



**ERIC GONZALEZ**  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
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May 3, 2019

Senator Zellnor Myrie  
New York State Senate  
Chair, Senate Elections Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 903  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblyman Charles Lavine  
New York State Assembly  
Chair, Assembly Elections Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 713  
Albany, NY 12248

RE: S.1931 / A. 4987

Dear Senator Myrie and Assemblyman Lavine:

I write in support of S.1931/A.4987, which would restore voting rights to New Yorkers on parole. My commitment as the elected District Attorney of Brooklyn is to keep the people of Brooklyn safe and strengthen community trust in our system by ensuring fairness and equal justice for all.

I strongly believe that public safety is enhanced when people returning to their families and communities from prison have the opportunity and the resources to become fully participating members of the community. Effective reintegration includes encouraging and welcoming their participation as full citizens. This is why I support the restoration of voting rights.

For decades, the Brooklyn District Attorney's office has created and supported programming to facilitate and support successful re-entry. Our Re-entry Bureau, which includes among its programs the Kings County Re-entry Task Force, is a model for District Attorneys throughout our State and our nation. The Bureau served more than 500 individuals returning to Brooklyn from incarceration during Calendar Year 2018. The work is not easy due to the intensity of the challenges facing these fellow New Yorkers – housing, employment, education, family reunification. Not being recognized by neighbors as able and willing to help their home community is one of the cruelest challenges facing formerly incarcerated people.

It is not lost on me that criminal justice system involvement and imprisonment have deeply impacted people and communities of color, and that these same communities have been the targets of disenfranchisement efforts throughout our history. Denying returning citizens the right to vote therefore contributes to the perpetuation of the disenfranchisement of people and communities of color. I see no reason to do this and I see many reasons to end this practice, including the reduced recidivism and increased public safety that I believe will flow from allowing formerly incarcerated people to participate fully in our democracy.

I am thankful that Governor Cuomo chose to use his pardon power to restore voting rights to New Yorkers on parole, but I believe the pardon process should not be required to restore voting rights to a formerly incarcerated person. Rather, voting rights restoration should be automatic when an individual has completed their sentence.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Legislature to codify and improve upon the Governor's actions by passing S.1931/A.4987.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Gonzalez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric Gonzalez  
District Attorney  
Kings County

cc: Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of the State of New York

Senator Leroy Comrie  
Assembly Member Daniel J. O'Donnell