

Amistad Law Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://amistadlaw.org/news/report-back-press-conference-and-rally-free-our-elders>

Campaign and Advocacy

On Thursday, September 30th, dozens of family members of the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals gathered with elected officials to call for a pathway home for elderly incarcerated people. The press conference took place at City Hall in Philadelphia and was attended by Senator SharifStreet, Senator Nikil Saval, Senator Anthony Williams, Rep. Chris Rabb, Rep. Rick Krajewski, Council Member Kendra Brooks and Council Member Helen Gym among others.

Amistad Law Project co-sponsored the press conference which was organized by our friends and colleagues at Straight Ahead. Family members of the incarcerated who work with Amistads Free Them to Heal Us network showed up and stood tall for second chances for their loved ones wearing shirts that read Bring Our Loved Ones Home.



The press conference was in support of SB 835 a bill introduced by Senator Sharif Streetthat would create both geriatric and medical parole. If passed this bill would allow people to go before the parole board if they were seriously ill or if they were over 55 years old and had served either 25 years or half of their minimumsentence whichever is less.

Marcie Marra, a family member leader with Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration who has also helped family members new to the movement get organized with Free Them to Heal Us, made it plain saying,"withholding mercy from advanced elders who have served decades of incarceration will not make anyone whole."

People hold a yellow banner that reads 'Free Our Elders'

Over 8,200 people in Pennsylvania are sentenced to life without parole or virtual life without parole sentences that ensure they will die in prison. **Pennsylvania is turning prisons into nursing homes.** Just last month the Department of Corrections announced its intent to open a new dementia care unit at SCI-Rockview.

Rep. Rick Krajewski commented on this sad state of affairs saying "I am angry and ashamed that the state is spending millions to hold aging and elderly people in prison, those we know after decades of imprisonment pose no risk."

People over 65 who are released from prison commit new crimes at a rate of less than 1%. We have long known that elderly and aging incarcerated people are the least likely to reoffend yet our Commonwealth keeps them imprisoned at a terrible cost both to their communities and society at large. **But we can turn things around and end the inhumane practice of death by incarceration.**

Through movement building, educating the public, advocating with legislators and exposing the often obscured reality of aging people in prison we can win parole eligibility for aging and seriously ill incarcerated people.

This press conference was an important step in this process and Amistad Law Project is committed to working with our movement partners to win a pathway home for our elders in prison.

Learn more about our [campaign to end death by incarceration](#) and sign up below to get involved in the fight to bring our elders home.