



## ***NYSCOPBA Requests Urgent Meeting with DOCCS to Address Critical Workplace Issues***

***Concerns Continue as DOCCS Plans Early Release of Dangerous Inmates into Communities***

### **For Immediate Release**

**April 4, 2025**

Albany, NY – The New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) is calling for an urgent meeting with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to address a range of serious issues effecting the safety, well-being, and working conditions of correctional officers. These issues, which include staffing shortages, workplace conditions, the implementation of 12-hour shifts, scheduled regular days off (RDOs), vacation periods and other issues have reached a critical point following the recent organization of a grassroots strike organized by NYSCOPBA members to highlight unsafe working conditions.

Compounding the current work-place crisis, is the announcement by DOCCS Commissioner Martuscello on Monday to release potentially thousands of inmates up to 110 days prior to their earliest release date yet failing to address the long-standing issues that led to the labor strike and the firing of 2000 officers.

Echoing the concerns of Senator James Tedisco, President Chris Summers stated , “The early release of inmates undermines public safety and sends a troubling message to crime victims who continue to live with the trauma caused by those incarcerated and only highlights DOCCS failure to face the on-going consequences of staffing shortages in our prisons”

New York has already seen the troubling effect of pretrial discovery laws ushered in by the State Legislature in 2019 that has caused hundreds of criminals to have their cases dismissed and walk free because prosecutors are hampered by their own staffing shortages and the unimaginable timeframes set forth by the law. Releasing inmates prior to their sentences are complete, coupled with the high number of criminal cases being dismissed on technicalities, will only increase the number of criminals that are walking free and make our communities unsafe.

The understaffing within the state's correctional facilities is not a new issue. Since January of 2023, staffing levels decreased by over 2000 through attrition and the failure to effectively recruit. When the Governor arbitrarily fired 2000 officers during the non-sanctioned labor strike, staffing levels are now at dangerously low level and impact the safety of both staff and inmates. We have been, and will continue to fight for the 2000 officers to be reinstated immediately.

After several negotiations between union leaders, DOCCS and members of the Governor's Office to address the mounting concerns the union had about the dangerous working conditions in state prisons during the non-sanctioned 22-day strike, these urgent concerns have been largely ignored by the Governor's leadership and DOCCS.

Yet, the Commissioner, after denying a meeting request, bypassed union leadership and shortly after issued a departmental memo to facility superintendents that instructed them to work with local union representatives to address the very concerns brought by NYSCOPBA. It was tantamount to a slap in the face to the good faith efforts made by NYSCOPBA leaders before, during and after the non-sanctioned strike.

"We are deeply disappointed by the Department's refusal to engage in a productive conversation about these critical issues, said NYSCOPBA President Chris Summers. Our members safety and the safety of the communities they serve should be a priority. The ongoing refusal to address these concerns only exacerbates the already dangerous conditions that exist in many of our facilities."

NYSCOPBA has been vocal about the need for improvements to ensure safer working environments and better treatment for correctional officers well before COVID hit in 2020. The denial of a meeting with DOCCS and questioning the legitimate concerns by state officials signals a troubling disregard for the safety and well-being of those on the frontlines of public safety. These issues are not just union concerns—they are the concerns of the dedicated men and women working in New York's correctional facilities every day.

"It's time for the State and DOCCS to recognize the importance of these concerns and work together with us to find lasting solutions," Summers added. Temporary, short-sighted solutions of the early release of inmates is not a long-term solution needed to address workplace violence, staffing shortages and the inability to recruit new officers. "We continue to urge the State and DOCCS leadership to engage with us in good faith. Our members

deserve a seat at the table to ensure that their voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed. Refusing to do so is simply disingenuous to the sincere efforts made by NYSCOPBA to end the labor dispute”

“We will not back down until real changes are made for the men and women who serve this state with unwavering dedication. Without effective changes, both public safety and the well-being of correctional officers will continue to be at risk.” said Summers.