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Local Activists and Criminal Justice Reform Leaders Host Press Conference Outside Adirondack Correctional Facility to Call on Gov. Cuomo and Legislative Leaders to Release Everyone from the New Prison Nursing Home

The Group Called on Cuomo to Grant Clemency To Everyone at the Facility and for State Legislative Leaders to Pass Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole Bills in the Interest of Public Health and Racial Justice

View Zoom Recording [Here](#)

(Ray Brook, New York) -- July 6, 2020 -- Local activists and criminal justice reform leaders hosted a press conference outside of Adirondack Correctional Facility to call on Governor Cuomo and New York State legislative leaders to release everyone from the new nursing home prison in support of public health and racial justice. The group called on Cuomo to grant clemency to everyone incarcerated at the facility, and for state lawmakers to pass Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole knowing Cuomo's dismal record on clemencies.

On June 2nd, Governor Cuomo emptied Adirondack Correctional Facility to create a [new prison nursing home](#) exclusively for older and sick incarcerated people as part of the state prison system's [COVID reopening plan](#). A majority of the people first transferred to the facility are [Black people who have already served a decade or more in prison](#) and from downstate New York. Some of the newly transferred incarcerated people have [families so far away](#) that they'll no longer be able to visit. Many of the incarcerated people came from [Fishkill](#) and [Otisville](#) Correctional Facilities, which have seen more COVID-19 cases and deaths than the large majority of prisons across the state. Incarcerated people were not tested before being transferred or upon immediate arrival to Adirondack. The Facility [only began testing people several weeks after the](#) transfers began. The results of those testing are [still pending](#) according to state prison officials. However, several weeks into the creation of the new prison nursing home, Ray Brook Correctional Facility, a federal prison less than one mile from Adirondack prison reported [five new COVID-19 cases](#). Both facilities share the same road, which staff at both places must take in order to leave and enter.

On June 26, [80 New York statewide and local advocacy organizations sent a letter](#) to Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, demanding the release of everyone at the facility in the interest of public health and racial justice. The letter called on Cuomo to grant clemency to everyone incarcerated at the facility and to minimally commute everyone's sentences to allow them to appear in front of the Parole Board for a chance at release. The letter also called on state lawmakers to pass Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole knowing [Cuomo's dismal record on clemencies](#).

[Elder Parole](#) would allow the State Board of Parole to provide an evaluation for potential parole release to incarcerated people aged 55 and older who have already served 15 or more years, including some of the state's oldest and most medically vulnerable incarcerated people. [Fair and Timely Parole](#) would provide more meaningful parole reviews for incarcerated people who are already parole eligible, and would ensure that their release decisions are based more on rehabilitation than on the nature of people's crimes.

Speakers at the press conference and digital rally said the following:

Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) Campaign, who served 38 years in prison, said, "We are calling on Governor Cuomo to grant clemencies to these elders at Adirondack and across the state. Our communities need these elders. I'm one of them. We're also calling on Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins to get on the right side of history and support an end to mass incarceration."

Martha Swan, Westport resident and Executive Director of John Brown Lives!, a racial justice advocacy group in the North Country, said, "The North Country made a deal with the devil decades ago by agreeing to incarcerate mostly Black fathers, sons and cousins. I appeal to my North Country neighbors not to turn your gaze away and get involved in this critical effort."

Jane Haugh, Upper Jay resident and Director of a local North Country social justice group, Wake the North Country, said, "We need to send these elders home where their communities need them so badly in this crisis. Let's start having a real conversation in the North Country that shifts our communities away from prisons."

Zohar Gitlis, North Country resident and Co-Chair of High Peaks Democratic Socialists of America, said, "As we stand here to call for compassion and humanity, we must reimagine rural relationships with mass incarceration. We as rural New Yorkers must speak up for our neighbors who are punished and hidden away during a pandemic."

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