

## **\*\*PRESS STATEMENT\*\***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Dave George - [ddgeorge23@gmail.com](mailto:ddgeorge23@gmail.com), 631-885-3565  
TeAna Taylor - [taylorteana@gmail.com](mailto:taylorteana@gmail.com), 518-847-5497

### **FOLLOWING CUOMO ADMIN'S ADMISSION IN NY TIMES FRONT PAGE EXPOSÉ THAT NEW YORK HAS NO PLAN TO VACCINATE INCARCERATED PEOPLE IN STATE PRISONS, ADVOCATES DEMAND IMMEDIATE RELEASES & ACCESS TO VACCINE**

**NEW YORK** -- In response to a front page, NY Times exposé showing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's administration has no plan to vaccinate incarcerated people in New York State prisons even amidst a serious second wave of COVID-19, **the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, #HALTsolitary, Parole Preparation Project, and Center for Community Alternatives** released the following statement:

*"Any New Yorker who cares about public health and decency should be outraged that Governor Cuomo has no plan to follow CDC guidelines and vaccinate incarcerated people in NY State prisons. His failure will ensure that this virus continues to run rampant in our state's prison system, spilling out into the community and harming many. Given the complete lack of a plan for vaccinating people in prison—and given long-standing public health advice to decarcerate—New York State must release vulnerable people and reduce the prison population now. Public health experts across the world all agree: to stop COVID-19 behind bars, all incarcerated people should have access to the vaccine, and prison populations should be significantly reduced. It's time for New York to follow the science and take action."*

**BACKGROUND:** More than 2,700 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19 since December 1, and the number of incarcerated people who have tested positive for the virus has officially surpassed 4,500. There are currently outbreaks of the virus at Attica, Coxsackie, Bedford Hills, Bare Hill, Clinton, Woodbourne, Wyoming, Wende, Groveland, Cayuga, and Walsh Correctional Facilities.

Through nearly ten 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.

The Governor has yet to announce when or if he intends to offer vaccines to incarcerated New Yorkers, falling behind [at least eight other states that are vaccinating this group](#).

The Cuomo Administration has, to date, excluded predominately Black and brown incarcerated people from eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine while predominantly white prison staff are currently eligible.

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. Public health experts advise that these bills will address the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent future similar crises:

- [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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