

Date:

Dear

I am writing to express my deep concern about the inhumane and counterproductive use of solitary confinement and other forms of isolation in New York State prisons and jails, and to urge you to co-sponsor and pass the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, S. 4784A which passed in the Assembly by a vote of 99-45 on June 12, 2018. The bill currently has 25 co-sponsors in the senate.

In New York's prisons and jails on any given day there are thousands of people held in isolated confinement in cells the size of an elevator for 22 to 24 hours a day, without meaningful human contact, programs, or therapy. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has concluded that more than *15 days* in isolated confinement can amount to torture. Yet in New York people are routinely held in isolation for months and years, and sometimes even decades. The majority are placed there for non-violent rule violations.

Such isolation can cause deep and permanent psychological, physical, and social harm. It also exacerbates rather than addresses the underlying causes of difficult behavior and makes our prisons, jails, and communities less safe. Even people particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of isolation, including youth and individuals with mental health needs, are held in solitary, and people of color are sent to isolated confinement in disproportionate numbers.

The HALT Solitary Confinement Act would both end the torture of long-term solitary confinement beyond 15 days and create more humane and effective alternatives. HALT would require that any person separated from the general prison population for more than 15 consecutive days be placed in an alternative secure rehabilitative and therapeutic unit. HALT also restricts the criteria that can result in isolation, bars vulnerable populations from being placed in isolation, enhances staff training, and provides for procedural protections and outside oversight.

New York has the opportunity to become a model for humane and effective change, while making our prisons, jails, and communities safer. Please give your utmost support to the HALT Solitary Confinement Act.

Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

Email: