



New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

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September 13, 2007

Honorable Eliot Spitzer
Governor, New York State
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer,

This letter is written on behalf of the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA) in opposition of bill S333-B/A4870-C. The legislation provides mental health treatment programs for the purpose of providing treatment and rehabilitation for inmates.

While NYSCOPBA appreciates the intent of the bill and its sponsors, we feel the way the language is crafted, places current correctional officers or any new staff positions created through this measure at risk. The safety and security of our Correctional Officers, as well as inmates and patients is our utmost concern.

Although NYSCOPBA fully supports addressing legitimate mental health issues with respect to those incarcerated within the State prison system, we cannot support this bill without evidence that implementation of the proposal would not create additional workplace hazards for our dedicated Officers.

The inmate/patients that the bill identifies are the individuals with a documented history of violence against staff and other inmates.

NYSCOPBA values the aspects of the bill that give current Correctional Officers additional training and provides for the potential of newly created jobs for corrections staff. We believe that there is a need for more Correctional Officers and correctional officer training; however, we do not think this bill in its current form achieves those goals.

S333-B/A4870-C establishes residential mental health treatment programs in several facilities to provide treatment and confinement of inmates with serious mental illnesses. The Department of Corrections would conduct 40 hours of initial training for those working in the residential mental health treatment programs and eight hours of annual training for all correctional staff.

Due to concerns for the safety of current Correctional Officers and inmates, NYSCOPBA opposes this bill and encourages you, the Governor of New York State, to veto bill S333-B/A4370-C.

We will continue to work with both Houses of the Legislature to achieve our shared goals of establishing additional training programs for Correctional Officers and increasing the number of Correctional Officers at our prisons. Each endeavor will only serve to promote a safer prison environment for staff and inmates alike.

Sincerely,

Larry Flanagan, Jr.
NYSCOPBA President