

## **\*\*STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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### **ADVOCATES DEMAND IMMEDIATE DECARCERATION IN RESPONSE TO NEW COVID DEATH AT WOODBOURNE PRISON**

**NEW YORK** -- On Thursday, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) reported that an [incarcerated person at Woodbourne Correctional Facility died of COVID-19](#). The prison system also reported [50 incarcerated people](#) have new, active cases at the facility, where 40% of the incarcerated population is older. In response, **Center for Community Alternatives, Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Parole Preparation Project, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, the #HALTsolitary Campaign, and [FWD.us](#)** released the following statement:

*“Governor Cuomo’s inaction has led to another tragedy. This new death by COVID-19 provides more evidence that New York’s prison system is incapable of controlling the harm and spread associated with the virus. As the Governor continues to refuse to grant life-saving clemencies to incarcerated New Yorkers, state lawmakers must pass the Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole bills to save lives.”*

**BACKGROUND:** The New York State prison system reported the death of a 19th incarcerated person at Woodbourne Correctional Facility on December 17, 2020. The prison system also reported 50 incarcerated people have new, active cases at the facility, where 40% of the incarcerated population is older.

In the last two weeks, 448 incarcerated have tested positive for COVID-19. There are currently outbreaks of the virus at Attica, Bedford Hills, Bare Hill, Clinton, Woodbourne, Groveland, Cayuga, and Walsh Correctional Facilities.

Amid the pandemic, Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted a total of [three clemencies](#) to New Yorkers in prison--fewer clemencies than [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 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)

Advocates have also called for lawmakers in Albany to pass three bills amid the pandemic:

- [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.
- 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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