



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Walczyk

STATEMENT FROM SENATOR WALCZYK: 199 DAYS OF NEGLECT FOR OUR CORRECTION OFFICERS

[Mark Walczyk](#)

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"It has been 199 long days since the corrections officers of New York boldly took a stand, picketing around burn barrels outside their prison. Some refused to continue working in the unacceptably unsafe conditions which jeopardized their lives every single day. In a remarkable show of solidarity, 38 out of 42 facilities operated by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) answered the call to action, making the disturbing reality of our correctional system undeniable. All New Yorkers heard their voice. Yet here we are, 199 days later, and what has been done to enhance the safety of our corrections officers? Absolutely nothing. The response from Governor Hochul and her Democratic allies? An utter refusal to confront the chaos spiraling out of control.

The aftermath of this strike has been devastating. Over 2,000 correction officers were stupidly fired for their plea for basic safety measures in the workplace. Now we face an untenable shortage of 4,700 officers needed to run our correctional facilities effectively. More than one-third of guard posts remain unfilled, with some prisons

staggering under a shocking 48% staffing shortage. The consequences are severe: overcrowded conditions, cancelled days off, rampant violence, inmate overdoses, staff exposures to dangerous poisons, and remaining officers overwhelmed by excessive overtime. Let's also acknowledge the \$100 million monthly cost to taxpayers footing the bill to keep National Guard in our prisons—this is a direct result of the inaction by DOCCS, Governor Hochul, and her Democratic allies. They seem to prioritize coddling criminals and wasting taxpayer money over taking accountability for what led us here.

The Governor said she was going to ramp up recruitment but the Corrections Academy isn't keeping pace with retirements. And she said she's going to close three prisons but has given no notice to communities, employees, and families. Instead, she's planning closures in secret, without input from the people impacted and lacking the transparency the public is entitled to.

I'm still receiving desperate messages from correction officers pleading for help. One recent message highlighted the untenable state of affairs: "Drugs are still coming in through flawed mail scanners, and our staff members are facing unprecedented levels of disrespect. The situation is not only dangerous for the officers; it poses a threat to the entire community." The negligence displayed by those in power is absolutely inexcusable.

Our correction officers' voices have been systematically ignored by the very leaders sworn to protect them. The HALT Act continues to unleash havoc within our prison system, drastically limiting the tools our officers need to manage violent behavior among inmates. Assaults on correctional officers have soared to alarming levels, with the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) reporting 2,070 assaults on staff in 2024, a staggering 50% increase from just four years prior. By November 2024, we had already shattered the previous year's record for assaults on staff. This showcases the Hochul administration's failure to prioritize the safety and well-being of those who safeguard our communities.

I sponsor a bill in the Senate (S5009), which mandates that every correctional facility housing over 100 inmates must have a drug-sniffing canine on site. Democrats blocked it this legislative session.

I joined the Republican conference in the Senate in an attempt to repeal the Halt Act. It was shot-down on the Senate floor.

Now, County Jails are filling with state prisoners at a cost to local taxpayers because DOCCS refuses to pick them up and take them to a state facility. Enough.

The Governor caused the crisis in our prisons and continues to be complicit in the system which is failing NY's inmates, staff, corrections officers, taxpayers, and the safety of the public. She needs to take immediate action to rehire unjustly terminated officers, suspend the HALT Act, and fortify our prisons against the flood of dangerous drugs."