



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Senator George Borrello Joins Correctional Officers to Denounce Inmate Family Day Amid Rising Inmate on Staff Violence

GEORGE M. BORRELLO October 14, 2023

| ISSUE: **HALT, CORRECTION OFFICERS, CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



NYSOPBA officials cite surging violence and mandated overtime are taking a terrible toll on officers and their families

COLLINS, NY – Senator George Borrello joined correctional officers and their families as well as union officials with the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSOPBA) at a press conference on Friday to denounce a decision by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to host a celebration for

inmates and their families amid increasing inmate-on-staff violence and deteriorating working conditions for correctional officers.

“It is outrageous that while our hardworking correctional officers are being assaulted and injured in record numbers and whose own family lives are suffering because of extraordinary amounts of forced overtime, DOCCS has expended its focus and resources on planning a celebration for inmates and their children and a ‘pampering’ event for wives and girlfriends,” **said Senator Borrello**. “If we needed another reminder that Albany’s priorities have shifted away from those who enforce our laws and toward those who break our laws, here it is. They have turned our criminal justice system into a farce.”

He noted that since implementation of the HALT Act on April 1, 2022, violence against correctional officers and staff has increased over 30 percent, making 2022 the most violent year ever in New York correctional facilities. Compounding the increasing violence is severe understaffing across the prison system as recruitment and retention of correctional officers falls due to the increasingly difficult working conditions.

Among those speaking at the press conference were officers’ wives who shared the toll that forced overtime has had on their families.

“For families like mine, the impacts are deeply felt. Summer camping trips? Cancelled. School functions and crucial life moments for our 10 and 13-year-olds? Missed. Holidays, special events and routine family time are all sacrificed, and yet, now, it’s even more than that. Every single day, there is a looming fear that a routine call from the jail could bring the worst news possible,” **said Nicole Falkiewicz, wife of a correctional officer at Collins**.

“New York State, like any employer, has an obligation to care for its employees. Yet it chooses to prioritize fluctuating political narratives over its duty to its employees, effectively making

them subservient to those they are tasked to manage. I dare our administrators and politicians to spend a day as an officer in a correctional facility – to walk in their shoes and then tell us how the system is ‘improving’, said Ms. Falkiewicz.

Our members are getting mandated at record highs, their regularly scheduled days off are being taken away, and they’re never getting to see their families. The burden of raising a family, playing mom and dad, is falling solely on their spouses due to these constant mandates. The importance of family weighs heavily on our members minds as they try to navigate this difficult time as a corrections officer,” **said Kenny Gold, NYSCOPBA Western Region Vice President.** “What’s happening here today is a total injustice to both our members and their families. Seeing all of the families show up here today to support their loved ones who work inside of these fences truly shows how much they love them and miss them being at home.

He added, “These officers didn’t commit a crime to be mandated inside day after day, the only crime they have committed is the dedication they have given to this department. Our members and their families deserve to be appreciated, as they are the ones that continue to sacrifice time at home so that their communities remain safe. After being assaulted and mandated daily, our members still show up day after day because of their dedication and expertise in this profession. They simply are the best at this thankless job and although they never ask for appreciation, I think now would be the time to recognize our officers. It has never been more apparent with all of the injustices we face, that we are the forgotten branch of the criminal justice tree. We are thankful for Senator Borrello standing here with us today, as well as the unwavering support from the offices of Senator Gallivan and Congressman Langworthy.”

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