

Drug Policy Alliance

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Governor Pataki's Former Spokeswoman on Rockefeller Drug Laws, Caroline Quartararo Busted for Buying and Possessing 3 Rocks of Crack

Ms. Quartararo Scheduled to Return to Court on Felony Drug Charges on January 5th, Faces Up to Two-and-a-half Years in Jail

Ms. Quartararo and All Non-Violent Drug Offenders Need Treatment, Not Jail Says Drug Policy Alliance

Caroline Quartararo, a former spokeswoman on Rockefeller drug law reform for Governor Pataki was arrested on December 20th for possessing three rocks of crack cocaine. Ms. Quartararo was charged with fifth-degree drug possession, a felony, and loitering to buy drugs, a violation. The felony D drug charge carries a maximum penalty of two-and-a-half years.

After her arrest, Quartararo was suspended without pay. Quartararo is scheduled to return to court on January 5th. The Drug Policy Alliance, an organization that has been working for nearly ten years to reform New York's draconian drug laws, is calling for compassion and treatment for Ms. Quartararo.

"Caroline Quartararo's case reminds us that substance abuse does not discriminate," said Asha Bandele of the Drug Policy Alliance. "Unfortunately, our drug policies do. Approximately 92 percent of the people in prison on drug charges in New York are Black and Latino, despite equal drug use among blacks and whites.

"One can hope that Ms. Quartararo's difficulties will open her and Gov. Pataki's eyes to more compassionate and humane ways of dealing with substance abuse," continued Bandele. "There are thousands of non-violent drug offenders serving long prison terms who would also benefit from treatment instead of a jail cell."

After years of demands from advocates and elected officials to reform the Rockefeller Drug laws, in December 2004 and then in August 2005, small changes were enacted that allowed several hundred A1 and A2 felons to apply for resentencing. A recent report by the Legal Aid Society found that the majority of people eligible for resentencing remain behind bars a year after the changes.

"Despite the rhetoric about reform, even the partial changes that happened a year ago have not been fully realized. Close to 70 percent the people who were expected to be released remain

behind bars,” said William Gibney, attorney with the Legal Aid Society and author of the report. “We need to put pressure on the DA’s and the politicians to fully implement the first round of reforms and join us in the ongoing fight to create further reform of Rockefeller drug laws - the most destructive and punitive drug laws in the nation.”