

## New York State Parole System

Thousands of people in New York are serving a sentence where parole is their only chance for a life outside of prison. The parole board is tasked with evaluating a person's readiness to be released back into society.

However, in most cases, parole is denied decades later because of the underlying crime, even when the person has proven they are rehabilitated. Two proposed bills would help give those in front of the parole board a fairer look:

### Fair and Timely Parole (S.159/A.127)

This bill would shift the focus of the parole determination from relying solely on the nature of the offense to who the person is today.

This bill would require the Board of Parole to have a clearly articulated and current public safety reason for denying the incarcerated person parole.

### Elder Parole (S.454/A.514)

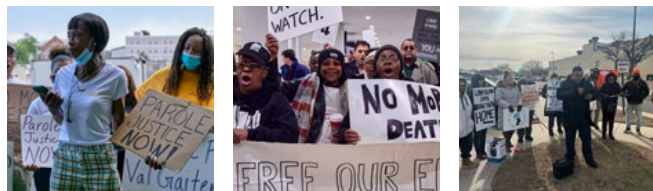
Provides incarcerated people aged fifty-five (55) and older who have served fifteen (15) or more years of their sentence an opportunity for parole release consideration.

This Bill does not guarantee release, but merely provides an opportunity for the state's oldest and sickest incarcerated people an opportunity to show the parole board why they are ready to be released.



## Organizations Making a Difference

- Release Aging People in Prison
  - [www.rappcampaign.com](http://www.rappcampaign.com)
- People's Campaign for Parole Justice
  - [www.parolejusticenyc.com](http://www.parolejusticenyc.com)
- Prison Policy Initiative
  - [www.prisonpolicy.org](http://www.prisonpolicy.org)



## For More Information:

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Website: <https://www.law.buffalo.edu/beyond/clinics/criminal-justice.html>

# “I AM” Campaign

Featuring Jerome Wright and David Sell



Presented By  
The University at Buffalo School of Law  
Criminal Justice  
Advocacy Clinic

## “I AM Campaign”

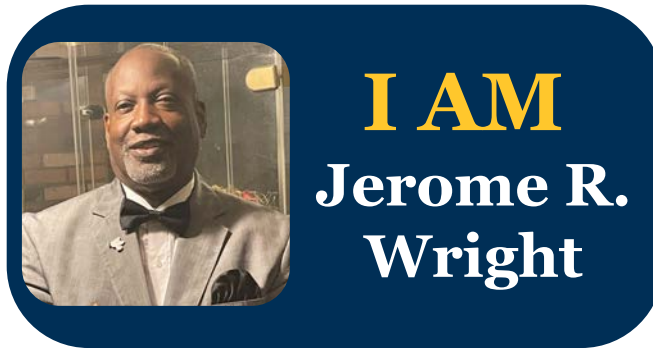
The “I AM” Campaign shares the stories of formerly incarcerated people doing great works in the community and currently incarcerated people who strive to bring their good works from correctional facilities to the greater community.

Through interviews with currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, we aim to amplify the voices of people making significant contributions to their communities inside and outside of prison.

Often, we’ve found that two people harbor the same determination to help others, but one is incarcerated and one has been released.

The stories of both incarcerated people and formally incarcerated people are examples of the dire need for a different approach to parole in New York State. Their stories help show why incarcerated and formally incarcerated people are infinitely more than the worst decisions of their life.

Stay tuned for more narratives highlighting other pairs of incredible incarcerated and formally incarcerated people.



## I AM Jerome R. Wright

I was 19 years old when I was sentenced to 18.5 years to life for second-degree murder. I served more than 30 years and went before the Parole Board six times before being released. I am now 63 years old.

While incarcerated, I spent a lot of time in solitary confinement, until I realized only I could change my behavior. I began to immerse myself in programming and attended college. I was fortunate enough to have a family who stood by me throughout my incarceration. Growing into a husband, father, and grandfather, I began to understand I was accountable for more than just myself



When I was released, I was reminded of all the amazing people I left behind. Now, I dedicate my time to helping those who remain incarcerated. As the co-director of #HALTsolitary of WNY, I fought to end the practice of solitary confinement. As the co-director of the NYS Jails Justice Network, I aim to bring together advocates, activists, and directly impacted people to raise awareness of the dire state of county jails.

“The passage of the Fair and Timely and Elder Parole Bills will give a lot of hopeless people hope and this Campaign will amplify when things go right instead of highlight when things go wrong.”



## I AM David Sell

I was 20 years old when I was convicted of second-degree murder. I am 48 years old and will not be eligible for parole until 2036.

While incarcerated, earning my GED taught me that I had options beyond crime. “It was like a light turned on” and I committed myself to change. I took Aggression Replacement Therapy and learned how to use conflict resolution in difficult situations. I used these lessons while working with at risk youth to encourage them learn from my mistakes.

Hoping to reach even more at-risk youth, I co-founded an organization called Change Comes From Within to continue mentoring youth and guiding them away from criminal behavior. I have given community presentations on preventing gun violence and do all I can to encourage kids to stay in school and to stop their destructive paths before they end up in prison with me.

I also strive to speak for those who have no voice. I continue to advocate for better prison conditions, treating incarcerated individuals with compassion, and speaking up against policies that cut off incarcerated people from their families.

