

CONTACT LEGISLATORS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Legislation is long overdue when it comes to geriatric parole and addressing the unmet needs of those aging in prison. Demand that both legislators and the Virginia Department of Corrections address the following:

- **Palliative Care:**
Implement palliative care programs and train all clinicians in how to manage serious illnesses and end-of-life care, especially for those with substance abuse histories.
- **Specialized Staff:**
Hire staff with expertise in geriatric and dementia care.
- **Address Dementia:**
Some states are finding innovative ways to deal with the growing number of prisoners with dementia, such as programs where fellow inmates take care of elderly inmates with dementia. This is much needed, but the burden of care should not fall solely on low-paid people in prison to take care of those with dementia.
- **Healthcare Access:**
Ensure that older people in prison have timely access to appropriate medical care and that their higher healthcare needs and costs associated with this population are funded.
- **Research and Data:**
Conduct research to identify risk factors for high medical expenditures among older prisoners and test interventions to improve healthcare value.
- **Geriatric Housing Units:**
Establish specialized geriatric housing units within prisons, but ensure they can access programming and healthcare like the general population.
- **Accessibility:**
Make prisons more accessible for older inmates, including wheelchair accessibility, accommodating those who can't climb to upper bunks, and providing healthcare and food inside units when prisoners are not mobile. Ensure ADA compliance.
- **Safety:**
Ensure the safety of older inmates from others who are younger and more violent.
- **Reentry:**
Fund transitional homes for the elderly so that when they are released, they have safe, ADA-compliant housing if they do not have a home plan with family.