

## **\*\*STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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### **ADVOCATES CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO RELEASE INCARCERATED PEOPLE AMID COVID-19 SPIKE IN NY PRISONS**

**NEW YORK** -- On Friday, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) reported 120 new COVID-19 cases in the last six days, including outbreaks in seven state prisons. In response, **Center for Community Alternatives, Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Parole Preparation Project, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, HALT Solitary Confinement Campaign, New Hour for Women and Children, and [FWD.us](http://FWD.us)** released the following statement:

*“Governor Cuomo and state lawmakers must take immediate action to stop this deadly spike of COVID-19 across New York State prisons. The Governor must grant life-saving clemencies. State lawmakers must pass Elder Parole, Fair and Timely Parole, and the HALT Solitary Confinement Act. There is no time to waste. Without swift and bold action, the virus will continue to spread, and New Yorkers will die.”*

**BACKGROUND:** The New York State prison system has reported [120 new COVID-19 cases](#) amongst the incarcerated population in the last six days. There are currently outbreaks of the virus at Attica, Bedford Hills, Clinton, Woodbourne, Groveland, Cayuga, and Walsh Correctional Facilities.

Amid the pandemic, Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted [three total 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 more 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, 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.
- The [Humane Alternatives to Long-Term \(HALT\) Solitary Confinement Act](#) would end the torture of prolonged solitary confinement and replace it with more humane and effective alternatives while still allowing for true medical isolation as needed.

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