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EXECUTIVE BUDGET FORCES CORRECTION OFFICERS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEIR FAMILIES & THEIR JOBS

*Closures Would Displace Hundreds of Correction Officers
& Increase Danger Inside Facilities*

NYSOPBA President Testifies Against Governor Cuomo's Proposed Correctional Facility Closures at Budget Hearing

(Albany, NY) – Donn Rowe, President of the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSOPBA), today testified against Governor Cuomo's proposed correctional facility closures during the Public Protection Joint Legislative Budget Hearing.

"Closing two more facilities will force correction officers to choose between their jobs and their families," said Donn Rowe. "Governor Cuomo has said that no jobs will be lost as a result of the proposed closures, but that's not the full truth. Eleven facilities have already been closed since 2009, and hundreds of correction officers are waiting for transfers within a daily commuting distance of their homes."

In his Executive Budget, Governor Cuomo has proposed closing two more correctional facilities to help balance the state budget – Beacon Correctional in Dutchess County and Bayview Correctional in Manhattan. One hundred-sixty correction officers would be displaced by these closures and the ripple effect would be felt throughout the system.

Since the economic crisis hit New York in 2009, 11 correctional facilities have been closed – nine of them during the Cuomo Administration. Not a single former correctional facility has been sold or repurposed in that time. More than 2,000 correction officer positions have been lost and hundreds of officers and their families have been displaced as a result of these closures.

The Governor's proposal would also ignore the state law requiring a one-year notice before closing a correctional facility. Instead, he has once again proposed shuttering these facilities just 60 days after the budget passes. If this proposal is approved by the legislature, Governor Cuomo's budget proposals will have closed nine correctional facilities, ignoring the law that requires a one-year notice in every single one of those closures.

“Ignoring the one-year notice law puts an unnecessary additional burden on correction officers and their families,” Rowe said. “Albany owes these public servants the respect of following its own rules and giving adequate time to plan in the event of a closure.”

The state’s correctional system is currently operating at 101 percent capacity and maximum-security facilities are currently operating at 117 percent capacity – even with the decline in the inmate population. There are still more than 10,000 active double bunk beds in medium- and maximum-security facilities. These closures and cuts have also made the system more dangerous, as correction officers are more likely to be assaulted by an inmate now than in years past.

NYSCOPBA represents more than 26,000 New York State employees and retirees from the Security Services Unit, including correction officers and correction sergeants.

For a copy of President Rowe's testimony, please contact mhook@skdknick.com.

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