



**New York State Correctional Officers  
& Police Benevolent Association, Inc.**

***"Keeping New York Safe"***

***NYSCOPBA Officials Point to Water down Discipline as Root of  
Escalating Violence***

***Union Calls on State Legislature to Suspend the Implementation of the HALT  
Legislation***

**August 19, 2021**

**Auburn, NY** – Today, members of NYSCOPBA held a press conference outside of Auburn Correctional Facility to call on State Legislators and the incoming administration to suspend the implementation of the recently passed HALT legislation until a comprehensive study can be conducted into the escalating violence inside correctional facilities across the state.

NYSCOPBA has long advocated that the watered down discipline system in DOCCS has led to mounting violence against staff amidst a decreasing prison population. The prison population has decreased from 55,000 inmates in 2012 to approximately 32,000 inmates currently. During that same time period, attacks on staff have doubled from 534 in 2012 to 1034 in 2020. This year the State is on pace to set a record for attacks on staff by incarcerated individuals despite an even further drop in the inmate population.

During his tenure, outgoing Governor Cuomo has presided over 19 prison closures, which have only contributed to a more dense prison population which breeds violence. Combined with a current discipline system that amounts to a "slap on the wrist" for violent behavior, the State has created more brazen incarcerated individuals with no regards for the rules within the correctional setting.

A violent inmate simply knows that if he attacks an officer, there are little or no consequences, regardless of the violent nature of the attack.

Auburn Correctional Facility is the poster child for inmate violence. This past May alone, there were serious incidents of weapons, drugs, fights and attacks on staff in 22 of 31 days in the month. Most days with multiple serious incidents.

Just 11 days ago at the facility, an officer was slashed in the face by an inmate and sustained a 7-inch gash to his face that resulted in 30 stitches to close the wound. The inmate continued to attack staff after the slashing and assaulted and injured two other officers who subdued him during the incident. Attacks on staff still continued during the ensuing lockdown period, with one officer having his hand stabbed with a makeshift sharpened broomstick.

Other violent incidents are occurring in correctional facilities in the Western Region as well.

- On August 4 at Albion Correctional Facility, a female inmate sprayed gasoline on another female inmate in one of the housing dorms and lit the gas on fire. The two inmates began fighting and after OC spray was administered, the fight was contained. The female inmate who was attacked sustained minor burns to her ear.
- On August 7 at Elmira Correctional Facility, a multiple inmate fight occurred in the fieldhouse. Staff observed several inmates making slashing motions. They gave several orders for the inmates to stop but the fighting continued. Chemical agents needed to be deployed. Once staff had the situation under control, one officer needed to be treated at an outside hospital for injuries sustained subduing one inmate and two inmates sustained lacerations consistent with make-shift cutting weapons.
- On August 9 at Attica Correctional Facility staff observed two inmates fighting in the recreation yard. A third inmate joined in the fight and began making slashing motions. Chemical agents were deployed to the yard. Once the fight was contained, officers located two toothbrushes that had been melted together and sharpened on one end to be used as a weapon.
- On August 11 at Attica Correctional Facility, staff observed two inmates fighting in the yard and making slashing motions at each other. The fight was broken up quickly by staff but chemical agents needed to be deployed when a number of inmates came off the wall towards staff in a threatening manner. One of the inmates involved in the fight sustained six lacerations consistent with being cut and needed to be treated at an outside hospital. A piece of broken glass was recovered in the pants pocket of one inmate during a search for weapons.

“Our members are on the front line every day, in one of the most dangerous jobs in the country, with very little support from our elected officials, the same elected officials our members keep safe. The numbers don’t lie, they speak for themselves. Inmate population down to its lowest levels in decades, while violence against staff is up over 100 percent. There has to be a root cause for the violence, yet inmate advocates and the majority of the legislature continue to reduce the tools our membership have to stop unprovoked attacks on staff as well keep inmates who follow the rules safe. What will it take for the State to wake up? Will it take one of our members to suffer life threatening injuries before it realizes the violence is out of control? It is our sincere hope that the incoming administration recognizes the brave job our

men and women do every day and will take proactive steps to keep them safe. It certainly would be a far cry from what we have been used to from the outgoing Governor!" – Stated Marc Deburgomaster, NYSCOPBA Western Region Vice President.