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On Third Day of Hunger Strike, Survivors of Solitary & Other Advocates Held Speak-Out Outside State Senate Majority Leader's NYC Office

With More Than Enough Votes to Pass, Participants Called for Enactment of HALT Solitary Confinement Act When NYS Session Resumes on Monday

Survivors of solitary confinement and other advocates held a speak-out outside New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins' NYC office on their third day of a [hunger strike](#) to protest the torture of long-term solitary confinement currently experienced by thousands of people in New York State prisons and jails. They demanded enactment of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act (S.1623/A.2500), which has the support of [the majority of state lawmakers](#) in both houses. Participants in the hunger strike are consuming only liquids, a common form of hunger strike that allows for extended protest. The strike, which began on June 13, builds on decades of similar actions by incarcerated people to protest solitary confinement and other inhumane prison conditions. One recent example [occurred in California prisons](#), where as many as 30,000 incarcerated people went on hunger strike to protest indefinite solitary confinement, which ultimately laid the groundwork for an important legal settlement and helped spur the movement for ending solitary across the country.

Laura Whitehorn of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign said: "I hunger strike to urge the New York State legislature to pass #HALTsolitary because I know too many people whose lives and health have been or are being destroyed by the torture of solitary confinement. I strike in honor of Layleen Polanco, Kalief Browder, and too many others lost to torture. I did time in solitary and I know it serves no purpose except to bully incarcerated people into submission. It is punishment gone wild. The world says solitary is torture. New York's legislature needs to join the world and protect New Yorkers."

Ryan Brown, a #HALTsolitary member, said: "I am participating in the hunger strike to #HALTsolitaryNOW because fasting for a week is nothing compared to having to endure the torture of solitary confinement for months, years or decades. Albert Woodfox, who survived over 40 years in solitary confinement, said that 'its sole purpose is to break and destroy human spirit. When you take that away from a human being, he can never get it back.' As New Yorkers, we are all complicit in this sick form of sadism unless we do something to end it."

BACKGROUND: 29 people are participating in a hunger strike to demand enactment of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, 17 of whom will remain on strike until the bill passes or, if lawmakers fail to act, session ends.

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HALT has enough votes to pass in the Legislature. As of June 14, 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 last year.

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. Nearly 1,000 people with diagnosed pre-existing mental health needs are in solitary confinement each day.

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 for the first time in 2018 by a vote of 99 to 45. States that have reduced the use of solitary have seen a positive impact on safety for both incarcerated people and staff. Survivors of solitary, family members, and other community members and advocates are calling for New York State Legislators and Governor Cuomo to pass HALT immediately.

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