

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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HELMING: PROPOSED PRISON CLOSURES A PUBLIC SAFETY DISASTER

Governor Cuomo’s recently proposed Executive Budget includes a proposal that would allow him to close additional state correctional facilities with only 90 days notice. Since taking office, the Governor has closed 17 correctional facilities. Our region is home to several correctional facilities, including Five Points Correctional Facility, Auburn Correctional Facility and Willard Drug Treatment Campus.

“Serious safety issues already exist in prisons across New York State and closing additional facilities will do nothing to address these problems. One of the main drivers of prison violence is the practice of double bunking inmates together. Although this helps reduce space constraints and contain costs, it significantly raises the risk of injury to both inmates and correctional personnel. As we have seen through recent coverage in the Auburn Citizen, our prisons continue to face a number of safety challenges. Correction officers already have one of the toughest and most dangerous beats in law enforcement. As a State, we have a duty and obligation to do our best to protect public safety, keep our communities safe and give law enforcement the tools they need to stay safe and do their jobs. Additional prison closures would only exacerbate these issues and make conditions inside prisons more dangerous,” said Senator Helming.

“As we’ve been saying all along, prison violence is at an all-time high, and the Governor and the Legislature should be working with us and our members to find solutions to make our prisons safer. State policies have created dangerous situations inside prison walls and put our members at risk. Let’s right-size the prison system by eliminating double-bunking, which will create a safer environment for both incarcerated individuals and staff. The last thing we need is prisons to be shuttered, especially on short notice and without public input, and the economies of upstate communities to be gutted from the aftermath. We thank the Senator for her unwavering support of our union sisters and brothers,” said Michael B. Powers, President of NYSCOPBA.

“The Governor’s plan to close addition correctional facilities without eliminating the double bunks throughout the states prison system is just another example of his failure to recognize the historic levels of violence within our correctional facilities. Governor Cuomo must take action to address the threats to Correctional staff and it starts with the elimination of the double bunks and giving the department the ability to stop the steady supply of drugs smuggled in through visitors and packages,” said Thomas Ingles, Council 82 President, Local 2951 NYS Correction Lieutenants.

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