

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 24, 2020

ADVOCATES WELCOME HOME NEW YORKERS GRANTED CLEMENCY YET SHARE THE HEARTBREAK OF THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES WHOSE LOVED ONES WILL CONTINUE TO LANGUISH BEHIND BARS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

2,518 INCARCERATED PEOPLE IN NY STATE PRISONS APPLIED FOR CLEMENCY IN 2020 — 80% MORE THAN IN 2019 — AND CUOMO GRANTED CLEMENCY TO LESS THAN 1% OF THEM

NEW YORK -- Today, Governor Andrew Cuomo granted clemency to 7 incarcerated people in the New York State prison system. **In response, the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign and Parole Preparation Project released the following statement:**

“We are elated for the 7 people Governor Cuomo granted clemency to, and for their families. They worked hard to prove their personal transformations and we celebrate their return home. There’s nothing more beautiful than when the Governor’s righteous clemency power is used to reunite families. These are brothers, sons, mothers, sisters, and people who will add value to communities across New York State.

At the same time, we are outraged that Cuomo granted relief to less than 1% of clemency applicants this year. The Governor made the right decision for these few people but if Cuomo truly believes Black lives matter, then he can and should make the right decision for so many more. New York State lawmakers must intervene to provide the life-saving relief to incarcerated New Yorkers and their families that Cuomo is withholding. We call on Albany lawmakers to join with impacted communities across New York State to deliver the mercy and justice that the governor clearly doesn’t believe in by passing parole reform in 2021.”

BACKGROUND: Amid the pandemic, Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted a total of 10 clemencies to New Yorkers in prison--[3 on June 17th](#) and 7 on December 24th. Governors in [California](#), [Illinois](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Kentucky](#), and other states across the country have granted more clemencies than Cuomo during the pandemic. According to the state prison system, [2,518 incarcerated people in NY State prisons applied for clemency in 2020](#) and amid the COVID-19 pandemic; 80% more than in the previous year.

The New York State prison system is experiencing a major spike in COVID-19 cases. In the last three weeks, [713 incarcerated have tested positive for COVID-19](#). Two incarcerated have died of COVID-19 in just the last week. There are currently outbreaks of the virus at Attica, Bedford Hills, Bare Hill, Clinton, Woodbourne, Groveland, Cayuga, and Walsh Correctional Facilities.

Gov. Cuomo has refused to take meaningful 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. 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:

- 4,022 people who are already eligible for parole release
- 3,305 people held on technical parole violation
- 8,291 people aged 50 and older
- 6,524 within a year of max/condition release (including 5 women with infants who are part of the Bedford Hills nursery program and one pregnant woman).

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