



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

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April 17, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of the State of New York
New York State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Governor Hochul,

We write to you on behalf of the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA), the union that represents the dedicated men and women who serve as correction officers and security personnel in New York State's correctional facilities. We do so in the strongest possible terms: the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) is in crisis. What is unfolding inside our prisons is a systemic emergency marked by escalating violence, dangerous contraband, staff assaults, overdoses, exposures, and deaths.

Recent incidents illustrate the gravity of the situation with unmistakable clarity:

- On April 5, 2026 at Mohawk Correctional Facility, three Correction Officers and two National Guard members were hospitalized after exposure to an unknown substance found on papers brought into the facility by a visitor. One officer was placed in intensive care and required a ventilator.
- Beginning March 30, 2026 at Clinton Correctional Facility, eight officers were injured in a six-day span across five separate incidents, including assaults by apparently intoxicated incarcerated individuals and large-scale disturbances involving dozens of participants and recovered weapons.
- On March 30, 2026 at Coxsackie Correctional Facility, a convicted murderer attacked officers with a broken pen, seriously injuring responding staff.
- On February 23, 2026 at Lakeview, both a counselor and an officer were brutally assaulted in a classroom setting. The same incarcerated individual was later transferred to Attica and again assaulted staff on April 15, 2026 while housed in a Residential Rehabilitation Unit (RRU).
- On April 6, 2026 at Upstate Correctional Facility, one incarcerated individual murdered another. A simple review of the perpetrator's history shows this was not his first murder; DOCCS management had tried to avoid double bunking but was forced to assign him a bunkie, whom he ultimately killed.

In just a matter of days, three separate deaths at Upstate, Riverview, and Gouverneur were placed under investigation by State Police, with early reports indicating fatal incarcerated-on-incarcerated violence. DOCCS data reflects 44 incarcerated deaths year-to-date as of April 1, including six ruled suicides. At Riverview, officers recently intercepted more than two pounds of marijuana smuggled inside a microwave shipment. Multiple visitors have also been caught attempting to smuggle contraband. These are not isolated occurrences—contraband is driving disorder, medical emergencies, violence, and fear across the entire system.

This is not normal. These are not routine disciplinary issues. They are unmistakable warning signs of a correctional system under extreme pressure—one that is becoming increasingly unstable and dangerous for everyone who lives and works behind the walls.

Governor, this moment demands your direct and personal intervention. We respectfully and urgently request that you personally engage with members of the State Legislature to advocate for the immediate adoption of the recommendations issued by the Statewide HALT Committee to amend the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement (HALT) Act. Tell the legislators who voted for HALT that we need reasonable amendments. Show them the video of this attack. Encourage them to visit facilities and see what these policies they voted for have created. Encourage them to meet with staff and the incarcerated to hear the direct stories of what their policies have produced.

The Statewide HALT Committee—formed with the participation of NYSCOPBA and other stakeholders—has produced thoughtful, balanced recommendations. These include expanding the range of serious offenses eligible for segregated confinement, allowing temporary SHU or RRU placement for protective custody when there is an unreasonable safety risk, and permitting up to 15 days of SHU placement for repeated misconduct when alternative interventions have failed. These recommendations must not remain on paper—they must be enacted into law.

We also call on you to work with lawmakers to strengthen New York’s contraband laws with stronger penalties for smuggling drugs, weapons, and toxic materials into correctional facilities—whether through visitors, mail, packages, or coordinated external deliveries. Specifically we recommend the implementation of S694-A Gallivan/ A615-A Shimsky regarding the civilian use of drones around correctional facilities.

Finally, the continued use of double bunking must end. Housing two individuals in a single cell significantly increases the risk of assaults and fatalities while making it more difficult for staff to maintain order. A comprehensive, statewide strategy to reduce—and ultimately eliminate—double bunking where it compromises security and human safety is essential.

Our members are being assaulted. Our facilities are being flooded with contraband. Staff are being exposed to unknown and potentially lethal substances. Incarcerated individuals are overdosing, dying, and attacking one another. The warning signs are everywhere.

Governor Hochul, the safety of the men and women who work in our state prisons—and the stability of the entire correctional system—now rests on your leadership. We implore you to use the full weight of your office to ensure these critical reforms are passed swiftly. We stand ready to meet with you or your staff at your earliest convenience to provide any additional information or support you may require.

The time for action is now.

Sincerely,

NYSCOPBA Executive Board