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Date: March 26, 2025

Re: SB 6471A - Marvin Mayfield Act

Position: SUPPORT

To: Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie

Dear Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie,

My name is Cheryl Morris, I am a retired Deputy Superintendent of Program Services at the New York State Department of Corrections, as well as a board member for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP). Thank you for the opportunity to express my strong support for the Marvin Mayfield Act, which would eliminate mandatory minimums, allowing judges to instead consider the individual factors of a case when deciding sentencing. I believe this legislation is a crucial step towards reducing unnecessary incarceration and improving public safety.

LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

I know from my career with the New York State Department of Corrections that it is crucial to prioritize public safety with our limited prison resources. New York spends an average of [\\$115,000 a year, or over \\$315 a day, to incarcerate just one person](#). This is a heavy burden on taxpayers, and we must ensure that we are making the best possible use of their money. When we overcrowd prisons and incarcerate those who no longer pose a threat, we waste resources that could otherwise be invested in helping individuals work toward personal improvement and transformation.

Mandatory minimums are a key driver of unnecessary incarceration. These

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

policies compel judges to hand down extreme sentences for certain charges, removing judicial checks and balances that would otherwise allow them to choose a sentence that fits the particular individual and situation. While mandatory minimum laws were designed with serious drug traffickers in mind, penalties have been [applied more broadly than Congress may have anticipated](#), often resulting in [lengthy imprisonment of offenders who played relatively minor, non-violent roles](#). There is no evidence that mandatory minimum sentences result in more effective rehabilitation, improved public safety, or less crime, but we do know that they have [cost taxpayers billions](#) of dollars.

Fortunately, with the Marvin Mayfield Act, New York now has the opportunity to eliminate mandatory minimums and allow judges to consider the individual factors in a case when deciding sentencing. The Marvin Mayfield Act would also eliminate plea deal restrictions that prohibit particular sentences based solely on the prosecutor's charging decisions.

The Marvin Mayfield Act is supported by [over 200 organizations](#), the [American Bar Association](#), and dozens of [judges](#), including the [Chief Judge of New York State](#). This essential legislation is also supported by other [law enforcement](#) professionals, including the former [commissioner](#) of New York's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Those who work in the criminal justice system understand that eliminating mandatory minimums would reduce unnecessary incarceration and allow law enforcement to better prioritize protecting public safety.

Passing the Marvin Mayfield Act would also help rebuild police-community trust among communities of color by rectifying historical injustices in sentencing. Mandatory minimums have disproportionately impacted people of color. For example, in 2019, Black and brown people accounted for [91%](#) of arrests for charges with mandatory minimums. Nearly [75%](#) of people in New York's prisons are Black or brown, and federally, [almost half of people serving life sentences are Black](#). Eliminating mandatory minimums would allow us to begin addressing these racialized sentencing disparities, which is essential for rebuilding the community trust that law enforcement depends upon to effectively protect public safety.

I urge New York lawmakers to pass the Marvin Mayfield Act to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences. By restoring judicial discretion, New York can ensure that the punishment is commensurate with the crime committed, while taking a meaningful step toward reducing unnecessary incarceration and rebuilding public trust in our legal system.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective in support of this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Deputy Superintendent Cheryl Morris (Ret.)
NYS Department of Corrections
Albany, New York