

****PRESS STATEMENT****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WITH 6 NEW DEATHS AND SPIKE IN COVID CASES IN STATE PRISONS, ADVOCATES AND FAMILY MEMBERS CALL ON GOVERNOR CUOMO TO ENSURE INCARCERATED NEW YORKERS ARE PRIORITIZED FOR VACCINE ACCESS

THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES ARE LEFT WONDERING WHEN THEIR LOVED ONES WILL GAIN ACCESS TO VACCINES

NEW YORK -- Today, during a New York State [Department of Health briefing](#) for legislators, Dr. Howard Zucker and Larry Schwarz told state legislators that incarcerated people in state prisons will be included in the next phase of vaccinations (1B) along with corrections officers. However, Senate Minority Leader Robert Ort claimed that a different message was delivered to the [Senate minority conference](#). In response, **Center for Community Alternatives, Release Aging People in Prison, the #HALT Solitary Confinement Campaign, and FWD.us released the following statement:**

“After weeks of advocacy, we and tens of thousands of New Yorkers across the state are desperately hoping that the New York State Department of Health will ensure that incarcerated people - like all vulnerable New Yorkers in congregate settings - have early access to the COVID-19 vaccine. It’s the right thing to do and in line with CDC best practices. Simultaneously, and understanding that the vaccine will take many months to adequately distribute to all New Yorkers, the legislature has a job to do. Public health experts across the country agree that decarceration is critical as a public health measure. With the start of the legislative session, we call on New York’s legislature to make long-lasting changes to stop COVID-19 behind bars, decarcerate, and end the torture of solitary confinement by passing Elder Parole, Fair and Timely Parole, and the HALT Solitary Confinement Act.”

BACKGROUND:

- For weeks, [advocates](#) have called on the Governor to ensure that all vulnerable New Yorkers, including incarcerated people, have early access to COVID-19 vaccines, as the Governor’s [vaccine distribution plan](#) prioritized New Yorkers in congregate care settings, but did not specify whether this included jails, prisons, youth detention or immigrant detention centers.
- Tomorrow is the start of the New York State legislative session and advocates are calling for the passage of Elder Parole, Fair and Timely Parole and the HALT Solitary Confinement Act.

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