

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 22, 2020

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

**NEW YORK ADVOCATES DEMAND EMERGENCY DECARCERATION IN  
RESPONSE TO NEW COVID-19 DEATH AT CLINTON PRISON**

**NEW YORK** -- On Tuesday, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) reported that an incarcerated person at Clinton Correctional Facility died of COVID-19. That's the second incarcerated person in NY State prisons to die of COVID-19 in the last week. In response, **a coalition of advocates from New Hour for Women Children LI, Center for Community Alternatives, Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Parole Preparation Project, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, and the #HALTsolitary Campaign released the following statement:**

*“How many more incarcerated people have to die before Governor Cuomo and State lawmakers take action? New York’s prison system cannot and will not contain the harm and spread of the novel coronavirus, and their talking points about following the science are contradicted by actual medical experts who have called for urgent decarceration. The Governor must grant life-saving clemencies right now, and the legislature must pass COVID-related reforms, including the Elder Parole bill, Fair and Timely Parole Act, and HALT Solitary Confinement Act to save lives and prevent more needless deaths behind bars.”*

**BACKGROUND:** The New York State prison system reported the 20th death of an incarcerated person, this time at Clinton Correctional Facility, on December 22, 2020. DOCCS previously reported that another incarcerated person died of COVID-19 at Woodbourne Correctional Facility on December 17, 2020.

In the last three weeks, 668 incarcerated 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.
- 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.

###