

For Immediate Release
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**Senator Montgomery, Attorney General Spitzer and
Criminal Justice Advocates Meet to Discuss Support Services
and Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated People**

Albany, New York (March 2, 2006): At a recent meeting organized by State Senator Velmanette Montgomery (D-Brooklyn), criminal justice advocates from throughout the state were invited to engage in a dialogue with State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, chief prosecutor for New York, regarding proposals to help ensure that individuals released from prison are provided with adequate services and opportunities to support their successful transition back into community living.

During the exchange, Mr. Spitzer heard from several previously incarcerated people who are now professionals leading organizations that provide a myriad of services designed to help former prisoners navigate a positive path upon their release from prison. Other meeting participants included representatives of long-standing nonprofit organizations that serve prisoners and their families in a wide variety of ways.

The groups that were represented include the Osborne Association; Fortune Society; Citizens for Restorative Justice; Women's Prison Association; Bard Prison Initiative of Bard College; New York Therapeutic Communities; NuLeadership Policy Group of Medgar Evers College; New York State Defender's Association; Prison Families of New York; Legal Action Center; Peter Young Housing, Industries and Treatment; and the Urban Justice Center.

Commenting on the meeting, Senator Montgomery said, "I believe it is important for Attorney General Spitzer to hear about the shortcomings of the current system and to hear ideas for reform from the people who have really and truly been there. If our state is going to implement successful transition programs, dialogues like these help to set the stage.

"New York's policy makers need to hear directly from men and women who have lived behind bars and who are now on the outside looking in with an eye towards helping others who have shared similar fates."

Senator Montgomery pointed out that the advocates' testimony focused on the need for an statewide plan to address the obstacles that impede a successful re-entry. This plan -- which would be designed and implemented by various governmental agencies, community-based groups and individual criminal justice advocates -- would be put in motion at the time of

sentencing and continue throughout incarceration and upon release from prison.

The advocates emphasized that an effective re-entry plan must include a continuum of comprehensive programs and services that address the education, job, housing, substance abuse treatment, primary health care, mental health and other needs of men and women who are striving to reenter society and be productive, law-abiding citizens.

“An important part of the equation for their success is a permanent funding stream that will support existing community-based providers that are on the front lines delivering the services and support the creation of new initiatives statewide,” underscored the Senator.

Mr. Spitzer expressed his willingness to participate in future meetings on this issue with Senator Montgomery and criminal justice advocates.

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