

CITIZENS FOR PAROLE

Older Adult Parole Bill

HB 5256 House Sponsor: Anne Stava-Murray (D)

SB 2114 Senate Sponsor: Kimberly Lightford (D)

Problem:

Illinois does not have parole.

The Illinois Legislature eliminated parole in 1978. Since then, Illinois has not offered an opportunity for an incarcerated individual to sit in front of a parole board to be reviewed for release. This law, combined with the "tough on crime" years in the decades following has left Illinois with people who are "over incarcerated" - given extremely long sentences guaranteeing they will spend their entire life in prison. This has quadrupled the prison population during this time* resulting in Illinois taxpayers paying **millions of dollars in extra costs** associated with this geriatric population.

Most people think Illinois has parole.

It's confusing because the Illinois Department of Corrections uses the term Parole interchangeably for Mandatory Supervised Release, the time after a returning citizen who has served **their entire sentence** is in the community yet are still supervised.

Older adults who are incarcerated cost Illinois lots of money, yet most do not pose safety risks.

That's why this legislation focuses on those **60 years and older** who have served a 20 year sentence, or those who are younger but have served 30 years. This age group is targeted because of the low recidivism rate, as well as the very **high cost of keeping older adults incarcerated** through the end of their life. Older adults cost the the taxpayers almost three times as much to incarcerate compared to the general prison population. It's estimated this cost will add a **half billion dollars annually**, one third of the IDOC budget.

Solution:

Older Adult Parole is a good beginning.

HB5256 and SB2114 provide opportunities for a parole hearing for people 60 years and older, who have served 20 years of their sentence or for people younger who have been incarcerated 30 years. The legislation provides that victims' families will be notified in a timely manner and provided the opportunity to participate at the parole hearing

The parole board then determines if the individual is rehabilitated and if they can be returned to "useful citizenship", as deemed in the Illinois Constitution. This will **save Illinois millions of dollars** and not be a threat to safety.

Criminal justice advocate and chair of Citizens for Parole, Bill Ryan stated, "Our coalition supports parole for all ages, this bill is a first step focusing on those most costly to warehouse and least likely to re-offend. We have a Corrections department infected by racism with a culture that prioritizes punishment not rehabilitation. This is extremely costly and has not made us safe, " said Bill Ryan chair of Citizens for Parole.

What can be done to advocate for Parole for Older Adults?

Call your state legislators now. Go to <https://www.illinoispolicy.org/maps/> to find your information.

HB 5256 and SB 2114 Synopsis:

Amends the Unified Code of Corrections. Provides that a committed person who has attained the age of 60 years and served at least 20 consecutive years of imprisonment or a committed person who has served 30 consecutive years of imprisonment may submit a petition to the Prisoner Review Board seeking parole. Provides for the requirements of the petition. Provides that victims' families shall be notified in a timely manner and provided opportunity to participate at the parole hearing concerning the petitioner's application for parole under this provision in accordance with the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act, the Open Parole Hearings Act, and this Code. Provides that Prisoner Review Board hearings under this provision shall be conducted by a panel of at least 8 members of the Board and a majority vote of the panel is required to grant the petition and release the petitioner on parole. Provides that if parole is denied, the petitioner shall be eligible to reapply for parole no later than 3 years after denial.

Go to ilga.gov for the complete bill. If you want to be more involved or have questions, email socialjustice@hinsdaleunitarian.org or contact Bill Ryan at 708-574-8046.

*Info from US Department of Justice and IDOC