



NEW JERSEY

SENATE DEMOCRATS

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Statements in Support of Sentencing Reform Legislation

“At a moment of national recognition of systemic racism in our criminal justice system, the New Jersey legislature has an historic opportunity to address severe disparities within New Jersey’s criminal code. The Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission has laid out a reasoned and long overdue path to address these disparities. The legislature has an opportunity to bend the arc of history toward justice. There’s much to do!” – **former Governor Jon Corzine**

“We have come to understand that the more time someone spends in prison is not necessarily good for society; indeed, it is harmful to rehabilitation. Providing judicial discretion, allowing the sentencing judge to make informed decisions based on personal profiles – age, work history and a rehabilitation plan -- is far more effective than cookie-cutter sentencing.

“Due to certain sentencing laws in effect today, persons have automatically been incarcerated for decades upon decades. These laws have disproportionately impacted poor communities of color. The recommendations of the Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission begins to address these inequities.” – **former Governor James McGreevey and president of the NJ Re-entry Corporation**

“People across the country have been marching for criminal justice reform, for the elimination of racial inequality and for a fair and just system based on equal justice for all of us. In New Jersey, the Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission has made recommendations that address mass incarceration and racial disparities in our sentencing laws. These bills carry out the Commission’s recommendations and begin the process of reform. These bills will make a difference.” – **former Governor James Florio**

“The recommendations of the Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission put forward in this set of bills are a critical first step in addressing mass incarceration and racial disparities in New Jersey’s prisons. The Commission was expressly created to examine criminal sentencing alternatives, mandatory sentencing schemes, and the parameters of supervised release, always with the purpose of eliminating bias through changes in our criminal laws that that focus on rehabilitation and limit the use of punitive sentencing schemes that serve no purpose. Our members represent the views of judges, legislators, prosecutors, public defenders, criminal defense lawyers, and corrections and parole officials. We have different backgrounds and different experiences and we play different roles in the criminal justice system, but we have come together, unanimously, to recommend the bills introduced in this package.” - **former Chief Justice Deborah Poritz**

“The County Prosecutors Association of New Jersey was honored to participate in the Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission and be an active participant in criminal justice and sentencing reform in New Jersey. We thank Chief Justice Deborah Poritz (ret.) for her leadership and the participation and input of all of the members of the Commission. The legislation introduced today represents a common sense and practical approach to criminal justice reform.” - **Angelo Onofri, Mercer County prosecutor and president of the County Prosecutors Association of New Jersey**

“These sentencing reforms represent an important first step in addressing the mass incarceration and racial disparity that, unfortunately, plague our prison system. Mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses, in particular, have had a discriminatory impact on urban residents, primarily people of color, so their elimination would have a positive impact immediately. The Public Defender's Office hopes the Legislature will enact them.” - **Joseph Krakora, state public defender**

“Over the last two decades New Jersey has successfully implemented a series of criminal justice reforms that have helped reduce our reliance on mass incarceration. But, they have failed to meaningfully address the horrible racial disparities that plague our nation and our state. This important package of bills promises to both safely reduce the number of incarcerated people and drive down the staggering disproportionality that remains a source of shame. With their passage and implementation we will move closer to the ideals of a smart and fair criminal justice system.” - **Amol Sinha, executive director of the ACLU-NJ**

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