

Albany, NY  
January 31, 2014

Terrence Tracy  
NYS Board of Parole  
1220 Washington Ave, Bldg. 2  
Albany, NY 12226-2050

Mr. Tracy;

I find the proposed new procedures of the Parole Board to be unsatisfactory. The regulations must make it possible for people who are up for parole to be released based on their readiness for re-entry into society.

Only one out of the four sections of the New York Codes Rules and Regulations that are set to be changed address procedures important to parole reform. This section, 9 NYCRR 8002.3, states that twelve "factors shall be considered". "Factors shall be considered" is not a defined explanation of how the factors will affect a parole decision. A numeric rating system for each of the relevant factors; and a minimum score that each factor must meet in order to award parole would be measurable.

The two new factors that were added both use the vague language "may have been". Factor (11) could be effective if it stated, "the current risk and needs assessment prepared by (name an objective qualified agency)". Factor (12) could be more effective if it stated "the current case plan prepared by (name an objective qualified agency)". These two factors should be listed as (1) & (2) in the language according to the level of priority in comparison to the others which have been used for years with little effectiveness in helping qualified individuals re-enter society.

Of the factors that are listed, I particularly disagree with the consideration of the following: (5) crime victims' statements; (6) determinate sentence that applicant could have received for certain drug-related offenses; (7) seriousness of the offense; and (10) prior criminal history. Parole should be awarded to those who demonstrate good behavior. Parole should not be denied to those based on the nature of their crime. I especially feel that non-violent crimes should not be a deterrent in awarding parole.

I know that people can change. People should not be punished indefinitely if they have demonstrated that they are ready to re-enter society. Keeping people in prison unnecessarily is a burden on taxpayers and the families of individuals who are incarcerated. Continuing to punish individuals who are no danger does not keep communities safe. After released, rehabilitated people will provide valuable support to their families and communities.

2011 law mandates that the Parole Board write procedures that "incorporate risk and needs principles to measure the rehabilitation of persons appearing before the board, the likelihood of success of such person upon release, and assist the members of the state board of parole in determining which inmates may be released to parole supervision". Please honor the law in writing these procedures. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely, Jessica R. Semon, Albany NY