



Dear Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and Governor Kathy Hochul:

We, the undersigned labor organizations, urge New York’s elected leaders to pass the [Earned Time Act](#) (S.342/A.1085) and [Second Look Act](#) (S.158/A.1283) during the 2026 legislative session, and to sign it into law.

For many of our members, this issue is not abstract—it is deeply personal. Across our unions, there are countless workers who have parents, children, siblings, and loved ones currently incarcerated in New York State prisons. These are families who show up to work every day while carrying the emotional and financial burden of separation, long sentences, and a system that too often denies their loved ones a meaningful opportunity to come home. When we fight for these bills, we are fighting for our members, their families, and the stability of our communities.

New York continues to maintain one of the largest and most expensive prison systems in the country, spending approximately \$3 billion annually on incarceration—despite overwhelming evidence that excessive incarceration is one of the least effective and most costly ways to promote public safety.

At the same time, New York is facing an ongoing labor shortage that is slowing economic growth and straining industries across the state. Hundreds of thousands of jobs remain unfilled, even as thousands of New Yorkers are locked out of the workforce due to long prison sentences and limited access to programs that would allow them to earn release. While important policies like Clean Slate are helping people reenter the workforce after incarceration, we cannot ignore those who remain behind bars long after they could safely return home, support their families, and contribute to our economy.

This system also reflects deep and persistent racial inequities. Black and brown New Yorkers are disproportionately policed, prosecuted, and sentenced to longer terms of incarceration, and they make up the vast majority of people in New York’s prisons. These disparities are not incidental—they are the result of decades of policy choices that have concentrated harm in certain communities while limiting opportunities for release and rehabilitation. For union members in these communities, this means entire networks of families and workers are directly impacted. Addressing these inequities is essential to building a fair economy and a just society.

In the 1990s, New York dramatically reduced funding for prison-based programs and severely restricted opportunities for incarcerated people to earn time off their sentences—despite clear evidence that these programs improve outcomes and public safety. As a result, tens of thousands of New Yorkers are serving excessively long sentences with limited access to education, job training, and rehabilitation. Many of these individuals could be contributing members of our workforce today. Our unions are stronger when more New Yorkers have access to stable, living-wage employment and the opportunity to support their families.

The Earned Time Act would modernize New York's outdated earned credit system by incentivizing participation in rehabilitative programming, improving safety within facilities, and expanding access to education and workforce development. The Second Look Act would create a commonsense process for judges to review sentences after ten years, allowing courts to assess rehabilitation and determine whether continued incarceration remains fair and necessary.

[Research](#), including data from [DOCCS](#), shows that earned time opportunities [reduce recidivism](#), [improve safety](#), and better prepare people for reentry. Yet New York continues to lag behind other states. Oklahoma allows incarcerated individuals to earn up to 50% off their sentences through good time credits, while New York's system remains far more restrictive. Similarly, Second Look policies have been adopted in multiple states and the District of Columbia, while New York still offers no meaningful mechanism for sentence reconsideration based on demonstrated rehabilitation.

For this reason, we add our strong support to the chorus of supporters that includes [union members](#), New York's [Chief Judge](#) and [Chief Administrative Judge](#), and [law enforcement](#), including the former [prison commissioner](#) of DOCCS, the [American Bar Association](#), [victim services and survivor justice groups](#), the [Comptroller](#), [over 250 organizations](#), and a [majority of New Yorkers](#). Together, we recognize that smart sentencing reform strengthens families, expands our workforce, and makes our communities safer.

We urge our elected leaders to act this session and pass the [Earned Time Act](#) (S.342/A.1085) and the [Second Look Act](#) (S.158/A.1283) to bring our loved ones home, strengthen our workforce, and build a more just and equitable New York.

Signed,

1199 SEIU
32BJ SEIU
New York State Laborers'
District Council 37
New York State Nurses Association
District Council 9 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
Local 338 RWDSU/UFCW
UAW Local 2325
United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers & Allied Workers, Local 22
Mason Tenders District Council
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU
Construction & General Building Laborers, Local 79