

# TIMELINES

## Monte Nido comes to Rockland

Adult eating disorder treatment center Monte Nido and Affiliates will be opening in New City this spring to help cope and care for individuals struggling with unhealthy dietary habits. At the center, patients will receive both medical and psychiatric assistance along with nutritional support and exercise planning in order to effectively get them on a healthier track.

Additionally, individualized therapy sessions will be offered along with 24/7 nursing assistance as a means of support from professionals and staff members to help with the transition after leaving the facility and receiving additional psychiatric care in order to prevent a relapse or pattern of violent behaviors.

The new Rockland location will be the sixth operating treatment center under the Monte Nido name in the state of New York and will service both adult male and females. The center has already provided support for adults struggling with issues such as anorexia and bulimia in fifteen different states around the country and has been in operation since 1996.

## NYC Sees record lack of snow

New York City is heading towards breaking a winter record in the coming days due to the lack of snow received so far this season that has been accompanied by mild temperatures and damp rainy conditions. It has been almost a year since there has been significant snowfall in NYC which could top the record from 2020 which 332 days pass until snowfall occurred with 1973 following behind with 320 days. Despite rumors of a snowless winter, a storm is expected to hit this Wednesday with a reported 18 inches for upstate New York and various parts of New England. However, only a slight dusting with little snow accumulation is projected to hit the city which may not be considered a measurable amount for the 2023 winter season as at least 0.1 inches is needed in order to count as such. The delayed snowfall could still signal a heavier winter to come in February as it is considered to be the snowiest month in New York City.

## California Shootings

A second mass shooting took place in California this past week after seven people were killed in Half Moon Bay on Monday. The 67-year-old suspect Chunli Zhao opened fire at two different locations using a semi-automatic handgun. The motive behind the shooting has been believed to be work related as his co-workers were said to be targeted in the attack.

Zhao was found and apprehended in his car following the shooting and was reportedly arrested without incident. This comes after suspect Huu Can Tran opened fire at a dance studio in Monterey Park three days before that left 11 people dead.

The shooting occurred during a Lunar New Year celebration with the victims ranging in age from late 50's to early 70's. Tran was later found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in his vehicle on Sunday. A candlelight vigil was held in honor of the slain victims at the scene of the shooting on Tuesday night.

## US Tanks to Ukraine

The US government has announced it's decision to send dozens of M1 Abrams battle tanks to Ukraine amid their ongoing fight to repel a Russian invasion. The battle tanks are said to be acquired through the Ukraine Security Assistance (USAI) which allows the Biden administration to get them from allies in the industry who can procure and send weapons on their behalf. About 30 tanks are rumored to be sent over but the length of the process is unclear as it could take months to obtain them along with the continuing debate over whether or not it would be appropriate to send them due to the cost of the equipment and the amount of training needed to properly operate it.

Additionally, other Western nations such as Germany have also offered their assistance and said that they would send over their Leopard 2 tanks if the US provided the M1 Abrams. This decision could significantly impact the war between Ukraine and Russia in their battle over land disputes as the latter has continued to use their military influence to assert domination.

# Club West: A new home for Rockland's retirees

Are you an active senior looking to finally settle down in a community with people who share the same interests as you? Well look no further, The Club West at Pearl River offers all of the necessary resources and luxury amenities you need to feel like you are on a 24/7 vacation schedule.

Located just over the Bergen County border, The Club West at Pearl River has managed to become one of the area's newest eye catching additions especially with the increasing need for new suitable retirement communities in Rockland County.

"It really offers a brand new luxury style community that is not seen anywhere else," BNE property manager Eugene Madreperla says of The Club West.

The new gated complex was built in partnership with the New Jersey based company BNE Real Estate Group who helped develop The Club West into a model luxury housing complex.

"We really don't see many competing active adult communities throughout Rockland County," Madreperla says.

"It's great if you're looking for a location that is easily accessible and has like-minded people that share similar interests," he added.

The Club West offers several different floor plans and

apartment models varying in size with one to two bedrooms and bathrooms available in each unit.

The units also contain amenities such as brand new stainless steel appliances, modern color schemes, high ceilings, hardwood floors and even a private balcony or terrace.

In terms of activities, The Club West has a wide range including a state of the art fitness center with exercise classes available, yoga studio, outdoor dining area, gaming room and of course a pool to boot.

Other miscellaneous resources include complimentary Wi-Fi in all common areas, 24/7 onsite maintenance services and an additional storage unit or garage if needed for extra space.

The Club West has already received numerous rave reviews from residents since opening this past June with terms such as "stress free" and "easy living" being some of the many words to describe living at this pristine location.

"It really is awesome to help people find their new homes," Madreperla adds. "It's very rewarding to help them through what can be a stressful transition."

If you're ready to start that next chapter, call The Club West at Pearl River at 845-733-3155 to learn more information or book an appointment.

# Lawmakers and Supporters of Sentencing Reform Urge Governor Hochul Pass 3 "Common Sense" Bills in 2023

Lawmakers, formerly incarcerated people, family members and incarcerated loved ones, are supporting the sentencing reform rallied today at the Capitol to call for Governor Hochul and the New York State legislature to pass the "Communities Not Cages" legislative package in the 2023 session.

This package includes three sentencing reform bills designed to modernize New York's outdated sentencing laws to make them fairer and more just. These bills have all received the endorsement of the American Bar Association.

The Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act would eliminate mandatory minimum sentences to allow judges to make individualized decisions and consider mitigating circumstances in a case. Mandatory minimums serve to coerce defendants, innocent and guilty alike, to take plea deals rather than face severe sentences for exercising their constitutional right to trial. Judges have voiced support for this measure.

The Second Look Act would allow judges to review and reconsider excessive sentences. Under current sentencing laws, incarcerated people have no opportunity to demonstrate to a judge that they have transformed while incarcerated or to seek a reconsideration of their sentences based on changes in law and norms.

The Earned Time Act would strengthen and expand "good time" and "merit time" laws to encourage personal transformation in prison and reunite families.

"From the 1970's Rockefeller Drug Laws to the 1990's 'tough on crime' era, New York built a sentencing regime that funneled hundreds of thousands of people into cages," said Patrick Stephens, community leader with Center for Community Alternatives. "As intended, these laws exacerbated the mass criminalization and mass incarceration of Black and brown New Yorkers. These laws have also led to a system of coerced plea deals: 98% of convictions in our state are the result of guilty pleas—not trials—because of New York's draconian sentencing laws. Prosecutors use the threat of outrageous mandatory minimums to skirt due process and extract guilty pleas. This undermines fundamental fairness and our basic constitutional rights."

"When I was 17 years old, I was sentenced to 25 years to life," said Marcel Smith, a member of Center for Community Alternatives. "If we had the Second Look Act while I was incarcerated, I would have been eligible for a resentencing hearing. It didn't take 25 years to realize that I made a mistake or a bad decision. It didn't take 25 years to rehabilitate myself. And we can't wait another 25 years for these bills to pass and make a difference in the lives of over 30,000 people who are currently incarcerated across New York."

"My husband Bryon was punished because he exercised his right to trial. He ended up with decades in prison, despite being initially offered a 5 year plea deal," said Jolene Russ, member of Center for Community Alternatives. "It's irresponsible that New York doesn't value people's rehabilitation or transformation. That's why we need the Earned Time Act. We need real, viable options to hope."

"After decades of mass incarceration, it is time for a Second Look," said State Senator Julia Salazar, sponsor of the Second Look Act. "I am proud to support the Communities Not Cages Campaign and to sponsor the Second Look Act. This bill will give judges the opportunity to review and reconsider excessive sentences. Second Look has already been passed in 4 states, and it's time now for us to pass this important piece of legislation here in New York."

"Our opponents are for judicial discretion before we know the facts, before we know who this individual is, before they have had their day in court, before we have determined if they are innocent or guilty," said Senator Myrie, lead sponsor of the Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act. "After we know what the facts are, after there has been a determination of innocence or guilt, our opponents say there should be no discretion, that the punishment should be mandatory. I say to those people: you are a hypocrite. For each individual who comes before the court, that is a life, that is a whole story, a whole experience. Why would we not wait the court to consider the individual facts?"

"In 2023, the New York State legislature must continue to work to undo the punitive, violent policies of the past that have enabled the criminal legal system to disproportionately mass incarcerate Black, brown, immigrant, and low-income people, families, and communities. We must instead fight for legislation that addresses the root causes of community violence head on. I'm proud to support the Eliminate Mandatory Minimums, Second Look, and Earned Time Acts and grateful to the advocates who continue to fight to make New York a more just and equitable state for all," said Assembly member Jessica González-Rojas.

"I stand with my colleagues on passing three sentencing reform bills: The Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act, Second Look Act, and Earned Time Act," said Assembly Member Demond Meeks, sponsor of the Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act. "It is time for New York State to end the warehousing of our communities and begin rehabilitating and preparing them for a second chance at life. The Communities Not Cages package will cut down on the mass incar-

ceration of Black and brown people as well as allow judges to consider individual factors in each case. These bills are restorative and transformative for incarcerated individuals, their families and our communities."

"It is a benefit to both the community and the person re-entering society from incarceration to have opportunities for rehabilitation and to ensure sentencing is as equitable as possible," said Senator Jeremy Cooney, lead sponsor of the Earned Time Act. "The Communities Not Cages campaign enhances this work by comprehensively helping to ensure corrections resources are being utilized so that we are creating environments for our neighbors to thrive. At the legislative level, I am advocating for improvements to earned time credit as we work to incentivize participation in programming and create pathways to rehabilitation. This legislation will incentivize restorative environments inside prisons and better protect both incarcerated populations and corrections officers. I am proud to support the Communities Not Cages campaign and advocate for more effective ways to carry out sentencing in New York State."

"Incarcerated individuals are supposed to be in a system that fosters rehabilitation and transformation, with the goal of a healthy re-entry into society for the individual, their family, and the community," said Assembly Member Anna Kelles, sponsor of the Earned Time Act. "All too often, however, they are simply reduced to a number. It is time to empower our judicial system to view the individual merits of each case. This package of legislation allows judges to operate without the rigid constraints of mandatory minimums that do not account for a person's mental health status or experienced trauma. This will be a step forward in putting an end to our system of mass incarceration. The Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act, Second Look Act, and Earned Time Act are reinvestments in communities that have too often been neglected. They offer a review of sentences and provide a fair and just pathway to the possibility of parole, focusing on the goal of rehabilitation of our incarcerated population. I'm proud to sponsor the Earned Time Act that provides increased good time and merit time allowance credits to incarcerated individuals and incentivizes participation in educational, vocational, treatment-related, and other beneficial programming. When incarcerated individuals engage in rehabilitative programming, violence against corrections officers also is reduced. We need to pass this legislative package and increase participation in rehabilitative opportunities so that we can reduce violence inside prisons, change lives, preserve families, and allow for effective reintegration back into society upon completion of a sentence."

Over the past 50 years, New York's laws have resulted in increasingly harsh sentences. Decades-long prison terms have become the norm in New York. Every year, nearly 1,000 people are sentenced to 10 or more years in prison, and over 4,000 people—more than 10% of people in prison—have been there for 15 years or longer. New York State has the largest population of people serving terms of life imprisonment in the country. Nearly 7,000 New Yorkers are currently serving life sentences.

Judges have spoken out about their inability to address sentences that are extreme or unjust. For example, in 2016, Chief United States District Judge Stefan Underhill wrote in the New York Times that a 18-year sentence he had handed down was too harsh and lamented that he was unable to modify it.

Nationally, second look bills are gaining momentum with legislation passed in four states—Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Oregon—and the District of Columbia, and proposed in an additional 22 states. Federally, U.S. Senator Cory Booker has proposed second look legislation in Congress.

Despite clear research that longer prison sentences increase rather than reduce recidivism, New York has shifted focus from rehabilitation to warehousing people in prison for as long as possible. Over the past three decades, average sentence lengths in New York State have more than doubled even though research shows that longer prison sentences increase rather than decrease recidivism.

Research also shows that earned time opportunities help to prepare incarcerated people for reintegration, reducing recidivism rates and correctional costs. Good time and merit time programs support personal transformation by encouraging participation in education, employment, and other rehabilitative programs. However, during the 1990s, New York State slashed programs for incarcerated people and dramatically limited the time people could earn off their sentences. This included eliminating financial aid for incarcerated college students, decimating college-in-prison programs. New York also restricted access to merit time based on conviction type, eliminating key opportunities for rehabilitative programming and earned time for thousands of New Yorkers each year.

New York is substantially behind other states—including traditionally conservative states—on allowing incarcerated people to earn time off their sentences. For example, Alabama, Nebraska and Oklahoma all permit incarcerated people to earn over 50% earned time.

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