



February 22, 2024

Senator Lea Webb
leawebb@nysenate.gov

Dear Senator Webb,

We first want to thank you for your long commitment to and support for social and criminal justice campaigns in the past. We have always considered you an ally.

We write now to solicit your support for legislation sponsored by community and social justice organizations across the southern tier and indeed the upstate area as a whole. Much past work and legislation has sprung from New York City and often bypassed upstate criminal justice reform concerns and problems. This no longer holds as strong local groups now exist and collaborate from Binghamton to Ithaca to Syracuse to Rochester and Buffalo and beyond.

While we remain critically concerned with longstanding reform legislation including the Elder Parole (A.2035/S.2423) and Fair and Timely Parole (A.162/S.307) legislation, we ask specifically that you support and cosponsor three bills that address pressing local needs by creating paths for oversight of local jails:

- [A06487/S.181](#): creates greater transparency and accountability of local jails, making them more accessible to state legislators by including their staffs, and accessible for the *first time* to local legislators, who are responsible for approving county jail budgets but often have little information about the conditions in the facilities they are approving.
- [A05709/S.5877](#): increases the number of members of the State Commission of Correction from 3 to 6, allowing for a more representative range of stakeholders beyond the current law enforcement personnel including health care and mental health practitioners, the formerly incarcerated, and public defenders.
- [A2746/S.6611](#) places correctional facilities, including jails, under the jurisdiction of state human rights laws. This will provide an avenue for redress of discriminatory and inhuman treatment beyond the current grievance process which is often short-circuited, ignored, or dismissed by the same facilities that are the subject of the grievance.

We have made real advances through such work and legislation: the number of persons incarcerated in the county jail has fallen from 500 to 300 in recent years. Broome County retains however the unfortunate distinction of still having the highest jail incarceration rate of any of the state's 62 counties. We hope you can help us change that metric.

Again, thanks for your past and continuing support of social justice legislation.

Sincerely,

Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier