



October 25, 2022

Dear Governor Murphy, Senate President Nicholas Scutari and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin,

We, the Jury of Us Coalition, write to urge you to join our effort to pass and sign A977/S3043 into law to end New Jersey's misguided practice of prohibiting people with criminal convictions for life from serving on juries.

As you know, the right to a jury of one's peers is foundational. Yet, New Jersey bans between 438,000 and 533,000 people of the overall population from serving on juries due to criminal convictions. By connecting jury service to its criminal legal system—which has America's worst racial disparities—our state imports racism into its jury selection process. As a result, between 219,000 to 269,000 Black people in NJ are banned from jury service because of a conviction—a staggering 23% to 29% of NJ's overall Black population. By denying so many people – particularly Black and other people of color – from serving on juries, our juries become whitewashed and people of color accused of crimes are not judged by a jury of their peers. This undermines the legitimacy and integrity of New Jersey's justice system.

Prohibiting people with criminal convictions from serving on juries is also at odds with the goal of reintegrating people into society. People with criminal convictions who have served their time and regained their freedom should participate in the same civic duties as their neighbors. You acknowledged that when, with advocates by your side, you led New Jersey to restore the right to vote to formerly incarcerated people on probation and parole. Foundational anchors like voting and jury service connect the individual to their communities, benefiting everyone.

It is now time to join Maine, Indiana, North Dakota and Washington and allow people with criminal convictions to serve on juries. Any potential bias would be addressed by our existing voir dire system – which is set to be strengthened through the recommendations of the Judicial Conference on Jury Selection.

We urge you to prioritize passing and signing A977/S3043 into law so that our juries can reflect the rich racial, cultural and socioeconomic diversity of our state, strengthening both our justice system and our communities.

Respectfully,

All of Us or None -- North Jersey
All of Us or None -- South Jersey
ALLIANCE OF FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE
AllofUsPublishing
American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey (ACLU-NJ)
Atlantic City Independence Committee
Black Men United Coalition



Common Cause
Credible Messengers Inc.
F.O.R.T.E. House
Fair Share Housing Center
Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network
Latino Action Network
Latino Action Network Foundation
Lawyers for Equal Access to Advocacy & Dignity (LEAAD)
Meet em at the Gate
Meet Her at the Gate
NAACP New Jersey State Conference
National Action Network South Jersey Chapter
National Association of Social Workers - New Jersey
NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
New Jersey Office of the Public Defender
New Jersey Policy Perspective
New Jersey Working Families
Newark Communities for Accountable Policing
NEWARK COMMUNITY STREET TEAM
NuEntry Opportunity Specialists
Prison Policy Initiative
Prisoners Legal Advocacy Network (PLAN)
Reimagining Justice Inc
Returning Citizens Support Group
SALVATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
Seeds & Berries
Solidarity22
The Council on American-Islamic Relations, New Jersey (CAIR-NJ)
The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
Transformative Justice Initiative
Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ
Voice of the Experienced