



October 28, 2019

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader
New York State Senate
188 State Street, Room 907
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl E. Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly
LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Heastie:

We, the undersigned, are writing to urge you to bring the HALT Solitary Confinement Act to a vote on the very next day the legislature is in session in January. We appreciate your ongoing commitment to this issue and urge you to partner with us now to pass HALT. As you know, Governor Cuomo recently issued proposed regulations about solitary confinement. Advertised as reform, these regulations would actually permit years and decades of solitary confinement to continue.

Thousands of people in New York are suffering in solitary confinement right now, and tens of thousands each year. In 2011, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture determined that any length of time in solitary beyond 15 days amounts to torture, and in turn, in 2015 the UN General Assembly adopted rules banning solitary beyond 15 days for all people. Yet in New York, people regularly spend months, years, and even decades in solitary. Black and Latinx people are disproportionately sent to solitary, as are transgender/gender non-conforming people, young people, and people with mental health needs. Solitary causes devastating mental, physical, and emotional harm, and even death. 30% of suicides in New York prisons take place in solitary, and a study in New York City jails found people in solitary are seven times more likely to harm themselves.

Among other limitations, the Governor's proposed regulations would continue to permit people to be locked in solitary confinement for years through endless cycles of "time-limited" solitary with no meaningful break or unlimited time in keeplock, another form of solitary without guaranteed access to meaningful human interaction, even for the most minor rule violations. These regulations would also take years before they impose any so-called "limitations" on how long a person can be in solitary, and even once fully implemented would continue to explicitly

permit people to be locked in solitary for lengths that amount to torture under United Nations standards, including for broadly defined nonviolent behavior. Moreover, people would still be able to be warehoused indefinitely (for months, years, and even decades) in the kind of solitary by another name that took the life of Layleen Polanco and has destroyed the minds and lives of countless others. In addition, young people, people with mental illness, and elderly people with acute health conditions would still be subject to this horrific treatment, continuing the horrible practices that have taken the lives of Ben Van Zandt and so many others. Further, the whole system of solitary will continue to operate without meaningful transparency or independent oversight.

We will continue to urge the Governor to make more comprehensive and effective changes, including by implementing the provisions of HALT administratively. But we are asking you to do your part now. The Governor has had the power to end this torture since he took office in 2011 and instead he has allowed scores of thousands of people to be subjected to solitary for months, years, and some for decades. His current proposed regulations unfortunately will maintain too much of the status quo and fall far short of what is truly needed to end the torture of prolonged solitary.

Please stand with us - people who have lost their loved ones to solitary, people who have survived solitary, and other allies who wish to see all people free from this torture - by passing the HALT Solitary Confinement Act. Survivors of solitary, family members who have had or lost loved ones in solitary, and other allies and experts all across New York State have been educating the public, the press, Legislators and other policy-makers for the last seven years about the horrors of solitary and the need for HALT. As a result, as you know, HALT has more than enough support in both houses of the legislature to pass. There are 34 Senate cosponsors, 79 Assembly cosponsors, and other Senators and Assembly Members who committed to vote for the bill, including from both parties.

Every day without HALT, we continue to feel the devastating impacts of solitary confinement. As one among countless examples, one of the #HALTsolitary campaign member's 21-year-old loved one has in the last couple months attempted on multiple occasions to commit suicide in a solitary cell in some of the current purported alternatives to solitary. He has thankfully so far survived, but he has been shuffled from one terrible purported alternative unit to another and his mind and his being have rapidly deteriorated to a shell of himself. Every day that goes by without HALT's enactment will mean another mind destroyed and the possibility of another life lost.

We urge that you bring HALT to a vote on the next day the legislature is in session in January, and that the Senate and the Assembly pass the bill, so we can finally end this torture in NY.

Sincerely,

Organizations in alphabetical order:

A Little Piece Of Light

Albany Friends Meeting

Albany Social Justice Center
American Muslims Indivisible
Amnesty International Brooklyn Local Group 27
Amnesty International USA
Anti-Racist Alliance
Appellate Advocates
Arizona Jews 4 Justice
Beacon Prison Action
Big Apple Coffee Party
Black and Pink NYC
Black Lives Matter of Greater New York
Brooklyn Community Bail Fund
Brooklyn Defender Services
Capital Area Against Mass Incarceration
Carla Sanderson Law
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Constitutional Rights
Certain Days collective
Chief Defender Association of New York
Citizen Action of New York
Citizens Against Recidivism
Close Rosie's
Coalition For Women Prisoners
College and Community Fellowship
Color Of Change
Columbia School of Social Work Criminal Justice Caucus
Community Service Society
Correctional Association of New York
Counseling Psychology, PC
Drug Policy Alliance
Durga Foundation
Empire State Indivisible
End Solitary Santa Cruz County [CA]
End the New Jim Crow Poughkeepsie

Families Together in New York State
Freedom Socialist Party
Gender Equality New York
Granny Peace Brigade
Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition
Group 73 of Amnesty International
Hour Children
Human Rights Watch
Indivisible BK
Indivisible Westchester
Interfaith Impact of NYS
Inwood Indivisible
Ithaca local of DSA
Ithaca Prisoner Justice Network
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club
John Brown Lives!
Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier
JustLeadershipUSA
Katal Center for Health, Equity and Justice
Komfort By KEEWEE Katering Services/Barriers Know More Poverty Prevention
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS
Latino Pastoral Action Center & Sanctuary Church
Law Offices of Moira Meltzer-Cohen
Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo
Legal Aid Society of Nassau County
Mental Health Association of Nassau County
Mental Health Association of New York State
Morningside Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
National Action Network NYC Chaplaincy Committee
National Action Network NYC Chapter Second Chance Committee
National Alliance on Mental Illness - Huntington
National Alliance on Mental Illness - NYS Criminal Justice
National Alliance on Mental Illness - Queens/Nassau

National Lawyers Guild - NYC Chapter
New Hour for Women and Children LI
New Jersey Campaign to Isolated Confinement
New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services
New York Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians
New York City Jericho Movement
New York Civil Liberties Union
New York County Defender Services
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
New York State Council of Churches
New York State Prisoner Justice Network
NY Working Families
NYC Books Through Bars
NYC Jericho Movement
NYC Metro Raging Grannies
NYCAIC #HALTsolitary Campaign
NYCD16-Indivisible
Parole Justice Albany
Parole Prep Project
Peace Action of Staten Island
Presbytery of New York City
Prison Action Network
Prison Families Anonymous
Public Interest Resource Center at Fordham Law School
Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP)
Restorative Justice Initiative
Rise and Resist
Rise Up Kingston
RocACTS Criminal Justice Task Force
Rockland United
Scientist Action and Advocacy Network
Second Baptist Church
Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC

Social Justice Action of St. Boniface Church
Social Justice Ministry of Christ Church Riverdale
Social Workers Against Solitary Confinement
Solidarity Committee, Capital District
St. Luke A.M.E. Church
Steffel Wellness Services, Inc.
STEPS to End Family Violence
SURJ ROC (Showing Up for Racial Justice Rochester)
[T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights](#)
The Anti-Racism Committee of the Diocese of New York
The Bronx Defenders
The Bronx Freedom Fund

The Episcopal Diocese of New York
The Law Office of Ronald Kuby
The Legal Aid Society
Transitional Services Association Inc.
Truth Pharm, Inc.
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock - Social Justice Committee
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie - Social Justice Committee
Uptown Progressive Action
Urban Justice Center
Uri L'zedek
Village Independent Democrats
VOCAL-NY
WESPAC Foundation, Inc
Westchester Coalition for Police Reform
Westchester Martin Luther King, Jr. Institute for Nonviolence
Western New York Peace Center
WHARR (Women's Health and Reproductive Rights)
Witness to Mass Incarceration
Women & Justice Project
Worth Rises
Youth Represent

Individuals:

Amanda Spray

Angelica Falloon

Appellate Advocates

Barbara Harris

Bobbi Siegelbaum

Brandon Franklin

Brooke Taylor

Caroline Zachowski

Chelsea Miller

Claire Fontaine

Claire Gardam

David C. Schopp

Decarcerate Tompkins County

Dixie L. Martin

Donna L. Robinson

Dr. Sandra Haber

Edna Mullen

Elizabeth Keefe

Elizabeth Weiss

Emily Greenspan, M.D.

Erica Itzkowitz

Gabriella Stutman PhD

Gail Golden

Jack Beck

James Litkett

Jared Chausow

Jayette Lansbury

Joanna Fredericks

Jon McFarlane

Karen O'Gara-Helm

Karyn Taber

Kate Itzkowitz

Katy Leidel
Laura Morrison
Lee Clayton
Leslie Gold
Linda Gerena
Linda Ortiz
Livvie Mann
Lorie Flaks
Lorraine Donald-Vital
Margo Sacerdote
Maria Kany
Mary Morich
Megan Madden
Michelle A. White
Ms Miriam Calabro
Ms Richenda Kramer
Nora Demere
Patricia Kuusisto
Prof. Robert McCrie
Prof. Ute Ritz-Deutch
Rabbi Charles P Rabinowitz
Rachel Weiss
Ricky Silver
Sam Klugman, Psy.D.
Samantha Lushtak
Sandra Bernabei Antiracist Alliance
Scott Paltrowitz
Steven Itzkowitz, MD
Susan Lee bady
Sylvia Kaplan
The Right Reverend Andrew M.L. Dietsche
The Right Reverend Mary D. Glasspool
Timothy I Mullen
Veronica Reignier

Wayles Browne

Wei Ji Ma

Willow Katz