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*****Press Release*****

Assemblyman Jones: Safety and Security of Officers and Civilians at Correctional Facilities must be top priority

Assemblyman Billy Jones (D-Chateaugay) expressed his frustration with Governor Andrew Cuomo’s decision to rescind a New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) pilot program that restricted packages to inmates.

“The safety and security of our officers and civilian employees, who work tirelessly to safeguard our communities, should be our top priority,” said Jones. “The Governor’s decision to suspend the secure vendor pilot program after being implemented for such a short time, is not only executing poor judgement, it threatens to put the lives of our men and women in blue at severe risk.”

The secure vendor pilot program, part of directive #4911A, sought to decrease prison contraband by limiting not only where items could be purchased but additionally limiting the weight and amount that could be sent to the prisons. The directive was ordered on December 7, 2017 and was instituted in three correctional facilities: Greene, Taconic, and Green Haven.ⁱ With inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-staff assaults generally on the rise over the past five years, in addition to increased confiscation of contraband, local prison officials were hopeful that the introduction of this program would help with a reduction of these incidents.ⁱⁱ

“The secure vendor package rooms would create a safer working environment for all staff working inside the prison system,” said John Roberts, Northern Region Vice President for the New York State Correction Officers and Police Benevolent Association. “With the constant rise in contraband discovered inside our facilities, I am very disappointed in the decision to discontinue the pilot program after so little time to evaluate its effectiveness.”

“This program was not designed to be punitive towards inmates and their family members, but rather enhance and ensure the security of our corrections facilities,” said Jones. “The fact is, the Governor has put the needs of inmates, and their families, ahead of the well-being of the men and women that protect our communities. As a corrections officer for over 20 years, I stand with my brothers and sisters in blue and call on the governor to reinstitute this program to ensure their safety.”

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ⁱ <http://amsterdamnews.com/news/2018/jan/11/doocs-secure-vendor-program-wants-limit-contraband/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.doocs.ny.gov/FactSheets/index.html>