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NEW YORK ADVOCATES DEMAND EMERGENCY ACTION IN RESPONSE TO NEW COVID-19 DEATH AT AUBURN PRISON

THREE INCARCERATED PEOPLE HAVE DIED OF COVID-19 IN NY STATE PRISONS IN LAST TWO WEEKS AMID COVID SURGE

NEW YORK -- On Tuesday, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) reported that an incarcerated person at Auburn Correctional Facility died of COVID-19. That's the third incarcerated person in NY State prisons to die of COVID-19 in the last two weeks. In response, **the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Parole Preparation Project, and the #HALTsolitary Campaign released the following statement:**

“Tens of thousands of New Yorkers in prison and their families are desperate for Governor Cuomo to take real action to stop COVID-19 behind bars. More than a thousand incarcerated people have contracted the virus in just the last month. Three have tragically died in the last two weeks. In response, the Governor suspended all visits from friends and family, but that won't stop the root of the COVID-19 problem in prisons: staff cycling in and out, the impossibility of social distancing, and lack of effective PPE. Cuomo must grant life-saving clemencies to vulnerable people and reduce the prison population right now, and the legislature must pass COVID-related reforms, including the Elder Parole bill, Fair and Timely Parole Act and the HALT Solitary Confinement Act to prevent more needless deaths behind bars.”

BACKGROUND: The New York State prison system reported the 21st death of an incarcerated person, this time at Auburn Correctional Facility, on December 29, 2020. DOCCS previously reported that another incarcerated person died of COVID-19 at Clinton Correctional Facility on December 22nd and at Woodbourne Correctional Facility on December 17.

Since December 1, 1,334 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19. There are currently outbreaks of the virus at Attica, Bedford Hills, Bare Hill, Clinton, Woodbourne, Groveland, Cayuga, and Walsh Correctional Facilities.

Amid the pandemic, Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted a total of [three clemencies](#) to New Yorkers in prison--fewer clemencies than [President Donald Trump](#), and governors in [California](#), [Illinois](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Kentucky](#), and other states across the country. Cuomo has refused to take action despite calls from [advocates](#), [attorneys](#), [family members of people in prison](#), [public health experts](#), [Members of Congress](#), [district attorneys and philanthropists](#), [editorial boards](#), and [high profile celebrities](#) for him to grant wide-sweeping clemencies to people in prison in response to the virus. Instead

of granting clemencies, Governor Cuomo has condemned thousands to solitary confinement, which [only exacerbates the harm](#) and spread of COVID-19.

There are many thousands of people in New York State prisons who are eligible for parole release, aged 50 and older, or imprisoned on a non-criminal technical parole violation, and/or within a year of their release date:

- 4,022 people who are already eligible for parole release
- 3,305 people held on technical parole violation
- 8,291 people aged 50 and older
- 6,524 within a year of max/condition release (including 5 women with infants who are part of the Bedford Hills nursery program and one pregnant woman)

Advocates have also called for lawmakers in Albany to pass three bills amid the pandemic:

- [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 sickest incarcerated people.
- [Fair and Timely Parole](#) would provide more meaningful parole reviews for incarcerated people who are already parole eligible.

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