

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



GEORGE M. BORRELLO
SENATOR
57TH DISTRICT

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
AGRICULTURE
BANKS
COMMITTEES
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS
ELECTIONS
FINANCE

ALBANY OFFICE
707 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG.
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE: (518) 455-3563
FAX: (518) 426-6905
DISTRICT OFFICE
2-6 EAST SECOND STREET
SUITE 302
JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 14701
PHONE: (716) 664-4603
FAX: (716) 664-2430
SATELLITE OFFICE
WESTGATE PLAZA
700 W. STATE STREET
OLEAN, NEW YORK 14760
PHONE: (716) 372-4901
FAX: (716) 372-5740

February 26, 2025

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

I write to you with grave concern over the decision to deploy 6,500 National Guardsmen to staff New York's prisons in place of striking correction officers. This reckless move has placed untrained service members in an extremely volatile environment, jeopardizing their safety and further destabilizing our correctional system.

The National Guard is an invaluable asset in responding to emergencies, but these men and women are not trained corrections professionals. Their expertise—whether in logistics, aircraft maintenance, tactical operations, or medical care—does not equip them for managing some of New York's most dangerous and violent offenders.

As one retired NY Air National Guard officer, stated in an email to the members of the Senate:

"NY State is sending logisticians, aircraft mechanics, truck drivers, communication specialists, carpenters, pilots, nurses, etc. into prisons to manage and care for New York's most dangerous and violent residents... You cannot possibly replace a lengthy corrections training academy with a few days of emergency training and expect a good outcome... This is a truly dangerous situation and [just] a matter of time before it results in serious injury or loss of life."

We have also had numerous calls to my Senate office from concerned parents of National Guard members, who report that their sons and daughters have been forced into these dangerous environments without adequate food, restroom facilities or safety equipment. They are unarmed, unprepared, and tasked with running recreation yards and escorting inmates—a situation that is being described as a “powder keg about to explode.”

Amid this chaos, your claim that you don't understand “what the issue is” is nothing short of astonishing. For two years, correction officers, their union, Republican legislators in the Senate and Assembly, and the families of officers have repeatedly sounded the alarm. Press conferences, statements, and direct pleas have all pointed to the same dire issues:

- **Escalating violence** against staff and inmates due to the HALT Act;
- **Severe understaffing**, forcing officers into relentless double and triple shifts;
- **The state's refusal to mandate body scanners for visitors**, allowing dangerous drugs to flood our prisons.

These concerns have been raised time and time again—only to be ignored. Governor, this crisis isn't new, and the issues have been made abundantly clear. It's time to stop pretending otherwise and take real action.

The deployment of the National Guard is not the answer and is only putting these young men and women in danger. What's needed is swift action to secure an agreement with correction officers that will immediately address the unbearable conditions they have been working under for far too long. The most important of the needed changes is the repeal of the disastrous HALT Act.

It is only a matter of time before the current situation results in the serious injury or loss of life of a Guard member or inmate. That responsibility will rest on your shoulders unless you take immediate action.

For the safety of everyone involved, I urge you to change course before it is too late.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George M. Borrello". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Senator George Borrello
57th District, New York State Senate

CC:
Commissioner Daniel F. Martuscello III
NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision