



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara calls for repeal of law that restricts disciplining NY's most violent inmates: Opponents of HALT Act say it is putting corrections officers at risk

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 24, 2022

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**Albany, N.Y., May 24**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today joined legislative colleagues in the Senate and Assembly, and representatives of the state's correctional

officers, to call for the enactment of legislation O'Mara co-sponsors to repeal the "Humane Alternatives to Solitary Confinement (HALT) Act."

The new law, approved last year by the Legislature's Democrat majorities and signed into law by former Governor Andrew Cuomo, restricts the ability of prison officials to discipline the state's most violent inmates by separating them from the general population.

Corrections officers have warned since the law's enactment that it would put officers at even greater risk within a prison system where inmate attacks on prison staff reached record numbers in 2021 and are on pace to be even more serious this year.

Earlier this year, the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) called on Governor Kathy Hochul to pause the law's implementation.

NYSCOPBA points to reports by the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS) showing that since April 1, 2022, overall violence in New York's correctional facilities has increased by more than 30%. Inmate-on-staff violence has risen approximately 25%, while inmate-on-inmate violence has climbed 40%.

O'Mara said, "Governor Hochul and the Legislature's Democratic supermajorities have been solely focused on coddling inmates by severely hampering disciplinary sanctions, finding ways to parole more and more inmates, and diminishing the ability of correctional officers to deal with violence inside prisons. Ongoing attacks inside the Elmira Correctional Facility in my legislative district and in prisons across this state should serve as a stark reminder that steps are needed to better protect corrections officers, prison staff, inmates themselves, and the overall safety and security within the walls of our prisons. Our corrections officers remain extremely alarmed about rising violence inside prisons and I share their concern. Governor Hochul and New York's current legislative leadership keep moving in the completely opposite and wrong direction. It's a carefree approach to criminal justice and corrections, and it's irresponsible and dangerous."

NYSOPBA President Michael Powers said, "As we have said for years, the HALT Act would only do one thing, make our correctional facilities more dangerous. The New York State Legislature, the people who created this poorly thought-out legislation are directly responsible for the skyrocketing violence we're experiencing in our prisons today. They ignored our warnings, our pleas to educate themselves properly before passing HALT, and now they've put the lives of everyone who resides or works in a correctional setting at risk."

The legislation (S9378) O'Mara co-sponsors would repeal the HALT Act. It is currently in the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee.