



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

“Keeping New York Safe”

***NYSCOPBA Officials Call on Governor Cuomo, DOCCS to Halt Future
Prison Closures***

Union Cites Increased Violence, COVID as Need to Create Impact Study

May 19, 2021

Rome, NY – Today, NYSCOPBA Union Officials called on Governor Cuomo and DOCCS to put a hold on any future prison closures until a comprehensive study can be commissioned to address the rising violence inside prisons amid a steady decline in the prison population.

During his tenure, Governor Cuomo has presided over an unprecedented 19 prison facility closures. While the Governor proudly touts he is responsible for closing the most prison facilities of any Governor in New York State history, he continues to fail to recognize and address the violence that is spiraling out of control inside our prison walls.

The numbers simply speak for themselves. Over the last ten years, the number of inmates has declined by over 20,000, while violence against staff has increased by 100 percent. Inmate on inmate violence continues to crest towards a triple digit percentage increase as well. Contraband, that includes deadly drugs and make shift weapons, continues to be seized by staff at record numbers. There is simply no end in sight.

This has all occurred under the Governor’s watchful eye without any meaningful discussion with NYSCOPBA members about how to stem the levels of violence.

The impact of the prison closures also has devastating impacts outside of the prison walls. The majority of these shuttered facilities reside in upstate, rural communities. When a prison closes it can tear apart a large fabric of the community. Officers and their families can be uprooted and local businesses can be devastated by the lost revenue provided by employees of the prison. Support that the facility and the employees provide to the community is immeasurable.

NYSCOPBA has a bill pending in the State Legislature, which established a commission to study and make recommendations on violence in state correctional facilities. The failure to enact this legislation is turning a blind eye to the officers who are attacked on a daily basis and betrays every man and woman who put on that uniform every day to protect New Yorkers.

Closing additional prisons will only create tighter living conditions and more confined spaces for thousands of dangerous inmates. It creates a potentially explosive environment every day for staff.

In the past year, the COVID pandemic has disrupted society in a variety of ways. It has also negatively impacted our organization as well. From day one, the brave men and women of NYSCOPBA have been on the front lines, braving the risks the deadly virus brought with it. 100s of members contracted the virus, 1000s were forced to quarantine by the State and unfortunately, we lost several of our members to the disease.

As we continue to navigate our way through the pandemic, now is not the time to reduce the ability to socially distance by closing more prisons. COVID is still real. People are still contracting the virus. People are still dying from it. Our members deserve to have their safety and the safety of their families be a priority. Creating less available space is misguided and a disservice to everyone, including the incarcerated population.

“Today we are calling on the Governor and DOCCS to put the brakes on any further prison closures until a comprehensive study, which we have been calling on for years, is commissioned to make real recommendations on how to effectively decrease the violence inside our facilities. Oneida Correctional Facility, which was closed nearly a decade ago, is another reminder of this administration’s failure to properly support the brave men and women of NYSCOPBA who put their lives on the line every day. Basking in the glory of closing the most prison facilities in New York State history is hailed as being fiscally responsible, but ultimately has come at the expense of our members’ safety. ” - stated NYSCOPBA President Michael Powers.