



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie to Governor Cuomo: Keep Watertown Correctional Facility Open

PATTY RITCHIE January 4, 2021



In a press conference outside Watertown Correctional Facility Monday afternoon, State Senator Patty Ritchie joined local leaders, prison employees and their family members to call on Governor Cuomo to reverse his decision to close the facility.

Last month—just four days before Christmas—it was announced that Watertown Correctional Facility would be one of three state prisons closing on March 31, 2021. Other facilities slated for closure include Gowanda Correctional Facility in Erie County and the Clinton Correctional Facility Annex in Dannemora.

“Since the pandemic began nearly a year ago, those who work in our prisons have selflessly put their health in harm’s way to do their jobs and return home to their families at the end of their shifts,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“As the pandemic rages on and cases of COVID-19 rise across the state, closing prisons and in turn, packing more inmates and staff in fewer facilities goes against everything we’ve been told about stopping the spread of this disease. Now is not the time to be closing prisons—especially those like Watertown Correctional Facility, which are well-run and filled with hardworking people.”

Senator Ritchie was joined at the press conference by Assemblyman Mark Walczyk, Mike Powers, New York State Correctional Officers Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) President, Brian Hluska, NYSCOPBA Vice President and a number of local leaders.

“While we disagree on many things, I have always given the Governor credit for paying attention to the North Country,” added Senator Ritchie.

“Today, I am calling on Governor Cuomo to reverse this decision. By halting this closure, and ensuring Watertown Correctional Facility stays open, he has the opportunity to be a hero to the hundreds of men and women who work at this facility, and their families.”

During the press conference, Senator Ritchie and those who spoke pointed to a number of reasons for keeping Watertown Correctional Facility open, including its reliable workforce, low number of violent incidents and recent infrastructure upgrades, among others.