



Freedom Unshackled Coalition

freedomunshackled@gmail.com | www.freedomunshackled.org | #4xy

To:

Senator Liz Krueger

Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Assemblymember J. Gary Pretlow

Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

From:

Roni Minter

Founder: Sistas Healing Old Wounds, Inc

The Freedom Unshackled Coalition

Date: February 4, 2025

Re: Public Safety Speech at New York State Senate Hearing

Good afternoon, Senators, and thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Roni Minter. I am 59 years old native of New York. I was released from prison at the age of 40. Since that time, I have rebuilt my life, and in doing so, I have worked to rebuild my community as well.

After my release, I relocated from Queens to Albany. I worked for and with the late Father Peter Young from 2005, the year of my release, until his passing in 2020. I have raised my granddaughter since she was just three weeks old—she is now 16. I was appointed as a member of the New York State HIV Prevention Planning Group by Tom Frieden who was the Commissioner of Health for New York State at that time. I served on the Prevention Planning Group for six years; serving the last three as the body chairperson.

In 2011, as formerly incarcerated woman I founded Sistas Healing Old Wounds, an organization providing direct services to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. During the pandemic, I launched The Freedom Unshackled Coalition, which pushes for legislative change and addresses policies governing the Department of Corrections.

I share this not to focus on some my accomplishments but to challenge the perception of what it means to have been incarcerated. If you had looked at my record before 2005, you might have seen someone you thought was a “risk to public safety.” But since 2005, I have been a registered voter, a taxpayer, a community leader, and an asset to New York State.

That’s why I’m asking you to support Parole Justice Bills more in particular the Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole bills. These bills give people a chance to rebuild their lives—people like me, who want to contribute and make their communities stronger.

Too often, society sees incarcerated individuals as less than human. Making our chances for Parole more difficult. But I ask you to reflect on the horrific killing of Robert Brooks. Who looked like animals in that video? Was it people like me, sitting here before you today, or those who brutally and viciously took his life? as a formerly incarcerated woman I have seen this brutal animalistic behavior from correctional staff far too often. Those beatings I’ve witness play over in my mind in the quiet of most nights. I’ve been in therapy for years now. Not because of my life prior to incarceration but because of my life during incarceration.

But I ask you—what does public safety really mean? Is it public safety to have Correctional Facility staff raping, beating, and murdering those they are charged with protecting under “care, custody, and control”? Is it public safety when Parole Officers are raping the women they are supervising? Why isn’t the culture within the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision being viewed as a threat to society...as a clear and present threat to Public Safety.

The reality is, many of those seeking parole have spent years participating in reentry programs and proving their readiness to return to society. Compare that to the 1,600 individuals pardoned by Donald Trump—many of whom showed no remorse for their roles in attacking our nation’s Capitol and attacking police officers. Crimes that all too often prevent incarcerated people from being released on Parole here in New York because of public safety. The hypocrisy is deafening.

Public safety is about more than punishment. It is about giving people the tools and opportunities to reintegrate and contribute. I am Roni Minter—a grandmother, an advocate, and a leader working to improve my community. Imagine what others could do with that same chance.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to pass these Parole Justice bills and give others the opportunity to rebuild their lives and strengthen New York.

Thank you.

Roni Minter

Sistas Healing Old Wounds

The Freedom Unshackled Coalition

Cell: 718-812-6473

Email: Freedomunshackled@gmail.com