

Memorandum in Support

A. 07634 (O'Donnell) / S. 02023A (Hassell-Thompson)

May 23rd, 2016

Dear Members of the New York State Senate and Assembly:

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East strongly supports this important legislation that would restore the right to vote to New Yorkers on parole.

The defense and expansion of civil rights is fundamental to our mission, and we believe New York is a stronger, healthier state when everyone has a chance to have their voices heard. This bill would expand voting rights to 40,000 more New Yorkers, furthering this goal.

The bill is especially important given that the current restriction of voting rights based on past experience with the criminal justice system disproportionately disenfranchises minority and low-income New Yorkers. While limitations on civic participation always weaken our democracy, they are especially offensive when they discriminate in this way. We believe that people who are subject to the law are entitled to their fair share of influence in helping to shape it -- regardless of race or income. The denial of voting rights to parolees is one of the more obvious ways in which our state fails to live up to this ideal, and we urge passage of the bill in order to help address this injustice.

With this legislation, New York will join the fourteen other states and the District of Columbia that already allow people to vote as soon as their sentence is completed. This bill has our complete support. We believe New Yorkers will benefit from its passage.

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