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NYSCOPBA Calls Governor Cuomo's Rejection of 'Death Gamble' Bill "Shameful"

ALBANY, N.Y.—New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA) responds to actions by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to veto NYSCOPBA's 'Death Gamble' bill for state correctional officers and sergeants, a legislative proposal that would have benefited the families of those who die after becoming retirement eligible. The legislation (A.5133-A/S.4077-A) was written to protect the financial well-being of beneficiaries of the deceased, who chose to continue to publicly serve and protect past 25 years.

"It's extremely disappointing that Governor Cuomo chose to disregard the basic fairness and financial security that this proposal would have provided," stated Michael Powers, President, NYSCOPBA. "Keeping as many trained men and women on the job as possible is something we see great value in at NYSCOPBA, and we wish the Governor felt the same."

Out of 20,000 active members, NYSCOPBA has approximately 2,700 members who are now eligible for retirement and are fully vested. "Ultimately, this bill could have convinced law enforcement officers to keep working past retirement at a time when the level of violence in the state's prison system is absolutely unacceptable. Now, more than ever, we need seasoned, experienced corrections officer on the job. This bill would have given them peace of mind that their families would be taken care of and what the Governor has done is simply shameful."

The legislation has been a priority for NYSCOPBA leadership and members for more than a decade. Two sponsors of this bill were Senator Patty Ritchie (NY-48th) and Assemblywoman Addie A.E. Jenne (NY-116th).

"As the sponsor of the bill, the daughter of a retired correctional officer, the New York State Senator representing five correctional facilities, and a strong supporter of the hardworking correctional officers all across the state, I am extremely disappointed in the governor's decision to veto this legislation," stated Sen. Ritchie. "The veto of this bill sends a message to our brave

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men and women who walk one of the most dangerous beats in New York State, that their willingness to put their lives on the line—that extreme sacrifice—is not as valued as it should be. In addition, this bill would have helped to keep experienced correctional officers on the job, making our jails safer at a time when there are more assaults on officers than ever.”

“I am very disappointed by the veto of this long sought legislation aimed at protecting the financial security of the families of correction officers who don't leave public service as soon as they reach retirement eligibility,” stated Rep. Jenne. “We need to ensure we have an experienced and dedicated security force to ensure safety in our state's prison system. This legislation would have helped retain invaluable knowledge and demonstrate support for the men and women who risk their lives to keep our communities safe. I will keep fighting for these brave and indispensable professionals.”

“Vetoing our Death Gamble bill may be pennywise in the Governor’s mind, but it is certainly pound foolish,” said Powers. “This veto claims to avoid a miniscule fiscal impact to the state, but it places a much larger burden on taxpayers when they must pay for extraordinary measures to keep New York prisons safe. This longer-term cost will only worsen New York State’s weakening financial condition down the road. My members can rest assured that this will not end our fight for the enactment of this extremely critical provision.”

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