



The Torture of Solitary Confinement in NY Prisons & Jails

- People in isolated confinement in NY State spend **22 to 24 hours a day locked in a cell** the size of an elevator, alone or with one other person. They may be permitted 1-2 hours to exercise alone in a cage; they do not receive any meaningful programs or therapy, and often cannot make phone calls.
- The sensory deprivation, lack of normal human interaction, and extreme idleness can lead to intense suffering and severe damage. Isolated confinement fails to address, and often exacerbates, underlying causes of difficult behavior as people deteriorate psychologically, physically, and socially.
- Most people sent to isolation in New York State prisons spend **months or years** there; some individuals have been in solitary confinement in New York's prisons for **more than two decades (upwards of 30 years)**. The **entire United Nations General Assembly has denounced solitary exceeding 15 days**. Colorado has implemented a 15-day limit on solitary and reduced the number of people in solitary from 1,500 to 18. NY currently places **no limit on the total time** a person can spend in isolated confinement.
- **Thousands of people are in isolated confinement in NYS prisons and jails each day, and tens of thousands each year**, at rates worse than the national average. The majority of sentences that result in isolated confinement in NYS are for non-violent conduct. **Black people** represent about 13% of all people in NYS, but 50% of those incarcerated in NYS, and nearly **60% of people** held in long-term solitary confinement units in NY. Young people and people with mental illness are disproportionately likely to be put in isolation.
- Many hundreds of people are **released directly from extreme isolation to the outside community** each year in NY; they receive no educational or rehabilitative programming, and no transitional services to help them prepare for their return to society, increasing rates of recidivism.
- Any correction officer can write a disciplinary ticket for alleged rule violations. Hearings by DOCCS employees to adjudicate disciplinary tickets that result in solitary confinement are arbitrary and unfair: 95% of people charged with these rule violations are found guilty.

Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, S.1623 / A.2500

Currently has 30 co-sponsors in the Senate and 64 co-sponsors in the Assembly, HALT would:

- End the torture of solitary by ensuring that no person is ever held in isolated confinement beyond 15 days in line with international standards, including the Mandela Rules.
- Create more humane and effective alternatives by fundamentally transforming the response to people's needs and behaviors, from deprivation and isolation to additional support, programs, and therapy. Anyone separated from the general prison population beyond 15 days would have at least seven hours per day out-of-cell with meaningful human contact and programs.
- Drastically restrict the criteria that can result in extended isolation or separation to the most egregious conduct in need of an intensive therapeutic and rehabilitative intervention.
- Ban any solitary for people particularly vulnerable to the effects of, or abuse inside of, isolation.
- Better equip staff to work with incarcerated people (via training), and make the processes resulting in separation fairer (including via legal representation), more transparent (via mandatory reporting), and with more accountability (via outside oversight).

Action to Take Today to Support HALT and Join the Movement!

1) CALL Senate Leader Stewart-Cousins (518-455-2585) and **Assembly Speaker Heastie** (518-455-3791). Tell them: *"I'm a New Yorker, and I'm calling to thank you for your ongoing support for the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, S.1623/A2500 and to urge you to pass it AS IS immediately so we can finally end this torture. I also urge you to pass a whole slate of changes to the injustice system, including related to pre-trial justice, parole release consideration, and more"*

2) Write a memo of support. If you are part of an organization, please write a memo in support of the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, S.1623/A.2500, explaining why your group supports this bill. Please email your memo to caicadvocacyday@gmail.com or email with any questions regarding the memo.

3) CALL Governor Cuomo: 518-474-8390. *"I am a New Yorker, I oppose solitary confinement. We need to end its use in NYS prisons & jails. I support the **HALT Solitary Confinement Act** (S. 1623/ A.2500) and urge you to get behind HALT to pass it in NY. I also urge you to require DOCCS to enact this bill's reforms. Don't wait for the legislature – act now to make NY a leader in protecting human rights for all!"*

4) ALSO CALL the following Senators – especially if you are constituents – but even if you aren't! *"I am a New Yorker who is committed to ending the torture of solitary confinement in New York. I am calling to urge the Senator to cosponsor the HALT Solitary Confinement Act (S.1623/A.2500). I whole-heartedly support this bill, and I hope that the Senator will sign on and urge fellow Senators to pass the HALT bill as is – without watering down any of its protections. We are counting on the Senate to end the torture of solitary confinement. Will the Senator sign on as a cosponsor? I also urge the Senator to support a whole slate of changes to the injustice system, including related to pre-trial justice, parole release consideration, and more."*

Sen Metzger: (845) 344-3311; (518) 455-2400

Sen Gaughran: (516) 922-1811; (518) 455-3250

Sen Martinez: (631) 360-3356; (518) 455-2950

Sen Gounardes: (718) 238-6044; (518) 455-3270

Sen Skoufis: (845) 567-1270; (518) 455-3290

Sen Kennedy: 716-826-2683; 518-455-2426

Sen Boyle: (631) 665-2311; (518) 455-3411

Sen Lanza: (718) 984-4073; (518) 455-3215

Sen Felder: (718) 253-2015; (518) 455-2754

5) Tweet: (use picture of letter above) Dear @NYGovCuomo @AndreaSCousins @CarlHeastie: I support the HALT Solitary Confinement Act because . . . NY must end this torture now. #HALTsolitary @nycaic. Also NY's injustice system needs a fundamental transformation. Support #HALTsolitary, #FreeOurElders, #FREEnewyork, #bailreform, #speedytrial, #discovery, #dismantleinjustice JusticeRoadmapNY.org

6) Hold a monthly #HALTsolitary action in your area: CAIC holds actions around the state on the 23rd of every month in recognition of the 23+ hours a day people spend in solitary

Learn more about CAIC at: www.nycaic.org and facebook.com/NYCAIC



The New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) brings together formerly incarcerated people, family members of currently incarcerated people, concerned community members, advocates, and organizations interested in challenging the use of isolated confinement in New York prisons and jails. CAIC seeks sweeping reform aimed at ending the torture of solitary confinement and fundamentally transforming the way our institutions respond to people's needs and problematic behaviors. Learn more about our work – and join us! – www.nycaic.org.