

Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to strongly encourage you to sign S.4077-A (Ritchie)/A.5133-A (Jenne) into law. This bill will provide the beneficiaries of a deceased State Correction Officer or Sergeant with a benefit equal to the value of the pension reserve as if the deceased individual retired on the day of his or her death.

Today, thousands of NYSCOPBA members are eligible to retire. We are seeing our colleagues retire from state service as soon as they are eligible, but we need to retain our most seasoned and experienced correction officers and sergeants to teach and train our younger, less-experienced officers. Nearly one-third of NYSCOPBA members are eligible to retire and the system is not equipped to handle a mass exodus of experienced law enforcement personnel. By providing a death benefit that protects our members and their families, the State can help retain our most experienced officers and ensure that the system continues to operate efficiently.

Under existing law, if a State Correctional Officer or Sergeant is eligible for a service-based retirement and continues working, his or her beneficiaries receive a lump sum payment of three times salary if the employee should die while in service, even though a pension would have been payable if the employee had retired on the date immediately preceding his or her death.

Enactment of this legislation would simply provide the beneficiaries of a service-retirement eligible Correction Officer or Sergeant who dies while in service with the benefit that they would have been entitled to, had their respective loved one retired, instead of opting to continue serving the people of the State of New York. For those dedicated law enforcement officers who make the decision to continue providing critical services for the benefit of all New Yorkers, the State should take the logical step of ensuring that the families of these dedicated civil servants are protected.

For these reasons stated herein, I respectfully request that you sign S.4077-A (Ritchie)/A.5133-A (Jenne) into law.

Respectfully submitted,