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**REMARKS OF STATE SENATOR BILL PERKINS | PRESS CONFERENCE, RE:  
SUBMISSION OF COMPLAINT IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK BY THE  
ESTATE OF SAMUEL HARRELL**

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Our correctional system is in a state of unfettered crisis.

On paper, our system espouses mission-based goals of rehabilitation, treatment and support – but these laudable and necessary goals – necessary to securing public safety – seem to be under lock and key themselves.

The homicide; frankly, the murder of Samuel Harrell at the hands of nearly 20 correctional officers, the infamous Beat Up Squad of Fishkill – is shocking to the conscience. It reinforces what many of us already know: we have a human rights crisis here in New York State.

Let me say this: my thoughts and prayers, my love and support is with the family of Mr. Harrell. What happened to your son; to your brother – is beyond outrageous; it is beyond malicious – and justice will prevail.

We have to ask ourselves: how did we get here? How did we get to the point where violence, threats, intimidation and punishment became the standard operating procedure of our correctional “professionals.”

As a State, we have to question ourselves and ask: are we willing to not only stomach but sustain a correctional system that through its very core action makes each of us less safe.

It has been about four and a half months since Mr. Harrell’s life was taken from him and the investigation continues; recently the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara joined the inquiry. This is welcome news.

One has to wonder, though; who is to be held accountable? The high-profile prison escape at Clinton Correctional Facility in June and the documented existence of a murderous Beat Up

Squad at Fishkill present dire public policy and public safety implications; the public deserves transparent answers and swift action.

The lesson to be learned from the tragic taking of Mr. Harrell's life is this: no longer can we view each incident of correctional officer on individual violence as distinct and disparate. System-wide reform is needed to address a system-wide breakdown in mission that imperils our collective safety.

For several years, I have been campaigning to reform and forever end the abusive and counterproductive practice of solitary confinement; I now plan on introducing additional companion legislation that will:

- ◆ Provide for an immediate external and independent investigation of our Correctional system by the United States Department of Justice.
- ◆ Totally overhaul the recruitment, training, composition and qualifications for Corrections Officers.
- ◆ Implement the use of independently monitored cameras in Correctional facilities – both stationary and body cameras.
- ◆ Provide that medical and crisis intervention staff must be on call all of the time at Correctional facilities; while providing enhanced, therapeutic and rehabilitative mental health treatment therein.
- ◆ Require all those who work in Correctional facilities to be deemed mandatory reporters of abuse.
- ◆ Require that any Correctional facility that is the site of a confirmed homicide of an officer on individual – as is the case in Fishkill, with the death of Mr. Harrell – will be automatically decommissioned.
- ◆ Provide independent legal and investigative professionals to individuals in prison that guarantee their rights and due process.
- ◆ Extend the current Executive Order (Number 147) for a Special Prosecutor to include incidents where correctional officers are involved in the deaths of individuals under their guard.

The murder of Samuel Harrell is a saddening and maddening indictment of the human rights abuses perpetrated by the State upon its citizenry. However, we must move forward, unified, on all fronts – to ensure that the name of Mr. Harrell – will, in the future – stand for justice, humanity, peace and everlasting change.