



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Statement from Senator Patty Ritchie

PATTY RITCHIE November 24, 2021



Tonight, many of us are spending our evenings with family and friends, making last minute preparations for the holiday tomorrow. But thanks to Governor Hochul, 50 correctional officers from Ogdensburg Correctional Facility and their families, have very little to celebrate.

That's because earlier today, they received phone calls notifying them that on December 16th—just nine days before Christmas—they'll need to report for duty at their new assignments. For many, this undoubtedly means uprooting their families and leaving the

community they love, right in the middle of the holiday season.

When I heard news of this, I was reminded of when the former governor, last year, callously announced the closure of Watertown Correctional Facility just three days before Christmas. I didn't think it was possible for someone to be more cruel than that, but unfortunately, Governor Hochul has demonstrated she's capable of it.

When she became governor, Governor Hochul promised a lot of things. First and foremost, she promised to "fight like hell" for the people of New York. I, and many others in our community, have a question for her—is closing Ogdensburg Correctional Facility and ripping 268 jobs out of our community "fighting like hell" for us?

She also promised to show people that "their government listens and actually cares." That's ironic, because for the past two weeks, I've been working tirelessly alongside other members of our community to get the Governor to listen and fully understand the benefit OCF provides to the North Country, as well as to the incarcerated population. Unfortunately though, she's turned her back on us and our pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Governor Hochul also pledged to be a more responsible leader. Earlier this week, the Acting Commissioner of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision issued a memo detailing a disturbing spike in violence in our correctional facilities. If New York State wants to address this issue, packing more incarcerated individuals into fewer facilities seems counterproductive—and not to mention, irresponsible.

Governor Hochul once said that she believed "all of us have a moral responsibility to fight for the underdog." When you look at New York State, the North Country is the underdog. We have endless potential, but need someone to fight for us in order to reach it. Along with many other people in our community, I had hoped Governor Hochul—a fellow Upstate New Yorker—would be that person. Sadly, that does not appear to be the case.