



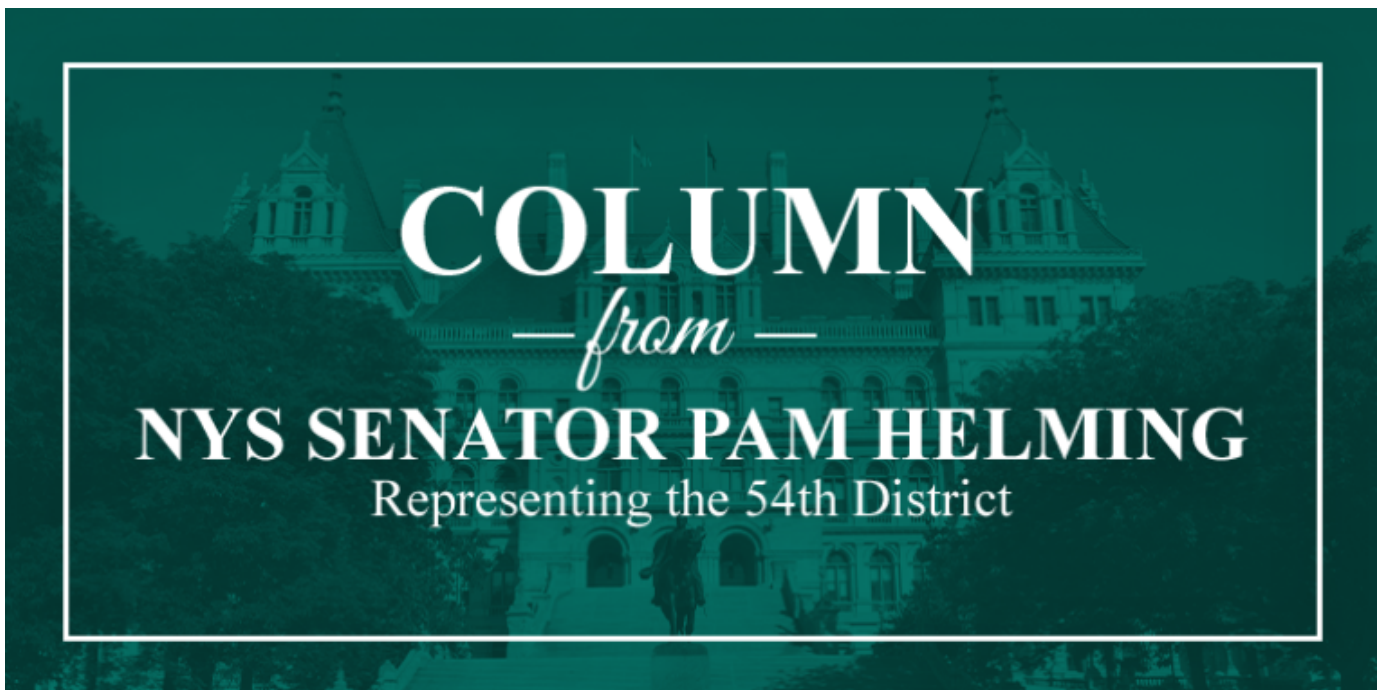
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Column: To New York's correction officers, I hear you

PAMELA HELMING February 24, 2025

| ISSUE: **NEW YORK STATE CORRECTIONS OFFICERS**



They were bundled up in layers and huddled around burn barrels, trying to stay warm in the coldest week of winter.

The right side of one woman's face was yellowing from a healing black and blue bruise.

A man's forehead was scarring after being sliced open. Another had a black eye.

Each of them attacked inside a state correctional facility, where according to the Department of Corrections, assaults on staff have increased 85 percent since 2019.

When I visited Groveland and Five Points correctional facilities this past week, I expected to see anger.

Instead I saw hardworking state employees who are frustrated and fed up with a broken correctional system and a government that has failed them.

A government that has neglected to protect its own employees as well as those in their care and custody.

These correction officers are not asking for money. They are simply asking for safer working conditions. For facilities that are more secure for staff and for inmates. Isn't that a reasonable request? Isn't that the basic role of government, to keep people safe?

Correction officers in our state have one of the toughest jobs imaginable. A job most of us would never consider doing.

Their work is not pretty. There are no casual conversations around the watercooler. No scrolling social media on lunch breaks. No birthday celebrations. There are no fancy wooden desks and ergonomic chairs. No fine art hanging on the walls.

It is steel and concrete, sterile and gritty. Officers must always stay vigilant and alert, head on a swivel.

Being a correction officer is honorable and necessary work. We should all appreciate their service.

Now lawmakers need to get to work and take immediate action to improve safety and security inside state prisons.

Repeal the HALT Act.

Pause further prison closures and consolidations.

Reject the Commissioner's directive that 70 percent staffing is the new 100 percent.

Mandate body scanner screening for all visitors.

Pass my bills for stronger contraband screening and a 20-year retirement option for correction officers.

Restore accountability and consequences in our laws.

Change is long overdue.

While some may judge the unsanctioned action of the workers standing out in the cold, we cannot ignore what they are standing for.

Their voices must be heard. They are pleading with us to hear them.

If you are an officer, staff or family member, please know I hear you. And I will keep fighting for the Governor and the leaders of the Senate and Assembly to hear you, too.

To them I say: Do what's right. Do your jobs.

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## 2023-S6165A

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- - In Committee Assembly
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- - Passed Assembly
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Relates to providing state correction officers with a special optional twenty year retirement plan

March 31, 2023

In Senate Committee [Civil Service and Pensions](#)

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Do you support this bill?

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