

MADLINE SINGAS
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NASSAU COUNTY**

February 9, 2021

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader
New York State Senate
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl Heastie
Speaker
New York State Senate
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Support for S. 1144 (“Less is More”) and S.830/A.4448 (Parolee Voting Rights)

Dear Majority Leader Stewart Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

I write in support of S. 1144, the “Less is More” Act, to reduce reincarceration for technical violations of parole, and S.830 / A.4448, to restore voting rights to parolees. These reforms, along with funding for supportive reentry services, are important to help justice involved New Yorkers successfully and productively reintegrate into society with the responsibilities and rights of full citizenship.

Because of longstanding racial disparities in our justice system, laws disenfranchising those on parole or with felony convictions disproportionately impact citizens of color, and when voters have had the opportunity to restore the voting rights of those who have served their time, they have done so. In 2019, Florida voters supported the reinstatement of voting rights of those with past felony convictions, and in 2020, Californians voted to amend their state constitution to restore voting rights to those on parole.

I believe these reforms enjoy broad support in New York as well. With nearly 35,000 people on parole, it is important that we as elected leaders do all that we can to ensure that they are leading productive and law-abiding lives. Reducing incarceration for minor technical violations of parole helps to ensure that parolees can better support their families and maintain stable employment,

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while engaging people in the political process makes them stakeholders in the community, further reducing the likelihood of recidivism and improving public safety.

During my tenure as District Attorney serving Nassau County's 1.4 million residents, I have invested unprecedented resources into our programs to prevent crime by matching at-risk individuals with the resources and services they need *before* they offend—whether the need is food, housing, job training, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, or other needs. For those who have been charged with crimes, we engage restorative justice strategies. And it's clear that this approach is working, with both incarceration and crime reaching historic lows, and US News & World Report designating Nassau as America's Safest County in 2020.

Our prosecutors have embraced the letter and the spirit of recent criminal justice reforms. More funding is essential to fully realize the Legislature's vision of a more efficient, transparent, and fair system, and we must continue to collaborate to examine our successes and failures to ensure New Yorkers have the justice system that they deserve.

I commend the sponsors and advocates for their work pursuing these important bills, and I encourage the Legislature to pass them this session.

Sincerely,



Madeline Singas
Nassau County District Attorney