

**Morningside Monthly Meeting: Addendum to Report to NYQM
Action Item for NYQM, January 17 2021**

On June 2, 2019, Morningside Monthly Meeting approved two minutes regarding the NYS Elder Parole Bill, and the Fair and Timely Parole Bill. Now, both of these bills will be introduced at the new (2021) session of the NYS Legislature. Given that Governor Cuomo has taken no significant action to release a significant number of the elderly and vulnerable incarcerated people who have turned their lives around, and are now vulnerable to COVID infection; and given the fact that there is now a veto-proof majority in the NYS Senate that makes it possible both or one of the bills will pass even if Governor Cuomo vetoes them; and most important, recognizing that the current dire COVID infection rate in NYS prisons for both incarcerated people and DOC staff means it is a matter of life and death to reduce the NYS prison population, we ask the NYQM 1) approve the following minutes and 2) to forward the minutes to the Witness Coordinating Committee:

I. Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minute in Support of the Fair & Timely Parole Bill (approved at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, June 2, 2019)

Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) supports the passage of the Fair and Timely Parole bill, which provides that if a person's record in prison is good and the person does not evince a current and unreasonable risk to the safety of members of the community outside prison, the person should be granted parole as a matter of course once he or she has served the minimum time the judge has set. As Friends, we believe that we all have the possibility of transforming our lives. People who have turned their lives around while incarcerated and have demonstrated that transformation deserve to be released. They can make important contributions to their communities and families. The nature of the crime committed many years before should not be the sole reason for denying parole. Those of us who have volunteered in NY State Correctional Facilities have seen numerous examples of this kind of positive change and know many who, upon release, have been assets to their communities.

II. Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minute in Support of the Elder Parole Bill (approved at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, June 2, 2019)

Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) supports the passage of the Elder Parole bill. This provides that all people aged 55 years or older who have served 15 years or more in prison would become eligible for parole consideration. It does not mean people will automatically receive parole, but it does allow people who have sentences such as life without parole or 50 years to life to be considered. As Friends, we believe all lives are sacred. This does not mean, however, that those who have committed murder or other violent acts deserve to have indefinite or life-without-parole sentences if they have transformed their lives while incarcerated. In fact, it means the opposite. Moreover, African Americans and other people of color receive these sentences disproportionately, so that granting those who are over 55 years of age a chance to be paroled may well be mitigating earlier injustice. At the same time, the evidence shows that people who are over 55 years of age have a minimal risk of recidivism. It also shows that people with these long sentences often lose hope and sometimes commit suicide. By recognizing the possibility of change, the possibility of hope is restored.

