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Officials look at safety in prisons

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BEACON - Assemblymen Joel Miller, R-Poughkeepsie, and Marc Molinaro, R-Red Hook, were part of an Assembly group that met at the Fishkill Correctional Facility to gather feedback on correctional issues.

Participants at Assembly Minority Statewide Forums on Workforce Issues in the Correctional System on Thursday discussed ideas on how to improve working conditions and make prisons safer for inmates, staff and communities.

"Correction officers play a vital role in the safe confinement of our inmates throughout New York state and by doing so, they shield all of us from the anti-social behavior of our inmate population," Miller said. "It is important to understand the increased burden placed upon the officers and the prisons as other facilities across the state are closed."

Among the correction professionals in attendance were representatives from the New York state Correction Officers and Police Benevolent Association, including employees of the Fishkill Correctional Facility, a medium-security prison.

"This forum, and others like it across the state, will explore ideas on how to make our prisons more efficient without sacrificing the safety of employees and inmates alike," Molinaro said. "State lawmakers need to take every step necessary to ensure that corrections employees have the resources they need to do their job of incarcerating and rehabilitating inmates while protecting the community that hosts our prisons."

The Department of Correctional Services recently closed camps Mt. McGregor, Gabriels and Pharsalia. The annexes at Butler, Eastern, Green Haven, Groveland, Lakeview, Sullivan and Washington Correctional Facilities will close by Oct. 1.

The closing of the camps has resulted in the elimination of approximately 233 staff positions, of which 181 are uniformed. Closure of the annexes will result in the elimination of approximately 325 staff positions, of which 292 are uniformed.