

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:**

Dave George, 631-885-3565 / [ddgeorge23@gmail.com](mailto:ddgeorge23@gmail.com)

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**Advocates Demand Gov. Cuomo Grant Broad and Immediate Clemencies in Response to Figures From DOCCS That The Department Has Released Less Than One Half of 1 Percent of New Yorkers During COVID Pandemic**

**(New York, NY)** -- Today, the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Parole Preparation Project, #HALTsolitary Campaign, VOCAL-NY, Worth Rises and Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club released the following statement in response to figures released by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) that the Department has only released less than one half of one percent -- 162 total people -- of the prison population, so far during the COVID-19 crisis:

“It is unconscionable that Governor Cuomo and the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision have released less than one half of one of percent (162 people) of incarcerated people in New York State prisons in response to COVID-19, despite thousands being at serious mortal risk. New York remains the epicenter of this virus yet governors in Kentucky, California, Oklahoma, Washington, and elsewhere have released hundreds and thousands more people than Cuomo. The Governor must exercise national leadership by granting broad clemencies to New Yorkers incarcerated in his prisons, especially the thousands of older and medically vulnerable people who have unnecessarily languished behind bars for decades. While it’s too late for [Benjamin Smalls](#), the 15 other incarcerated New Yorkers who died from COVID-19 in DOCCS custody, and their families, it’s not too late for so many other New Yorkers.”

**Background:** Since the outbreak of COVID-19, at least 15 state prison systems and the federal prison system have recognized that preventing massive suffering and death behind bars necessitates significant reductions in prison populations, and have [reduced their incarcerated populations by more than one percent](#). Governors and state prison systems in Kentucky, California, Wisconsin, Utah, Maine, and Vermont, have all reduced their prison populations by at least four percent. [New York State prisons have more COVID cases](#), and higher rates of COVID, than all six of these states that have taken more action. New York State prisons have a high rate of infection despite only testing less than two percent of incarcerated people.

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