

Governor Andrew Cuomo
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

**Acting Commissioner
Anthony Annucci**
1220 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12226

Chairwoman Tina Stanford
1220 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12226

RE: RELEASING NEW YORKERS FROM PRISON IS THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE LIVES IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

To Governor Andrew Cuomo, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Anthony Annucci, and Chairwoman of the Parole Board Tina Stanford,

We are in the midst of a global pandemic of unimaginable proportions. While the world works to adjust and enact drastic measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among the public, a massive humanitarian crisis is unfolding inside New York State prisons. Of the 43,800 New Yorkers who are currently in custody, 72% are Black or Latinx, 9,500 are aged 50 and older, and 3,500 have been behind bars for more than 20 years, including 800 people who have served over 30 years.

Deplorable, unsanitary and inhumane conditions in our state correctional facilities guarantee that the spread of coronavirus will be rapid and lethal. Practices like frequent hand-washing, social distancing and self-quarantine are nearly impossible inside our prisons. We agree with the hundreds of medical and public health experts and advocates across the country: **the only effective way to prevent the unending spread of COVID-19 is to release people from the confines of prison.** If you do not act now, we must prepare for a catastrophic loss of life behind bars.

We write to you calling for immediate and urgent action. We do so in our capacity as legislators elected to represent New York communities and in accordance with our steadfast commitment to protect New York's most vulnerable. We join advocates, attorneys, formerly incarcerated people and family members with loved ones in prison to urge you to act in accordance with the belief that all people have an inherent right to dignity, care and compassion, and that no person, including those who have caused harm, deserves to suffer or die behind bars of COVID-19.

You have the power to act, and to stave off the widespread harms and potential loss of life that will result from the further spread of Covid-19 in New York state prisons. Critically, doing so is consistent with safety and the welfare of all New Yorkers. Releasing people from prison, especially those who have served long sentences and are aging or elderly, strengthens families and ensures the overall well-being of our communities. It also allows our state to divert millions of dollars otherwise spent on locking people up to critical resources when our state needs them most.

WE CALL ON YOU TO JOIN US IN THIS CRITICAL MOMENT BY TAKING THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- **Release those who are older, medically vulnerable, parole eligible or within one year of their release date.**
- **Expedite reentry** by removing barriers to housing, expediting field investigations of residences and residential treatment programs to ensure the swift release of people from prison, and partnering with existing reentry and community-based organizations to support people released during the pandemic.
- **Supervise those released from prisons in a manner consistent with the prioritization of public health** by terminating the supervision of those who have successfully completed one year of supervision and by suspending travel restrictions, programming requirements, the enforcement of technical violations, and the use of electronic monitoring.
- **Improve the conditions inside New York State prisons** by immediately implementing measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus while respecting the dignity, physical health, mental well-being, and basic liberties of all people in prisons, including: making testing and medical treatment readily available to all; ending solitary confinement; providing free and unlimited access to phone calls, emails, and mail for communication with family members, loved ones, legal counsel, and the courts; ensuring access to supportive services; justly compensating those who provide labor to the state; and guaranteeing transparency regarding steps taken to address the danger of coronavirus and the threat of its spread.

This letter serves both as a warning for what is to come, and a plea for immediate action. The lives of thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers depend on the actions you take today.

SINCERELY,

Assembly Member & Majority Leader
Crystal Peoples-Stokes

Assembly Member
Joe Lentol

Assembly Member
Dick Gottfried

Assembly Member
Dan Quart

Assembly Member
Karines Reyes

Assembly Member
Walter T Mosley

Assembly Member
Carmen De La Rosa

Assembly Member
Aravella Simotas

Assembly Member
Nick Perry

Assembly Member
Felix Ortiz

Assembly Member
Robert Carroll

Assembly Member
Michael Blake

Assembly Member
Nathalia Fernandez

Assembly Member
Ron Kim

Assembly Member
Daniel O'Donnell

Assembly Member
Linda B Rosenthal

Assembly Member
Catalina Cruz

Assembly Member
Rebecca Seawright

Assembly Member
Harvey Epstein

Assembly Member
Patricia Fahy

Assembly Member
Latoya Joyner

Assembly Member
Latrice Walker

Assembly Member
Robert Rodriguez

Assembly Member
Nily Rozic

Assembly Member
Victor Pichardo

Assembly Member
Andrew Hevesi

Assembly Member
Jo-Anne Simon



**Senator
Kevin Parker**



**Assembly Member
Alicia Hyndman**



**Assembly Member
Al Taylor**



**Senator
Gustavo Rivera**



**Senator
Julia Salazar**



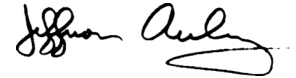
**Assembly Member
Yuh-Line Niou**



**Assembly Member
Deborah Glick**



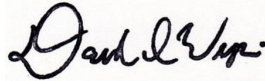
**Senator
Luis Sepulveda**



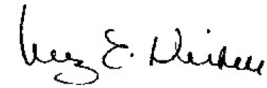
**Assembly Member
Jeffrion Aubry**



**Senator
Leroy Comrie**



**Assembly Member
David Weprin**



**Assembly Member
Inez Dickens**



**Senator
Brad Hoylman**



**Senator
Jessica Ramos**



**Assembly Member
Mathilde Frontus**




**Assembly Member
Charles Barron**



**Senator
Zellnor Myrie**



**Assembly Member
Tremaine Wright**



**Assembly Member
Jose Rivera**



**Senator
James Sanders**