

Dear Legislator:

As a constituent represented by the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA), I am writing to request that you reject the Governor's 30-day budget amendments that would allow the closure of five unidentified correctional facilities with only 90 days' notice. The Legislature passed laws to protect workers and affected communities by requiring a one-year notification prior to the closing of a correctional facility and that an economic impact study be conducted on the affected community – these are laws that the Governor continues to ignore to the detriment of our corrections staff and communities.

It is unfair and unreasonable to expect staff and businesses to make life-altering decisions year after year, with only 90 days' notice. Working for DOCCS has become a perpetual burden dealing with unending violence, an employer who doesn't support you, and the constant threats of facility closures year after year. How does this State expect anyone who works in corrections to have any sense of normalcy in their lives? These short-sighted decisions will result in families being uprooted and broken, homes will need to be purchased and sold, leases will be broken, employees will resign, children will be required to switch schools, commutes to work will be extended, and businesses will suffer; all evidenced by the impacts of the 20+ prison closures we have experienced in the last decade. This must come to an end!

These days, fewer people are willing to take jobs in law enforcement, especially if they must uproot and move. At a time when the State and DOCCS are actively attempting to recruit thousands of corrections officers to join our ranks, they are simultaneously shrinking the pool of potential candidates with each facility closure. It is hard enough to recruit people to become correction officers in New York State, we shouldn't be making it harder. Closing facilities will only ensure that fewer people will have the opportunity to work in facilities that are close to home. This will lead to fewer candidates considering the job and the staffing challenges will continue. Instead of closing more prisons, the State should invest in their workforce by providing funding for additional training, higher starting salaries and salary grade increases, pension protections for retirement eligible employees, and a work/life balance that attracts the most qualified people to state service.

As my elected representative, I kindly ask that you remove Part II of the Public Protection and General Government Article VII Budget Bill (A.3005/S.3005) and work with the leadership in your house to oppose the closure up to five unidentified prisons. Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,