

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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**AHEAD OF THANKSGIVING AND AMIDST COVID-19 SURGE,
FAMILIES OF THOSE IN PRISON, FORMERLY INCARCERATED
LEADERS, LAWMAKERS, AND ADVOCATES RALLIED TO CALL
ON GOVERNOR CUOMO TO GRANT CLEMENCY
TO BRING PEOPLE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

Full [recording of the rally here](#)

(New York, NY) -- November 23, 2020 -- Roughly 100 New Yorkers, including those with family members in prison, formerly incarcerated people, New York State lawmakers, and advocates held a socially distant rally to call on Governor Andrew Cuomo to grant clemencies to New Yorkers in prison and reunite families ahead of Thanksgiving and the holiday season, and amid a surge of COVID-19 across the state prison system.

New York State prisons have recently experienced a [record-breaking number of COVID-19 infections](#). 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.

Nawanna Tucker, Queens Community Leader with the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, who is seeking clemency for her currently incarcerated husband, said, “My husband has been incarcerated for 32 years. I’m standing with my ten-year-old daughter who hasn’t seen her father since February. We don’t want our loved ones making masks, coffins, and hand sanitizer. We want them home with us.”

Stanley Bellamy, a Queens native who is currently incarcerated at Green Haven prison and is seeking clemency called into the rally and said, “What we have control over is how we treat one another. How we empathize with each other. There’s a real need for compassion, to reunite families. Fortunately in New York, Governor Cuomo could do this with a stroke of a pen.”

Assembly Member elect Zohran Mamdani, said, “Often politicians try to disconnect the dots to make it hard for you to connect the pain you feel to holding someone accountable. Clemency can be done with the stroke of a pen. If you are wondering why people have not been granted clemency now, it’s because of two words: Andrew Cuomo.”

Assembly Member elect Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, said, “Cuomo, the solution is easy. It’s clemency now. We can get this done. I’m entering the NY Assembly with a vision for equity and justice. And justice looks like freedom.”

Senator Elect Jabari Brisport, said, “New York prisons and jails have been the epicenter of the epicenter of Covid. We cram too many people in cages who should not be there. What are we doing? In a pandemic we are sentencing them to death.”

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