

****PRESS STATEMENT****

Release Aging People in Prison Campaign Responds to NY Supreme Court Decision Making All Incarcerated People in NY State Prisons Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine

NEW YORK --Today, the N.Y. State Supreme Court ruled that all incarcerated people in New York State be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. **In response, Release Aging People in Prison Director Jose Saldana, released the following statement:**

“This decision is a critical step to stopping the spread and harm of COVID-19 in NY State prisons and jails, and outside communities across the state. We thank the attorneys who worked tirelessly to make this possible and look forward to helping to hold Governor Cuomo accountable to ensure that these life-saving vaccines are administered as thoughtfully and swiftly as possible.”

BACKGROUND: 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 two 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.

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