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## Rangel Pushes Bill Against Unjust Crack Sentencing

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*Calls For End to All Mandatory Minimums at House Subcommittee Hearing.*

Congressman Charles B. Rangel on Tuesday renewed his call to end mandatory minimum prison sentences for drug offenses and restore judicial discretion in testimony before the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, & Homeland Security.

"The current system shows a lack of confidence in our judges," Rangel said at the hearing. "The only hope that once we get our common sense back, we'll do away with mandatory minimums."

Before a packed house of onlookers – many of whom donned bright red pins that read "The Disparity" – Rangel hailed his bill as a solution to the tarnished legacy of stiff cocaine penalties.

The current system imposes a 100-to-1 sentencing disparity between powder and crack offenses, mandating the same 5-year sentence for possessing 500 grams of powder as it does for just 5 grams of crack. His bill, the Crack Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act (H.R. 460), would eliminate the mandatory minimum for possession of cocaine and set mandatory crack triggers equal to powder levels.

The Congressman said that eliminating the disparity is a matter of fairness and good sense.

"At the time these stiff penalties were enacted, they were seen as the well-intentioned response to a frightening epidemic," Rangel said in a statement following the hearing. "But in reducing drug addiction and crime, those laws have swelled our prisons, fueled a crack epidemic that jails young Black men at disproportionate rates, left a generation of children without fathers and driven up the costs of a justice system focused more on harsh punishment than rehabilitation."

Rangel has been a leading voice on sensible drug policy and criminal justice, recently before the Supreme Court for granting judges greater flexibility in drug sentencing and testimony before the Sentencing Commission for retroactively lowering its inflated sentencing guidelines.

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