



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

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March 14, 2020

Members of NYSCOPBA:

I am writing to share with you an important update on the handling of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that affects all DOCCS facilities.

All visits to DOCCS facilities will cease as of 5 o'clock p.m. today, March 14, 2020. This policy will remain in place at least through April 11, 2020, at which point DOCCS will reassess the need to continue the visiting ban.

First, I wish to thank the entire NYSCOPBA Executive Board, as well as our law firm, for their assistance in helping me to convince the State that this action was necessary for the health and safety of everyone involved. We have been actively engaged in discussions with DOCCS' executive team, the Governor's office and the Legislature for the past few weeks in an effort to prevent visitations. While the outcome certainly is not perfect, I fear that things could have been much worse if we had not pursued this issue so aggressively. *We have urged, and continue to urge, the State to implement similar measures in non-DOCCS facilities for the benefit of our Law Enforcement members and hope to similarly resolve their issue as soon as possible.*

This change in policy is certainly a relief, and a step in the right direction, but not a solution. I share your fears that the damage has already been done—that COVID-19 has already entered our facilities and that it is too late to prevent it from spreading behind the prison walls. I share your frustration that this action should have been taken days or weeks ago. Shame on DOCCS for placing its workforce and inmate population at risk when they have known for some time how quickly and easily this deadly virus spreads. NYSCOPBA will now turn its attention to the next tasks at hand: protecting our members from contracting this disease; providing the necessary support to those who will undoubtedly fall ill; and holding the Department responsible for putting your lives at risk.

Since the very beginning of this public health emergency, NYSCOPBA has been sounding the alarm and advocating for necessary health and safety measures for our members, both in the public sphere and behind the scenes with State and agency leaders. We will not stop until this crisis is over, all affected members have received the treatment they need, and measures have been put in place to prevent a disaster of this magnitude from happening again.

In solidarity,

Michael B. Powers
President, NYSCOPBA, Inc.