



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Legislation Text

File #: 23-1458, Version: 1

Agenda Summary

In support of a prison moratorium and elder parole.

Official Text

WHEREAS: On June 26th, for the first time in our Commonwealth's legislative history, 22 incarcerated women testified live from MCI-Framingham via Zoom to our state legislators in support of passing two bills (S.1979/H.1795) that would require a five-year prison and jail construction moratorium; and

WHEREAS: These bills were passed last legislative session after advocates such as The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls as well as Families for Justice as Healing built public support for these measures, only for them to ultimately be vetoed by Republican Governor Charlie Baker; and

WHEREAS: The passage of these bills would not prohibit any necessary repairs to existing carceral facilities; and

WHEREAS: The Baker administration proposed the construction of a new women's prison, at a cost of \$50 million, to house the women in Commonwealth's singular women's prison, MCI-Framingham; and

WHEREAS: Massachusetts has seen rapid decline in the number of incarcerated women over the last decade, as incarcerated women at MCI-Framingham decreased from over 600 to the about 200 currently; and

WHEREAS: Massachusetts could continue to maximize pathways for release through implementing elder parole by passing An Act relative to Parole Review for Aging Incarcerated People (Elder Parole S1547/H2397), which would make people ages 55 and older eligible to see the Parole Board after they have served half of their sentence or at least 15 years; and

WHEREAS: Over a dozen of the women incarcerated in MCI-Framingham are over the age of 60; and

WHEREAS: Approximately 20% of women incarcerated at MCI-Framingham are pre-trial detainees from Middlesex County, many held on bail of less than \$2000; and

WHEREAS: The Somerville City Council views decarceration as a matter of racial, gender, and class justice; and

WHEREAS: Governor Healey has yet to either publicly oppose the construction of the new women's prison or the campaign to pass the moratorium bill; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council supports the passage of the aforementioned bills implementing a prison moratorium and elder parole as means of intersectional justice and decarceration; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City calls upon Governor Healey to publicly support the passage of the aforementioned bills and to publicly oppose the construction of a new women's prison.