

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

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 22, 2020

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

### **ADVOCATES RESPOND TO NEW YORK STATE PRISON CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**NEW YORK** -- The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision announced they will be closing three state prisons in the coming weeks, including Watertown, Gowanda, and Clinton Annex Correctional Facilities. **In response, Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign released the following statement:**

*“Upstate prisons cannot be a jobs program. We welcome these prison closures but know that far more needs to be done to reduce the state prison population at a time when record-breaking numbers of incarcerated people are infected with COVID-19. The Governor should grant live-saving clemencies before the new year and state lawmakers must go back to Albany in 2021 and pass parole reform, specifically the Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole bills, as a humane solution to the COVID crisis and the injustice of mass incarceration.”*

**BACKGROUND:** 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.

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

- 4,022 people 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 mothers with infants who are part of the Bedford Hills nursery program and one pregnant person)

Advocates have also called for lawmakers in Albany to pass two 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.