

Assembly Member Smullen
5659 State Route 5 Suites 1-3, Herkimer, NY 13350

Dear Assembly Member Smullen:

I am writing to you as a concerned constituent and NYSCOPBA member, to urge your strong support for Bill **S7004/A7925**, which would establish an optional 20-year retirement plan for state correction officers employed by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS).

As you know, **S7004/A7925** amends the Retirement and Social Security Law to create a much-needed optional retirement plan under Article 14-C, allowing dedicated correction officers the option to retire after 20 years of creditable service with a pension equal to 50% of their final average salary. This vital legislation recognizes the extraordinary physical and mental demands of our profession, where officers face daily risks to maintain public safety, rehabilitate individuals under our care, and ensure the security of New York State's prisons.

Correction officers and sergeants perform one of the most challenging jobs in public service, often under conditions of high stress, violence, and isolation. The current retirement structure does not adequately account for these hazards, leading to burnout, staffing shortages, and early resignations. By passing **S7004/A7925**, we can improve recruitment and retention efforts by incentivizing experienced officers while providing a fair pathway to retirement for those who have given two decades of service in a career protecting New York's communities. This legislation would not only boost morale but also enhance facility safety for both staff and the incarcerated, ultimately benefiting taxpayers by reducing turnover costs and overtime expenses.

New York State's correction officers and sergeants deserve this equity, especially when compared to similar protections afforded to other law enforcement titles. I implore you to prioritize **S7004/A7925** by working to advancing it out of the Civil Service and Pensions Committee and voting yes when it reaches the floor. Your support will demonstrate a commitment to the brave men and women who protect our communities every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Darren Heidelberger