



## News From State Senator

# Velmanette Montgomery

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### SENATE AND ASSEMBLY APPROVE MONTGOMERY BILL REQUIRING DISTRIBUTION OF HIV /AIDS PREVENTION INFORMATION TO PEOPLE IN PRISON AND UPON RELEASE

Albany, NY (June 19, 2008): The State Senate gave final approval this week to legislation (S8508/A8849) that requires New York correctional facilities to provide people in prison with information about the prevention of HIV, and how to obtain HIV testing and counseling services upon release.

The legislation, sponsored by Senator Velmanette Montgomery (D-Brooklyn) and Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples (D-Buffalo), now goes to Governor Paterson for approval before becoming law.

“Incarceration is a major factor in HIV infection among communities of color, African American and Latino/as in particular,” charges Senator Montgomery, noting that New York has the highest HIV infected inmate population in the nation. A US Department of Justice report reveals that in 2006, there were 4,000 inmates or 6.5 % of the total New York State prison population (3,650 men and 350 women) living with HIV. Of the estimated 35,000 to 47,000 HIV positive individuals residing in correctional facilities nationwide, one third are released back in the community each year.

In New York State, more than 26,000 people are released from state prisons each year. up to 1,600 of this population may be HIV positive. Of the total number of people released from New York State prisons, approximately 53% or 14,000 return to communities throughout the five boroughs of New York City. And, of the 14,000 people re-entering downstate communities, approximately 3,400 return to Kings County, according to the Office of the Brooklyn District Attorney; based on the total number of people with HIV in prison 6.5 %, the estimated 200 individuals returning to Kings County may be HIV positive.

**“As men and women transition from prison life to their home communities, there should be no wait time for medical and support services,” Montgomery said. noting that if her bill becomes law, all people being released from prison will receive information and referrals to community based HIV prevention, education, and counseling resources located within the neighborhoods to which they are returning.**

Underscoring the high rate of HIV infection among communities of color, Assemblywoman Peoples, said “According to a recent study by researchers at D.C. Berkeley, the high rate of African American men in incarceration may also have played a role in the rapid spread of HIV throughout African American communities.”

Senator Montgomery added: “The epidemic is due, in part to the fact that prison systems are havens for high risk behaviors that make the spread of HIV prevalent, including intravenous IV drug use, tattooing, unprotected sex between men and male rape, and the use of contaminated cutting instruments.” added Senator Montgomery, who is also a sponsor of legislation that would require the distribution of condoms in prisons to help stem the high infection rate of HIV.

in 2000, the Correctional Association of New York released report, titled “Health Care in New York State Prisons.” Among the findings, it revealed that, “The New York State prison system has the highest percentage of HIV positive inmates than any other state prison system in the country. Yet, site visits to 22 prisons revealed uneven care, medical staff who lacked basic knowledge of HIV/AIDS, and inmates who reported they had no idea how to get an HIV test.