



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

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Good morning,

My name is Michael Powers and I'm president of NYSCOPBA – the union that represents the fine men and women that work inside the walls of this and every other state correctional facility.

I just completed a short tour of this facility with Governor Cuomo. I would like to thank the Governor for taking this tour. He's the first Governor since his father, Mario Cuomo, to visit one of our prisons. We invite Governor Cuomo to visit others so that he can truly appreciate the nature of the work we do.

During the tour, some of my members and I had an opportunity to share with the Governor the difficulties, challenges and hazards that come with this line of work.

With the release of non-violent drug offenders in recent years, the state's prison system is left with a more violent, more volatile inmate population. During the past several years we have seen the violence against our officers' increase by more than 50%. During that same period, the violence against other inmates has increased by more than 60% - this all occurring at a time that the prison population has declined.

The rise in synthetic drug use inside the walls, an increase in gang activity, the reclassification of inmates, all play a role in the rise in violence. To combat that violence the state needs to make an investment in the hiring of more officers.

We thank Governor Cuomo for his commitment to hiring more than 100 new officers this fiscal year. This is certainly a step in the right direction. We are hopeful that the Governor will continue to recognize the need for additional staff in future years to ensure a safer work environment for the men and women of NYSCOPBA, as well as a safer environment for the state's prison population. We look forward to working with the Governor on this crucial endeavor.

Thank you.