



*For Immediate Release...*

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**Statement by the #HALTsolitary Campaign  
on Bernie's Commitment to End Solitary**

Sen. Sanders is the Latest of Many Leading Presidential Candidates to Make  
this Commitment

(New York, NY) -- Today, the #HALTsolitary Campaign released the following statement on calls by [Senator Bernie Sanders](#), along with other leading Presidential candidates, for the elimination of solitary confinement:

"The tides of the national progressive movement have turned towards abolishing solitary confinement and New York must not get left behind. Yesterday, U.S. Senator and Presidential contender Bernie Sanders released a criminal justice reform platform with an unequivocal condemnation of the torture of solitary confinement. As part of a 'Bill of Rights' for incarcerated people, Bernie committed to ending solitary confinement, calling it 'a form of torture [that is] unconstitutional, plain and simple.' Bernie is just the latest of several Presidential candidates to make this commitment. We commend this affirmation of basic human rights and call on any and all New York political leaders who claim to be progressive to take swift action. We need not wait for the federal government. New York City must immediately end the use of solitary confinement. New York State must enact the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, which has more than enough votes to pass in both houses of the Legislature, on the first day of the new session in January.

Importantly, Bernie's call for an end to solitary is part of a much larger platform, whose many pieces are likewise consequential and warrant further scrutiny by impacted people and families and other experts. We are only speaking to this one component, though we firmly believe that the entire racist punishment paradigm must end."

**BACKGROUND:**

Senator Sanders' call for an end to solitary confinement is part of a growing chorus of voices across the country to stop this torture, including from other presidential candidates.

Sen. [Elizabeth Warren](#) said: “solitary confinement is cruel and inhumane. We must end this practice.” Sen. [Corey Booker](#) has said: “[s]olitary confinement is torture. It is an archaic, damaging, and inefficient practice that has been proven to have irreversible effects. ... [T]his practice is wholly unjust and leaves the incarcerated worse off.” [John Hickenlooper](#): “We also need to end solitary confinement, which is cruel and unusual punishment, and makes it next to impossible for [people] to reenter society when their prison term ends.” [Beto O’Rourke](#): “let’s absolutely end solitary confinement.” [Pete Buttigieg](#) will “[r]educe use of solitary confinement, including abolishing its prolonged use” (which is defined internationally as beyond 15 days). [Joe Biden](#) also calls for “ending the practice of solitary confinement, with very limited exceptions such as protecting the life of an imprisoned person.”

Thousands of people remain in solitary confinement in New York’s prisons and jails each day, and tens of thousands each year experience this torture: 22 to 24 hours a day in a cell without any meaningful human contact or programs. They are disproportionately Black and Latinx people, young people, gender non-conforming people, and people with mental illness.

**People continue to spend months, years, and decades in solitary (including [30+ years](#)) in NY.** The sensory deprivation, lack of normal interaction, and extreme idleness of solitary can lead to intense suffering and severe psychological, physical, and even neurological damage. [More than 30% of all prison suicides](#) in New York take place in solitary.

The entire United Nations, including the US, passed rules prohibiting solitary beyond 15 days for any person, because it otherwise would amount to torture. **Colorado has implemented a 15-day limit** in its prisons and reduced the number of people in solitary from 1,500 to 18. **The HALT Solitary Confinement Act (S1623-Sepulveda / A2500-Aubry) similarly includes a 15-day limit** on solitary, and would create more humane and effective alternatives. A summary of the bill can be found [here](#). The bill passed the State Assembly in 2018 by a vote of 99 to 45.

34 New York State Senators from Long Island to Upstate New York are officially co-sponsoring the HALT Solitary Confinement Act – a clear majority – and additional Senators have committed to vote for the bill, as well. 79 New York State Assembly Members also officially co-sponsor HALT – another clear majority – and the bill passed in that house in 2018.

The New York City Council passed a resolution in support of HALT, the second such statement by a local government (in May 2019, the Tompkins County Legislature also [passed a resolution](#) supporting HALT). The Progressive Caucus and the Women’s Caucus of the NYC Council have [called](#) for a complete end to solitary confinement.

States that have reduced the use of solitary have seen a positive impact on safety for both incarcerated people and staff. Community members are calling for New York State

Legislators and Governor Cuomo to pass HALT on the very next day the legislature is in session, and calling on New York City to act before then to end solitary completely in the City jails.

Learn more at [www.nycaic.org](http://www.nycaic.org).

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