

****PRESS STATEMENT****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ADVOCATES SLAM GOV. ANDREW CUOMO AFTER ANOTHER INCARCERATED PERSON DIES OF COVID-19 IN NY PRISONS

ADVOCATES CALL ON LAWMAKERS TO PASS REFORMS AS THEY WORK TO RESTORE CO-EQUAL BRANCH POWER IN ALBANY

THE NUMBER OF INCARCERATED PEOPLE IN NY STATE PRISONS WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 SURPASSED 6,000

NEW YORK -- Yesterday, the NY State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) reported that yet another incarcerated person—at Riverview Correctional Facility—died of COVID-19. This person represents the 34th known COVID-related death in a New York prison. Since the start of the pandemic, over [6,000 incarcerated people](#) have contracted COVID-19. **In response, Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign and People’s Campaign for Parole Justice leader released the following statement:**

“As the whole world awakens to the horrors of Governor Cuomo’s personal and professional conduct, another family is mourning the loss of their loved one in prison. This death is yet another example of the fatal harm Cuomo’s prison system causes New Yorkers behind bars and their families. New York State lawmakers must pass life-saving COVID-related reforms, including Elder Parole, Fair & Timely Parole, and the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, in this critical moment as they reassert themselves as a co-equal branch of government, and a check on the Governor’s misuse of power.”

BACKGROUND: The New York State prison system reported the 34th death of incarcerated people from COVID-19, this time at Riverview Correctional Facility. The number of incarcerated people who have tested positive for the virus has officially surpassed 6,000.

Through nearly twelve months of the pandemic so far, Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted a total of [ten clemencies](#) to New Yorkers in prison--fewer clemencies than [racist and xenophobic former 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 pandemic. Instead of granting clemencies, Governor Cuomo has condemned thousands to solitary confinement, which [only exacerbates the harm](#) and spread of COVID-19.

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

- 4,786 people who are already eligible for parole release
- 3,305 people held on technical parole violation
- 8,291 people aged 50 and older

- 7,955 within a year of max/conditional release (including 5 incarcerated mothers with infants housed in the Bedford Hills Corr. Facility nursery and one pregnant woman)

Advocates have called for lawmakers in Albany to pass three bills that will uniquely address this pandemic and prevent additional future tragedies:

- [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 and community ready.
- The [Humane Alternatives to Long-Term \(HALT\) Solitary Confinement Act](#) would end the torture of prolonged solitary confinement and replace it with more humane and effective alternatives while still allowing for true medical isolation as needed.

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