



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 742

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.1209/A.1297, also known as the Mayfield Act, in relation to eliminating mandatory minimum sentences.

By Council Members Salaam, Williams, Cabán, Hanif, Avilés, Ossé, Nurse, Ayala, Banks, Feliz and Restler

Whereas, New York State incarcerates more people per capita than any other major Western democracy, a consequence of sentencing policies developed over the past 50 years, according to the Prison Policy Initiative; and

Whereas, New York's sentencing policies shifted dramatically in the 1970s with the implementation of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, introducing mandatory minimum sentences and a two-strike law that enhanced penalties for repeat offenders; and

Whereas, Subsequent legislative changes in the 1970s and 1990s expanded mandatory minimums, increased sentence lengths, imposed consecutive sentences for minor offenses, curtailed parole opportunities, and bolstered prosecutorial power, resulting in a sentencing framework that limits judicial discretion in individual circumstances or mitigating factors and continues to drive mass incarceration despite partial repeals of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, according to the New York Law Journal; and

Whereas, Mandatory minimums were justified as a deterrent to crime and a means of ensuring uniformity in sentencing, but research has consistently shown that these policies fail to reduce crime rates effectively and disproportionately impact low-income individuals and communities of color; and

Whereas, People of color in New York comprised 91% of arrests for crimes carrying mandatory minimum sentences in 2019, compared to only 7% for white individuals, reflecting a profound racial disparity

in the application of mandatory minimum laws, according to the Center for Court Innovation; and

Whereas, Growing recognition of the ineffectiveness and harm caused by mandatory minimum sentences has led to calls for comprehensive sentencing reform to prioritize judicial discretion, rehabilitation, and community-based solutions over punitive measures; and

Whereas, The Mayfield Act, sponsored by State Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assemblymember Desmond Meeks, aims to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for prison, jail, and probation, thereby restoring judicial discretion to consider the individual circumstances of each case and reorienting the system towards fairness and rehabilitation; and

Whereas, This legislation seeks to repeal New York's mandate of lengthy periods of incarceration based on prior convictions, often disproportionately affecting marginalized communities and perpetuating cycles of mass incarceration; and

Whereas, The Mayfield Act also addresses the undue influence of prosecutorial discretion by eliminating plea deal restrictions that prohibit certain sentences based solely on the prosecutor's charging decisions, ensuring fairer outcomes within the criminal justice system; and

Whereas, The Mayfield Act seeks to address longstanding disparities and advance fairness within New York State's criminal justice system; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.1209/A.1297, also known as the Mayfield Act, in relation to eliminating mandatory minimum sentences.

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