

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

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FAMILIES OF THOSE IN PRISON AND ADVOCATES TO HOLD VIGIL OUTSIDE GOVERNOR'S MANSION TO CALL ON GOV. CUOMO TO GRANT EMERGENCY CLEMENCIES AMIDST COVID-19 SURGE

WHEN: Monday, December 7th, 5:30PM

WHERE: Outside Governor's Mansion, Eagle Street, Albany; and Via Zoom: bit.ly/Free-Them

WHAT: New Yorkers with family members in prison, formerly incarcerated people, and advocates will hold a socially distant vigil to call on Governor Andrew Cuomo to grant clemencies to New Yorkers in prison and reunite families amid the COVID-19 surge in the NY State prison system, and ahead of the holidays.

WHO: New Yorkers with family members in prison, formerly incarcerated people, and advocates from the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Albany Social Justice Center, All of Us, Bethlehem United, Black Freedom Project, Capital Area Against Mass Incarceration (CAAMI), Capital District Coalition Against Islamophobia, Capital District Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Capital District Showing Up for Racial Justice (CD-SURJ), Citizen Action of New York, Jewish Voice for Peace-Albany Chapter, Muslim Solidarity Committee, NYS Prisoner Justice Network, Parole Justice Albany, Project Salam, Something Out Of Nothing (S.O.O.N.), Troy 4 Black Lives, VOCAL-NY, Women Against War

BACKGROUND: New York State prisons have recently experienced a [record-breaking number of COVID-19 infections](#), including new outbreaks at [Attica](#) and [Cayuga](#) prisons. 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](#), 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.

During his nearly 10-year tenure as governor, Cuomo has granted 24 total clemencies--fewer than governors in Republican states such as [Oklahoma](#) and [Kentucky](#), and Democratic states such as California. Since 2016, [more than 6,400 incarcerated people in New York State prisons have submitted clemency applications](#). Thousands of applications have gone unanswered for years.

The New York State constitution explicitly permits Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to grant clemency to anyone in the New York State prison system. There are currently roughly 36,000 people incarcerated in New York State prisons--nearly 9,000 are elderly people and roughly 8,600 are serving life sentences.

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