

An Appeal to the Faith Community to Support the Equal Act and Eliminate Discriminatory Sentencing Disparities for Cocaine Offenses

The following was written in 2023 in support of the Equal Act

Some progress in reforming this law has been made. *The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010* reduced the disparity to 18:1 for pending and future cases only. *The First Step Act of 2020* made the 18:1 disparity retroactive to cover all those impacted by the original statute.

Black people are 77% of those sentenced for crack cocaine offenses, but only 27% of those sentenced for powdered cocaine offenses.

More needs to be done.

The Equal Act. HR 1693 and S-79 would equalize sentences imposed for crack and powder cocaine offenses and do so retroactively. Here are some of the reasons why it should be enacted into law.

There is no basis for the existing sentencing disparity in terms of the effects or dangers of the drugs involved.

Those convicted of crack cocaine offenses are subject to significantly longer sentences hence contributing to mass incarceration.

There are significant racial disparities in sentencing given the high proportion of Black people who are sentenced for crack cocaine offenses.

There is no correlation between crack or powder cocaine conviction and recidivism on reentry.

This bill has already passed the House by a strong bipartisan vote and is sponsored in the Senate by eleven Republican Senators, including several who joined in the past few months.

If we are to end mass incarceration, we must replace the laws and policies that led up to it.

Unjust sentencing laws pierce the very soul of justice, and the crack-cocaine punishment dichotomy twists the knife.

It is time.