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**REPORT: NEW YORK'S PAROLE SYSTEM DISPROPORTIONATELY HARMS PEOPLE OF COLOR
New York imprisons more people for technical parole violations than all but one state**

New York - New York's parole system disproportionately supervises and incarcerates Black and Latinx people, according to [a report released today by Columbia University's Justice Lab](#). The report, entitled *Racial Inequities in New York Parole Supervision*, examined data at the city and state level for people on parole. It comes at a time when New York legislators are considering overhauling the state's parole policies and the New York State Bar Association has issued a report critical of New York's parole practices.

The report's key findings include:

- Black and Latinx people are subjected to parole supervision at 6.8 and 2.5 times the rate of white people, respectively – significantly larger disparities than are observed in national parole supervision rates.
- Black people are incarcerated for technical parole violations in New York State prisons at 5 times the rate of white people, and Latinx people are 30% more likely than white people to be incarcerated for a technical parole violation.
- Black people are detained for alleged parole violations in New York City jails at a rate 12 times higher than that for white people, and Latinx people are detained for alleged parole violations at roughly 4 times the rate of white people. As persons detained in city jails awaiting their parole hearings are the only population increasing in the notorious Rikers Island jails complex, this could present problems for the planned closure of Rikers Island.
- Among people on parole held pretrial in New York City jails for alleged misdemeanor offenses, 99% were people of color. Overall, people on parole comprise two-thirds of all people held in New York City jails for a misdemeanor charge.

Parole supervision fuels mass incarceration everywhere, but particularly in New York as New York sends more people back to prison for non-criminal, technical parole violations than any state except Illinois. Nearly six times as many people are reincarcerated in New York State prisons for technical violations – such as missing an appointment, being out past curfew, or testing positive for alcohol – as were reincarcerated for a new criminal conviction. Incarceration for technical violations costs New York State and localities a total of over \$600 million annually.

“Technical parole violations fall most heavily on people of color, their families and communities,” says Vincent Schiraldi, report co-author, co-director of the Columbia Justice Lab and former New York City Probation Commissioner. “The alarming racial disparities in our report should serve as a clarion call for state policymakers to act this year to redress this unacceptable situation.”

“The risk of reincarceration for a violation threatens not only the person under parole supervision, but also their family,” says report co-author and director of the Justice Lab's Probation and Parole Reform Project Kendra Bradner. “A father may be unable to accept a well-paying night job or take a sick child to the emergency room if it conflicts with his parole curfew. A mother may face homelessness because

parole terms do not permit her to live with family members who have a criminal record or who live in public housing. These situations further complicate an already-difficult process of reentering society, and exacerbate systemic racial inequities.”

The authors noted that recommendations from a New York State Bar Association Task Force and the Less Is More Act co-sponsored by Senator Brian Benjamin and Assemblymember Walter Mosley have proffered similar reforms that would address the challenges raised in the report.¹ The authors recommend:

- Allowing people to earn time off of their parole supervision terms for positive performance.
- Limiting incarceration for technical violations.
- Curbing the use of jail detention while people are awaiting adjudication for parole violations.

Comments on *Racial Inequities in New York Parole Supervision*

New York State Senator Brian Benjamin: “Last year we made historic strides towards ending mass incarceration with major reforms to New York’s criminal justice system but there is still more work to do. As this report makes clear, our work must now focus on fixing the inequities and racial disparities of New York’s parole supervision system. Luckily, that is exactly what the bill I sponsor with Assemblymember Mosley, Less is More, aims to do. I am proud to be a part of the remarkable coalition of people who make laws, enforce laws, and have been affected by parole supervision laws that agrees that when it comes to community supervision Less is More.”

New York State Assemblymember Walter T. Mosley: “The burdens that parole supervision and revocation have on black and brown communities in New York, ranges far and wide across our state. Many families are living under the constant threat of reincarceration. This has a detrimental effect on the family dynamic as black people are detained for parole violations in New York City jails at a rate 12 times higher than that for white people, and Latinx people are detained for parole violations at roughly 4 times the rate of white people. We know that by incentivizing good behavior, preventing reincarceration for technical violations, and creating a higher threshold for less serious offenses, our state can save money, reform our criminal justice system, and keep people out of a revolving door of reincarceration. The time is now for Albany to give New Yorkers the just parole system that they all deserve. We as legislators, like to talk the talk about the damage the prison pipeline in and out of our communities has had, well now is to time to walk the walk. Less is More is a major key to dismantling the prison pipeline and we will not compromise this bill. It must be passed and it will be passed.”

City Council Speaker Corey Johnson: “For far too long, our criminal justice system has been jailing people solely for minor parole violations. More than 10% of our jail population is made up of New Yorkers who missed an appointment, failed a drug test or committed technical, non-criminal parole violations. As we work to reform the criminal justice system, we need to ensure we reform the parole system. For the current fiscal year, the City Council designated more than \$13 million for Alternatives to Incarceration programming targeting this population, but the fundamental problems with this system can only be addressed by state legislation, which is why I urge the state to pass the Less is More Act. I commend the work the advocates have been tirelessly doing to push for this bill’s passage.”

¹ The New York State Bar Association Task Force on the Parole System initial report can be found [here](#). Information on the #LessIsMoreNY campaign and legislation can be found [here](#).

Former Chief Judge of New York State and Chair of the Independent Commission on NYC Criminal Justice & Incarceration Reform Jonathan Lippman: “Non-criminal, technical parole violations have become a major – but too often unseen and unknown – driver of mass incarceration here in New York State, and they overwhelmingly impact people of color. The racial disparities uncovered in this report from Columbia are shocking: black people are incarcerated for parole violations in NYC jails twelve times the rate of white people, and Latinx people are detained at approximately four times the rate of white people. If we are going to permanently close the jails on Rikers and create a fairer, more equitable justice system, we must do away with needless incarceration for non-criminal violations of parole and work together to address the issue of unequal treatment.”

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez: “There are many reasons to reform New York’s parole system so it is fairer and provides individuals a chance to rebuild their lives instead of holding them back. The stark racial disparities highlighted in Columbia Justice Lab’s study, and the adverse consequences they create on communities of color, are important reasons to reduce the use of detention for technical violations and to enhance due process. These findings strengthen my already-strong support of the Less Is More Act and I call on Albany to pass this critical bill during this legislative session.”

Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance, Jr.: “Parole is meant to provide a more rehabilitative, less punitive alternative to incarceration. Instead, technical parole violations continue to be major catalysts of unnecessary reincarceration across our city and state. As Columbia Justice Lab’s groundbreaking new report reveals, New Yorkers of color are significantly more likely than their white peers to return to prison for non-criminal, technical parole violations. This extreme racial disparity is an intolerable injustice that demands immediate legislative action. I thank Columbia Justice Lab and its Co-Director Vincent Schiraldi for their scholarly analysis illuminating the exigent need for a forward-looking, evidence-based overhaul of our parole system. The Less is More Act, co-sponsored by Senator Brian Benjamin and Assembly Member Walter Mosley, would deliver this substantial overhaul, and I urge New York lawmakers to enact it now.”

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark: “The purpose of our Bronx County Reentry Task Force is to provide those returning from prison with resources such as NYS ID cards, housing, health care and the employment services that they need to successfully reconnect with the community. Without such resources, people returning from prison may face technical violations of parole that land them back behind bars. I have been a supporter of The Less Is More Act because it is sensible reform. The Columbia Justice Lab’s report clearly states why this act should pass: to bring fairness to people of color in our state, as well as lower the population at Rikers Island, which holds an increasing number of technical parole violators who are disproportionately from our communities of color.”

Vanita Gupta, President and CEO, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights: “We commend the Columbia Justice Lab for releasing this important report and placing a spotlight on an ever-growing problem in our nation – the revolving door of incarceration through probation, or parole, supervision and the grossly inequitable treatment of black and brown people within it. The problems with community supervision in New York and the disparities associated with it are but a snapshot of the crises faced by many jurisdictions throughout the country. It is past time that we transform the probation and parole systems nationally and end the cycle of mass incarceration and the inequitable treatment of people of color. Studies like this one provide the data needed to bring about change to this flawed system that is largely ungoverned by law and policy.”

New York State Bar Association President Henry M. Greenberg: “New York State and its municipalities spent nearly \$600 million last year reincarcerating people on technical parole violations such as missing curfew. The impact of reincarceration falls disproportionately on people of color. Given the Columbia University report, the New York State Bar Association renews its call to drastically reduce the use of reincarceration for such minor transgressions.”

Donna Hylton, Author, Founder, A Little Piece of Light Organization: Parole was founded in the 1800's as a rehabilitative measure to assist and provide individuals with the tools and resources necessary to divert them from reentering the prison system. In New York State, parole has become a tool to not only deprive individuals of their liberty but a measure used to re-incarcerate primarily Black and Latinx individuals for behavior that is not criminal, much less alarming. Second only to Illinois, New York State has become a driving force in sending individuals back to prison and jail at a cost of \$600 million annually. Parole was created as an incentive for people to become productive tax-paying citizens. Inversely, New York State utilizes parole as a weaponized standard to re-incarcerate Black, Latinx and poor people.

DeAnna Hoskins, President and CEO, JustLeadershipUSA: "We all deserve the right to redemption, fairness and equal justice — but our current systems of parole stand in direct violation of those rights. I am grateful that the Columbia Justice Lab report has shown the inhumane racial disparities within New York's parole supervision system — a system that disproportionately targets black and brown New Yorkers and keeps them from enjoying the freedom that is their human right. We stand with the Katal Center, and urge all New Yorkers to support The Less is More Act and ask their legislators to properly invest in a true second chance for all formerly-incarcerated people."

Gerdzer Edmee, Member, Katal Center for Health, Equity and Justice: "Having been on the inside [prison], it's so disgusting how many Black and brown people on parole are in there. Seeing that gave me no hope while I waited for release. Parole officers will find each and every possible to keep their job security by recycling people on parole in and out the system. If you remove all the people from prison who are on parole, you would have no choice but to close them. This report shows, again, why New York lawmakers need to pass Less Is More today."

Emily NaPier Singletary, Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of Unchained: “Anyone with any experience with parole knows anecdotally that it is yet another aspect of the carceral apparatus designed to restrict the liberty of Black and Latinx people. Now with the new report from the Columbia Justice Lab we have concrete data illustrating the magnitude of this civil rights crisis in New York State. Black and Latinx people are routinely jailed for technical violations of parole at much higher rates than white people. To remedy this, the New York State Legislature and Governor Cuomo must immediately pass and enact the Less is More Act.”

Stanley Richards, Executive Vice President of the Fortune Society: “The eye-opening report released today by the Columbia Justice Lab makes passage of the Less is More Act even more urgent and critical. Less Is More is New York's chance to correct some of the deeply misguided criminal justice policies that disproportionately impact communities of color by reframing our approach to reentry to prioritize dignity, compassion, and community solidarity. This state has a well-documented problem with mass incarceration, but it is the habitual reliance on re-incarceration that allows the cycle to continue, returning black and brown New Yorkers to prison for technical violations at a rate five times higher than white parolees. The practice of reincarcerating people on parole for minor infractions keeps thousands of people unfairly locked up -- unravelling the fragile new lives they've tried to build after being released

from prison. If we want formerly incarcerated people to rejoin society as active, contributing members, the first thing we must do, as a community, is give them the chance.”

Christopher Watler, Chief External Affairs Officer, Center for Employment Opportunities: “It is time to address the unnecessary and prolific use of parole violations in New York State that do little to promote public safety, inhibit effective social reintegration and further exacerbate racial disparities in the justice system. Thanks to the leadership of Senator Brian Benjamin and Assemblymember Walter Mosley, and the analysis provided by the Columbia Justice Lab, The Less is More Act offers our state a pathway to a more humane and effective justice system. It is time for New York State to pass these important reforms to support continued declines in incarceration and crime.”

Soffiyah Elijah, Executive Director, Alliance of Families for Justice: "Families form the fiber of any community and when the families are in crisis, the community is in crisis. Poor Black and Brown communities have been devastated by mass incarceration and racially biased parole practices, and the collateral consequences of that devastation are immeasurable. Reincarcerating people for technical violations of parole is hugely disruptive to the reentry process and harms families who are working to support their loved ones. This report should prompt lawmakers to take action immediately."

Kassandra Frederique, Managing Director, Drug Policy Alliance: "As this data shows, systemic racism is pervasive across every single area of our criminal legal system, including parole. Thousands of Black and Latinx New Yorkers are being reincarcerated for technical violations of parole, including positive drug screens. We already know that incarceration is not a solution for addiction or drug use or anything else. We need immediate action from the Assembly, Senate, and Governor to address this. It's time to pass the Less Is More NY Act."

The full report with charts is available upon request.

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