



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

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Union Calls For Investment To Make Prisons Safer

Our correctional facilities are in need of a wholesale examination. The problem is systemic and endemic, and requires measures to bring more safety and security to both inmates and Correction Officers.

While some have chosen to focus solely on the recent court hearing involving three former Corrections Officers at Attica, there is a broader challenge at hand that requires a deeper and more committed solution.

The overwhelmingly majority of our Correction Officers go to work every day in an increasingly dangerous environment and do their job with professionalism, integrity and honesty. Under the toughest conditions, they put their lives on the line to protect the public and the inmates.

We owe them and the public more than just Band-Aids and hysterical pronouncements. While glib remarks are more likely to win the headline of the day, they won't fix the problem. What we really need is an honest conversation among workers, policy makers at the Department of Corrections, and elected officials to solve the problems plaguing our prisons.

That requires an investment in training, technology, resources, and tools commensurate with the high-risk environment in which Correction Officers work. It means identifying new ways to improve the safety of everyone at our facilities. And it demands an honest assessment of the increasing dangers in our prisons.

Despite the decline in prison population the climate inside the facilities has grown more dangerous. Since 2010, the offender population has decreased by over 4,000 inmates, while the number of reported assaults on corrections officers increased by 30 percent. And the numbers of assaults are on record pace to reach nearly 900 by the end of the year, while the workforce tasked with keeping our prisons safe has been reduced by almost 10 percent.

Common sense dictates that if the assaults on staff have increased, the last thing that should occur is staffing reductions. Unfortunately, the dangerous reality we face is just the opposite - more assaults and a smaller workforce to keep our prisons safe.

Every statistic shows violence in prisons is at a five-year high. In addition to the increased assaults on staff, there were also more inmate-on-inmate assaults, and a greater likelihood that those assaults resulted in injuries. This is a prime example of a policy that is not working and needs to be addressed for the safety of inmates and Corrections Officers.

Adequate staffing all of the facilities would be a good start to address the increased violence. Greater resources for training, new technology and equipment should also be part of the conversation about how we can better protect officers and inmates.

The job our Corrections Officers perform is hard and dangerous, and essential. So instead of focusing on a single unfortunate incident, we must find common ground and work toward common sense solutions to reshape our prisons into a safer environment for everyone.

Submitted By:

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