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*****STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Advocates Slam Gov. Cuomo for Granting Handful of Clemencies After Not Issuing a Single Clemency to New Yorkers in Prison in 2019

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Release Aging People in Prison Campaign and Parole Preparation Project released the following statement after Governor Cuomo granted 2 sentencing commutations to New Yorkers in prison on Friday, January 3rd, 2020.

“It is outrageous that Governor Cuomo issued only a small handful of clemencies and failed to grant a single sentencing commutation in 2019. As New York celebrates a new year and decade, thousands of New Yorkers continue to languish behind prison bars in 2020 because the governor continually refuses to use his executive clemency power in a meaningful way. While governors in Kentucky, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, California, and other states have recently used their executive power to promote freedom and reunite families, Cuomo continues to keep people in despair and families apart.

In 2015, Cuomo invited pro bono attorneys to help incarcerated people put together clemency petitions with the goal of granting more clemencies to worthy candidates. More than 6,000 New Yorkers in prison responded by applying for clemency in ways that demonstrated their remorse, accountability, many accomplishments, family and reentry support, and more. Yet to date, Cuomo has granted only 21 total commutations, an average of two per year since taking office in 2011.

If New York is to be a leader in the movement to end mass incarceration and the nationwide effort to resist President Trump’s racist agenda, then we need a progressive governor to show bold courage and leadership. Justice for one or two individuals isn’t enough. We call on Governor Cuomo to use his executive power in 2020 by commuting the long and life sentences of thousands of people in prison who are so desperately ready and fully qualified to be free and back with their families. In this new year, the lives of so many people—and so many communities—depend on Cuomo’s action.”

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