerated in a New York State prison and subsequently exonerated would have the records of their convictions permanently sealed and receive a package of benefits to help them rebuild their lives. The benefits include lifetime health, mental health and dental insurance, reimbursement of attorney fees incurred in the process of vacating or reversing their wrongful conviction, and tuition at SUNY or CUNY colleges and universities.

Exonerees would also be eligible to receive services provided to parolees and released inmates such as job training, counseling and substance abuse treatment. These benefits would be in addition to existing New York law, which allows exonerated individuals to file a legal claim to seek compensation from the state for unjust conviction or imprisonment.

"The state has no more serious responsibility than correcting its own errors," said Assemblymember Dan Quart. "A wrongful conviction can't ever be undone, but New York has a duty to ensure that exonerees are made whole as completely as possible. The wrongfully convicted should be able to access the same services as other parolees, in addition to job training and health and mental health care as they start their lives over."

"Wrongful conviction is a miscarriage of justice in the truest sense," said State Senator Brad Hoylman. "Incarceration exacts a physical and psychological toll that can be compounded when someone is imprisoned for a crime they did not commit. While we can never truly return the time stolen from the wrongfully convicted, New York has a moral obligation to help those for whom the criminal justice system has failed. By sealing the records of exonerees and providing benefits like job training and counseling, this legislation will help remove the devastating social stigma of incarceration, lower

barriers to economic reintegration, and help exonerated people build new and meaningful lives.”

According to a [recent report](#) by the National Registry of Exonerations, a record 149 people nationwide were exonerated in 2015, with New York representing more than 10 percent of overall exonerations. On their website, the National Registry [ranks New York second](#) in the number of exonerations since 1989, with more than 208 people found to be convicted of a crime they did not commit.

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